

Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation to Review the Implementation of  
the Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012:  
The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action

23-25 June 2010  
Bangkok

**Agenda item 4: Assessment of the achievements thus far of the Asian and Pacific Decade  
of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, and the remaining challenges**

**Summary**

Under agenda item 4, the Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation will review achievements made by the region during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012 and identify the remaining challenges in promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The document considers progress made thus far and challenges faced, and suggests areas of further action. It also calls upon participants of the Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation to:

1. Share their experiences of the key issues and challenges faced in empowering persons with disabilities and promoting a rights-based and social model-based approach to disability.
2. Identify critical issues to be addressed in the post-2012 period.

The Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation is invited to deliberate on the above-mentioned issues with a view to reaching consensus on what critical issues need to be addressed in follow up to the current Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. The recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation will be submitted to the governments attending the Committee on Social development, at its second session, which will be held from 19-21 October 2010 in Bangkok.

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## I Introduction

1. Since 1993, ESCAP, in close collaboration with disabled people's organizations (DPOs), has been the regional engine in promoting a rights-based approach to disability issues. It has achieved this by means of two unique consecutive regional initiatives, namely "Asian and Pacific Decades of Disabled Persons". The first Decade ran from 1993 to 2002 and the second and current Decade started in 2003 and will end in 2012.

2. *The Agenda for Action* for the first Decade and *the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action* as well as *the Biwako Plus Five* for the second Decade have been serving as regional instruments, endorsed by ESCAP member States, to translate the rights-based approach to disability into effective policy actions. Particularly, the second Decade's defining slogan, "An Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society" underscores that the removal of barriers and the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities can create a society for all, where every person, including those with disabilities, fulfils their desired potential and enjoys their well-being.<sup>1</sup>

3. With the current Decade concluding in two years, Commission resolution 66/8 of 14 May 2010 encourages participatory preparatory processes leading up to the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting in 2012, when the official, fully-fledged review of the implementation of the second Asian and Pacific Decade is to take place. The current Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation is part of the initial preparatory process, where experts and key stakeholders are expected to discuss ways forward beyond 2012.

4. Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to review progress made thus far and to identify areas of further action for consideration by experts and stakeholders in the Meeting. The paper first discusses the progress made and challenges faced under four headings, followed by consideration of seven areas for further action to be carried out by Governments and other stakeholders. The paper utilizes information and data presented in previous ESCAP meetings on disability, including the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012<sup>2</sup> as well as recent ESCAP publications, especially "Disability at a Glance 2009"<sup>3</sup> and "Disability Policy Central".<sup>4</sup>

5. While recognizing ongoing limitations relating to the paucity of accurate and comparable data on demographic and socio-economic indicators of persons with disabilities in the region, the paper attempts to capture the lived reality of persons with disabilities and what measures are needed to change it by utilizing the data and information that are currently available. Furthermore, as the paper functions as a preliminary review, it does not assess the achievements related to each of the 21 targets of the *Biwako Millennium Framework for Action*.

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<sup>1</sup> See E/ESCAP/CSD/6.

<sup>2</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP 92)/1\*.

<sup>3</sup> Disability at a Glance 2009, accessed from:

<[http://www.unescap.org/ESID/psis/disability/publications/glance/Disability\\_at\\_a\\_Glance2009.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/ESID/psis/disability/publications/glance/Disability_at_a_Glance2009.pdf)> on 11 June 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Disability Policy Central, accessed from:

<[http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/policy\\_central/index.asp](http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability/policy_central/index.asp)> on 11 June 2010.

## **II. Progress made and challenges faced**

6. The paper summarizes the progress made and challenges faced on the two regional disability decades under the following four headings:

1. Measures taken for the well-being and empowerment of persons with disabilities;
2. Heightened policy commitment to the promotion of a rights-based and social model-based approach to disability;
3. Enhanced disability data collection capacities;
4. Increased attention to disability-inclusive development — development for all.

### **A. Measures taken for the well-being and empowerment of persons with disabilities**

7. While available data and anecdotal evidence indicate continuing and often overwhelming region-wide disparity between persons with and without disabilities, certain proactive measures have been undertaken to improve the situation in major development areas including education, employment and poverty reduction.

