



Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide

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## RI Global Newsletter, June 2018:

### Leave no one behind

#### **Thirteen more organizations joined RI**

The global family of Rehabilitation International has been consistently growing under the leadership of RI President Haidi Zhang, with 10 more national organizations and three associate member-organizations having joined RI.

The RI Executive Committee has approved in its meetings held in Beijing, China and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2017 and Hangzhou, China in 2018 the application of ten National Member-Organizations (NMO) namely the National Alliance of DPOs of Bangladesh, Fuhong Society of Macao, Chandelle Welfare Society for Special Persons of Pakistan, Child Welfare Scheme of Nepal, All-Russia Society of Disabled People, Braza Saude of Brazil, Federation for These Abled Persons in the Philippines, DEAFSKILLS International based in Russia but registered in the Netherlands, Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCRBT) and Potibondi Community Center of Bangladesh.

Three new organizations in Africa joined RI as Associate Member Organizations in the first half of 2018, namely, Berhan Lehatsanat, Harmee Education for Development Association and Cheshire Foundation Action for Inclusion – all based in Ethiopia.

RI President Haidi Zhang has repeatedly expressed her commitment to enable grassroots organizations of persons with disabilities and those who work with them, to be actively involved in the global work of Rehabilitation International.

As a woman with a disability born and raised in a developing country, Haidi Zhang understands the challenges faced by disabled persons, especially women and girl-children who face multiple and intersecting discrimination on account of their gender, poverty and disability. She has consistently asked RI officers, members and partners to share the examples of good practice developed by the organization in the last 96 years to make a dent in the lives of persons with disabilities consistent to the vision of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **RI continued advancing its work for persons with disabilities during the 11th session of the Conference of States Parties**

The 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, one of the largest and most participatory international disability conferences, took place in the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 14 June 2018. The overarching theme of the session was “leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the CRPD”, with three subthemes: 1) national fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation for strengthening the implementation of the CRPD; 2) women and girls with disabilities; and 3) political participation and equal recognition before the law.

On 12 June, two rounds of elections were held, in accordance with Article 34 of the Convention, to elect nine members to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The following nine candidates were elected as members of the Committee whose terms will begin on 1 January 2019: Ms. Rosemary Kayess (Australia); Ms. Miyeon Kim (Republic of Korea); Ms. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame (Ghana); Mr. Jonas Ruskus (Lithuania); Mr. Markus Schefer (Switzerland); Mr. Danlami Umaru Basharu (Nigeria); Ms. Mara Cristina Gabrielli (Brazil); Ms. Amalia Eva Gamio Rios (Mexico); and Ms. Risnawati Utami (Indonesia).

During the 11<sup>th</sup> session, RI Global delivered its statement at the General Debate as an observer member of Civil Society, and co-organized three side-events pertaining to the challenges and opportunities for the full implementation of the CRPD in the coming years.



*RI's side-event on Women and girls with disabilities in rural and remote settings.*

RI in collaboration with CBM, Harvard Law School Project on Disability and UN DESA, hosted a side-event entitled “Including the most likely to be left behind: women and girls with disabilities in rural and remote settings”. The side-event highlighted the situation of women and girls with disabilities in rural and remote locations in the Global South; and shared programmes, strategies, lessons learned, and best practices to reach and include women and girls with disabilities in rural and remote areas. Innovative approaches to promote access and inclusion for women and girls with disabilities were shared by representatives from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, University of Malta, Harvard Law School, as well as NGOs from Vietnam, Israel and the BestCities Global Alliance. Ms. Haidi Zhang, President of Rehabilitation International, also gave a message, reiterating RI Global’s strong commitment to leaving no one behind through reaching the furthest left behind, especially through RI Global’s continued efforts in addressing the intersectionality of discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities in the Global South.

