



EMPOWERMENT

APCD Newsletter

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Community-Based Rehabilitation Training Chiang Mai, Thailand 3 - 12 June 2003

A community-based rehabilitation (CBR) approach, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1994, is “a strategy within community development for the community and rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of all people with disabilities. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of disabled people themselves, their families and communities, and the appropriate health, educational, vocational, and social services.”



Mrs. Ormporn Nithiyasuthi, Director of the Bureau of Empowerment for PWDs with participants, resource persons, and staff at the CBR regional training.

APCD's “Workshop for Strengthening Community-Based Rehabilitation Movement”

From 3-12 June 2003, the 1st community-based rehabilitation (CBR) training course organized by APCD was held in Chiang Mai. The course entitled, “Workshop for Strengthening CBR Movement” adopted a participatory

training approach with a focus on “experience sharing” as well as CBR knowledge that is both practical and applicable for the participants.

South-to-South Collaboration

Twenty-one persons representing disability-concerned government agencies, NGOs for/of people with disabilities from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Thailand participated in the training course. Since APCD facilitates South-to-South cooperation, most resource persons for the training course were persons who have been engaged in CBR practices in developing countries such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Japan.

Chiang Mai and Community Development

The training course was conducted in Chiang Mai since the rural area of northern Thailand is comparable to the environments in which the participants will or have initiated CBR in their respective countries. In addition, community-based support programs were being carried out there for socially vulnerable persons such as ethnic minority groups and persons with HIV/AIDS in close collaboration between the local Thai government and NGOs. For these reasons, Chiang Mai seemed most appropriate for the participants to experience community-based development.

CBR and Empowerment

For the past two decades, CBR has been highly evaluated and promoted in developing countries all over the world, since it is a strategy for enhancing the quality of life of people with disabilities by improving service delivery, providing more equitable

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opportunities and, by promoting and protecting their human rights. Further efforts, however, are necessary to empower people with disabilities, to be facilitators for CBR; to plan, implement and evaluate CBR programs in their own communities. Participants learned the significance of full-participation of people with disabilities in the entire CBR process and the strategies to achieve it. All participants successfully completed the course curriculum with realistic CBR action plans to be developed in their respective countries.



Participants visiting a CBR project in Chiang Mai.

Words from APCD's Resource Persons

Mr. A. Prasad and Dr. Padmani Mendis, two APCD resource persons for the CBR regional workshop from 3-12 June 2003, shared their feedback. Mr. A. Prasad was very positive and stated that it helped with the cross-fertilization experience to influence participants policymakers to adopt CBR into their policies. CBR, in his perspective is, "empowering PWDs through rights-based approaches for disability rehabilitation and independent living"

Dr. Padmani Mendis stated she expects participants to strengthen or develop new CBR programs with a wider version gained from their knowledge and experiences from the workshop to meet objectives of the "Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF)" and to benefit PWDs in their communities.



Mr. A. Prasad acknowledging participants during the training course.

According to Dr. Mendis, CBR is "sharing with people who have disabilities, all the opportunities that we have as citizens of our countries. CBR is empowering them so that they can lead a full and satisfying life and providing them with opportunities to fulfill themselves as human beings. CBR is enabling them to contribute to the national development using their knowledge, experiences, skills, and capabilities by including them on the basis of equity in all social development processes."



Comments Regarding CBR Workshop

By Ms. Yukiko Nakanishi, JICA Short Term Expert

CBR has widely spread throughout Asia and the Pacific since the concept was introduced by the World Health Organization about 20 years ago. Participants in the workshop understood that CBR is a community development approach for persons with disabilities. But when it came to the point of empowering persons with disabilities, however, it became apparent that the majority were not aware of the provisions and measures needed for equal participation. CBR was still viewed as an approach to provide rehabilitation training to community members for persons with disabilities in their homes. Persons with disabilities cannot be empowered through this CBR approach.

This is true to many CBR organizers in the region. That is the reason why the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability plans to include CBR training as one of its training courses.

