

June 6, 2008

**June 2 – 6 Intersessionals, session on CRPD
Survivor Corps Intervention, Tirza Leibowitz**

The way victim assistance is spoken of today is incomparable with how it was spoken of at the outset: As persons first, addressing needs that arise from disabilities without allowing the disability to define the people. Also prominent in the discourse today is consultation with the survivors and the role they should have together with the government in determining the needs for and the content of the services.

The role that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has had in this cannot be exaggerated.

To take up the point of the expert: The discourse here is progressive, not only because of the discourse that goes on here, but because implementation is knocking on our door. And this provides a unique chance.

Buildings are built, programs established. It is a wonderful chance to implement principles of rights of persons with disabilities:

We heard of an overhaul of hospitals and rehabilitation centers. Certainly a chance to rebuild them so they are fully accessible – but also to train doctors, nurses, hospital administrations how to provide services in a manner which is accessible to blind people, deaf people, people with intellectual disabilities.

Vocational training programs established: Time to reexamine: instead of relegating pwd to segregated settings, now is the chance to push for full inclusion in the open labor market.

Once again we heard about housing projects built for hundreds of survivors so they can move out of the institutions where they were put. Now is the time to ensure the housing project is not a set-apart one, but one which facilitates living in the community within the community in full participation.

Care is given to educational needs of children who are survivors: Let's ensure that to begin with – support is given to them within a regular school, a regular classroom.

The right to accessibility
The right to equality in the workplace
The right to live in the community
The right to inclusive education

We call on states to lead the way – not only in implementing victim assistance, but in implementing it in a way which upholds and promotes the rights of persons with disabilities. The privilege will be ours once again, to show the way on the ground.