



# Rehabilitation International

## News!

A GLOBAL ADVOCATE FOR REHABILITATION, INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS



## Editorial

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

Welcome to the July 2025 edition of the Rehabilitation International (RI) Newsletter. In this issue, we are proud to share significant developments and inspiring highlights from across our global network:

- ◆ RI Activities
  - Rehabilitation International Statement on Respecting the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza War Zone
  - Recent Developments at Rehabilitation International
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  - Inclusive Symbol Design Competition, Launch of the RI Youth Forum
  - Call for Applications to Host the 25th Rehabilitation International World Congress in 2028 – Member organizations are encouraged to express their interest.

We warmly welcome your stories, insights, and updates. Your voices and experiences are essential to advancing our shared vision of equity, inclusion, and dignity for all.

A heartfelt thank-you to our contributors and readers for your ongoing support.

Together, we are building a more inclusive world.

Warm regards,

Hannover, July 2025

**RI President & RI Media**

## In this RI News!

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## Rehabilitation International Statement on Respecting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Gaza war zone - 1



In war zones and armed conflicts, persons with disabilities are more vulnerable than other people. Reacting to alarm and finding a shelter may be difficult or even impossible for persons with visual and hearing impairment as well as those with restricted mobility or orientation difficulties.

International Humanitarian Law, provides protection for persons with disabilities in armed conflicts, recognizing their specific vulnerabilities and needs. It aims at to limit the effects of war and protect civilians and it specifically addresses the protection of persons with disabilities, requiring parties to treat them humanely and provide necessary medical care.

The UN-Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities states in Article 11 the following: "States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters."

The International Laws and Human Rights approach bounds states to guarantee specific protections and obligations: they consist in

- **Humane Treatment:** Parties to conflicts must treat persons with disabilities humanely and without discrimination.
- **Medical Care:** Persons with disabilities must receive medical care to the fullest extent practicable and without delay.
- **Access to Services:** Efforts should be made to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to basic services like healthcare, water, and sanitation.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** Parties to conflicts must facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including specialized assistance for persons with disabilities.
- **Protection from Attacks:** Persons with disabilities are entitled to the same protection from attacks as other civilians.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** States Parties to the CRPD are obligated to provide reasonable accommodation to the rights of persons with disabilities both in the conduct of hostilities and when they are in the power of a party.



## Rehabilitation International Statement on Respecting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Gaza war zone - 2

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) too, points out that “Everyone living in the shadow of conflict faces unthinkable challenges in striving to protect themselves and their loved ones. For persons with disabilities, those challenges can be even more daunting. Many come up against additional barriers in seeking protection; some, particularly women and girls with disabilities, are physically unable to flee violence and many are vulnerable to human rights violations, violence and abuse, including sexual abuse.” Therefore “International humanitarian, human rights and refugee law require states to protect and assist persons with disabilities at all stages of the conflict cycle. In 2019, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2475 on the situation of persons with disabilities in armed conflict, which acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities, while reinforcing the obligations of all United Nations Member States” (<https://www.unmas.org/en/persons-with-disabilities-armed-conflict>).

In Gaza Strip, international humanitarian law and the principles of human rights are violated in many ways. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), “persons with disabilities suffer from catastrophic humanitarian conditions, exacerbated by the widespread destruction of infrastructure and basic services and their exposure to tragic displacement conditions in addition to the difficult psychological trauma they are exposed to.”

In 2024, the World Health Organization, estimates the number of serious injuries requiring continuous care and rehabilitation the number of serious life-changing injuries requiring continuous rehabilitation at about 25% of the total number of injuries.

“These cases include between 13,455 and 17,550 severe limb injuries, in addition to 3,105 - 4,050 amputations, mostly of the lower limbs. In addition, the same report estimates about 2,000 major head and spinal cord injuries, and the number of burn injuries is estimated to be over 2,000. Spinal cord injuries and burns require immediate treatment and rehabilitation to prevent long-term effects, which may result in permanent disabilities.” (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)).

The Palestinian Ministry of Health indicated that 70% of the total number of wounded are children and women. According to a report issued by Save the Children and quoted from UNICEF in January 2024, more than 1,000 children have had their limbs amputated, an average of more than 10 children per day during the first three months of the aggression.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics points out that the “conditions of the injured persons have been exacerbated by the systematic destruction of hospitals and rehabilitation centers, in addition to the strict restrictions imposed on the evacuation of patients and the limited entry of assistive devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, and hearing aids, and the severe shortage of medical supplies and basic consumables. This systematic attack on health facilities and medical personnel has limited the health system’s ability to provide essential treatment to the injured persons, especially those with serious injuries such as spinal cord injuries and burns, which require immediate treatment and intensive rehabilitation to prevent long-term effects. Amidst this destruction, access to basic treatments and specialized services has become almost impossible, contributing to the deterioration of their health conditions and putting their lives at grave risk.

