

Asian And Pacific Decade Of Disabled Persons 2003-2012

Biwako Millennium Framework For Action

Submitted by Ooi Kah Hooi

In May 2002, ESCAP adopted the resolution “Promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific regions in the 21st century”. The resolution also proclaimed the extension of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002, for another decade, 2003-2012.

In October 2002, Governments at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002, adopted the “Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific” as the regional policy guideline for the new decade.

The “Biwako Millennium Framework” outlines issues, action plans and strategies towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities.

To achieve the goal, the framework identifies seven priority areas for action, in which critical issues, targets with specific timeframe and actions are specified. In all, 21 targets and 17 strategies supporting the achievement of all the targets are identified.

The new decade (2003-2012) will ensure the paradigm shift from a charity-based approach to a rights-based approach to protect the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of persons with disabilities.

To pursue the targets and strategies, consultations with and involvement of civil societies, *inter alia*, self-help organisations and concerned NGOs are essential.

The following summarises the seven priority areas for action, the targets, strategies, timeframe and supporting/monitoring mechanisms.

- (1) Self-help organisations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations.
- (2) Women with disabilities.
- (3) Early detection, early intervention and education.
- (4) Training and employment, including self-employment.
- (5) Access to built environment and public transport.



- (6) Access to information and communications, including information, communication and assistive technologies.
- (7) Poverty alleviation through social security and livelihood programmes.
- (8) Highlights of item (5) : Access to built environment and public transport.

Inaccessibility to the built environment, including public transport systems, is still the major barrier for persons with disabilities. This problem will only be exacerbated, as the number of older people with disabilities increases in the region. Universal design approaches benefit all people in society, including older persons, pregnant women and parents with young children. Its economic benefits have been legitimised, yet substantive initiatives at policy level have not been taken. Three targets are set to improve the situation:

- The Government should adopt and enforce accessibility standards for planning of public facilities, infrastructure and transport, including those in rural/ agricultural contexts.
- Existing public transport systems and all new and renovated public transport systems should be made accessible as soon as practicable.
- All international and regional funding agencies for infrastructure development should include universal and inclusive design concepts in their loan/grant award criteria.

For further information, please refer to www.unescap.org/sps/disability.htm 