In the second half of the workshop, there was an emphasis to include the components of disabled peoples' organizations, inclusive education and independent living in a CBR program. Participants actively discussed how to promote the above components under the leadership of Mr. Somchai who provided Thai/English interpretation and appropriate advice. The plans of action of the participants representing ministries and government organizations showed, they had barriers in implementation of the components, whereas it was easier for persons with disabilities to incorporate them into their organization's activities.

CBR has not developed the way the initiators expected, including Dr. Padmani Mendis, one of the resource persons for the workshop. Some disabled persons' organizations in developing countries have started to say, "We do not want CBR." By strengthening self-help activities, persons with disabilities gain confidence to develop community-based activities by themselves. Frequently, the activities promote

public awareness or generate income and prioritize the independent living concept, especially self-determination and self-management. When persons with disabilities become more aware of their rights in the community, CBR will take a different format; it will form a part of the independent living movement in developing countries. Independent living in developed countries attaches importance to such services as personal assistants and independent living skill training.



Ms. Yukiko Nakanishi, JICA Short Term Expert for CBR training course.

On the other hand, in developing countries it will be advocacy-centered. In fact, the number of campaigns and demonstrations has increased in developing countries which is a sign that the independent living movement is developing.

All resource persons for the CBR workshop agreed to put an emphasis on the participation of persons with disabilities in the CBR workshop next year. CBR is important for many persons with disabilities in the region who have no services. Until persons with disabilities become empowered, APCD is expected to have CBR organizers and implementers take a rights-based approach.



Two Decades of CBR in Asia and the Pacific

by Dr. Padmani Mendis

Consultant in Disability and Rehabilitation, Sri Lanka

Five countries of the Asia-Pacific region participated in the first field trials of CBR with the leadership of WHO from 1979-1982, they were India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. It may be true to say, that today over 90% of countries in the region have started CBR programs. What difference has CBR made to people in the region who have disabilities? Has it influenced their daily living and their future? Has it helped to empower them?

Looking back two decades and to the end of the first global field trial (in which countries from Africa, South

America and the Caribbean also participated), a meeting was held in Sri Lanka to evaluate the results; participants included State and NGO national field trial coordinators. Suffice it to say, there were no individuals with disabilities participating in that meeting. The outcome of this finding on the part of WHO was twofold. Firstly, WHO itself established stronger relationships with Disability Organizations at global and national levels in order to stimulate their interest in CBR. Secondly, at the micro level, space was created for people who have disabilities to take their place in local CBR leadership structures. It was at this time that a special component was included in the WHO Manual "Training in the Community for People who have Disability"¹ to promote, together with CBR growth, the formation of grass roots disability organizations.

As a result, today, WHO will not convene any forum to discuss CBR and disability without the participation of people who have disabilities. It is a foregone conclusion that they must be part of any decision-making. However, in Asia-Pacific, the representative leadership that participates in decision-making at the regional level remains confined to a few individuals.



Dr. Padmani Mendis, explaining 7-priority areas of BMF and CBR.

On the other hand, it is at the micro level that the impact of CBR reflects much greater democratization and can best be seen. In areas where CBR has started, individuals who have disabilities are now, as a rule, part of the leadership that takes responsibility for CBR development in their own communities. Individuals and their families increasingly have access to the information, knowledge and skills that they require to access their rights and to overcome the consequences of disability. Disability itself is being detected sooner and children have their right to development, protected through early and extra stimulation programs. They have increasing access to inclusive education. Self-employment for adults who have need for income generation helps to draw them into mainstream community

development processes. Advocacy groups have grown from the grass roots. **CBR is no longer seen as a “medical” approach. Instead, it is now seen in the way that it was originally conceptualized, namely as a rights-based social development approach.**

CBR is reaching individuals who would otherwise not have been reached. This however, is no cause for satisfaction. CBR is not growing fast enough. Speeding up its expansion calls for greater involvement of people who have disabilities in its management, particularly in planning and monitoring at the macro level. This is not happening adequately, largely due to the fact, that they do not as yet know enough about CBR and have therefore not yet realized the potential that CBR offers them for empowerment.

(Endnotes)

¹ Helander et al. *Training in the Community for People who have Disability*” WHO Geneva, 1983



Special APCD Announcement

APCD has received the most gracious honor from Thailand’s HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who will lay the foundation stone for APCD at the Groundbreaking Ceremony. The Groundbreaking Ceremony is scheduled for 19 September 2003 in the Rajvithi Home for Girls area, Bangkok, Thailand, where the APCD building will be constructed.

