Voices from the North-East Asian Disability Community

Reena Lee
Secretary General, Korean Disability Forum
Director, RI Korea
Dialogue within disability community

- An outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic directly affected persons with disabilities in many aspects of lives.
- Living through the pandemic has not only showed reverse impact on persons with disabilities, but also highlighted the significance of mainstreaming disability perspectives in general policies and guidance to ensure leaving no one behind.
- Korean Disability Forum organized two sets of discussion with the North-East Asian disability communities; preparatory virtual meeting on Sept. 17th and a Side-event on Oct 23rd, participated by 21 DPOs from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Mongolia, Russia and RoK.
- Objective of our dialogue is to share the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities and contribution made by the disability communities to alleviate the situation caused by crisis and to implement the disability-inclusive responses around the North-East Asian region with a view to accelerate the implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs.
1. Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities

- COVID 19 does not only affect persons with disabilities, but all.
- However, it surely made them more vulnerable than others.
- COVID 19 highlighted unequal basic human rights for persons with disabilities.
1. Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities

**Inequality in access**

**Information**
- Sign language service for official briefing, but not available either on COVID 19 Hot line or at screening stations
- No provision of Easy Read information for persons with developmental disabilities

**Health service**
- No effective and sufficient medical treat, esp. for people with kidney illness

**On-line education**
- Limitation on E-learning environment, esp. for students with developmental disabilities
1. Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities

**Greater vulnerability in residential homes**

- Out spread in residential homes, affecting not only the residents, but also the care staff.

- As OHCHR asserted in COVID 19 and the rights of persons with disabilities: Guidance, published in April 2020, persons with disabilities who are living in institutions have been exposed to greater risk of infection and death (42% to 57% of all COVID 19 deaths), as well as of human rights violations, such as neglect, restraint, isolation and violence.

- The guidance advise to discharge them from institutions and to re-settle in the community with appropriate provision of support.

- However, most counties in our region, only the Cohort isolation for institutions were taken while putting them at risk of violation of human rights, abuse and over-treatment of medicine.
1. Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities

Care Gap
- Lack of personal assistance during self-quarantine
- Shutdown of schools and community-based services
- Tragedy of families ending their lives without support for their off-springs with developmental disabilities
- Accidents of people with developmental disabilities

Women with disabilities
- Faced by multiple difficulties, due to lack of personal assistance for themselves while having heavy burden on caring for their children
- Exposed to intimate violence
1. Key challenges faced by persons with disabilities

**Decrease in income**

- Drastical decrease in income of visually impaired persons working in massage industry, and people employed in felt souvenires, but emergency relief measures were not available for persons with disabilities.
- First group of redundancy at work.
2. Good practices on multi-stakeholders partnership

DPOs’ Advocacy and partnership with multi-stakeholders

- Disabled people’s organizations (DPOs) immediately alerted the need for disability-inclusive COVID-19 responses and advocated additional needs to safeguard persons with disabilities at outbreak of the virus.

- Based on a sound understanding of the nature of each disability, staff from diverse DPOs collaborated closely with diverse stakeholders, including the government, to support persons with disabilities both from the medical and life support aspects.

- DPOs worked closely with the government and medical professionals to develop the guidance both for prevention of infection and for admission of hospital.

- DPOs also organized support groups and raised fund to send basic items for disinfection and daily goods, as well as provided personal assistance service while wearing protective suit.
2. Good practices on multi-stakeholders partnership

- Support for persons with disabilities in self-quarantine provided by staff of DPOs in Daegu in ROK, which was first hit by COVID 19,

- China organized Disabilities Supporting Network against Pandemic, with more than 50 DPOs, and supported women living in Hubei in Wuhan.
2. Good practices on multi-stakeholders partnership

Development of disability-inclusive COVID 19 responses

- Taking the initiative in developing disability-inclusive response to COVID 19
- Easy Read leaflet on COVID 19, published by a local DPO in Daegu which helped the government to develop the national Easy Read information (Republic of Korea)
2. Good practices on multi-stakeholders partnership

Suspending school without suspending learning

Hong Kong

- Enhanced support for hardware through the government’s subsides for purchasing mobile computer and and for internet access
- Lending devices and platform for e-learning by schools
- Real-time on-line learning for teaching and rehabilitation
  - Videos and instruction sheets for parents and students
  - Telephone consultation and support

- New opportunities
- Involvement of parents
- Active self-learning of students
2. Good practices on multi-stakeholders partnership

Subsides for income support

- Exemption of tax and social insurance fee/provide financial support to employees etc. but, those measures were not disability inclusive initially

- As the result of DPOs advocacy activity, persons with disabilities have been included in those measures and financial support for 6 months became available for them
3. Ways forwards

- Make COVID 19 Responses disability-inclusive, including Disaster Risk Reduction guideline
- Develop small-scale of community-based services for health, education and social care during the pandemic
- Women with disabilities’ personal needs to be considered
- Ensure job preparedness and lack of adequate training results in ineligibility and low competitiveness on the labor market
- With emergency of untact business and wider ranged of IT based society, development of it training for persons with disabilities is expected to reduce digital divide and to increase job opportunities for persons with disabilities
- Accelerate de-institutionalization plan for living in the community with fully access to community-based services, in line with UN policy, esp. the immediacy de-institutionalization