

March Newsletter: Work and Accessibility

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Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide

March Newsletter: Work and Accessibility



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Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlines the right to work of all peoples.

RI Sets Sights on Accessibility with Return to Work (RTW) Standards

Late last year, Rehabilitation International (RI Global) decided to shift course from policy to outcome, adopting the theme “Accessibility” as a baseline for all of its activities for 2016. The organization’s Work and Employment Commission (WEC) wasted no time at including “accessibility” in its platform. Members at the annual meeting in Hong Kong last September set about adopting a universal framework in Return to Work (RTW) competencies for universities to use in the education of rehabilitation counselors. Lots of terms and educational programs for “disability managers” exist all over the world, the Commission determined, but a benchmark had still not been established. RI designated Madan Kundu, an expert in Rehabilitation Counseling, and Friedrich Mehrhoff, known for his social and economical investment approach to Disability Management, to draft “domain areas” for standard RTW criterion.

The basic document advises that disability counselors students learn not only the medical, functional and environmental aspects of a disability, but also the group dynamics present in rehabilitation. Students, according to Kundu and Mehrhoff, need to be able to identify strategies to reduce attitudinal barriers affecting people with disabilities, as well as to demonstrate an understanding of stereotypical views toward individuals with a disability and the negative effects of these views on rehabilitation outcomes. Prospective RTW counselors should also have a minimum of 100 hours of supervised rehabilitation counseling with at least 40 hours of direct service to people with disabilities. “These experiences increase their awareness and understanding of the differences in values, beliefs and behaviors of individuals who are different from themselves.” Kundu and Mehrhoff wrote.

“With changing demography, emerging disabling conditions, returning veterans, and enhanced longevity due to medical advances, the prevalence of disabilities has increased geometrically,” Kundu said.

In other Commission news, the OttoBock HealthCare Group, which produces mobility products for the disabled, has signed a memorandum of understanding with RI to work on projects aiming at improving availability of Assistive Health Technology (AHT) for disabled persons to actively participate in work. Further adaption of products such as the Michelangelo prosthetic hand, the C-Brace orthotronic mobility system and other orthotics and prosthetics – in alignment with the UN Convention of the Rights of Disabilities (CRDP) – will begin in Asia Pacific this year. Ottobock and RI will jointly promote the importance and relevance of access to assistive health technology for mobility at international conferences and congresses, as well as

support the WHO-GATE initiative on AHT. Each year, a Steering Committee will review the progress of the partnership and advise on ways to keep advancing RTW agenda, as a key part of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Read more about the right of people with disabilities to work in an [OHCHR report](#) and [OttoBock's commitment](#) to disability rights.



RI Participates in the 60th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

The sixtieth session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016.

Priority theme:

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

Review theme:

The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls ([agreed conclusions](#) from the fifty-seventh session)

Every year, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, meets to help shape global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2016, UN Women, one of the main principles of CSW, adopted as priority theme: women's empowerment and the link to

sustainable development. It subsequently has a review theme of the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

While the existing gender equality goals and targets are viable, the work of the CSW60 will focus on engaging all stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society to support governments in moving from “declarations to deliverables”. In other words, the CSW60 aims to help transform the lives of women and girls everywhere by ensuring that as countries proceed with “localization” of the SDGs, all strategies, policies and programmes, constitutions, laws and regulations, funding and institutions are aligned to support realization of the gender equality commitments.

RI HAPPENINGS AT CSW60

Sustainable Development through Women’s Organizations: The Norwegian and Ethiopian Experience: As the Norwegian Women’s Public Health Association celebrates its 120-year anniversary in 2016, join NWPHA advisor and RI President Jans Monsbakken in learning about its partnerships and its future. Monsbakken will moderate a panel, featuring Birikit Terefe director, Women’s Health Association of Ethiopia (WHAE) – the NWPHA’s “sister organization” in Ethiopia – Zenebu Tadesse, Minister of Women and Children Affairs in Ethiopia, Solveig Horne, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Inclusion of Norway and other special guests to learn how NWPHA has contributed to building the Norwegian welfare system and secured women’s rights throughout its past and the ways in which WHAE can be a similar strength in the Ethiopian society. **The City of New York Graduate Center, Room 1, 365 Fifth Ave., 14 March, 12:30 to 14:00.**

OTHER CSW60 DISABILITY EVENTS

CSW60 will also hold several meetings pertaining to the equality of women with disabilities, sponsored by Sisters of Frida and other local empowerment groups. They are:

- ***Advancing the Agenda for 2030 – Empowered Young Women and Men as Partners in Achieving Gender Equality (Youth Forum at CSW60):*** The World YWCA, in partnership with UN Women, will host a two-day Youth Forum prior to the CSW 60, aiming to convene 200 young people from diverse backgrounds and locations to amplify their common concerns and advocacy efforts before CSW officially opens. Sessions take place at the Salvation Army, 221 E 52nd St on 11 March, and United Nations Headquarters on 12 March, 9am to 6pm, Free.
- ***NGO CSW Forum Consultation Day:*** The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY), an advocate for gender equality and the empowerment of women among Member States of the UN, will host a NGO

Consultation Day on 13 March in advance of CSW60. NGO Representatives are brought together to caucus, issue joint statements and provide wording for the Agreed Conclusions of the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The one-day event takes place at the 92nd Street Y, 92nd Street and Lexington Ave., on 13 March from 9am to 3pm. Registration continues until 7 March. The [NGO CSW Handbook 2016](#) has gone mobile – [download](#) the Handbook App from the Apple App Store or the Android Marketplace.

