

EMPOWERMENT

APCD Newsletter

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Independent Living Training

27 January - 1 February 2003

Thai Persons with Disabilities Empowered by Independent Living Training



Mr. Anurak Jureemart, Minister (Right) and
Ms. Panit Nithitanprapas, Permanent Secretary (Left)
Ministry of Social Development and Human Security

The Second Independent Living (IL) Training was organized by the Redemptorist Vocational School in collaboration with APCD for Thai persons with disabilities (PWDs) from 27 January - 1 February 2003. A one day seminar with more than 300 participants was held in Bangkok to learn about the concept of IL which was followed by a five day workshop on peer-counseling in Pattaya. Thirty-seven leaders of PWDs studied the technique of peer-counseling from two Japanese experts with disabilities.

The training "Promotion of Understanding and Technical Transfer of Peer-counseling" was the second of a three year IL training program supported by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The first training concentrated on the concept of IL; the third will focus on management of an IL center. The goal is to empower Thai citizens with disabilities by training local leaders of PWDs to understand the concepts and skills of IL.

Empowered PWDs Empower PWDs

"Thai leaders with disabilities are getting empowered and have some confidence", said

Ms. Akiyama, a Japanese expert on IL, who has participated in the training program from the beginning. She could already see a positive attitude among the Thai leaders. "During the technical workshop on peer-counseling, the Thai leaders began to look brighter and brighter", reported Ms. Nakahara, another Japanese expert.

IL training was first introduced to Thailand three years ago. Mr. Suporntum Mongkolsawadi, Principal of the Redemptorist Vocational School, one of the initiators, is an avid practitioner of IL. The first training resulted in three pilot projects in different provinces that meet monthly to pursue IL and in turn inspire others.

Having learned about the concept and movement of IL, they will be capable of implementing an IL center with peer-counseling. APCD hopes that the IL training will expand from Thailand to neighboring countries and to the Asian and Pacific region.

Independent Living in Thailand: Review of Three Pilot Projects

by Suporntum Mongkolsawadi



Many people may wonder why the Redemptorist Vocational School for the Disabled (RVSD), Pattaya which is a vocational training school for electronics and computer for persons with disabilities (PWDs) became involved in promoting an Independent Living Project (IL).

In 1999, Shoji Nakanishi, Chairperson of Human Care, Topong Kulkhanchit, Disabled Peoples International, Regional Development Officer for Asia and the Pacific, and I had several discussions about the Independent Living Concept; how it enables PWDs to live in society with pride and dignity. In the same year, Mr. Nakanishi also sought funds for me to participate in the Second World Summit on



Mr. Suporntum Mongkolsawadi

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Independent Living in Hawaii, USA which enabled me to more fully understand the concept.

In 2001, JICA agreed to financially support a three year IL program, send Japanese experts with disabilities as resource persons for the training as well as documentation. The first IL training held in January 2002, focused on **the concept of IL**. The second training and seminar held in January 2003, focused on **peer counseling**. Leaders from three pilot provinces (Nakornpathom, Nonthaburi and Chonburi) who had participated in the first training, shared their experiences and exchanged ideas with other participants. The third seminar and training is scheduled for January 2004, to focus on Independent Living Center management.

Seeking Methodology

Three main issues surfaced after the first training in January 2002. The first was how can the participants adapt the knowledge gained from the seminar. How can the participants who took the concentrated training and understand the IL concept build up IL pilot projects in three provinces? How can these projects and the IL movement be developed in other provinces as well as countries in the region?

Disability Awareness

A working team was formed to address these issues. The workshop team included representatives from RVSD, Pattaya, Nakornpathom Association of Disabled Persons, Nonthaburi Society of Disabled Persons and Chonburi Association of People with Disabilities. They looked at the IL movement from a broader perspective than just providing training and a seminar. They added public relations by publishing a newsletter and preparing radio script to introduce the concept of IL.

Research and Evaluation

In the three provinces, participants in the IL projects actively searched for PWDs and encouraged them to join the project; they made a plan for an IL program which included IL Skills Training, recruitment of PWDs, as well as training and provision of Personal Assistants. This will be followed up, evaluated and the lessons learned will be summarized and documented as Lessons Learned by Active Research Methodology.

Training for Trainees

The second issue was to develop resources for the project; to screen PWDs for leaders to be trained to handle the project.



