



# Rehabilitation International

## News!

A GLOBAL ADVOCATE FOR REHABILITATION, INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS



RI Executive Committee in Berlin at DGUV Headquarters on March 31 to April 1, 2025  
(including, in the first row: Kirsten Bruhn, Gold Medal winner of Summer Paralympics 2012 in London)

## Editorial

**Dear Members of Rehabilitation International,  
Friends and Partners of Rehabilitation International,  
And All Interested Readers,**

Welcome to the April 2025 edition of the Rehabilitation International Newsletter.

This issue features key highlights:

- Inside RI: RI President's speech and updates from the Executive Committee meeting in Berlin (March 31 – April 1, 2025).
- RI Activities: RI's continued commitment at the Global Disability Summit.
- External Insight: The Amman-Berlin Declaration and a report on the UN Human Rights Council side event hosted by the UAE, focused on disability rights, technology, and AI.
- RI Regions: Updates from Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) and RI Finland.
- Science Corner: A global study reveals major mental health data gaps—especially affecting children and low-income countries.

We welcome your contributions—your voices strengthen our shared mission.

Thank you to all contributors and readers for your continued support. Together, we move closer to a more inclusive world.

Warm regards,  
Hannover, April 2025  
**RI President & RI Media**

## In this RI News!

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## Rehabilitation International President Urges Stronger Global Action for Disability Inclusion - 1



RI Executive Committee at DGUV Headquarters, Berlin (Germany), March 31, 2025

In a keynote address at the opening of the Rehabilitation International (RI) Executive Committee meeting in Berlin on March 31 and April 1, the RI President reflected on two decades of progress for persons with disabilities while issuing a call for urgent and coordinated action to address persistent global inequities and rising threats to disability rights.

Over 190 countries have adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD), with 104 ratifying its Optional Protocol, marking significant progress toward visibility and inclusion. Yet, despite advances in advocacy, legislation, and assistive technology, the President highlighted that 1.3 billion people globally—16% of the world's population—continue to face systemic discrimination, reduced life expectancy, and limited access to employment, rehabilitation, and inclusive education.

Citing alarming statistics from WHO and the UN, the President underscored ongoing disparities: in low- and middle-income countries, over half of those needing rehabilitation do not receive it, and only a fraction of people requiring assistive technologies like wheelchairs actually obtain them. In some regions, up to 90% of persons with disabilities remain unemployed. Alarming, 75% of children with disabilities in parts of Eastern and Central Europe are excluded from quality, inclusive education.

These challenges are compounded by global instability. Armed conflicts, displacement, and the destruction of social infrastructure disproportionately impact people with disabilities, particularly those with sensory, mobility, or cognitive impairments.

“The rollback of rights in some countries and the erosion of international legal norms threaten the fragile gains we’ve made,” the President warned, citing the accelerating influence of populist movements and shrinking democratic space.

**The President highlighted RI's ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with UN agencies. While already enjoying consultative status with ECOSOC, RI is pursuing formal affiliations with WHO and UNESCO and contributing to global initiatives such as the WHO's Disability-Inclusive Health Services Network. He also encouraged deeper collaboration with other non-state actors like the International Disability Alliance and Cochrane Rehabilitation.**

Reaffirming RI's commitment to rights-based advocacy—not charity—the President outlined a comprehensive “international policy cycle” aimed at realizing the goals of the UN-CRPD. Key strategies include gathering lived experiences and data, producing evidence-based policy proposals, integrating disability perspectives into UN agency documents, and supporting national implementation through RI's Member Organizations.

## Rehabilitation International President Urges Stronger Global Action for Disability Inclusion - 2

The President praised the growing activity and membership of RI's Commissions, which develop guidance and best practices. He emphasized the pivotal role of RI's regional representatives in shaping culturally relevant advocacy and called for the re-establishment of a Latin American Region to better reflect linguistic and cultural contexts.

A major theme of the address was inclusivity within RI itself. While acknowledging the organization's broad and diverse membership, the President emphasized the need for stronger engagement, better communication, and tailored membership fee structures. He proposed reviving regional conferences, expanding digital communication channels, and encouraging content contributions for RI's website and multilingual newsletters.