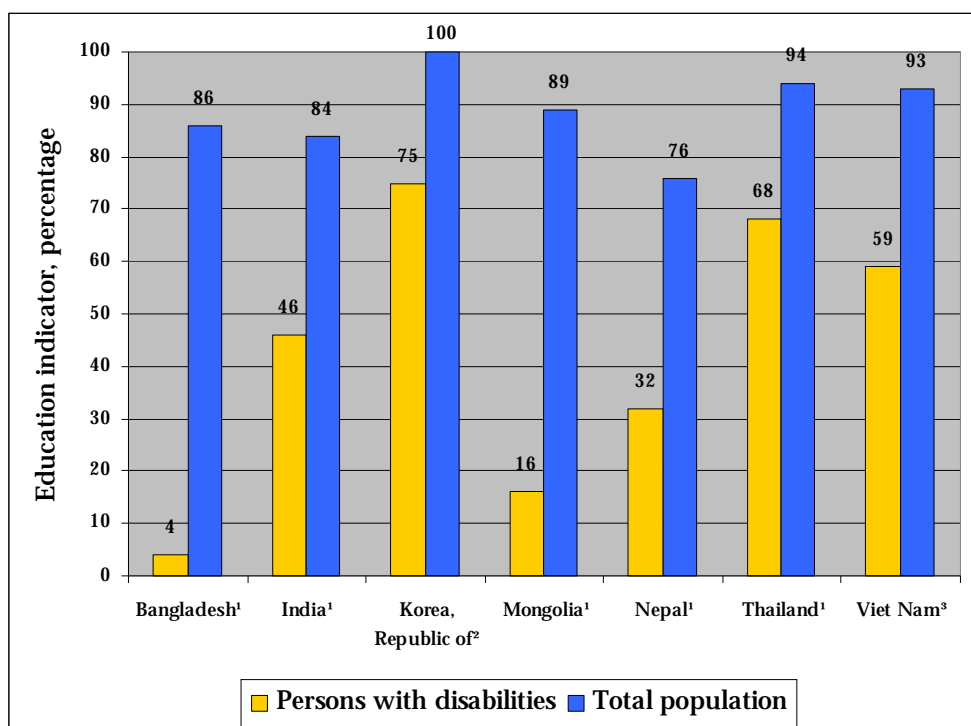
8. In the area of education, a comparative analysis of specific indicators of education as these relate to persons with and without disabilities reveals disparity between the two groups. This is shown in figure 1., where some of the percentages are approximations. The percentage of children with disabilities with access to primary education is as low as 4 per cent, which is 20 times less than that for the total population, confirming the global assessment that children with disabilities tend to have low educational attainment.<sup>5</sup>

9. In certain settings, where socio-economic development may be at a higher level or where there may be greater emphasis on equity, the percentage of children with disabilities with access to primary education is considerably higher and not too dissimilar from that of the total population. This indicates that, with the right policies and programmes, progress is possible. Irrespective of progress regarding certain indicators, it is relevant that the figures do not provide information on the forms and quality of education provided to children with disabilities as well as how it contributes to their development, self-worth and dignity and being put on an equal basis with children without disabilities.

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<sup>5</sup> Some Facts about Persons with Disabilities, accessed from:  
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/facts.shtml> on 14 June 2010.

**Figure 1. Various indicators of education: Persons with disabilities and total population in selected countries in Asia and the Pacific**



<sup>1</sup> Access to primary education.

<sup>2</sup> Completion of primary education.

<sup>3</sup> Literacy rate (for persons with disabilities over 6 years and for total adult population).

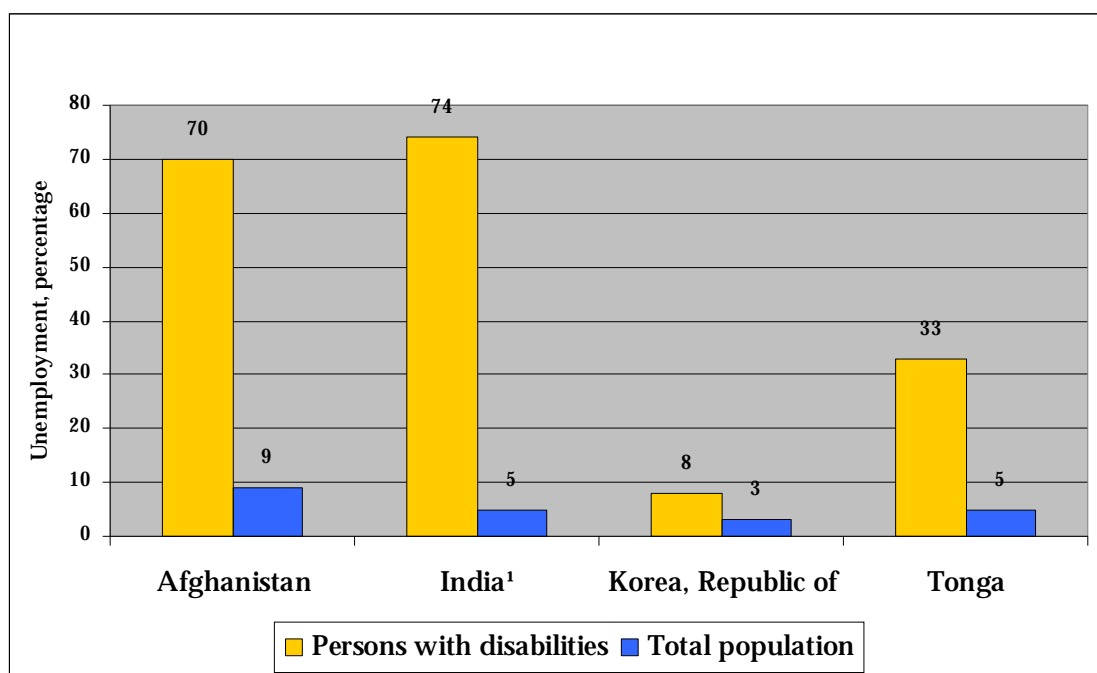
Source: Disability figures from ESCAP Disability Policy Central for Asia and the Pacific, Online database.

