



# EMPOWERMENT

## Regional Workshop for Networking and Collaboration on Intellectual Disabilities (ID)

APCD organized the Regional Workshop for Networking and Collaboration on Intellectual Disabilities (ID) from 22-25 January 2008, at APCD, Bangkok, Thailand.



Working Group of Persons with ID

This workshop was the highlight of APCD in 2008 with 26 participants. They included persons with ID (self-advocate), parents of persons with ID as well as supporters from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand.

The objectives of this workshop were to strengthen networking and collaboration regarding persons with ID among APCD and relevant groups/organizations in the target countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand). The 3 main strategies used were as follows:

- Empowering persons with ID to be aware of his/her situation, set a vision, and learn about self-help and self-advocacy;

- Equipping key family members of persons with ID with practical knowledge/ skills to develop their self-help groups/ associations; and

- Enhancing the supporters' knowledge and attitudes to effectively assist persons with ID and their families.

A learner-center approach was applied in which some sessions all everyone participated in the same room while some sessions we are conducted concurrently; one room for self-advocates and another room for family and supporters' groups.

The field visits conducted on the second day included visits to the cookie-making project at the Thai Autism Vocational Center and

meeting with a gentleman with an ID at a private company who works there as an administrative officers.

The last day was most interesting as well as important since the family group presented an action plan while the self-advocates shared their dreams and future plans.

The closing ceremony followed discussion on "How to Initiate Networking Among all Participants" in which the participants agreed to communicate by email and expect focal point organizations which are government organizations to make sure all participants can connect with each other even if they are unable to utilize internet or email.

This workshop was organized successfully believing and respecting the potential of Persons with ID, implementing the program based and focused on the learners through a learner-center approach, and lastly by being confident that strong networking and collaboration would bring positive changes on the quality of life of persons with ID.

APCD invited 5 self-advocates to be resource persons. This was epoch-making in that this was the first time that JICA dispatched a self-advocate from Japan as a short term JICA expert.

Follow up and support for Networking and Collaboration on ID will be implemented and strengthened continually in the respected countries by APCD and relevant groups/ organizations.



ID Boy from Cambodia Expressed his Comment During Class

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## INTERVIEW CORNER

### Ms. Mayumi Narazaki, JICA Short-term Expert Self-Advocacy Group “Sunflower”, Japan



There are many friends of mine with disabilities that got together to form the Sunflower Group. In the beginning when I started the group, I was interested in getting a license to look after elderly persons and also a driving license. The goal of the Sunflower Group is for persons with disabilities to get together and volunteer for other persons, like elderly persons who need care and children who need service. It's not difficult for me to recruit members. Not many persons with disabilities want to study. The majority of persons with intellectual disabilities prefer self-funded recreational activity. So I'm planning to persuade persons that learning or studying is important. For example, they could study how to get a job or a license. I don't tell others that studying is important but they will tell each other. As a resource person from this training, I hope when the participants go back to their country, they will have lots of friends – make friends and talk more among themselves when they get together and talk. And I hope that they will be proud and love themselves. I really enjoyed this self-advocacy workshop. I think it was fun!

### Mr. Preecha Preeyotchaisan, (Self-advocate)

My nickname is 'Ae'. I'm a 22 year-old farmer and come from Nakhorn Ratchasima province. My home includes my parents, brother in-law, my younger sister and one niece. I'm the elder in my family. I enjoyed this course because I could learn from the different experiences of the other participants. In this training course I wished to gain as much experience and knowledge from others. I went to Makro to observe how the autistic children sell their cookies and also we went to the Thai Autism Vocational Centre to see their daily activities. Activities provided at the Centre were very interesting such as fitness, a garden and much more. It's quite different from where I live because the Centre is situated in the city area, not isolated. I am a committee member at my Centre. For sure, I'll tell everyone in my Centre about the knowledge gained and experiences shared in this training!



