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Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide

## May Newsletter: Putting the Disability in SDGs



*At least five of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in motion at the beginning of 2016 deal with disability.*

## Adapting the SDGs into the Work of RI Global: The Annual Executive Committee Meeting

The UN-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) includes Article 25 (Health), Article 26 (Habilitation and Rehabilitation) and Article 27 (Work and Employment) – if countries sign or ratify it, they must abide by their tenets. In most countries, social insurance pays for medical treatment after trauma, and

despite the reputation of bureaucracies, countries regularly request rehabilitation centers to implement human rights as a regular part of their services, especially regarding newly disabled persons.

German Social Accident Insurance has taken a lead in this “human rights approach” to healthcare, with an Action Plan that comprises goals and measures in five action fields: “awareness-raising” that includes the paradigm-shift from the medical model to the psycho-social paradigm of health care; “Participation” to allow persons with disabilities and their relatives to bring in their own expertise; and “barrier-free” surroundings, which means not only ramps or electric doors, but also mechanisms for deaf and blind persons.

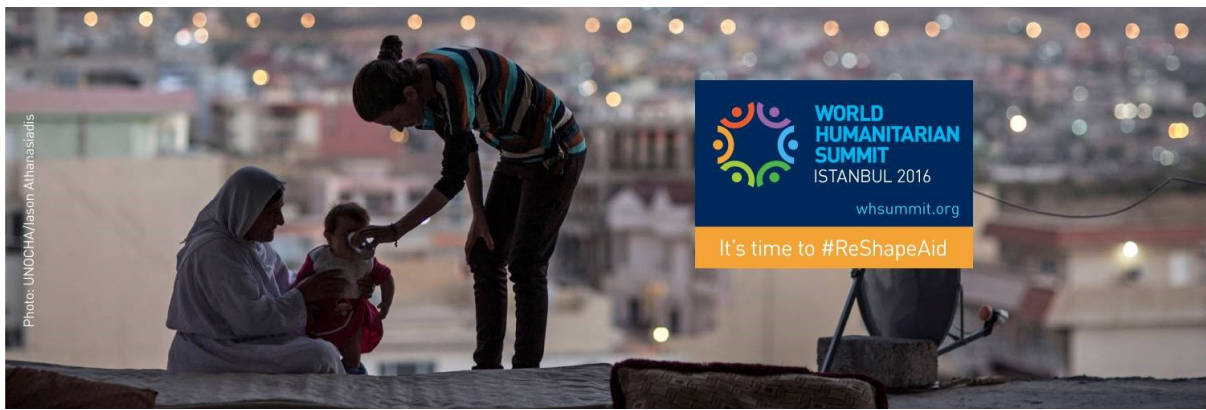
“Sustainability in the all-day working life of accident insurers and trauma facilities is the main reason of the second Action Plan,” said Friedrich Mehrhoff, Director of Rehabilitation Strategies, with DGUV, during a presentation at the annual Rehabilitation International Executive Committee meeting. “One of the new measures alone solves ten percent of the research budget for projects focused on participation in medical treatment.”

Mehrhoft was just one of the key experts presenting in one of the most cutting-edge questions for the SDGs at the annual meeting in Tokyo, which brought together all of the principals behind RI Global to set the agenda for the coming months and to finalize plans for the 23rd World Congress in Edinburgh in October. Attendees also received a preview of the presentations slated for the Congress, including in the areas of Disaster Inclusiveness, Work & Employment and Habilitation.

RI Global attendees also set in motion the agenda for the rest of the year, which includes the Conference of the States Parties (COSP) at the UN in mid-June, in which elections will be held for nine members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Paralympics in Rio, Brazil and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in September, which will have a focus on persons with disabilities.

“Lots of progress has already been made on our issues this year, and there is room for much more,” said RI Global Secretary-General Venus Ilagan. “With many new initiatives this year, including a redesigned website, Rehabilitation International is poised for greatness. I think all Executive Committee members agree.”

Read more about the meeting updates and the World Congress on the newly redesigned [RI Global website](#), which is part of the organization's efforts to better connect the Secretariat with its hundreds of members around the globe.