- ***Sustainable Development Goals or Sidelining Disabled Girls?: Making SDGs Stand for All Women and Girls*** hosted by Women Enabled International, Sisters of Frida and Women with Disabilities India Network. This six-speaker panel discussion will address the four SDGs that bear on the rights of women with disabilities – Goal 1 (Poverty), Goal 3 (Health), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and Goal 16 (Peace & Justice) – and the barriers that women with disabilities face in realizing their rights under these goals. 17 March, 2:30pm, CCUN, Boss Room.
- ***“Operationalizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Women and Girls with Disabilities”***: The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the empowerment of all women and girls remains crucial for the achievement of all goals and targets in the new global development framework. Women and girls with disabilities similarly have a critical role to play in the SDGs in order to effectively leave no one behind. UN Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (DSPD/DESA) will hold this multistakeholder discussion to explore priority issues and specific goals for the realization of the SDGs for women and girls with disabilities, as well as discuss how existing mechanisms can be used to strengthen links between gender, disability and sustainable development. UN Headquarters, Conference Room B, 18 March, 11:30 to 12:45.
- ***A Dialogue: Survivors in a Disabling Environment: What Does Empowerment of Disabled Women Mean Globally?*** hosted by Sisters of Frida CIC, National Alliance of Women Organisations (NAWO) and Women Enabled International, 24 March, 12:30pm, CCUN, Chapel.
- ***Blue Print on Sustainable Empowerment of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, Center For Organizational Development***, hosted by Mrs. Nkechi Eneh, Lady Nkiru Celine Okoro, Young Women Christian Association (YMCA) Nigeria, 24 March, 4pm, CCUN, Hardin Room.



RI HAPPENINGS AROUND THE GLOBE

RI Gears up for Abilympics France

The 9th Abilympics will take place in Bordeaux, France from 23-27 March, bringing disabled people from around the world to show off their various skills and competencies, from preparing fine French cuisine to creating projects of modern industrial design. Participants demonstrate their skills and abilities in more than 40 tests in five categories: crafts, services, technology, energy and industry. Created in Japan in 1981 to highlight to international year of disabled people, the Abilympics, is an amalgam from the phrase “Olympics of Abilities”, and aims at promoting vocational abilities of persons with disabilities in order to advance their education and participation in socio-economic activities.

The Abilympics are encouraged and supported by Rehabilitation International, which will send Venus Ilagan to address participants during the week. The second International Abilympics were held in Bogota, Colombia in 1985, where former President of Rehabilitation International, the late Sir Harry Fang, proposed to establish an International Abilympic Federation (IAF) to enable the holding of International Abilympics on a continuing basis. In addition to the International Abilympics, the IAF holds regular world workskill events for people with disabilities, special discussion and lectures aimed at various aspects of the lives of people with disabilities and a rich programme of social and cultural events during the competition. The International Abilympics have been held in Perth, Australia (1995), Prague,

Czech Republic (2000), New Delhi, India (2003), Shizuoka, Japan (2007) and Seoul, South Korea (2011).

EC Meeting in Japan: From 9-10 April, the Rehabilitation International Executive Committee will meet in Tokyo, Japan to discuss issues relative to the future of RI and to finalize plans for the 23rd World Congress in Edinburgh. They will also meet from 22-24 October in Edinburgh, ahead of the World Congress.



Refugees with disabilities are at the highest risk for gender-based violence, according to the Women's Refugee Commission's new report, Mean Streets.

NEWS TO USE

Identifying and Responding to Disability Violence

An increasing majority of refugees live in cities and face risks of gender-based violence as a result of unmet needs and intersecting oppressions based on gender, race, sexual orientation – and disability. This new reality necessitates a monumental shift in humanitarian response, according to the new report, *Mean Streets: Identifying and Responding to Urban Refugees' Risks of Gender-Based Violence*.

Among other findings, the Women's Refugee Commission established that although women and girls are generally more at risk of sexual violence than men and boys, consultations with urban refugees with disabilities and their caregivers suggest that boys and men with intellectual disabilities are specifically targeted for sexual violence. Adult men with disabilities most often reported experiencing emotional violence and the denial of employment as a result of their disability, perpetuating a cycle of emotional violence at home and within their community, due to an inability to fulfill assigned roles as "men".

Furthermore, the Mean Streets report found that the rejection from employment on the basis of disability – combined with the added costs that households of persons with disabilities face due to frequent health visits and transportation needs – creates a ripple effect on the lives of families. These families struggle to find alternative sources of income necessary to survive in a city, and rely on income-generating activities that are often fraught with risks of their own, from putting their children to work to engaging in sex work.

