

STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING DISABILITY ISSUES IN DEVELOPING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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“Strategies for Mainstreaming Disability Issues in Developing Assistance Programs”

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1. Introduction; Multi-Sector Strategy

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) and the UN ESCAP Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) have promoted the regional approach for mainstreaming disability issues in cooperating with Governments, NGOs and private sectors. At the beginning of the first Decade, Governments centered on UN conferences but gradually collaborated with NGOs. Governments making their policies now realize that they have more effective results when they cooperate with NGOs that have been working at the grass-root level with people. The NGOs know the needs of people with disabilities in the community.

During the Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, regional NGOs organized annual Campaign Conferences jointly with ESCAP in which Government representatives participated. The Thematic Working Group on Disability Concerns (TWGDC) of ESCAP has been led by NGOs. Four out of five co-chairpersons for the next Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons are NGO representatives helping to develop the mission, goals, and strategies.

At the ESCAP Conferences, NGO Campaign and TWGDC, it was recommended that an Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability be organized to facilitate the empowerment of persons with disabilities and promote a barrier-free society for all.

The 58th ESCAP General Assembly adopted a resolution, “Promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific Region in the twenty-first century” which was proposed by the Japanese Government and

co-sponsored by 28 Governments of ESCAP. The Resolution “Encourages all Governments, the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations to support the operation and activities of the Asian and Pacific Development Center on Disability with financial, technical and other in-kind contributions, in recognition of the importance of the Center, to be located in Thailand, as a viable means of consolidating achievements and ensuring long-term follow-up to the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, and encourages organizations of disabled persons, non-governmental organizations and the private sector also to provide appropriate support for the operation and activities of the Center.”

1.1 Policy, Program Planning and Implementation Development

Multi-sector strategy enhanced cooperation among Governments, NGOs and private organizations including donor organizations in policymaking, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the mainstreaming of disability issues in the Asia and Pacific Region. (Annex 1)

1.1.1 The Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD) was proposed by the NGO sector during an ESCAP meeting at the closure of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992. In 1998, after NGOs lobbied hard, the Royal Government of Thailand was asked to consider cooperating and collaborating with the Japanese Government to establish APCD. The Royal Government of Thailand formed a Committee consisting of Government Officers and NGO representatives which included persons with disabilities to study the feasibility. Two years later, the Committee made a proposal to the Japanese Government. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) then formed a research team to study the proposal for the APCD. Both the Thai and Japanese sides met several times to discuss the mission, goals and strategies. In 2002, both sides agreed to start the APCD project in Bangkok, Thailand.

1.1.2 NGOs were represented in all activities related to the policy formation, program planning and implementation of the APCD. Representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and experts with disabilities in Thailand and Japan contributed significantly; on other words, consumers participated in the policy formation as well as the program development.

Both Governments supported the policy formation and program implementation of APCD. NGO representatives took the leadership role for the Governmental Record of Discussion (R/D) for two years until its conclusion when it was signed by the Thai and Japanese Government Officials. Since many disability groups and service providers were included in the discussion, it took a long time to satisfy all. Therefore, at the time of the signature ceremony, every sector involved knew APCD's policy and program.

A representative of the United Nations ESCAP, who was a member of the APCD Preparation Committee for two years, introduced APCD to UN agencies where international networking and collaboration was established in the initial stage. Since the Thai Government included a representative from the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC) who was also a member of the APCD Preparation Committee throughout the process, JICA's implementation was well prepared by the Thai side. DTEC is the Thai Government Agency to accept international collaboration. Thus policy, planning and implementation development has been done by Government agencies and NGOs.

1.2 Collaboration Among Governments

Although the APCD is a bilateral project between the Thai and Japanese Governments, its implementation is for developing countries in the Region. Generally, international Government collaboration is bilateral. At the 58th ESCAP General Assembly in May 2002, the Japanese Government proposed a resolution to support the APCD which twenty-eight countries endorsed. The United Nations played an important role in coordinating the regional project to assure the implementation of the APCD. The ESCAP

resolution enhanced the APCD for developing countries even though it is a joint project between the Thai and Japanese Governments.

