

Differently Abled People: Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity

*Report of the
Asia Regional Consultation*



Christian Conference of Asia

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STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS AND QUEST FOR DIGNITY
Report of the Asia Regional Consultation
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Foreword

Differently Abled People: Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA

One in every six persons in Asia has some form of disability and they number about 650 million. This number is expected to rise over the next decades due to ageing populations, natural disasters, conflicts and war, chronic health conditions, road accidents and related injuries, poor working conditions, and other factors. Despite the constant increase in their number, persons with disabilities tend to be unseen, unheard, and uncared. They are often excluded from access to education, employment, social protection services, and legal support systems, and are subject to disproportionately high rates of poverty and sexual abuse. They continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society. Disability affects hundreds of thousands of families in Asia. The two-way link between poverty and disability creates a vicious circle. Poor people are more at risk of disability because of lack of access to good nutrition, health care, sanitation, as well as safe living and working conditions. Once this occurs, people face barriers to education, employment, and public services. In many contexts, churches also have not properly recognized people with disabilities in their congregations or communities. They face isolation from friends and family members, as well as members in their communities. Such exclusion even isolates them from active involvement in the spiritual life of Church which should be a “caring and inclusive” community. People with disabilities are even unable to enter into church buildings or church related institutions in most Asian countries.

As Jesus loved, cared, and protected people with disabilities in his society, he strongly disputed the connection between sin and blindness, saying, “It was not that this man or his parents sinned but that the works of God might be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). Jesus healed the blind man, but first, Jesus gave him dignity and self-respect. All people with or without disabilities are created in the image of God and called to be in an inclusive community,

in which they are empowered to use their various God-given gifts. Persons with disabilities have great capacities and gifts to be shared in the household of God, which should be a “caring and inclusive” community. The Church is called by God to embrace persons, including those with disabilities, and assist them in exercising their various abilities and spiritual gifts.

The issue of differently abled people has not been addressed by CCA with as much importance as it should have been. In 2005, CCA and WCC Asia Desk organized a Consultation to initiate an advocacy network of disabled persons from Asian churches as part of the Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN). However, the EDAN was not followed up and the initiative through CCA became defunct. The new strategic programme direction of CCA identified the ecumenical advocacy on disabled persons as a priority programme, and initiated an Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (AEDAN). Subsequently, CCA organised a consultation in 2016 focusing on Disabled People and HIV AIDS advocacy.

The Asia Regional Consultation on ‘Differently Abled People: Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity’ facilitated the formation and launching of an Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (AEDAN). The new initiative of CCA started networks with the participation of Asian churches and NCCs, and helped churches to participate actively in ecumenical advocacy on disability. This new programme of CCA is now focusing on several Asian churches that are not yet sensitized to the dignity and rights of disabled people.

AEDAN is expected to be an effective mechanism of Asian Churches to be engaged in advocating for the special needs of people with disabilities. The Asia Regional Consultation was held in conjunction with the Asia Mission Conference (AMC) in Yangon, Myanmar in October 2017 as a pre-AMC event. The participants of the Consultation attended the AMC throughout its duration. Their presence at the AMC was a reminder for Asian churches to be more actively involved in this special ministry of upholding the dignity and fullness of life of the differently abled people in our churches and communities.

It is our prayer and hope that the new initiative of CCA will be a blessing in our common ecumenical journey.

Communiqué

‘Strength in Weakness and Quests for Dignity’

We, 63 participants including persons with disabilities met in Yangon from 9 -11 October 2017, on the auspicious occasion of the Christian Conference of Asia’s (CCA) 60th diamond anniversary on the theme “Journeying Together.” We are grateful to CCA for thoughtfully holding CCA’s Regional Consultation on People with Disabilities: Strength in Weakness and Quests for Dignity. We consist of representatives, including People with Disabilities (PWDs) from the CCA Member Churches, National Councils, their related care-giving institutions and organisations Church leaders, theologians, academicians, professionals and the families of the PWDs.

There were conversations based on the United Nations and Ecumenical Frameworks with academic and practical knowledge through sharing sessions and story-telling sessions by the People with Disabilities, Care Givers and the Care-giving institutions. We have scanned the religious and societal status of the PWDs from listening to the country reports from 13 Asian Countries. We realised that the context and status of the PWDs remain the same everywhere. Stigmatization and discrimination are in practice and the PWDs and their families are pushed to a social isolation as they live in shame.

We appreciate churches across the globe for actively engaging and caring for the PWDs through different diaconal interventions. However they solicit the churches to be much more proactive in terms of being inclusive, by affirming and practicing the interdependency ‘with’ and ‘among’ PWDs. We were challenged by the statement ‘Gospel is Gospel’ ‘for’ all and that has to be communicated with wholeness, without any dichotomy, avoiding labeling our faiths by a generalizing theology. We are motivated to preferably brand them as disabled-people rather than using ‘people with disabilities’. Their presence, participation, expressions and experiences are the sources to develop theologies of the disabilities and theologies of inclusion.

We were inspired by the prayers, songs sung in sign language and art (by legs) by the participants in this consultation. Hence, we expect the churches to express their inclusion by adapting similar methodologies that are inclusive.

We were cautioned by the PWD participants NOT TO USE PWDs for projects and as objects for fund raising. At the same time called to move from ‘charity’ model to inclusive model of diaconal and ministerial interventions.

We do realise that the Churches are mostly influenced by the ideologies like ‘ableism’ and ‘patriarchy’ by observing the Levitical and such laws as imperative. This makes the church have a minimal focus on the ministerial importance towards the PWDs by marginalizing them.

