

Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons: Action Targets Gender Dimensions

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Targets , Recommendations and Gender Dimensions for Implementation of the Agenda for Action

In June 1995 a regional meeting to review the progress of the Decade was held. The outcome of the meeting was a set of targets and recommendations for the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Decade, together with recommendations on inclusion of the gender dimension in implementation. The targets and recommendations were endorsed by the Commission, at its fifty-second session in April 1996. The targets and recommendations serve to guide local-, provincial- and national-level action to achieve the Decade goal of "full participation and equality".

Targets and Recommendations for Implementation of the Agenda for Action

1. NATIONAL COORDINATION

Critical issues

The achievement of full participation and equality of people with disabilities requires the active collaboration of all ministries, departments and government agencies at central and State/provincial levels whose work affects the lives of people with disabilities, as well as NGOs in all fields of development, including self-help organizations of people with disabilities. That collaboration remains to be realized in many countries of the ESCAP region. There is an urgent need to promote disability concerns and the participation of people with disabilities as an integral part of all development programmes and projects, particularly those directed at poverty alleviation and employment expansion. National coordination committees on disability concerns have a pivotal role to play in achieving that collaboration. However, in many countries of the region, they do not as yet exist. Where they have been established, there is a need to strengthen them.

Targets

1.1 Establishment, by 1996, of a national coordination committee (NCC) on disability concerns with an appropriate mechanism to ensure its accountability to the legislature/head of Government to promote a multisectoral approach to the implementation of the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, and with representation at the policy-making level of all State/provincial Governments, and concerned ministries/departments and government agencies, substantial representation of NGOs, including self-help organizations of disabled persons, women with disabilities, as well as with adequate allocation of resources.

1.2 Establishment, by 1996, of an executive committee with appropriate representation from State/provincial Governments, ministries/departments and government agencies, NGOs, including self-help organizations of people with disabilities and women with disabilities, to ensure timely follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the decisions of the NCC, as well as to facilitate its functioning.

1.3 Formulation, by 1996, of a national plan of action and its incorporation in national development plans with a time-frame and in-built mechanism for monitoring and evaluation, as well as adequate multisectoral allocation of resources for the implementation of the Agenda for Action, and specifically, the targets for national action contained in this document.

1.4 Prioritization, within the national plan of action, of the identification of means of promoting the participation of poor persons with disabilities in all poverty alleviation programmes and projects implemented within the country.

1.5 Specification of the participation of persons with disabilities as a criterion for the approval of funding for poverty alleviation programmes and projects.

1.6 Strengthening, by 2000, of the NCC as a permanent statutory body with adequate resources and infrastructure for its effective functioning.

Recommendations

(1) As a first step towards the formation of a national coordination committee on disability concerns, the national focal point for disability shall organize consultative meetings involving the following:

Ministries/departments and government agencies responsible for the formulation of national development plans, NGO affairs, education, human resources development, development of women and children, health and family welfare, rural and urban development, science and technology, labour, employment and training, industrial development, budget and finance, legal affairs, transport and communications, information and broadcasting, sports and culture, as well as foreign affairs;

NGOs, including self-help organizations of people with disabilities;

Women with disabilities.

(2) The NCC and its executive arm may invite experts from diverse fields for advice.

(3) The executive arm of the NCC may meet at least once in three months and shall be accountable to the NCC.

(4) All NCCs may immediately initiate preparations for participation in a regional mid-Decade meeting to review the progress of implementation of the Agenda for Action, including mobilization of resources for this purpose and collation of information for the preparation by the secretariat of a report on the status of people with disabilities in the ESCAP region.

(5) The national plan of action shall provide for a national mechanism with subnational linkages for:

- Monitoring, review and evaluation of the implementation of programmes that benefit persons with disabilities;
 - Setting quantitative targets, in terms of both number of beneficiaries and programme expenditure;
- Development of indicators to measure the effectiveness of implementation of the plan.

(6) The government agencies and NGOs responsible for the implementation of programmes may submit periodic reports to the concerned ministries/departments for consolidation into sectoral reports to be reviewed by the NCC.

(7) The NCC may disseminate information on the progress made in the implementation of the national plan of action to all concerned ministries/departments at central and State levels, government agencies and NGOs, as well as the ESCAP secretariat.

(8) Adequate national budgetary provision shall be made to facilitate the effective functioning of the NCC, particularly to convene meetings and workshops, monitor the field-level

implementation of its decisions, computerize and link up with other NCCs in the region, and disseminate information.

2. LEGISLATION

Critical issues

Many laws and policies tend either to discriminate against or restrict the participation and integration of people with disabilities in society.

Legislation and policies have yet to provide for enabling provisions for people with disabilities, including women with disabilities, to promote their full participation and equalization of opportunities.

Similarly, the majority of countries and areas in the region do not have basic laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities or provide for affirmative action in different areas of their lives. Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, violence and abuse. They need to be well covered by basic laws.

While some countries have enacted such basic laws, in many cases they have not been implemented, either because implementing rules and regulations have not been framed or because the dates for their coming into force have not been notified.

Targets

2.1 Establishment, by 1997, of a suitable mechanism to examine and identify all substantive and procedural laws, such as those covering inheritance, marriage and properties, as well as criminal and civil procedure codes and policy provisions on various subjects.

