



Dear

The Community Based Rehabilitation Global Network (CGN) and Indian Forum on Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology (IFRA) request your support to secure the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities living in your country and in the Global South.

On May 24, 2021, Ministers of Health from around the world will gather virtually for the 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) to discuss and adopt a resolution entitled, "The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities." That resolution is currently undergoing a drafting process.

CGN and IFRA are advocating to include the two following items in the final draft of the resolution:

- 1) Poverty is recognised as a barrier to Persons with disabilities, especially in the Global South; and member states take proactive measures to ensure that health care, including habilitation and rehabilitation services, reaches persons with disabilities living in poverty, with sufficient investment of human and financial resources and
- 2) Community based/home based habilitation and rehabilitation services (CBR) are integrated into primary health care centres and have a central emphasis as a key strategy.

Our networks of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from the Global South have been working at the grassroots and policy levels for many years to promote access to health, habilitation and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. We have been proactively monitoring this international development to ensure the voices of Persons with disabilities are heard and their recommendations included.

According to the World Report on Disability (2011), about 80% of persons with disabilities live in the Global South, so their participation is crucial in the development of any policy that relates to them. The majority of Persons with disabilities in middle and low-income countries do not have access to habilitation and rehabilitation services. One key reason is most public hospitals and health centres simply do not offer these services. It is mostly CSOs and the private sector who provide habilitation and rehabilitation services, and they are few in number, especially at the community level. In any case, the cost of private sector services can be so exorbitant most people who need them, can't afford them.

CGN/IFRA have been successful in recommending changes to the first draft of the resolution and the outcome is the addition of wording in the current draft : "Non-discrimination, access to rehabilitation, affordability of the health system, inclusion of rehabilitation in social services, and universal health coverage".

More changes, however, are needed before the final draft is presented at the WHA meeting in May. We need to ensure that two key points as stated above are included in the final draft of this resolution..

What can you do to help?

The following are some actions that OPDs/DPOs and CSOs can take to strengthen our campaign and enable persons with disabilities in the Global South to access the highest standard of health care, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the SDGs

- Read WHA Draft Resolution https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB148/B148_CONF8-en.pdf and share your feedback with us.
- Research the statistics, and situations, related to persons with disability, available in your country i.e. numbers of persons with disability, types, services provided/required, national budget allocated to services for persons with disabilities
- Collect the first-hand experiences of persons with disabilities about accessing health care, as well as habilitation and rehabilitation services, to demonstrate the need for their inclusion in the resolution. Share these stories with your Government, among persons with disabilities and the media.
- Build and maintain a working relationship with officials of the following ministries: Health, External/Foreign Affairs and Social Justice/ Social Security/Welfare. Encourage them to express their support for the inclusion of the two key points in the final version of the resolution.
- Write to the Prime Minister or President or Minister of Health of your country, to urge Ministries to co-ordinate and to express their support to the WHO for the inclusion of the two key points in the final draft.
- Build and maintain a working relationship with your country's Permanent Mission to the UN and encourage them to support the inclusion of the two key points in the final draft. Encourage them to express their support to the WHO for the inclusion of the two key points in the final version of the resolution. A list of the Permanent Missions can be found on the UN website or on Wikipedia.
- Share information and persuade other OPDs/CSOs/interested groups to join this advocacy effort.
- Engage with mass media and use your social media platforms to promote and raise awareness about the campaign and the need for action to change the living conditions of persons with disabilities.
- Engage in other activities in support of this advocacy effort - write letters, e-mails, or create awareness through videos to encourage your government and other stakeholders to take concrete steps to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in our societies — Persons with disabilities.

What should your Minister of Health/Prime Minister/President need to do:

- ✓ Write an email/letter to the WHO Regional Office recommending to include in the WHA Resolution on highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities the following: :

1) Poverty is recognised as a barrier to Persons with disabilities, especially in the Global South; and member states take proactive measures to ensure that health care, including habilitation and rehabilitation services, reach persons with disabilities living in poverty, with sufficient investment of human and financial resources and

- 2) Community based/home based habilitation and rehabilitation services (CBR) are integrated into primary health care centres and have a central emphasis as a key strategy.
- ✓ Send the copy of this email/letter to the Director General of WHO, Geneva and to the Permanent Mission of your country.

Thank you for considering our request for support. We hope you will join hands with CGN/IFRA to strengthen our campaign with and on behalf of persons with disabilities. You can contact us regarding your interest, or with any questions or comments, through Balakrishna Venkatesh, worldhealthassembly2021@gmail.com .

Balakrishna Venkatesh

Honorary President of CGN and Honorary Convener of IFRA