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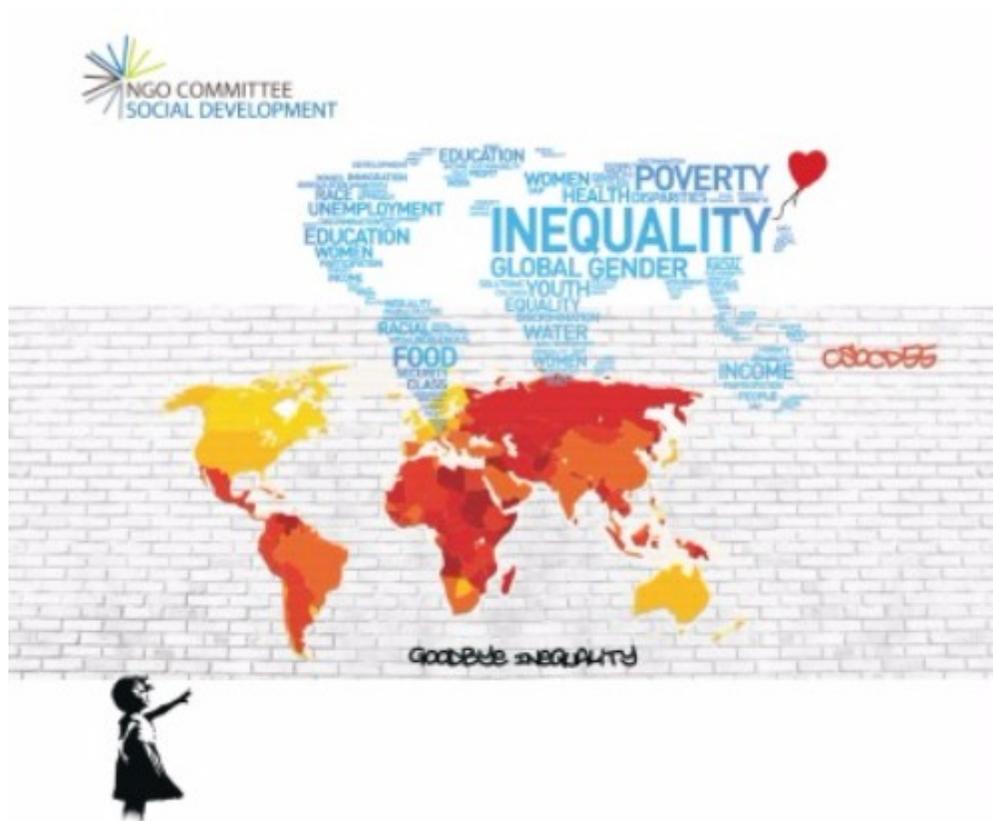
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RI Global What's On February 2017
Putting Disability at Forefront of SDGs: CSocD55

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Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide



February 2017 Newsletter

Putting disability at the forefront of the SDGs: CSocD55

RI Global advocates rights-based approach to fighting poverty among disabled

Nongovernmental organizations and interest groups highlighted the obligation of governments and international alliances to promote and protect the rights of

Participants in a panel discussion, including senior Government officials and academic experts, focused on the interconnectedness between disability and poverty and the need to incorporate disability into all future development efforts. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, declared that the 2030 Agenda was a unique opportunity to eradicate poverty, but that the goal could not be achieved without persons with disabilities.

“The cost of exclusion is very high, not only for persons with disabilities and their families, but also for national economies and our shared prosperity,” she said. “Poor persons with disabilities contribute less to economic growth, a cost estimated at between one and 7 per cent of gross domestic product.”

Ana Helena Chacón, Vice-President of Costa Rica said poverty represented a situation of “flagrant violence” for the world's weakest people. Disability was not merely a biological issue, she said, pointing out that it also had social, cultural, economic and other implications. Among the topics generating the most discussion were the role of the United Nations in mainstreaming questions of disability, the importance of social-protection schemes in supporting the poorest and most marginalized, funding challenges, and the distinction between meaningful participation in decision-making and mere “tokenism”.