## RI Global at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, 23-24 May

Global wars, natural disasters and epidemics are testing the resilience of communities and national institutions and stretching the ability of regional and international organizations to support them. Peacekeepers, peacemakers and humanitarian workers are being deployed for longer periods and at ever-higher cost. At the same time, the international aid system has not kept pace with the challenges and the diverse range of organizations demand a more unified approach that draws upon the capacities and resources of all stakeholders to reach those in need. These external and internal difficulties have called for a process of fundamental change to reaffirm our commitment to humanity: the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul, Turkey on 23-24 May. The first Summit of its kind, is an opportunity for “we the peoples” — Heads of State and Government, representatives of affected communities, national and international aid organizations, global opinion leaders and private sector leaders— to agree that they can and must do better to end conflict, alleviate suffering and reduce risk and vulnerability.

Rehabilitation International will send Mr. Khaled Al-Mohtar to discuss key priorities and issues in relation to the “transition from conflict to reconstruction” in Session I, which consists of sharing experiences and lessons learned from humanitarian actors in the advancement of disability-inclusive humanitarian actions. The Special Session will also serve as a forum to launch a Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, which is designed to galvanize political commitment to act and will be complemented by an action plan outlining key steps needed to achieve change.

<https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org>

Other disability-related panels include:

### **Natural Disasters and Climate Change – Managing Risks and Crises**

**Differently:** The objective of the High-Level Leaders’ Roundtable on “Managing Risks and Crises Differently” is to build on global agreements in 2015 to commit to a more collective approach to managing risks, and increasing investments in

preparedness, reinforcing national and local systems, and agreeing clear responsibilities, triggers and guaranteed finance for early action.

**People-Centred Humanitarian Action:** This Special Session will invite commitments from stakeholders which ensure that affected people know what they can expect from aid providers and are able to express their views and concerns. The commitments should also ensure that humanitarian responders, including member states and donor countries, listen and respond to the feedback and perceptions of affected people.

# Better health for people with disabilities

**1** Over **BILLION** people globally experience disability



**1** in **7** people

**People with disabilities have the same health care needs as others**

But they are:

**2x**

more likely to find **inadequate** health care providers' skills and facilities

**3x**

more likely to be **denied** health care

**4x**

more likely to be treated **badly** in the health care system



## RI HAPPENINGS AROUND THE GLOBE

### Conference of States Parties to the CRPD

Urbanization is one of the most significant global trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with 60 per cent of the world's population predicted to be living in cities by 2030 in both developed and developing countries. For an estimated one billion persons with disabilities across the world, however, ill planned towns and cities that lack accessibility present a combination of physical, environmental, technical and social barriers and can have particularly devastating consequences for persons with disabilities, including obstacles to inclusion, participation and inequality. Disability and urbanization factor heavily into the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) announced last September and therefore, the 9th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the CRPD whose theme is "Implementing the 2030 development agenda for all persons with disabilities: Leaving no one behind".

“The SDGs have proven that Rehabilitation International’s messages on the inclusion of people with disabilities were heard,” said Jan Monsbakken, RI Global’s President. “Funding bodies and authorities in many countries must, for the first time, pay attention to disability issues. And we have a wonderful tool in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities to build development programs together so that people with disabilities can have a full life wherever they live.”

**Goal 11** of the SDGs especially deals with urbanizations and disability, as it calls upon Member States to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations. In addition, the proposal calls for providing universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for persons with disabilities.

“RI Global is looking forward to a good discussion among sister organizations at the COSP, and new initiatives, including a remedy to lack of data and information on disability and the situation of persons with disabilities at the national level, which has contributed to the invisibility of persons with disabilities,” Monsbakken said.

### **CRPD Committee elections**

In accordance with article 34, paragraph 7, the term of nine of the members elected will expire on 31 December 2016. At this year’s COSP, the elections for nine members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will take place to replace those whose terms are due to expire in December 2016. See more on the [COSP website](#).