More than 300 participants attended the one day IL seminar at Thailand Culture Centre

Preferably, the leader would be a person with a severe disability. But to find such a person with spare time and financial resources for personal expenses due to a limited budget is not easy. Transportation costs will be significant since they can not use public transportation. Many of them need personal assistants. Persons who already have a job and join the project would have the same or less income while having increased expenses.



Experience sharing among participants during the IL training at RVSD

Persons with Severe Disabilities

If there are persons with severe disabilities willing/able to be leaders, the project can proceed. On one visit, several problems arose. We found that many PWDs needed wheelchairs, cushions to prevent bedsores, medical treatment and/or rehabilitation. The working team had to seek resources to respond to these needs resulting in much time communicating and traveling.

Self-esteem

The third issue was the low self-esteem of PWDs themselves or by their guardians who were unaware of the value of their lives. Some PWDs are not keen to develop to their full potential; they are not interested in seeking employment or even in living in general; they only live by depending on others for daily survival. Some families do not value their lives and even others are ashamed to have a PWD as a family member, hiding them from society.

What is Independent Living?

Independent living is a philosophy and movement of people with disabilities (PWDs) who work for self-determination, equal opportunities, and self-respect. This does not mean that PWDs want to do everything by themselves, do not need any assistance or want to live in isolation. But rather, it means they have the same needs and are to have the same choices and control in their daily lives as others in society. They also need to support and learn from each other in order to organize themselves to work for political changes towards legal protection of human and civil rights.

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, (UNESCAP), "independent living" means living just like everyone else, having opportunities to make decisions and being able to perform activities like others in society.

Challenges

In spite of having problems and obstacles, the working team is not giving up. They are concentrating on studying by training, sharing ideas within the group, and having opportunities to meet with Mr. Nakanishi who has kindly spent time in giving additional comments by either e-mail or organizing a meeting for the working team in Thailand.

Five Areas of Concern

By the end of December 2002, the working team discovered five interesting issues:

1. Persons who have become severely disabled might consider committing suicide; some have succeeded; others have not. It is most important and necessary to empower PWDs in a crisis situation.
2. Rehabilitation for PWDs is still not good enough for them to practice Independent Living. After rehabilitation, persons with severe disabilities are still dependent on others.
3. PWDs are still left to fate, suffering both physically and mentally, especially persons with severe disabilities.
4. Persons with severe disabilities are able to live independently if they are trained and have a personal assistant as needed.
5. To develop quality of life for PWDs, all services need to be planned and processed.

Summary

This project, through organizing the IL training, especially the peer counseling, has resulted in developing a concept of IL for PWDs in Thailand. It can definitely be adapted to neighboring countries that have similar economic, political, social and cultural settings as Thailand.

I am confident that on completing this three year pilot project, we will have some answers for Thai society on whether IL for PWDs is possible or not, why and how it can be done.

Hopefully members of the pilot provinces can increase in the future and the government requested to make a national policy which would include supportive laws and regulations. This can be done in full consideration of establishing an Institutional Base Concept and Community Welfare of Civic Society. All of these are challenging for rehabilitation and helping PWDs develop to their fullest potential. I do believe that a better concept will be developed in the Thai social context.



Empowered participants

Interview with Peer-Counselor for Independent Living Training

Ms. Emiko Nakanishi and Ms. Hiroko Akiyama



Ms. Nakahara (Left) and Ms. Akiyama (Right)

Q1. What is your impression of the training this year?

Ms. Akiyama

Last year, participants had mixed feelings toward Independent Living (IL). They were not sure whether it was beneficial for them or not since they did not fully understand the meaning of IL. Since some participants who attended last year are attending the training again, they have a much better understanding of IL. Their experience in the past year has built up their confidence; they understood what more they needed to learn about IL and peer-counseling.

Ms. Nakahara

The look on the participant's faces changed throughout the training. Since the first day of training was a lecture, without technical experience, I think they could not fully understand the significant of IL. Furthermore, they likely did not have enough confidence to proceed with IL due to a lack of knowledge and experience with it.

On the other hand, I believe that the participants in Pattaya could reach a common understanding of IL through their practical training since they had exchanged ideas and opinions through practical questions. For example, how to support friends who are thinking about committing suicide or how to get along with a peer-counselor, etc. Through this exchange, they were able to further develop their understanding of independent living and peer-counseling.

Q2. What did you feel participants learned the most?

