



**CHEF INTERNATIONAL**  
Comprehensive Health & Education Forum Int'l

# Pakistan Institute Of Rehabilitation Sciences



International Day of Persons with Disabilities  
“Not all disabilities are visible”



## Introduction

Disability is part of being human and integral to the human experience. It results from the interaction between health conditions and/or impairments that a person experiences, such as dementia, blindness, deafness, loss of arm/leg, spinal cord injury, and a range of contextual factors related to different environmental and personal factors including societal attitudes, access to infrastructure, discriminatory policies, age, and gender. As of 2021, approximately 1.3 billion people – about 16% of the global population – have disability. This number has increased substantially during the past decade due to different demographic and epidemiological changes such as population rising and the increase in the number of people with noncommunicable diseases, who are living longer and ageing with limitations in functioning.

Persons with disabilities are part of human diversity; although often referred to as a single population, they are a very diverse group of people. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) describes persons with disabilities as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction 4 Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

Pakistan Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences (PIRS) hosted an event to commemorate International Day of Persons with disabilities on 1st December 2022. The event was attended by several stakeholders working in the disability sector including Sightsavers, HelpAge, Community Based Inclusive Development Network, Human Development Foundation (HDF), Brien Holden Vision Foundation (BHVF), International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), Rehab Initiative (RI), Pakistan Special (journal for persons with disabilities), Saaya Foundation, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and National Commission for Human Development (NCHD). Member National Assembly Zill-e-Huma graced the event with her presence. Prof Muhammad Daud Khan, chairman CHEF-I attended as chief guest.

International Day of Persons with disabilities is celebrated all over the globe with great significance to re-affirm commitment towards inclusion of persons with disabilities. The theme for this year was “Not all disabilities are visible”.

Key objectives of organizing this event were to discuss the quantum of disabilities, including prevalence, types, causes and management of disabilities in terms of rehabilitation, access to education, skills and livelihood, social inclusion, and economic empowerment in Pakistan.



## Proceedings

International Day of Persons with disabilities event started with the recitation of Surah Rehman. Prof Muhammad Daud Khan, in his opening speech titled “How best we can rehabilitate persons with disabilities in Pakistan”, discussed the challenges of growing population, aging, poverty, inequitable distribution of resources, extremism, conflicts etc along with lack of epidemiological evidence and lack of primary health care for persons with disabilities as major obstacles in meeting their needs. Prof Muhammad Daud Khan strongly recommended a national strategic action plan for comprehensive management of disability.

Dr Muhammad Babar Qureshi, vice president IAPB and Director NCD at CBM, addressed participants through a video message. He reminded participants that “Leaving no one behind” is the key to UN SDGs but persons with disabilities are less likely to access quality health care, education, employment and participate actively in their communities. Dr Qureshi said 1 billion people live with visual impairment and if remained unaddressed, will have serious consequences on the lives of children, adults, and older adults. International Agency for Prevention of Blindness envisions by 2030 eye care be available, accessible, and affordable to everyone.

Munazza Gillani, country director Sightsavers, discussed the vital role of Sightsavers in the eye care and advocacy for disability rights in Pakistan. The key features and achievements of her presentation were global disability scenario, legislation on disability rights in Pakistan and inclusion of disability desegregated data collection in government institutions.

Dr Khalid Riaz, chairman Human Development Foundation, addressed participants via a video message. Dr Khalid Riaz emphasized the invisible disabilities due to micronutrients deficiencies and learning disabilities particularly due to vision and hearing impairment in children.

Dr Farrukh Seir, executive director PIRS, shared the vision and mission of PIRS in developing human resources for rehabilitation for disability.

Prof Andrew Smith, International Centre for Evidence in Disability, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, presented global perspective on hearing disabilities.

Dr Aliya Qadir, Research and Development PIRS, presented status of hearing disability in Pakistan. About 5% people face hearing disability globally and 4.4 million have disabling hearing loss in Pakistan that is unaddressed. In the absence of a national vision and programme, this is likely to increase. She recommended the establishment of national committee at the ministry of health services, regulation, and coordination for the governance, planning and coordination of ear and hearing programmes. Dr Aliya Qadir introduced Public Health Planning for Hearing Impairment (PHPHI) course to participants that is conducted in collaboration with International Centre for Evidence in Disability (ICED)- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

A short film titled “Hidden Disability” based on the struggle and achievements of deaf and mute Amir Raees was shown. This short film calls upon the importance of social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities.



Dr Gul Zaman, International Committee of Red Cross Pakistan, presented rehabilitation services, technology, capacity development and technical role of ICRC for physical rehabilitation.

Anwar Sadat, Aging, Disability and Diversity Taskforce (ADDTF) coordinator, HelpAge, informed audience that 46% of world's population above 60 years faces some form of disability. Anwar Sadat also talked about the background and history of ADDTF and prospects in Pakistan. He also shared how inclusion was made a reality in recent floods.

Asim Zafar presented the journey of CBIDN for the rights of persons with disabilities. He gave details of the legal aspects of rights of persons with disabilities and achievements on the legal front.

Farhat Abbas, editor in chief Pakistan Special, discussed the vital role of journal "Pakistan Special" for raising voice of persons with disabilities. He announced the digital version of journal in 2023.

Zill - e Huma, member National Assembly and focal persons for disability in the parliament, applauded the role of NGOs and strongly recommended for more collaborative and coordinated efforts. She assured her guidance and support for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Dr Bakht Sarwar, Chairman Rehab Initiative, commented on the urgent needs for rehabilitation of physically disabled.

Mehboob ul Haq, CEO Human Development Foundation, commented Disability being the cross-cutting theme, will be part of HDF programmes in future.

Khalid Saifullah, country director Brien Holden Vision Foundation, highlighted the importance of research, availability of quality data and database.

Brig. (R) Dr Sultan Muzaffar, informed audience about the dire needs of health care for persons with disability.

Nawazish Khan, NDMA, explained the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disasters management.

Munazza Gillani urged upon public private partnership as a key for sustainability.

## Recommendations

The presentation paved way for the following recommendations:

- Building and strengthening national and international collaboration and partnerships.
- National disability technical working group to develop a national strategic plan for comprehensive management of disability.
- Quality epidemiological data on national situation analysis of disability through a health systems approach.
- Human resource development for rehabilitation at provincial level.
- District based inclusive development models including access to health services, education, skills development, livelihood, social and economic inclusion.



## Conclusions

Event concluded with a vote of thanks. Participants urged to continue efforts and actions to impact in societal and systems change for people with disabilities in social interaction and inclusion, in education, in decent work and livelihood, in safety and security – to be able to live their lives with dignity and independence.





Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities – WHO - 2022