Report of RIA Representative to the
Twelfth Conference of States Parties (COSP12)
United Nations New York City
11-13 June 2019

Summary of findings

The Event	
	Twelfth Conference of States Parties (COSP12, United Nations, New York - 10-13 June 2019
Funded Participants	Susan Salthouse
Presentations delivered	Not applicable
Outcomes	Not applicable as an individual participant However, Australian Government -supported side events had positive outcomes for people with disabilities 1. Strengthened contact between organisations of women with disabilities 2. Raised awareness of people with communication impairment & their work with speech pathologists & need to improve service provider familiarity with AACs. 3. Promotion of the International Communication Project 4. Interventions and statements made by Australian delegates/government were professionally done and positively received.
Relevance, usefulness and benefits of the event for Australia	1. Enabling Australian CSO delegates to meet with counterparts from all over the world 2. Enabling Australia CSO delegates to learn about approaches to implementation of CRPD being taken by other DPOs and government 3. Enabling networking with and support of delegates from Australian DPOs 4. Showcasing of Gov't/CSO cooperation 5. Improved knowledge of how UN Human Rights Instruments are run

Information presented at the event that may inform Australian Disability Policy Development	1. Launch of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy provides impetus for across agency coordination of disability policy to all UN Agencies and treaty bodies. Lessons from this cross-agency coordination could be applied to implementation of the CRPD through the National Disability Strategy. 2. The launch of the Beijing+25 framework by UN Women with female Committee members of the CRPD indicates an improving strengthening of inclusion in mainstream women's organisations, led from UN Women 3. Intersectionality considerations needs to drive policy 4. A call for employment of people with disabilities to mirror the demographic representation in the population 5. That ICT with use of AT is an essential utility and must be made available, affordable and accessible 6. A definition of AT needs to be clearly articulated 7. AT policy in NDIS and Ageing needs to be aligned with WHO, Global Cooperation of Assistive Technology (GATE) initiatives 8. Women with disabilities need to be recognised in leadership positions 9. Natural supports of adult children with disabilities cannot be maintained as disabilities are acquired by ageing parents. 10. The importance of collection of data aligned with Washington Group methods, and disaggregation by gender
Issues that Australia needs to be aware of/consider	1. DPOs need capacity building, especially in the Global South and North 2. At the same time these DPOs are calling for recognition of their improved professionalism and existing capacities 3. They call for more balanced sharing of power between donor organisation and recipient organisation 4. Greater calls for accessible habitat planning, multiple calls for Universal Design 5. The intersection of disability & ageing needs close policy cooperation, with better services for ageing people with existing disabilities, and attention to the perception of disabilities acquired with age. 6. A recognition that the slogan of the disability rights movement may need amendment from '***Nothing About us Without us*** to ***Nothing without us***
	Full report follows

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Introduction

I was privileged to be given the opportunity to attend COSP12 at the UN headquarters in New York City from 11-13 June 2019. COSP12 formal meetings were preceded by a Civil Society Forum hosted by the International Disability Alliance and also held at the UN on Monday 10 June.

My attendance was made possible by a grant from the Department of Social Services under the Disability and Carer Service Improvement and Sector Support Program through the Government Grant Activity Supporting Participation of Representatives of People with Disability in International Forums. Rights and Inclusion Australia (RIA) had applied for funding under this grant in order to enable its 3 women directors to conduct a COSP12 side event on awareness raising (a cross-cutting theme) and the use of technology and ICT for inclusion of people with disabilities (a sub-theme) using Articles 9 & 26 for guidance. With grant funding for only 1 director it was not possible to proceed with organisation of the side event. Instead I focussed on side events looking at the ICT sub-theme and side events looking at gender in the implementation of the CRPD.

Background

The participation of representatives of Australian Disabled People's Organisation (DPOs) at COSP12 was coordinated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Two orientation pre-meetings were held at the AHRC in Sydney, on 15 and 29 May. I was only able to attend the latter meeting. These meetings afford essential briefing and an opportunity to meet a number of other delegates. Unfortunately my travel arrangements had already been made before I learned that COSP12 was to be preceded by the Civil Society Forum. In consequence I was only able to attend part of this forum. Delegates for COSP13, which is to be held from 10-12 June 2020, should be made aware that travel arrangements should be made to enable participation in the IDA CSO forum likely to be held on 9 June.

Conference of States Parties

The [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)](#) was adopted by the General Assembly by its resolution 61/106 of 13 December 2006. It opened for signature on 30 March 2007 and came into force on 3 May 2008 upon its 20th ratification. Australia signed the CRPD on 30 March 2007 and ratified it on 17 July 2008. The CRPD entered into force in Australia on 16 August 2008.

The CRPD is accompanied by an additional agreement, the Optional Protocol (OP), which establishes an individual's right to take complaints to the UN when they believe that their rights under the CRPD have been denied. The OP was adopted on 13 December 2006 and came into force on the same date as the parent document. Australia ratified the OP in 2009.

Article 40 of the Convention stipulates that *The States Parties shall meet regularly in a Conference of States Parties (COSP) in order to consider any matter with regard to the implementation of the present Convention*.