### **WHO Sixty-Ninth World Health Assembly**

The World Health Organization has estimated that more than a billion people live with some form of disability, corresponding to about 15 percent of the world’s population. Moreover, the rates of disability have been increasing due to ageing populations, an increase in chronic health conditions and the global state of conflict. People with disabilities remain vulnerable to deficiencies in health care services, although they often experience greater vulnerability to secondary conditions, co-morbid conditions and engaging in health risk behaviors.

Every year, NGOs, governments and other stakeholders have the opportunity to address their particular public health concern at the WHO World Health Assembly (WHA), the decision-making body of WHO to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General and review and approve the proposed programme budget. RI Global’s President, Jans Monsbakken, is headed to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva, Switzerland from 22-28 May. Among other issues, the WHA will take up the health-related Sustainable Development



Goals (SDGs), which follow on from the unfinished agenda of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The meeting will also acknowledge and strategize about the breadth of the new Agenda: it does not only see health as a goal in itself; it views health and its determinants as influencing, and being influenced by, other goals and targets as an integral part of sustainable development. "Disability is something that is essential to the agenda of every public health agenda in every nation around the world," Monsbakken said. "The SDGs are all interlinked; the SDGs surrounding health are all linked in preventing or treating many disabilities due to preventable diseases or man-made causes."

The agenda for the WHA and other important documents are available [online](#), with updates on the redesigned RI Global [website](#).

## **UN ECOSOC: High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which takes place from 11-20 July is United Nations' central platform for the follow-up and review of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals](#). The Forum, which adopts a Ministerial Declaration (Ministerial Days 18-20 July), is expected to start effectively delivering on its mandates to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on the 2030 Agenda's implementation and follow-up; keep track of progress; spur coherent policies informed by evidence, science and country experiences; as well as address new and emerging issues.

### **What will happen at HLPF?**

HLPF in 2016 is the first since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The session will include voluntary reviews of 22 countries and thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, supported by reviews by the ECOSOC functional commissions and other inter-governmental bodies and forums.

HLPF will also include a range of side events and a Partnership Exchange event, allowing multi-stakeholder partnerships to showcase their work and network.

### **How can major groups and stakeholders participate?**

HLPF is the most inclusive and participatory forum at the United Nations, bringing all States Members of the United Nations and States members of specialized agencies together. All people can participate in HLPF through the [major groups and other stakeholders](#) format. All stakeholders are also invited to organize [side events](#), and [register multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments](#) in support of the SDGs. Click on the [link](#) for more information



*For the first time in their centuries-old history, people in wheelchairs can now ride gondolas in Venice thanks to an association of drivers called Gondolas4All.*

## NEWS TO USE

### Wheelchair Skills Video Series Teaches New Moves

The Northwest Regional Spinal Cord Injury System has developed a series of videos to help disabled people learn proper techniques for performing manual wheelchair skills and managing different kinds of terrain. The videos include how to do a wheelie, turn in tight spaces, and cross obstacles. If you are a clinician prescribing wheelchairs or a wheelchair user looking to update your wheelchair skills, check out the skills program [website](#). The videos stem from full-day practical workshops that have been held annually (usually in mid-October) in Halifax since 2004. Additionally, Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia puts on a variety of practical workshops each year, ranging from two hours to five days in duration in various locations each year. For further information about dates and locations, please contact [wsp@dal.ca](mailto:wsp@dal.ca).

### Gondolas in Venice Become Accessible for All

The gondolas in Venice are almost as emblematic of the city as the canals they float on, but thanks to a new private-public project, the traditional form of transportation just received a state-of-the-art upgrade: wheelchair accessibility.

[Gondolas4All](#) unveiled its first wheelchair-friendly access point on March 11, where a crowd gathered to watch several [wheelchair-bound](#) people take a spin in an authentic boat. The organization also created a special jetty that uses an automatic

lift to make getting in to the unstable gondola easier. Over the next few weeks, gondoliers will be trained in operating the lift, and visitors can book a ride for the average ticket price on the [website](#). “Too many times in the course of our 20 years of service, we have seen people in wheelchairs dozens of times looking at us as if we were the last Coca Cola in the desert,” said gondolier, Alexander, one of the Founders of Gondolas4All, who started a crowdfunding page to raise funds for the cause. “It tugged at my heart. Because of this, we wanted to guarantee everyone an equal chance.”