Ms. Nakahara

They learned that equality is the most important in peer-counseling. There is no distinction between the peer-counselor and the person being counseled. They learned that listening is the fundamental approach to peer-counseling, where listening carefully is more important than giving advice.

No advice does not mean no support. Listening to a story is already supporting a person to think and find a solution by themselves. If a leader gives them advice, they would not think it out by themselves, which in reality could mean taking away an opportunity for self-consideration. In that way, persons grow to be more dependent rather than independent. Let them speak, let them think and let them decide is the beginning of independent living.

Q3. What are your expectations of the Thai participants after the training?

Ms. Nakahara

They need time to find the **Thai way of IL** which meets the needs of Thai society. The key element is to promote/develop a social movement toward IL in Thai society. There is no instant success of IL. It is my hope that participants who are particularly

capable of becoming peer-counselors can develop the Thai way of IL in the near future.

Q4. Do you think other developing countries could benefit from having IL training like the Thai?

Ms. Nakahara

Yes, I do. IL has nothing to do with a country or culture but rather pursuing freedom from all obstacles which includes psychological barriers such as overcoming low self-esteem. However, it is difficult for only one person to achieve this. Colleagues and friends are needed to support and work with, to form organizations such as non-governmental organizations to promote the IL movement in society. It is this kind of advocacy that generally leads to social changes.



Non-handicapping Environment Training

25 February-11 March 2003

Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability towards the Promotion of a Non-handicapping Environment for PWDs

APCD organized the third Regional Training Course for Trainers on the Promotion of a Non-Handicapping Environment for PWDs in Bangkok, Thailand from 25 February to 11 March 2003 in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), UNESCAP and the Government of Thailand through the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to promote equalization of opportunities for PWDs.



Thirty participants from nine countries visited RVSD

Building a Non-Handicapping Environment for PWDs is significant for APCD since the objectives of APCD are to promote the empowerment of PWDs and a barrier-free society for all countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Thirty persons from nine countries, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated in this training course. The target group of this training course was architects, engineers,

urban planners, public transport planners, Government officials, non-governmental representatives on disability-related issues, and representatives of self-help organizations of PWDs.

The first objective of the training course was for participants to become trainers, promoters and resource persons concerning a non-handicapping environment, universal design, and a barrier-free society in their respective countries. The second was to link and network participants to promote a non-handicapping environment in their respective countries as well as in the Asia-Pacific region.

Access Survey and Field Visitation

The training course included presentations by experts promoting and designing non-handicapping environments, simulation exercises to facilitate awareness of cross disabilities, access surveys and field visits. The participants did access surveys of areas related to shopping, education, recreation, transportation and religion to determine accessibility for persons with cross disabilities. Field visits were made to rural and urban schools to compare accessibility services; to the new underground train system under construction in Bangkok to observe accessible features and to Pattaya City to observe a tourist site regarding accessibility. Participants were eager to learn in all areas of the training.

Prior to the training most participants who already had basic knowledge of a "non-handicapping environment" commented that such an environment for PWDs would provide access to infrastructures and public transportation not only for PWDs but elderly persons and the well-being of many other users, and hasten their integration into mainstream society to promote independence, and self-reliance.



Field visit to Samsennok School

Universal Design

After completing the training, participants stated studying the Universal Design was very helpful. Having learned about the Universal Design, they were able to identify problems and propose recommendations for improvement when doing the access audits. Everyone benefits from a barrier-free society.

Definition and Background

A “handicapping environment” as stated by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) means the buildings, roads, and pedestrian path-ways including public transport and communication systems which are all components of a built environment. Barriers from these components, not only affect PWDs but elderly persons and the well-being of many other users.

PWDs and a diverse group of people in society have the right to move about freely in a safe physical environment without any obstacles. Everyone benefits from a built environment that meets the safety standards, convenience and usability of PWDs.

Agenda for Action: Accessibility

The Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002 recommended measures to improve access to public buildings for persons with disabilities (PWDs) by promoting a “Non-Handicapping Environment for People with Disabilities”. “Accessibility: Environment and Public Transport” is a priority area of the New 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.

Outcome of the Training

On returning to their respective countries, participants stated they will:

- **promote awareness** of the universal design,
- **enforce a design concept** on building applications,
- **help to incorporate** a non-handicapping environment in state housing projects, and
- **build a network** with Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations to share skills and implement plans.