Total population figures from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Data Centre, Online database.

10. In the area of employment persons with disabilities are generally at a considerable disadvantage and are much more likely to be unemployed. Available data indicated in figure 2 show that persons with disabilities tend to have significantly higher rates of unemployment than the rates for the total population. The unemployment rate of persons with disabilities can be over 70 per cent, around ten times higher than that for the total population. This, again, reaffirms the global assessment of employment of persons with disabilities, which states that the unemployment rate is usually at least double that of the general population and in developing countries 80 to 90 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Disability and Employment, Fact Sheet 1, accessed from:  
<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=255> on 14 June 2010.

**Figure 2. Unemployment: Persons with disabilities and total population in selected countries in Asia and the Pacific**



<sup>1</sup> Persons with disabilities figure for persons with physical disabilities.

Sources: Disability figures for Afghanistan and Tonga from ESCAP Disability Policy Central for Asia and the Pacific, Online database; disability figures for India from UN Enable - Disability and Employment, Online Fact Sheet; disability figures for Republic of Korea from Ministry of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea (2009) 2008 Survey on Persons with Disability; total population figures from ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, Sixth Edition, Online database.

11. Some data reveal that the challenges may be becoming more severe and there is a greater need than ever for progress. For instance, in India the employment rate of persons with disabilities actually dropped over the period from 1991 to 2002, from 42.7 per cent to 37.6 per cent,<sup>7</sup> indicating fewer opportunities for employment were available for them.

12. While available data do not provide information on types of employment, working conditions and worker retention rates for persons with disabilities, anecdotal evidence suggests that many persons with disabilities are engaged in casual or short term labour, leaving them vulnerable to changes in the economic situation of a country and beyond.<sup>8</sup>

13. Regarding the poverty rate, data on persons with disabilities indicate the severity and complexity of their poverty, which warrants due attention in future reports on Millennium Development Goal achievement. This is especially so since aggregate numbers

<sup>7</sup> People with Disabilities in India: From Commitments to Outcomes, accessed from: <http://www.worldbank.org.in/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/INDIAEXT/N/0,,contentMDK:21557057~menuPK:3968122~pagePK:64027988~piPK:64027986~theSitePK:295584,00.html> on 11 June 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Disability and Employment, Fact Sheet 1, accessed from: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=255> on 14 June 2010.

can mask variations between subgroups of people. For example, the overall poverty rate in China fell from 33 per cent to 10 per cent between 1990 and 2004, greatly contributing to progress towards attaining Millennium Development Goal 1, Target 1, “Halve, between 1995 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day”.<sup>9</sup> However, the results of the Second China National Sample Survey on Disability indicate that disaggregated data over time on different groups, such as persons with disabilities, have to be critically examined. The level of income of persons with disabilities is often less than half of that of those without disabilities, and progress, or lack thereof, over time of this group cannot be easily detected. In 2006, 62 million persons with disabilities lived in rural areas, accounting for 75 per cent of the total population of 83 million persons with disabilities. Those living in rural areas are generally far poorer than those living in urban areas; in addition to person with disabilities being disproportionately concentrated in rural areas, families with members with disabilities are generally significantly poorer than families without members with disabilities. In 2006, per capita income of families with members with disabilities in rural and urban areas was ¥2,260 (approximately \$296) and ¥4,864 (approximately \$636), respectively. In contrast, the average per capita income of rural and urban families without members with disabilities was ¥4,631 (approximately \$607) and ¥11,321 (approximately \$1,483), respectively.<sup>10</sup>