We were challenged to believe, affirm and practice inclusivity in our socio-religious spectrum of our lives. In this context we are made aware to recognize:

- That the PWDs are ‘also’ created in the image of God by the same Creator with equal qualities of lives.
- Some Biblical passages seem to be ‘exclusive’ and ‘discriminative’ toward PWDs, but by adapting disability hermeneutics one could experience the inclusive nature of the same passages.
- Right to worship and to participate in the mission and ministries of the Churches is the fundamental Right of every Christian, including PWDs. Therefore, Church as a body of Christ is yet to learn to practice a ‘transparent inclusion,’ by creating a physical space for the PWDs, by becoming the accessible and inclusive church both physically and spiritually.
- The aroma of Asian spirituality is nothing but inclusive, which upholds the unity and diversity. Therefore, it is an ecumenical call for the Asian churches to promote inclusive spirituality that affirms dignity and respect ‘of’ all – ‘for’ all – ‘with’ all, including PWDs.
- All governments are party in upholding the UN Convention of People with Disabilities and therefore, it would be an opportunity for the CCA and the Asian Churches to ecumenically involve in affirming, promoting and defending the Rights of the PWDs with the Kin-dom values of the Justice, Peace and Hope.

Therefore we commit ourselves to

- Reading the Bible with inclusive lenses by adapting disability hermeneutics.
- Affirm, defend and promote the rights of the People with Disabilities spiritually, theologically, ministerially and diaconially.
- Articulate the Theologies and missiologies of inclusion.
- Promote disabled-friendly congregations, by inculcating the culture of inclusion and practice fuller accessibility for all.
- Encourage Persons with Disabilities to actively participate in the ministries of the Church and pursue theological education
- Develop disabled-friendly worship resources by joining with the Christian liturgy publishing houses.

We appeal to...

- The CCA and its member churches and councils to practice and promote 'transparent-inclusion,' - by becoming inclusive and practicing accessibility.
- The CCA to initiate a network of disability ministries of the member churches and councils to inspire and encourage, to open a dedicated disability programme and deliberately have a PWD as a facilitator of the programme team.
- The **Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network**, to incessantly work on bringing the unheard conversations and stories of emancipation of the PWD's, in Asia to enlighten member Churches and Councils, as we march towards a Society and Ecclesia 'for' all, 'by' all, and 'with' all.

- The CCA to act as a RAMP to emancipate the theological and ministerial knowledge on disability concerns in Asia by WHEEL-CHAIRING disability-conversations for cross-learnings with HEARING AIDS and cross-fertilization with the help of CRUTCHES.

Yangon, October 11, 2017

Missiological Understanding of Advocacy on Disabled Persons

Rev. Stephen Arulampalam

Introduction

I am Arulampalam Stephen attached to the Theological College of Lanka Pillimathalawa in the Central part of Sri Lanka. When I was 9 months old, I had fever and a doctor gave me a wrong medicine that affected my nerves whereby, my sight started to deteriorate. Now I am enjoying the life of blindness. In this context, even though I had applied to the ministry immediately after my secondary studies, the Church did not given me a positive answer because it was a new issue for the church as well. In the midst of everything, in 1995 my house in Jaffna was bombed. My father lost his right leg and became a disabled person as well. My mother survived with some pieces of shell in her body. She remains disabled. Immediately after my ordination I was appointed as Chaplin at the school for the Deaf and Blind where I was able to listen to the stories of many people. During this period due to the war, a number of people became disabled. My personal experience and the experience of other people enabled me to create a theology of disability in my own context.

Who is disabled?

Generally people refer to this community as handicapped, disabled people, mentally retarded (mentally challenged), and crippled (wheelchair users), so on and so forth. There are other people who refer to them as the able or differently able and also another group of people call them as person with disabilities. One billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability. Eighty percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. In Asia, 600 million people are enjoying disabilities and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 23 (1) states that: "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and protection against unemployment." Even though the declaration indicates about this privilege, this community is still going through many stigmas in religion, society and employment.

When we come to religion, an exclusive way of reading the Bible (Exodus 4:11, Leviticus 21:14-16, John 9:1-3), Doctrine of Sin (Mark 2:1-12), Interpreting the Miracle in the light of faith (Mark 9; 14-29) place an important role of the exclusion of the disabled people. Giving opportunities, respecting the human dignities, inclusiveness are the key figures of the social and economic stigmas.

Theology of Disability

Disability theology is a relatively new discipline stemming from liberation theologies. Although the Sri Lankan Churches are yet to examine this area, there is an ever-expanding body of literature on the subject and practical guides to include people with disabilities in the life of the church. There is far too much literature to review with any depth here but I have chosen a few of the key texts on which my theories are based.

Possibly the most ground breaking book in disability theology is Nancy Eiesland's 'The Disabled God'. Coming from a disability rights perspective, Eiesland develops a powerful image of God in a "sip-puff wheelchair". This image of a broken God is most visibly seen through Jesus' actions on the cross and his visible wounds after the resurrection.

The impaired Christ reveals a new humanity as the "revelation of true embodied personhood". In her final chapter, Eiesland attempts to apply her theories to a practical element of worship that speaks of Christ's brokenness and embodiment through the Eucharist. She develops a liturgy that is inclusive for both disabled and non-disabled people.

New Missiological understanding and the dignity of the disabled people

The word mission comes from the Latin word "Missios" that means sending out by church or sent out by Christ to proclaim the love of God. Here I would like to introduce certain new missiological approaches and understanding towards persons with disability in order to promote their human dignity.

1. Image of God and Disability

There is a traditional teaching of the image of God among humans. Patrick Mcardle describes the theological link between Imago Dei and Humanity. This theological construct positions human as a perfect individual who has self-reliance, rationality and autonomy. These dominant perspectives are missing among the disabled. The image of God in Jesus - individual, male, whole, celibate, no defects of mind or body - communicates the theological inconsistency in the nature of God. Therefore he opines that theology should engage with the brokenness of humanity, which is a mirror to humanity and this brokenness is not to be eliminated but to be celebrated. He introduces 'mutual vulnerability; and 'inter-subjectivity' which has the potential to confront the inconsistencies. Mcardle quotes the relational encounter of Immanuel Levin as that for the one who confronts the other is an essential 'other' who pleads not to be rejected and, ultimately, not be killed. He says the face of the other one is confronted by his/her own vulnerabilities and frailties. John Swanton travels on a different path that says there is a shared experience of oppression and there are no individual impairments. All the experiences are melded together in the shared oppression. Therefore there is collective experience for all the disabled.

