



## PRESS RELEASE

### *International Coalition Launches Groundbreaking Disability Rights Fund*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BOSTON, MA** – The Open Society Institute, The Sigrid Rausing Trust, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, and an anonymous donor today announced a groundbreaking collaborative to support the human rights for people with disabilities.

Launched on the first anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD), the Disability Rights Fund<sup>1</sup> will provide financial support for human rights advocacy in the developing world and Eastern Europe/former Soviet Union. The broad objective of the Fund will be to empower disabled persons organizations around the world to effectively implement and monitor the CPRD.

“The Fund is a unique partnership among donors and the worldwide disability community,” said Emily Martinez, Director of Special Initiatives at the Open Society Institute. “It will directly support the human rights work of disabled persons organizations in the developing world.”

The CRPD recognizes that self-representation is essential to the enjoyment of human rights. It underscores the importance of including people with disabilities in the development of disability law, policies and programs. Through its unique governance structure, the Disability Rights Fund incorporates this principle.

A global advisory panel, made up of 12 individuals, most of whom are persons with disabilities, will provide recommendations on grantmaking strategies for the Fund; four of the Panel members will also serve on the Fund’s grantmaking decision body. The members of the panel come from five continents and reflect a broad cross-section of the disability community. The majority were nominated by international and regional disabled persons organizations.

The structure of the Fund not only reflects the international disability community’s slogan, “Nothing About Us Without Us,” it also reflects a growing trend within the grantmaking community to better listen to the communities they seek to serve and to redefine the relationship between grantmaker and grantee in the interest of more effective grantmaking.

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<sup>1</sup> The Disability Rights Fund is a project of Tides.

Grants disbursed by the Disability Rights Fund will be centered on three major areas: increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in their communities through trainings and networking opportunities; developing awareness of the CPRD among stakeholders; and supporting advocacy projects that promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. The Fund expects to make its first grants in late spring/early summer 2008.

“The broad, international support for the Disability Rights Fund is a remarkable characteristic of this grantmaking enterprise. It is our hope that this diversity in funding sources will expand as the Fund develops,” said Diana Samarasan, Director of the Fund.

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