



## Headlines

A newsletter of  
Rehabilitation  
International

Volume 3

December 2005

### Bahrain Hosts RI Assembly and Regional Conference

Over 80 representatives of RI member organizations gathered in Bahrain from November 12-16 to participate in this year's Governing Assembly and Arab Regional Conference. Some of the key benefits of the meetings were the opportunity to exchange information and develop and maintain partnerships for the benefit of persons with disabilities in the Arab region and around the world.

Among its many decisions, the Assembly approved 29 new members from 23 countries, expanding RI's membership to 8 new countries. The Assembly also elected a new Vice President for the Asia-Pacific Region, a new Chair for the Leisure, Recreation

and Physical Activities Commission and members of the Nominating Committee (which will have the important task of seeking candidates for the next RI President, to be elected in 2006, to serve from 2008).

Commission chairs shared the developments in their fields of expertise, including a paper on the ICF jointly prepared by the Social, Policy and Services and Health and Function Commissions. Regional Vice Presidents and Deputy Vice Presidents informed the Assembly about progress in their respective regions, including a presentation by Donal McAnaney on a study entitled "Rehabilitation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" prepared by RI-



Closing session of the RI Governing Assembly in Bahrain (November 12-13, 2005).

Europe (for an electronic copy, email: [RI\\_Ireland@rehab.ie](mailto:RI_Ireland@rehab.ie))

A highlight of the Assembly were workshops on how RI Global and its members can promote the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, as well as how to steer RI's future goals and structure to have the most impact in the disability field.

The next Governing Assembly will take place from August 19-21, 2006—

#### Inside this issue:

<i>EC Committee Guides Strategy</i>	3
<i>Workshop for Women in Arab region</i>	3
<i>RI members at WSIS</i>	4
<i>In Recognition</i>	4
<i>Commitment to UN Convention</i>	5
<i>IDA Update</i>	5
<i>KSRPD Youth Initiative</i>	6
<i>International Day for Disabled Persons</i>	6
<i>RI Global Projects</i>	7
<i>Meetings in Addis Ababa</i>	7

## Bahrain Assembly and Regional Conference

(continued from page 1)

in conjunction with the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Committee meeting in New York—and will include a one-day seminar on monitoring and implementation of the UN Convention.

The RI Arab Regional Conference attracted more than 600 advocates, policy makers and practitioners from the region and around the world to discuss a range of disability issues including disability rights, work and employment, education, technology and accessibility, women with disabilities, health and the role of the media. Among the many distinguished speakers were

Ambassador Luis Gallegos, former Chair of the UN Ad Hoc Committee for the Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities; UN Special Rapporteur on Disability Sheika Hessa Al-Thani; Barbara Murray from the International Labor Organization (ILO); Federico Montero from the World Health Organization (WHO); and scholars and practitioners from the region and beyond.

Participants also engaged in in-depth seminars and workshops, and had the opportunity to visit rehabilitation centers as well as historic sites in Bahrain. At the close of the

meeting, RI Vice President for the Arab Region Khaled El Mohtar presented some recommendations on how to build on these discussions.

The Conference contributed to a greater awareness of disability rights in Bahrain and the Gulf region and generated many fruitful partnerships and possible projects. RI Global would like to thank the Kingdom of Bahrain for their warm hospitality, and all members of the Organizing Committee for their hard work and commitment. The next RI Review will feature some of the presentations from the Regional Conference.



(l-r, clockwise from top left) RI President Michael Fox with new Vice President for the Asia-Pacific region **Il-Young Lee (Korea)**; Chair of ICTA **Betty Dion**, Michael Fox, new Chair of the Leisure, Recreation and Physical Activities Commission **Clermont Simard (Canada)**, and Max Beck, Deputy Vice President for North America; and RI members participating in workshops. Also elected were Nominating Committee members: **Jan Ingvar Lindstrom (Sweden)**, **Munira Al-Mutawa (Kuwait)**, **Ilene Zeitzer (USA)**, **Johan Viljoen (South Africa)** and **Philip Yuen (Hong Kong SAR)**.

## Executive Committee Guides RI Strategy

Prior to the Assembly and Regional Conference, the Executive Committee (EC) met to further develop RI's goals and priorities and identify key challenges for 2005-2008. Among other important issues, the EC discussed funding matters and how to maintain an effective financial structure with greater flexibility for members to pursue a common agenda. The EC also talked about the



*Dr. Fatima Bint Mohammed Al Balooshi, Minister for Social Development of the Kingdom of Bahrain, welcomed EC members to her country and encouraged RI to develop a strong partnership with the Arab region.*

structure and operation of RI Commissions, with the aim of ensuring a more effective relationship between regions and

commissions and greater support through funding and projects. In addition, the EC exchanged views on how to create a more fair and equitable dues and voting rights system. Another key issue was how to increase and sustain membership, in order to strengthen

RI's global network.