Since 2008 sessions of the Conference of States Parties have been held at United Nations Headquarters in New York: the 2019 COSP is the 12th, hence its COSP12 title.
About 400 NGOs have been accredited to attend COSPs.

Background papers to the sub-themes can be accessed here. Actual session to the Roundtables, Interactive Dialogue and a large number of side events can be accessed here.

This report looks at the COSP12 events that I attended from Monday 10 June to Thursday 13 June 2019. It is organised so that information about specific side events can be downloaded and expanded on for newsletters and meetings to disseminate information about COSP12 and the COSP processes at the UN.

DAY 1: Monday 10 June 2019

Civil Society Forum hosted by International Disability Association – AM session

After the opening the first session of the Forum was devoted to summarising of the current state of play, with delegates sharing their experiences with the implementation of the CRPD. This was followed by a session on Capacity Building initiatives, and the need for focus on building the capacity of individual activists and of DPOs in order to participate in change making and inclusion improvement across governments.

Panellist **Setareki Macanawai** CEO of the Pacific Disability Forum stressed the need to establish a baseline before approaching any capacity building. He noted the disappointing relationships with funding bodies such as the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, when the existing strengths which individuals and DPOs bring to a partnership are not recognised. This disjunction can be prominent in times of natural disasters where there no work or consultation with the DPOs. Macanawai emphasised that agencies need to understand that DPOs have networks and strengths. This lack of recognition means that there is inadequate distribution of funds to assist the post-disaster recovery of people with disabilities. Sometimes donor language and terminology can be a barrier in itself. There is a need to base partnerships on mutual respect, and to continue to focus of inclusion of people with disabilities.

Panellists noted that capacity building is needed by donors as well as recipients. This is a deficit view held by donors. Likewise governments need to take positive actions to reduce stigma, such as that experience by people with leprosy in Nepal. There was a call for no-cost or low-cost changes made in conjunction with repairs or upgrading of buildings and environments. There is an ongoing need for data and the 2020 Global Survey will include information about groups overlooked in the first survey.

DPOs need funding that is directed to capacity building. Execution of projects must not be an end in itself. There is little acknowledgement by donors that DPOs have grown enough to take on more work and be engaged more. There was a final call for the Disability Rights Fund to be adequately funded and used to better advantage.

The chair of the panel was **Gertrude Fefoame** (member CRPD Committee). Panellists included **Ruth Warwick (**IDA First Vice-Chair), **Jose Viera**, (Representative, **Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities**), and **Ola Abu Alghaib** (Board, Disability Rights Fund)**.**

In the afternoon, the interactive dialogue focused on the *protection of the rights of children with disabilities to live with their families through deinstitutionalisation, inclusive education and access to health and adequate medical services.* Background to this session can be read here.

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ICT Accessibility: The Key to an Inclusive Digital Society

Side event
Monday June 10 - 1315

Hosted by the International Telecommunications Union, UNDESA and the Permanent Mission of Ecuador, This side event looked at the vital role that ICTs play in all people's empowerment. In 2019 access to ICT is regarded as an essential utility and enabler. The extent to which people with disabilities are denied access is a significant inhibitor to inclusion and participation. As a result, access to ICT must be available, accessible and affordable for all. The full suite of ICT access must include development of and adherence to agreed standards for ICT, adequate training, guidelines for ICT use, tools and sharing of good practices, equitable access to information. These are the prerequisites for full inclusion in the digital economy.

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Side Event

ICT and design for independent living innovation

This event was hosted by Singapore, Norway and the Arab emirates.
At the time of Singapore's independence in 1965 poverty was widespread, infrastructure was non-existent. There were no supports or equipment for People with disabilities. Over the next two decades a cooperative development plan between government and community resulted in rapid development. It was not until 2004 that the Prime Minister started the vision for an inclusive society. And in 2007 the first master plan was launched. The second (2012) and third (2017) Enabling Masterplans have followed. With the latter now taking a client centric approach, and emphasis on physical accessibility, using ICT as an enabler, and a focus on changing societal attitudes. Importantly all new public buildings, including public houses, must incorporate universal design. From 2018, 98% of bus stops and buses must be fully accessible. The train service is already full accessible. ICT is an essential component of the city accessibility plan with a series of training centres for enabling full access to information as well as equipment.

In the United Arab Emirates the Special Olympics in March 2019 have been used as an opportunity to raise awareness of people with Intellectual Disabilities. Twenty-one thousand volunteers were involved to look after the 7000 competitors from 200 countries. This has meant that a high proportion of the UAE population has been involved. Following the games a national Innovation challenge for both disabled and non-disabled is designed to measure post-games changes in attitudes and capabilities.

In Norway the government action plan for universal design focuses on ICT and welfare technology. The plan spans 10 ministries and has 47 different measures, with achievements monitored and coordinated by the BUFDIR (Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs).