## Rehabilitation International Statement on Respecting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Gaza war zone - 3

Currently, only 17 out of 36 hospitals remain partially operational, while primary healthcare is often suspended or inaccessible due to insecurity, attacks and repeated evacuation orders. The only limb reconstruction and rehabilitation center in Nasser Medical Complex has been out of service since December 2023 due to the shortage of supplies and the displacement of specialized health workers, and was later destroyed after the Israeli attack on the hospital in February 2024. The Ministry of Health reports as of 23/11/2024 indicate that more than 1,000 health workers and specialists have been killed, and a previous report issued in May indicated that 39 physiotherapists were killed."

Rehabilitation International urges Israeli Government to immediately stop the violations of International Laws and Human Rights during war in Gaza Strip and other areas in the region. This includes to set up a specific strategy and measures to protect persons with disabilities and to stop attacking hospitals and health and rehabilitation centers as well as protect women and children from injury through war weapons.

New York City, July 7, 2025



Signed on behalf of Rehabilitation International  
Prof. Christoph Gutenbrunner, MD, PhD, FRCP, SFEBPRM  
President of Rehabilitation International



## Recent Developments at Rehabilitation International - 1



Taking a brief pause from ongoing RI management work, I'm pleased to share a summary of recent key developments within our organization:

**UNESCO Relations:** RI's application for official relations status with UNESCO has been confirmed. A final decision is expected in September 2025.

**WHO Engagements:**

- RI has submitted its application for membership in the World Rehabilitation Alliance, hosted by WHO.
- Prof. Christoph Gutenbrunner has been nominated as a member of the Founding Committee of the WHO Network on Health Equity for People with Disabilities.

**Academic Contributions:** Our official journal, the International Journal of Rehabilitation and Disability Studies, hosted by ZHO, has been launched and is now open for submissions.

**Membership Updates:** Eight new membership applications are currently under review and will be presented for approval at the General Assembly in November 2025.

**Youth Engagement:** The RI Youth Forum is scheduled to launch on Wednesday, August 27, 2025. Further details will be shared soon.

**Strategic Partnerships:** A new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the International Social Security Association (ISSA) has been finalized and will be signed at the ISSA World Congress in October 2025, Kuala Lumpur.

**World Congress 2028:** The call for bids to host the RI World Congress 2028 has been published on the RI website.

**Advocacy in Crisis Settings:** The Commission on Humanitarian Emergencies has drafted a statement titled 'Respecting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Gaza War Zone'.

## Recent Developments at Rehabilitation International - 2

**Global Partnerships:** Collaborative work is underway with Madame Haidi and representatives from Qingdao University of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences to activate two RI Centers, supported by a donation from CDPF.

**Inclusive Education Initiative:** Tone Mörk has announced the completion of the handbook for the Global Symbol on Inclusive Education project. It will be shared shortly.

**New Initiatives:** Preliminary discussions are ongoing with Mark Soubiran on establishing an RI Academy, potentially hosted by the Institut Supérieur de Rééducation Psychomotrice (ISRP). The project is in early planning stages.

**COSP 18 Participation:** RI actively participated in COSP 18, organizing two side-events, delivering a statement during the general discussion, and holding multiple informal consultations—including with WHO Health Equity Network leads, ISPRM representatives, the German Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD), and other key stakeholders.

### Upcoming Regional Conference – Delhi:

- From November 3–6, 2025, the regional conference will be held in Delhi, hosted by Amar Jyoti Charitable Trust, under the theme: “Redefining Abilities – A Global Vision for Inclusive and Empowered Living.”
- The RI Executive Committee (EC) and General Assembly (GA) meetings are scheduled for November 1–2, 2025 in Delhi.

### 2026 Planning:

- I propose that the first in-person EC meeting of 2026 be held in New York City, two days prior to COSP 19.

### Organizational Restructuring:

- The Delphi exercise on reforming RI Commissions within the EC has been completed. The Management Board (MB) has also developed a proposal for a revised membership dues structure.



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



# New Journal to Elevate Disability Research Worldwide – Call for Papers Announced - 1

## International Journal of Rehabilitation & Disability Studies

Articles & Issues ▾ About ▾ Editorial Board Publishing Packages Indexing Publish ▾



<https://emiratesscholar.com/directory/index.php/ijrds>

### About

This interdisciplinary journal publishes original research, reviews, and case studies on topics such as rehabilitation techniques, disability rights, assistive technologies, inclusive practices, and societal inclusion. It seeks to bridge the gap between academic research, policy development, and practical implementation.

