



**The theme for the International Day for Persons with Disabilities for 2013, is “Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all” Towards an inclusive society and development for all**

3 December 2013 - The World Report on Disability estimated in 2011 that about 15% of the world’s population – equivalent to over one billion people – lives with some form of disability . These people face barriers in different aspects of life, whether physical, social, economic or attitudinal, that negatively affect their access to education, employment, health and social participation. This, in turn, deprives their communities of their effective contribution to development.

Over the past decades, it has become increasingly evident that without mainstreaming persons with disabilities and their contribution to all life and developmental aspects, it is unlikely that any major development goals can be achieved.

For this reason, the theme for the International Day for Persons with Disabilities for 2013, is “Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all”.

The Day marks the climax of a year of efforts to address disability and development by WHO and partners.

Today a new important WHO report is being released, International Perspectives on Spinal Cord Injuries. It presents the best available evidence on the causes, prevention, care and real life experiences of persons with spinal cord injuries.

Among other key milestones, the UN General Assembly held a High Level Meeting on Development and Disability for heads of state and government in September 2013, under the theme “The way forward: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond.” The meeting produced an action-oriented outcome document providing policy guidance to help translate the international commitment for a disability-inclusive society into actions based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The document also aims at reinforcing global efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in, and have access to, all aspects of society and development.

Another key event was International Day for Disaster Reduction, marked on 13 October, which focused on the significant contributions that people living with disability can provide to help reduce the risk of disasters in their communities and build resilient societies. A regional joint UN statement on disability and disasters was released on the Day highlighting the need to include persons with disabilities “in all policies and programmes” aimed at addressing disaster risk reduction and humanitarian situations in order to achieve the same level of safety for all. As well, a Guidance Note on Disability and Emergency Risk Management for Health was released by WHO and partners within and outside the UN system.

WHO and Unicef also released a discussion paper on early childhood development and disability, which was developed to inspire discussion and action on disability, early childhood development and related interventions.

Moreover the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly issued resolution WHA66.9 on Disability in May 2013. This resolution requests the Director-General to prepare a comprehensive WHO action plan based on the evidence of the World Report on Disability and in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the report of the high level meeting on development and disability. The resolution further requests the Director-General to develop the plan in consultation with other UN organizations and Member States to ensure that regional and country perspectives and considerations are appropriately and adequately reflected. The draft plan has been developed for further processing and final endorsement by Member States in the 2014 Executive Board and World Health Assembly.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is an opportunity to explore the different linkages between disability and development and to strengthen global efforts to promote accessibility break all types of barriers, and to make the full and equal participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in their communities a reality. Inclusion that will not only benefit persons with disabilities but will also bring major contributions to the societies in which they live.

## Important Links

[United Nations enable: development and human rights for all](#)

[International perspectives on spinal cord injuries](#)

[Discussion Paper on Early Childhood Development and Disability](#)

[Guidance Note on Disability and Emergency Risk Management for Health](#)

[Joint UN Statement on Disability and Disasters](#)

[WHO Action Plan 2014 – 2021: better health for persons with disabilities](#)

[Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond](#)

[World Report on Disability](#)

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities&nbsp;](#)

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