2.2 Completion, by 1998, of the process of examination and identification of the above-mentioned laws and policy provisions.

2.3 Amendment, by 2000, of those laws, to include enabling provisions which would provide equal legal protection to persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities and people with intellectual disabilities, repeal provisions that restrict their full participation and equalization of opportunities, or which are discriminatory.

2.4 Enactment, by 2000, of a basic law with an effective in-built implementation and enforcement mechanism to protect the rights of people with disabilities, including women with disabilities and people with intellectual disabilities, to promote affirmative action in their favour and to eliminate discriminatory practices as well as architectural and communication barriers.

2.5 Introduction, by 1998, of a national scheme of social security measures covering financial assistance and subsidies for persons with extensive disabilities and their families living in poverty, as well as primary breadwinners who become disabled and have no other means of income support for their dependants.

2.6 Review of laws relating to customs duties and amendment thereof, with a view to exemption, by 1998, from custom duties on the import of vehicles, assistive devices, equipment and materials, including medical supplies, required to facilitate the daily living of people with disabilities, including women with disabilities.

2.7 Review and suitable amendment, by 1998, of other taxation laws to provide for incentives in the form of tax benefits to persons with disabilities, manufacturers of indigenous assistive devices and employers of disabled persons.

2.8 Enactment and/or amendment, by 2000, of laws/regulations for promoting health and safety in the workplace, in public places, transport and in the home, as well as setting standards for safety of equipment and items for industrial, domestic and personal use.

Recommendations

Governments of the region may:

(1) Involve NGOs, including self-help organizations of people with disabilities, in the process of formulation and implementation of basic legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

(2) Formulate and implement a scheme of paralegal training for NGOs and self-help organizations of persons with disabilities, to enable them to participate effectively in the implementation and enforcement of basic and other related legislation for protection of the rights of people with disabilities.

(3) Provide adequate coverage of persons with disabilities in legal aid schemes, including interpretation and translation facilities, particularly for deaf and blind people.

(4) Provide a mechanism and a time-frame for regular review of legislation concerning people with disabilities, including women with disabilities.

(5) Set up a suitable mechanism in appropriate government agencies to regularly review the impact of general substantive and procedural laws on the rights of people with disabilities, including women with disabilities.

(6) Provide organizations of people with disabilities with adequate resources for self-advocacy training.

3. INFORMATION and 4. PUBLIC AWARENESS

Critical issues

A major factor restricting the equal participation of people with disabilities is the prevalence of perceptions and practices which prevent them from functioning as full members of society. Often, the abilities of persons with disabilities remain unrecognized. Opportunities are limited for the full development of their potential. To rectify this, it is important that all awareness campaigns for full participation and equality emphasize the abilities of persons with disabilities and their value as productive citizens and members of their communities. In addition, inadequate resources and a lack of a national focal point for the establishment of databases relating to disability issues are the major difficulties encountered in developing information systems in the countries of the region.

Targets

3.0 Information

3.1 Establishment, by 1998, of a national resource centre with an accessible information and database on the disability situation, including demographic data on persons with disabilities, as well as social and economic dimensions, including employment status, educational level, housing and membership in registered organizations of people with disabilities.

3.2 Initiate, by 1998, a national sample survey.

3.3 Immediate action to translate the Agenda for Action into national and local languages for dissemination through the mass media, folk media, government agencies and voluntary organizations.

4.0 Public awareness

4.1 Immediate action to ensure that the national and provincial mass media, including private sector and folk media, feature Decade-related issues through regular and accurate coverage that improves public awareness and attitudes towards people with disabilities.

4.2 Phased action (1995-2002) to encourage all education and training institutions, government agencies and NGOs implementing programmes and projects for children and youth, to identify and provide means of ensuring that children and young persons with disabilities are included, in a sensitive manner, in activities designed for all children and young persons.

4.3 Immediate action to initiate a review of all educational and functional literacy materials in use in the country, with a view to excluding, by 2000, contents that are derogatory towards persons with disabilities and to including illustrations and references that support the integration of persons with disabilities into everyday life.

4.4 Immediate action to ensure the issuance, by the mid-point of the Asian and Pacific Decade (1997), of first-day covers and commemorative stamps promoting full participation and equality of persons with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region.

4.5 Inclusion, by 1996, of disability issues and policies relating to information and the media, providing in particular for appropriate time and space for disability concerns, prohibiting the depiction of negative as well as inaccurate images of persons with disabilities through performances, especially comedies, films, and cartoons.

4.6 Establishment, by 1998, of an effective monitoring mechanism to assess the impact of campaigns and strategies to generate public awareness and improve attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

The Governments of the region may:

(1) Facilitate electronic networking of the national resource centre with NCCs, NGOs and international agencies in the region.

(2) Promote, with the participation of self-help organizations of people with disabilities, disability simulation exercises for policy makers, children and young people.

(3) Ensure adequate representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making bodies relating to the media, such as the national censorship board.

(4) Provide adequate resources to self-help organizations of people with disabilities and other NGOs to enable them to perform the functions of media watch, i.e. to encourage and give recognition to positive portrayal of persons with disabilities and role models for persons with disabilities, and to discourage negative portrayal.

(5) Establish a fund to promote the creative talents of persons with disabilities and encourage their inclusion in mainstream cultural and entertainment activities.

(6) Commemorate the International Day of Disabled Persons (3 December) by recognizing the country's achievements in the promotion of the Decade.