### Mr. Johari Bin Jamali United Voice (Coordinator), Malaysia



I'm the President of the United Voices of Self-Help Groups for persons with disabilities. My experience with self-advocacy is to fight for our rights. For example, we wrote a letter to the public transport in Kuala Lumpur which they didn't accept. We were still fighting for it so they came to our Centre. A few months later they finally accepted our request.

### Ms. Payanart Sookcharoen Association for the Mentally Retarded of Thailand (Self-Advocate)

I'm a volunteer for Archan Daranee to look after children with intellectual disabilities by taking care of them, feeding them and cleaning. This is the first time for me to visit APCD; before I never knew about this at all. It's very helpful that APCD organized this workshop for ID persons to discuss their opinions and share their needs and experiences. I've learned a lot from this workshop; for example, the problem of a parent of an ID child is what their child will do after his/her parent passes away. I'm very grateful that APCD and JICA gave me a chance to attend the conference in Shanghai which was my first time to travel by plane. I'm also happy with Mr. Nagase and APCD's staff members. I'm really speechless because I'm very grateful for their support to make me feel more comfortable to express my feelings and want to participate more in social activities. I used to stay alone and didn't like to join others. I'll help others by talking to ID persons and their parents about self-help activities.





# APCD Missions

## Networking and Collaboration Mission to Myanmar

10 - 14 March 2008

The purpose of our mission to Myanmar was: to establish collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, to establish self-help organizations for persons with hearing impairments and/or an intellectual disability and their families; visit related groups and organizations and exchange information on the deaf and intellectual disability fields as well as exchange information on deaf and intellectual disabilities.

The mission team met with Mr. Sit Myaing, Director General of the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement, in order to continue our relationship and further collaboration with his successor since he was retiring at the end of March. He confirmed that the government will support the creation of a unified deaf organization since there are two different deaf groups, the Yangon Deaf Association and Mandalay Deaf Association. The deaf groups expressed their appreciation for APCD.

The mission team visited a school for disabled children and met with a Parents Group of Disabled Children and a Special Olympic Commission to discuss and exchange information on concerns such as education for children with disabilities, job opportunities, rearing methods suitable for the children and how to organize parents groups. They would like APCD to organize a workshop and/or seminar in Myanmar so that they can have more information regarding the afore-mentioned matters.



**Field Visit at a School for Disabled Children and a Parents Group of Disabled Children**

APCD arranged a workshop at the JICA Myanmar office on three main topics; Introduction to the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) by Mr. Surachet Lertsajayan a representative of WFD, Introduction to the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand (NADT) by Mr. Suwat Uthamaphethai, President of NADT and the Real Meaning of Disability and Equity by Ms. Jirat Wachirasereechai, Chief of HRD, APCD. The participants of the workshop included twenty members from the Yangon Deaf Association, five members from the Mandalay Deaf

Association and another five from the Mary Chapman School for the Deaf.



**Workshop for the Deaf in Yangon**

The problems of the Deaf in Myanmar can be attributed to a lack of sign language interpreters, different sign languages used between the deaf schools and the community, limited education, limited information received from the media, and an inadequate support for their budget; two groups of deaf persons need to be certified by law to qualify to request support from WFD.

We realized through this workshop that the Thai resource persons were effective and had good advice for people in Thailand's neighbouring countries such as Myanmar; the climate, history, culture and social & economic situations are similar as compared to the same factors of developed countries.



**During Deaf Workshop**

# APCD Trainings

## DISABILITY EQUALITY TRAINING

APCD organized a Disability Equality Training (DET) Extension Program in 2 Provinces in order to promote a disability model and raise awareness on disability issues for target groups.

### **February 19, 2008**

The DET Extension Group arranged a seminar for PWDs, local authority officers, special education teachers as well as staff who are responsible for refugees and hill tribes at Mae Sot District, Mae Hong Sorn Province, in northwest Thailand. The curriculum focused on the rights of PWDs with Thailand's new Empowerment for Persons with Disabilities Act 2007.



