



**The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Promoting Disability Inclusion in Ireland and the World**

**October 20th 2011
Conference Report**



This event has been produced with the assistance of the European Union as part of the project 'Making Development Inclusive'. The contents of this event are the sole responsibility of CBM Ireland, the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), and the lead applicant of the project, Leonard Cheshire Disability, and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

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A note about the Conference Organisers

About CBM

CBM is an international Christian development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the poorest countries of the world. Based on its Christian values and over 100 years of professional expertise, CBM addresses poverty as a cause and a consequence of disability. We work in partnership to create a society for all. CBM's vision is "an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential".

Working together with partner organisations and persons with disabilities, CBM seeks to overcome these barriers through a twin-track approach. One track addresses the empowerment of persons with disabilities and their families, regardless of their nationality, age, sex or religion. This is done through providing equal access to affordable and comprehensive health care and rehabilitation programmes, quality education programmes and livelihood opportunities. The other track simultaneously works towards breaking down the barriers that exclude persons with disabilities while promoting an accessible social and physical environment to ensure active their participation in community- based activities, planning and decision making. Through advocacy and within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), CBM strives to eliminate discriminatory practices and stigma related to disability. For further information please see <http://www.cbm.ie>

About CDLP

The Centre was formally established in 2008 and is dedicated to produce research that informs debate on national and international disability law reform. Its formation coincides with one of the most intensive periods of disability law reform in Ireland as well as internationally. The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007 should help accelerate this worldwide trend and give it further direction. The disability action plans of both the European Union and the Council of Europe help frame the policy choices facing Ireland and other European Member States. In addition, the Irish Governments' National Disability Strategy of 2005 provides a clear strategic direction and an unprecedented opportunity for rational developments in the field. The main challenge ahead is implementation and the Centre will produce research that contributes to that process. For further information, please see <http://www.nuigalway.ie/cdlp/>

About IDDC

The **International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)** is a global consortium of 23 disability and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mainstream development NGOs and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) supporting disability and development work in more than 100 countries around the world. IDDC and its members aim to promote inclusive development. Inclusive development means respecting the full human rights of every person, acknowledging diversity, eradicating poverty and ensuring that all people are fully included and can actively participate in development processes and activities regardless of age, gender, disability, state of health, ethnic origin or any other characteristic.

Making Development Inclusive is our project financed by Directorate-General Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid (DG DEVCO) for the period 2010 -

2012. The objective is to improve mainstreaming of disability in international development activities conducted by European State and Non-State Actors in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Under this project, IDDC will build up its capacity to advocate successfully at the EU level and will develop materials and resources to assist practitioners and policy-makers in making inclusive international development a reality. IDDC will be strengthened as a hub for the provision of expertise on mainstreaming disability in development to national and international state and Non-State Actors. The project will enable IDDC to increase its promotion of consistent understanding and implementation of the CRPD with a range of target groups across Member States.

For further information about IDDC and Making Development Inclusive please see www.iddcconsortium.net

About DOCHAS

Dóchas is the association of Irish Non-Governmental Development Organisations. Dóchas provides a forum for consultation and co-operation between its members and helps them speak with a single voice on development issues. In 2006 Dochas and DFI facilitated a meeting among Irish NGOs working in the area of disability and international development. From this meeting, the Dochas Disability and International Development Working Group (DD&IDWG) was formed. The DD&IDWG promotes the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in developing countries by raising awareness, sharing expertise and promoting action on disability issues, including lobbying for change. For further information, please see <http://www.dochas.ie/>

About DFI

Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) is the national support organisation for voluntary disability organisations in Ireland who provide services to people with disabilities and disabling conditions. The vision of DFI is that Irish society is fully

inclusive of people with disabilities and disabling conditions so that they can exercise their full civil, economic, social and human rights and that they are enabled to reach their full potential in life. DFI's mission is to act as an advocate for the full and equal inclusion of people with disabilities. For further information, please see <http://www.disability-federation.ie/>

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Background to the conference – why now?

On October 20th 2011, CBM Ireland and the Centre for Disability Law and Policy (CDLP) National University of Ireland Galway in conjunction with Dochas and the Disability Federation of Ireland organised a major conference The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Promoting Disability inclusion in Ireland and World.