(7) Undertake steps to include questions on disability in the national population census as a long-term measure.

5. ACCESSIBILITY and COMMUNICATION

Critical issues

Many societies in the Asian and Pacific region are ageing rapidly. It is estimated that the number of people aged 60 and over in the region will increase from 225 million in the 1990s to 623 million by 2025. The needs of frail and infirm elderly persons for accessible built environments are similar to those of persons with disabilities.

The rapid economic growth in the ESCAP region stimulates rapid infrastructure development. However, new buildings are being constructed without consideration of the needs of people with disabilities and elderly people. The building of mass transport systems in urban areas in the ESCAP region has been initiated or is under consideration. However, most of those systems do not incorporate in their designs the access needs of people with disabilities and elderly people. If those systems are completed without access features, they will remain inaccessible for many decades to come.

The lack of information and technical knowledge concerning barrier-free design among policy makers, urban planners, architects, designers and traffic engineers, particularly in the developing countries of the ESCAP region, hinder the promotion of non-handicapping environments.

The lack of standardized national indigenous sign language prevents communication among deaf people and between deaf and hearing people. To ensure that deaf people are fully integrated into community activities, the establishment of certified sign language interpretation services is required. There is a need for sign language interpretation services at vital public facilities. Braille materials and materials in other formats for those persons who cannot read print materials are required to ensure the full participation of persons with visual impairments in the community.

Targets

5.1 Immediate incorporation of barrier-free features as a standard requirement in designs and plans for all new construction, renovation and expansion of buildings and facilities used by members of the public, including transport, educational facilities and housing schemes as well as theme parks.

5.2 Immediate action to include barrier-free features in all mass transport facilities and systems, particularly rail systems which are to be built.

5.3 Immediate action to make external built environments accessible, including installing pavements with kerb ramps and provision of adequate space for wheelchair users.

5.4 Immediate inclusion of barrier-free design in the curricula for the training of architects, urban planners and engineers.

5.5 Incorporation, by 1997, of access provisions for people with disabilities into existing building by-laws.

5.6 Establishment, by 2000, of standardized indigenous sign languages with mechanisms for certification of sign language interpreters.

5.7 Availability, by 2002, of sign language interpretation services at vital public services and facilities, particularly police departments, hospitals, law courts, and financial institutions.

5.8 Availability, by 1998, of reading material in Braille, large print, computer disk, audio cassette and other suitable formats for people who have difficulty in reading regular print; access to human readers and sign interpreters for people who need them; as well as access to captioning and audio description, radio, telephone and fax machines for information and entertainment for people with sensory disabilities.

Recommendations

(1) The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and official development assistance

programmes shall establish funding criteria to ensure that the infrastructure developed by loans and grants from them should be fully accessible.

(2) Access committee at local, regional and national levels may be established.

(3) An access officer, at the provincial level of government, may be appointed.

(4) Awards or public recognition shall be granted to building owners who have made their building fully accessible.

(5) Disability simulation exercises may be used in public awareness campaigns on accessibility, and in the training of personnel to provide first-hand experience of living with a disability.

(6) People with disabilities have valuable insights based on their own experiences of negotiating every day the numerous obstacles in the built environment and shall be fully involved at every stage in the planning, building, monitoring and evaluation process.

(7) Resources for and competence in undertaking research on access issues in the ESCAP region, as well as related exchanges of information, need to be strengthened. In particular, the need for research and exchange of its findings on the provision of accessibility in rural areas should be emphasized, as the normal urban-style planning controls and specific recommendations are not applicable.

(8) Computer software may be developed to translate print materials in the national language into Braille, and vice versa.

(9) A research and development team composed of deaf persons, sign language researchers and other concerned government and NGO personnel may be established for the development of standardized indigenous sign languages.

6. EDUCATION

Critical issues:

Ninety-three million (62 per cent) of all children with disabilities who are under 15 years of age live in the Asian and Pacific region. Less than 5 per cent of them receive any education or training. Among adults who are disabled, illiteracy is a problem of a much greater magnitude. Women and girls with disabilities are, even more than boys and men with disabilities, discriminated against.

In view of the lack of information and understanding, children and adults with disabilities are denied opportunity for formal and non-formal education. Schools, colleges and universities are generally most inaccessible for persons with disabilities. In addition, lack of the requisite support services for persons with disabilities to participate in integrated education is a critical problem in the region. There is an urgent need to accelerate schooling by providing early intervention services and training on special needs education for teachers in regular schools. At the same time, the number of specialist teachers has to be increased proportionately. There is a serious lack of appropriate assistive devices, teaching materials and support staff.

Targets:

6.1 Enable, by 2002, at least 75 per cent of all children and adults with disabilities to participate in formal and non-formal education programmes on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers and through progressive enrolment, together with the appropriate support services.

6.2 Inclusion, by 1997, of girls and boys and women and men with disabilities in all policies, plans and programmes to ensure Education for All, with adequate financial allocations

as well as appropriate technical and human resources (including Braille textbooks, education material in audio, visual and other [e.g., large print] formats, indigenous sign language, appropriate assistive devices, physical access and support staff).

6.3 Introduction, by 1997, of early intervention programmes for children with disabilities, with provision for the active involvement of their families, in both rural and urban areas.

