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CBR AFRICA NETWORK

CAN 2025 Annual Highlights



Colleagues and friends of CAN,

As we present this Annual Report for 2025, I do so with pride—and with clear awareness of the realities we faced together. This year unfolded amid global uncertainty, tightening resources, and growing pressures on civil society. Yet it also proved something important: when a network is led with integrity, shared responsibility, and disciplined follow-through, it can rise again.



CAN has always stood for collective strength—learning together, coordinating together, and speaking with one voice so that **CBR/CBID** becomes real in people's lives. In 2025, we moved from intention to practice. We strengthened governance, restored rhythm and accountability.

What matters most is not only what we achieved, but *how* we achieved it. We chose a leadership model grounded in values and evidence: transparency over

noise, teamwork over individual visibility, and stewardship over short-term wins. We invested in shared understanding through orientation and continued dialogue, and we made realistic decisions, then worked hard to implement them step by step.

I offer my sincere thanks to the IAB members for your commitment and principled leadership across regions and languages; to the Secretariat for carrying daily coordination with professionalism and perseverance; and to our partners (especially NAD and CP Trust) for standing with CAN at a critical moment and enabling stability when it was not guaranteed. I also thank our wider collaborators, including those opening new pathways with us through brilliant ideas.

Most importantly, I thank CAN's membership across Africa. Networks revive because members believe again. And to persons with disabilities in Africa and around the world: this work is ultimately about your rights, dignity, and participation. Our vision is not charity-based; it is rights-based, and it depends on inclusive leadership led by those most affected by exclusion.

We carry this progress with humility and remembrance, honouring those who helped build this movement and ensuring their legacy lives on through the next generation. Looking ahead to 2026, we will focus on strengthening national and sub-regional networks, improving multilingual communication, deepening partnerships, and preparing for the opportunities ahead guided by the same principle that brought us back in 2025: success is collective, and leadership is shared.

With respect and solidarity,

Ayman Eltantawy

Chairperson, CAN International Advisory Board

1) Overview

In 2025, the CBR Africa Network (CAN) sustained its revival and strengthened its operational foundations under significant global uncertainty and severe funding constraints. Through the commitment of the International Advisory Board (IAB), the Secretariat, advisors, and the continued support of NAD and CP Trust, CAN maintained core governance functions, advanced priority partnerships, and prepared strategically for major opportunities in 2026.

2) A Short Historical Note (2001–2025)

Founded in 2001, CAN emerged as a pioneering continental platform for CBR knowledge exchange and collaboration at a time when African cross-country learning spaces were limited. Over time, CAN helped amplify African practice in global CBR/CBID spaces. After a period of reduced activity in the late 2010s–early 2020s, the revival process accelerated in 2023–2025—

culminating in strengthened governance, renewed strategic momentum, and growing opportunities to support national and sub-regional networks across Africa.

3) 2025 at a Glance

CAN continued to promote networking, knowledge exchange, and information sharing on disability, rehabilitation, and inclusive development across Africa. This has been enhanced through its key information-sharing platforms including its website (<http://www.afri-can.org>), social media channels Facebook (*Community Based Rehabilitation Africa Network*) and X (@CBR Africa) and online trainings in the formation of CBR/CBID networks for over 500 participants and supporting the launch of CBR/CBID Networks in five IAB member countries.

Through these platforms, CAN has continued to foster shared learning to enhance service delivery and advance the quality of life of people with disabilities and their families across Africa and beyond.

- **Governance reset and oversight strengthened** through a new IAB convening and structured follow-up mechanisms. Also successfully recruited a Network Coordinator after a five-year period of operating without one and relying primarily on volunteer support. This development significantly strengthened the Secretariat and operational capacity of the Network.
- **Capacity strengthening** delivered through a dedicated IAB orientation programme (virtual) covering CAN's mandate, history, governance, and financial oversight responsibilities.
- **Strategic partnership direction confirmed:** a phased institutional approach for 2025–2026 to stabilise CAN while rebuilding systems and capacity.
- **Partnerships expanded** through engagement with Liliane Fonds (Breaking Down Barriers) and the emerging Centres of Excellence opportunity for 2026
- **Congress pathway advanced:** CAN supported early preparation for the 3rd CBR/CBID World Congress planned in Africa (Cairo, Egypt) in 2026.
- **Tribute and continuity:** CAN mourned the passing of Professor Sally Hartley (4 December 2025) and reaffirmed commitment to her legacy.