The President highlighted RI's ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships with UN agencies. While already enjoying consultative status with ECOSOC, RI is pursuing formal affiliations with WHO and UNESCO and contributing to global initiatives such as the WHO's Disability-Inclusive Health Services Network. He also encouraged deeper collaboration with other non-state actors like the International Disability Alliance and Cochrane Rehabilitation.

Recognizing the importance of scientific rigor, the President advocated for bolstering RI's research capabilities, possibly through partnerships with academic institutions like Qingdao University and the formation of a Scientific Advisory Board. He noted the need to support evidence-based policymaking and facilitate scientific literacy among members.

Other organizational priorities include improving internal governance through the recently established Managing Board, enhancing fundraising strategies beyond traditional donations, and finalizing plans for the next RI World Congress. The President also called attention to the under-resourced Secretariat in New York and the importance of addressing staffing and operational capacity.

Finally, he emphasized the importance of youth inclusion, expressing hope that the Terms of Reference for the RI Youth Forum will be ratified during the Berlin meeting.

Concluding his address, the President expressed gratitude to the Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung (DGUV) and key organizers for hosting the event, setting an ambitious tone for the two-day meeting: "Now let's start our work."



**Prof. Christoph Gutenbrunner**  
**MD, PhD, FRCP, SFEBPRM**  
RI President



## RI Executive Committee meets in Berlin



RI Executive Committee in Berlin at DGUV Headquarters on March 31 to April 1, 2025  
(including, in the first row: Kirsten Bruhn, Gold Medal winner of Summer Paralympics 2012 in London)

On March 31 and April 1, the Rehabilitation International (RI) Executive Committee (EC) held its first face-to-face meeting of 2025. The meeting was hosted by the *Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung* (DGUV) at its headquarters in Berlin. Following the opening speech by the RI President, the committee engaged in a full and productive agenda.

Numerous topics were discussed, including the future advocacy strategy, prioritization of actions, relationships with UN agencies and non-state actors, optimization of the work of committees and task forces, and financial matters such as membership fees and fundraising.

Some of the most important decisions made during the meeting include:

- Organizing a strategic workshop to define RI's future strategy and work plan
- Reviewing and approving structured reports and work plans for each Commission
- Adopting the Terms of Reference for the RI Youth Forum, to be published soon
- Establishing two new commissions:
  - Commission on Women and Girls with Disabilities
  - Commission on Humanitarian Emergencies
- Reactivating RI's Latin American region
- Hosting the next RI World Congress in 2028
- Organizing a public event in 2026 to mark 20 years since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD) by the UN General Assembly

Further information will be shared in upcoming newsletters and on RI's website. A number of additional topics were discussed and prepared for future decisions.



On the second day, the film "GOLD – You Can More Than You Think" was screened. This documentary highlights the dedication of Paralympic athletes in the lead-up to the London 2012 Summer Paralympics.

Gold medalist Kirsten Bruhn attended the screening and shared powerful insights into her life, the barriers she has faced, and the ways she has overcome them. Themes of respect, solidarity, and the significance of success were central to her reflections and responses to questions from RI-EC members. (For more information about the film, visit: [DGUV – GOLD Film](#)).

Many EC members remained in Berlin after the meeting to attend the Global Disability Summit. During the summit, RI Korea, led by Reena Lee, hosted a fireside chat on the topic "Digital Literacy & Decent Work through Disability-Inclusive Development." RI also made three official commitments at the summit (see page 6).

This article is based on the report of RI President:



**Prof. Christoph Gutenbrunner MD,  
PhD, FRCP, SFEbPRM**  
RI President

## RI Commitments at Global Disability Summit 2025

At the Global Disability Summit, held in Berlin April 2-4, 2025, **Rehabilitation International made the following commitments:**



1. Development of a guideline for Universal Design in Universities incl practical recommendations for the implementation with the goal to facilitate the access to higher education for students with disabilities. This shall include to develop practical recommendations should include physical access to buildings, access to educational materials for students with vision, hearing and cognitive impairment, tools and to design a global symbol for use for all institutions in the education sector and also in universities.