Samuel George quotes Nancy Eiesland's view that disability is not to be seen as a distortion of the image of God but rather that human beings reflect the disabled image of God. The image of God is manifested in all humans with dignity and value. It is not dependent on what one accomplishes or contributes but on dignity and value that are permanent and which are the essential attributes bestowed by God. Every human life is sacred and every human is to be treated with honor. There is a distortion of value in understanding the image of God.

2. Inclusive way of interpreting the miracles

Jesus' message in the gospels was one of inclusion. On a number of occasions, Jesus interacted with, healed and restored people with disabilities. The gospel of Mark gives several accounts of interaction between Jesus and people with impairments. As in ancient society, people with disabilities

during Jesus' time were stigmatised and excluded from society. This was true in the case of the man with leprosy. According to Mosaic Law, anyone with a skin disease was deemed unclean and therefore disallowed from coming into contact with anyone else. On being relieved of the illness, the person with the skin disease must present themselves to the priest, who would prescribe the appropriate rituals before pronouncing the person clean.

Yet Jesus not only healed the man of leprosy, but also touched him thereby rendering himself unclean. This was unheard of since it was forbidden in Jewish law to touch someone who was unclean. Jesus, in healing the man who could only be made clean by a priest, tackled the root of the problem thereby demonstrating his power and authority. In this act, Jesus broke the stigma attached to skin disease and identified himself with the man, thus demonstrating true inclusion.

In the following chapter, Mark recounts a further healing story. In this narrative a paralysed man was presented to Jesus for healing. Due to large crowds around Jesus, the man had to be lowered through the roof of the building Jesus was in. As a result, the passage can be understood both positively and negatively. Firstly, in relating to the paralyzed man, Jesus saw beyond his physical disability and dealt with the man's spiritual condition before addressing his bodily one. This indicates that Jesus addresses the needs of the whole person and not just the physical condition. It was only when the Pharisees showed shock that Jesus had taken it upon himself to forgive sins that Jesus demonstrated his power by healing the man. There was no expectation that the man needed to be healed of his physical condition other than as an illustration of Jesus capabilities. It was commonly believed that disability was a consequence of sin in either the life of a person or their parent's lives. Mark links the concepts of healing and forgiveness in this story, thus reinforcing society's assumptions. The idea that disability is a result of sin has been passed down throughout Christian history and is still a commonly held belief amongst some sections of the Church today. This has been particularly damaging for Christians with disabilities that have felt guilt, shame and uncleanness because of their impairment.

Despite this, in John 9:3, Jesus makes it clear that disability and sin are not linked. The disciples, on encountering a man born blind, immediately linked

the man's impairment to sin in either his or his parent's lives. Jesus answered by categorically stating that sin was not the cause of the man's disability. Jesus then healed the man without offering forgiveness as he did with many of his healings. This passage suggests that disability and sin are not linked which is contrary to society's understanding at that time. These particular activities of Christ gave identity to the Disabled Community.

3. Blind Christ

This inherited set of attitudes and beliefs is ambivalent towards blindness. On the one hand, blind people are thought of as helpless, pathetic, useless, ignorant or even stupid, insensitive and incompetent. On the other hand, blind people are sometimes regarded as being strangely gifted. They have amazing memory and may have a weird kind of foresight. Blind people are regarded with a mixture of admiration, compassion and horror. A sighted person, sharing these attitudes towards blindness, who loses his or her sight transfers inwardly all of the previous images and presuppositions about blindness. The blinded person now has feelings of horror and compassion towards the self. All the helplessness and ignorance which were imputed to other blind people now recoil upon the self. Thus blindness is a shattering blow to one's self-esteem. This is reinforced by the attitudes of compassion and horror with which the blind person is now greeted by relatives, friends and above all, employers. In the light of this, when I read the Bible I identified Jesus Christ as a blind person also; the Gospel according to Mark, Chapter 14: 65 says "Some began to spit on him, saying to him "Prophecy". These guards also took over him and beat him." This passage indicates about the blindness of Christ. He asked them who struck me, this question is asked by a blind person therefore Jesus became blind in order to understand my community. Therefore Theology of Disability, an inclusive way of reading the bible, reinterpreting miracles of Jesus and creating God in our own image will help us to become an inclusive people.

4. The Nature of Spirituality

Human spirituality is that which transfigures and transcends the biology of the human. When we speak of transcending the biological, we refer to those potentials of the human being which enable him or her to make the biological

organism instrumental to non-biological purposes. These potentials include abstract thought, imagination, empathy, the ability to represent biological experiences symbolically, and the capacity to integrate experience and knowledge around a significance or a meaning which goes beyond the pleasure and pain of the individual. Language and money are the two finest achievements of the human tendency towards the spiritual, because being relational in their character, they articulate and facilitate the experience of solidarity with other people. The capacity of the human will to become integrated with others, or to dominate others, as the case may be, is incarnate in money and in language.

When we speak of spirituality as transfiguring the biological, we refer to the fact that the biological is never left behind by transcendence. The body is not the antithesis of the spiritual but its organ. We should not contrast the spiritual with the material, nor should we regard the spiritual and the biological as being on altogether different levels. Rather, we should speak of transfiguration: the material infused with the spiritual, the body becoming the form of inter-subjectivity.

In Christian faith, the typical representation of spirituality is to be found in the story of the transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9:2-8). The body was not left behind but shone with radiance. This could not occur to an isolated body, but only in the context of others, and of the speech which links person to person. This is why Jesus is seen on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, and they speak with each other (v.4). Even the resurrection does not leave his body behind (Lk 24:39, Jn 20:6f), and with the ascension, the transfigured body is raised to universality (Acts 1:9). The ascension into heaven of the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11), the figure of the resurrected Christ (Jn 20:27) and the bodily assumption of Mary all indicate that Christian faith confesses a biological spirituality, and believes in the resurrection of the body as the fulfilment of human potential (Ro 8:23, 1 Cor 15:42, Phil 3:21) .