RI Secretary-General Venus Ilagan also intervened at the panel.



“A rights based approach would level the playing field in terms of people with disabilities by ensuring that adequate resources are made available for universal design, accessible technology and coordinate public-private programmes and services to facilitate the meaningful participation of disabled people as contributing members in the development of their communities,” she said. “Persons with disabilities have so much to offer in terms of contribution, but



RI Global witnesses milestones at WHO Executive Meeting

The Executive Board of the World Health Organization (WHO) held its annual meeting in Geneva –just prior to the CSocD55 – in which it attempted to answer, in a wide-ranging report, whether the global community could achieve the SDG health targets without the rule of law.

The WHO also determined three finalists to become the next director-general of the global health agency, replacing Dr. Margaret Chan, whose second term of office ends June 30. These were: former Ethiopian Health Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, U.K. physician and United Nations official David Nabarro and Pakistani cardiologist and former science minister Sania Nishtar.

In the report, *Advancing the right to health: the vital role of law* found that governments need functioning health systems supported by strong legal frameworks, the WHO conclusively found that public health legislation sets out the responsibilities of governments to coordinate responses to public health risks, to create healthier environments, to generate the information base needed for effective action and to develop policies and to manage a competent health workforce, including in dealing with disabilities.

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important other disability policies. The goal of polio eradication for 2019, has been well advanced, in particular through the regularity of financial contributions, allowing health systems to save \$50 billion to direct to other strategic priorities.

Regarding the health of migrants, the WHO advised a coherent global strategy, including the access of migrants to long-term health care developed alongside the humanitarian paradigm and with coordination between WHO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Organization for Migration. Finally, the Executive Committee approved a global plan against dementia through 2025, which contained recommendations on the management of dementia, especially outside hospital structures.

The new director-general will be elected in late May by all of WHO's member states at the World Health Assembly, a 10-day gathering in Geneva, Switzerland, and will take office on 1 July. RI Global would continue to assess its current collaboration with the WHO in terms of a new framework for non-state actors, especially regarding mental health and migrant health.

[RI GLOBAL: On/Off the Agenda](#)



RI Global Secretary-General Venus Ilagan at the Expert Group Meeting “Advancing the rights and perspectives of women and girls with disabilities in development and society” 15-17 November in Santiago, Chile.

RI Global Calendar for 2017

[Third Symposium Franco-Latin American Research on Disability](#)

The central theme of this 3rd symposium is **Equality and Dignity**. Bringing together academics and civil society groups, this convention discusses the reinforcement for development as well as the sustainment and expansion of policies for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, accessibility (universal design) and, consequently, social responsibility and dignity.

9 to 11 March, Porto Alegre, Brazil

[UNISDR Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction,](#)

This platform is a biennial forum for information exchange, discussion of latest developments, knowledge and partnership-building across sectors, with the goal of improving implementation of disaster risk reduction through better communication and coordination amongst stakeholders, including persons with disabilities.

22 to 26 May, Cancun, Mexico

[10th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD](#)

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matter with regard to the implementation of the present Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).” Accreditation for new NGOs and Registration will begin in March 2017.

13 to 15 June, UN Headquarters, New York, NY

[High-Level Political Forum \(HLPF\)](#)

The theme of this year's HLPF will be *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*. The set of goals to be reviewed in depth include Goal 17, which strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

10 to 19 July, UN Headquarters, New York, NY

[3rd International Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf](#)

The conference will elaborate different themes on the occasion of plenary, section and board meetings: bilingual education, sign language in the families, deaf employees at employment market, communication without barriers, new IT revolution, and participation in the decision-making process.

8 to 10 November, Budapest, Hungary

[International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Since 1992, the annual observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

3 December, UN Headquarters, New York, NY

Stay tuned to this space for more events as the come up!

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The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) in Nigeria keeps pushing forward, challenging the government for their rights under the 2030 Agenda, especially education.

MEMBER PROFILE:

Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) -- Nigeria

Even as delegates and statesmen were making the link between disability and poverty at last week's UN Commission on Social Development, Nigerian PwDs were in Lagos protesting the government for inclusion in various schemes designed to lift up the poor.