**DET at TAK Province**

### **March 25 – 26, 2008**

Two ex-participants of the DET Training of Trainers, a volunteer from Chiang Mai Province and APCD HRD personnel organized a 2 days DET Seminar at Nan Province.

Target groups were persons with disabilities, teachers and staff from a Special Education Center, hospital personnel, local authorities and social workers.

The contents included a correct understanding of 'Disability', the medical and social models, inclusion in society as well as a simulation activity in the city and hotel to monitor accessibility and the facilities.



**Stimulation Activities on DET at NAN Province**

## APCD THAI EX-TRAINEE FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

**28 – 29 FEBRUARY 2008**

APCD organized a 2 days seminar for Thai APCD ex-trainees in order to update their work progress on their target areas after receiving training from APCD as well as build up networking and collaboration by sharing knowledge between ex-trainees who had previously received training on empowerment and a barrier-free society.

Activities included were:

- Disability Equality Training: training to encourage right attitudes on equality between persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons.
- Reports on the projects and activities of the 17 selected ex-trainees.
- An update on the movement of persons with disabilities in Thailand by inviting leaders of persons with disabilities to share their activities and news.

Ex-trainees had an excellent opportunity to exchange and share their knowledge and information which can be utilized and applied in their own target areas. Network was built among them to further develop their work and expand

target groups in the future. As an organizer, APCD, received comments and suggestions on conducting training, follow-up, evaluation and ways to support them.



**APCD's Thai Ex-trainees on Thai Follow-up Seminar**



## WOMEN WITH DISABILITY TRAINING

4 - 6 MARCH 2008

APCD's concept is to break barriers for all, including women with disabilities who are ignored by society. This is the first time for APCD to organize a Seminar on Women with Disabilities (WWD). The Seminar was conducted from 4-6 March 2008 at APCD's training building. The objectives were to give knowledge in equality and rights for Women with Disabilities and set up networking among the 35 participants who are leaders of women and men with disabilities.

Contents of the seminar included reviewing the international legal framework and social norm (CEDAW), and analysis regarding the roles of women and men. Group discussion focused on disclosure of male and female stereotypes, the relationship between poverty and rights in development, a panel discussion on women's participation in development and the current situation & crisis/problems of women with disabilities. Participants also had a chance

to visit Promoting Womens' Status Center in order to see real problems. Participants then wrote action plans for future networking.



During Class on WWD Training

At a glance:

### The First Ever Secretary-General, National Office for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities



We are happy to introduce Mrs. Kingkaew Inwang, Secretary General, National Office for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (NEP), a new departmental organization under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS). Mrs. Kingkaew has had much experience in community development which focuses on empowering and strengthening networking of people among concerned organizations and people's organizations under the Ministry of Interior. After the Public Reform in 2002, she relocated to stay as a Director of the Bureau of Gender Equality and as a Deputy Director General of the Office of Woman Affairs and Family Development, MSDHS.

Mrs. Kingkaew stated that the major role of NEP is to coordinate with various governmental and non-governmental organizations on disability policy. NEP has a strong network with MSDHS. NEP's strategy includes empowerment of persons with disabilities by involving representatives of disabled people's organizations in all stages from planning to monitoring. This national office also serves as an information center particularly data of registered persons with disabilities in Thailand, research, best practices, etc.

One of her significant achievements was to seek approval of the Cabinet of Ministers to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This will lead to more persons with disabilities to mingle with others in society and enjoy the same rights as others.