The conference was organized against the backdrop of significant progress over recent years made at an international level on disability rights and inclusive development. This progress includes a number of elements such as:

- the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by over 105 countries which establishes benchmarks for governments to ensure their international cooperation and particularly international development programmes are inclusive of people with disabilities;¹
- the development of policies and strategies by a growing number of bilateral agencies on disability inclusive development;
- the understanding that unless disability is included in global poverty reduction efforts, targets for poverty reduction such as the Millennium Development Goals will not be achieved² and
- the recognition that disability is part of the natural life course, that it is part of the human condition.³

From an Irish perspective, Irish Aid does not have a specific policy on disability, however the 2006 White Paper gave a commitment to ***examine the possibilities***

¹ See Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

² See The Time is Now, Ensuring Development for All: Disability and the Millennium Development Goals, Dochas September 2010;

³ The World Report on Disability highlights the intersectionality of ageing and disability situating disability as part of the human condition

for increased activity in the area of disability and development, such as support for specific programmes to address the needs of disabled people.⁴

Rationale for the conference

The rationale for organizing the conference was two-fold. First of all to learn how other countries have implemented inclusive strategies, at home and also within their overseas international commitments. The United States and Australia are two such countries that took a deliberate policy decision to make disability a visible aspect of their overseas work.

Secondly, further to the announcement of the Irish governments plan to review its White Paper on Irish Aid, an opportunity was now available to listen to views of an audience representative of a broad number of stakeholders. These stakeholders included the Irish disability community, development organisations, members of academic institutions and representatives from Ireland's civil society and human rights sector.



Left to right front row: Ms Prudence Mabhena, singer/artist, Ms Judith Heumann, Special Adviser to the US Department of State, Ms Mary Keogh, CBM Ireland. Left to right back row: Lord Mayor of Dublin, Andrew Montague, Mr David McAllister, CBM Ireland; Mr Beral M'Baikoudou, Mr Bob McMullan, Professor Gerard Quinn, Ambassador Bruce Davies (Australia), Ambassador Pertti Majanen (Finland)

⁴ See Irish Aid White Paper, 2006.

Conference Highlights

The morning session consisted of a number of inputs from international experts and local speakers. Two panel discussions were held.

Panel 1: The International and Regional

The first panel discussion focused on international development and showcased where countries such as the US and Australia are providing leadership in inclusive development. Dr Maurice Manning of the Irish Human Rights Commission moderated the first panel discussion.

Ms Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State, delivered the keynote address. Ms Heumann commented **there is a need to acknowledge the disability is unquestionably a development issue and furthermore that if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved then people with disabilities need to gain access to changes brought by development money and programmes.**



Ms Judith Heumann, Special Adviser on International Disability Rights to the US State Department

Mr Bob McMullan who served as an MP in the Australian Labour government and who championed the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Australian governments overseas programmes also addressed the conference. Starting with what he called an imaginary country, he gave the audience some stark statistics. This country has up to 500 million people, the under 5 mortality rate is up to 80%; the school attendance is 10%; the literacy rate is 3% and the unemployment rate is up to 80%. These statistics in any country would be unacceptable from a human rights perspective. Mr McMullan commented **that while the country might be imaginary, the statistics are true when it comes to describing disability within a developing context.**



Bob McMullan, former member of the Australian Labour government

Based on the Australian experience, Mr Mc Mullan then outlined to conference participants the 10 low cost steps that can be taken to make Aid or International Cooperation more inclusive. These steps are

- Step 1 Establish reference or advisory group
- Step 2 Review mainstream programmes for compatibility with CRPD obligations
- Step 3 Develop strategy documents focused on rights
- Step 4 Fund DPO strengthening (e.g. DRF)
- Step 5 Adapt scholarship programme for PWDs
- Step 6 Ensure infrastructure programmes reduce barriers
- Step 7 Develop disability focus in volunteer programmes
- Step 8 Establish partnerships with NGO's
- Step 9 Undertake research
- Step 10 Become a global advocate for the post 2015 priorities

Second panel: The Global and the Local

Hans Zomer, Director of Dochas, moderated the second panel of the morning session. The panel focused on the global and the local and featured a number of speakers from Ireland and the Global South. Speakers giving the Irish perspective included Professor Gerard Quinn (Centre for Disability Law and Policy), Mr David McAllister (CBM Ireland), Mr John Dolan (Disability Federation Ireland) and Mr Aidan Leavy (Chair of Dochas Disability and Development International Working Group). Speakers from the South included Ms Prudence Mabhena (singer/artist) from Zimbabwe and Mr Beral M'Baikoudou from Chad.