President Muhammadu Buhari campaigned as a social reformer, but under his watch, Persons with Disabilities remain out of the public's welfare system from school-age to death. Neither schools, nor public buildings, nor health care centers in Nigeria are designed, built and managed in any manner that facilitates accessibility.

For these reasons, the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) keeps pushing forward, challenging the government for their rights under the 2030 Agenda. Among other issues, JONAPWD has lately focused on education, with the appointment of a 14-person Inclusive Education Policy Drafting Committee (IEPDC) to lay out a comprehensive education policy for

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of children with disabilities, or seven million children, are not in school in Nigeria.

“While there are special schools for the disabled, JONAPWD does not want special schools but rather inclusive education where all children are able to relate and interact with their peers,” said Ekaete Umoh the president of JOAPWD. “We do not want institutionalization.”

An umbrella organization for PwDs, JONAPWD represents the interests of the growing disabled population at all government levels. Although recognised by the federal government, JONAPWD is not funded by Nigeria and counts on a variety of international organizations, such as USAID and Coalitions for Change (C4C) to run its programs. In addition to children’s advocacy, JONAPWD trains the disabled in job skills and livelihood schemes, documents and shares stigmatisation of PwDs and promotes community based rehabilitation programmes. Visit www.jonapwd.org.

RI GLOBAL NEWS TO USE



Saudi Arabia Takes Steps to Make Hajj Sites Accessible

In a move welcoming Muslims of all stripes to make the Holy pilgrimage of Hajj, the government of Saudi Arabia has issued recommendations calling for utilities, buildings and hotels in the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina to be accessible for people with disabilities. It is expected these new guidelines will be enacted during the forthcoming meeting of the Supreme Hajj Committee. Under the directive, the cities will allocate special blocks for Tawafa establishments for PwDs, as well as allocate special restrooms and services in camps at the holy sites during the pilgrimages. The Saudi government says it aimed to ensure Hajj affairs offices provide staff to accompany and help people with disabilities who

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Ordering the Latte in Sign Language, or with Voice-Activated Gloves

While it's not uncommon for customers visiting most Starbucks to say “good morning” and “thank you” to their baristas, at London’s Jubilee Place, Canary Wharf Starbucks, it would be out of the ordinary if they did not sign the greetings as they placed their orders. This foray into nonverbal communication is part of an ongoing effort by the store’s manager, Toro Manca, and his fellow partners promote deaf awareness through a program called We Sign Café. Through We Sign Café, deaf baristas Manu Sulaiman and Haytam Lakb, provide instruction in British Sign Language during a regular Meetup, while other programs teach about deaf culture and actively recruit deaf employees – an initiative encouraged by former CEO Howard Schultz.

Meanwhile in Schultz’s hometown, two undergraduate at the University of Washington created a pair of gloves that can translate hand gestures of American Sign Language into speech, winning the prestigious Lemelson-MIT prize in technology. Thomas Pryor and Navid Azodi invented the “SignAloud,” device: gloves that contains sensors to record hand position and movement, sending it wirelessly to a central computer which recognizes the gesture and speaks the word or phrase. “Our purpose for developing these gloves was to provide an easy-to-use bridge between native speakers of American Sign Language and the rest of the world,” Azodi said. “The idea initially came out of our shared interest in invention and problem solving. But coupling it with our belief that communication is a fundamental human right, we set out to make it more accessible to a larger audience.”

