



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **UNDP & MWFC D TO SPEARHEAD EFFORTS TO RAISE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS OF THE DISABLED**

*Kuala Lumpur, April 10* –The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFC D) will embark on several landmark initiatives to tackle challenges faced by People With Disabilities (PWDs) and foster inclusive development for all groups in society.

Two pilot projects, based in the states of Johor and Penang, will look at reducing barriers that PWDs face in finding employment and accessing public transportation respectively, with the long-term goal of increasing the economic and social rights of PWDs. The projects are expected to be officially launched in the first half of 2008.

These projects come in the wake of heightened awareness among the general public on disability issues.

It is hoped that the UNDP projects, spanning eighteen months, will provide critical input for policies and programmes helmed by MWFC D to promote protect, and safeguard the rights of PWDs.

On April 8, Malaysia became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Convention, which has been signed by 127 countries, sets out recommendations for action at the national, regional and international levels for the achievement of full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social and economic life.

The convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2006 along with its Optional Protocol with an aim to protect the rights of at least 650 million persons with disabilities worldwide, of whom approximately 80 percent live in less-developed countries.

In December 2007, the Malaysian parliament passed the Persons With Disabilities Bill, the country's first rights-based legislation.

According to available statistics, persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Malaysia remain disproportionately undereducated, untrained, unemployed, underemployed and poor. They have insufficient access to the mainstream labour market partially due to social exclusion, lack of trained and competent staff and adequate training for independent workers.

There are currently 197,519 PWDs registered with the Social Welfare Department, but the actual figure of PWDs in the country is expected to be much higher. One of the aims of the projects is to improve data collection and documentation on PWDs in Malaysia.

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### **About UNDP:**

**UNDP** is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. UNDP's current priority is to help all countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

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