Nevertheless, the body is transcended as well as transfigured. This takes place when the body of the other person is valued like my own body, felt like my own body, and even loved as my own body (Eph 5:28). The body which is not transcended remains encircled within the membrane of the skin. Egocentricity is the enclosed body. The senses, although they appear

to open the body out upon the world, do not do so unless they are met by the answering sense of the other. In the reciprocity of eye contact, or skin contact, or conversational contact, we transcend the biological nature which is transfigured in the process.

5. Disability and the Church

Churches in Sri Lanka engage with the marginalized. The charitable projects and mission outreach projects have been evolved from the vision to serve people with disabilities. However, the church often ignores the struggles of the disabled. In Nancy Eiesland's opinion, for the disabled the church is like a 'city on a hill'-physically inaccessible and socially inhospitable. The church is beautiful and broken, impaired but powerful, complex and gifted. The Church incarnates the disabled God through Jesus who embodied a commitment to justice, who challenged all structures. The integral mission becomes possible only when the voices of the disabled are heard, their experiences are honored and their gifts are allowed to flourish. The task of the ecumenical movements is to side with the disabled to have a right space within the church and not to passively support the structure of the society that alienates the disabled.

6. The Role of the WCC in Promotion of Inclusive Community

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has produced a theological document regarding disability. The statement, entitled *A Church of All and For All*, is a foundational report, released in 2003, for all denominations exploring disability in their own contexts. It offers pointers and insights on major theological themes. Its aims are to enable churches to interact with disability discourse and to equip the Church to address issues of inclusion, active participation and full involvement of all people in the spiritual and social life of the church. The report addresses theological issues of the *Imago Dei*, healing and the image of the disabled Christ. However, most importantly, the document attempts to address and apply disability theology practically in the context of worship; offering some advice on how to be fully inclusive in worship. Finally, the statement offers a vision of the Church as a fully inclusive, hospitable place of welcome without discrimination.

Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris's book, *Making a World of Difference*, examines the main themes and issues of disability theology. They dedicate their final three chapters to practical solutions for the inclusion of disabled people in the life of the church. This includes a charter for healing and intercession as well as "ten ways for churches to do something practical" for people with impairments in the church.

7. Re-interpreting the hymns in the light of Liberation

Let us now turn to the more frequent occurrence of visual metaphorical language. When J.M. Neale translates a hymn from the late evening service of the Orthodox Church, there is no hint of a disparaging attitude toward blind people: songs should encourage the congregation to come closer to God, but through a few songs we move away from the Lord. Words hurt particular people; they are oppressed and hurt through the words.

Lord, that in death I sleep not

And lest my foe should say

"I have prevailed against him"

Lighten mine eyes I pray.

O, Jesus, keep me in thy sight

And guard me through the coming night

Another ambiguous example comes from the well-known hymn 'Holy, Holy, and Holy'.

Verse three reads like this...

Holy! Holy! Holy! Though the darkness hide thee

Conclusion

In this article it has been argued that hospitality and inclusion of all people are gospel imperatives. It is the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. Christians must therefore work at both their practice and theology in order to become a fully inclusive community. This will require hard work, sacrifice, humility and graciousness from the congregation but it will result

in an environment that displays God's love and grace to all. Developing the theology of the church is a journey which the congregation must embark on together. It may take them into unexpected territory but will be of benefit to all in the long term as they learn to love one another despite their differences.

Disabled People: Is the Mission to the Blind a Church Mission?

Rev. Thein Lwin

During the 1970s there was a battle of ideas about gospel in churches which were Social Gospel and Pure Gospel. Pure Gospel was called Evangelizing by preaching while sharing and supporting those who were in need (including blind mission) was called Social Gospel. At that time the churches and the denominations believed that they were the true believers by conducting an open air campaign everywhere with preaching, witnessing and tracts distribution. On the other hand they called World Council of Churches (WCC) and Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) materialist because they were related to assisting communities and those who suffered tremendously. Likewise, MCC called the persons who only preached evangelism, stooges of capitalism. In this situation, we should know clearly whether the blind mission is a church mission or not and have to go back to the Bible.

1. Blind mission reveals Christ's coming.

There are many messianic prophecies in the Old Testament including (Isa 35:5). The prophet said, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened". That means when the messiah comes the blind shall see by him. According to the prophecies when messiah Jesus came, the blind saw. We can read in (John 9) and recorded in the following scriptures. Mt 20:29-30), (Mt 21:14), (Mk 8:22), (Mk 10:46-52), (Lk18:35), (Lk 7:21). In this case it shows that mission to the blind is forwarding divine's image.

2. Blind mission is a Divine's work

According to the will of Father God, Jesus was brought up from his childhood up to age thirty according to the custom: he honored his parents, cared and loved his brothers and sisters and apart from this, he served his father God proclaiming that he was sent to restore sight to the blind. Luke 4:19 is called Nazareth declaration. He revealed clearly that in his ministry, mission to the blind was also included. That is why mission to the blind is a divine work

3. Blind mission is witnessing that Jesus is Christ.

After proclaiming that Jesus is messiah, John the Baptist himself was in doubt. It can be found at the beginning of Mathew 11. So Jesus told two of his disciples “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see”. You can find the evidence that Jesus answered “The blind see” in Matthew chapter 11:4.

According to the prophecies and Jesus’ proclamation, the great multitudes came to Him, having with them the blind, near the mountain of Galilee sea. (Mt 15:30-31) In Nazareth, two blind men were sitting by the road, and cried out saying “Have mercy on us , O Lord son of David” (Mt 20:29-30), the blind who came to him in the temple (Mt 21:14), a blind man brought to him by the people in Bethsaida (Mk 8:22), Blind Bartimaeus in Jericho (Mk 10:46-52), a certain blind man from Nain (Lk 18:35) and the blind man who was healed (Jh 9).