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Civil Society Forum hosted by International Disability Association – PM session

The afternoon session further developed the emphasis on universal design, transportation, localities and the ICT network, with people with disabilities involved in all decision making and

results incorporated into national law. Engagement of civil society is necessary with essential involvement of people with disabilities. There was a call for all governments and all organisations to implement the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

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Day 2: Tuesday 11 June 2019

Side Event
Tuesday 11 June – 0815

How to Make Disability Votes Count

Organised by the Disability Federation of Ireland, the event compared good practice in elections in both the EU and Ireland. Accessibility of information and physical accessibility of voting stations is essential. There were slight improvements in the EU election for 2019. However there is little representation of people with disabilities in elections as candidates.

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Opening of COSP12

Tuesday 11 June, 0900
The opening statement to Day 1 of COSP12 was given by **Ana Lucia Arellano[1]**, chair of IDA and President of the Latin American Network of Non-Government Organisations of Persons with disabilities and their Families. As with sessions on day 1 the theme of involvement of people with disabilities in all activities and at all levels was emphasised. Much hope is pinned on the global Disability Summit to be held in Buenos Aeres in 2020.

This was followed by a statement on UN accessibility, noting changes that the UN has made to accommodate accessibility, including changed seating in the conference rooms, provision of CART, international sign language, documents in accessible formats and available in Braille. Notwithstanding this, wheelchair users had staged a demonstration on Day 1 when it was discovered that there was a limit on the number of wheelchairs allow into Conference Room 4 for any session. The ban was lifted, and there were never more than 4 wheelchairs in the CR4 at any one time. However, from the rear of the room it was impossible to read the CART, and the CART was slightly out of synch with the voice so that it was difficult to understand what was being said.

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Side Event

Disability and Ageing: Shaping the Agenda for Tomorrow

Tuesday 11 June, 1130
Organised by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, its panel comprised **Jim Crowe** (EASPD), **Emmanuelle Grange** (European Commission), **Antony Duttine** (WHO), **Pat Clarke** (European Disability Forum) **Diana Tudorancea** (Agenzia Sapport) and **Emelie Lindahl** (Swedish Agency for Participation).

Currently, there is no specific **EU legislation** on accessibility for persons with **disabilities** and the proposed Accessibility **Act** has therefore a lot of potential. However it is not expected to be

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[1] Check name or Catalina Devandas, UN Special Rapporteur on Implementation of the CRPD

implemented in the next 6 years. In its place the EU Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 has been in in operation, and the new strategy is under development.

Jim Crow is a founder of the deinstitutionalisation movement in Ireland /Europe. In Europe focus on disability and ageing is essential with 50 of people with disabilities aged over 65. In total, 250 Million people in Europe have disability. It is a gendered matter with 62% of the older population being women. In the CRPD, Articles 12, 17, 29 and 28 relate particularly to aging. A parallel document is the UN Principles for Older Persons (1991). In turn, this document sits alongside the European Pillar of Social Rights adopted in 2017 with 20 parallel principles

The crucial issue that needs to be addressed is the onset of disability with age, married with the reality that people with disabilities are now also living into old age. Yet older people are rarely viewed as disabled. There is no cross-over between the two areas with policies and services still in silos. Gerontologists look at disability as a personal characteristic, and are critical of the social model of disability. Hence there is no way to include ageing of people with disabilities. Even though the number one fear of the aged is their loss of independence, and a desire to remain in the community, yet there is little person centred planning in aged care.

Duttine looked at the role of assistive technologies as a bridge between disability and ageing. He defined Assistive Technology as *any product designed or generally able to obtain an individual's independence and functional wellbeing.* In addition there must be systems for the delivery of AT products. The systems must be relevant to the use and assessment of AT products. He noted the evolving perception of AT with a long history of it being relegated to prosthetics and physical products. Now AT products and needs are seen in a much wider scope.

We must look at the demand for AT. In fact 970M people worldwide need glasses; 75M need wheelchairs. The number is growing and it is estimated that by 2030[2] 2B worldwide will need some form of AT. Yet only 10% will have access to what they need.

The CRPD is not age-specific, and the use of AT is implied throughout the Articles and is mentioned specifically in 8 Articles. The WHO views the access to AT in terms of universal health coverage and access to health across all ages and stages. Similarly AT must be available for all who require it. Thus a new definition of AT must include a life course approach. WHO is not age focussed and AT is regarded as a component of Universal Health Coverage.

The Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) is a flagship programme, launched in 2016, in partnership with UN and other agencies and DPOs. ATscale was launched in 2018 to address the need to scale up the supply of ATs taking into account the needs of people with disabilities, the aged, and ageing people with disabilities.

Tudorancea focussed on the withdrawal of supports to adult children with disabilities as parents age and themselves acquire disabilities.

The closing statement of this event was given by **Caterina Devandas Aguilar**, the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability. She emphasised that the intersection of disability and ageing must be recognised. There are aggravated forms of discrimination including stereotyping and social

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[2] check

isolation. The CRPD affords the opportunity to strengthen older responses to people with disabilities. The CRPD has specific reference to the aged and older persons especially with respect to health services, social protection, and poverty reduction. Direct participation of older persons with disabilities is essential.

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Side Event
Tuesday June 11, 1315

Realising Disability Inclusion within the UN system – the New UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)

Hosted by UNDESA and the Government of Australia, this event was one of the most significant staged at COSP12. With opening statement by the <u>UN Senior Advisor on UN policy</u>, **Ava Maria Menendez,** the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy was launched.