2. Development of a simple on-line tool to easily estimate the implementation of the UN-Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the sectors health and rehabilitation (Article 25 and 26 of the convention). The tool shall enable national organization

to make a preliminary survey and benchmark with other countries. This can be starting point for mor detailed scientific assessment and help to raise awareness at country level. This shall include an on-line self-report questionnaire for individual user to collect information and assess impact of the relevant policy and services and an organization-based assessment tool to be used by governmental agencies and NGOs to collect information and evaluate influence of the relevant policy and services

3. Development of online training tools for health professionals on rehabilitation and inclusion for the use at university level. Topics will include communication with persons with disabilities, clinical examination of patients with disabilities, scientific health risk for persons with disabilities, concepts and basics of rehabilitation services and assistive technologies.

All RI members are invited to contribute to these commitments. Please contact RI Secretary General, the respective Commission Chairs or the President.



**Prof. Christoph Gutenbrunner MD,  
PhD, FRCP, SFEBPRM**  
RI President

## Global Disability Summit 2025 Concludes with Historic Amman-Berlin Declaration

The third Global Disability Summit wrapped up with the adoption of the **Amman-Berlin Declaration**, a powerful global commitment to advancing disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action.

Held jointly in Amman and Berlin, the summit brought together heads of state, civil society, international organizations, and over 1,000 representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) from around the world. The Declaration builds on the near-universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and calls for urgent, coordinated action to eliminate the barriers faced by more than 1 billion people with disabilities.

Among the key commitments is the goal that 15% of international development programs will explicitly pursue disability inclusion by 2028—matching the estimated percentage of persons with disabilities globally. The summit emphasized a rights-based approach and intersectionality, calling attention to the compounded discrimination faced by women, girls, and youth with disabilities.

The Declaration calls for:

- Full engagement of OPDs in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs
- Inclusive humanitarian action aligned with the Sendai Framework and UN guidelines
- Strengthened data systems and use of the OECD-DAC disability inclusion marker
- Strategic partnerships across sectors, including private industry and academia

This Declaration is not just a statement—it's a roadmap. With over a billion people affected, the world must act now to ensure no one is left behind.

The next Global Disability Summit will take place in 2028, offering a key checkpoint on global progress.

Further information on Amman-Berlin Declaration:

<https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/resource/amman-berlin-declaration/>

## United Arab Emirates: Disability Rights & AI Innovation at UN Human Rights Council

At the 58th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosted a pivotal side event titled ***"Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Access to Technology and Artificial Intelligence."*** The high-level discussion explored how emerging technologies, particularly AI, can advance accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities while addressing key challenges.

### UAE Reaffirms Commitment to Disability Rights & AI-Driven Inclusion

His Excellency Ambassador Jamal Al Musharakh, Permanent Representative of the UAE to the UN in Geneva, opened the session by reinforcing the UAE's unwavering commitment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). He emphasized the nation's progress in integrating CRPD principles into national laws, particularly in education, healthcare, and social security, ensuring equitable opportunities for all.

Her Highness Sheikha Dr. Moza bint Tahnoun Al Nahyan, Advisor at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spotlighted the UAE's global leadership in AI-driven disability empowerment. She highlighted how the country is harnessing cutting-edge technology alongside social innovation to foster full societal inclusion for persons with disabilities.

### Experts Highlight AI's Transformative Potential for Accessibility

Ms. Rehab Boursli, a member of the International Committee of Experts on the CRPD, provided an in-depth analysis of AI's role in enhancing quality of life for persons with disabilities. She stressed that ethical, inclusive AI design is crucial in unlocking its potential—from assistive communication tools to smart mobility solutions.

Ms. Martina Albarit from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) underscored the importance of a human rights-based approach in digital

technology development. She called for inclusive design frameworks that prioritize dignity, autonomy, and active participation of persons with disabilities in tech innovation.

His Excellency Abdullah Al Humaidan, Secretary-General of the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination, outlined the UAE's comprehensive legal and policy measures supporting disability rights. He showcased national initiatives that empower persons with disabilities to become active contributors to society, reinforcing the UAE's vision of an inclusive, barrier-free future.

### Global Call to Action: Accessible Tech for an Inclusive Future

The event concluded with a resounding call to action, urging governments, tech developers, and civil society to prioritize accessible AI, ensure disability-inclusive design in emerging technologies to achieve global equality.

AI are not just tools but catalysts for global equality, ensuring full rights realization for persons with disabilities.