The late Professor Sally Hartley (MHSRIP)

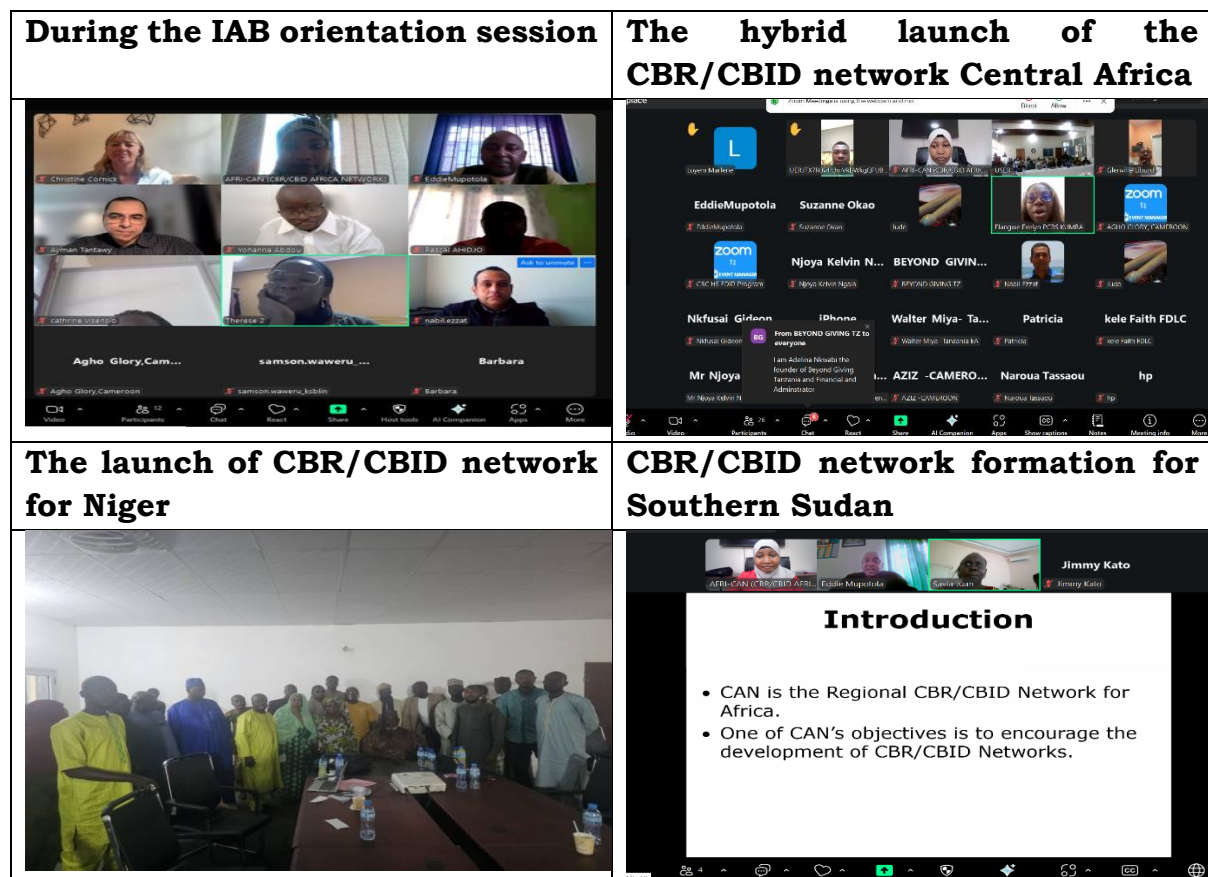
4) Governance and Leadership

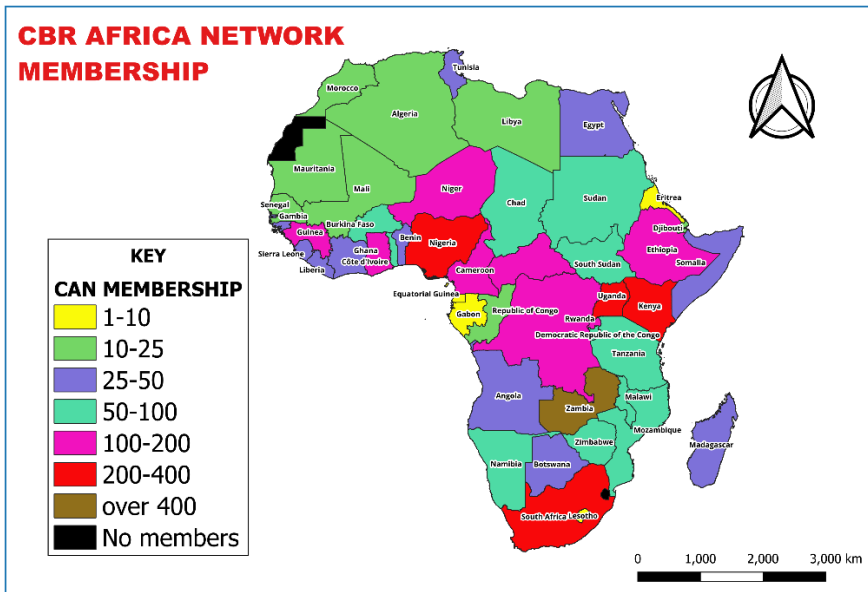
Introductory meeting (14 February 2025). The IAB convened to review CAN's mission and operating realities, confirm the Board's oversight role, and note partner support enabling core Secretariat functions. The meeting also confirmed arrangements for IAB orientation and the process to formalise IAB leadership appointments following orientation.