14. To tackle harsh realities of the aforementioned nature, proactive policy measures have been taken by Governments in the region. For example, 18 Governments in the region reported that they targeted children and youth with disabilities as an integral part of their measures to attain Millennium Development Goal 2 on achieving universal primary education.<sup>11</sup> At least 16 countries reported having a quota scheme for persons with disabilities with the quota rates varying from 1 to 4 per cent, whereby either public or private sector entities are either mandated or encouraged to hire these percentages of persons with disabilities. At least 25 Governments have accessibility standards for either the built environment or public transport or both. Eight Governments have accessibility guidelines on ICT.<sup>12</sup> With increasing recognition of a rights-based approach in the region, as described in the subsequent section, anti-discrimination measures to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the work place are clearly stipulated in the legislation of certain Governments, such as that of the Republic of Korea.<sup>13</sup>

15. Specific measures to institute change have also been taken. India adopted Education for All, Sharva Shiksha Abhiyan, an initiative prohibiting rejection from school on the ground of disability.<sup>14</sup> India started to expand categories of disability in the quota for university admissions and now, for example, a student with dyslexia is being admitted to a university.<sup>15</sup> In 2005, Bangladesh incorporated the disability perspective in its Poverty

<sup>9</sup> *A Future within Reach 2008: Regional Partnerships for the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.II.F.15).

<sup>10</sup> Dongme Zhang “Policies and effects of poverty reduction for the disabled in China”, paper presented at the Taking Action for the World’s Poor and Hungry People seminar, Beijing, 17-19 October 2007, accessed from: [www.ifpri.org/2020chinaconference](http://www.ifpri.org/2020chinaconference) on 15 June 2010.

<sup>11</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1\*, p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> See Disability at a Glance, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> ROK case study paper from the ESCAP EGM 2009

<sup>14</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1\*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Against all odds: Thanks to 'Taare...', he dared to dream, accessed from: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/Against-all-odds-Thanks-to-Taare-he-dared-to-dream/articleshow/6009621.cms> on 11 June 2010.

Reduction Strategy Paper. This was followed by its introduction of interest-free micro credit schemes for persons with disabilities, monthly cash assistance for severely disabled persons over 30 years old and education subsidies for students with disabilities at all school levels. China, as a result of mainstreaming disability into poverty reduction schemes, lifted 10 million persons with disabilities out poverty, as defined by its national poverty line.<sup>16</sup>

16. In addition to the developments discussed above, data on accessibility indicate that an enabling environment is being constructed gradually in many settings. In China, each of its 100 “accessible model cities”, catering for the accessibility needs of all and in particular persons with disabilities, have been designated and promoted. In 2007, India reported that it had manufactured 1,250 accessible railroad coaches nation-wide and 625 low-floor buses had been ordered by the Delhi Transport Division. In Pakistan, accessibility audits and a sensitivity campaign have been conducted and, as a consequence, changes in the physical environment are being made.<sup>17</sup>

17. Another important area of progress concerns wider and greater acceptance of DPOs as “agents of change” by major stakeholders such as Governments and international organizations. The participatory drafting process of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in which representatives of persons with disabilities and DPOs played major roles, showcased the abilities of such people and testified that their participation in the decision making processes was instrumental in effective policy formulation processes concerning important aspects of their lives.

18. The International Disability Alliance (IDA) was established in 1999, as the world’s first network of global and regional DPOs to promote the effective implementation of the CRPD. Before its formation, there had been no formal alliance of DPOs, many of which had single-handedly represented groups of persons with specific impairments. IDA, having UN consultative status, currently comprises nine global and three regional DPOs, with two other regional DPOs having observer status. Their members have been at the policy negotiation table internationally, regionally and nationally, to voice the concerns of persons with diverse disabilities.<sup>18</sup> In Asia and the Pacific, their representatives have been instrumental in drafting the *Agenda for Action*, the *Biwako Millennium Framework for Action* and the *Biwako Plus Five*.

19. In the region, the vibrancy of their advocacy has also contributed to good practices at the national level. For example, in 2009, the Ministerial Board for the Disability Policy Reform was established in Japan to critically review the existing legislation on disability in light of the CRPD. A total of 14 of the 24 members of the Board are persons with different types of impairments and they meet on a biweekly or monthly basis for the harmonization of domestic legislation with the CRPD.

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<sup>16</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1\*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1\*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> IDA home page: <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/about-us/who-we-are/>.



## **B. Heightened policy commitment to the promotion of a rights-based and social model-based approach to disability**

20. One powerful factor which has enabled the abovementioned progress is heightened policy commitment in the region to the promotion of a rights-based and social model-based approach to disability. Needless to say, adoption and entry into force of the CRPD is the major driving force for this achievement. As the first disability specific human rights treaty in the world, it was a landmark in validating a social model and a rights-based approach to disability as well as underscoring the parallel importance of the development of persons with disabilities and international cooperation to realize their rights.