On 5 June 2003, a Signing Ceremony for the Exchange of Notes (E/N) for Grant Aid from the Government of Japan to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand took place at the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The E/N was signed by H.E.Mr. Atsushi Tokinoya, Japanese Ambassador to Thailand and Mr. Pradap Pibulsonggram, Director-General of DTEC. The APCD building is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2004 to empower PWDs in the region.

Community-Based Rehabilitation Movement of CBR in South East Asia through “Workshop for Strengthening Community–Based Rehabilitation Movement”

By Mr. Somchai Rungsilp
Disability & Development Manager,
Handicap International Thailand

*“ Believe in Community
Believe in People with Disabilities
We all are colleagues
Though we work in different places,
we are working together with the same goal. ”*

This workshop was jointly organized by APCD from 3-12 June 2003 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The concepts and principles of this workshop were a participatory approach, to share experiences and learn how to have a practical and applicable approach.

The contents of the workshop consisted of the following concepts :

- 1) Participatory Community Development
- 2) Participatory Project Management
- 3) Introduction of the UNESCAP Biwako Millennium Framework
- 4) Independent Living
- 5) Sharing of CBR practices in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India
- 6) A Field Visit
- 7) Action Plan Proposals by the participants

All of the participants, resource persons, and APCD staff learned much by sharing ideas and experiences. We are confident that this workshop will be another step towards further developing the CBR Movement in Southeast Asia.



Mr. Somchai Rungsilp (left) , a CBR resource person and a Thai participant from Chiang Mai.



APCD Mission Reports

Mission to Myanmar 11-14 May 2003

The APCD mission to Myanmar was scheduled from 11 to 14 May 2003. The team visited the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and was welcomed by Mr. Sit Myaing, the Director-General of the Department of Social Welfare. This department was identified as the Government sector focal point for APCD.



APCD mission at the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement.



Part of the community-based rehabilitation services provided at the Eden Handicapped Service Center.

The mission team visited the National Rehabilitation Hospital which has an orthopedics and prosthesis department, World Vision, the Myanmar Christian Council, the Christian Education Center for the Blind as well as Eden Handicapped Service Center which has just started implementing community-based development. Eden Handicapped Service Centre provides a disability awareness campaign for the community as well as the training of teachers, parents and community people.



Mission to Cambodia 19-20 June 2003

APCD team undertook a mission to Cambodia from 19 to 20 June 2003 and identified the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSALVY) and the Disability Action Council (DAC) as a joint focal point for the Government/ Non-Governmental Organizations.

The mission team visited two NGOs: The first NGO was the Trans-cultural Psycho-social Organization (TPO), which has been working on a trans-cultural and social approach for psychiatric and mentally challenged persons. TPO has a community-based development project, as well as an awareness campaign and community development with families and villagers.

The mission team also visited the Center for Child Mental Health of Cambodia. There was intensive discussion on how APCD could be involved with persons with mental and psychiatric disabilities. APCD shared their



H.E. Mr. Ith Sam Heng, Minister of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training, and Youth Rehabilitation, and the APCD mission team.

intention to conduct a workshop on the human right for psychiatric and mentally challenged persons in the future.

Close Collaboration Confirmed with National Association of the Deaf in Thailand Bangkok, Thailand, 16 May 2003

APCD representatives visited the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand (NADT) on 16 May 2003, to exchange ideas/experiences to promote collaboration between APCD and NADT.

Close collaboration and a friendly relationship was confirmed with Mr. Surasak Chittasattakul, Representative of NADT. Mr. Surasak stated "I was very happy to work together with APCD in order to empower persons with disabilities and promote a barrier-free society in the Asia-Pacific Region."



APCD representatives meeting with Mr. Surasak Chittasattakul (left) at NADT.

Since NADT has been implementing some international programs with Myanmar and Finland, and have collaborated with the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), NADT is willing to further promote a regional cooperation together with APCD.