The UN must lead by example and UNDIS is a flagship policy document with potential to change inclusion of people with disabilities both internally and externally. The result of 2 years of consultation UNDIS seeks to raise awareness, and is a strategy of actions to raise the standards of disability inclusion across the board. UNDIS applies across all agencies and all areas of the UN. Individually and collectively the UN must review its performance, including strategic planning, develop disability inclusive programming, have appropriate procurement policies, and develop policies to attract and support people with disabilities to work in the UN. Under the strategy, teams will be set up to focus on implementation. It is envisaged that a country scorecard will operationalise the implementation of UNDIS> There will be a system-wide set of focal points that will help to identify what and where investments are needed. Best practice actions and activities will be shared.

UNDIS represents the UN recognising it obligations under the CRPD and UNDIS is key to development for all. Targets have been developed, e.g. Target 5 covers consultation and meaningful involvement of people with disabilities and DPOs Civil Society organisations and IDA need to be involved in this consultation process.

In recognition of the application of UNDIS across all agencies speakers included **Mika Kontianen**, DFAT Director of Disability, **Blair Excell**, First Assistant Secretary, Development Policy Division of DFAT; Asa **Regner**, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women; **Vladimir Cuk,** secretary general of IDA; **Asako Okai**, representing UNDP and ILO and HRO involvement in the development of UNDIS; and **Reena Ghelani** Deputy Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In her launch address, Asa Regner of UN Women stated that:
- Women with disabilities are 20% of the population of women
- They face multiple discrimination
- They receive fewer benefits than men
- Prevalence of violence is high
- Political participation and representation is low
- Education levels are lower than for other women
- The women's movement has not taken women with disabilities into account

- There is a failure to prioritise funding to organisations of women with disabilities

On IDPWD 2018 UN Women launched a strategy to support the full inclusion of women with disabilities across all of UN Women and integrate into the UN Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2021).

In conclusion, UNDIS is a vehicle for mainstreaming disability. People with disabilities must not be regarded as a distinct part, but as a part of everything and included at all stages of planning. Hopes are high. Implementation, setting targets and monitoring outcomes are a key. UNDIS could be the exemplar for other organisations and governments to follow.

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Side Event

Digital Accessibility: Strategies for Disability Inclusion in E-Governance Platforms
Tuesday June 11, 1500
This side event looked at the digital accessibility in the Global South and Global North, and was sponsored by Disabled Peoples International, the Permanent Mission of Ecuador, the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations; CBM International, G3ict, IDPP, WBU, World Enabled & Zero Project

The common AT theme was repeated in this side event, i.e. – that ICT is an essential utility for all people and that access to ICT is an essential mechanism for inclusion. This time the perspective was on inclusion in decision making, and productive engagement in socio economic development. Speakers were Comm. Cid Torquato, Govt. of Brazil; Dr Michael Fembek, European School of Social Innovation (Essl) Foundation; Francesca Cesa Bianchi, G3ict; Nirmita Narasimhan, G3ict; Dr Derrick L. Cogburn, IDPP; Hannes Lagrelius, WBU; Henrietta Davis-Wray, DPI; and Trevor Carroll, AFDO

Digital Social Innovation DSI) is intimately related to all other areas of social innovation. ESSI has identified at least 500 different innovative practices developed by at least 80 different companies that aid inclusion. Few relate to e-government even though the potential is great, e.g. in e-health, access to tax credits, the Canadian 10-year innovation strategy, Universal Design planning in Oslo, generation of easy English documents. From now, all cities must be designed as inclusive habitats.

The Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation (DARE) index developed by the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT) enables ICT accessibility to be compared across governments. Australia is not ranked amongst the top 10 performing countries in a score of country commitments to accessibility, capacity to implement and actual outcomes in digital accessibility, G=However Australia does scrape into the top 10 rankings when the measure is for the actual outcome variables alone. It measures the stage of progress of a country in making digital products and services available to people with disabilities.

Once again country benchmarks are important in providing advocates with data and information to lobby for changes to accessibility to e-government and for access to the tools to achieve good outcomes.

Introduction of the Beautiful Mind Music Academy and the Production of the Documentary Movie "Beautiful Mind"

The Beautiful Mind Music Academy caters for non-neurotypical students across a number of countries. It is supported by the Beautiful Mind Charity which caters for underprivileged children, especially those with disabilities. The event featured a Cello Solo by a cellist with visual impairment and a Guitar Solo by a guitarist with Developmental disorder. The performances were followed by a screening of a documentary showcasing the work of the BMMA.

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DAY 3: Wednesday 12 June 2019

People with Communication Disability Speak Up for Inclusion and Participation: How the Implementation of the CRPD and the SDGs can Support this Right

Wednesday June 12 – 0815
Organized by Speech Pathology Australia, the Royal College of Speech Language Therapists; the , International Communication Project (ICP), and Humanity and Inclusion, UK, this side event highlighted both the fundamental human right for communication and the appalling lack of focus on this right for people with communication impairment. This was the first COSP side event to focus on Communication Disability.