6.4 Progressive reduction, by 2000, of the drop-out rate of children with disabilities by at least 50 per cent.

6.5 Inclusion, by 1997, of a component on special education and children with special needs in the curricula for regular teacher training, including opportunity for relating directly with such children.

6.6 Promotion, by 1997, of the teaching of science and technical skills at the secondary school level to students with disabilities, including blind students.

6.7 Review and modify, by 1999, of the national/State education curricula to facilitate access to education for children and adults with disabilities, including appropriate provisions for the teaching of language, especially to deaf persons and hard-of-hearing persons, and to redress immediately any deficiency in this regard.

Recommendations

(1) Mobilization of the media to inform and change public opinion by wide use of success stories of people with disabilities.

(2) Involvement of the parents and families of children with disabilities in their education.

(3) Conduct of intensive short-term courses for classroom teachers in regular schools.

(4) Conduct of in-service vacation courses to train and upgrade special teachers of children with disabilities.

(5) Upgrading of special schools by setting up resource centres to support integrated education programmes in inclusive schools and to cater for those children with disabilities who cannot be integrated, either completely or partially, in self-contained classes within regular schools.

(6) Discouragement of the setting up of cross-disability special schools.

(7) Provision of instructional materials, appropriate assistive devices and essential equipment.

(8) Initial emphasis on functional literacy and language skills.

(9) Provision of scholarships and/or transport, where essential.

(10) Inclusion of pre-vocational skills training at the secondary level.

(11) Submission of periodic, substantive and financial reports on progress to achieve the above-mentioned targets.

(12) Monitoring and review of the progress of implementation of programmes to achieve the above targets.

(13) Evaluation of the resource status and augmentation of human, material and financial resources, as required.

7. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Critical Issues

People with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region have a very limited range of training and employment opportunities. Moreover, existing vocational training programmes are usually not linked to the demands of the job market. Once in a job, people with disabilities have less opportunity for further learning and career development. Few incentives exist for encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities or to compensate them for the eventual costs of making a workplace accessible. Women with disabilities are further disadvantaged as traditional role models hinder their entry into the job market.

In developing countries of the ESCAP region, whose labour markets are characterized by the dominance of the informal sector, people with disabilities suffer from limited access to credit. Thus they face additional obstacles to making a living. Furthermore, existing support services for informal sector operators or rural areas are often unaware of and therefore not responsive to the needs of people with disabilities.

In the rapidly changing economic scenario of the ESCAP region, there is a danger that employment opportunities for people with disabilities will further be limited if steps are not taken to match vocational training with job markets.

Targets

7.1 Strengthening, by 1997, of modalities identified by the Asia-Pacific Skills Development Programme to promote the integration of persons with disabilities, with due attention to gender equity, into mainstream vocational training schemes.

7.2 Development and strengthening, by 1998, of curricula and support services (physically accessible training sites and equipment, Braille texts for blind persons, and sign language interpreters for deaf persons) to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in regular pre-vocational and vocational training programmes leading to gainful employment.

7.3 Formulation, by 1997, of a Government policy to promote achievement of the national targets set for the placement and promotion of persons with disabilities in the public sector, such as through a quota system.

7.4 Setting up, by 1996, of a mechanism for phased and ongoing identification of new employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors, and training to use those opportunities for paid and self-employment of people with diverse disabilities.

7.5 Establishment, by 1997, of annual training and job placement targets that are gender-equitable for people with disabilities, for joint action by ministries responsible for employment, human resources development, rural employment and development, urban development and other relevant areas, as well as employers' and workers' organizations.

7.6 Establishment, by 1998, of production centres that employ people with extensive disabilities and those who require a supportive environment.

7.7 Full participation, by 2000, of persons with disabilities in all schemes of assistance to engage in informal income-generation and self-employment in the rural and urban sectors.

7.8 Provision, by 2000, of appropriate training and employment opportunities for people with extensive disabilities.

7.9 Introduction, by 1997, of a national scheme for giving soft loans and support services for marketing, including entrepreneurial skills development, to low-income persons with disabilities to assist them in competing in the open market.

Recommendations

Governments may:

- (1) Establish a NCC working group composed of relevant ministries and agencies, organizations of and for people with disabilities, as well as workers' and employers' organizations, to identify obstacles that people with disabilities face in vocational training and employment and to recommend appropriate tools to equalize their opportunities in the job market.
- (2) Examine existing training schemes to identify the extent to which they are geared towards the present and future demands of the labour market.
- (3) Introduce a scheme of annual national awards to give public recognition to the achievements of employers, NGOs and other relevant organizations in providing quality vocational training and employment for people with disabilities.
- (4) Develop individualized vocational guidance services to enable persons with disabilities to make informed choices from among several training and/or employment options which are in line with their personal interests, and to facilitate their transition from school to adult life.
- (5) Develop or strengthen existing placement services which, together with the above-mentioned guidance services, will create links between job applicants with disabilities and potential employers.
- (6) Establish a regular exchange of information of vocational training and employment of people with disabilities, with particular focus on appropriate adaptations of job-sites; the exchange may include, but not be limited to, government agencies and organizations of and for people with disabilities.
- (7) Consider ratification of ILO Convention No. 159; Convention Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) and review national law and practice to examine compliance with the Convention.
- (8) Issue directives to all their departments, agencies, institutions and corporations to develop and strengthen measures aimed at promoting the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector.