4. Blind mission is revealing God’s work.

In Isaiah 61:3 Prophet Isaiah said, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified.

It means that indeed there are blinds among those who are mourning. Any blinds they will mourn for their blindness at least once in their life. This is natural.

But the prophecies are “not for grumbling, finally planting for the Glory of God. In (John 9:3), Jesus himself said that the works of God should be revealed in him. Until today the works of God are revealed through blind’s mission.

5. God given blind’s rights.

In Myanmar, MCFB has led and worked hard with people with disabilities, and the disabled law was promulgated only on 5th June, 2015. The previous

situation of disabled people including blinds was that the political, economic, education, health, employment, and social conditions were in hopeless condition.

However MCFB was not among them because the MCFB had mentioned situation such as:

- a. The rights according to the Word of God; “God is Love”. (Mother Law/ Legislation) 1John 4:8.
- b. The rights according to the Word of God; Recovery of sight to the blind, (By Law) Luke 4:19.
- c. The rights according to the Word of God; that the works of God should be revealing in him. (Manual) John 9:3

These are the rights given from above. Therefore, from 1975 to 1980 MCFB stood on Faith Based and after 1980 slowly moved to Charity Based. Currently it is using Rights based, so we could cooperate and communicate with the high level authorities.

6. Jesus Manual

The Gospels, except John 9, mention at least two or three evidences and parables. John 9 is not like other chapters; it speaks amazingly about a blind man only and in this chapter you can clearly see the manual of Jesus. But the disciples were only interested in the blindness of man - why he was blind from his birth and curiously wanted to know by whose sin.

Jesus had only the liberation of the blind man in mind.

Firstly the blind man was liberated mentally. (Jh 9:3)

According to the Jewish concept, the blind man doubted that his blindness was either because of himself or his parents’ sin. He noticed himself that he was under the level of other people because of sin, but the declaration of

Jesus wiped away all the depression.

Secondly, his physical body was liberated (Jh 9:6-7).

Thirdly and finally his soul was spiritually liberated. (Jh 9:35-38)

So the Divine mission of God is the liberation of the body, spirit and soul of the blinds.

Conclusion:

How can we specify the blind mission as Social Gospel or Pure gospel? Indeed, there are no adjective forms for the Gospel. Gospel is Gospel, the greatest works of the Lord. Every church which admits “Christ is the head of the Church” should include the caring, supporting mission to the blind. The Church which neglects the blinds is called church without head.

Moreover, coloring the gospel into pure or social is adding new things to the Bible. Revelations 22:18 strongly restricts us; The churches must do the blind mission without fail.

God's Image in the Disabled

*Naw Shay Myar, Naw Bway Say Wah,
and Nyunt Nyunt Thein*

In human society, the disabled are usually viewed as handicapped and pathetic people who always have to rely on other people in order to survive. People tend to look down on them and treat them as inferior to them. In reality, the disabled also have abilities and we can sometimes see that many disabled people have talents that others do not have. Most importantly, it is important to realize the truth that, like all other human beings, the disabled are also created in the image of God.

I. Human Beings Are Created in God's Image

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. On the sixth day God created man in His image.

“And God said, “Let us make humankind in our image and according to our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the likeness of God he created him, male and female he created them.”

“God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven, and over every animal that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1: 26- 28)

God created man in His image not only in spiritual nature but also in physical body. The whole man is God's image and God gives authority and responsibility to rule the earth. Human is a corporeal image of the incorporeal God to represent Him on earth.

II. The Image of God in the New Testament

Because of the rebellion of Adam and Eve, God's Image in man (the abled

and the disabled) was shattered. But because of Jesus Christ, man (the abled and the disabled) can bear the image of God again. In John 1:1, it is said,

In John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the word was God.”

The apostle John uses the term *the Word*, which refers to Jesus. Jesus became a man but in reality, he is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). Therefore, Jesus revealed this truth to His disciples that ‘*he who has seen me has seen the Father*’ (Jn. 12:45; 14:9) ; He is also the First Born of all creations. Thus, those who are in Christ shares Christ’s image, which is God’s image.

III. People’s View on the Disabled

In some religions and philosophies, disability is considered as karma. But Jesus did not view disability in this way. We all originated from God - blind or sighted, hearing or deaf, physically abled, mentally abled or disabled. Therefore, every race, black or white, all are created by God and bear the image of God through Jesus Christ. In John 9:1-3, it is said:

And as he (Jesus) went away, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?” ³Jesus replied, “Neither this man sinned nor his parents, but it happened so that the works of God could be revealed in him.”

Suffering, hardship and disability may be part of God’s plan and God’s image can be shown and people can see God’s work through them to glorify God. In John 9:35-41, the scriptures illustrate:

Jesus heard that they had thrown him (The one formerly blind) out, and finding him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have both seen him, and he is the one who is speaking with you. “And he said, “I believe, Lord!” and he worshiped him. And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that those who do not see may see,

and those who see may become blind!” Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things and said to him, “We are not also blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

In this case, the blind man could see Jesus as God’s son and he believed in Him. However, the Pharisees and leaders did not see Jesus as son of God and also they did not see themselves as sinners. They thought that they did not need to repent.

In Exodus 4: 10-16, Moses was too frightened to speak to Pharaoh because he had a speech defect. And Yahweh said to him, “*Who gave a mouth to humankind, or who makes mute or deaf or sighted or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?*”

God created disabled people and He can use disabled people according to His plan and purpose. Disability cannot hinder God’s plan. He gives authority and responsibility to both the abled and the disabled alike. His original purpose of creating man in His image to represent Him on earth cannot be failed because of disability. Disabled people are created, valued and loved by God. In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Paul taught the believers in Corinth:

Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

In the same way, he instructed the believers in Ephesus:

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

The church (believers) is unified in Christ’s body. As a body has different parts and functions, believers have different roles and gifts to accomplish

God's purposes. Disabled people are also parts of the Christ's body and they have different roles and gifts to represent God as His image. Christ is the head of the body and believers are directed by Christ to accomplish God's purposes.