Orientation sessions (25–27 February 2025).

Across three virtual sessions, IAB members revisited CAN’s historical milestones, clarified roles (including regional representation and youth representation), reviewed the Constitution and governance structure, and examined external pressures impacting networks in Africa. Financial oversight expectations were introduced, and the Board reaffirmed voluntarism and values-driven service

Special meeting (10 March 2025). The IAB confirmed a transitional operational pathway for 2025–2026 to stabilise CAN and rebuild capacity, regional/country network launches in the selected IAB regions including Niger, Southern Sudan and Central Africa. Leadership matters were resolved, including managing conflict-of-interest concerns, and the IAB agreed to strengthen accountability through monthly meetings and quarterly target-setting.





5) Key Decisions and Execution (Selected)

In 2025, the IAB prioritised decisions that were realistic and implementable within constraints, including:

- Confirming the transitional partnership approach for CAN's stabilisation and capacity rebuilding in 2025–2026.
- Prioritising Secretariat strengthening, including progressing recruitment for the Network Coordinator role.
- Strengthening governance discipline through regular meetings and quarterly targets to support follow-up and delivery.
- Reviewing CAN's financial governance and financial bylaw/policy toward the end of the year to reinforce controls and donor compliance.

6) Partnerships and Programmes

NAD and CP Trust remained CAN's backbone partners in 2025, enabling continuity of core governance and administrative functions and sustaining CAN's revival pathway.

- Support to expanding CBR/CBID networks in other African Countries including; Egypt South Sudan, Niger, Cameroon

Liliane Fonds partnership advanced through two linked tracks:

- *Breaking Down Barriers*: CAN engaged through representation in the project's expert/advisory space. In 2025, **Samson Waweru from Kenya a representative for youths with disabilities on the IAB** was delegated to participate on behalf of CAN.

- *Centres of Excellence*: late-2025 discussions advanced an opportunity for CAN to help co-lead an Africa-focused Centres of Excellence agenda in 2026, subject to funding and agreed next steps.

3rd CBR/CBID World Congress (Africa, 2026): CAN supported early groundwork and coordination efforts, positioning Africa’s networks to be visible and influential in the Congress pathway.

7) Operating Environment: Resilience Under Pressure

CAN worked in an environment marked by tightening funding, shifting donor models, and competing global and regional crises that affected civil society networks. These pressures reinforced the importance of CAN as a low-cost, high-value platform for coordination, peer learning, and advancing CBR/CBID and the rights of persons with disabilities across the continent.

8) Quality and advisory support

A key enabling factor in 2025 was the strength of CAN’s governance support model. The appointment of a dedicated network advisor (**Christine Cornick** with support from NAD/CP Trust added significant value by providing continuity, institutional memory, and practical guidance that helped the IAB and Secretariat translate decisions into consistent follow-up. In parallel, the deliberate selection of IAB members based on proven experience—and in line with CAN’s Constitution and governance provisions—strengthened credibility, accountability, and regional balance, enabling the Board to navigate constraints with professionalism and shared leadership.

8) In Memoriam: Professor Sally Hartley

CAN mourned the passing of **Professor Sally Hartley** on **4 December 2025**. As a co-founder and long-serving leader of CAN, her contribution remains foundational. In honouring her legacy, CAN reaffirmed commitment to knowledge exchange, inclusive leadership, and strengthening national CBR/CBID networks, so that her impact continues through the next generation of African disability and inclusion leaders.

9) Lessons Learned (2025)

- Sustainability requires **diversified funding** and realistic resourcing for coordination.
- Governance discipline improves delivery: clear roles, regular meetings, and simple follow-up systems matter.
- Inclusion must be planned and resourced: multilingual engagement and youth participation do not happen by chance.

- Adaptive planning is essential: prioritisation and flexibility protect delivery in uncertain contexts.

10) Priorities for 2026 (Headlines)

CAN enters 2026 focused on:

- i) Information sharing through different avenues
- (i) Congress preparations.
- (ii) Advancing the Centres of Excellence opportunity.
- (iii) Establishing and Strengthening national/sub-regional CBR/CBID networks.
- (iv) Rebuilding Secretariat capacity (including the coordinator role) and diversifying resource mobilisation.
- (v) Strengthening multilingual communications and knowledge products.