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## **Abuja Conference launches new guidelines aimed at empowering millions of Africans with disabilities**

**ABUJA** (ILO News) –The 4th CBR Africa Network Conference (CAN) today launched new guidelines designed to empower persons with disabilities by supporting their inclusion in health, education, employment, social, skills training and other community services.

The Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) guidelines resulted from the joint efforts of four U.N. and international organizations are expected to impact on millions of people with disabilities in Africa, many of whom now live in poverty and exclusion.

The new CBR guidelines, under development since 2004, were produced by the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Office (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), in close consultation with other key stakeholders on disability and development globally.

Nigerian First Lady Dame Patience Goodluck Jonathan, wife of President Goodluck Jonathan, officially opened the conference – *‘Linking CBR, Disability and Rehabilitation’* – and launched the guidelines at the gathering of some 350 delegates from 30 countries in the Africa region, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America.

The event also heard a welcome address by the Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development, Ms. Iyom Josephine Anenih MNI, FNIM, and included the participation of high-level Nigerian government officials, in addition to international development partners, United Nations agencies and CBR practitioners.

Nigerian government support for the landmark conference comes in the wake of its recent ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol and ILO Convention No. 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention which aim to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy their rights on an equal basis with all others.

“The new CBR Guidelines will make a fundamental difference to the up to 80 million people with disabilities in Africa, lifting them out of poverty, in a process that involves them centrally”, said CAN Executive Director Ms. Joan Okune.

Dr. Etienne Krug, Director of the WHO Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability Department said "the Guidelines on community-based rehabilitation provide an important additional tool to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and strengthen community-based development involving people with disabilities."

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Echoing this support, Rehabilitation International Secretary-General Venus Ilagan said “the CBR Guidelines highlight the importance of all stakeholders – including disabled persons’ organisations as well as government and social partners - working together to achieve a shared goal of full participation with equality of persons with disabilities.”

IDDC and its partners across Africa, Asia and Latin America, having contributed to the development of the Guidelines, are expected to put into practice this fundamental shift toward a multi-sectoral approach involving all parts of government in partnership with people with disabilities, their families and communities.

Speaking on behalf of the ILO, Ms. Barbara Murray, Senior Disability Specialist, said “the Guidelines will be an essential part of the campaign to keep the promise of the Millennium Development Goals for people with disabilities who represent more than a one in 10 of the worlds’ population.”

The new guidelines provide guidance on using CBR programmes to implement the CRPD in low and middle income countries; promote a strategy for community-based inclusive development; shift away from the old approach which separated people with disabilities from the mainstream of society to a new approach that seeks to empower and include them in decision making; and, promote dignity and rights for all.

To access the guidelines: <http://www.who.int/disabilities/cbr/en/>

**Note to correspondents**

The conference is being held at the Nicon Luxury Hotel in Abuja and will conclude on Friday, 29 October. It is open to the media and disability experts are available for interviews.