This article is based on the information from Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) provided by



**MEERA MOHAMMED ALSHAMSI**  
Vice Chair  
RI Health & Function Commission

# Zayed Higher Organization's Vocational Programs for People of Determination Receive Official NQC

## Accreditation

Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO), in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-represented by the National Qualifications Center (NQC)-and the Ministry of Family, has achieved a landmark in inclusive education with the official national accreditation of its Level 1 and Level 2 vocational education programs. This announcement, made in March 2025, marks a transformative step in the UAE's commitment to empowering People of Determination through recognized, high-quality qualifications that drive both employability and social integration.

### National Accreditation: A Milestone for Inclusion

The accreditation, granted under the National Qualifications Framework, is a testament to the quality, rigor, and inclusivity of ZHO's vocational programs. By aligning with global best practices, these programs bridge the gap between education and employment, equipping graduates with skills that are officially recognized at the national level. This achievement not only enhances the prospects of People of Determination in the labor market but also positions ZHO as a leader in vocational education, both regionally and internationally.

### Leadership Endorsements

Her Excellency Sana Suhail, Minister of Family, praised ZHO's unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive services, which is the pivotal role of these accredited programs in building a more equitable society and reaffirmed the Ministry's full support for initiatives that empower all community members.

His Excellency Abdullah Al Humaidan, Secretary-General of ZHO, highlighted the strategic significance of this achievement. He emphasized that the official accreditation guarantees equal vocational education opportunities and opens broader pathways



for People of Determination to actively participate in sustainable development and the national workforce.

His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Al Mualla, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, noted that the accreditation ensures graduates receive certifications recognized under the National Qualifications Framework. This recognition is crucial for enhancing social inclusion and enabling People of Determination to secure employment that matches their abilities, thus contributing meaningfully to the UAE's labor market.

### Future Vision: Expanding Opportunities

Looking ahead, ZHO is set to:

- Forge international partnerships to expand the global recognition of its certifications.
- Enhance practical training by collaborating with local and international companies.
- Introduce digital skills programs to prepare students for the future workforce.

This article is based on the information from Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) provided by



**MEERA MOHAMMED ALSHAMSI**

Vice Chair

RI Health & Function Commission



## Abu Dhabi's ZHO and Topland launch the Autism Reality Experience



Abu Dhabi is rapidly positioning itself as a global leader in redefining how societies support and empower People of Determination. A groundbreaking collaboration between the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) and UAE-based innovation company Topland is transforming regional perspectives through empathy-driven, immersive technology.

At the heart of this initiative is the **Autism Reality Experience (ARE)**—a pioneering, hands-on training program that provides participants with a firsthand understanding of the sensory, cognitive, and emotional challenges commonly faced by individuals on the autism spectrum. Originally developed by the UK's Training2Care, the program offers a transformative experience that goes far beyond conventional education—it fosters behavioral change, empathy, and inclusive mindsets.

Unlike traditional training, ARE places educators, healthcare professionals, caregivers, and community members into highly realistic simulated environments that replicate real-life sensory and communication barriers. These carefully crafted scenarios provide profound insights into the everyday struggles many neurodivergent individuals encounter, deepening understanding and reshaping how participants engage in both personal and professional settings.

Recognizing the transformative potential of ARE, ZHO and Topland have localized the program for the UAE, embedding Arabic language and culturally relevant contexts. Housed within the ZHO Innovation Centre in Al Bahia, this initiative sets a scalable precedent for inclusive education & training

with future deployment planned across schools, healthcare systems, public institutions, and corporate workplaces throughout the country.

This launch directly supports key national strategies, including UAE Centennial 2071 and the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, while also aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals—particularly those focused on reducing inequality and ensuring inclusive, quality education for all.

Initial feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting heightened empathy, a more nuanced understanding of autism, and practical improvements in their communication and support strategies. These outcomes underscore the unique value of immersive learning: its ability to spark personal transformation and promote inclusive behavior in ways that traditional lectures and data cannot replicate.

More than a social initiative, this project represents a strategic investment in inclusive innovation and health technology. It reflects a strategic commitment to advancing Abu Dhabi's ambition of becoming a global hub for inclusive technologies and health innovation. The broader vision is to establish a comprehensive, adaptable model of inclusive development that can be scaled both within the UAE and throughout the wider MENA region.