## Farewell Message from JICA Expert - Ms. Naoko Ito

Dear Supporters and Friends,

Thank you so much for all the kind support you extended to me during my service at APCD. I am sure that APCD has created the best “chapter” of my life, in which I could meet wonderful persons like you and my respected husband, Mr. Lian Kual Sang, a former participant of a CBR workshop. It was my great pleasure and treasure to have worked for the empowerment of persons with disabilities together with all the committed persons in this Asia-Pacific region. Since I was engaged in the APCD project formulation from 1999 and it was not so easy to facilitate various stakeholders’ consensus on the project design, APCD was once a “dream” for me. After APCD was established in 2002 and I was assigned for technical cooperation in the Human Resource Development Program, the “dream” became “reality”. I was pleased to witness all the positive changes happening thanks to our former participants and collaborators. Now that Project Phase I is completed and my successor, Ms. Emi Aizawa, has arrived for Phase II, APCD has become a “memory”. However, all of you remain in my thoughts and I wish you all the best and continuous cooperation with APCD. I am no longer in Thailand but in Australia/Myanmar; please feel free to contact me ([naoko1024@gmail.com](mailto:naoko1024@gmail.com)) if I can be of any help to you. See you sometime soon and do take care.



## Introduction from New Coordinator - Mr. Takafumi Miki



Hi!

Although I became project coordinator for APCD six months ago, this is my first opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Miki (family name) Takafumi (given name). I arrived in Bangkok on 31 October 2007. The first time I came to this country was in 1990. Since then I have been here several times. The city of Bangkok seems to have developed quite well in due course of time. Yet there are still some things that remain untouched such as the Chaophraya, Wat Phrakaeo and the hospitality of the people, etc.

I had been working for a flood control project of JICA in the Philippines before I came here. I enjoyed sailing very much. I look forward to finding a beautiful sea suitable for sailing in Thailand and attaining fruitful results of the APCD project as well.

Let us enjoy working together and sailing together, shall we?

## Introduction from New JICA Expert - Ms. Emi Aizawa

I feel somehow destined to come to work at APCD, because my experiences of working with persons with disabilities has had a large influence on my personal commitment and career formation. I joined JICA in 1996, when I was first assigned to facilitate training courses on disability in Japan, such as training of leaders. It was how I came in touch with the issue on disability and development, which since then, has been close to my heart. Inspired by the leaders of persons with disabilities from various developing countries, I asked JICA for a study leave to conduct research on cooperation between disabled people’s organizations and development agencies, during which I had a pleasure of interviewing various leaders of the Thai disability movement, who later became active resource persons of APCD. Over the past twelve years, I have been directly or indirectly involved in JICA’s activities concerning disability. I have worked in Cambodia as well as a section at the JICA headquarters responsible for disability issues. All these years, I have been hoping to have a chance to work at the frontline of activities, so working at APCD is like a dream-come-true for me, though I see it as a big challenge as well. I’m very excited to join the APCD family and I assure you that I will do my very best. I am looking forward to meeting you in person and working with you!





# APCD Activities

Tentative APCD activities for the next 6 months (April - September 2008)

## April

- Newsletter Volume 23
- 21 April - ● Community-based Rehabilitation Training (CBR)
- 2 May

## May

- 18 - 28 ● Mission to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
- ICT for Visually Impaired Persons Training

## June

- 16 - 19 ● Mission to Lao PDR
- 23 - 26 ● Mission to the Philippines
- 25 - 27 ● Seminar on the Expansion of Empowerment Concept (Thai Persons Only)

## July

- 5 - 14 ● Newsletter Volume 24
- Mission to Uzbekistan & Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan
- 21 - 24 ● Blind Future Leaders' Dialogue (Nippon Foundation & FAPCD)

## August

- None -

## September

- 24 - 26 ● APCD & ESCAP & International Disability Alliance (IDA) Networking and Collaboration

Tentative Activities 2008	April	May	June
Newsletter Volume 23			
Community-based Rehabilitation Training	21 Apr-2 May		
Mission to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan		18-28	
ICT for Visually Impaired Persons Training			
Mission to Lao PDR			16-19
Mission to the Philippines			23-26
Seminar on the Expansion of Empowerment Concept			25-27
Tentative Activities 2008	July	August	September
Newsletter Volume 24			
Mission to Uzbek & Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan	5-14		
Blind Future Leaders' Dialogue (Nippon Foundation/FAPCD)	21-24		
APCD/ESCAP/IDA Networking and Collaboration			24-26



## ESCAP and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



Aiko Akiyama  
Social Affairs Officer  
ESCAP

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has been the regional engine advocating for a rights-based approach for the last 20 years. It is now promoting the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF) and its supplement, the Biwako Plus Five, under the second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (2003-2012). In the past five years, ESCAP has made significant contributions to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) drafting process, particularly through the submission of the Bangkok Draft, a regional draft of the Convention, which was made possible with concerted efforts of representatives of Governments and disabled people's organizations. The Bangkok Draft became one of the foundational documents of the current Convention.