APCD needs a representative with a hearing disability who is able to comprehend the regional concern of persons with disabilities. NADT also promised to provide regional news of persons with hearing disabilities to be included in APCD's Newsletter and website. WFD is now planning to install a new management system for WFD Asia-Pacific so that more information on persons with hearing disabilities in Asia and the Pacific will be readily available.

NADT raised the issue of having a sign language interpreter for persons with hearing disabilities in the APCD training courses. Mr. Surasak stated it is very important and requested that APCD do so. APCD representatives agreed to seek provision of an interpreter for APCD training courses as well as related conferences and meetings.

Website of NAD: www.thai.net/nadthai/



Thailand Association of the Blind Bangkok, Thailand, 27 May 2003

Representatives of the APCD visited the Thailand Association of the Blind (TAB) on 26 May 2003 to exchange ideas/working experiences for persons with visual impairments in Thailand and the Asia-Pacific Region. TAB showed a strong interest in becoming an associate organization of the APCD Project

Mr. Somchai Puneakwong, President of TAB, said that TAB is willing to work with the APCD Project, as APCD Deputy Director, Ms. Saranpat Anumatrajikij, expressed appreciation for TAB's contribution to the APCD Project and had offered the association an application form to become an associate organization. In fact, the Vice-President of TAB, Mr. Monthian Buntan, has been working as a member of the preparation committee for the APCD Project and a leader of one of the taskforces in the APCD training course, the Regional Workshop on Web-based Networking, which will be held from 21 July to 1 August 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand.

TAB has been working for Thai persons with visual disabilities for 36 years, and now has 44 projects in 21 provinces throughout Thailand. The ultimate goal of TAB's activities is to encourage self-expression and self-determination of persons with visual impairments. A self-gathering project is a major project that TAB is currently working on. They ask persons with a visual disability living in rural areas who do not go out of home often, to get together somewhere in town where no facilities and equipment are generally available, and then provide a training course for them to become more empowered. The project has always looked for potential persons with visual disabilities and has actually found them. Through the project, TAB expects to double its membership nationwide, Mr. Monthian said.



A computer lab at TAB.

APCD was impressed with this project since it could be a role model of a grassroots activity for not only persons with visual disabilities, but also persons with other types of disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region. TAB and

APCD agreed to share this type of information, especially regional news and activities of persons who are visually impaired. APCD is willing to distribute information related to persons with visual disabilities through the APCD website and newsletter.

Web-site: <http://www.tab.or.th/about/bg-en.htm>





Assistive Device Technology

Background and Introduction

To promote “accessibility to information and communications”, for PWDs, which includes information, communications, and assistive device technologies.

With the help of assistive devices and the creation of barrier-free built environments, PWDs will be able to enjoy their freedom of movement and choices in daily life. The main focus is on meeting the needs of the majority of PWDs, especially in the developing countries of the ESCAP region, who are excluded from such services and opportunities that only a few privileged persons receive.

Assistive devices are devices that directly help PWDs in undertaking activities of daily living. Such activities are pursuing education, enjoying freedom of movements in the built environment, and working and engaging in leisure programs and plans.

Four Categories

Assistive devices can be grouped into four categories: locomotive disabilities, multiple disabilities.

1. Devices for persons with locomotive disabilities include wheelchairs, braces, crutches, walkers and artificial limbs.

2. Devices for persons with multiple disabilities, including persons with cerebral palsy are, for instance, communication boards, adapted crockery, and other devices used by persons with locomotive disabilities.

3. Devices for persons with a visual impairment include Brailers, low-vision devices, white canes, and talking watches and clocks.

4. Devices for persons with hearing impairments are hearing aids and telecommunication devices.

General principles concerning the designs, production, and distribution of assistive devices must be acknowledged and executed if the goals are to be reached.

Each person with disability has different needs, abilities, desires, and potential; therefore the choices and designs of assistive devices should be based on the factors, and should comply with local customs and cultures, the physical environment, as well as economic conditions and lifestyles of the users and their communities. The assistive devices must be adapted to fit the individual users, and not for the users to be forced to fit into the devices. If possible, PWDs should be given the priority for training and work in all areas of rehabilitation.

