



## **Burton Blatt Institute Facilitates Inaugural Membership Meeting of Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD)**

World leaders from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, and Australia, representing civil society organizations, governments, and multilateral agencies including the World Bank and UNESCO, unanimously approved a Charter and elected the First Board of Directors for the Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD). Meeting at the headquarters and as the guests of the German Technical Corporation (GTZ) in Eschborn, Germany, the assembled agencies and organizations made a core commitment to a world of inclusive communities where individuals with disabilities regardless of age, gender, or type of disability enjoy the same rights and have access to the same opportunities enjoyed by other citizens.

Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) staff facilitated planning and organizing the expert presentations and group discussions. BBI, through an agreement with the World Bank signed in January 2008, is the Secretariat for the GPDD. Maria Reina serves as the GPDD Executive Director with assistance from Michael Morris, BBI CEO and Deepti Samant, BBI Research Associate.

With a commitment to combat the social and economic exclusion and impoverishment of people with disabilities and their families in developing countries worldwide, the GPDD represents an unprecedented alliance of agencies, organizations, and resources to accelerate change within and outside of government that targets development activities to include and benefit individuals with disabilities.

Four years of planning by a volunteer Task Force culminated in the historical birth of GPDD with the election of the First Board of Directors today in Eschborn, Germany. The 12 members elected to the Board of Directors are:

- Mr. Khandaker Jahurul Alam, Asia Pacific Disability Forum
- Ms. Tanya Barron, Leonard Cheshire Disability
- Mr. A.K. Dube – African Decade Secretariat
- Ms. Sangita Gairola, Representative of the Government of India
- Ms. Celia Siphokazi Gcaza, African CBR Network (CAN)
- Mr. Kalle Könkkölä, Disabled Peoples' International
- Mr. Rudiger Krech, GTZ

- Ms. Euphrasia Mbewe, World Federation of the Deaf
- Mr. James Mwandha, Commonwealth Disabled Peoples' Forum
- Mr. Andreas Pruisken, Christian Blind Mission
- Ms. Indumathi Rao, CBR Network South Asia
- Dr. William Rowland, World Blind Union

This unique Global Partnership will bring world attention to the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities in developing countries. The assembled GPDD members began a plan of action to: expand the membership base of GPDD, improve data collection and analysis that identifies the number of people with disabilities in developing countries and their impact on GNP, facilitate information sharing on inclusive development policy and program implementation, support and monitor implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and mobilize resources to build the capacity of GPDD through alliances and member networks. "In its activities, the GPDD will become a powerful voice for change," said BBI CEO Michael Morris.

"With 25 countries having ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities this month, GPDD can mobilize and coordinate the needed expertise of people with disabilities, researchers, educators, and rehabilitation professionals to advise governments and NGOs to protect and promote individual rights and full community participation of individuals with disabilities worldwide," said GPDD Executive Director Maria Reina.

The potential is unlimited to advance through partnership a new level of inclusion of people with disabilities in development policies and practices. With support from the World Bank and the governments of Italy, Finland, and Norway as donors to a Multi Donor Trust Fund, the GPDD will bring attention to reduce and eliminate barriers to full social and economic participation. For more information about GPDD and how you may become involved, please contact Maria Reina, Executive Director at [mvreina@law.syr.edu](mailto:mvreina@law.syr.edu); for information on the GPDD and BBI, see <http://bbi.syr.edu>.