By embedding empathy-driven technologies, Abu Dhabi is institutionalizing inclusion, making it the norm rather than the exception. This marks a key step toward innovation rooted in human understanding.

This article is based on the information from Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) provided by



**MEERA MOHAMMED ALSHAMSİ**  
Vice Chair  
RI Health & Function Commission

# Rehabilitation as a Shared Culture in Finland – Network as a Service - 1



**A Finnish innovation is reshaping how we think about mental well-being, community, and rehabilitation. Markus Raivio introduces the GFP model and its expansion across workplaces and global networks.**

Earlier this year, I had the honor of participating in a Rehabilitation International committee meeting as Vice President of RI Finland. During the meeting, I had a meaningful and thought-provoking conversation with RI President Professor Christoph Gutenbrunner.

We spoke about the future of rehabilitation—not just in technical or institutional terms, but as a human and cultural question: How do we design systems that recognize the full person, not just the diagnosis? How do we make room for participation, creativity, and hope as core elements of rehabilitation?

At the end of our exchange, Professor Gutenbrunner encouraged me to share some thoughts on the holistic approach we've been building in Finland. I was grateful—and excited—to contribute to this newsletter by introducing the Guided Functional Peer Support (GFP) model.

## **Rehabilitation as something we do together**

The GFP model is a framework that shifts focus from fixing individuals to building cultures of well-being. It is not simply a method—it is a philosophy and infrastructure for participation.

At its most visible, GFP is practiced through culture houses—safe, creative, diagnosis-free spaces where people gather around shared interests such as art, music, storytelling, movement, or digital media. In these spaces, trained peer tutors—often with lived experience—facilitate connection, leadership, and meaning-making.

## **Beyond the Culture House: A framework, not a format**

GFP is more than what happens inside a culture house. It's a way of working—a flexible and transferable framework that can be applied in various settings, from schools and prisons to workplaces and digital communities.

One powerful example of this is the Safe Mind Network (Mielenturvaa-verkosto) in Finland—an alliance of some of the country's largest employers, including both public and private organizations. In this network, employers share best practices, support one another, and co-develop peer-based mental health solutions in a highly functional and solution-focused way.

Rather than relying on top-down models of mental health care, the Safe Mind Network builds a culture where well-being is integrated into everyday working life, and challenges are met collaboratively. Kukunori acts as the guided part of this process—facilitating the network, providing structure, and supporting organizations in turning ideas into action. The result is a living example of the GFP model in action: participatory, practical, and grounded in peer learning.

Internationally, GFP has also been adopted in Sweden and Kenya, and is currently being piloted in Wales, supported by our partner Ashoka, public funders, and civil society alliances.

In 2024, the European Commission recognized the GFP model as a Best Practice in Mental Health, affirming its role as a systemic innovation with international relevance.

## Rehabilitation as a Shared Culture in Finland – Network as a Service - 2

### What we're seeing in practice: Real outcomes

In Finland alone, over 25 GFP-based culture houses operate today. These spaces receive more than 4,000 annual visits, with consistent reports from participants of:

- Increased self-esteem
- Reduced anxiety and isolation
- New social roles, leadership, and peer relationships
- Improved access to education and employment (62% of the participants applied for school and work after the first year, regardless of their diagnosis.)

Municipalities have adopted the model in mental health planning. Hospital districts now integrate peer-led group work inspired by GFP. The City of Helsinki has cited it as a key shift toward more community-based, participatory recovery environments.

### POKKA: Measuring meaning and inclusion

A key part of the GFP ecosystem is the POKKA platform, a digital tool for evaluation and participatory reflection. Instead of relying on clinical outcome metrics, POKKA tracks human-centered indicators: inclusion, connection, self-expression, and well-being.

For example, a peer group may reflect on their experience using intuitive sliders and simple questions on a shared tablet or smartphone. These results help guide learning, planning, and communication—without losing the model's non-clinical, strengths-based approach.

POKKA is now used by 80 of Finnish NGOs and is available for international partners through the GFP international platform, currently supported by Ashoka Nordic, EU funding instruments, and peer learning networks.

