

THE **10th** **WORLD** **DISABILITY & REHABILITATION** **CONFERENCE 2025**

*"Empowering People with Disabilities through Innovative Mental Health Initiatives and
Inclusive Rehabilitation for Sustainable Change"*

28-29 August 2025 || Bangkok, Thailand

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Table Of Content

04 **Conference Overview**

17 - 19 **Presentation Awards**

05 - 06 **Research Paper
Presentations**

20 **Participant Testimonials
and Feedback**

08 - 11 **Special Features**

21 - 25 **Acknowledgements**

12-16 **Partnerships and
Networking Opportunities**

22 **Conclusion and Future
Outlook**



Visit for more details:
<https://disabilityconference.co/>

Dear WDRC Community,

We are delighted to present a summary of the key moments and achievements from the **10th World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference (WDRC) 2025**, held in Bangkok, Thailand, from August 28th - 29th 2025.

Under the theme **“Empowering People with Disabilities through Innovative Mental Health Initiatives and Inclusive Rehabilitation for Sustainable Change.”** This conference stands out for its focus on integrating mental health within disability rehabilitation, fostering collaboration among global experts, and inspiring innovative approaches. By addressing critical challenges faced by disability communities, WDRC 2025 aims to promote inclusivity, resilience, and sustainable advancements that enhance the well-being and rights of individuals with disabilities worldwide. The event brought together a diverse group of scholars, researchers, activists, and practitioners from across the globe to engage in a comprehensive exploration of global feminisms, examining both the theoretical and practical dimensions. The gathering provided a platform for the development of collaborative partnerships, facilitated publishing opportunities, and contributed to advancing the discourse on achieving a more equitable and just world.



Conference overview

For 2025, the 10th World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference (WDRC) was held under the theme, “**Empowering People with Disabilities through Innovative Mental Health Initiatives and Inclusive Rehabilitation for Sustainable Change.**” This theme was thoughtfully designed to address the most pressing topics within the field of disability and rehabilitation in today`s world. In alignment with this theme, the paper submission tracks spanned a broad range of topics.

Key data of the conference:

Total number of abstracts received: **222**

Number of Participants: **121** (physical: 72, virtual:50)

Sessions Held: **07 Technical Sessions**

Countries Represented: **30+**

Special Features: Keynote Speech | Plenary Panel | Workshops | Speed Networking Session for Partners | Participants Networking Spaces| Bilateral Forum| Exhibition| Awarding Ceremony

Research

Paper Presentations

Key highlight of the conference was the extensive range of high quality research papers presented by seasoned academics, students, practitioners and industry representatives. These contributions underscored the conference's commitment to academic excellence and real-world applicability, offering insights that bridged theory, policy, and practice. Paper Presentations covered a broad spectrum of topics, including, but not limited to;

- Mental Health and Well-being in Disability Communities
- Inclusive Healthcare Systems and the UN SDG Agenda
- Legal Frameworks, Advocacy, and Policy
- Assistive Technology and Innovation
- Education, Employment, and Economic Empowerment
- Future Directions in Disability and Rehabilitation
- Rehabilitation Practices and Therapeutic Approaches
- Social Media and Cyberbullying
- Disaster Response, Conflict, and Crisis Support
- Aging, Disability, and Geriatric
- Biopsychosocial Coding in Disability Rehabilitation

Sessions were structured to encourage critical engagement, with many presentations followed by in-depth Q&A segments, encouraging meaningful dialogue among participants. In addition to standard Q&A, each technical session included a dedicated time slot known as Technical Dialogue, a structured discussion space designed to promote collective reflection and cross-presentation synthesis. These segments provided an opportunity for presenters to engage in shared discussions on emerging themes, methodological challenges, and policy implications raised by the session's papers.

Priority SDGs:



WDRC conference series is firmly committed to supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through evidence-based dialogue and actionable insights. Each session, paper, and technical discussion is designed to not only raise awareness but also drive tangible progress across health-related goals.