*Disability-specific fitness trackers could become something for everyone, not just elite, competitive athletes.*

## MORE NEWS TO USE

### Fitness Tracker for People with Disabilities in Development

While no study conclusively proves that fitness trackers are the most effective means of monitoring activity, Wake Forest University research has shown that older Americans who used trackers in combo with diet and exercise [lost more weight](#) than those who relied on diet and exercise alone. But trackers and scales are generally built for the ambulatory. University of Pittsburgh’s rehabilitation scientist Dan Ding has devised, however, algorithms that track activity and calorie expenditure for the mobility-impaired and wheelchair-bound that may soon translate into a more accurate FitBit for the disabled.



Fitness tracking could be a game changer for Americans with disabilities, a group that's nearly [twice as likely to be obese as the general population](#). But simply adding extra algorithms to activity trackers already on the consumer market isn't very possible, says Ding, and he is working on a fitness-tracking armband that could give wheelchair users information through a smartphone app. Until the perfect fitness tracker hits the market, here are some ideas for retrofitting an [average one](#).

## New UN Enable Web Resource Tracks Disability and Migration

Although the international normative framework has broadly recognized the importance of addressing the needs of persons with disabilities in the fields of human rights and development, it has historically overlooked the subgroups within the disabled people in the context of migration, including migrant workers with disabilities and refugees with disabilities. But a new [web resource](#) draws attention to the status on migrants with disabilities and highlights the invisibility of migrants with disabilities in the international normative framework.

Also on 19 September 2016, the UN General Assembly will also host a High-level Meeting at UN Headquarters to address large movements of refugees and migrants, with the aim of bringing countries together behind a more humane and coordinated approach. In consideration of limited time and the importance of civil society engagement on these issues, the Office of the President of the General Assembly (OPGA) has requested UN-NGLS and UN DESA to launch an open call for applications for a civil society Steering Committee. To learn more and apply for the civil society Steering Committee for this event, please visit the [application page](#).



*Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spends some time with blind children after inaugurating the construction of the third floor of Blind Education and Rehabilitation Development Organisation (BERDO) of Mirpur.*

## MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

### BERDO: Helping Blind Children in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a poor and overcrowded country where approximately 8-10 percent of the population is disabled. An estimated 8.5 million people are physically disabled, while almost two million are visually impaired or blind, including 50,000 children. Lacking access to education, employment and medical facilities, disabled people are dependent upon their families and are considered a burden on society by their communities. To address the harassment and humiliation that people face, BERDO works to empower the disabled community and uplift its members towards full participation in society.

BERDO has found that if children receive education, a meaningful life awaits, but few communities provide schooling support. To solve the problem BERDO has set up two centers in Dhaka and Madaripur with one school and a hostel in each location. Support includes lodging, food, medical checkups, counseling support, education, as well as sports and cultural activities – a complete care house. Just this past year, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the construction of a BERDO expansion. BERDO, in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, also developed the CBR program to provide income generating activities to persons with disabilities while raising disability awareness by sending disabled people to do jobs in the community.

More than 100 children attend the centers and BERDO Executive Director Saidul Huq Saidul Huq, plans to keep them there. Huq lost his eyesight at the age of six. A doctor from Switzerland, who was visiting Bangladesh on an assignment, told him that he would never see again and that he should concentrate on his studies to use his misfortune as an opportunity to serve his community. Since a young age, Huq has been steadfast in his pursuit of equal rights for the disabled in Bangladesh.

“Our main task is to make sure blind people are not seen as a burden on society; the biggest problem they face is the negative social stigma of being blind,” Huq said in a recent interview. “But as anyone who sees our ‘talking library’ and the recording studio where talking books can be created and the hundreds of books that have been created by student volunteers from different educational institutions, they will know differently.”

To keep the blind children in school and in good health BERDO has started a fundraising campaign on through Global Giving. With 9,000 USD left to raise from a 20,000 USD push, Global Giving must reach at least 40 donors or donations of 50 USD from 1st June to 30th June. By contributing as little as \$10, donors also bring BERDO one step closer to a permanent spot on the Global Giving website. Donations of 25 to 100 USD, are matched to 20 percent by Global Giving. To donate to BERDO, click on the [link](#). For more information about BERDO, visit the [website](#).