APCD is seeking ways to work with Governments and NGOs in the Region. Bilateral Government cooperation requires some kind of written agreement between Governments. However, the programs of APCD involve many countries with the majority of participants being persons with disabilities from NGOs. It is not easy to make a bilateral agreement with several Governments for each project; it is necessary to establish some kind of international multi-cooperative agreement which could be endorsed by the United Nations.

1.3 Collaboration among NGOs.

There are two types of NGOs concerned with disabilities. One is an organization of persons with disabilities, and the other is an organization for persons with disabilities. Both organizations have had confrontations in some areas in the past twenty years but have cooperated with each other. Historically, organizations for persons with disabilities made the decisions regarding persons with disabilities. The world now respects persons with disabilities as equal citizens in society, thanks to the UN's human rights declaration as well as two UN Decades which promoted persons with disabilities as consumers, partners in policymaking and advocates. Both organizations have begun to understand each other and are seeking collaboration based on the human rights, autonomy and leadership of persons with disabilities.

Both Preparation Committees for APCD in Thailand and Japan had NGOs participation to develop its mission, goals and strategies. APCD's mission is to promote empowerment of persons with disabilities and a barrier-free society in developing countries in the Region.

It is essential to have networking and collaboration among NGOs. The support and collaboration of NGOs is necessary for the recruitment of trainees since the APCD is offering various leadership training courses for community leaders with disabilities and/or future

leaders for their communities. A barrier-free society needs to be promoted in order to empower persons with disabilities. NGOS have been working at the community level and are in the position to enhance and promote a barrier-free society in each country. Governments and UN agencies are encouraged to promote NGO collaboration since Government poverty reduction projects can not be effective without the networking and collaboration of NGOs.

1.4 Inter-regional Collaboration

The JICA Africa office is planning to send South Africa regional representatives with disabilities to the APCD to exchange and develop networking with the Asia and Pacific Region since the Japanese Government took the initiative to promote a South to South collaboration at the 58th ESCAP General Assembly; the resolution requests, “strengthening collaboration with other regional initiatives in the field of disabilities, including sharing of best practices in the implementation efforts of the African Decade of Disabled Persons, 2000-2009.”

Member countries of the South African Federation of Disabled (SAFOD) which include Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are planning to visit APCD in December 2002 to learn about the process of establishing networking and collaborating with APCD. Also ESCAP is organizing a meeting of the TWGDC on December 5th to discuss the next Decade plan of action. ESCAP and APCD are planning to have a session with TWGDC and SAFOD to exchange information on the African Decade and the Asia and Pacific Decade as well as the new Decade. This is the first opportunity to have inter-regional collaboration. Most African delegates will be NGO representatives with the program being jointly promoted by Governments and NGOs.

The curriculum can include understanding the expected roles and functions of Disabled Peoples’ Organizations (DPOs), such as advocacy with Government policymakers and

administration, awareness raising on the needs and rights of people with disabilities in society and information sharing on the best practices of the disability movement in the South African Region as well as the Asia and the Pacific Region.

This program is a good example of inter-regional cooperation with many stakeholders such as the United Nations, Governments, NGOs and an implementation agency, JICA.

2. Process-Oriented Approach

“Development” is the process to promote the abilities of needy people utilizing and managing all types of resources in order to enrich the quality of life with justice and sustainability. The owners of these human dreams and hopes are the people who belong to specific groups, such as poverty and disability; they are to be empowered to break through the barriers of poverty and injustice.

For this reason, APCD adapted a process-oriented approach to make sure the ownership is with people with disabilities. It is essential to have persons with disabilities in the initial planning stage of its implementation.

Persons with disabilities are:

The ones to know what poverty means.

To be empowered.

To promote poverty reduction.

To implement its project.

To monitor the projects.

To evaluate

Since they have ownership of:

Poverty

Dreams and hopes

Implementation.

ADB is encouraged to include persons with disabilities in the poverty reduction strategy in its plans for implementation. The best strategy is to empower persons with disabilities to promote alleviation of poverty.

Persons with disabilities who were members of APCD's Planning Committee were motivated by the process-oriented approach and also empowered in knowledge, information and human networking through participating in the planning process.