### What could this mean for Rehabilitation International?

RI has always stood for dignity, inclusion, and the right to participate fully in society. The GFP framework doesn't challenge these values—it brings them to life in practice.

It also invites us to rethink what a service is. In GFP, we're not delivering interventions to individuals—we are building networks and communities that themselves become the platform for support. The support isn't separate from the people. The people are the support. This opens possibilities for RI members and working groups, from inclusive education to post-conflict recovery, to explore new ways of enabling local leadership and lived experience within rehabilitation ecosystems.

Here is an article in Forbes US for more information:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashoka/2022/06/07/in-the-happiest-place-on-earth-a-revolution-in-mental-health-care/>

This article was written by:



**Markus Raivio**

Director of Kukunori & Vice President,  
Rehabilitation International Finland

# Global Study Exposes Critical Data Gaps in Mental Health Prevalence-Children and Low-Income Countries Most Affected - 1



A study published in The Lancet Global Health on April 24, 2025, has revealed a stark reality for global mental health: more than 80 percent of countries and territories lack recent, nationally representative data on the prevalence of mental health conditions, with children and low-income regions facing the greatest information deficits. This data vacuum threatens to undermine policy, advocacy, and service delivery at a time when mental health is climbing the global policy agenda.

## Landmark Research: Scope and Significance

The study systematically analyzed the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2021 dataset. Researchers examined 1,241 unique, nationally representative data sources on 11 mental health conditions—including neurodevelopmental, psychiatric, and substance-use disorders—spanning 204 countries and territories since 1950.

## Key Findings: Where the Gaps Are Largest

### 1. Children Are the Least Represented

- Nearly 90% of countries have no nationally representative data on mental health conditions in children.
- Neurodevelopmental disorders (such as autism spectrum disorder and ADHD) are especially underrepresented, with less than 13% of countries reporting any prevalence data for these conditions.

- Most available datasets for children were collected before 2010, failing to reflect current challenges or trends.

### 2. Low- and Middle-Income Countries Left Behind

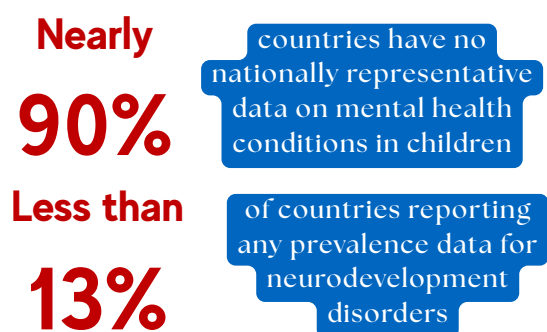
- Low-income countries have the largest data gaps, with no data on neurodevelopmental disorders, only 29% with any data on general psychiatric disorders, and just 21% with data on substance-use disorders.
- The African and Western Pacific regions are the most affected, with the African region lacking any nationally representative data sources for children.

### 3. Most Data Are Outdated

Across all disorders, 70–80% of the data were collected before 2010, raising concerns about their relevance given recent increases in mental health distress and changing societal factors.

### 4. Adult Data Predominate

The majority of data sources focus on adults, with significant gaps for early childhood (0–4 years) and adolescence (10–19 years), despite these being critical periods for the onset of mental health conditions.



## Implications: Why Data Gaps Matter

The absence of timely, high-quality, and representative mental health data has profound consequences:

- **Policy Blind Spots:** Without accurate prevalence data, governments and international agencies cannot allocate resources effectively or design evidence-based interventions.



## Global Study Exposes Critical Data Gaps in Mental Health Prevalence-Children and Low-Income Countries Most Affected - 2

- **Stigma and Advocacy:** Data gaps perpetuate stigma by keeping the true scale of mental health needs invisible, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and those in low-income settings.
- **Global Inequity:** The predominance of data from high-income countries skews the global understanding of mental health, limiting the applicability of research and interventions in diverse settings.



### Recommendations: Bridging the Data Divide

The study's authors and global mental health advocates urge several key actions:

- **Investment in Data Infrastructure:** Support national and international efforts to collect, update, and harmonize mental health data, especially for children and adolescents in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Open Science and Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Leverage open data frameworks and collaborations across research, government, and civil society to close knowledge gaps.
- **Focus on Underrepresented Groups:** Prioritize data collection for children, adolescents, and marginalized populations to ensure inclusive policy development.
- **Regular Data Updates:** Establish mechanisms for ongoing, periodic data collection to capture emerging trends and inform timely responses.