21. In Asia and the Pacific, irrespective of a country's economic status or human development index, there has been commitment to this important international instrument. As of 7 June 2010, in Asia and the Pacific, 30 Governments had signed the Convention and 18 had ratified it.

22. At the national level, legal and policy frameworks on disability have been instituted at an increasing pace, with explicit mention of a rights-based approach therein. At least 23 Governments in the region in their constitution make an explicit reference to disability and 25 Governments have comprehensive disability laws. Seven Governments have anti-discrimination laws on disability. Many Governments either developed or revised their legal frameworks or policies after 2003, during the current disability Decade. Of note, 24 out of the existing 30 action plans on disability policy have been developed and updated during the current Decade.

## **C. Enhanced disability data collection capacities**

23. During the current Decade progress has been made on disability data collection capacities in two main areas; one by enhancing the availability of data and the other by enhancing the comparability of data collection methodologies.

24. On the first point, at the end of the last Decade, short of 10 Governments in the region reported that they had some forms of disability data collection, and yet, the availability of data on relevant socio-economic indicators was unclear. As of 2010, 31 Governments, across the spectrum of economic and social development, reported to ESCAP that they collected data on the population of persons with disabilities either by census, survey or registration systems. Most of the data were collected within the current Decade. Furthermore, 13 Governments reported on their data on employment status of persons with disabilities and 14 reported on their data on education status of persons with disabilities.<sup>19</sup> In 2007, at the midpoint review of the Decade, four Governments reported on their data on income poverty of persons with disabilities.<sup>20</sup>

25. Other data on access to the Internet, availability of standardized sign language and sign language interpreters were reported. Country-based situation analyses of persons with disabilities, such as in India and Myanmar, reveal more detailed data, including non-income indicators for households with and without persons with disabilities.<sup>21</sup> As often

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<sup>19</sup> See Disability at a Glance, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1\*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Myanmar National Disability Survey 2010.

mentioned, the accuracy of data related to persons with disabilities might be debatable, leaving room for further improvement, including on definitions and methodologies. However, increasingly available data allow for analysis of the socio-economic status of persons with disabilities.

26. With regard to improvements in the comparability of disability data collection methodologies, efforts have been made to integrate the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) into national disability data collection methods. This has been promoted by ESCAP, WHO and the Washington Group through the dissemination, and field and cognitive testing of ICF-based census and survey questions in the region. The promotion has been regarded as crucial as it fundamentally reflects the social model approach to disability and provides a broader spectrum of disability. As a result of these efforts, a number of countries in the region, including the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, have or will be integrating the ICF-based questions into their national disability data collection methods.<sup>22</sup>

#### **D. Increased attention to disability-inclusive development — development for all**

27. During the last eight years of the current Decade, many development partners and organizations across the world have formulated policies and strategies on “disability-inclusive development”. This refers to ideas and ways of mainstreaming the disability perspective into development projects and activities.

28. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, organizations such as the World Bank, AUSAID and JICA have a clear policy on implementing and measuring outcomes of projects aimed at empowering persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in thematic development projects such as poverty reduction, health management, education, infrastructure and transportation development. Underlying the thinking of this approach is the idea that disability-inclusive development ultimately leads to development for all, where persons – not only with disabilities per se but also family members of persons with disabilities, the growing population of older persons, pregnant women, families with young children and temporarily injured persons – can all benefit by having less of a burden, a better livelihood and a superior quality of life.<sup>23</sup>

29. Discourse within the United Nations system on mainstreaming disability into Millennium Development Goal implementation and monitoring is increasingly noticeable, particularly through recent GA and ECOSOC resolutions, including, A/C.3/64/L.5 of 7 October 2009 entitled, “Inclusion of persons with disabilities in realizing the Millennium Development Goals”,<sup>24</sup> and E/CN.5/2010/L.3/Rev.1 of 12 February 2010 entitled, “Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda”.<sup>25</sup> As a result, Governments in the

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<sup>22</sup> ESCAP Statistics Division.

<sup>23</sup> Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014, accessed from:

[http://www.aisaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=8131\\_1629\\_9578\\_8310\\_297&Type=;](http://www.aisaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=8131_1629_9578_8310_297&Type=)

JICA policy on disability assistance

[http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/social\\_sec/docs/001.doc](http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/social_sec/docs/001.doc); on 12 June 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Accessed from: [http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/gadocs/a\\_c3\\_64\\_l5.doc](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/gadocs/a_c3_64_l5.doc) on 14 June 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Accessed from: [http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/resolutions/csocd48\\_resolution.doc](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/resolutions/csocd48_resolution.doc) on 14 June 2010.

region have been motivated to duly integrate disability concerns into the Millennium Development Goal achievement review process, poverty reduction schemes, education for all schemes and other development goals.