8. PREVENTION OF CAUSES OF DISABILITY and 9. REHABILITATION (health and social development)

Critical issues

The majority of people with disabilities living in the rural areas and slums of the Asian and Pacific region do not have access to any form of rehabilitation services, particularly when access is considered in terms of time, cost and availability.

Good data are required if disability issues are to be accorded high priority by governments for resource allocation and programme development. However, data on disability are limited largely because the problems concerning the collection of data have not yet been resolved.

There is also a lack of information materials, as well as training tools and programmes on disability issues for personnel involved in diverse development sectors, e.g., health, social development, education, rural development, urban management and NGOs. This seriously limits the development of service provision, including through community-based rehabilitation.

Policies and programmes in diverse sectors need to be strengthened to support community-based rehabilitation as an approach to the delivery of appropriate health, educational,

vocational and social services involving the combined efforts of people with disabilities, as well as their families and communities.

Targets

8 Prevention of causes of disability

8.1 Identification, by 1996, of the major factors, including gender-sensitive demographic data, associated with the five most prevalent preventable causes of disability.

8.2 Initiation, by 1997, of public education campaigns directed at the prevention of the five most prevalent preventable causes of disability, which reduce negative perceptions of people with disabilities and undermine their right to live.

8.3 Elimination, by 2000, of iodine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency and leprosy as major public health problems.

8.4 Achievement, by 2002, of a minimum 50 per cent reduction in the incidence of three other preventable causes of disability, without neglecting good disability prevention efforts that may already be under way.

8.5 Formally join, by 1997, the international campaign to ban the production, use and sale of anti-personnel land mines.

8.6 Mount an immediate campaign to prohibit the manufacture and sale of laser weapons whose sole purpose is to cause total blindness.

8.7 Immediate recognition that good and safe design and use of the built environment and equipment, as well as the compulsory use of personal protective equipment, are major factors in the reduction of injury-caused disabilities.

9 Rehabilitation services (community-based rehabilitation)

9.1 Inclusion, by 1996, of persons with disabilities and their families, in particular women, as active participants in the formulation of CBR strategies and in the implementation of government and NGO programmes and projects on CBR.

9.2 Convene in 1996 a conference on CBR involving concerned government ministries and departments, and NGOs, including self-help organizations of people with disabilities, to discuss a national CBR strategy.

9.3 Development, by 1997, of a national CBR strategy which will include training in CBR management so as to provide a framework for action and support for programmes with a special focus on rural and slum communities.

9.4 Inclusion, by 1997, of both men and women with disabilities in CBR training, that includes gender-sensitive material, as managers, trainers, supervisors, field workers and volunteers.

9.5 Integration, by 2000, of disability issues, including those which specifically concern women with disabilities, into mainstream programmes, especially those for health, communications, housing, human resources development, labour, transport and rural and urban development.

Health and social development

9.6 Identification and coordination, by 1997, of all government and NGO rehabilitation services as a basis for action to strengthen and develop these services as support for CBR programmes.

9.7 Inclusion, by 2000, of disability, equalization of opportunity issues, and positive attitudes towards people with disabilities in the curricula and training of medical doctors, social workers, nurses, teachers, as well as all other personnel working in health and social development.

9.8 Inclusion, by 2000, of rehabilitation services in all primary health care

programmes and projects, as underlined in the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care, 1978, for support of CBR programmes.

Recommendations

(1) A common CBR strategy may be adopted throughout the Asian and Pacific region that emphasizes the development of communities with the participation of persons with disabilities, their families and community members, so that the communities, with government and NGO support, can assume responsibility for the social, vocational, economic and physical enablement of people with disabilities to reach their optimal levels of functioning.

(2) Minimal levels of data shall be collected by all countries using standard terminology in accordance with the WHO International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap.

(3) All government agencies and NGOs working on disability issues shall collaborate and coordinate with each other to support the development of entire communities.

10. ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Critical issues

The lack of assistive devices prevents the majority of people with disabilities in rural areas from participating fully in community activities. There is a great need for low-cost and high-quality assistive devices that are suitable for local conditions.

Persons with disabilities, particularly those in the rural areas, are not aware of the full range of assistive devices that are available, their functions and costs, as well as the opportunities that they open up. The limited supply of affordable appropriate devices and the lack of awareness of the devices means that few are able to benefit from the devices. Furthermore, there is considerable duplication of effort in terms of development of assistive devices, as there is little communication among NGOs and the public sector corporations which produce assistive devices.

Duties and taxes on assistive devices constitute a very small portion of the income for Governments, but are a heavy burden on persons with disabilities. The imposition of duty on assistive devices hinders its cross-border distribution and the expansion of the market for these devices. There are some assistive devices for disabled persons which are also useful for elderly persons and convenient for non-disabled persons. At present, individuals and NGOs experience great difficulty and delay in clearing such goods through customs.

Targets

10.1 Establishment, by 1998, of national criteria and a subsidy scheme to provide assistive devices as well as repair and maintenance services to all disabled persons who meet the criteria, with due attention to the needs of women and girls with disabilities.

10.2 Exemption, by 1998, of customs and other duties on the import of assistive devices, as well as components, materials and equipment for their production, repair and maintenance.

10.3 Simplification through preferential treatment, by 1998, of customs clearance procedures for the import and export of assistive devices, as well as components, materials and equipment for their production, repair and maintenance.