“Empowering Inclusion, Engaging the World: Building Bridges in Disability and Rehabilitation”

WDRC is organized by The International Institute of Knowledge Management (TIKM) based in Sri Lanka, WDRC exemplifies how the Global North & South is increasingly shaping global conversations on disability, rehabilitation, and accessibility. While the majority of participants and organizers represent nations from the Global South, the conference also embraces insights and expertise from across the Global North. This cross-regional collaboration not only helps to bridge gaps in disability and rehabilitation knowledge, but also fosters mutual respect, shared innovation, and long-term partnerships. WDRC stands as a platform uniting diverse regions in pursuit of a more inclusive, equitable, and empowered world.

Global Reach

This year, WDRC welcomed submissions from over **50 countries** across Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond. The most significant number of papers came from Asia, underscoring the region's growing academic engagement. Reflecting global reach, the conference welcomed participants from over **30 countries**, including:



Many **universities, Institutions and Industries** were represented, and the participant pool was equally diverse in roles and expertise including, University leadership (Presidents, Deans, Heads of Departments), Faculty members and academic researchers, Doctoral and postgraduate students, Civil service professionals, Social, community activists and Industry leaders.



Special Features

The conference offered a rich array of special features designed to balance academic rigor with practical, real-world application. These included insightful keynote addresses, dynamic plenary sessions, interactive panel discussion, and hands-on workshops. In addition, exclusive networking spaces were thoughtfully curated to foster meaningful connections and collaborative opportunities among participants. Together, these elements created a comprehensive experience that engaged participants across disciplines and sectors.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Title:

“Bridging Distances, Transforming Lives: Telerehabilitation as a Scalable Solution for Mental Health and Disability Inclusion”

Speaker:

Prof. Jose Frant (Deputy Vice Chancellor, The University of the WesternCape (UWC), South Africa

PLENARY SPEECH

Title:

“Advancing Disability Empowerment Through Inclusive Rehabilitation and Mental Health Innovations for a Sustainable Future”

Speaker:

Prof. Tsitsi Chataika
Disability Inclusion Advisor, CBM Global
Disability Inclusion, Zimbabwe





STORY TELLING SESSION

Title:

Redefining Disability: Voices of Resilience and Empowerment

Speaker:

Ms. Saowalak Thongkuay Me ASEAN Disability Forum (ADF), Thailand



WORKSHOP

Title:

"Empowering People with Disabilities through Innovation – The South African Perspective"

Speaker:

- Dr. Anitha Ramsuran (Technology Innovation Agency, South Africa)
- Ms. Shakiladevi Maharaj (Technology Innovation Agency, South Africa)
- Ms. Itumeleng Dhlamini (Technology Innovation Agency, South Africa)



WORKSHOP

Title:

"The Future of Integrated Care: Partnering for Holistic Support, The Future of Integrated Care: Partnering for Holistic Support"

Speaker:

Najla Wortham, President Rock Creek Foundation, Maryland, USA

&

Michelle Grigsby-Hackett, LCPC, CPRP Chief Executive Officer Affiliated Santé Group Maryland USA

WORKSHOP



Title:

"Legal Pathways and Comparative Policies: Advancing the Rights and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities."

Speaker:

Ms. Zahra Hosanee

Co-founder of the YWDEP, Mauritius



PANEL DISCUSSION

Title:

"Cultural Sensitivity in Disability and Rehabilitation Efforts."

Moderator:

Dr. Loren O'Connor

President of WDRPA, Former University Assistant Vice Chancellor, Office of Accessible Education, Kolpin & O'Connor Global Consultants, LLC

Panelists:

- Ms. Zahra Hosanee (Co- Founder of YWDEP, Mauritius)
- Nekram Upadhyay (Managing Director, Medvok Healthcare Chairman, i-CReAT Foundation - International Centre for Research on Assistive Technology and Accessibility, India)

COLLABORATIONS & NETWORKING

Collaborations and Networking were at the heart of WDRC 2025. The conference featured a variety of opportunities for presenters and attendees to connect, including the exclusive Partner Networking Space - Bilateral Academic Forum, which ran across all two days. An Open Networking Space on Day one created room for engaging dialogue among participants and resource people, while informal interactions during breaks and meals added further opportunities to form lasting professional relationships. These platforms positioned WDRC as a hub for cross-sector and cross-border collaboration in the field of Disability and Rehabilitation.