Participants felt PWDs can be empowered by:

- **giving** them **equal access** to education, employment, transportation, etc, integrating and being visible in the community,
- **advocating** a non-handicapping environment to concerned organizations and individuals, and
- **working** with disability-related organizations to formulate plans/laws on accessibility for PWDs and make proposals to governments.

On the closing day of the training, 11 March 2003, participants prepared the **“Bangkok Statement 2003 on the Promotion of a Non-handicapping Environment for Persons with Disabilities.”** The Statement encourages Governments in the UNESCAP region to collaborate with Non-governmental Organizations to promote the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, especially in regards to access built environments and public transport.

Impression of Non-handicapping Environment Training

by Mr. Yoshihiko Kawauchi, Resource Person

I was able to participate in the latter half of the “Promotion of a Non-Handicapping Environment” from 3-12 March 2003. The keen interest and motivation of the participants impressed me very much.

Participants were quick to understand the concepts presented by the resource persons and what issues needed to be focused on.

Certainly participants had to deal with issues differently in their respective countries. The resource persons presented several examples so participants could recognize there is more than one way to implement the universal design to meet the needs of society.

On the last day, the participants knowledge and understanding of “Promoting a Non-Handicapping Environment” gained from the training was apparent when each person shared the activities they planned to do on retiring to their countries.

I feel there would be merit in continuing this program if persons are eager to improve their societies’ participation.



Mr. Yoshihiko Kawauchi



Visitors from African Decade of Disabled Persons

Inter-regional Collaboration with the African Region

Ten African representatives from the Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) from 9 countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) visited Thailand from 23-26 February 2003. This visitation was to learn about the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons; how to plan, implement and evaluate the Decade in order to build strategies for the African Decade of Disabled Persons, 2000-2009, and to exchange information and collaborate with disability-related organizations in the region.



African delegates attended the opening ceremony of the Non-handicapping Environment for PWDs

During their visit in Thailand, delegates visited three Independent Living pilot projects in Nonthaburi, Nakornpathom, and Chonburi as well as former participants living in the rural community.

Delegates joined the opening ceremony of the "Regional Training Course for Trainers on the Promotion of a Non-handicapping Environment for PWDs" on 25 February 2003 where they presented their country reports with participants from 11 other countries in the Asia and Pacific region.

The Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD)

Mr. Siegfried K. Runge, Information Officer of SAFOD, which is composed of 10 member countries, stated it was formed in 1986 by persons with disabilities (PWDs) for PWDs as a federation of Non-governmental Organizations in the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) countries and representatives of anti-apartheid PWDs in South Africa. SAFOD is a regional network of independent human rights organizations of PWDs in Southern Africa.

SAFOD's main aim is to support and encourage the formation of organizations of PWDs in Southern Africa and strengthen existing ones. SAFOD promotes training of administrative personnel and leaders of organizations of PWDs and coordinates development efforts and self-help projects among PWDs and their organizations in the region.

Background of African Decade of Disabled Persons

The African Decade of Disabled Persons 2000-2009 was formally declared in July 1999 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) representing an innovative partnership between Governments and Non-governmental Organizations. Delegates who attended the Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) Fifth World Assembly in Mexico, 1998 recognized the need to organize an African Decade of Disabled Persons in order to improve and equalize the quality of life for person with disabilities (PWDs) in Africa.

Objectives of the African Decade of Disabled People are to:

- Alleviate poverty of PWDs and their families
- Raise public awareness and conscientisation on disability issues
- Combat causes of disability by promoting peace and reducing other causes of disability
- Strengthen the African voice of disabled people
- Put disability on the social, economic and political agenda of African Governments
- Spearhead the implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for PWDs, leading to the adoption of a convention by OAU member states on PWDs
- Apply the UN instruments on the Declaration of Human Rights
- Address issues pertaining to children, youth and women with disabilities
- Ensure the application of UN Standard Rules as a basis for policy and legislation to protect the interests of PWDs in Africa.

Many international organizations of PWDs support the Decade activities to implement the above objectives. Among them are Inclusion International, the World Federation of the Deaf, and the International Organization of the Deaf and Blind, all of which will be members of a committee working with Pan African Federation of the Disabled (PAFOD). Regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the African Rehabilitation Institute, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the International Labour Organization will also participate.

The concept of the Decade is expected to create positive changes in the quality of life for PWDs in Africa. Total government and related organizations support is needed to achieve the objectives. The lives of many people in Africa depend on the success or failure of the Decade of Disabled Persons.