The next EC meeting will be held from March 9-11, 2006 in Vienna, Austria.

## First Ever Forum for Women with Disabilities in the Arab Region

One of the highlights of the week in Bahrain was the first ever Workshop for Women with Disabilities in the Arab region, with the participation of women from all 14 RI member countries in the region. This event – organized by RI in partnership with the UN Special Rapporteur for Disabilities Sheika Hessa Al-Thani and with support from the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) – provided a forum for women to have frank discussions about the challenges they face in their societies. Participants identified two issues of particular importance: the lack of general awareness of women's rights



*Rajaa Ahmed Al Masaabi, RI National Secretary for Yemen, presented the outcomes of the Workshop for Women with Disabilities in the Arab region to the Governing Assembly in Bahrain.*

and leadership training for women; and the need to strengthen opportunities in education and employment for women with disabilities.

The Workshop not only brought together women from within the region, but

provided all participants in the Regional Conference with a glimpse into the challenges facing women with disabilities, particularly the segregation and isolation of those living in traditional societies. For example, women with disabilities are not considered marriageable in some societies and their non-disabled siblings are also overlooked in marriage by reasons of association.

RI is exploring ways to follow up with the recommendations from the workshop and expand on the dialogues to include women with disabilities from other regions. A detailed report with recommendations will be available in January.

## Happy New Year from RI



(l-r) RI Secretariat staff Shantha Rau, Tomas Lagerwall, Blanca Cedeno and Leonor Coello .

The Secretariat of RI Global wishes all members and partner organizations a safe and happy holiday season and a healthy and happy new year!

In 2006, RI Global looks forward to working with you in our common mission to promote the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly in advancing the UN Convention.

## RI Members Active in World Summit on Information Society

Members of the RI's ICTA Commission (International Commission on Technology and Accessibility) were actively involved in the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunisia from 16-18 November 2005. The event was very well attended, with over 25,000 people descending on Tunis for the conference. At the close of the Summit, participants adopted the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

The Global Forum on Disability, a two-day event organized by Hiroshi Kawamura, provided an opportunity for fruitful exchange of ideas and presentations on how people with disabilities are using and can benefit from the use of information technologies. On the opening day, Catherine Roy, a member of ICTA – North America, presented a paper on

an e-collaboration initiative in Quebec to build the capacity of people with disabilities. Betty Dion, the Chair of ICTA Global, took part in the closing plenary on opportunities for further action, as well as in a presentation with UNESCO. Participants drafted a declaration for presentation at the plenary session.

The exhibit area was extremely busy and had information on the accessibility of the information society for persons with disabilities, with booths from many countries as far away as South Africa to Sweden. Others provided information on their inclusive technologies and programs to address poverty reduction utilizing information technologies.

A follow-up meeting is anticipated in Athens in the next six months, to continue the conversations about internet governance.

## In Recognition

RI congratulates **Dr. Sabri Rbeihat** for his recent appointment as Minister of Political Development and Parliamentary Affairs of the Kingdom of Jordan. Dr. Rbeihat has been dedicated to promoting the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities as the Advisor to the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability for the past two years, and we look forward to his continued commitment in his new capacity.

RI would also like to congratulate **Kicki Nordstrom**, past President of the World Blind Union, who recently received the Award for Human Rights Achievement by the Swedish Association of the United Nations, for her longstanding and important contributions to the disability rights movement.

Information on the Summit and the Global Forum on Disability are online.

In English:

<http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/prompt/wsisindex.html>

In Japanese:

<http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/japanese/prompt/wsisindex.html>

For information on the follow up to the WSIS, visit:

[www.ictaglobal.org](http://www.ictaglobal.org) or contact Betty Dion, Chair of ICTA Global at [icta@bdel.ca](mailto:icta@bdel.ca)

## RI Maintains Commitment to the UN Convention

RI is preparing to participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Ad Hoc Committee (AHC), which will take place at UN Headquarters in New York from January 16-February 3, 2006.

RI looks forward to continuing its role in fostering the participation of people with disabilities, NGOs and governments in this important process.