01. Bilateral Academic Forum – Powered by TIIKM at WDRC 2025

As part of the Bilateral Academic Forum at the 10th World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference (WDRC 2025), a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings were successfully conducted with the aim of strengthening academic collaboration and fostering international partnerships.

Forum Overview:

The Forum provided a structured platform for universities, research institutions, healthcare organizations, and academic professionals to engage in purposeful one-on-one discussions. These engagements facilitated the exchange of expertise, the identification of collaborative research opportunities, and the development of long-term institutional linkages.

TIIKM's Role:

Through this initiative, TIIKM reaffirmed its role as a facilitator of global academic networking. The Forum advanced TIIKM's mission to cultivate sustainable partnerships and promote impactful dialogue in the areas of disability studies, rehabilitation, mental health and beyond.

Outcomes:

- Strengthened international academic and professional networks.
- Recognition of new avenues for strategic research collaboration.



A meeting was held with delegates from the College of Engineering, Al-Nahrain University, Iraq, and Mr. Nekram Upadhyay, an assistive technology expert from India and representative of the International Center for Research on Assistive Technology and Accessibility (i-CReAT). The discussion centered on collaborative research and initiatives in the field of orthotics, with a focus on bridging academic expertise and practical application.



TIIM also facilitated a meeting between the Director of Research at Al-Nahrain University, Iraq, and the exclusive conference sponsors, The Rock Creek Foundation and The Affiliated Santee, USA. The discussions focused on potential collaborations in the fields of mental health and survivor support, creating opportunities for impactful joint initiatives.



Technology Innovation Agency, South Africa, engaged in discussions with Al-Nahrain University, Iraq, to explore collaborations in Innovation for Inclusive Development.

02. Music for Inclusion – “Advocating Disability Rights in Africa

Godfred Enyan (King Sobada) from Ghana presented a powerful virtual performance of his original composition, “Advocating Disability Rights in Africa.” At the 10th World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference. Through his music, he creatively highlighted the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and championed their rights across the continent. His performance blended rhythm, storytelling, and emotion, engaging audiences while promoting inclusion, awareness, and social change. By using his art as a platform for advocacy, King Sobada demonstrated how music can transcend borders and inspire communities to support disability rights and equal opportunities for all.

His work is now available on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq1M29Ej3lY>

03. Talented deaf students from Setthasathian School captivate audiences with their inspiring musical performance, supported by a special donation

At the WDRS Conference, a group of exceptionally talented deaf students from Setthasathian School under Royal Patronage delivered a remarkable musical performance, showcasing their dedication, creativity, and resilience. To celebrate the 10th edition of the conference, a donation was also presented to support these inspiring young performers, further enabling them to continue their artistic journey and advocate for inclusive opportunities in the arts.



04. A Platform for Empowerment and Visibility: Thai Autistic Foundation, Thailand

WDRC 2025 provided an exhibition booth for the **Thai Autistic Foundation, Thailand**, creating a valuable platform for a local authority in the field of disability and rehabilitation to engage with a global audience. The booth not only offered them the opportunity to showcase their initiatives but also to display and sell products crafted by members with disabilities and autism within their foundation. This meaningful inclusion highlighted the importance of empowering local organizations and amplifying the talents and contributions of persons with disabilities on an international stage.



05. Exhibition Booth Spaces

WDRC 2025 also featured exhibition booths from a diverse range of institutions, showcasing their expertise and innovations in the field of disability and rehabilitation. Their participation created opportunities for knowledge exchange, industry-academia collaboration, and the introduction of cutting-edge practices to a global audience.