The DPI Asia and Pacific Regional Assembly scheduled for Shanghai, China will include discussion on cooperating with APCD; RI's Osaka Forum in Japan offered to introduce APCD. In addition, ESCAP's Hi-level International Meeting to Conclude the Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons in Otsu, Japan has a draft "BIWAKO Millennium" which includes APCD as a key Center for Regional collaboration. Members from all these international organizations were part of the Planning Committee for APCD.

3. Human Resources Development Strategy

A strategy for mainstreaming disability issues in developing an assistance program is to build human capacities to effectively utilize resources and develop sustainability. Since Governments have been developing specialized skill training institutes in the region such as vocational training centers, prosthesis training schools and so on, NGOs have been undertaking task-oriented training such as leadership training, microfinance, independent living and self-help organizational management; most notably, NGOs of persons with disabilities have been developing training skills in community-based living by themselves.

The 21st Century is people-oriented compared to the technology-oriented 20th Century. The disability field is the same. Rehabilitation technology developed in the 20th Century and now the 21st Century is to develop human resources in terms of empowering persons with disabilities to promote mainstreaming disability issues.

APCD is to identify and collaborate with focal point organizations in the Region in order to formulate and proceed with policies promoting empowerment of persons with

disabilities and a barrier-free society in each country. These focal points are to be partners in recruiting and sending potential community leaders with disabilities to the APCD. APCD is to provide necessary training for persons with disabilities primarily by persons with disabilities. There will be Independent Living Training for two months to empower trainees to develop independent living centers in their respective countries.

Capacity-building self-help organizations of persons with disabilities are to develop community-based organizations to empower persons with disabilities with resource persons of cross-disabilities from different countries in the Region. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) program uses assistive technology for persons with disabilities to equip them for gaining information power. The program is to develop a website-based networking course to promote information focal points in the Region. APCD plans to invite twenty grass-root organizations from the Region every year for five years so a total of one hundred grass-root organizations of persons with disabilities will create regional networking at the APCD Information Center. This information approach is grass-root oriented.

APCD hopes to develop focal points in each country in the Region, networking and collaboration. It is seeking ways to effectively utilize international, national, provincial and village level resources to reach seventy per cent of the persons with disabilities who live in the rural areas. Leadership and organizational training may enhance the human resource development of persons with disabilities in the community economically as well as socially.

4. Grass-Root Recruitment Strategy

International organizations have macro-policies on disability issues compared to grass-root organizations that have micro-policies. It is important to link the macro and micro policies and their implementation. Since grass-root organizations especially implement on a face-to-face level, in terms of human development, international organizations including UN agencies should be encouraged to link with them.

At the international level, the development of policies and programs generally occurs with the national government followed by the local government to the community and village level. Unfortunately, the implementation of many policies did not reach the grass-root level. On the other hand, NGO's have been working directly at the grass-root level and know the needs of the community and persons with disabilities. Government and NGO collaboration should not be limited to the international level only, but also link with local governments and grass-root NGOs.

APCD is developing a trainee recruit system in cooperation with the APCD experts, country focal points (Government and NGO coordination) and local NGOs. APCD experts will visit the focal points, get information about local NGOs, and then visit them at the community level along with the focal point personnel to identify potential candidates. On the recommendation of grass-root NGOs of persons with disabilities, the focal points, NGOs and Government can assist the candidate to have training at the APCD in Bangkok, Thailand. The Government endorsement of a candidate with a disability may open a channel for the person with disability to participate in a policy, advocacy and/or advisory function of the Government in the future. In this way, the grass-root recruitment strategy not only provides an opportunity for training for persons with disabilities at the community level, but also creates a link between the Government and local NGOs.

When trainees return to their own communities, the Government and/or NGOs can assist in developing his/her human resources in the community. APCD can develop an after-care system. APCD will send a mission team to identify focal points and associate NGOs in each country.

Many NGOs have been successful in mobilizing both international and national resources for their programs at the community level. NGOs have a more flexible mobilization of resources including personnel. (Annex 2)

The APCD Information Service will also adapt this grass-root recruit strategy. Most information on disability issues is categorized according to disabilities in the professional field such as medical, educational, and vocational rehabilitation, etc. These values were selected primarily by the rehabilitation profession and service providers or a certain type of disability group. APCD does not select priorities in the field of disability for the Information Service, but rather train each grass-root organization to access their information for APCD and then APCD will just categorize the information in sub-regions and countries. In other words, the information of the grass-root organizations, the voices of persons with disabilities and the community people will be a resource for the APCD Information Service.