Local Adaptation

In addition, the communities must try to use all locally available materials and resources for the production, repair and maintenance of the assistive devices while seeking the compromise of the communities’ craftsmen, mechanics, and welders.

Once the assistive devices are being used, it is necessary to promote training in their use and regular follow-up on their continued appropriateness especially for young children. *A regional plan should also be worked out in which issues, studies, technologies, or projects concerning assistive devices with existing one included. There should be, as well, a regional information center in which a database concerning assistive devices in the ESCAP region are gathered.* Inter-country linkage or networking to improve and strengthen training, as well as to exchange expertise and technical knowledge concerning devices for the poor should also be established. Technical cooperation among developing countries should be supported as well so that they will assist one another in matching specific needs with available resources and expertise within the ESCAP region. It is also necessary to train engineers, technicians and community rehabilitation workers in production, assessment and distribution of assistive devices. It is worth noting that being able to reduce the time lingering between inventions and innovation will greatly improve and strengthen technical cooperation.

Promotion and Development

When all these principles and recommendations are put into action, assistive devices can help PWDs tremendously, especially the poor, as they will be able to have more opportunities to participate in the activities of daily life. “Indigenous Assistive devices must be promoted in developing countries so that they will recognize and realize the need and seriousness of the limited availability of culturally-appropriate, high quality and low-cost assistive devices.

(Endnotes)

<http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/decade/publications/z15001p1/z1500101.htm>





Report of UNESCAP Meetings

Report of the “Expert Group Meeting and Seminar on an International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities”, 2-4 June 2003

UNESCAP organized the Expert Group Meeting and Seminar on an “International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities” from 2-4 June, 2003 at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand.

The purposes of this meeting were to create united regional support for the elaboration of the proposed “International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities” among countries in Asia and the Pacific region and to formulate a set of recommendations on its principles, structure and content. One hundred thirty participants from various sectors such as Government, Non-Government, and United Nations agencies, discussed and formulated useful recommendations in response to the invitation by the General Assembly in Resolution 57/229 to “make available to the Ad Hoc Committee suggestions and possible elements to be considered in proposals for a convention.” These recommendations will be presented to the second session of the Ad Hoc Committee, to be held in New York from 16 to 27 June, 2003.

The concrete outcome of this meeting was “The Bangkok Recommendations on the Elaboration of a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities” which can be summarized as follows.

The inclusive international convention on the human rights of persons with disabilities is of great benefit because it enables the State Parties to understand their obligations and develop their infrastructure and process. This convention should be based on the human rights principle to ensure guarantees of human rights and fundamental freedoms of PWDs, leading to the achievement of the goals of human and social development. Finally, the full participation of representative disability groups and persons with disabilities is necessary in the process of elaboration of a convention.

In conclusion, this meeting was cooperative in the sense that it brought together significant experts to discuss the issues related to the elaboration of an international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and finally provided invaluable input to the follow-up meetings organized by ESCAP on the same subjects, but at a higher level.

It should be noted that ESCAP was taking a leadership role in promoting the rights of people with disabilities at the regional level and supporting the elaboration of the proposed international convention.

The “6th Session of the Thematic Working Group on Disability-related Concerns”, 5-6 June 2003

Subsequently, from 5 to 6 June 2003, ESCAP conducted the Sixth Session of the Thematic Working Group on Disability-related Concerns (TWGDC). Some representatives in the Asia and Pacific region attended the working group on their own. This Thematic Working Group serves as a key coordinating mechanism working towards the outcome of the second Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. On 6 June, there were meetings of Task Forces on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Education of All Children and Youth with Disabilities (EFA) and Employment. Moreover, two new task forces on self-help organizations of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities and the International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities met for the first time.



Thematic Working Group discussion at UNCC.

One of the important tasks of the working groups was to implement, monitor and evaluate the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF). The working groups raised significant issues of the BMF and reconfirmed that the policy guidelines for action by governments and the seven priority areas should be equally implemented in each country. Throughout the course of the meeting, all participants expressed their enthusiasm and commitment to the future success of the second Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012. APCD pays considerable attention towards the implementation of the BMF. The next TWGDC meeting is scheduled for December 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand.