Conclusion

Human beings, both abled and disabled, were created by God in His image to glorify God. For this reason, it is imperative that all human beings know the purpose of God for their lives in order that they will be able to glorify God, making use of the abilities given to them by God. Like other people, the disabled are also capable of glorifying Him, as they are differently abled people who have potentials and capacities to serve God and represent Him as the image of God.

People with Disabilities in Asia: an Overview

Lee Ye-Ja

Asian churches were alerted to the fact that about 15-20% of poor people who live in the developing world suffer from some form of disability. Sixty percent of the world's disabled population lives in Asia. This compares with 13% in Africa, 12% in Europe, 9% in Latin America, 5% in North America, and 1% in the Pacific region. We got to know how churches in Asia take action and listen to the voices of the people with disabilities.

Only 2% of children with disabilities have access to basic health education or any form of education worldwide, less than 10% in Asia. About 70% to 80 % of people with disabilities live below the poverty line in this region. Given this situation, it becomes important to learn how churches in this region address this issue and work to carry out our mission.

In order to get an overview of the Asian disability movement situation, I am going to consider the role of the United Nations because the UN is the body which makes initiatives and has the power to challenge the countries for this problem.

The Role of United Nations : The International Year of Disabled People

In 1976, the General assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled People (IYDP). It called for a plan of action at the national, regional and international level, with an emphasis on equalization of opportunities, rehabilitation and the prevention of disabilities.

The theme of IYDP was “full participation and equality,” defined as the right of people with disabilities to take part in the better life and the development of their societies enabling them similar enjoyable living conditions to those experienced by other citizens.

The major outcome of the year was the elaboration of the World Program of Action concerning Disabled People. The Program, adopted by the assembly in 1982, became the main UN policy document on disability. Equalization

of opportunities is a main theme of the WPA and the important principle underlying this theme is that issues concerning people with disabilities should not be treated in isolation, but within the context of normal community services.

UN Decade of Disabled People (1983-1992)

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1983-1992 the Decade of Disabled People in order to provide a time frame during which governments and organizations could implement the activities recommended in the World Program of Action.

UN Convocation on the Right of People with Disabilities.

This convention was adapted in 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly as result of the hard work and collaboration between governments and CSOs

It could have been a landmark convention for the protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities and a paradigm shift from regarding people with disabilities as the ‘objects of charity or welfare’ to people who can make decisions by themselves with equal rights, opportunities, and dignity. It proclaimed that people with disabilities should be respected because of their inherent dignity, individual autonomy, freedom to make one’s own choices, and because of the basic independence of people.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-2015)

In September 2000 at the United Nations Headquarters, one hundred and forty-seven world leaders from 189 countries agreed upon a solution for at least eight kinds of problems among many other issues in the world that became an important measure for the poorest and most marginalized people of the world.

It took the form of a partnership between developed countries and the developing countries to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower people equally
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve mental health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

However within MSGs, concern for people with disabilities was not clearly delineated and therefore CEOs and stakeholders continued to work hard to include the disability issue in SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2016-2030)

Sustainable Development Goals include 17 goals and 169 targets, with more disability issues included, and have the overarching principle of “Leave no one behind”.

Herein are more explicit references to people with disabilities in five of the SDGs:

Goal 4: (quality education) Which guarantees equal and accessible education by building inclusive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for people with disabilities.

Goal 8: (decent work and economic growth) Which promotes inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment by allowing people with disabilities to fully access the job market.

Goal 10: (reduce inequality among countries) Which emphasizes the social, economic, and political inclusion of people with disabilities.

Goal 11: (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) Which encourages the creation of accessible cities and water resources, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transportation systems, by providing universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces.

Goal 17: (partnership goals) Which underlines the importance of data collection and monitoring of SDGs, with emphasis on disability disaggregated data.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP)

The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled People (1993-2002)

Areas of Concern

1. National coordination
2. Legislation
3. Information
4. Public Awareness
5. Accessibility and communication
6. Education
7. Prevention of causes of disabilities
8. Rehabilitation services
9. Assistive devices
10. Self-help organizations
11. Regional cooperation

The Second Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled People (2003-2012)

In May 2002, ESCAP adapted a resolution “promoting an inclusive barrier-

free and right-based society” for the people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region in the twenty-first century.

Areas of Concern:

1. Self-help organizations for people 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-environments and public transport.
6. Access to information and communication, including information, communication, and assistive technologies.
7. Poverty alleviation through capacity-building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmers.

Achievements and challenges: Mid-Point-Review

- Paradigm shift from a charity-based approach to a right-based approach.
- Urge MDGs to include disability in its target and indicators.

The Third Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled People (2013-2022)

The response of governments and CSOs to the 2011-2012 ESCAP survey on the final review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled People, 2003-2012 provided a rich evidence base for the development of the Incheon Strategy. The Incheon Strategy is composed of ten interrelated goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators. The spirit of Incheon Strategy is based on the CRPD.

The Ten Goals to “Make the Right Real”

1. Reduce poverty and enhance work and employment prospects
2. Promote participation in political processes and in decision –making
3. Enhance access to the physical environment, public transportation,

knowledge, information, and communication

4. Strengthen social protection
5. Expand early intervention and the education of children with disabilities
6. Ensure gender equality and women's employment
7. Ensure disability inclusive disaster risk reduction and management
8. Improve the reliability and comparability of disability
9. Accelerate the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Right of People with Disabilities and harmonization of national legislation with this convention
10. Advance sub-regional, regional, and interregional cooperation

APDF (Asia-Pacific Disability Forum)

After the United Nations Decade of people with disabilities, UNESCAP declared the first Asia Pacific Decade (1993-2002), and built a RNN (Regional NGOs Network) on civil society level. APDF was made in Osaka, Japan after declaring the 2nd Asia Pacific Disability as a response to expectation of CSOs and New Decade.