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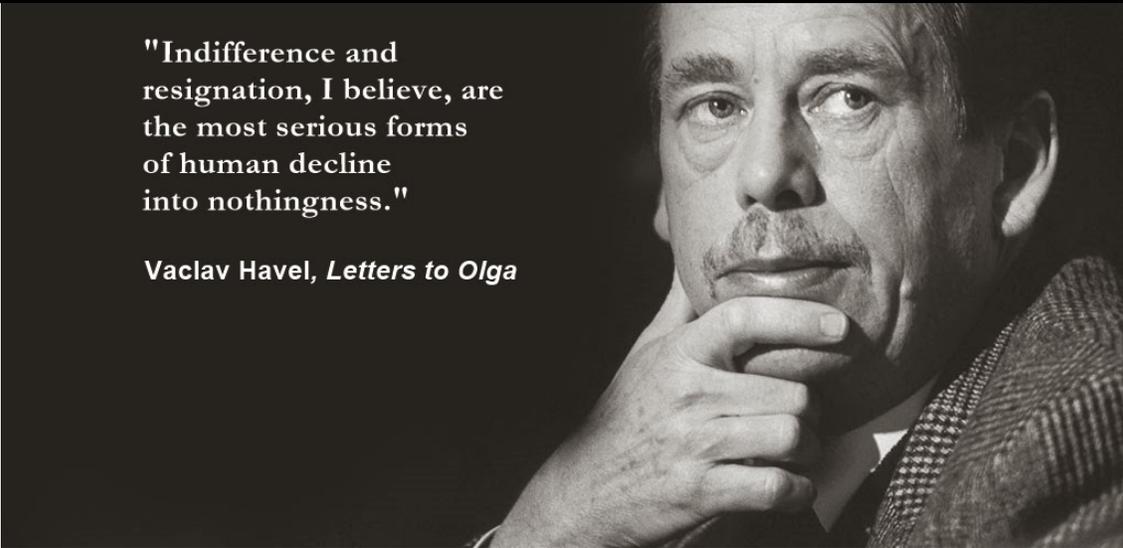
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Alexa Hearts the Disabled

Most of those who own an Echo or its smaller sibling, the Dot, treat these voice-activated devices as novelty items that issue weather reports or launching NPR on demand. For for persons with disabilities (PwDs), Amazon Echos have become invaluable tools that help live more independently from reading books out loud to programmable thermostats. “The voice-activated feature is a way to address a number of barriers for people who can’t move their hands,” says Henry Claypool, a policy consultant with the American Association of People with Disabilities, a nonprofit advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. “The specific challenges of people with disabilities may seem routine to others. But simply getting groceries or scheduling appointments can be taxing for someone who has difficulty operating a telephone or navigating the internet.”

Although the Echo was developed for the broader consumer market, benefits for the disabled have multiplied exponentially through new apps, or “Skills” (as Amazon calls them), for the device, and its relatively low price of \$180 (just \$50 for the company’s similar Do) which has allowed users on a limited income to buy the devices. While there are not yet statistics on how many PwDs are using one of the Echo products, the AAPD speculates that the number could be in the hundreds of thousands, considering that Amazon has sold more than 5 million of its Alexa-powered speakers. While most of us don’t think a thing about getting up to walk to the shopping list that hangs on the refrigerator, it is a Herculean effort for someone with a disability, said one the spouse of one user. “Being able to tell Alexa, ‘Add eggs’ made life better for both of us.”

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"Indifference and resignation, I believe, are the most serious forms of human decline into nothingness."

Vaclav Havel, *Letters to Olga*

Nominations for the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize, which consists of a sum of €60,000 are now open. The Prize rewards outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond.

EVENTS/AWARDS/CONFERENCES

Accessible Media Inc. (AMI) announces the 2017 Robert Pearson Scholarship campaign

Entering its sixth year, the AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship program offers much needed financial assistance to students with disabilities. The scholarship was renamed in 2016 in memory of AMI's former Accessibility Officer, Robert Pearson, who passed away suddenly in December 2015. In 2017, AMI will once again collaborate with the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) to two \$5,000 bursaries to two deserving students with a permanent disability; one from the English community and one from the French. The AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship contest concludes 30 April 2017. Complete rules and regulations are available on the [English website](#) or the [French website](#).