## **Message by RI Global President, Haidi Zhang**

*It is a pleasure to convey my best wishes to all of you who have gathered for the side event with a topic of Rural Women with Disabilities.*

*The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 300 million women and girls worldwide have some kind of disability. Research also shows that women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination compared to men, since the prejudice is from not only disability but also gender. They lack access to education, health care, and employment and are at high risks of gender-based violence and neglect. If we look into the women and girls with disabilities in rural areas, we would see that they are faced with even worse conditions.*

*Since 1922, Rehabilitation International (RI) has demonstrated its commitment to rehabilitation and concerns for the welfare for millions of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities. I still remember my inaugural address in 2016 at the last day of the 23<sup>rd</sup> RI World Congress in Edinburgh. I mentioned women with disabilities as one of the priority groups that RI should pay more attention to, which is also reflected in RI Strategic Plan 2017-2021.*

*One of the important goals of 2030 Agenda is to strengthen efforts of the international community to empower persons with disabilities and to provide them with equal access to participation and opportunities in the process of achieving the SDGs.*

*Today, we should be the strongest advocates for realizing the vision set out by the CRPD. We call on the international community to eradicate all forms of discrimination and biases, to promote equal sharing and inclusive development for women with disabilities. With all stakeholders working together, in a collaborative partnership, this goal can be achieved.*

*Here I have some suggestions to achieve this goal: first, I call for strengthened collaboration among the United Nations, Governments, DPOs, women's organizations, the private sector and persons with disabilities themselves, so as to draw more attention to women with disabilities worldwide. Second, when we provide services to persons with disabilities, women with disabilities should be the priority target group in health care, education, rehabilitation and employment. Third, empowerment of women with disabilities is critical to achieve their equal access to all fields.*

*Please let me extend my high appreciation to the Secretariat who organized this wonderful event. On behalf of RI, I truly appreciate everyone attending the side event. As we embark on the great journey for the betterment of all human beings, let us be reminded that realizing our goals requires the inclusion of women with disabilities.*



*Norway's Deputy State Minister gave the opening remarks at RI's side event on Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities.*

In close cooperation with the Government of Norway, RI also organized a side-event entitled “Inclusive education for persons with disabilities: from special schools to inclusive education”. The event focused on how the policy and practice had changed in the education sector for persons with disabilities, namely, from special schools to be included in the school’s learning community. It also highlighted the existing gaps between global policy frameworks and the practice on the ground for students with disabilities, and shared best practice and outcomes of inclusive education around the world.

On June 19, RI also co-organized a side event with UN women to highlight the urgency to advance the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the priorities of the work of UN Women. Entitled “Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities”, the side-event was part of the activities during the UN Women's Annual Board Meeting held in New York. In her welcome remarks, Ms. Asa Regner, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, said she was happy about the election of six women experts out of the nine new members of the CRPD Committee. Mr. Jouni Laaksonen, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Mission of Finland to the UN also spoke about the contribution of disability movement in his country and his

government's commitment to address inequality to ensure that persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, enjoy equal access to services and exercise their rights on an equal basis with others. He highlighted the initiative of the Finnish disability organization, Abilis Foundation, which has been providing support to grassroots organizations in developing countries, most of which are in Africa, to empower persons with disabilities in poverty through various livelihood projects to enable them to be self-reliant.

Ten years after the Convention has come into force, while significant progress has been made for persons with disabilities, there is still a lot more that needs to be done, especially for persons with disabilities from the Global South. It is critical to note that 80% of the 1.5 billion persons with disabilities live in developing countries, and RI Global will strengthen its work towards the inclusion and access for all persons with disabilities through concrete initiatives that utilize the organization's experience and expertise from its 96 years of rehabilitation work across the world.



*Members of the RI Project Management Committee and the RI Secretary-General met in New York to discuss on the implementation of RI's Global Disability Development Fund and Africa Fund.*

The Conference of States Parties is held each year to advance the global discourse on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to engage broad participation from governments, civil society organizations and the UN system for the promotion of the rights, perspectives and leaderships of persons with disabilities. For more information about the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference, click [here](#).

### **RI Global: Around the World**

**Mobility India (MI)**, World Learning and International Society of Wheelchair Professionals (ISWP), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) organized the Wheelchair Stakeholder Meeting at Mobility India, Bangalore from 15 to 18 January 2018. The meeting gathered over 50 cooperative partners and experts from different countries to discuss the challenges and solutions to wheelchair provision in developing countries.