Women with Disabilities

The 2nd Regional Leadership Training Seminar of Women with Disabilities

On 24 April 2003, 18 participants from the 2nd Regional Leadership Training Seminar of Women with Disabilities visited APCD as part of their field visit. This training course was organized by Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) Asia-Pacific at the Eastin Lakeside Hotel, Nonthaburi Province, Thailand from 21-25 April 2003. The objectives of the training were as follows:

- 1) *To develop leadership skills of women with disabilities.*
- 2) *To provide knowledge on how to strengthen and empower self-help organizations of women with disabilities.*
- 3) *To advocate for every woman with a disability to have opportunities for true involvement at all levels.*
- 4) *To change social activities and power relationships which discriminate against women with disabilities.*
- 5) *To develop and maintain a network of women with disabilities in the Asian-Pacific region.*

Key facilitators of the training course were Dr. Padmani Mendis, Consultant in Disability and Rehabilitation, Sri Lanka and Ms. Maulani Rotinsulu, DPI-Indonesia. Other resource persons included Ms. Kornvipa Boonsue, Eliminate Violence Against Women (EVAW) Program Manager, Ms. Aiko Akiyama, Project Expert on Disability UNESCAP, Ms. Penelope Price, Consultant Disability Program UNESCAP, Ms. Suppattraporn Tanatikom, and Mr. Topong Kulkhanchit, Regional Development Officer, DPI-Asia-Pacific Region. Participants came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cook Islands, India, Indonesia,



Participants of the 2nd Regional Leadership Training Seminar of Women with Disabilities during their visitation to APCD.



Certificate presentation by Mrs. Surapee Vasinonta, Director-General of the Office of Welfare Promotion, Protection and Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups.

Lao PDR, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

According to the Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons: Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for PWDs in Asia and the Pacific, "Women with Disabilities" is one of the seven priority areas for action. Targets for this priority are as follows:

- To create and provide anti-discrimination measures by 2005
- To encourage the promotion and empowerment of women with disabilities by self-help organizations by 2005.
- To push for the inclusion of women with disabilities in mainstream women's associations by 2005.

Strategies to meet these targets are:

- To promote and launch equal access and non-discrimination campaigns.
- To increase public awareness and publicize information on women with disabilities.
- To engage representation of women with disabilities
- To encourage training, leadership, self-help and capacity-building for women with disabilities

This regional training shows the commitment to empower and promote a barrier-free and rights-based society for women with disabilities. APCD also sees the importance of this issue and fully supports women with disabilities in the Asia and the Pacific region.





Regional News

Disability Events

1. 8 August 2003

“Art for All, Art for Inclusive, Barrier-free Rights-Based Society” opening ceremony will be held at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand.

2. 18-22 August 2003

A Training Workshop on Women with Disabilities: To promote full participation of women in the process of elaboration of an international convention on the rights of PWDs will be organized by UNESCAP, Emerging Social Issues Division (ESID), Population and Social Integration Section (PSIS), Disability Programmes, in Bangkok, Thailand.

3. 21-26 August 2003

The 16th Asian Conference on Mental Retardation (ACMR), “Empowerment and Full Participation” will be convened at the Tsukuba International Congress Center, Tsukuba, Japan. ACMR is held every two years since 1973 with 14 participating member countries, aimed at being a forum for delegates to present and discuss about diagnosis, education, treatment, and support for daily life and social activities for those with intellectual disabilities and related developmental disabilities. This ACMR will promote sharing of knowledge, mutual experiences, and ideas of empowerment of participants as established in their respective life styles, cultures, and geographical environment.

4. 1-2 September 2003

The first international conference on disability and health will be held at the University of Karachi, Pakistan. This is an effort for the Association for Special Children (AFSC) to discuss and resolve issues on teaching and training of children with disabilities both at the national and international level.

(http://www.dpi.org/en/events/asia-pacific/05-2203_pakistan.html)

5. 1-4 September 2003

59th Commission Session, Phase II. Due to the SARS situation, the 59th Commission Session had to be held in two phases. The first phase held on 24-25 April 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand was mainly concerned with program and management matters. The upcoming phase is intended to enable ministers and senior officials from the capitals of members and associate members of ESCAP to consider the original planned provisional agenda.