- The Affiliated Santee Group
- The Rock Creek Foundation
- Technology Innovation Agency
- Al- Nahrain University, Iraq

INVOLVEMENT OF PARTNERS:

WDRC 2025 was honored to have the support of 10 Academic and Strategic Partners representing institutions from USA, Indonesia, the Philippines, Poland, Iraq, South Africa, Mauritius and Spain. Their active involvement greatly enhanced the academic depth and diversity of the conference, making them integral to its overall success.

Name	Partnership	Coordinator
The Affiliated Santee Group, USA	Exclusive Sponsor	Ms. Michelle Grigsby-Hackett
The Rock Creek Foundation, USA	Exclusive Sponsor	Ms. Najla Wortham
University of the Western Cape, South Africa	Academic Partner	Dr. Makhya Malema
College of Engineering, Al - Nahrain University, Iraq	Academic Partner	Prof. Ahmed Al-Duroobi
University of Granada, Spain	Academic Partner	Prof. David Domínguez Escalona Prof. María Asunción Pérez de Zafra Arrufat
Hermina Hospital, Indonesia	Academic Partner	Mr. Moh Kurniawan
NU Clark, National University of Philippines	Academic Partner	Ms. Joanafel Mateo
Youth with Disabilities Empowerment Platform, Mauritius	Strategic Partner	Ms. Zahra Hosanee
Kolpin & O'Connor Global Consultants (KOGC)	Strategic Partner	

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ACADEMIC PARTNERS



STRATEGIC PARTNERS



PRESENTATION AWARDS

WDRRC 2025 saw a significant number of paper submissions, with several outstanding works selected for presentation. Presenters were assessed by an expert evaluation panel based on a comprehensive set of criteria, including research quality, field contribution, originality, and time management. Final decisions regarding the award recipients were made under the careful oversight of the Conference Chair. Presenters were awarded under Session Best, Best Poster, Student Best and Overall Best categories, separately in physical and virtual platforms.



Physical Awardees List:

SESSION BEST PRESENTERS

PRESENTER	AFFILIATION	COUNTRY
Sarasa Kai	Institute for Cancer Control, National Cancer Center, Japan	Japan
Boleu, KP	University of the Free State, South Africa	South Africa
Jamwal, R	Austin Health, Australia Monash University, Australia	Australia
Alwash HF	Al-Nahrain University, Iraq	Iraq
Moganti S	Mahatma Gandhi University of Medical Sciences and Technology, Jaipur, India	India

BEST POSTER PRESENTER

Wagner, Y	E. Service Fraternel d'Entraide, Lao PDR	Republic of Laos
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BEST STUDENT PRESENTER

Magidigidi L	University of the Western Cape, South Africa	South Africa
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OVERALL BEST PRESENTER

Dr. Julian Gojer
Mbbs Dpm
Mrcpsych Frcpc
Frcpsych Jd Phd

University of Ottawa, Ottawa

Canada

Virtual Awardees List:

OVERALL BEST PRESENTERS

Nidhi Malshe

Independent Researcher,
Canada

Canada

Sreedurga T.N

Maharashtra National Law
University, Nagpur, India

India

Basma Fawzi
Abdullah

Al-Nahrain University, Baghdad,
Iraq

Iraq

Vaishali B Pai

Tamahar Trust – Centre for
Children with Developmental
Disabilities, Bengaluru, India

India

BEST STUDENT PRESENTER

Sarah Ibrahim
Ahmed

Al-Nahrain University, Iraq

Iraq

BEST POSTER PRESENTER


Pienaar L

University of South Africa, South
Africa

South Africa

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACKS

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, with many highlighting the conference's organization, the quality of content, and the opportunities for collaboration. We also received feedback from participants on ways to improve the conference. While we recognize there is room for improvement, TIHKM remains committed to delivering an even higher quality conference next year.