Communication Impairment affects millions worldwide. Importantly disability prevalence studies mostly ignore the incidence of Communication Disability. Yet its impacts on individuals and on economies are largely ignored. There is a need to overcome the historical recognition of the right to communication. The **International Communication Project** is formed by a group of national, member-based organisations that share a common goal of raising the profile of communication disabilities and the professionals who can help. It has about 50 participating organisations.

Drawing on Articles 21 (the right to freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information) and Article 2 (the rights and freedoms regarding communication and language, this event discussed proposals to address the discrimination experienced by people with communication impairment. **A**rticle 19 refers to Universal Design. The CRPD specifically names access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Globally there are limited strategies that address communication impairment. The work of the ICP is cross-linked to the SDG e.g. SDG 1-Poverty. Levels of access across Australia show that people with communication impairment are clustered in low socio economic groups. It is difficult to access services and people have poor access to employment. . SDG 3 - Health: people have poor access to health services and poor health outcomes, e.g. children have 2-8 times the need for emergency medical interventions. People lack access to education (SDG 4), with problems persisting into adulthood.
Memorable presentations were given by Meredith Allen (Scope Vic) and Miles Form an American Disability Advocate. The safety of people with CD is impaired in situations of emergency and a higher risk of violence in the community. AAC must be made affordable for people with disabilities. Commonly the abilities of people with CD are underestimated. In an extension of UD, AAC icons are being used to teach language to refugees in Australia.

Trevor Cable spoke about the need to support people through the justice system because the legal barriers are huge. Communication intermediaries are available in many countries. In Victoria, police are being training in Communication Awareness and in the use of AACs.

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Intersectional Barriers and Challenges for People with disabilities

Wednesday June 12 – 1130

Improving understanding of 'intersectionality' needs to be a part of any awareness raising agenda. Clarifying the distinction between multiple discriminations experienced by women and girls with disabilities and intersectional considerations formed an important part of General Comment Number 3 on the CRPD. In this side event speakers focussed on the imperative to consider all attributes of people with disabilities when gathering data and in the development of policies. The event was hosted by the Permanent Missions to the UN of Canada and Ecuador. Speakers included **Bonnie Brayton,** from DAWN Canada, and **Carla Qualtrough** from the Canadian Ministry of Public Services & Procurement & Accessibility.

The application of an intersectionality lens presents problems for policy makers and practitioners. Organisational structures and the machinery of government mean that siloing of departments and activities is a default position, with disaggregation of data making incorporation of a more diverse approach more difficult. DAWN drew largely on *More than a Footnote: A Research Report on Women and girls with Disabilities in Canada.* This report provides a 2017 snapshot of the intersectional challenges and barriers faced by Canadian women and girls with disabilities. As in Australia, women with disabilities are disproportionately impacted across many domains of their lives, comprising about 30% of those living in poverty. Similarly, near 20% have no post-school qualifications compared to 8% of their non-disabled counterparts. In Australia, nearly double this proportion has no post school qualifications (46%)[3]. Labor force participation, at 61% in Canada, is much higher than the 49% labour force participation of Australian women with disabilities[4]. In Canada there is a similar lack of support for mothers with disabilities, a problem exacerbated by poverty and precarious employment opportunities. As in Australia, Canadian girls are less likely to get the support services they need in education, and less likely to have their learning disability recognised or diagnosed.

In Canada, violence against women and girls with disabilities occurs at a much higher rate than for non-disabled women or their male counterparts, with occurrence being both inside the home and in the wider community.

The similarities in the situation for women and girls with disabilities in Canada to those in Australia indicate that ongoing cooperative work with DAWN will mean that we can learn much from each other. Information about DAWN is available here.

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[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers 2015, *Table 7.3 Persons aged 15 years and over, living in households, disability status, by selected social characteristics–2015, proportion of persons*
[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers 2015, Table 9.3 (44300DO0202015): *Persons aged 15-64, living in households, disability status, by sex and labour force status-2012 and 2015, proportion of persons*

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ROUNDTABLE 1 – Conference Room 4

It was not possible to take notes at this session because of the difficulty of balancing the smart pad on the knee, listening to often inaudible speech which was out of synch with the CART. Record of the discussion was in tweets to @inclusionaus.

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Launch of Global Data on Disability rights in Education and Work
Wednesday June 12 – 1315

The availability of robust global, national and local data is an essential tool in disability-inclusive policy making and in awareness raising of the issues for people with disabilities. The work offers a comparative view, showing each country both gaps and strengths. Publication of data can be a prompt for governments to take action to remedy a gap in delivery of services for people with disabilities. For these reasons the COSP12 presentation by the World Policy Analysis Centre was extremely important. The event was co-sponsored by UNDESA, El Goberno de Todos in Ecuador, and the World Policy Analysis Centre.

The primary reason for the event was to launch a new global data set on *Equal Rights and Full inclusion at school and Reasonable Accommodation in work in all UN countries*. A secondary value of the forum, was to raise awareness of the work of the World Policy Analysis Centre, and to give DPOs information and access to the vast resources available on the Centre's Website.