5. Community-Based Strategy

Community people in terms of persons with disabilities, and NGOs participated in the policymaking, project documentation and plan of action of APCD. The implementation became community-based. Its target population for training and information is at the community level of persons with disabilities. JICA recruited the Chief Advisor through a community-based expert on the recommendation of community-based NGOs and persons with disabilities. Executive Board members include representatives from community-based NGOs even though APCD is a Government agency. The future plan of the Thai Government is for APCD to become an Autonomous Public Organization (APO) which will enable NGOs to participate in the policy and management as well as decision-making.

Programs are designed on a community-based concept such as independent living, self-help organization, information, etc. The Community-Based rehabilitation (CBR) course particularly, places an emphasis on developing community with a wholistic concept. This course is not limited to empowering persons with disabilities but also promote a barrier-free society. The community CBR has been promoted by NGOs of persons with disabilities.

There are several different types of CBR with some focused only on persons with disabilities or are just an extension of traditional institutional services on rehabilitation. The

community-based rehabilitation might be more effective in the rural areas since less financial input is required and the expected outcome is greater in comparison to the institutional approach.

According to “Prejudice and Dignity: An Introduction to Community-Based Rehabilitation” by Dr. Einar Helander, published by the United Nations Development Programme, an institutional approach is too expensive and less effective whereas a community-based approach is less expensive and meets the needs of persons with disabilities.

The CBR approach does not see disability as a problem, rather the environment. In order to promote a barrier-free society, persons with disabilities are the key citizens since they know the barriers through their daily living.

There are four major barriers:

1. Physical such as buildings and transportation.
2. Service such as medical, educational and social services.
3. Information such as a lack of access to communication, particularly for persons with visual and/or auditory impairments
4. Attitudinal such as discrimination

Persons with disabilities in the community encounter these four barriers. The majority of persons with disabilities have been ignored and pushed into a corner of society. CBR is the tool to community development to break through and eliminate these barriers. In order to promote the necessary changes, trained and empowered persons with disabilities can be an asset as community resource persons.

6. Policy Advocacy Strategy

NGOs should also participate in the process of policy-making with the United Nations and Government sectors in the human resource development field, especially NGO

representatives from recipient service organizations in terms of persons with disabilities as well as donor organizations.

International NGOs in the Asia and Pacific Region have been playing important roles as policy advocates, using NGOs' experience, wisdom and knowledge to influence ESCAP priorities and development programs at the international and national levels. At ESCAP Inter-Agency Meetings during the UN Decade of Disabled Persons, there was cooperation and positive advocacy among the Government, UN agencies and NGOs. NGOs continued to advocate in prioritizing the plan of actions. ESCAP, the TWGDC has enriched the Plan of Action of the Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled persons by proposing the next Decade and its priorities. With four out of five TWGDC Co-Chairpersons being NGO representatives, the participation of international NGOs plays an important role in the UN advocacy policy providing policy inputs to international policymakers. NGOs have rich knowledge and experience at the grass-root level often advocating for persons with disabilities in poverty.

Similar policy advocacy can be observed in the Royal Government of Thailand. The Thai national Association of Disabled Persons (a cross-disability organization) took the initiative to propose a National Rehabilitation Law which the Government adopted in 1991. At the present time, the Prime Minister has an Advisory Committee on Disability Concerns including representatives with physical, visual, auditory, and mental disabilities

At the ministerial level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) has a Committee for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons which includes representatives from NGOs of persons with disabilities. The representatives of NGOs on the Sub-Committee of APCD were directly appointed by the Minister of MLSW and played an important role in establishing APCD's mission, goals and strategies.

At the international and national levels, there is policy advocacy by NGOs and persons with disabilities. However, the local government level has not yet developed policy advocacy with NGOs. The National Government should encourage the local government to

open channels for NGOs in policy advocacy since implementation concerned with disabilities is at the local government level.

Governments need to develop a more open system for policy formulation with wider representation. Since disability policies need to incorporate grass-root level realities, the process of policy formation should have appropriate participation from representatives of the NGO sector.