10.4 Increase of availability, by 1998, of assistive devices, and repair and maintenance services.

10.5 Introduction, by 1998, of government schemes to actively encourage NGOs and private entrepreneurs through tax incentives and subsidies for indigenous production and servicing of assistive devices.

Recommendations

- (1) Resource centres may be established to conduct research and development of assistive devices and to display different models and types of assistive devices, which persons with disabilities may visit to test, try and choose those which are suitable for them.
- (2) Information in the form of videotapes and pamphlets on assistive devices may be widely disseminated.
- (3) Channels for the distribution of assistive devices may be established through government agencies, NGOs and CBR programmes to reach the maximum number of persons with disabilities.
- (4) Relevant government agencies and accredited NGOs may be granted exemption of duty imposed on items for general and specific use which are required by persons with disabilities.
- (5) Encourage research and advanced training institutions for technology, engineering and allied sciences to collaborate with NGOs and CBR programmes, to develop and improve upon assistive devices that can broaden training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

11. SELF-HELP ORGANIZATIONS

Critical Issues

In order to realize the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities, it is imperative that they themselves play a key role in the formulation of national policy on all issues that directly affect their lives. Self-help organizations provide the means for persons with disabilities to collectively voice their needs and aspirations. Lack of coordination and consultation among self-help organizations can reduce their effectiveness in this role. National forums of self-help organizations can facilitate the formation of common positions and thereby strengthen their representation.

Some countries within the ESCAP region do not as yet have self-help organizations owing to lack of information and understanding of the role of these organizations. Another issue is the low level of organizational and management skills on the part of persons with disabilities in those organizations. In some instances, the absence of an environment that is conducive to self-help and organization is a serious obstacle to the establishment of self-help organizations of people with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities in the rural areas and disability groups, such as users of psychiatric services, leprosy-affected persons, HIV-positive persons and women and girls with disabilities, have been neglected. There is a need for existing cross-disability organizations to include the participation of these marginalized groups as well as take initiatives to encourage these groups to set up their own organizations.

Effective leadership and management development remain major concerns of self-help organizations in the ESCAP region.

Targets

11.1 Establishment, by 1997, of a national forum of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities to include organizations from rural areas, as well as organizations of marginalized groups such as women and girls with disabilities, users of psychiatric services, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons who are HIV-positive and persons affected by leprosy.

11.2 Development, by 1997, of self-help organizations of diverse disability groups, which focus on rural people with disabilities in the provision of mutual support, advocacy and referrals to programmes and services, and which collaborate actively with NGOs engaged in rural and urban development issues.

11.3 Put in place, by 1997, mechanisms under the direction of the National Coordinating Committee, which will increase consultations between self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and diverse government ministries covering the implementation of the Agenda for Action.

11.4 Establishment, by 1997, of a national policy with the requisite resource allocations to support the development and formation of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities.

11.5 Development, by 1998, of programmes for training persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, as trainers in the leadership and management of self-help organizations.

Recommendations

(1) Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities may initiate action plans for the establishment of national forums.

(2) National forums of self-help organizations of people with disabilities shall monitor regularly the progress made in the implementation of the targets relating to self-help organizations.

(3) The national forums may develop tools for monitoring and evaluating services for people with disabilities and the effectiveness of self-help organizations.

(4) Provide training to people with disabilities on computer and electronic networking skills to strengthen the self-help movement of persons with disabilities through giving them greater access to information and effective communication technologies.

(5) Encourage people with disabilities to play an active role in the national political process.

12. REGIONAL COOPERATION

Recommendations

(1) ESCAP, in close co-operation with concerned members of the Asia-Pacific Inter-organizational Task Force on Disability-related Concerns, may collaborate in:

Assisting Governments in carrying out national sample surveys, by:

Providing technical expertise to facilitate disability-related data collection;

Provide training to trainers of census enumerators in the interpretation of definitions of definitions for data collection.

Disseminating the United Nations Handbook on Development of Impairment, Disability and Handicap Statistics and the International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (edited by WHO);

Holding the first NCC Convention in 1997, the mid-point of the Decade, at which, inter alia, awards may be presented to persons and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of the Decade;

Approaching UNDP to consider the inclusion of a factor on development and rehabilitation of disabled persons in the UNDP Human Development Index;

Laying a foundation for regional cooperation and networking with subnational linkages, so that collaborative research and development in the production of assistive devices may be undertaken and transfer of technology to production workshops and NGOs may be promoted;

Training self-help organizations of people with disabilities in diverse skills required for effective participation in their respective NCCs;

Facilitating exchanges and mutual help among self-help organizations of people with disabilities in the ESCAP region, including for the establishment of national forums.

(2) The Asia-Pacific Inter-organizational Task Force on Disability-related Concerns may:

Develop training materials and programmes about disability for personnel working in health, social welfare, education, labour, rural and urban development, and NGOs;

Organize, at the subregional level, multisectoral training workshops on CBR management for personnel from diverse ministries and NGOs, including self-help organizations of people with disabilities.

(3) Regional NGOs, in cooperation with Very Special Arts International, may consider organizing a regional arts festival of persons with disabilities to be hosted by a country in the region.

(4) ESCAP members may:

Develop training modules and materials for the training of persons with disabilities as trainers in awareness-raising of issues affecting people with disabilities.