(<http://www.unescap.org/59/phase2/index.asp>)

6. 4-6 September 2003

The 1st session of the **Committee on Emerging Social Issues** is scheduled to be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 4-6 September 2003. This committee is to strengthen the commitment of governmental policy-makers and program planners to adequately tackle key emerging social issues and their impact on the region and specific socially vulnerable groups, including women, youth, PWDs, older persons, migrants, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

7. 21-24 September 2003

Life Activities (an organization that pushes the boundaries always seeks ways to provide services that best meets people’s needs, especially on the quality of life of PWDs and their supportive networks) will organize the **1st International Conference on Disability** in Newcastle, Australia with the theme “Creative Community Initiatives for People with Disabilities”. The objective is to open pathways to innovation and change; to achieve will enhance the quality of life and community acceptance of PWDs.

Regional News

1) Fiji

Suva, Fiji: A Workshop for Residential Care for PWDs was held on 3 May 2003 in Suva, Fiji. Dr. Eceline Uluiviti stated there is an urgent need to train and effectively monitor residential caregivers for PWDs and to expose the talents and abilities of both disabled persons and the caregivers. She completed a survey in Fiji’s two main islands, Viti Levu and Venua Levu, aimed to research the number of PWDs and caregivers. She clearly stated that “improving the quality of caregiving needs to receive the commitment of society and funding by the government and stakeholder in training and monitoring caregiving activities”. (<http://www.fiji.gov.fj/news/N2003-05-05.shtml>)

2) Landmine Survivors Bicycle Rally to Congratulate the Royal Thai Government on the Final Destruction of Stockpiled Mines (Bangkok, Thailand, 23 April 2003)

A bicycle rally organized by the Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) in collaboration with the Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines (TCBL) and its NGOs network, was held on 22 – 24 April 2003 from Bangkok to Lopburi Province, was aimed to congratulate the Royal Thai Government on the final destruction of anti-personal mines from stockpiles under the obligation of the Mine Ban Treaty. This event was also aimed to promote the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, scheduled to take place in Bangkok from 15-19 September 2003.



The bicycle rally consisted of 55 people, including 35 landmine survivors and 20 supporters from the Bicycle Club for Health and other organizations.

(<http://www.icbl.org/news/2003/319.php>)

3) Congratulations to Three Thai Students with Visual Disabilities Passing the University Entrance Exam

Three students with visual disabilities out of twelve partially sighted students, who applied for the 2003 entrance exam, passed. They were Anant Sriboonroj, who will study at the Faculty of Education of Silpakorn University; Phanomporn Nokamla, who will study at the Faculty of Education of the Prince of Songkhla University; and Kanoksak Jampathai, who will study Thai language at Chiang Mai University. All three students expressed their appreciation to the government for the opportunity for higher education of persons with disabilities.

(TNA, Bangkok, May 6, 2003)

Articles

“Paralympic Games Information Material in Braille and Sign Language Available”

The Education and Training Department of Athens 2004, the organizing committee of the Paralympic Games 2004, is promoting audiovisual materials on the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2004 with the cooperation of the Association

for Blind and Vision Impaired People and the Association of the Deaf in Greece. This is aimed at raising public awareness, and to brief people with visual and hearing impairments of the international sports event. The department has completed information material in Braille and --a CD with the narration of the events. In addition, two information videos have been produced in sign language for those with hearing impairments. (<http://www.paralympic.org>)

Editorial Message

Welcome to APCD's fourth newsletter. APCD has come along for almost one year with activities devoted to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Asian and Pacific Region, as you have read and discovered from APCD's previous newsletters. Now, glancing into our fourth edition, you will see that we have included articles on the understanding of CBR programmes, on the introduction to assistive devices for PWDs, and on women with disabilities. Covering disability issues this newsletter also include regional news, articles, and announcements beneficial for our region. APCD would also like to express thankfulness to distinguished resource persons for contributing their articles to our APCD Empowerment Newsletter.

APCD newsletter is an open floor always opening for PWDs and parties concerned to share their information on disability issues. APCD newsletter editorial team strongly hopes that we will continue to receive support and collaboration from all our readers in the future.

Thank you
Editorial Staff

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