Sanjay Verma
5 reviews


★★★★★ 5 months ago

This was a wonderful event. By participating in this conference, I learned a lot of new things and got a chance to contact many scholars of the world. Many congratulations to Medcom and Tikam for organizing this event.

Dr. Sanjay Verma,
Bennett university
India

Press and hold to react






frances carlos
1 review

★★★★★ a month ago

Congratulations to the organizers of the 10th World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference! Excellent choice of topics and well organized event 🍌

Press and hold to react






Franco Emil Macaspac
2 reviews

★★★★★ a month ago

It was a good experience meeting other people working in disability and rehabilitation efforts from all over, especially the global south, in this year's WDRS.
Towards more disability-inclusive healthcare systems!
#WDRS25

Press and hold to react

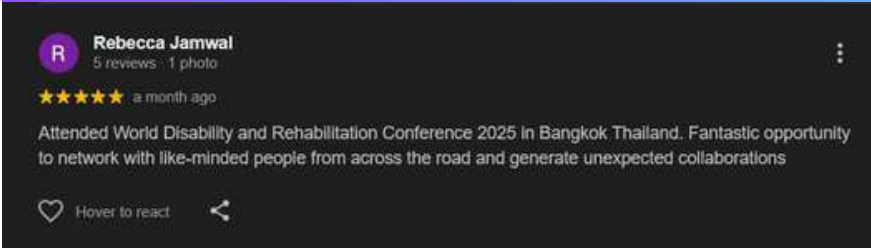




Rebecca Jamwal
5 reviews · 1 photo

★★★★★ a month ago

Attended World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference 2025 in Bangkok Thailand. Fantastic opportunity to network with like-minded people from across the road and generate unexpected collaborations

Hover to react

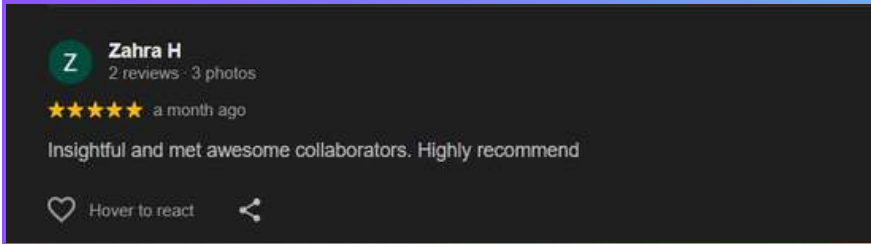




Zahra H
2 reviews · 3 photos

★★★★★ a month ago


Insightful and met awesome collaborators. Highly recommend

Hover to react




kelebogile portia boleu
Local Guide · 11 reviews · 16 photos

★★★★★ a month ago



Hover to react

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all participants, speakers, resource people, partners for their invaluable contributions to the success of WDRS 2025. Your engagement and support made this conference a truly memorable experience.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR,

RESOURCE PEOPLE



Conference Chair

Dr. Loren O'Connor

President of WDRPA, Former University
Assistant Vice
Chancellor, Office of Accessible Education.
Kolpin & O'Connor Global Consultants, LLC.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Dr. Thierry Kolpin

Vice President of WDRPA
Kolpin & O'Connor Global Consultants,
LLC.)
USA



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mr. Nekram Upadhyay

Managing Director, Medyvok Healthcare
Chairman, i-CReAT Foundation -
International Centre for Research on
Assistive Technology and Accessibility New
Delhi, India



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ms. Zahra Hosanee

Co-founder of the YWDEP
Mauritius



STEERING COMMITTEE

Dr. Gerry Duwin A. Dela Zerna

President and CEO
Guided and Unified Interaction for the
Development of Children, Inc.
Philippines



KEYNOTE SPEAKER **Prof. Jose Frantz**

Deputy Vice Chancellor
The University of the Western Cape (UWC)
South Africa



KEYNOTE SPEAKER **Aiko Akiyama**

Expert Disability Inclusion
Provision of telephone relay services The Nippon Foundation
Japan