This network has 71 organizations from 19 nations with organizational meetings every two years to monitor the implementation of Incheon Strategy and incorporate suggestions to ESCAP and also to strengthen its membership.

The working group on the Asia and Pacific Decade of People with Disabilities (2013-2022) is a multi-stakeholder advisory mechanism composed of 15 ESCAP member states and 15 civil society originations with ESCAP as its secretariat.

The working group was asked to provide technical advice and support to member states to aid in their full and effective implementation of the Incheon Strategy during the Asia and Pacific Decade of People with Disabilities, 2013-2022.

It will organize a high-level intergovernmental meeting for the midpoint

review of the Incheon Strategy to provide guidance on the future of the Working Group for the second half of the decade, from November 27th to December 2nd 2017 .

1. A Church of All and for All

The WCC central committee in August 2003 received the statement and after intensive study and deliberation accepted it as a WCC statement.

It recommended in a statement to all WCC member Churches for increased study, reflection, feedback, and action.

2. A Gift of Being

This statement was accepted by WCC central committee 2016 and this was also asked to be used within member churches as same with the first statement (a church of all and for all).

Rights and Dignity of People with Disabilities: Prophetic Witness of the Church

Prof. Dr. Irwanto

Background

In honesty, I had never thought of writing any articles on disability¹ and the church. In dealing with my own disability (spinal cord injury) for the past 14 years I was bouncing up and down in my Christian faith. Although I have lost confidence in Institutionalized Church, my Christian faith remains a core value that navigates my daily decisions. When one day in 2004 I was suddenly not able to move most of my body parts due to medical error, my core belief and value inflamed me with confusion, frustration, and anger. I plunged into deep depression. I asked people around me to turn the light in my room down. I could not listen to my favorite songs. I was not happy meeting with people.

Fortunately I did not experience my emotional disability for too long. Thank you to my wonderful wife and two lovely daughters. Their faith and attitude saved and helped me re-examine mine and to ascertain myself that I have trusted company to fight for my life and my future. When my wife asked Astrid, our eldest daughter who just graduated from Senior High School and was yet to find a college, about her dad's possible long-term disability, she replied shortly: "If God says that this is the way we have to go, then there we go". This short answer wiped out my fear of rejection by my own family.

What I have inside me is only my childhood Christian faith and very personal spiritual journey that goes along with it. Early on in my life, I knew that I was not a good churchgoer but I had been very spiritual. I had to do a lot

¹ The term "disability" has different meanings depending on the context from which it is used. From a layperson perspective, "disability" means the same as having defective or impaired feature of the body and mind. When used in this context, disability is commonly attributed as the/ a personal characteristic of the person. In the UNCRPD context, disability is a social construction. It is the dynamic interaction between impaired condition of the person with his social and physical environment. Unless I am making specific context to UNCRPD, I used disability as a lay term for impairment.

of flashback to recollect when my faith had actually helped me go through challenges and adversities in the past 47 years.

I decided to go to school outside of my hometown when I was 15 years old and I felt liberated from living in a family of conflictual parents. During my adolescent and young adulthood I had to get over my identity crisis as a mixed Chinese minority during strong anti-communist and Chinese political discourse and to deal with the fact that my only younger brother was expelled from school due to drug use. I also had to survive studying in a red-neck state in a foreign country (Texas and then Indiana – the USA) during the worst industrial time of Michigan and Detroit. And less than a year after I finished my postgraduate education I had to recover from the worst blow in my career as a psychologist when my brother took his own life. A lot of self-talk, reciting my childhood songs, talking to a bird that visited my hospital window every morning, learning from fellow patients in the hospital in Singapore eventually led me to believe that I should not be angry and blame God for what I had experienced. I asked His forgiveness and then I asked to have the strength to forgive the doctor that prescribed the wrong medicine that cause my tetraplegic condition. I was totally convinced that my disability was not caused by my or my ancestors sins but “*the works of God manifested in me*” (John 9:3).

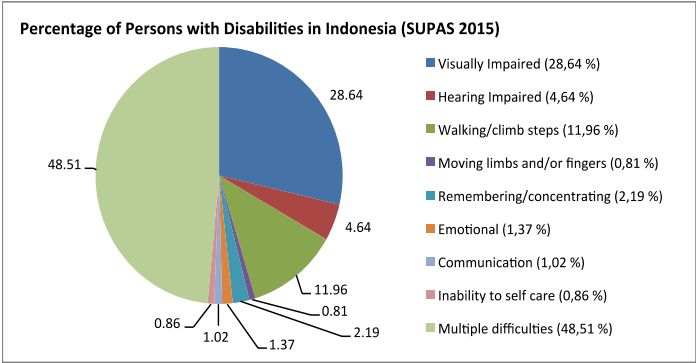
With my disability I am carrying a mission that if someone like me can deal with my limitations and challenges and the traumatic experiences that go with becoming disabled, then my family (my wife and daughters) and people around me, could positively learn from my struggle to recovery (mentally and socially). There is no greater gratitude than witnessing people around me appreciating my coming back to my previous career and advance even further. Today, without my disability, I would not have been able to meet a lot of very brave and inspiring people in this conference. For that, again thank you Lord and the committee for inviting me.

Living with Disability in Indonesia

Indonesia is a very large and populous country (248 million people). This limited observation, therefore, would not be able to represent all persons with disabilities in Indonesia. Recent studies and observation will be highlighted to bring very general impression of being an Indonesian with disability.

Population according to categories of disabilities

According to SUPAS (Inter Census Survey) 2015², Indonesia is currently the home of more than 16 million persons with disabilities (PwDs) or 7.8% of the population (age 2 years old and older).