[Read More](#)

A transformative step in global rehabilitation research is underway with the launch of the **International Journal of Rehabilitation & Disability Studies (IJRDS)**. This newly established, peer-reviewed, and open-access journal is now accepting submissions for its debut issue, offering scholars and professionals an inclusive platform to share pioneering work in both Arabic and English. The journal emerges through a collaborative effort between the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO), the Emirates Scholar Scientific Research Center, and Rehabilitation International (RI)—uniting regional leadership with international expertise.

### A Unified Vision for Change

IJRDS is designed to serve as a vital conduit for research that bridges science, policy, and lived experience. Contributors are encouraged to submit papers exploring:

- Innovative, data-driven rehabilitation methods
- Policy-focused studies that influence decision-making
- Narrative and qualitative research centered on real-world experiences

By spotlighting interdisciplinary work, the journal seeks to connect a wide spectrum of voices—from clinicians and policymakers to engineers and people with disabilities themselves.

### Your Role is Vital

As members and advocates of RI's mission for inclusive practice, the community is warmly invited to support the journal in several key ways:

#### • **Spread the Word**

Share this journal with universities, NGOs, researchers, and professional contacts throughout the MENA region and internationally.

#### • **Inspire Quality Contributions**

Encourage your peers and early-career researchers to submit meaningful, original work that advances the field.

#### • **Promote Cross-Sector Collaboration**

Help position IJRDS as a meeting ground for diverse expertise, where academic research informs on-the-ground solutions.

### Advancing Global Inclusion

The launch of IJRDS represents a major stride toward the shared goals of RI and its partners:

- Strengthening the Evidence Base

The journal will help solidify research that informs impactful rehabilitation policy and practice.

- Encouraging International Dialogue

It will provide a forum for professionals worldwide to exchange knowledge, ideas, and culturally informed innovations.

# New Journal to Elevate Disability Research Worldwide – Call for Papers Announced - 2



## CALL FOR PAPERS

International Journal of  
**Rehabilitation  
& Disability Studies**

VOL 1 | ISSUE 1 | 2025  
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## About (IJRDS)

The journal is dedicated to advancing knowledge and fostering dialogue in the fields of rehabilitation and disability studies. It aims to address global challenges, promote inclusivity, and support innovative solutions that empower individuals with disabilities.

This interdisciplinary journal publishes original research, reviews, and case studies on topics such as rehabilitation techniques, disability rights, assistive technologies, inclusive practices, and societal inclusion. It seeks to bridge the gap between academic research, policy development, and practical implementation.

Authors are invited to submit original research papers, that align with the following topics :

Data-Driven Approaches in Rehabilitation.

Policy-Oriented Research in Rehabilitation and Disability.

Qualitative Analyses of Rehabilitation Practices and Experiences.




Submit Now

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<https://emiratesscholar.com/directory/index.php/ijrds>



# The Hidden Power of Inclusion: Why Guests Love Hotels that Employ People with Disabilities - 1



## Why Disability Inclusion in Hospitality Matters

The hospitality industry is facing a turning point. According to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, promoting employment for people with disabilities is crucial for "inclusive economic growth." Yet, the numbers paint a stark picture: while 15% of working-age adults in developed countries are disabled, only 22.5% of disabled people in the US are employed, compared with 65.8% of non-disabled people.

Hotels that employ PWD are doing more than meeting legal requirements—they are demonstrating a real commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR). As lead researcher Bora Kim and her team found, this commitment is more than ethical. It's smart business.

***"Initiatives like employing people with disabilities deliver business benefits by boosting consumer loyalty," the authors write. "Consumers support businesses they see contributing to societal welfare, with increased trust and revisit intention."***

## How Disability Employment Shapes Guest Behavior

While hospitality leaders have long debated whether guests will accept PWD in customer-facing roles, actual consumer voices have seldom been heard. This new research bridges that gap using two robust experiments with over 1,400 UK participants.

Guests were shown hotel scenarios both with and without PWD employees, then asked about their impressions, likelihood to recommend, and intention to book again.

The results were eye-opening:

- Hotels that visibly employ PWD spark higher guest trust, more positive word-of-mouth, and increased repurchase intentions.
- These effects are driven by both personal moral judgment ("this is right") and positive perceptions of CSR ("this hotel cares about society").
- These benefits hold true across all hotel types—whether five-star luxury or three-star independent.

Notably, guests' intent to spread positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and book again is powered by what researchers call "moral decision-making": guests feel morally good about supporting inclusive hotels, and more likely to recommend them.