Thanks to the generous support of the Mexican government and others, RI is again undertaking the task of producing Daily Summaries for the 7<sup>th</sup> AHC Session. These daily summaries will be posted on the RI website as well as on the UN Enable website.

In addition, RI will be involved in four side events during the 7<sup>th</sup> session:

- Raising the Voices of Children and Young People

with Disabilities, in partnership with Save the Children

- The Link between HIV/AIDS, Poverty and Disability
- Options for Monitoring of the UN Convention
- Implementation of the UN Convention

The 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Committee will be held at the UN headquarters in New York from August 7-18, 2006.

RI encourages members to participate in these next two sessions, as these will be valuable opportunities to provide input into the negotiations of the UN Convention.

Interested members who do not have consultative status with the UN may contact RI to facilitate participation.



*NGO participants in the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Ad Hoc Committee (August 2005).*

**Documents for the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the AHC can be found at:**

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc7.htm>

## IDA Update

The International Disability Alliance is composed of the following eight international organizations of and for people with disabilities: Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, World Blind Union, Disabled Peoples' International, Rehabilitation International, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the Deafblind, World Network

of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry—representing millions of people with disabilities worldwide.

Tina Minkowitz (USA) from World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (WNUSP) will complete her term as IDA chair in May 2006 and Gidion Mandesi (Tanzania) from RI will serve as IDA Chair from June 2006 to May 2007.

IDA has obtained support from the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) for projects promoting disability rights in developing countries for a three-year period beginning in 2006.

The next IDA meeting will be held on January 21-22, 2006 in New York, in conjunction with the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Ad Hoc Committee.

## Korea Initiates Innovative Approach to Empower Young Adults with Disabilities

In order to empower and nurture the next generation of global leaders, Sang Chul Lee, President of the Korean Society for Rehabilitation of the Persons with Disabilities (KSRPD), supported by Shinhan Financial Group and the Community Chest of Korea, organized an international study program for young adults with disabilities – the first initiative of its kind in the disability field.

This year, KSRPD selected 25 young persons with disabilities – through a very competitive process – and assigned them to six different groups to work with other RI members and experts. Each

group was made up of five young persons with disabilities and five social welfare specialists and professionals. The groups then successfully completed a seven-day study trip, exploring specific themes in different countries:

- Canada: Employment of persons with severe disabilities
- Chile: New areas of rehabilitation; art and culture
- Tanzania and Kenya: Focus on HIV/AIDS and poverty
- United Kingdom: Rehabilitation and disability in assistive technology
- Australia: Access to buildings and technology
- Thailand: Persons with disabilities and human rights

In developing and implementing the project, RI Korea was fortunate to secure more than US \$250,000 in funding from a leading Korean Bank (Shinhan Financial Group). In addition, the Korean Broadcasting System reported on the international study program from its preparation to completion.

In 2006, KSRPD plans to continue and improve this Global Challenges for Young Adults with Disabilities Program. RI members interested in inviting the 2nd Dream Team should contact KSRPD (by phone: +82-2-2636-3414, fax: +82-2-2636-3422, or e-mail: rikorea@empal.com)

## Disability Advocates Commemorate International Day for Persons with Disabilities

In commemoration of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, RI attended a panel organized by UN DESA on December 2, under the theme “Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Action in Development”. The speakers – including Dr. Bill Albert from UK Development Agency and Ms. Linda Mastandrea from the International Paralympic Committee – discussed the interdependence between human rights, development and disability. The event also included messages from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan;

Ambassador Don MacKay, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee; and RI Secretary General Tomas Lagerwall on behalf of the International Disability Alliance.

On December 3, Harvard Law School organized a seminar entitled “Towards Effective Monitoring of a UN Treaty on Human Rights and Disability – A Global Challenge”, at which participants discussed disability from a human rights perspective and the role of National Human Rights Institutions. The morning session addressed issues

such as the importance of a UN Convention on disability rights as well as the need for an effective and comprehensive monitoring mechanism, with information provided on the treaty reform process. In the afternoon session, National Human Rights Institutions—including from Canada, Denmark, France, India, Ireland and Sweden—discussed national and international monitoring and possible mechanisms for future cooperation. For more information on this meeting, contact Michael Stein at: [mistein@law.harvard.edu](mailto:mistein@law.harvard.edu).