Hans Zomer opened the session by introducing Beral M'Baikoudou, a 24-year-old man with a visual impairment. Beral addressed the conference by giving an insight as to what it is like to live in Chad with a disability. He commented **as a person with a disability, I do not require pity or charity, but a right to access opportunities like everyone else.** Beral along with being an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities in Chad is also the youngest member of the Parliament of Chad. Prudence Mabhena an acclaimed artist and songwriter

followed Beral and she spoke about the challenges of living with a disability in Zimbabwe.

The speakers from Ireland bridged the gap between the global to the local. Professor Gerard Quinn commented that “This is a pioneering event at European level which gives space to reflect how regions like the EU and states like Ireland can be a force for good in the world where the vast majority of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. Professor Quinn went onto comment that **Good practice from around the world – including particularly USAID – will help us reflect on the positive role of development aid programmes in lifting people with disabilities out of poverty and opening up new opportunities in their lives. Inclusion does not necessarily require more money – just that existing monies are spent smartly to avoid exclusion and to create pathways into the mainstream.**

Aidan Leavy, Chair of the Dochas Disability Working Group spoke about the need for three key areas of work in Ireland. They included lobbying for change, sharing expertise and awareness raising. John Dolan of Disability Federation Ireland highlighted how the Irish disability community can work closely with disability organisations in developing countries.

Finally, CBM Ireland National Director David McAllister called for disability support to be systematically embedded in Ireland’s Overseas Budget. He spoke about his years of been involved in delivering high impact programmes to address the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. He talked about his astonishment at lack of inclusion of persons with disability in the mainstream development programmes. He **called on all mainstream development organisations funded by Irish Aid to engage with organisations such as CBM to learn more about disability and to work in partnership on creating inclusive development programmes.** Mr McAllister’s final remarks concluded by stating that **Ireland has an opportunity to be a leader in this field through**

ensuring that the Overseas Development is inclusive and accessible to those with disabilities. However this inclusion will not happen merely because of legislation or the development of discussion papers. It must be dynamically embedded in Irish Development Policy for Overseas Development Aid.

Irish Aid White Paper Review

The session started with a presentation from Mr Donal Cronin of Irish Aid. Donal gave an input to conference participants explaining the plans for the upcoming public consultation on the White Paper Review. The plans can be found in more detail at <http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/whitepaper/>.

After the presentation, conference participants had the opportunity to discuss how during this review process how Ireland can build on its commitment to including persons with disabilities in its international cooperation work.

The key questions put to conference participants were as follows:

Overarching Q: How can Ireland contribute to furthering the aims of the Convention in developing countries?

Q1. What are the priorities for disability in international cooperation?

Q2. What outcomes should arise from this process of international cooperation?

Q3. What can the organisations/people in this group bring to this process?

Summary of Discussions in Afternoon Sessions relating to the Irish White Paper on Disability with Comments and Observations

This is a summary of the comments made by Professor Nora Groce of the Inclusive Development Centre, University College London when wrapping up the final session. The comments reflect views and thoughts on key points raised during the afternoon discussion session, which address the issue of the next

steps for international disability efforts in Ireland. The comments are based on the workgroup sessions themselves as well as Professor Groce's own comments and observations.

1. In each group, **there was a consensus that efforts to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities needed to be led by government.** While DPOs and NGOs can play an important role, the most they are able to do is to plug gaps in the system. They cannot by themselves run comprehensive systems that address the needs of all disabled citizens. (In developed countries, these services are considered the primary responsibility of the government and not fitted together by civil society – there should be comparable goals in developing countries). Hence, the creation of sustainable systems that ensure implementation of the CRPD, including programmes in educational, legal, job training and employment, civil engagement and social support systems must be led by governments. This takes on additional importance in countries like Ethiopia and Somalia that limit what outside advocates and organizations can do. This is not to say that DPOs and NGOs do not have important contributions to make, only that the ultimate goal should be functional government support and involvement with core activities that involve disabled citizens.

2. Success of the CRPD will be measured not simply by passage at the national level or number of trainings of senior governmental or ministerial levels. This top down approach is one component of implementation, but **the true litmus test of whether the CRPD is successful is whether the rights and benefits conveyed by the CRPD extend to the community and individual level, particularly among the poorest and marginalized groups of persons with disabilities.**

3. The goal of any international development initiative is ultimately to work itself (and ourselves) out of a job – turning the responsibility to running programmes over to governments, local NGOs, DPOs and civil society at the community and

country level. Thus **the issue is not simply providing additional aid, but engaging in capacity building.**

4. The ‘twin-track’ approach as advocated by DFID and other bilateral and multilaterals is important, but it must be approached with caution. Where funding is ‘ring fenced’ as when, for example 5% of all funding is supposed to be dedicated towards disability issues, it is not unlikely – unless there is consistent vigilance – that those in charge of distributing the remaining 95% of the funding will feel that disability is already addressed. The result may be that those overseeing the 95% will not mainstream disability into their work. In fact, **a ‘twin track’ approach means that there must be consistent oversight of both funding specifically dedicated towards disability and the remaining funds where disability should be mainstreamed into the rest of the development agenda.** (As pointed out in several of the group discussions, this is already done with gender issues – where gender-specific and gender-inclusive programming has now become the norm).