30. In the past, Community-Based Rehabilitation mainly referred to only the extension of medical and rehabilitative services in rural communities. However, during the current Decade, WHO, in partnership with DPOs and other development organizations, has redefined it using a much broader perspective that adheres to rights-based development. It is now considered to be a useful tool to implement the CRPD at the community level across the region.<sup>26</sup>

31. The business community has also started to realize the benefits of including the disability perspective, not so much in terms of a “corporate social responsibility” obligation but more from the perspective of appealing to growing numbers of consumers with disabilities and the burgeoning silver market. Examples of this are a series of barrier-free training and partnership activities with DPOs, conducted by SM shopping Mall in the Philippines and accessible tourism promotion done by the city of Takayama, Gifu prefecture, Japan. Such activities are laudable, however they tend to be relatively limited in their scope and hence it is vital that greater efforts are directed to realizing the rights of persons with disabilities, as the following section attests.

### **III. Areas for Further Action**

32. The paper considers areas for further action in the context of the two regional disability decades and in light of the way forward under the following seven headings:

- A. Recognizing the diversity of needs of persons with disabilities
- B. Prioritizing issues regarding women with disabilities
- C. Harmonizing national legislation with the CRPD policies and enforcement mechanism
- D. Filling in the implementation gap
- E. Enhancing leadership development and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making
- F. Improving data collection and research
- G. Mainstreaming disability into all areas of development

#### **A. Recognizing the diversity of needs of persons with disabilities**

33. Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group. As a consequence, they have a variety of different needs, depending on their type severity and complexity or combination of impairment – whether physical, intellectual or psychosocial – and other factors which may pose additional challenges, such as social-economic status, gender, race, caste or location of residence. A simple case in point concerns issues of accessibility. Ensuring accessibility for a blind person might require different considerations to those for wheelchair users; the former would benefit from tangible surface changes or gaps to identify differences between pavements and roadways, whereas the latter would benefit from smoother transitions between surfaces. Hence addressing differing needs involves careful consideration, planning and implementation.

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<sup>26</sup> CBR Matrix : <http://www.who.int/disabilities/cbr/matrix/en/index.html>.

34. Another important issue is that a large part of policy attention and many good practices in the disability field are concentrated in urban areas, catering to the needs of wheelchair users who are adult male persons with disabilities. A more effective way of addressing the needs of persons with disability requires actions to incorporate the perspectives of diverse groups within the disability community, for instance persons in rural areas, persons with multiple disabilities and girls and women with disabilities. Such perspectives should be routinely integrated in policy discourse.

### **B. Prioritizing issues regarding women with disabilities**

35. There are more than 200 million women with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and their social, educational, economic and political rights have largely been ignored or, in certain cases, violated by society.<sup>27</sup> In fact, women and girls with disabilities in developing countries often face triple discrimination as a consequence of their female status, being a person with disability and being over represented among the poor.

36. In the Philippines, girls with disabilities have fewer opportunities to attend school for elementary education as compared to boys with disabilities due to the over-protectiveness of their parents and the attitudes of communities towards women and girls in general.<sup>28</sup> Even in developed countries, such as Australia, disability strategies have been criticized as being weak instruments to promote equality of access for persons with disabilities in general and women with disabilities in particular. For instance, men with disabilities are significantly more likely to be in full time employment than women (21 per cent compared to 9 per cent), and, in addition women with disabilities are likely to be in lower paid jobs.<sup>29</sup>

37. Shortcomings of the aforementioned nature are recognized by the CRPD, which, in article 16(4), requires States parties to put in place “effective legislation and policies, including women- and child-focused legislation” to ensure the proper identification, investigation and prosecution of exploitation, violence and abuse against persons with disabilities. Across Asia and the Pacific, there is a lack of participation of women with disabilities in disability organizations. Without actions to change this, issues of significance to girls and women with disabilities cannot be effectively addressed.

38. Some countries, such as the Republic of Korea, have introduced many forward-sighted measures to enhance the role of women with disabilities in society, while organizations like Korea Differently Abled Women United aim to implement the goals of the disability rights movement from a gender perspective. Actions of this nature are vital to ensure that the rights of women with disabilities are respected and their needs are met. To this effect, other countries can learn from the experience of the Republic of Korea and enhance the participation of women with disabilities in working for positive change in the disability field.

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<sup>27</sup> Osaka Declaration on Women with Disabilities, accessed from: [http://www.disabilityworld.org/11-12\\_02/women/osaka.shtml](http://www.disabilityworld.org/11-12_02/women/osaka.shtml) on 11 June 2010.