*The Heidi Latsky Dance Company is seeking participants for a living sculpture to celebrate the International Day for Persons with Disabilities.*

## AWARDS/NOMINATIONS/CONFERENCES

### Heidi Latsky Dance IDPD Call to Action for "On Display"

To commemorate the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) Heidi Latsky Dance (HLD) has created an artful representation of a living sculpture court called *On Display* to celebrate diversity and engender a spirit of action for equality. For IDPD on 3 December 2016, HLD is seeking Ambassadors – groups, individuals, and organizations –to coordinate installations of *On Display* in their cities. An Ambassador would need to organize: a cast of physically diverse people that must include people with physical disabilities; an accessible and public space to set the installation; a director (from theatre or dance) who can ensure the installation maintains the artistic values of HLD; two installations of *On Display* – one before October 2016 that can be filmed and sent to HLD to be part of the Global webpage and one on December 3rd to celebrate the day alongside the worldwide network of partners. All are welcome to join in this initiative. For more information, click on the [website](#), or to submit an application to become an Ambassador for this movement, click on the *On Display* [application](#).

### The Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize, Nominations Extended

Awarded annually by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in

partnership with the Václav Havel Library (Prague) and the Charta 77 Foundation (Prague) for outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond, the prize consists of 60 000€, a trophy and a diploma. This Prize is open for nomination of any individual, non-governmental organisation or institution working to defend human rights. The Prize is awarded in memory of Václav Havel, playwright, opponent of totalitarianism, architect of the velvet revolution of 1989, President of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic and an enduring symbol of opposition to despotism. The 2016 Award Ceremony will take place in Strasbourg on 10 October 2016. The deadline for nominations for the 2016 edition of the Prize has been extended to **30 June at midnight**. Prize regulations and the nomination form can be found on the Assembly's [website](#).

### **Conference: Disability and Global Health -- Innovative practices and human resources for equitable enablement**

According to WHO/World Bank's World Report on Disability (2011), approximately 15 percent of the world's population, or 1 billion people, live with a disability. It is also estimated that 90-150 million are children, most living in low- and middle-income countries; about 110-190 million are adults. Successful re/habilitation can lead to increased independence and participation in education, employment and society. Indirectly, enablement/re-ablement alleviates care responsibilities for families and reduces pressure on health systems. Not the least, appropriate services respond to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006). The Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at Bergen University College, Norway, in collaboration with Duke University, U.S., invite researchers and practitioners within the field of disability and health to attend the [Disability and Global Health Conference](#) to learn and collaborate on successful re/habilitation, increased independence and how both can lead to participation in education, employment and society. They will also examine how, indirectly, enablement/re-ablement alleviates care responsibilities for families and reduces pressure on health systems.



## **Create a more inclusive world**

### **RI WORLD CONGRESS 2016 | EDINBURGH**

## **RI WORLD CONGRESS**

### **Discounted Rate through 30 June, Call for Applications**

On 27 April, RI Global Secretary-General Venus Ilagan sent the following note regarding the World Congress:



“The 23rd World Congress of Rehabilitation International is scheduled for 25-27 October 2016 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Through the generosity of RI members and supporters, the RI President and President Elect and other members of the Executive Committee, have established a small fund that would support participation of RI members from low-income countries. Please share this information with your members who may qualify for assistance to participate in our 23rd World Congress. When you have decided on the participants from your countries/organizations, kindly contact the Secretariat. As it may take time to process visas, I encourage you to register early for invitation letters to be sent to you by the Congress Organizers. Where applicable, please note that you will need invitation letters from Shaw Trust to be able to apply for entry visas to the UK.”

Celebrating the theme “Create a more inclusive world”, RI Global has put together a complete training and information program for hotels, restaurants, taxi drivers, police and even border guards in order to make this a truly barrier free and enjoyable experience. Book before 30 June 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. Read more about the 2016 [RI World Congress](#).



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