The BMF, Biwako Plus Five and the CRPD all share the same vision of creating an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society and emphasize a paradigm shift from a charity-based to a rights-based approach to disability. Therefore, with the CRPD's entry into force, ESCAP will be able to strengthen its regional efforts towards the creation of inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based societies.

Furthermore, ESCAP will be able to involve more of UN agencies and organizations in the efforts. In December 2007, the Inter-agency Support Group (IASG) for the CRPD was established at New York with an aim to make the UN system-wide commitment to mainstreaming the disability perspective into its operations. ESCAP is one of its members. Capitalizing on the global development, ESCAP will organize a meeting later in September this year for the UN agencies and organizations in the region to promote the disability mainstreaming at the regional level.

The participation of persons with disabilities has been instrumental in creating a meaningful policy dialogue and good practice sharing in many of the ESCAP activities. ESCAP will also continue this practice towards the attainment of the shared vision.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

#### 1<sup>ST</sup> ASIA PACIFIC COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION (CBR) CONGRESS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

The World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the Royal Thai Government through Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and APCD welcome you to **the 1st Asia-Pacific CBR Congress, 9-11 December 2008, at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok.**

This will be the first opportunity for CBR implementers, policy-makers and representatives of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) from all over the Asia-Pacific region to share experiences, form a network and be updated with the new trends in CBR with the content of the Asia-Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (2003-2012) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The tentative program as well as registration fees will be announced on the Conference website at <http://www.cbr-asiapacific.org>.

If you have inquiries, please contact the **Conference Secretariat** at:

Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD)