## The Secret: It's About What Guests Feel and Perceive

The research dives into the psychology behind these numbers. Two factors proved key:

- **Moral Judgement and Obligation:** Guests who see a hotel employing PWD feel a sense of moral rightness and even moral obligation to support that business.

## The Hidden Power of Inclusion: Why Guests Love Hotels that Employ People with Disabilities - 2

- **Perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** When guests believe a hotel is truly committed to fair and inclusive employment, they trust its brand and are more likely to become repeat guests.

These effects are so strong that even if guests have high expectations for luxury or seamless service (think: five-star hotels), their positive feelings about inclusion outweigh concerns over service delivery.

### Star Ratings and Chains: Inclusion Works Everywhere

Contrary to industry fears, the positive effects of PWD employment were not limited to lower-tier or independent hotels. Whether a hotel is a luxury chain, a five-star flagship, or a budget three-star, embracing inclusive hiring delivered consistently better guest outcomes.

Even when tested across different business types, the impact of CSR and moral perception did not vary. This means hotels of all sizes and brands have a unique opportunity to enhance their image and guest loyalty by genuinely integrating disability inclusion into their workforce.

### Practical Tips for Hoteliers: Make CSR Real and Visible

1. Integrate, Don't Isolate: Disability employment should be part of the core workforce—not just an isolated gesture. Offer real career development and training, ensuring service standards remain high.
2. Communicate CSR: Make employment practices visible to guests through clear messages at the hotel and online booking platforms. Transparency boosts credibility.
3. Train Staff for Excellence: Inclusive hiring should never compromise service quality, which remains important for repeat business. Frontline training and empowerment are essential.

4. Promote Inclusion at Every Star Level: Whether independent or a big chain, any hotel can benefit from PWD employment. The payoff comes in goodwill and positive guest sentiment.

### The Business Case: Inclusion Isn't Just Fair, It's Smart

By focusing on what matters to guests—fairness, social responsibility, and authenticity—hotels can break the “inclusion dilemma.” The research confirms a new paradigm: guests are more likely to recommend and trust hotels that are openly inclusive, regardless of star rating or brand prestige.

As the UN's global goals and the modern traveler both demand a more equitable world, hotels embracing disability inclusion find themselves ahead of the curve—both ethically and financially.

In summary, hotels that visibly employ people with disabilities benefit not just from fulfilling a moral obligation, but by building stronger trust, higher guest loyalty, and a powerful reputation for responsibility and care. The return on inclusion is clear, measurable, and universal—proving that doing good also means doing well.

Reference: Kim, Bora, Anyu Liu, and Erin Chao Ling. "Effects of disability employment on guest perceptions and behavioral intentions in the hotel sector." *International journal of hospitality management* 124 (2025): 103993.





Rehabilitation  
International

# Inclusive Education Symbol

## Design Competition

Rehabilitation International (RI) is inviting submissions for a 21st Century ***“International Symbol of Inclusive Education”*** to represent core values of rights and inclusion, equity and independence, diversity, physical and virtual accessibility for all, including people with disabilities.

The challenge is to develop an international symbol of inclusive education that reflect this goal. The competition is an opportunity for all designers interested in promoting design for all -awareness and accessibility and participation for all.

Competition announced  
and launched

**15 September**  
2025

**5 October**  
2025

Deadline for the  
receipt of questions

Answers for the questions

**24 October**  
2025

**15 November**  
2025

**Submission Deadline**  
1700, Hong Kong Time



### Contact us

Questions should be sent to  
competition secretariat  
AUAHK at [info@auahk.org](mailto:info@auahk.org)  
by 5 October 2025.



### Competition Organizer

Rehabilitation International (RI)

**Address** A66 United Nations Plaza, Office 422  
New York, NY 10017, USA

**Phone (interim period)** +49 176 611 77 125  
**Email** [info@riglobal.org](mailto:info@riglobal.org)

**Web** <https://www.riglobal.org/>

Submission  
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Now

<https://ridesigncompetition.auahk.org/>





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## You're Invited to the Launch of



Empowering Youth, Transforming Inclusion

Young people with disabilities face unique challenges in identity, education, training, and employment. Too often, their perspectives and visions are overlooked in policies and actions. This Forum ensures they not only have a seat at the table, but an active role in shaping the future of inclusion, rehabilitation, and human rights.



## Your Support Makes All The Difference



Saturday,  
11 Oct 2025



Starting at 15:00  
CEST/Berlin time

### Welcome Speech



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

REGISTER  
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[www.riglobal.org](http://www.riglobal.org)



## Save the Date

### **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 **December 20, 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 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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