### Conclusion: A Roadmap for Global Mental Health Equity

The findings of this comprehensive analysis serve as a wake-up call for the international community. As mental health rises on the global policy agenda-especially ahead of the United Nations General Assembly's focus on accelerating action for mental health-addressing data gaps is an urgent priority. Only with robust, up-to-date, and inclusive data can the world hope to design effective policies, reduce stigma, and ensure that no one, especially children and those in low-resource settings, is left behind.

**Reference:** Casella, Caio B., Antonis A. Kousoulis, Brandon A. Kohrt, Jason Bantjes, Christian Kieling, Pim Cuijpers, Sarah Kline et al. "Data gaps in prevalence rates of mental health conditions around the world: a retrospective analysis of nationally representative data." *The Lancet Global Health* 13, no. 5 (2025): e879-e887.

This article was prepared by Dr. rer.biol.hum. Boya Nugraha, MS

## Save the Date

### **RI Announces the Call for Applications to Host the 25th RI World Congress in 2028**

As one of RI's most significant events, the World Congress is an unparalleled opportunity to bring together international leaders, experts, and advocates committed to advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disability on a global level. The Congress serves as a vital platform for sharing knowledge, strengthening partnerships, and shaping global agendas.

Following the tremendous success of the 2024 World Congress in Abu Dhabi, we now invite RI Member Organizations to submit proposals to host the 2028 event.

Please find attached the full announcement and supporting documents, which include:

- RI WC 2028 – General Outline
- RI WC 2028 – Bid National Host
- RI WC 2028 Bid for International Congress Host

These documents provide detailed information about the Congress vision and the requirements for hosting. They are available for download on the RI website:

<https://www.riglobal.org/ri-announces-the-call-for-applications-to-host-the-25th-ri-world-congress-in-2028/>

The deadline for proposal submissions is **August 31, 2025**.

Should you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We look forward to receiving your proposal and working together to make the 2028 World Congress another landmark event for the global disability community.

### **RI Governing Assembly 2025 combined with a RI Regional Conference**

The RI Governing Assembly 2025 combined with a RI Regional Conference will be held in Delhi (India) from November 6-9, 2025. More detailed information will follow soon. Please check RI website

### **The 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSPI8)**

The 18<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSPI8) will be held at UN Headquarters in New York City from June 10-12, 2025. RI has registered two side events. More information will follow soon.

### **The Second World Summit on Social Development**

The Second World Summit on Social Development will be held from Nov 4 to 6, 2025 in Doha (Qatar).

## Call for contribution

A heartfelt thank you to all our contributors for your invaluable support, dedication, and engagement! Your efforts continue to inspire and drive our shared mission of creating a more inclusive world for everyone.

### We are excited to invite:

- **Member Organizations:** Showcase your impactful programs, innovative projects, and success stories that advance rehabilitation and inclusion.
- **RI President & Vice Presidents:** Share your strategic insights, regional updates, and experiences from the frontlines of advocacy.
- **RI Commissions:** Contribute research findings, policy recommendations, or groundbreaking initiatives that shape the future of accessibility and empowerment.
- **RI Regions:** Highlight local achievements, unique cultural approaches to rehabilitation, and stories of resilience within your communities.

Whether it's a breakthrough initiative or an inspiring individual, we encourage you to share your activities, achievements, thoughts, or ideas with us. Your contributions provide valuable insights and help amplify the incredible work being carried out worldwide.

### Why Contribute?

Your stories not only foster collaboration and learning but also inspire others within the Rehabilitation International community to take meaningful action. Together, we can create a powerful platform for change and advocacy.

### How to Submit?

Please send your submissions to: **RI Media** ([rimedia@riglobal.org](mailto:rimedia@riglobal.org))

We welcome articles, photos, videos, and any other materials that best showcase your work and its impact.

Let's continue to work together to shine a light on the exceptional efforts that make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities around the world.

We look forward to hearing from you soon!

### Don't forget to check and follow our social media:



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Rehabilitation  
International

**A GLOBAL ADVOCATE FOR REHABILITATION,  
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