It is necessary to set up institutional mechanisms in order to make participatory roles of NGOs, particularly persons with disabilities in policy advocacy more effective. The role of NGOs needs to be specified in policy planning, program formulation, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The cooperation of NGOs in functioning as policy advocates to governments in the formulation and implementation of programs could strengthen government programs for poverty alleviation on the disability population.

7. South-to-South Strategy

APCD is a JICA technical cooperation project with the Thai Government. JICA experts have been working to transfer technology and resources to the Thai side in order to create South-to-South aid. After five years of JICA Technical Cooperation, APCD will be handed over to the Thai side. Thai culture, society, and economics have much more similarity to developing countries in the Region. Project expenditures will be much less than in a developed country resulting in less total cost input and a greater output.

It is essential to encourage semi-developed countries such as Thailand to develop a policy to support developing countries in the humanity field; changing the attitude from a recipient to a provider is a dynamic process to develop global mutuality and harmony. Developed countries have been gaining humanistic and spiritual rewards by providing aid to developing countries. Material aid will disappear in time but resources used in human development will continue to grow and develop further.

Human resource development projects can take leading roles on poverty alleviation of the disability population. Persons who have experienced poverty can best understand the situation and needs of poor people. South-to South strategy can be more effective for this human resource development project.

APCD does not only expect Thai experts to continue the human resource development but also trained persons with disabilities from developing countries can develop their communities in their own countries as resource persons. For greater effectiveness, the Macro-level of South-to-South strategy can reach out to the Micro-level when persons with disabilities in the Thai community train persons with disabilities in the community of developing countries.

8. Conclusion

Globalization is not only in the economic and political fields, but also includes international aid. The 20th Century was based on a Government-to-Government bilateral aid system. Today the need for multi-lateral aid is increasing. Governments from developed countries need to develop multi-lateral and NGO strategies to effectively support poverty alleviation projects. South-to-South strategy is also expected to develop in the international aid field. This movement started from “North-to-South” and is now changing to “South-to-South”, and may continue to move to “South-to-North” then “North-to-North”. Human resource development is a dynamic global issue. The human attitude is the most important towards disability. We can work towards poverty alleviation of persons with disabilities but if discrimination continues, they will continue to suffer.

The meaning of “poverty” is not limited to economics but also encompasses the spiritual, social, educational, vocational, information, accessibility and the human attitudinal aspects. ADB’s poverty reduction on the disability population should be a comprehensive approach to address all of the poverties. Its strategy should have a wholistic and humane base.

Human resource development is not visible like a building, but will become apparent at the community and organizational levels. Human resource development is a continual growth process of human society. Training persons with disabilities in the community is more effective than training professionals who are not community members since they will be life-long village members and continue to develop better humanity.

Human resource development can grow in the community since it is a human grouping approach compared to a building which can not grow, but perishes. Also human resource development is a movement that is passed from one generation to another. Therefore ADB poverty reduction projects should be human resource oriented.

Research and development also focus on human resource development. Preferably, the research would be designed by persons with disabilities who know the total needs of persons with disabilities. Professional rehabilitation research tends to focus on a specific area, miss the wholeness, and at times forget that persons with disabilities are human beings and community members.

The research to assess APCD's needs was designed and conducted by persons with disabilities. As a result, APCD plans to have human resource programs such as CBR, Independent Living, Self-help Organizations and Their Management as well as Peer Counseling and an Information Service

From APCD's experience, ADB could encourage Governments to sub-contract with NGOs to strengthen Government-NGO cooperation. Also ADB could encourage Governments to subsidize NGO programs. Since NGOs lack finances in the field of human resource development, Governments can facilitate the development of effective NGO programs at the community level. NGOs would then need to be accountable to the Government and ADB for their financial assistance. They can learn appropriate management, including finances to develop transparency and accountability. Humanity

resource development projects should include an effective management course to create a trustful relationship with donor organizations.

Lastly, the ownership of poverty in the disability population is with the poor persons with disabilities themselves. All stakeholders of the ADB poverty reduction program should listen to their voices and encourage persons with disabilities to participate in this poverty reduction program since they know the needs and best solution.