

Guidelines on the provision of Manual Wheelchairs in less resourced settings



World Health
Organization



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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The wheelchair is one of the most commonly used assistive devices for enhancing personal mobility, which is a precondition for enjoying human rights and living in dignity and assists people with disabilities to become more productive members of their communities. For many people, an appropriate, well-designed and well-fitted wheelchair can be the first step towards inclusion and participation in society.

The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and World Health Assembly resolution WHA58.23 all point to the importance of wheelchairs and other assistive devices for the developing world, where few of those who need wheelchairs have them, insufficient production facilities exist, and all too often wheelchairs are donated without the necessary related services.

When the need is not met, people with disabilities are isolated and do not have access to the same opportunities as others within their own communities. Providing wheelchairs that are fit for the purpose not only enhances mobility but begins a process of opening up a world of education, work and social life. The development of national policies and increased training opportunities in the design, production and supply of wheelchairs are essential next steps.

In the light of the realities of the developing world and the immediate need to develop functioning systems of wheelchair provision in less-resourced parts of the world, the World Health Organization (WHO), the US Agency for International Development, the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics and Disabled Peoples' International, in partnership with the Centre for International Rehabilitation, the Motivation Charitable Trust and Whirlwind Wheelchair International, have developed this document to assist WHO Member States to create and develop a local wheelchair provision system and thereby implement Articles 4, 20 and 26 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We extend our thanks to the US Agency for International Development's Patrick Leahy War Victims Fund for its support in producing these guidelines and assisting in their implementation.

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