Over the last two years, the WORLD Policy Analysis Center performed a systematic analysis of the thousands of constitutions, national laws, and policies related to equal rights, disability rights, and education and employment discrimination in all 193 UN member states.

Speakers at the event were **Professor Michael Stein**, co-founder and executive director of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, **Akiko Ito**, chief of the Secretariat for the CRPD within the UN Department of Economic & Social Affairs (DESA); **Prof. Jody Heymann**, founding director of the World Policy 'Analysis Centre, and **Luis Gallegos**, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the UN.

Speakers emphasised the importance of universal design as an underlying principle for inclusion of people with disabilities. Their work highlights that rights enshrined in constitutions are guaranteed, whereas rights derived through a country's legal system may be changed or removed by governments. Yet disability is acknowledged as cross-cutting issues with relevance in all laws in a country. By way of example, speakers acknowledged that the right to reasonable accommodation is not yet found in all member states. Only 50% of countries explicitly enshrine the rights of people with disabilities in their constitutions, although most constitutions included the right to equality in race and religion. Only 7 countries have included the rights to education for people with disabilities in their constitutions.
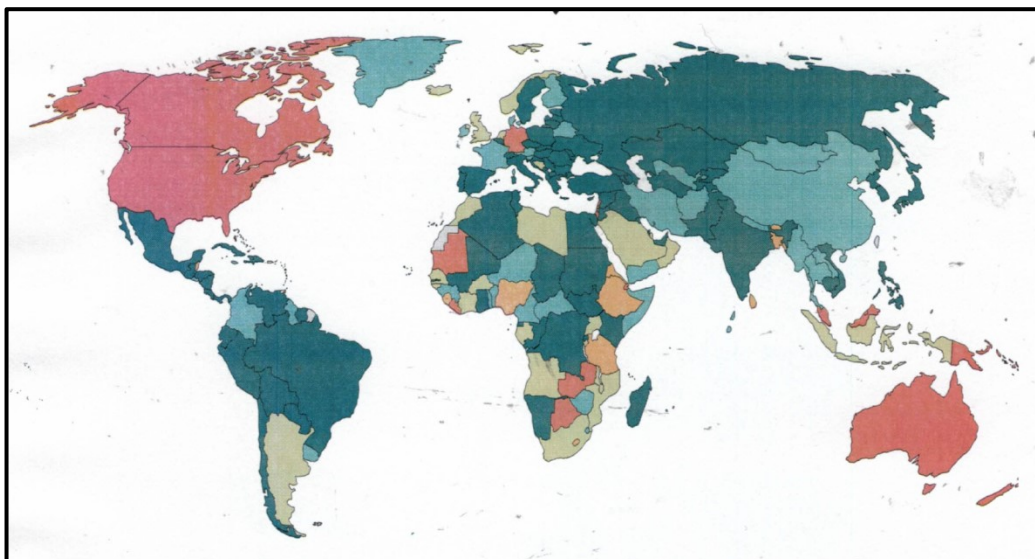
A study of countries which explicitly guarantee equality or non-discrimination for persons with disabilities in their constitutions show that very few have specific provisions. Canada and England are amongst the countries which have this guarantee. For the vast majority, equality is guaranteed in constitutions without being specific to people with disabilities.

Australia, along with Greenland and Saudi Arabia, are the only countries which have no constitutional guarantee for equality, or equal rights for people with disabilities. This means that DPOs need to be vigilant that laws are in place which cover such gaps, and that we fight for our inalienable right to equality. In contrast Australia is one of very few countries which have no known barriers to equal opportunities for women at work.

The World Policy Analysis Centre has undertaken global analysis of on a range of social policy areas including disability, gender, health and education. It uses a wide range of data sources, including the work of the World Bank and WHO. The very nature of this work on a global scale and condensed to whole-country results, means that the nuances of reality within any one country or for any one social situation, must be taken as an indication only and treated with caution.

Recommendation: that the work of the World Policy Analysis Centre be widely publicized to DPOs, legal centres and advocacy groups.

Image: World Map showing the constitutional guarantee of citizens' education rights.

Countries which do not enshrine the right to education are shown in orange. These countries are few but include Australia, PNG, Canada, and USA

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High Level Meeting on women with disabilities in Political leadership: Towards Beijing 25

Sponsored by the UN Secretary General Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility,
Ms. María Soledad Cisternas Reyes

This meeting was held at the offices of UN Women. It was one of the most significant of meetings held for COSP12. It launched a comprehensive framework for the inclusion of women with disabilities in the Beijing+25 framework, and sits parallel to the UNDIS which embeds an inclusion strategy across all UN agencies, to becoming a statement which links the work of the women on the CRPD committee to that of the leadership of UN Women.

The women of the CRPD committee in cooperation with the leaders of the UN Women have made a commitment to overcome the historical lack of recognition of women with disabilities in UN Women's policies and programs and mirrored in women's organisations around the world. The meeting was also attended by women leaders from other UN agencies, and a number of female politicians from around the world.

