



## **Bangkok Recommendations on Disability-Inclusive Agribusiness Development**

We, the representatives of government agencies representing the sectors concerning disability, social welfare and development, agriculture, the business sector, civil society organizations, including groups and organizations of persons with disabilities, the United Nations and other international partners, from the Asia-Pacific region met at the United Nations Convention Centre in Bangkok, Thailand, from 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013, at the Regional Workshop on Disability-Inclusive Agribusiness Development. Comprised of over 120 delegates, the Workshop was organized by the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and The Nippon Foundation.

Participants recognized that persons with disabilities make up a significant part of the world's most vulnerable and disadvantaged population, often excluded from productive resources and livelihood opportunities. According to the World Report on Disability, issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank in 2011, 15% of the world total population is persons with disabilities. In Asia and the Pacific, it is estimated that approximately 40% of the population is persons with disabilities and their family members.

Highlighting food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition continues to be a major challenge. According to WHO, the biggest cause of disability is malnutrition. The global prevalence of malnutrition and hunger remains unacceptably high. From 2010 to 2012, it was estimated that nearly 870 million people were undernourished. The Asia-Pacific region holds the largest share, 62 % of the world chronic hunger population. Despite all efforts, there has been little improvement in recent times due to widening inequity and income disparity, as well as high and volatile food prices which affect the most vulnerable groups of society, including persons with disabilities and their family members.

Acknowledging that the Workshop was the first event after the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2011-2020, and the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, led by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to showcase great initiatives, to facilitate the involvement of the business sector, disability-inclusive agribusiness practitioners, government, civil society, United Nations and international organizations to develop future strategies.

While disability-inclusive initiatives are a growing trend, the significance of agribusiness within the context of the Asia-Pacific region and the reduction of hunger and poverty has not yet been explored.

In collaboration with FAO and the Nippon Foundation, APCD conducted pioneering research on more than 60 case studies in targeted ASEAN countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Forty-five active cases were identified as



having elements of disability-inclusive agribusiness. Based on the experiences of disability-inclusive agribusiness practitioners and a growing need for information in this area, the study has identified good practice models and a range of challenges for disability-inclusive agribusiness. These challenges are defined by the selected countries' individual perspectives on business, behavior and knowledge. Key findings for each challenge were shared according to the expertise of persons with disabilities as a source of numerous solutions. In addition, multi-sectoral partnerships and the sharing of technical expertise were acknowledged as enabling factors.

Based on the discussions, participants concluded with the following recommendations:

1. Expand enabling policies at all levels, and establish/strengthen networks that support persons with disabilities, and the public and private sectors engaged in disability-inclusive agribusiness development;
2. Develop and implement disability-inclusive policies and strategies that improve access to productive resources and assets, including credit within the agribusiness sector;
3. Promote employment and job opportunities, and create disability-friendly business environments and customer services in the agribusiness sector;
4. Support research and development, and invest in accessible technologies and infrastructure that will enable persons with disabilities to draw on their unique knowledge and abilities for effective engagement in agribusiness;
5. Improve access of persons with disabilities to affordable credit by providing reasonable provisions such as acceptable credit/interest terms, from the finance sector;
6. Create a certification/accreditation system which could add value to disability-inclusive agribusiness products and services;
7. Further promote evidence-based research on disability-inclusive agribusiness across Asia and the Pacific to identify, promote and share good practice models for future replication;
8. Enhance skill development opportunities and on-the-job training for persons with disabilities to include them in agribusiness;
9. Raise awareness of the importance of disability-inclusive agribusiness development, share accessible information and advocate for concerted actions among sectors and partners;
10. Consider the potential of disability-inclusive agribusiness in the discussion of the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
11. Form a network to strengthen coordination and to follow up the Recommendations at the national and regional level for actual implementation, and to meet together in the next 2 years to review and discuss the progress of disability-inclusive agribusiness.

Presented and unanimously adopted  
at the Regional Workshop on Disability-Inclusive Agribusiness Development,  
22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013