APCD Mission Reports

1 Mission to India



The mission team promoted the APCD project

An APCD mission team participated in the XVI National Conference on Mental Retardation in Calicut, India, from 29 - 31 December 2002 hosted by the **National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped (NIMH)** and the **Association for Welfare of the Handicapped (AWH)** in collaboration with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). The theme of the annual conference was Vocational Training and Job Placement; Clients' Satisfaction; and Community-based Rehabilitation Model. The Conference was to raise public awareness on mental disability, as well as promote activities to develop human resources in the southern part of India, and culminate all efforts to effectively mainstream persons with mental disabilities in society. More than 100 NGOs concerned with disabilities participated in this National Conference which is the only one that covers all the states of India, a large country, geographically and population wise. There were many presentations on community-based rehabilitation models, practices and research. India is one of the leading countries on community-based rehabilitation for persons with mental disabilities.

Mrs. Aloka Guha, Chairperson of the **National Trust** for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities, under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, is a powerful national leader promoting an awareness campaign, as well as humanity development for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Dr. Kunh Ahamed Kutty, President, **Association for Welfare of the Handicapped (AWH)** operates a school for inclusive education for children with disabilities, training schools, counseling centers, community-based rehabilitation, and drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs mainly based in Kerala, India. The AWH promoted disability awareness campaigns in the Calicut community simultaneously with the Conference with music, dancing and art performances.

APCD Chief Adviser, Prof. Akiie Ninomiya, presented the APCD Project, programs and information service, as well as regional networking and collaboration in order to maximize, utilize and mobilize local resources. He also gave a presentation on Mentally Challenged Persons and Ageing Society. Many NGOs representatives positively responded to collaborating with APCD. APCD opened a booth during the Conference and provided information on their activities. The APCD mission team also visited the rural area in Kerala State in order to research community-based development for people with mental disabilities.

Seirei Asha Bhavan (the Seirei House of Hope), which collaborates with a Japanese NGO, has been developing a community-based program with vocational training, literacy classes, and recreation and sports. They have developed four village-based development centers utilizing regular houses in the community. Mr. Varghese Abraham, the Director who started this program since 1990 is now serving more than 100 persons with mental disabilities in several locations. His training of community leaders includes fund-raising, management and public awareness campaigns. He trains parents of mentally disabled children to be one of the leaders in each community-based program, and assigns a professional worker to the CBR program to train community people to be volunteers. This small grass-roots approach project is very effective. Mr. Abraham's dream is to have one community-based rehabilitation program in all districts in south Kerala.



2 Mission to Chiang Mai

The APCD mission team visited the province of Chiang Mai, Thailand on 13 February 2003 to study their community-based rehabilitation projects and independent living programs.



The mission team visited a self-help group

The mission team met with Mr. Somchai Rungsilp, the CBR Coordinator and Office Manager of the Institute of Sustainable Development Education Promotion in Chiang Mai and received extensive knowledge on the CBR projects conducted by various organizations. The APCD mission consulted with Mr. Somchai Rungsilp concerning preparation for APCD's Community-based Rehabilitation Training Program for the region, scheduled for June, 2003.

During this visit to Chiang Mai, the APCD mission team attended a seminar on "Sustainability Enhancement of Persons with Disabilities Leader Project" organized by **Handicap International**. The target groups of this training were leaders of persons with disabilities, who are members of the Provincial Rehabilitation Committee.

The mission team visited Huay Sai village in Muang district to observe an Independent Living project initiated by self-help organizations. APCD was very pleased to join the interviews of two families related to the activity of Independent Living. The APCD team also had the opportunity to visit many other rural areas in Chiang Mai to study about the CBR program. It included the Pong Yang sub-district and Mae Rim District meeting with sub-district administration organization members to discuss sub-district administration organization roles and community development activities at the village level.

On this mission, APCD collaborated with the Director of Technical Promotion Office in Chiang Mai. The Director promised to contribute to APCD activities in the future and the CBR training course in June 2003.



Regional Networking and Collaboration

APCD sent mission teams to Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the Republic of the Fiji Islands and the Lao People's Democratic Republic to identify focal points with the Governments and NGOs, and for networking and collaboration between APCD and disability-related organizations.