Additionally, people with disabilities in urban communities face:

- Lack of housing: not only on grounds of stigma and discrimination, but also, superstitions around disability;
- Isolation: due to a perception that all locations outside the home pose a risk or a need to be accompanied at all times;
- Loss of Protective Networks and Threat of Institutionalization

For the full report, visit the [Women's Refugee Commission](#).

Mapping and Enabling a Women's Disability Movement

Women and girls with disabilities represent more than 500 million people (the population of the European Union) and they face, on a daily basis, violations to their human rights, such as forced sterilization, sexual abuse, physical abuse and a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services. Despite their numbers and the grave human rights violations they experience, women and girls with disabilities remain invisible at all levels – their needs and concerns not adequately reflected in the advocacy work of the disability community, or the women's rights movement. For these reasons, WEI has just released [Enabling a Global Human Rights Movement for Women and Girls with Disabilities: Global Disabled Women's Rights Advocacy Report](#).

Enabling a Global Human Rights Movement represents the first-ever report and map of its kind; it includes data, analysis and infographics of the leaders, venues, and locations of the most active women's disability rights advocates and organizations, worldwide gaps in resources and opportunities for collaboration. The Report overwhelmingly found that the growing number of disabled women and their organizations working for the rights of women and girls with disabilities is increasingly passionate, energetic and committed to this urgent effort. Furthermore, these women want to work collaboratively, share a desire to enhance their skills and demand their rights unequivocally. For more information about the needs and abilities of this dynamic community, check out [the interactive map](#). The Report also includes a brief herstory of the growing movement of women and girls with disabilities, outlines findings from the survey and suggests 'next steps' for action.



Fans of Lego spotted the new wheelchair figure at the London and Nuremberg Toy Fairs, with photos later shared online by the Bricksfans website.

MORE NEWS TO USE

LEGO Unveils Minifigure in Wheelchair Following #ToyLikeMe Campaign

LEGO has unveiled its first ever minifigure of a wheelchair user, almost a year after a social media campaign began pushing the toy maker to represent people with disabilities. The beanie-wearing minifigure, accompanied by a aid dog, is featured in the Fun in the Park set. Last year, Toy Like Me, a group of parents of children with disabilities advocating for the global toy industry to include disability in the toy box, launched a petition on change.org for LEGO to include minifigures with disabilities. Toy Like Me's founder, Rebecca Atkinson, also posted pictures of toys she had adapted with different disabilities on the internet. "We are beyond happy right now," Atkinson told the Daily Mail. "LEGO have just rocked our brick-built world and made 150 million disabled kids, their mums, dads, pet dogs and hamsters very very happy."

Suitable Wheelchairs for Rougher Terrain

An Indo-US collaboration has developed an all-terrain, lighter weight and more durable wheelchair to suit the mobility conditions in India. Designed at Human

Engineering Research Lab, University of Pittsburgh, and re-modelled by H.S. Chhabra, the Medical Director & Chief of Spine Service of the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC), the wheelchair features a 360-degree joystick controlling system, a battery back-up of up to 15-120 km in one charge and a suspension system with linear links used to make all four wheels operate independently. "Indian wheelchair users have had to face the dual challenge of uneven terrain in rural India along with prohibitive cost which limits the accessibility of the wheelchairs available in the market," Chhabra said in a statement.



MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA) – Youth Contribute their Own Voices to UNFPA Campaign

Estimates suggest that for 220 million young people with disability aged between 15-24 years worldwide, puberty brings not only changes to their bodies, but also more exposure to human rights abuses. In November 2015, the Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA) hosted the "Youth with Disability National Forum" as part of the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) Global Programme to Enhance Reproductive Health Commodity Security to advance the sexual health and rights of young people with disability. Fourteen young people with disability from around Australia attended and participated in the Forum, helping the UNFPA Global Programme to choose its "branding" developed by Family Care International (FCI).

The young participants in the forum raised interesting insights and questions regarding the logos and messages put forth, including sensitivities about further stigmatization and gender binaries or “heteronormative” symbolism. Forum facilitators then turned over paper and marker to the kids so they could create their own designs – for many attending, it was the first time they had ever been asked for their views on issues of concern. They suggested that the UNFPA use images of young people from around the world to reflect the global nature of the program, apply the ACDA banner and name the campaign “We Decide” or “I Decide”. The Forum proved there existed a strong desire from young people with disability to have a voice and opportunities to engage in, inform and contribute to the development of public policy on issues that affect, concern and interest them.

Read more on the [disabled youths participation](#) in the UNFPA Global Programme.



Create a more inclusive world

RI WORLD CONGRESS 2016 | EDINBURGH

RI WORLD CONGRESS

Discounted Rate through April: Held every four years, the Congress offers a unique opportunity to build a stronger international coalition to eradicate socioeconomic barriers, promote independence and facilitate an open dialogue between world leaders to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Book before 30 April 2016 and join senior politicians, leading academics and leaders from organisations such as the ILO, WHO and UN at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre in Scotland for just £405. [Book your accommodation today](#). Read more about the 2016 [RI World Congress](#).



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