

A shared vision

Shuaib Chalklen

I assumed my position as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Disability at a time when we have an enormous opportunity to bring about sustainable change in the conditions of all persons with disabilities, with particular attention to Africa and other developing regions of the world.

We are in the fortunate position of having 77 countries that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a great many countries that have used the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (adopted in 1993) as a tool to develop national policies, although the implementation of these policies remains a challenge. A growing number of governments, legislators and members of civil society beyond the disability community have begun to work with organisations of persons with disabilities, building broader constituency for advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in society and development around the world.

While much progress has been made through the adoption of the Convention and increased efforts in

promoting the disability-inclusive Millennium Development Goals, persons with disabilities – at least 10% of the world’s population – still remain among the poorest of the world’s citizens. And the current competing political, social and economic concerns make the needs of persons with disabilities all the more pressing.

There is also the matter of persons with disabilities in situations of conflict and displacement, and in other situations of great risk. The devastating and tragic earthquake in Haiti brings to mind the situation of persons with disabilities within the present circumstances and their urgent need for food and shelter.

The previous Special Rapporteurs, Mr Bengt Lindqvist and Sheikha Hissa Al-Thani, noted that there was a lack of implementation of disability policies in countries around the world. I plan to focus on the blockages to the implementation of disability-specific programmes and policies. One of the means of encouraging the implementation of disability programmes and policies is through the sharing of information and technical cooperation.



My vision is for equal opportunities and the full participation of persons with disabilities in society and development, informed by international cooperation. I intend to bring together the disability community, governments, the United Nations system and civil society to promote this vision in practical action for a real change for persons with disabilities on the ground.

This issue of Forced Migration Review is a most welcome contribution to the work of bringing together our different communities, sharing information, encouraging cooperation and promoting this vision.

Shuaib Chalklen (shac@iafrica.com) is Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development.