

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSION OF DISABILITY ISSUES IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By:

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## Challenges and Opportunities for Inclusion of Disability Issues in Economic Development

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This presentation will focus on the critical need to engage governments, ADB and other development agencies, UN Agencies, and donor countries to take a more proactive role in the eradication of poverty of disabled people.

Many acknowledge that disabled people are among the poorest of the poor throughout the world. In developing countries there are estimated to be more than 400 million disabled people. One of the significant challenges we face in the battle to raise their standard of living is convincing those in authority that their poverty is the result of neglect and the erroneous belief that disabled people are unable to make meaningful contributions to their societies. But like all people, these contributions cannot be made if people are denied decent education, employment, housing, transportation, health care, and respect from their communities.

Over the past decades we have seen the growth and development of organizations run by parents of children with disabilities, and adults with disabilities. These organizations were formed to enable people to join together, to learn from each other and to create a unified agenda. These organizations are represented by competent individuals who need to become a part of the government agencies and organizations that are responsible for ensuring that underserved populations are given the support and services they need to improve their quality of life.

The needs of disabled people have become more prominently recognized over the past two to three decades as disabled people in the Asian Pacific Region and around the world have begun to organize. This movement has been growing, in part because of support it has gained from NGOs and donors. However the continuing slow progress of removal of legal, structural, and attitudinal barriers remains both an economic and human problem.

The presentation will discuss in greater detail the challenges and opportunities that exist to remove these barriers. We must move away from platitudes and more aggressively towards action. Measurable goals must be established and meaningful technical assistance must be provided to guarantee results. We must move away from the medical model and the charity model, and towards the social model of disability, which regards disabled people as equal members of their communities with the same rights and responsibilities as all other citizens.