<sup>28</sup> CRPD Publication (ESCAP, forthcoming), Philippines.

<sup>29</sup> Women with Disabilities Australia (2005). “Submission to the Review of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy”, accessed from: [www.wwda.org.au/cdssub2.htm](http://www.wwda.org.au/cdssub2.htm) on 11 June 2010.

### **C. Harmonizing national legislation with the CRPD policies and enforcement mechanism**

39. There has been progress at the national-level in terms of legislative recognition of a rights-based and social model approach to disability. Nevertheless, more detailed work on translating concepts into disability-specific and general thematic laws, policies, plans and enforcement mechanisms is needed. In essence, national legislative processes should be the harmonized with the CRPD. Currently, some countries, such as the Republic of Korea, have a relatively comprehensive legislative framework and institutional and enforcement mechanism, which are in line with the obligations stipulated in the CRPD. Yet many other countries do not have comparable systems in place.

40. The Asian and Pacific region is presently tasked with reviewing, revising and developing definitions and terminologies that relate to disability, as well as undertaking the categorization of different types of impairment and the definition of various forms of discrimination, reasonable accommodation and enforcement mechanisms in light of the obligations, principles and substantive and procedural articles of the CRPD. In this connection, the revision and nullification of discriminatory laws and regulations are other actions that require urgent attention.

### **D. Filling in the implementation gap**

41. While many existing laws, policies, plans and schemes might adopt ideal and inspirational language, significant implementation gaps, in terms of statements on what should be done and what is actually done, exist. Hence addressing this shortcoming, whether in the context of discrimination or the provision of accessible environments, remains a crucial area for action if measures are to effectively cater for the needs of persons with disabilities.

42. Many existing service schemes with good intentions do not reach those who need them partially due to a lack of awareness or commitment on the side of administrators, and partly due to a lack of awareness on the side of persons with disabilities and their families. In the design of policies and schemes, limited categories of persons with disabilities are considered. As a result, persons who are deaf and who have severe disabilities, intellectual disabilities, other developmental disabilities and psychosocial disabilities are often left out and unable to partake in the development processes. Many countries in the region suffer from a dearth of sign language interpreters, hampering meaningful participation of deaf persons in society. For instance, there are 964 official sign language interpreters in the Philippines, 50 in Thailand, 40 in Nepal, 4 in Cambodia, 2 in Sri Lanka and none at all in Indonesia.<sup>30</sup>

43. Institutionalizing penalties and incentives in fields such as promoting employment and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities have to be considered seriously, as the current situation in these areas reveals a lack of motivation by the stakeholders who should be accountable. In Vanuatu, one of the countries more committed to empowering persons with disabilities, it is recognized that self-help organizations and organizations providing community-based rehabilitation services need to work closely in partnership

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<sup>30</sup> See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2)/1\*, p. 18, Secretariat for Asia and the Pacific of the World Federation of the Deaf.

with the Government for there to be effective promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities and implementation of schemes that benefit them.<sup>31</sup> Similar commitments, as well as other actions to bring about tangible results and changes in perception regarding persons with disabilities, are required across Asia and the Pacific.

#### **E. Enhancing leadership development and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making**

44. In spite of the well-accepted slogan, “nothing about us without us,” participation of persons with disabilities in relevant decision making processes tends to be marginal. It is often encouraged only on an ad-hoc and temporary basis. Capacity development of persons with disabilities themselves, and systematic involvement of them in decision making processes need to be realized region wide. To this effect, specific programmes should be implemented to empower persons with disabilities to be more effective decision makers and enhance the leadership skills. Moreover, there needs to be strong leadership from “champions” of persons with disabilities in the government and other sectors to promote the principles and purposes of the CRPD and put disability at the forefront of development challenges that need to be addressed. This can be done by, for example, greater involvement of key political figures, including prime ministers, in commissions and other entities that work to change legislation and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

45. In Thailand, the Constitution not only does not restrict voting rights and the right of persons with disabilities to stand to be elected for a seat in the House of Representatives or the Senate, it stipulates that the procedure for selecting a Senator must include the underprivileged and persons with disabilities. Senator Monthian Buntan, who has visual impairments, was recently selected based on this provision. It is important that in other countries similar actions are carried out to realize greater leadership development and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making.