Contribute designs of stamps to commemorate the Asian and Pacific Decade for possible use by ESCAP members and associate members.

Support the convening of subregional multisectoral training sessions on CBR management for personnel responsible for disability matters in the ministries of education, health, labour, social development, organizations of people with disabilities and other NGOs;

Develop information materials and organize programmes on approaches to the achievement of these targets for technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC);

Strengthen regional cooperation for the promotion of the Decade through increased contributions of human and financial resources to the secretariat.

Gender Dimensions of the Implementation of the Agenda for Action

Adopted by the Meeting to Review the Progress of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, Bangkok, 26 – 30 June 1995.

Critical issues

Women and girls with disabilities in every community, whether urban or rural, whether in a developed or a developing country or territory in the ESCAP region, experience triple discrimination: from being female, disabled and poor. Discrimination and prejudice prevail even within each of those groups. Among women, the disabled woman is seen as inferior; among people with disabilities, she is not their equal. Thus women with disabilities are among the most isolated, marginalized and poorest of people.

They are likely to receive less care and food and be left out of family interactions, and community activities. They also have less access to health care and rehabilitation services, fewer opportunities to be educated and employed and little hope of marriage. They will be more vulnerable to physical and psychological abuse.

All actions to improve the status of disabled persons do not always benefit women and girls with disabilities equally. If the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, is to make a difference for women and girls with disabilities in the region, greater attention must be given to the issues faced by them and to increasing their capacity to participate in the local-, national- and international-level implementation of the Agenda for Action.

Recommendations

1. National coordination

Strategic objective:

To enable representatives of women with disabilities to be involved in policy - and decision-making on issues that relate to them at the national level.

Action to be taken:

1.1 Include women with disabilities as members of the national coordination committee, their number to be equal to the number of men with disabilities in the committee.

Action by: National coordination committees for disability concerns.

1.2 Provide the means for them to develop the skills required for effective functioning in the committee.

Action by: Self-help organizations of people with disabilities, organizations concerned with human resources development and empowerment among women.

2. Legislation

Strategic objective:

To protect and promote the rights of disabled women.

Action to be taken:

2.1 Identify, examine and amend existing legal and policy provisions which may discriminate against women with disabilities and restrict their access to public services and participation in society.

Action by: Governments, self-help organizations of people with disabilities.

2.2 Initiate and strengthen activities to inform and educate women and girls with disabilities as well as the public (including women and men with disabilities), regarding their rights.

Action by: Governments, self-help organizations of people with disabilities, women s organizations, particularly those engaged in the promotion of legal literacy.

2.3 Provide free legal service to women with disabilities.

Action by: Governments and legal aid organizations.

3. Information

Strategic objective:

To generate, collate and disseminate information on the situation of women with disabilities to provide a sound basis for policy formulation and action, and to increase public awareness.

Action to be taken:

3.1 Incorporate the collection of gender-specific data in surveys on the disability situation at national level and by the United Nations system.

Action by: Governments, UNICEF, UNIFEM.

3.2 Undertake studies on the actual living conditions of disabled women in urban and rural areas, particularly those in the poorest and most disadvantaged communities, with a view to identifying ways to improving their status and living conditions.

Action by: Governments, self-help organizations of people with disabilities, women's organizations, organizations working on urban management and housing rights and on rural poverty alleviation.

3.3 Record and document the experiences of women with disabilities in ESCAP developing and least developed countries.

Action by: Self-help organizations of people with disabilities, women's organizations and media organizations.

3.4 Investigate and report on the extent and nature of violence against disabled women and girls, with a view to formulating measures for their protection and redress.

Action by: Governments, self-help organizations of people with disabilities, women's organizations and regional networks involved in campaigning on violence against women.

4. Public Awareness

Strategic objective

To generate, collate and disseminate information on the situation of women with disabilities to provide a sound basis for policy formulation and action, and to increase public awareness.

Action to be taken

4.1 Raise awareness among media persons in the ESCAP region on issues relating to women and girls with disabilities and encourage their support for promoting positive public attitudes regarding women and girls with disabilities.

Action by: Self-help organizations of people with disabilities, organizations working on social mobilization of marginalized groups, UNICEF, UNESCO, the Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO.

4.2 Include women and girls with disabilities in all activities (e.g., sports and the arts) and materials (e.g., posters, commemorative stamps, first day covers and training packages) aimed at public information, education and social mobilization on disability issues.

Action by: Governments, self-help organizations of people with disabilities, media organizations.

5. Accessibility and Communication

No additional recommendations for women and girls with disabilities.

6. Education

Strategic objective:

To ensure that all girls and women with disabilities be given the fullest possible opportunity for education.

Action to be taken:

6.1 Study the reasons for the low enrolment of girls and women with disabilities in schools, higher learning institutions, functional literacy and other non-formal education programmes,

with a view to evolving and implementing a comprehensive plan to eliminate barriers to their enrolment.

Action by: Governments and UNICEF.

6.2 Incorporate measures to address the education needs of disabled women and girls in all policies and programmes to achieve the UNESCO goal of Education for All.

Action by: Governments, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP, NGOs concerned with the enhancement and promotion of functional literacy.

6.3 Set targets for girls and women with disabilities for all education and literacy programmes, particularly those that focus on girls and women in general.