**People with Disability Australia** mobilized over 160 civil society groups and over 100 academics to join the call for a Royal Commission into violence against people with disabilities in Australia. The Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens have also supported the call to ensure that people with disabilities to enjoy the access to justice on an equal basis with others.

**BestCities Alliance** announced a joint study project with Rehabilitation International and GainingEdge. Aspired to remove barriers in meeting and conventions for delegates with special

needs, the report aims to comprehensively address the broader issues including visitor accessibility that can impact visitor experiences and capacity in the visitation industry for full economic and social benefit realization. With the experience and expertise from the work of Rehabilitation International and GainingEdge, the report will be released in the 2018 Fall.

### **RI Global: Mark Your Calendar**

[9-18 July 2018, UN Headquarters, New York, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development \(HLPF\)](#)

The theme this year is “Transforming toward sustainable and resilient societies”, and the set of goals to be reviewed in depth this year are the following, including Goal 17, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development:

- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

[25-27 July 2018, Glasgow, UK, 13<sup>th</sup> World Down Syndrome Congress](#)

The 13<sup>th</sup> World Down Syndrome Congress will be held in Glasgow, UK this summer. The Congress offers an opportunity for families, professionals and people with Down syndrome access to the latest medical research, educational developments and best practice related to the condition. It also aims to create a unique environment for families to share their personal experiences, and connect people from diverse backgrounds and communities who face similar challenges and interests.

[16 August 2018, Hamburg, Germany, International Symposium on Benefits & Conditions of Sports regarding Health and Participation of People with Disabilities](#)

On the occasion of the Wheelchair Basketball World Championships (WBWC) 2018 in Hamburg, Germany, the organizing partners are proud to announce an international symposium, where international scientists, experts and practitioners will present important aspects of sports and physical education in relation to rehabilitation. Aiming to collect and promote the knowledge of benefits of sports and the conditions to be met in order to achieve these benefits, the international symposium will provide an important contribution to health and participation of people with disabilities as well as a platform for establishing networks and cooperation among professionals in the area of Leisure, Recreation and Physical Activity, interested in the benefits of sports in a rehabilitation context.

[4 November, Berlin, Germany, Advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities worldwide](#)

The RI Commission on Policy and Services will hold a meeting to advance the work of RI Global through reviewing the progress made in advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities through the policy and services contributed by RI Global, and discuss on the way forward through more collaboration with other RI Commissions, as well as other stakeholders and experts.

[8-12 November, New Delhi, India, 2018 Global IT Challenge for Youth with Disabilities](#)

The Korean Society for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (KSRPD) has been spreading awareness and policies on IT and persons with disabilities at regional and national levels, in close collaboration with the Korean government, RI Global and international organizations since 2011. This year, the 2018 GITC will be held in New Delhi, India, which has performed an exemplary role both as an IT powerhouse and using IT to solve various disability issues both domestically and internationally. In particular, the Government of India has pledged to implement its role and responsibility as a co-host country by supporting accommodation and event venue for

all participants. The four-day event will be an exceptional forum for youth with disabilities to demonstrate their leadership and knowledge in the IT industry, and for experts and practitioners from governments and international organizations to explore policy options to reduce the digital gap for persons with disabilities as well as to promote ICT policies and networks inclusive of persons with disabilities.

[12-15 November, Taipei, Taiwan, 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons](#)

The 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons, organized by Eden Social Welfare Foundation, invites researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and advocates to contribute to the discussion on accessible transportation.



**Registration for RI Meetings in Berlin is now open.**

RI members are reminded that the RI Executive Board meeting, the 2018 General Assembly and other meetings, will take place in Berlin, Germany from 2 -6 November this year. For more detailed information on registration for your participation and hotel bookings, please email our colleagues at [ri2018@dvfr.de](mailto:ri2018@dvfr.de) no later than 30 July 2018. Please note about the deadline to avail of discounted hotel rates negotiated by local organizers.