

## Introduction of World Health Organization guidelines for provision of wheelchairs in less resourced settings

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### Abstract

*Purpose:* The aim of this guideline is to support the EU member states to develop a wheelchair delivery system, that will support the Right to mobility which is laid down in Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Methods:* Following the consensus conference, held in India, in October 2006, on provision of wheelchairs in less resourced settings, hosted by the World Health Organisation, ISPO and USAID, resulted the WHO Guidelines on provision of wheelchairs in less resourced settings, guide that was implemented in Romania during a pilot project in 2011 by Motivation Romania Foundation. *Results:* The resulted guidelines represent a tool to implement and recommend standards for design and production of appropriate products, service delivery, training and long term monitoring. The materials turn into a practical reality of training, to implement service provision. The aim of the package is to develop the skills and knowledge of wheelchair service personnel. *Conclusions:* Mobility devices are important to enhance functional independence and also, in terms of human rights, inclusion and equal participation in the society. However, millions of people with disabilities have very limited personal mobility due to lack of access to mobility devices. The recommendation is to develop national standards regarding wheelchair delivery services. The standards should include mobility evaluation services and individually prescribed and customized wheelchairs, national level planning, cooperation between suppliers and wheelchair services included in the already existing package, helping people to access their rights as defined in the convention.

**Key words:** *wheelchairs, delivery services, national standards, inclusion.*

### Rezumat

*Scopul* acestui ghid este de a susține Statele Membre ale UE pentru dezvoltarea unui sistem de furnizare a scaunelor rulante, care să sprijine implementarea Convenției privind “Drepturile Persoanelor cu Dizabilități” (în special Articolele 4, 20 și 26) și a “Rezoluției 58/23 a Adunării Mondiale a Sănătății din 25 Mai 2005”. *Metode.* În urma unei conferințe,

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gazduită de către Organizația Mondială a Sănătății, IPSO și USAID, în India, în anul 2006, a rezultat Ghidului privind furnizarea de scaune rulante cu antrenare manuală în regiuni cu resurse limitate, care a fost implementat în România în cadrul unui proiect pilot, în anul 2011. Fundația Motivation România a fost implicată direct în dezvoltarea acestui ghid resursă, care promovează mobilitatea personală și creșterea calității vieții utilizatorilor de scaune rulante. *Rezultate.* Ghidul rezultat analizează procesul de design, inclusiv nevoia de testare a produselor, studiile cu utilizatorii și monitorizarea pe termen lung. Materialul se referă la scaunele rulante cu antrenare manuală și la nevoile pe termen lung ale utilizatorilor de scaune rulante. Recomandările se adresează persoanelor implicate în furnizarea de servicii, de la proiectare și planificare, la furnizarea și întreținerea scaunelor rulante. *Concluzii* Scaunul rulant reprezintă pentru multe persoane cu dizabilități mai mult decât un echipament de mobilitate, fiind mijlocul prin care aceste persoane își exercită drepturile omului și realizează incluziunea și participarea în condiții egale în societate. Se recomandă dezvoltarea unor politici naționale privind furnizarea scaunelor rulante. Astfel de politici trebuie să includă prevederi privind evaluarea nevoilor, planificarea la nivel național, colaborarea între furnizorii de servicii și integrarea serviciilor de scaune rulante în rețeaua existentă de servicii de recuperare, respectiv adoptarea de standarde naționale privind scaunele rulante și serviciile conexe.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *scaune rulante, furnizarea de servicii, standarde naționale, incluziune*

### **Purpose**

The aim of this guideline is to support the EU member states to develop a wheelchair delivery system that will support the Right to mobility which is laid down in Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Methods**

In October 2006, a consensus conference on provision of wheelchairs in less resourced settings was held in India. This was hosted by the World Health Organisation, ISPO and USAID.

The result of that conference was the production of the WHO Guidelines on provision of wheelchairs in less resourced settings. By less resourced settings we mean geographical area with limited financial, human and infrastructural resources to provide wheelchairs.

The tools to turn this document into a practical reality of training to implement service provision are now being developed.

Motivation Romania Foundation has been directly involved in the development of this exciting training resource by defining it and how it can be used.

The right to mobility is laid down in Article 20 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The guidelines are a tool to implement article 20 and recommend standards for design and production of appropriate products, service delivery and training.

The training package which we discuss here is the material where the impact of article 20 and the guidelines reach the individual.

When we talk about the appropriate wheelchair we talk about the appropriate device for the lifestyle and living environment, that provides proper fit and postural support, is safe and durable and is available in the country. This can be obtained and

maintained and services sustained, in the country, at the most economical and affordable price.

Personal mobility is considered “the ability to move in a manner and at the time of one’s own choice”. In other words this means:

- help to provide an appropriate wheelchair;
- help wheelchair users learn how to get in and out of their wheelchair themselves;
- help wheelchair users to learn how to propel themselves;
- encourage family members to support the wheelchair user to be more independent.

## Results

The training package is the service, where the individual’s specific impairment, size, lifestyle and living environment are considered. The aim of the training package is to develop the skills and knowledge of service personnel.

The training package is divided into three levels, all based on client’s postural support needs.

**Basic Service** - for users who require manual wheelchairs without modifications. Mobility and postural support are provided through a well-fitted wheelchair and seat cushion. The content of the basic wheelchair service delivery package includes:

- Core background knowledge sessions;
- Practical knowledge and skills to carry out the 8 defined service steps;
- Practical sessions with real clients, considered extremely important;
- Cushion fabrication. This essential piece of equipment is frequently not available locally.

**Intermediate Service** - for users who require manual wheelchair with supportive seating. The supportive seating is provided through individual modifications to a basic wheelchair, or a specialized seating system.

**Advanced Service** – for users who require complex supportive seating and mobility equipment. Mobility and individually prescribed and customized wheelchairs provide postural support and accommodate fixed deformities. The training methodology considered the fact that there are a lack of mentors and senior experienced staff in the field. Personnel will need to rely very much on their individual skills. There are a lack of service models of good practice and it is therefore important to demonstrate this as part of the training. Core competencies need to be demonstrated by trainees during training and this comes with practice experience. Development of personal skills and confidence to apply them is extremely important. Three days from the training period have been allocated to practical application of skills.

It has been taken into consideration the development of a two days course for service managers. It is extremely important to create an awareness and understanding of the importance of client centred service provision amongst management positions. The impact of ordering systems and use of budgets on products, accessories and repairs can support or undermine the ability of service staff to deliver a service, which meets the needs of its clients. The guideline was produced and 3000 copies were printed in the initial print run, then WHO was obliged to run a reprint for 2000 more copies six months after the launch. We can mention a large number of downloads, close to 18 000, in English, French and Spanish.

## Conclusions

Mobility devices are important to enhance functional independence and also, in terms of human rights, inclusion and equal participation in the society. However, millions of people with disabilities have very limited personal mobility due to lack of access to mobility devices. The recommendation is to develop national standards regarding wheelchair delivery services. The recommendation is to develop national standards regarding wheelchair delivery services. The standards should include mobility evaluation services and individually prescribed and

customized wheelchairs, national level planning, cooperation between suppliers and wheelchair services included in the already existing package, helping people to access their rights as defined in the convention.

## References

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