Action by: Governments and NGOs working on the promotion of education and functional literacy among marginalized groups.

6.4 Integrate the education and functional literacy needs of women and girls with disabilities in all UNESCO s activities to promote education of girls.

Action by: UNESCO and NGOs supporting UNESCO s objectives.

6.5 Support exchanges on models of integrated education for disabled children.

Action by: Governments, UNESCO and UNICEF.

6.6 Request relevant international agencies and bodies through their existing advisory services to governments in the ESCAP region, to provide technical advice to governments in the formulation of comprehensive plans for the education of children with disabilities, with attention to equal access for disabled girls.

Action by: UNESCO, UNICEF.

7.Training and employment

Strategic objective:

To provide equal opportunities for vocational training and employment for women and girls with disabilities.

Action to be taken:

7.1 Establish a system to identify and provide jobs in all sectors which are suited to the abilities, potential and aspirations of women with disabilities.

Action by: Governments, organizations involved in community development, vocational training and other human resource development activities.

7.2 Increase the intake of women and girls with disabilities in vocational training and integrate them with the requisite support services, into existing vocational training facilities.

Action by: Governments, NGOs involved in vocational training for persons with disabilities.

7.3 Provide opportunity for promotion of women with disabilities by upgrading their skills.

Action by: Governments, NGOs involved in vocational training for persons with disabilities.

7.4 Protect the rights of women with disabilities in the workplace.

Action by: Labour unions, organizations concerned with the rights of women workers

7.5 Protect the health and safety of women with disabilities in the workplace.

Action by: Labour unions, organizations concerned with the rights of women workers.

7.6 Educate employers and fellow employees to ensure the rights of women with disabilities to work free from psychological and/or sexual harassment.

Action by: Labour unions, organizations concerned with the rights of women workers.

7.7 Strengthen training in business development, product quality control, marketing and distribution of products and services by women with disabilities who are self-employed either as individuals or as a group.

Action by: Governments, UN agencies, NGOs working on small business development

7.8 Specify the inclusion of women with disabilities as target beneficiaries of credit schemes directed at poverty alleviation among women.

Action by: Governments, organizations concerned with provision of credit in urban and rural development projects.

8. Prevention of causes of disabilities

No additional recommendations for women and girls with disabilities.

9. Rehabilitation services (health and social development)

Strategic objective:

To ensure that women and girls with disabilities have equal access to health care and rehabilitation services.

Action to be taken:

9.1 Strengthen community health care and community-based rehabilitation services, and make available information about them; so that women and girls with disabilities will be able to have greater access to them.

Action by: Governments and NGOs involved in community-based rehabilitation

9.2 Increase the training of women with disabilities as community-based rehabilitation workers to enhance service delivery to more women and girls with disabilities.

Action by: Governments and NGOs involved in community-based rehabilitation.

10. Assistive devices

Strategic objective:

To increase the availability of assistive devices for women and girls with disabilities.

Action to be taken:

10.1 Promote the production and distribution of assistive devices which are appropriate for women and girls with disabilities and ensure that they have equal access to existing subsidies and concessions.

Action by: Governments and NGOs involved in the production and distribution of assistive devices.

11. Self-help organizations

Strategic objective:

To strengthen the capacity of women with disabilities to include their concerns into the agenda of self-help organizations and to provide them with equal opportunities to influence policy and decision-making in those organizations.

Action to be taken:

Self-help organizations of people with disabilities should:

11.1 Take special action to recruit more women and girls with disabilities as members so as to improve the gender balance in the organizations and better represent the interests of women and girls with disabilities.

11.2 Aim towards equal representation of women members in their policy- and decision-making bodies.

11.3 Form committees elected by the women members to promote the advancement of women and girls with disabilities.

11.4 Raise the awareness of women and girls with disabilities regarding gender issues, with a view to increasing their ability to analyse the barriers caused by gender bias and to develop the skills to deal with those barriers in everyday life.

11.5 Include equal numbers of women in leadership and management training activities.

11.6 Strengthen cooperation with women's organizations through joint projects on issues faced by women and girls with disabilities.

11.7 Approach, in collaboration with the national focal points on disability, all multilateral, bilateral and national funding agencies to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are explicitly cited as target beneficiaries of development programmes which are intended to be gender-sensitive.

12. Regional cooperation

Strategic objective:

To enhance the sharing of information and experience on the advancement of women and girls with disabilities and to strengthen their effectiveness in advocacy at relevant regional forums.

Action to be taken:

12.1 Encourage and support networking among women with disabilities, and between women with disabilities and mainstream women's organizations as well as other NGOs.

Action by: Self-help organizations of people with disabilities, women's' organizations and NGOs.

12.2 Ensure equal representation of men and women in bilateral exchange programmes in the field of disability.

Action by: Governments and NGOs.

12.3 Discussion on the progress of efforts to promote the implementation of the recommendations regarding women and girls with disabilities should be included in the agenda of the meetings of the Asia-Pacific Inter-organizational Task Force on Disability-related Concerns and the biennial regional meetings to review the progress of the Decade.

Action by: All members of the Inter-organizational Task-Force on Disability-related Concerns.

12.4 Country reports and reports by NGOs for future biennial regional reviews should include gender-segregated data and information on women and girls with disabilities with respect to implementation of all areas of the Agenda for Action.

Action by: Governments and NGOs.