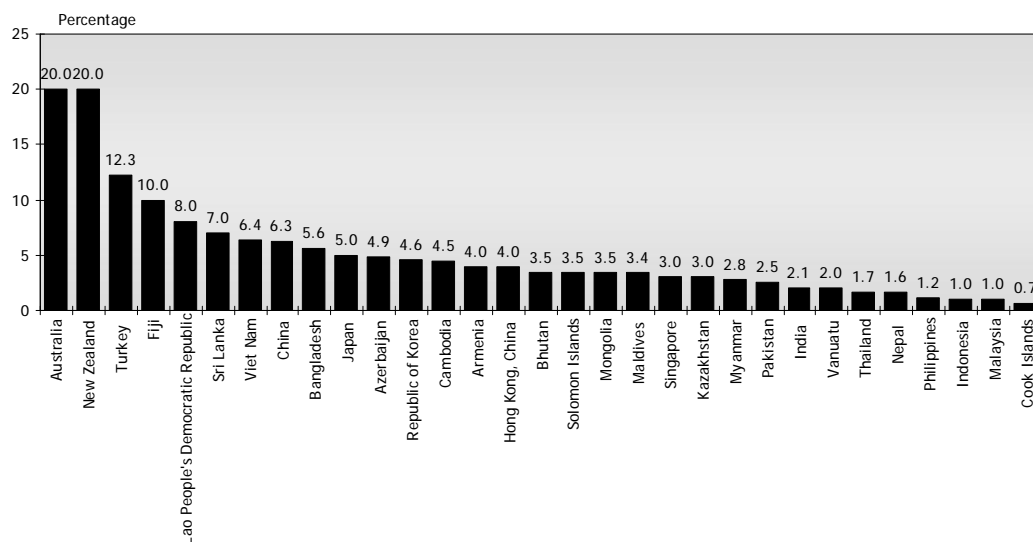
#### **F. Improving data collection and research**

46. Disability data is being made more available, yet the region is still home to a wide range of population ratios of persons with disabilities. In Figure 3 below, the data show a wide range in the proportion of persons with disabilities, from 0.7 per cent in the Cook Islands to 20 per cent in Australia. This owes greatly to varying definitions regarding the scope of disability, as well as different methods and institutional capacities of data collection. In this regard, officials responsible for disability data collection need continuous capacity development to allow for more effective use of data including comparability through greater harmonization of statistical techniques and criteria of measurement.

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<sup>31</sup> CRPD Publication (ESCAP, forthcoming), Vanuatu.

**Figure 3. Proportion of persons with disabilities to total population**



Source: Disability at a Glance 2009: a Profile of 36 Countries and Areas in Asia and the Pacific

47. An additional matter is that the region suffers from a dearth of region-generated research which directly involves persons with disabilities as a part of research teams and links their voices for change with institutional, administrative, and legislative solutions to be recommended. Hence action is required to not only improve data collection and analysis, and make it more compatible across Asia and the Pacific, it is also needed to better highlight critical issues and allow effective messages to reach those in decision making as well as the population at large.

### **G. Mainstreaming disability into all areas of development**

48. In recent years, Governments have generally shown greater policy commitment to disability issues. However, there largely remains an attitude that disability issues are “theirs” and not “ours”. This indicates that disability only belongs to social welfare focal points and limited areas of the government apparatus. Protection and promotion of rights and the development of persons with disabilities requires concerted efforts of those in all ministries as well as partnership with civil society. Mainstreaming disability into all areas of development cooperation involves assessing the impact of any planned action on persons with disabilities. This includes legislation, policies and interventions in all areas and at every level. Strategies according to such principles include the concerns of persons with disabilities as an integral component of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres in order that persons with disabilities benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.<sup>32</sup>

49. In essence, disability issues are all-encompassing and multi-faced; persons with disabilities should and can, like all others, actively participate in development and contribute to every aspect of life. The issue is that existing approaches do not permit

<sup>32</sup> Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda, United Nations, accessed from: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=708> on 11 June 2010.

persons with disabilities to fulfil their potential. An example of action that is required is what needs to be done to ensure enrolment and sustainable access for children with disabilities to schools. From the government side, at the minimum level, involvement of officials from education, health, infrastructure and transport sectors are required. From the community, involvement of local organizations of persons with disabilities and other community based organizations is needed to be instrumental in extending support. Similar circumstances apply to access to employment, health care and other development issues, such as poverty reduction schemes, architectural and information related laws and disaster-preparedness plans. Multi-ministerial coordination and multi-sectoral partnerships are keys to success, and, with coordinated action in each sector, persons with disabilities can have their rights realized and play a valuable role in development.

#### **IV. Issues for consideration**

50. Taking into account the above analysis, participants of the Expert Group Meeting-cum-Stakeholder Consultation are expected to:

1. Share their experiences of the key issues and challenges faced in empowering persons with disabilities and promoting a rights-based and social model-based approach to disability.
2. Identify critical issues to be addressed in the post-2012 period.