Scholarships to Advance Inclusive Higher Education for Youth with Disabilities

The University of Gondar and Canada's Queen's University announced a 10-year, USD\$24.2 million partnership to advance inclusive higher education for young people with disabilities in Ethiopia and Africa as part of The MasterCard Foundation's Scholars Program. The partnership will provide 450 next-generation African leaders with a high-quality university education at the University of Gondar, while also providing 60 of the university's faculty members with the opportunity to study at Queen's University, where they will enhance

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the [MasterCard Foundation website](#)

ISPO World Congress 2017

For the first time the 16th World Congress for the International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) flagship meeting from 8-11 May will gather international participants on the African continent, in Cape Town. It will feature an unique interactive forum where professionals involved in the care of persons in need of prosthetic, orthotic, mobility and assistance devices come together to learn about the latest scientific and clinical advances, products, innovative technologies, designs and materials in prosthetic and orthotic care. The meeting will also offer professionals involved in P&O rehabilitation a unique opportunity for continued development through discussion and exchange between researchers, technicians, manufacturers, doctors and therapists. For full details, visit the ISPO website, www.ispo2017.org.

2017 Hong Kong Conference of Workability International and Workability Asia

The Hong Kong Joint Council for People with Disabilities and Hong Kong Council of Social Service will host the 2017 Hong Kong Conference of Workability International (WI) and Workability Asia (WAsia) from 12 to 14 June 2017. It is currently inviting organizations to attend the Conference and submit abstracts for this important event. For the programme rundown, abstract guideline and the 1st Announcement of the Conference for your reference, see <http://www.2017wasia-wiconference.org.hk/>.

Submission should be sent via email 2017hkconference@hkcss.org.hk on or before 10 March 2017.

ZeroProject Conference: Employment, Work, Vocational Education and Training

The Zero Project Conference 2017 marks the start of the second round of its four-year cycle of research topics. It returns, once again, to the issue of employment, but expands it to include both work and, more specifically, vocational education & training. Representatives of Innovative Practices and Policies are invited to present, discuss and inspire, jointly with world leaders from all sectors of society, with and without disabilities. Keynote speakers will include high level representatives from International Organizations, leading managers from multinational companies, representatives from leading NGOs, self-representatives, entrepreneurs, and many more. The three-day-programme will start 22 February and ends 24 February and consists of plenary and workshop sessions, an exhibition and the Award Ceremony. For more information, please visit www.zeroproject.org. The Conference Committee can be reached at office@zeroproject.org.

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The Vaclav Havel Prize, which consists of a sum of €60 000, a trophy and a diploma, rewards outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond. It is open to nominations from any individual, NGO or institution working to defend human rights. The deadline for nominations for the 2017 edition of the Prize is 30 April 2017. The Award Ceremony will take place in the Assembly Chamber on 9 October 2017 during the 2017 Fourth part-session. Prize regulations and the nomination forms can be found on the Assembly's [website](#). Should you require further information, you can reach the Secretariat of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize by email hrprize.pace@coe.int or by phone + 33 3 90 21 45 20.



In Memoriam: M.B. Lee

With heavy hearts, Rehabilitation International announces the death of longtime board member, former president and friend, M.B. Lee. Lee, the immediate Former President of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation, passed away peacefully on 27 January 2017, leaving a record of leadership, service and contribution to rehabilitation service in Hong Kong and beyond.

In late 2015, RI Global presented its Presidential Award – its highest honor – to Lee to recognize his decades of valuable contributions and support. In accepting the award, Lee, one of the pioneering leaders and supporters of RI Global in Asia, related the story of how he and then RI President, the late Dr. Harry Fang,

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active involvement and engagement with the United Nations and other important actors in the field of rehabilitation and disability. “Mr Lee will forever be remembered and appreciated for his tireless support to RI, the latest of which was his generous donation that enabled young rehab professionals to participate in RI’s recently concluded world congress,” said RI Global Secretary-General Venus Ilagan. “On behalf of RI President Zhang Haidi, the EC, RIF Board and members of the global family of Rehabilitation International, we convey our condolences to his family, colleagues and friends during these difficult moments in their lives. May he Rest in Peace.”

The memorial service for M.B. Lee will be held on 14 February from 5 to 10pm at The Hong Kong Funeral Home, 679 King’s Road, North Point, Hong Kong

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