KEYNOTE SPEAKER **Emily Hyland**

Disability Specialist
Global DEI & Wellbeing Manager at TUI
Churchill Fellow 2023 - Inclusive Wellbeing for Disabled People
Founder of Mana Charity, UK



PLENARY SPEAKER **Prof Tsitsi Chataika**

Disability Inclusion Advisor
CBM Global Disability Inclusion
Zimbabwe



STORY TELLING SESSION SPEAKER **Ms. Saowalak Thongkuay**

Member, a Steering committee, ASEAN Disability
Forum (ADF)
Thailand



STORY TELLING SESSION SPEAKER **Mr. Lokman Ayva**

Founding Chairman
Beyazay Association
Turkey



WORKSHOP SPEAKER **Najla Wortham**

President
Rock Creek Foundation
Maryland
USA



WORKSHOP SPEAKER **Michelle Grigsby-Hackett, LCPC, CPRP**

Chief Executive Officer
Affiliated Santé Group
Maryland, USA



**Pre-Conference Publication Workshop on
"Educate and Accept Diversity (LEAD): A
special education program blueprint for
developing countries."**

by Dr Darlene S. Quijada, The New Era University



**Pre-Conference Publication Workshop on
"Community-Based Rehabilitation for Mental
Wellness: Inclusive Approaches for
Empowerment"**

by DR. JEGANISH Primary Health Care Physician Public Health Specialist Research
Consultant



**Pre-Conference Workshop on "Vicarious
trauma and its implications for all: Support
and engagement for - and with -
professionals, parents, carers, children, and
other family members."**

by Dr. Sarah Wall, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and
Social Sciences, Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), Chelmsford, United Kingdom.

SESSION CHAIRS AND EVALUATION PANEL – WDRC 2025

- Dr. Jasmine Rae Maranan-Gutierrez, Manila Adventist College, Philippines
- Dr. Sujeewa Weerasinghe, The Vice President, World Disability and Rehabilitation Professionals Association, Sri Lanka
- Prof. Wesam Darawsheh, School of Rehabilitation Sciences, Jordan
- Dr. Kokila Abeykoon, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
- Dr. Dorota Kobus-Ostrowska, University of Lodz, Poland
- Dr. Ramesh Singi, Veeranari Chakali Ilamma Women's University, India
- Dr. Saniya Sadafkhan, Founder, Chief Executive Officer - Lifeline Emed Companies Pvt Ltd, Lifeline Emed Publications Pvt Ltd, Lifeline Emed Charitable Trust.
- Dr. Afaf Manzoor, University of Education Lahore, Pakistan
- Prof. Pubalin Das, Singhania University, India
- Prof. Hakan Zari, Department of Hematology, Memorial Atasehir Hospital, Turkey
- Dr. Kofi Nseibo, Pentecost University, Sowotuum Accra Ghana | University of Cape, Town South Africa
- Dr. MD Ashraful, ALAM University of Dhaka, Bangladesh



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

WDRC 2025 was a remarkable success, thanks to the dedicated participation of scholars, professionals, and change-makers. Together, we explored the evolving landscape of gender justice, discussed intersectionality, and shared research that will influence global policy and social movements.

As we look ahead to WDRC 2026, we are excited to build on this momentum. The next edition will place a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering partnerships across diverse sectors, and welcoming new voices to the conversation. Our vision is to further strengthen WDRC as a leading platform for global dialogue on disability and rehabilitation.

But most importantly, we're listening!

Your feedback is invaluable, and we are carefully reviewing your reflections to bring meaningful improvements. Whether it's enhancing accessibility, refining session formats, or amplifying underrepresented voices, your insights will help us shape a more inclusive and impactful conference experience.

We remain deeply committed to making WDRC a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking platform. Thank you for being part of this journey and for helping us grow stronger together.

With gratitude,

Organizing Committee

The 10th World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference (WDRC 2025)

We'll see you next year in **Bali, Indonesia!**



Co - Hosting Partner



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