## RI Continues Global Projects

### AIDS and Human Rights in Africa

In partnership with RI member DOLASED in Tanzania, RI Global has begun the second phase of a project to raise the voice of people with disabilities in Africa. This project focuses on the development of educational materials and training on the issue of HIV/AIDS for youth with disabilities. The project will be conducted in Tanzania and Mozambique with the hope of creating a training manual which can be replicated for other countries in Africa. This program has been made possible thanks to the generous contribution of the Swedish International Development Association (Sida). For more information, email: [shantha@riglobal.org](mailto:shantha@riglobal.org)

### Study on Assistive Technology in Latin America

The first phase of this project entitled "Intergenerational Enterprises for Production of Assistive Technology for the Elderly & People with Disabilities in Latin America" will be completed in December 2005, with market studies from Bolivia, Honduras, Pa-



*Consultants in the Latin American Study on Assistive Technology met with the Dean Berta T. de Arosemena and researchers at UDELAS University in Panama (October 2005).*

nama and Peru. The project is funded by the Swedish government through the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and with RI member the Swedish Handicap Institute as the main contractor. For information, email: [barbro.richter@hi.se](mailto:barbro.richter@hi.se) or [sg@riglobal.org](mailto:sg@riglobal.org)

### Employment for Latinos in the US

For the past four years, RI has been assisting with developing and contributing news articles to the website and information base for *Proyecto Vision*, a national technical assistance center for U.S. Latinos with disabilities. The sponsor of this project is the US Department of Education. The latest issue of the newsletter is available online in Spanish and English at: <http://www.proyectovision.net/index.html>

## Addis Ababa Hosts Disability Meetings

Three international meetings focused on disability in Africa were held in September in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the African regional headquarters for most UN agencies. The meetings included a three-day consultation organized by the Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD), a two-day conference of the partners of the African Decade of Disabled Persons and a three-day technical consultation of the International Labor Organization, focusing on the impact of disability legislation on employment for disabled persons in eight African countries.

The GPDD coordinating task force held a planning meeting from 18-20 September to develop a two-year work plan and to define modalities for effective participation in the GPDD by NGO consortia and disabled peoples' organizations, especially those based in developing countries. Held under the chairmanship of Kalle Konkolla (Finland), the task force also held sessions on the needs of people with disabilities in Africa.

For more information on these meetings, contact Barbara Duncan at: [barbara@riglobal.org](mailto:barbara@riglobal.org)

## About RI

### Who We Are

Founded in 1922, RI is a global network of people with disabilities, service providers, researchers, government agencies and advocates promoting and implementing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. RI is composed of several hundred members and affiliated organizations in about 90 nations, in all regions of the world.

### What We Do

RI and its members develop and promote initiatives to protect the rights of people with disabilities and improve rehabilitation and other crucial services for disabled people and their families. RI also works toward increasing international collaboration and advocates for policies and legislation recognizing the rights of people with disabilities and their families, including the establishment of a UN Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.



*Female students at a school for children with disabilities in Bahrain learn about life skills.*

As a federation of local, national and international organizations and agencies, RI provides an open forum for the exchange of experience and information on research and practice.

### Our Structure

RI is governed by an annual Assembly - representing its member organizations - and by a President and Executive Committee elected every four years by its members. The Executive Committee then appoints the Secretary General. The current RI President is Michael Fox of Australia and the Secretary General is Tomas Lagerwall of Sweden.

### How You Can Join

Governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, public and private not-for-profit rehabilitation providers, disability advocacy organizations, consumer organizations, self-help groups and individuals are welcome to join the RI network. For more information, contact [ri@riglobal.org](mailto:ri@riglobal.org)

## Calendar of Upcoming RI Events

- **March 9 – 11, 2006**  
Executive Committee Meeting (Vienna, Austria)
- **August 19-21, 2006**  
Governing Assembly and Seminar (New York, USA)
- **August 22, 2006**  
Executive Committee Meeting (New York, USA)
- **October 20-27, 2007**  
Executive Committee, Governing Assembly and Regional Conference, (Djerba, Tunisia)
- **August 19-28, 2008**  
Executive Committee, Governing Assembly and World Congress (Quebec, Canada)
- **2009**  
Executive Committee and Governing Assembly (United Arab Emirates)

**Member organizations are requested to send the RI Secretariat their updated contact information, including name of national secretaries, phone, fax and email.**



## Rehabilitation International

25 East 21st Street, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10010, USA  
Web: [www.riglobal.org](http://www.riglobal.org)

Phone: 212-420-1500  
Fax: 212-505-0871  
E-mail: [riglobal@riglobal.org](mailto:riglobal@riglobal.org)