5. A key point raised in all three groups, but nicely summarized in group 2, is that as far as disability inclusion in the aid sector goes, **it is critical that international development professionals understand that disability is not a lack of material resources per se, but a lack of inclusion and equity.**

6. There is **a need for regular communication between disability DPOs, NGOs and government agencies funding international work, as well as with NGOs and government groups working on broader development issues.** There is a need for round-table meetings and other forms of engagement at least several times a year where people can meet face-to-face.

7. **Local and national DPOs and disability NGOs in Ireland should be encouraged and funded to share their knowledge internationally.** (This comment by the way, resonates with Judith Heumann’s comment in the Key Note

session, in which she reminded the audience that the American Disability Rights Movement began not as a national movement but as a series of small-scale actions taken by groups at the local and state levels, taking from 1973 to 1990 to get legislation). Local experience and knowledge shared at this level would in many cases, provide local groups in developing countries with pragmatic and innovative solutions to problems in the 'real world' at the community level, and be the basis upon which stronger national level organizations can be built.

8. Staying on the local level for the moment, it was also observed in Group 1 that **funding – particularly small-scale funds that would enable practical programmes at the local level – is often difficult to get in-country by local DPOs and NGOs.** It is with frustration that local groups often find international NGOs or other groups arriving on their doorsteps having had access to international funders. This problem is compounded when **international DPOs and NGOs have had far more experience than local DPOs and NGOs in framing and marketing their expertise** –(although they may have far less expertise on the ground, really addressing local issues). **Irish Aid and other groups who fund in country should be aware of this disparity and work in country to build the capacity of local DPOs and NGOs to access such funding.**

9. All three groups discussed Irish Aid approaches to disability and the fact that a specific set of countries were identified as 'priority countries'. It was noted that **specific attention should be directed towards these identified 'priority countries', both to increase disability-specific efforts and to ensure better mainstreaming of disability issues into the large scale international development efforts that Irish Aid is funding.** There is a real opportunity to increase the focus on disability by working in tandem with and building on Irish Aid's already established interests in these countries.

10. It was also **noted in the discussions that all of the ‘priority countries’ have already ratified the CRPD.** (And it was suggested by this Rapporteur that among other things funded by Irish Aid, perhaps it was time for an exchange of experts, with Irish Aid funding parliamentarians from the ‘priority countries’ to come to Ireland to offer a series of workshops, seminars and training sessions for Irish politicians, to teach them how to get ratification for the CRPD).

11. It was also noted that **while there is much at Irish Aid can do to increase its commitment to disability issues, in fact, there has already been commendable efforts by Irish Aid to fund disability projects.** The work of Barbara Murray, Disability Specialist at the International Labour Organization in Geneva was cited as an example.

12. Another **point of concern was the continuing lack of education of donors around disability issues.** On-going attention is needed in engagement and education. Too many in international development, and at government/ministerial level, start not only with little knowledge of disability, but with negative stereotypes – for example, continuing to see disability as a charity issue.

13. To this point, the Rapporteur also adds that such education efforts need to be on going. **Finding an interested advocate in Irish Aid or other development agencies and building their knowledge and competence is fine – but if the links are only built around individuals, then all progress stops or goes backwards should this key person be moved elsewhere or retire.**

Education on disability – beginning in the undergraduate or graduate/professional levels – must be a consistent goal of disability advocates. It should be an important component of any professional training programme (as gender now is).

14. The issue of the ‘language of development’ was also raised. **Currently, disability is discussed in terms of ‘resource needs’ and ‘empowerment.’**

These terms are not bad however we are missing an important entry point. In a world currently geared to economics and business models, we should be talking about ‘investment in persons with disabilities’ as investments in the future of the country through transformation of their human resources. Disabled people have the capacity to be economic assets, making important contributions to the well being of all. Framing development funding in such a way creates a new and potentially very potent entry point to working with international development funders and creates a dialogue that should be explored in far greater depth.