3 Mission to Viet Nam

APCD organized their mission to Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi Cities, Social Republic of Viet Nam from 13 to 19 February 2003 and visited five Governmental Organizations (GOs) and eighteen Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) was the major governmental organization on disability-related issues. The mission team met with Mr. Nghiem Xuan Tue, Standing Member and Director of the Office of National Coordination Council on Disability (NCCD) under MOLISA which is the focal point governmental organization for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Viet Nam. Mr. Tue promised to provide full support for APCD.

The APCD mission was very pleased to meet with Dr. Tran Trong Hai, Director of International Cooperation, and **Ministry of Health (MOH)**. He is active in the Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) project for the past 10 years based on primary



The mission team visited the Enterprise 203/Bright Future Group

health care with approximately 20,000 workers in 40 provinces. Additionally, **Handicap International** (Viet Nam) has worked closely with MOH on designing a CBR model for Viet Nam.

Disability Forum is a remarkable information focal point for disability-related organizations in Viet Nam, which connects organizations by information such as an e-mail list, websites, etc. The APCD mission team was so impressed with the Disability Forum's network and Ms. Nguyen Hong Ha, Programme Coordinator who has been working very hard to promote the Forum. Further information about the Disability Forum is available at <http://forum.wso.net>

The team also visited **Dong Hanh**, a company run by PWDs which provides services for PWDs such as tourism and promotion of goods produced by PWDs.

The APCD team was successful in building collaboration and networking with GOs and NGOs. APCD's Human Resource Development (HRD) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sub-division was also pleased those organizations expressed interest and will collaborate in the recruitment procedures for APCD training courses.



4 Mission to Fiji

An APCD mission team went to Suva, Republic of the Fiji Islands from 2 to 7 March 2003 and met with five Governmental Organizations, and nine Non-governmental Organizations.

The mission team met with Mr. Setareki Macanawai, Vice-chairperson of **Disabled Peoples' International**, Asia-Pacific Oceania Sub-regional Office and members of Fiji Disabled Peoples' Association. Both organizations are priority Non-governmental Organizations for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Fiji. Fiji Disabled Peoples' Association agreed to serve as the NGO focal point organization.

The mission team met with Hon. Ms. Adi Asenaca Caucau Filipe, Minister, Ministry of Women, Social Welfare, and Poverty Alleviation, who plays an important role on disability-related issues and works closely with Non-governmental Organizations on these issues. The APCD team also met with Mr. Rishi Ram, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry and Director of the Fiji National Council of Disabled Persons (FNCDP), which is the focal point for Governmental Organizations for PWDs.



The mission team with representatives from PWDs Group

Representatives of Non-governmental Organizations were also Council members.

Dr. Helen Tavola, Social Policy Adviser, **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat** (PIFS), who associates with 14 countries in the South Pacific and works closely with the UNESCAP Oceania Sub-regional Office in Vanuatu on disability-related issues also met with the mission team.

The APCD team met with 20 teachers from the Special Education Teachers' Association to exchange information and share the concept of APCD. They expressed interest in networking with APCD both in the training implementation and information exchange.



5

Mission to Lao PDR

An APCD mission team visited Lao PDR from 17-20 March 2003 and received positive responses for cooperation with APCD after visiting five Governmental and five Non-governmental Organizations.

Lao PDR is a country of 5 million people with few organizations working for PWDs. However, there are valuable resource persons/organizations and impressive programs for PWDs.

In 1995 the Government established the National Committee for Disabled People (NCDP), chaired by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. It is a collaborative body of Governmental Organizations such as the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education which support the **Lao Disabled Peoples' Association** (LDPA) and the Lao Disabled Women's Development Center (LDWDC).

Ms. Chanpheng Sivila, has a remarkable program for PWDs at the **Lao Disabled Women's Development Center** (LDWDC). To our knowledge, this is the first women's development center for the PWDs in the Asia-Pacific region which has been fully organized by Laotians and funded by JICA. The vocational training includes a six months sewing class, a one month banana leaf papercraft, three months silk weaving class; and a one month computer training class.

Trainees come from Vientiane, the capital of Lao PDR, and five other provinces where the LDPA has provincial branches. Trainees stay in a dormitory at the Center. Amazingly, the Center

accepts male students since they do not want to have gender discrimination and there is no vocational center available for men with disabilities.

LDPA, an officially recognized NGO working for PWDs with branches in five provinces is implementing as well as a coordinating body. They collaborate with the LDWDC to recruit trainees for their vocational school from the five provincial branches.