The framework references a number of human rights treaties, General Recommendations and Security Council resolutions. It contains a summary of the situation for women and girls across the globe; notes the cross-cutting application of the CRPD and focuses on SDGs and the need to include women with disabilities in all policies and programs,

It contains 16 Recommendations for States Parties to CEDAW and CRPD in the following:
1. Stating that the CRPD, CEDAW; Beijing Platform for Action, and the 2030 SDGs are legally binding instruments;
2. CRPD General Comment 3 (Article 6 Women with Disabilities)) is applicable to all States Parties;
3. Called on all stakeholders in Beijing+25 to implement the framework
4. Encouraged UN member states to sign, ratify and implement the CRPD and its Optional Protocol;

Following recommendations highlighted areas and Articles of the CRPD
5. proactive empowerment of women and girls with disabilities to participation and promotion of leadership;
6. specific inclusion in legislation and public policies
7. eliminate violence against women with disabilities including sexual harassment, through complying with General Assembly resolution (A/RES/73/148) (see CRPD Article 16 and SDG 5.2);
8. guarantee equitable access to education (CRPD:24 and SDG4.5);
9. promote economic opportunities *CRPD: 27 and SDG 8);
10. promote equitable access to health (CRPD;25 and SDG 3);

Member states are called on to:
11. strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender equality;
12. improve journalistic representations of women and girls with disabilities to improve their visibility in public life;

The Private Sector is called on to:
13. provide employment and job opportunities to women with disabilities; improve accessibility of goods and services;

National Human Rights Institutions are called on to:
14. promote full enjoyment and visibility of women and girls with disabilities, monitor compliance in this context;

Civil Society Organisations (DPOs and women's organisations) are called on to:
15. recognise, consult with and include organisations for women with disabilities; and
16. Calls on the UN system to coordinate and promote the framework across agencies and committees.

It is comprehensive, and important, but at present is merely a framework for action. It can be used to spur CSOs to lobby for implementation.

Unfortunately the documents given in hardcopy at the meeting are not available online. In contrast the guideline for [Preventing Violence Against Women in Elections: A programing Guide](#), given to attendees to the meeting, is available.

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Meeting of COSP12 women delegates
Wednesday June 12 – 1600

By word of mouth arrangements were made on June 12 to hold an impromptu meeting of women delegates to COSP12. No meeting room was available or could be found, so that the gathering was eventually held in a corridor. An International Network of Women with Disabilities (INWWD) was founded in 2008 in conjunction with the Rehabilitation International World Congress in Quebec City. An online community, it has been coordinated by Myra Kovary over the intervening 11 years. However, it was felt that there are many new young women with disabilities who are active in the area of disability advocacy, and there is increasing representation of women with disabilities from Asia and Pacific regions. In addition an action based group of women with disabilities is now needed. The disproportionate discrimination experienced by women with disabilities was noted and agreed to by the women present. This new consortium will be coordinated by Abia Akram, CEO of the [National Forum of Women With Disabilities Pakistan](#).

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DAY 4: Thursday 13 June 2019
Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Thursday 13 - 0815

Organised by the Harvard Law School Project on Disabilities (HPOD), UNDESA and the Permanent Missions of Israel and Australia.

Speakers were **Prof. Michael Stein, Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD), USA; Venus Ilagan, HPOD, USA; Jean Judes, Beit Issi Shapiro, Israel; Loic van Cutsem, Ashoka, Austria; Ms. Sara Minkara,ETI, USA; Fernando Acafrao, XTEND Schools Health, South Africa**

Social entrepreneurship skills are important in fostering inclusion through social cultural and environmental businesses. Employment presents an ongoing challenge which can be met is small ways through social innovation. Social ventures sit outside the constraints of profit/loss for commercial operations and deliver value to society.
Beit Issi Shapiro coordinates 140 early intervention facilities, by-passing government inaction. BIS see AT as essential in day to day living, and UD and accessibility needing to be addressed. Through work with Google, 5 accessibility products have been developed and are on the market commercially. There are limitations because only 10% of those who need AT actually have access to it. **BIS** is looking at a supported Decision Making model.

Other examples of Social Ventures and commercial ventures which have directly employed people with disabilities, e.g. the **Capito** app which translates into Easy English; the **Spealisterne** assist people with autism to organise their tasks; **Solar Ear** uses solar powered batteries for hearing aids; All these social ventures developers have in common:

- Passion for system change
- Smart partnerships
- Innovative mobilization of
- Hybrid scalable business models – not grant dependent
- Tracking the impact

The Ashoka fellowship is a worldwide network of social entrepreneurs but not yet accessible from Australia.

Zero Project finds and shares models that improve the daily lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities and trains potential entrepreneurs

Speakers dealt with innovative projects in the South Africa, Middle East, in the Philippines that are founded, governed and operated by people with disabilities.

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Reimagining Movement Building: How Feminist Leadership within the Disability Movement is Broadening the Disability Rights Discourse

Thursday 13 June – 0945 (International Albinism Awareness Day)

This side event was sponsored by CREA World (Feminist Human Rights Organisation based in New Delhi); International Women's Health Coalition, and Women Enabled International. The event looked at the intersection of the feminist and disabilities movements. Building a feminist disability movement has had both challenges and rewards. Ireland regards the CRPD as a more feminist convention than CEDAW. We need to guard against default to using the masculine pronoun when describing the articles of the CRPD.

