

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.¹

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, 2003-2012² as well as recent ESCAP publications, especially "Disability at a Glance 2009"³ and "Disability Policy Central".⁴

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*.

¹ See E/ESCAP/CSD/6.

² See E/ESCAP/APDDP 92)/1*.

³ Disability at a Glance 2009, accessed from:

<http://www.unescap.org/ESID/psis/disability/publications/glance/Disability_at_a_Glance2009.pdf> on 11 June 2010.

⁴ Disability Policy Central, accessed from:

<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

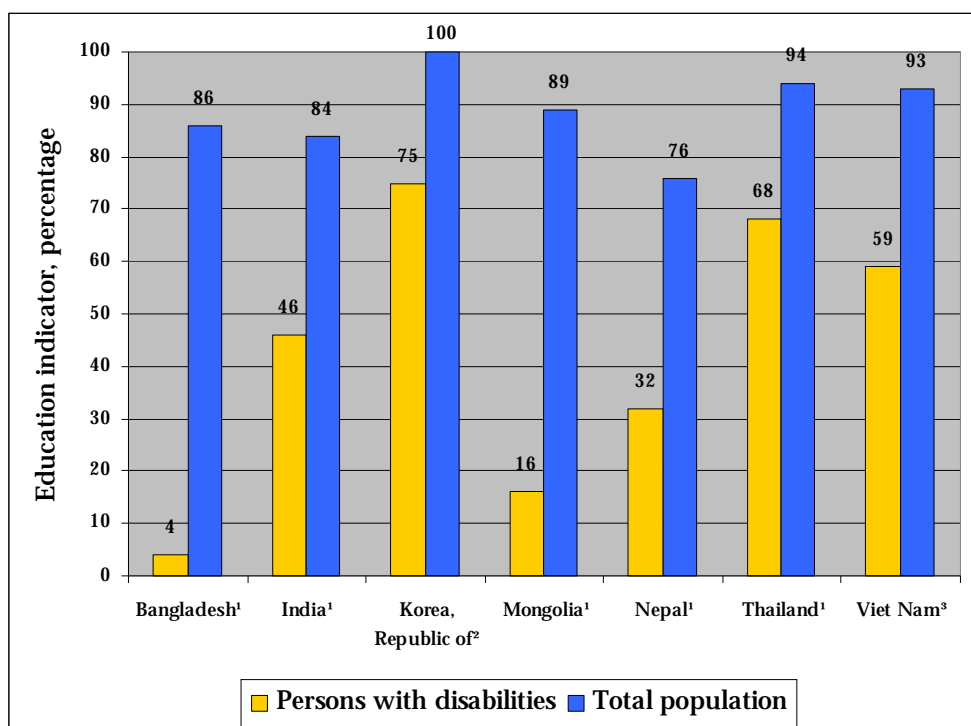
7. While available data and anecdotal evidence indicate continuing and often overwhelming region-wide disparity between persons with and without disabilities, certain proactive measures have been undertaken to improve the situation in major development areas including education, employment and poverty 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.⁵

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.

⁵ 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



¹ Access to primary education.

² Completion of primary education.

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

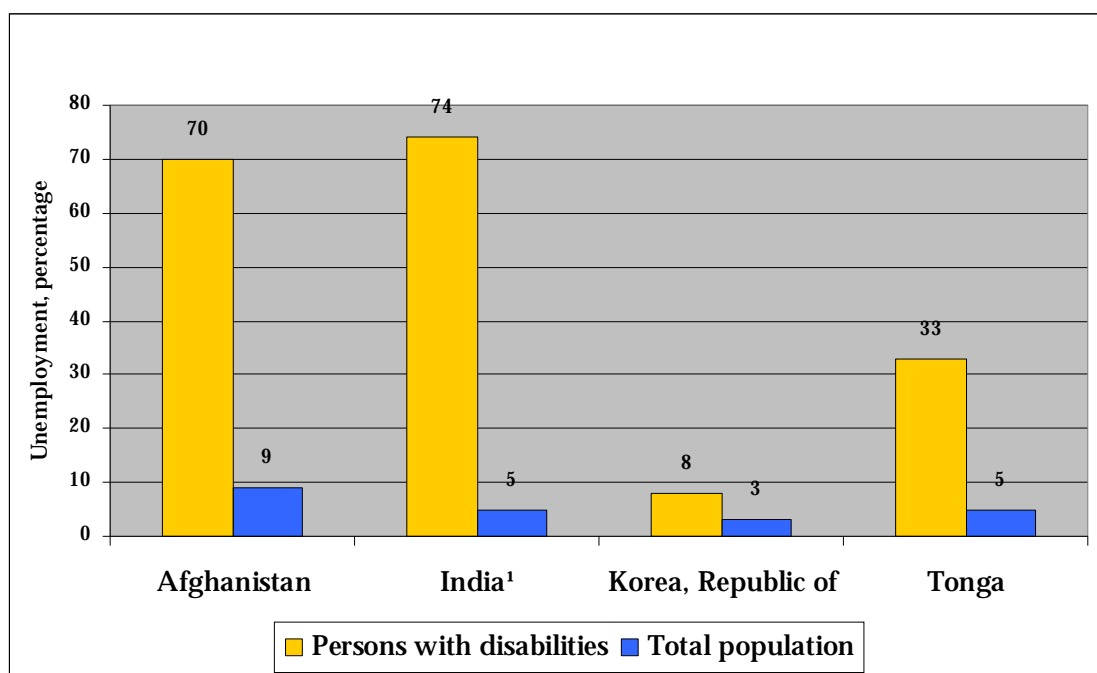
Source: Disability figures from ESCAP Disability Policy Central for Asia and the Pacific, Online database.

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.⁶

⁶ 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



¹ 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,⁷ 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.⁸

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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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”.⁹ 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ In 2005, Bangladesh incorporated the disability perspective in its Poverty

⁹ *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).

¹⁰ 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 on 15 June 2010.

¹¹ See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1*, p. 14.

¹² See Disability at a Glance, p. 13.

¹³ ROK case study paper from the ESCAP EGM 2009

¹⁴ See E/ESCAP/APDDP (2) /1*, p. 14.

¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ 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

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