APCD Bldg., 255 Rajvithi Rd., Rajthevi, Bangkok 10400 Thailand

Tel: 66-(0)-2354-7505, 66-(0)-2354-3525-29

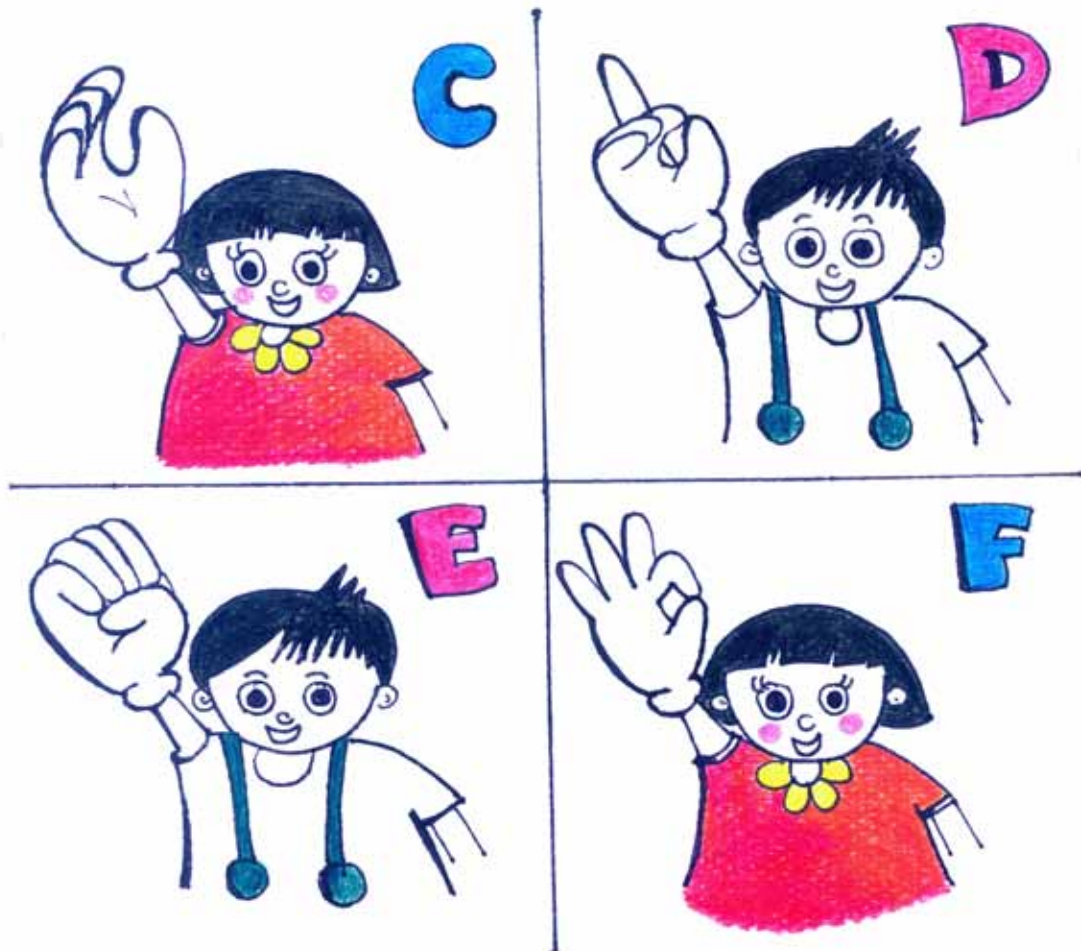
Fax: 66-(0)-2354-7507, 66-(0)-2354-3530

Conference Website: <http://www.cbr-asiapacific.org>

E-mail: [secretariat@cbr-asiapacific.org](mailto:secretariat@cbr-asiapacific.org)



# Let's learn International Sign Language



Hello, Everyone!!! It's Kana-chan and Juk's showtime. Ladies first, Kana-chan wants to demonstrate "C" in the alphabet by holding four fingers down half way and lifting her thumb upright. Juk is now ready for "D", Juk lifts his index finger and stretches his thumb forward stretching the other three fingers to the tip of the thumb. Juk wants to go on with "E", which is just like "A" grasping his hand covering his thumb. Here comes Kana-chan wanting to show "F", which is like "D" with only the forefinger stretching to the tip of the thumb and the other fingers straight up.



## Regional News

January - March 2008

### Nepal Signed the UN Convention and Optional Protocol! United Nations 3 January 2008

Nepal has become a state party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Some countries in South Asia, which are Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Nepal, signed the Convention. On behalf of the Nepal government, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations Madhu Raman Acharya on 3 January 2008 signed the Convention and its optional protocol 2006 at the UN Headquarters in New York. Under the Convention, states parties would guarantee that persons with disabilities enjoy their inherent right to life on an equal basis with others. Children with disabilities would have equal rights, would not be separated from their parents against their will, except in their best interests, and would in no case be separated from their parents on the basis of a disability of either the child or the parents.

*Please check [www.un.org/disabilities/countries.asp?navid=12&pid=166#N](http://www.un.org/disabilities/countries.asp?navid=12&pid=166#N) for more detail.*

*Source: Mr. Ghulam Nabi Nizamani, DPI AP*

### China Approves Draft Law Revision on Protection of the Disabled China 24 January 2008

China's State Council, or Cabinet, approved in principle a draft law revision for better education, better rehabilitation, a higher standard of living and more jobs for the country's disabled persons. The revised draft deepened the concept of putting people first and focused on improving or adding stipulations guaranteeing the rights and interests of the handicapped. Improvement included: — Establishing and improving the rehabilitation service system for disabled persons; encouraging and supporting the establishment of such institutions. — Setting up educational institutions for disabled persons and providing financial support for disabled students and children with poor disabled parents. — Setting up more public welfare jobs for disabled persons, providing free employment services, and encouraging employers to arrange jobs for them. — Adopting necessary aid measures for families with a person with disability who still suffer from poverty but can enjoy the guarantee of subsistence allowances for urban residents. The draft also added stipulations on the improvement of the disabled-friendly facilities and the building of an easy environment for the persons with disabilities to equally participate in social life. The revision further clarified the legal

responsibilities for the infringement of disabled people's rights and interests.