Mr. Singkham Takounphak, the President of LDPA and Mr. Bounviene Lanungnot, a member of LDPA as well as the Secretariat of NCDP, promised to recommend potential leaders with disabilities for the APCD training courses.

Mr. Vangzay Phonelameuang, Project Coordinator for **World Concern**, has had a Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR) Program in Sarawan Province for 10 years. Major programs are primary health care and clean water supply which help prevent disabilities; for PWDs, they have rehabilitation and income generation programs.

Mr. Luc Delneuve and Mr. Ngo Thuc Tinh, from **Handicap International** (HI), continue to develop a CBR program and demine near the border of Viet Nam. Nearly 30 years after the Viet Nam War, one of the major causes of PWDs is the thousands of unexploded land mines still remaining in Lao PDR.

HI has conducted an analytical survey on CBR for PWDs interviewing more than 5,000 persons in communities in collaboration with the National Rehabilitation Center (NRC). They are also planning to organize a National Seminar on CBR from 12-15 May 2003 at Vientiane and invite local leaders of/for PWDs.

The overall outcome of the mission was significant in that APCD could establish cooperative and supportive relations with Lao PDR Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations. Also, we could identify some capable Lao PDR leaders with disabilities who could be good candidates for future APCD training courses.



Mr. Ninomiya with representatives from the Lao Disabled People's Association



Activities of the APCD Project

January – March 2003

 Looking back at the first quarter of the Year 2003, APCD implemented many activities for the Asian and Pacific region. Starting with the Independent Living Training course from 27 January to 1 February 2003 with thirty-seven participants. Short-term experts from Japan were invited to monitor this training, which was held at the Thailand Cultural Centre and the Redemptorist Vocational School for the Disabled in Pattaya, Thailand. Following that, APCD held the 3rd Regional Training Course for Trainers on the Promotion of Non-handicapping Environment for Persons with Disabilities in Bangkok, Thailand from 25 February to 11 March 2003. APCD warmly welcomed thirty-one participants from nine countries. This training course successfully met its goals and objectives. (Details of both training courses are provided in this newsletter.)

In addition to these training courses, APCD sent mission teams to three countries; the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the Republic of the Fiji Islands, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic for networking and collaboration. APCD was pleased to successfully identify focal point organizations in each country.

APCD Activities (April – September 2003)

April	7: Third APCD Newsletter
May	12 – 15: Mission to Myanmar
June	2 – 12: Community-based Rehabilitation Training (CBR)
July	1-4: Mission to Bangladesh 21July – 1 August: Regional Workshop on Web-based Networking
August	Non-handicapping Environment Training
September	Capacity Building of Self-help Organizations of PWDs

APCD Logo Contest



Ms. Panit Nithitanprapas (Left), Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and Ms. Alisa Rattanaprasatporn (Right)

The winner of the APCD Logo contest chosen from sixty-three entries received from many countries was Ms. Alisa Rattanaprasatporn, a student from Chulalongkorn University. It was announced on 25 February 2003, at the opening of the Non-handicapping Environment Training to promote awareness of the issues of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Asia-Pacific region and as a participatory strategy to promote APCD public relations.

Ms. Rattanaprasatporn's logo was a contemporary symbol representing PWDs and development. The colors and globe represent the Asia-Pacific region; the lines in the circle express networking and collaboration; the small circle on the top right symbolizes global development of humanity and the half circle represents PWDs. The movement of the logo expresses ongoing activities of the APCD Project toward empowerment of PWDs and a barrier-free society.

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Regional News

Disability Events

1. 21-25 April 2003:

The second Regional Leadership Training Seminar of Women with Disabilities organized by **DPI Asia-Pacific Regional Office** will be held in Nonthaburi, Thailand, to strengthen the capacity of young women leaders with disabilities from developing countries and promote regional networking.

2. To be scheduled:

The Fifty-Ninth Session of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific** was postponed due to SARS and the date will be determined later. The theme of this session is "Integrating Economic and Social Concerns, Especially HIV/AIDS."

3. 31 May-5 June 2003:

The Fourteenth National Deaf Games will be held in Langkawi, Malaysia: with 127 athletes from ASEAN countries participating.

4. 2-4 June 2003:

Expert Group Meeting and Seminar on an International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities will be held at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand.