In Kenya, too, women with disabilities are included in the women's movement and an intersectional approach is taken to writing the Shadow Report to CEDAW along with other intersectionalities and diversities.

In both countries women with Intellectual Disabilities are not included or integrated.

The session was 50% completed by the time I arrived.

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Community Based Inclusive Development: Reaching Communities in the Implementation of the CRPD and SDGs

Thursday 13 June – 1315

Sponsored by the Government of Australia the event looked at Community Based Inclusive Development in which people with disabilities and their families and DPOs are engaged at the grass roots and community level. **Speakers were** Ms Farida Yesmin, CBR; Ms Bharagvi Davar, Transforming Communities for Inclusion of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities; Ms Yetnebersh

Nigussie, IDDC DPO Partnership; Mr Martin Essl, Zero Project; and Dr Alessandra Aresu, IDDC Inclusive Health.

It was noted that:
- World Bank sponsored the global disability summit 2018 and made 10 commitments to Disability Inclusive Development (DID);
- Disaggregation, collection Washington Group questions appear on the on the WB website as a tool.
- At COSP11 disability inclusion and an accountability framework were proposed that sets out a roadmap for DID.

Building an evidence base, and disaggregating the data, in all work is essential. There is urgency to enhance the resilience of people with disabilities to climate shocks. We need to recognise intersectionality, that disability is not an isolated issue and interacts with age, gender, race, minority status, etc.

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Accessible Public Procurement: Making Sure Tax Payers' Money is Spent on Accessibility

Thursday June 13 – 1630
Sponsored by the European Disability Forum, speakers were **Katherine Eng**, Senior ICT Accessibility Specialist at the US Access Board; **Alejandro Moledo**, EDF Policy Coordinator; **Laisa Vereti**, Manager – Planning Policy and Advocacy at the Pacific Disability Forum; Stein Erik Skotkjerra, Head of Accessibility Relations at Site improve, an international Software-as-a-Service, and
Ursula Wynhoven, representative of the International Telecommunication Union to the UN. The event was moderated by Catherine Naughton, Director of the European Disability Forum.

The basic premise underlying calls for procurement is that without accessible equipment in government, people with disabilities cannot be employed, and inclusive cannot be progressed, and clients cannot be serviced adequately. A positive side effect is that the demands of government actually lead to development of a more accessible market. However in general purchasing rules regulate how to buy rather than what to buy. The preferred method is to write the technological specifications needed including the AT features. Comply with technological feature specified and then select the product that gives the most AT features for the best price. The EU Accessibility Act has a number of features that align with the Americans with Disabilities Act S. 508.

The EU Accessibility Act will also include standards, and is developing an e-procurement policy with included criteria of compliance with the standards and an explanation of how/why compliance is achieved.

Vereti stated that there are no standards operatives in any member countries of the pacific Disability Forum, for transport, built environment, ICT, although DPOs set criteria that government and donors must meet certain accessibility criteria. For example, the Asian Development Bank does not do any disability-specific projects but should be procuring accessible equipment so that people with disability can work for the projects. There is a skills gap for DPOs when assessing equipment of any kind. Universal design of accessibility features is essential.

The ITU, in cooperation with G3ICT, has developed model policy on public procurement which includes model txt. It assigns responsibilities and develops a library of tool, set standards for tender processes and has online training courses (8 hours duration). The ITU has a Joint Coordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors (**JCA-AHF**).

In closing, the question was asked that there be an added criteria that the suppliers and equipment developers must also show employment of people with disabilities.
A good point to finish COSP12 on.

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Conclusion

The 3 Roundtables and final Interactive Dialogue sessions which enabled time-limited statements from government delegates provided an informative background for me as a representative of a DPO. It enabled me to experience the machinery of governance for the United Nations, and afforded some learnings of progress with implementation of CRPD as stated by a limited number of State Parties. This experience will be passed on to Rights and Inclusion Australia and through the RIA network, the women's network and the DPO network.

In contrast the rich learning afforded by participation in the side events have given me new information in the areas of Assistive Technology, Intersectionality, and Gender.

All Side events attended had a focus on inclusion of people with disabilities and the launch of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and the Beijing+25 framework provide documents which will inform future actions. It was possible to see that the central them of *Ensuring inclusion of persons with disabilities in a changing world through the implementation of the CRPD* was embedded in all session.

My choice of side events enabled a focus on areas of interest to Rights and Inclusion Australia (RIA, specifically the sub-theme of *Technology, digitalization and ICTs for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities.* I have increased my understanding of development and supply of assistive technologies, including ICT and telecommunications.

The other sub-themes of *Social inclusion and the right to the highest attainable standard of health* and *Inclusion of persons with disabilities in society through participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sports* figured less prominently in my discussions with other delegates and in attending side events.

The cross-cutting theme of awareness raising was central to all presentations. The whole COSP12 experience has given me renewed impetus to continue to work with colleagues to promote the implementation of the CRPD in Australia and the Pacific Region.

Sue Salthouse

Director Rights & Inclusion Australia

27 July 2019