*Please check [http://en.ce.cn/National/Politics/200801/24/t20080124\\_14345410.shtml](http://en.ce.cn/National/Politics/200801/24/t20080124_14345410.shtml) for more detail.*

*Source: China Economic Net*

### DAISY Training for Trainers of Autism and Low Vision Philippines February 2008

After a successful Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) seminar held last year wherein 53 attendees composed of librarians, authors and publishers participated in a one-day seminar, the Philippine DAISY Network (PDN) conducted another DAISY training which was held at the Legend Hotel in Mandaluyong City. The training started on February 18 and culminated on February 22, 2008. The participants selected were ten DAISY trainers of autism and low vision. This training was sponsored by DAISY for ALL and supported by Nippon Foundation and DAISY Consortium. PDN is composed of governmental and non-governmental agencies, namely the Department of Education (DepEd), the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP), Autism Society of the Philippines (ASP), the National Computer Center (NCC), ATRIEV, and the National Library of the Philippines and Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI). The objective was to teach the autistic and visually impaired trainers how to produce digital reading materials for those who are print disabled. Through DAISY, people with disability will benefit most because it assures them of equal access to information and knowledge.

*Please check [www.blind.org.ph](http://www.blind.org.ph) for more detail.*

*Source: Resources for the Blind*

### Human Rights United Nations (UN) Adoption of Arab Disability Day United Nations 8 February 2008

Endorsing a proposal by the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Disability, Hissa Al Thani, the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs has adopted a resolution marking 13 December as Arab Disability Day. This resolution marks a significant step towards widening the circle of concern for the rights of persons with disabilities in the Arab region. The date of 13 December, which is also the date of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, will allow for a unified campaign across the region to highlight and advocate for the signing,

Any disability-related news is welcome to be included in our newsletter.

Please submit your news to us!!!

ratification, implementation and monitoring of the Convention. The theme of Arab Disability Day for 2008 will be "Equal Rights and Full Participation through the Implementation of the Convention."

**Source:** *DPI e-update-8 February 2008*

### **The First Youngest Blind Person Seated in the Upper House of Thailand** Thailand 19 February 2008

Thailand's Election Commission (EC) announced the 74 appointed senators, who have been selected by an EC-appointed seven-member panel. Mr Monthian Buntan, President of Thailand Association of the Blind and Member of the Executive Board Committee of the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability, was one of the 74 appointees to the Upper House to serve a three-year term. Under the 2007 Constitution, the Senate is authorized to supervise the government's work as well as propose amendments to the bills.

**Please check** [www.apcdproject.org](http://www.apcdproject.org) for more detail.

**Source:** *Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability*

### **Guaranteeing Rights of Disabled Persons Obligation for All Bangladesh** Bangladesh 29 February 2008

The chief adviser, Fakhruddin Ahmed, has said despite resource constraints, Bangladesh is firmly committed to addressing the diverse needs of persons with disabilities within and outside the country. He said it has become both a challenge and an obligation for all to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The head of the military-controlled government made the remarks while inaugurating the 3rd General Assembly and Conference of Asia and Pacific Disability Forum at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, jointly organised by the National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled and APDF. The theme of the conference was 'Disability and Development-Practical Strategies'.

**Please check** [www.independent-bangladesh.com/200802292524/country/guaranteeing-rights-of-disabled-persons-obligation-for-all.html](http://www.independent-bangladesh.com/200802292524/country/guaranteeing-rights-of-disabled-persons-obligation-for-all.html) for more detail.