5. 5-6 June 2003:

The sixth session of the **Thematic Working Group on Disability-related Concerns (TWGDC)** will convene at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand. This session will serve as a regional coordination mechanism, to promote successful implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

Reports

Technical Consultation on Vocational Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific

The **International Labour Organization's** Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ILO) organized the above meeting in collaboration with the Government of Japan in Bangkok, Thailand, from 14 to 16 January 2003. More than 50 representatives of Governmental Organizations and Non-governmental Organizations attended and exchanged their ideas concerning vocational training and employment of people with disabilities.

The consultation was to examine the current status of people with disabilities (PWDs) in the region in regards to the training and employment of PWDs within the context of the ILO Convention No. 159 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, 1983 and the Biwako Framework for Action; to share examples of good practice within the region and other parts of the world that are succeeding in promoting training and employment of disabled persons and to develop recommendations for stakeholders in general as well as participating countries in particular, and to implement the intent of the ILO Convention and Biwako Millennium Framework.

Discussion focused on regional trends affecting the employment and training of PWDs and barriers faced by them. Data from 14 country studies were also reviewed.

Participants worked in country groups and developed plans of action on how to address specific issues of most concern in their countries in regards to the training and employment of PWDs.

Participants, inspired by the discussions, made commitments to address these issues by arranging national dialogues involving Government, employer's groups, trade unions, disabled people's organizations and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in their own countries.

For further information, please refer to <http://www.ilo.org/abilityasia>

International Seminar and Regional Demonstration Workshop on Accessible Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Persons with Disabilities, 3-7 March 2003, Manila, Philippines.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) hosted this seminar in collaboration with the Government of the Philippines. This forum supported the Millennium Development Goals and Rights-based Approaches to Development according to the UN General Assembly Resolution 56/168 and aimed to further equalize opportunities in the social life and development of PWDs. Targeted were interested Governments of least developed and low income countries as well as countries with economies in transition. It provided an opportunity for exchange of knowledge and experience in promoting awareness, planning and developing accessible ICT solutions in the context of sustainable and equitable development for present and future generations.

This workshop included participants from ten countries, discussing ways of making ICT more accessible to PWDs, especially through the Global Internet Accessibility Website. In addition, it explored opportunities for growth and human development despite the difficulties imposed on PWDs.

In closing, participants formulated a Strategic Framework on Building Capacities for Accessible ICT for all and came up with a strategic paper containing their objectives and strategies for action.

** Any disability-related news is welcome to be included in our newsletter. Please submit your news to us!!*



The Manila Declaration on Accessible Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and the Manila Accessible ICT Design Recommendations were presented and will be forwarded to the United Nations Ad Hoc Meeting. It may serve as a policy paper/advocacy document to advocate accessible ICT for all with special attention to PWDs in each country. For further information, please refer to <http://www.worldenable.net/manila2003>

Articles

Locally Developed Talking Book Reader Thailand

A computer program has been developed in Thai to help blind persons read books.

The D-reader, a **Digital Talking Book Reader Program**, devised by Thai University students, makes and plays recordings of volunteers reading books and can be activated on demand. With the D-reader, blind readers can go back and forth in their reading just as one can flick through the pages of a book.

The software is a bilingual program. The Thai language can be substituted with another language. The program can be downloaded free of charge or the CD-ROMs containing the speaking books can be obtained at **Ratchasuda Foundation**, Thailand.

Thailand Donates Wheelchairs to Afghanistan

One hundred locally made Thai wheelchairs were donated to victims of war in Afghanistan through the collaboration of public and private organizations in Japan, Thailand and Afghanistan. It was a project of a **Wheelchairs and Friendship Center of Asia** (WAFCA) and Minsai Center, Japan.

The donation was to provide assistance to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Afghanistan, particularly children with disabilities since many children have been maimed by landmines during and after the war.

The Thai wheelchair industry is pleased that international organizations have acknowledged the quality of Thai made wheelchairs. The factory can produce wheelchairs much cheaper than those manufactured in Europe and Japan, approximately 1,000 wheelchairs per year with 14 staff; 10 of whom are PWDs.

Editorial Message

APCD's third newsletter seeks to reflect a global perspective. This issue includes articles on independent living (IL) and non-handicapping environment training. APCD's missions to several countries encourage close collaboration and networking.

Let us exchange our ideas, concerns, interest and knowledge to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

Thank you
The Editorial staff

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