15. While all groups of disabled people are important, **one group that is consistently overlooked is disabled youth. These young people are must be seen not simply as individuals needing education and help entering both the job market and the adult community – they must be seen as the next generation of disability leaders who have the potential to make great contributions to society.** Far more attention is needed to ensure they are supported and prepared for these roles.

16. There are **important links between people newly injured on the job or newly disabled through accident, injury or disease (for example HIV/AIDS) who could benefit significantly by being in contact with DPOs** – and this needs to be explored in far greater depth.

17. There is **a need for building an evidence base around disability and development. There are critical gaps in the data that make it difficult or impossible for disability advocates to identify points of concern, initiate dialogue with funders or prepare adequately for appropriate interventions.**

Additional points made by Rapporteur

18. While lack of data is a stumbling block to initiating dialogue with bi-laterals, multi-laterals, governments and international NGOs, the very lack of such data is also evidence of the need of disabled populations. **Using the 15% estimate from the recent World Report on Disability by WHO and the World Bank, an advocate or researcher can begin a discussion just by asking why the needs or status of 15% of the population seems to be missing.** (In other words, the missing data **IS** the evidence you need to start a discussion).

19. There is a great deal of global health and international development data already available on populations around the world and this body of data is growing quickly. **Instead of reinventing the wheel by doing a disability-specific study/ survey when data is needed, identifying existing data on communities, populations, health services, etc. can at least let you start a discussion on how persons with disabilities as part of the communities being studied.**

20. While more information/ data is always helpful in designing and implementing programmes and policies, we cannot afford to wait to act until we have completed data sets and research projects. **Building on what is already known about individuals and populations, we can begin to extrapolate about disability issues from this.**

21. **Care must be taken not to export or repeat mistakes made in developed countries on disability issues. We must be honest about the mistakes made in Ireland, the UK, the US and other developed countries.** For example, in an era where we have spent decades dismantling institutions, the European Union should not be providing structural funds to build or revamp new institutions in the developing world. New transportation systems and building schemes in developing countries should not be funded if they are not disability accessible.

22. An important component of capacity building is the establishment of mechanisms such as standards, policy guidelines and monitoring and evaluation tools. Many of these tools have already been developed, validated and are in regular use here in Ireland and elsewhere. While such tools are often country specific and not immediately transferable to developing countries, these tools can be helpful as people in-country begin to build their own country-specific standards, guidelines, etc. Advocates and policy makers at the local and national levels can decide what to use, what to adapt and what not to use – but we should share what we already have with them and allow them to make the decision of what may be helpful and what they do not need, themselves.

Rapporteurs concluding remarks:

Perhaps the best way to summarize much of the overarching discussion around aid in Ireland is to quote Professor Gerard Quinn's statement earlier in the day: 'when it comes to disabilities, we're all developing countries' and to cite Bob McMullan's very interesting conceptual framework, where he argues if disability were an 'imaginary country', the statistics on the well-being of persons with disability (or lack thereof) would constitute a pressing emergency in international aid circles.

Annex: Conference Programme

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Promoting Disability Inclusion in Ireland and the World

Dublin Convention Centre, Thursday October 20th, 9.30-3.45pm

9.00 Registration and coffee on arrival

9.30 Formal opening of conference

The International and the Regional

International and Regional perspectives are given on different approaches to inclusive development and international disability rights

9.50 Keynote address: Ms Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. Department of State

10.15 The Australian Experience: Mr Bob Mc Mullan

10.45 Facilitated Questions Session

11.15 Coffee Break

The Global and the Local

This section focuses on development in practice, promoting how it has achieved inclusion and also introducing the local Irish perspective.

11.45am - Beral M'Baikoudou, Disability Advocate and Member of Parliament, Chad

- Prudence, Singer/Songwriter, Zimbabwe

- John Dolan, CEO, Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)

- Prof. Gerard Quinn, Director, Centre for Disability Law and Policy, NUIG

- David McAllister, Director, CBM Ireland

- Aidan Leavy, Chair, Dóchas Disability and Development Working Group

Chair: Hans Zomer, Director, Dóchas

13.00 Lunch

Consultation for Review of Irish Aid White Paper on Overseas Development Assistance

14.00 Overview, Donal Cronin, Coordinator Irish Aid White Paper Review

14.15 Consultation via facilitated break out groups

15.15 Plenary session facilitated by Rapporteur

15.45 Close of conference & musical performance