**Source:** *Independent Bangladesh*

### **Cambodian Disabled Arts Festival Promotes Equal Rights** Cambodia 7 March 2008

A festival aimed at promoting disabled artists in Cambodia has just ended in the nation's capital, Phnom Penh. Despite having one of the world's greatest number of disabled persons, social, political and economic discrimination against disabled persons is widespread. The aim was to try to help change popular perceptions of disability in Cambodia by promoting disabled people's

abilities rather than their disabilities. Hundreds of mainly disabled children took part in the opening parade of the Spotlight Festival - the first of its kind in Cambodia aimed at promoting the rights of the disabled. Spotlight Festival featured performances and workshops from a number of acclaimed disabled artists from Cambodia and the wider region. Performers included the blind Cambodian musician Kong Nay, master of the so-called "Mekong Delta Blues," who some call the "Ray Charles of Cambodia" because of his trademark sunglasses. Also performing at the festival was the acclaimed drumming team, Kosu Roa Taiko from Japan. All of the drummers were deaf and performed by feeling the drum's vibrations. As well as showing how disabled persons can play a full role in the arts, the festival succeeded in bringing some joy into the lives of some of Cambodia's most vulnerable disabled children. Organizers hope that festivals like Spotlight can help to bring about a general shift in attitudes towards disabled persons in Cambodia and the wider region.

**Please check** [www.voanews.com/english/2008-03-07-voa28.cfm](http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-03-07-voa28.cfm) for more detail.

**Source:** *VOA News*

### **Regional News: Upcoming Events** (April - June 2008)

#### **The 3rd Annual International Shafallah Forum** Qatar 20-22 April 2008

**Please check** [www.shafallah.org.qa](http://www.shafallah.org.qa) or email to [valeriek@brownlloydjames.com](mailto:valeriek@brownlloydjames.com) for more detail.

**Source:** *Shafallah Center*

#### **MIUSA's 4th International Women's Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)** United States of America 12 August - 2 September 2008

**Please check** [www.miusa.org/miusa-exchange-programs/WILD2008/index.html](http://www.miusa.org/miusa-exchange-programs/WILD2008/index.html) or email to [womenleaders@miusa.org](mailto:womenleaders@miusa.org) for more detail.

**Source:** *MIUSA*

#### **Training Programme for CBR Managers** India 7-17 April 2008

**Please check** [www.cbrnetworksouthasia.org/index.html](http://www.cbrnetworksouthasia.org/index.html) or email to [cbrnet@airtelbroadband.in](mailto:cbrnet@airtelbroadband.in) for more detail.

**Source:** *CBR Network*

#### **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: a Call for Action on Poverty, Lack of Access and Discrimination** Ethiopia 19 - 22 May 2008

**Please check** [www.lcint.org/?lid=4048](http://www.lcint.org/?lid=4048) for more detail.

**Source:** *Leonard Cheshire*



**2nd International Convention on Rehabilitation  
Engineering & Assistive Technology,  
i-CREAtE 2008  
Thailand  
13 - 15 May 2008**



**i-CREAtE 2008 conference** is jointly organized by the Thailand's National Electronics and Computer Technology Centre (NECTEC) and Singapore Therapeutic, Assistive & Rehabilitative Technologies (START) Centre. The conference aims to address current and future developments in the areas of rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology through workshop sessions, scientific platform sessions, interactive poster presentations, integrated demonstrations and a Clinical Practicum.

**Please check** [www.start-centre.com/i-create2008/index.php](http://www.start-centre.com/i-create2008/index.php) for more detail.

**Source:** *i-CREAtE 2008*

## Editorial Message

To all "Empowerment" members! In this quarterly issue we are happy to announce the good news that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been ratified by 20 countries and will become effective in May 2008. Now we are shifting to a new stage on the Human Rights of persons with disabilities. We continue our column on International Sign Language - so everyone can enjoy!

Members who have any suggestions or want to forward news on persons with disabilities, please send to [info@apcdproject.org](mailto:info@apcdproject.org). We welcome your comments and news! See you in our next issue in July 2008.  
Cheers!

"Empowerment APCD Newsletter"

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