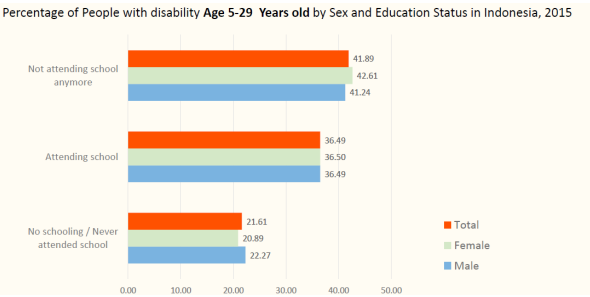


Distributio of PwDs

PwDs are distributed more in the rural than urban areas and more female with disabilities than male (see statistics in Table 1)

Education Status of PwDs

The results of the inter census survey in 2015 also suggest that most persons with disabilities were never attending school or were not in school anymore (see statistics below):



2 This data set was used in the Initial Report by the government of Indonesia to UNCRPD Committee in 2016.

To understand the quality of life of persons with disabilities, we did a number of assessments and a survey. With technical assistance from the Washington Group, in 2012 my colleagues and I were involved in a large survey involving 2,200 individuals with disabilities in 11 provinces. The study was conducted to understand the needs of PwDs for social assistance. When respondents were asked about the cause of their disabilities, the following statistics revealed that some of them associated their condition with “being cursed”.

Chances of completing elementary and secondary education

Table 04 indicated that when they experienced onset of severe (high) disabilities before the age of 18 years old, their chances of completing higher education were much smaller than those who experienced light to mild (low) disabilities. To account only for those who had disabilities before the age of 18 (when they were expected to complete secondary schooling) was important because many PwDs experienced their disabilities when they were older and many were during their employment.

Table 04: Onset of disability before the age of 18 and school completion

Variable		Low Disability				High Disability			
Gender	Age Group	Did not finish primary	Primary	Secondary	Above secondary	Did not finish primary	Primary	Secondary	Above secondary
Male	19–40	16.05	23.46	56.79	3.70	48.40	24.68	25.64	1.28
	41–60	25.00	43.75	25.00	6.25	51.70	25.85	21.09	1.36
	All	20.00	28.70	46.96	4.35	49.68	25.16	23.89	1.27
Female	19–40	13.51	37.84	37.84	10.81	59.40	22.22	17.52	0.85
	41–60	47.37	36.84	15.79	0.00	66.67	23.23	10.10	0.00
	All	25.86	37.93	29.31	6.90	62.74	22.47	13.97	0.82
All	19–40	15.25	27.97	50.85	5.93	53.11	23.63	22.16	1.10
	41–60	33.33	41.18	21.57	3.92	57.72	24.80	16.67	0.81
	All	21.97	31.79	41.04	5.20	55.37	23.99	19.57	1.07

(Source: Adioetomo, Mont, &Irwanto, SNSAP PWD – 2012)

The above statistics also revealed that being female with disability was a disadvantage in school participation and completion compared to male. Male have 1.5 better odd ratio than female to complete elementary education.

Employment Status

Employment is one of the most important basic rights of every human being. It is also an important element of human dignity. The following Table 05 suggested that employment was affected with disability and its severity. Just like the above statistics on education, there was a significant higher degree of disadvantage being female rather than male. Compared to males, only one third of females were gainfully employed.

Employment of PwDs 18 years and above according to severity of Disability

Variables		Employed (%)		Total (number)
		Yes	No	
Age group	18–24 years	44.71	55.29	2,732,806
	25–34 years	66.51	33.49	3,969,479
	35–44 years	71.33	28.67	3,291,260
	45–54 years	71.83	28.17	2,376,491
	55–64 years	60.86	39.14	1,318,539
Severity of disability	None	64.11	35.89	13,195,511
	Mild	56.36	43.64	428,777
	Severe	26.42	73.58	64,287
Education	Did not finish primary school	64.95	35.05	1,049,868
	Finished primary school	65.67	34.33	3,859,363
	Finished secondary school	62.68	37.32	8,779,344
Gender				
	Male	83.35	16.65	6,861,529
	Female	43.94	56.06	6,827,046

Participation

Participation is an essential feature of the rights of persons with disabilities. Many people with disabilities can not enjoy participating in daily activities with their community due to a number of factors. First is, or course, his or her impairment or existing condition in physical, intellectual, or mental structure and functioning. Severe impairment would seriously affect one’s ability to carry oneself to participate in community activities. Second, and most important, is existing barriers in his/her environment, both structural (physical) and social (attitudes or stigma by people). The UNCRPD defines disability as a result of dynamic interaction between one’s impairment and the environment, including social and cultural barriers.

The following statistics revealed that PWDs had difficulties in enjoying activities in the community, recreation, sport and cultural activities, as well as religious and political activities. Almost half of persons with higher degree of disabilities acknowledged that they were having difficulties in participating in religious activities.

Reporting Restriction in Community Participation of PwDs

Variable		Low Disability				High Disability			
Gender	Age Group	Did not finish primary	Primary	Secondary	Above secondary	Did not finish primary	Primary	Secondary	Above secondary
Male	19–40	16.05	23.46	56.79	3.70	48.40	24.68	25.64	1.28
	41–60	25.00	43.75	25.00	6.25	51.70	25.85	21.09	1.36
	All	20.00	28.70	46.96	4.35	49.68	25.16	23.89	1.27
Female	19–40	13.51	37.84	37.84	10.81	59.40	22.22	17.52	0.85
	41–60	47.37	36.84	15.79	0.00	66.67	23.23	10.10	0.00
	All	25.86	37.93	29.31	6.90	62.74	22.47	13.97	0.82
All	19–40	15.25	27.97	50.85	5.93	53.11	23.63	22.16	1.10
	41–60	33.33	41.18	21.57	3.92	57.72	24.80	16.67	0.81
	All	21.97	31.79	41.04	5.20	55.37	23.99	19.57	1.07

Source: Adioetomo, Mont, &Irwanto, SNSAP PWD – 2012)

Need/Getting Ratio of important services from Government Assistance

Services	Receiving Benefits			No Benefits		
	Need Service	Get Service	Getting/ Needing Ratio	Need Service	Get Service	Getting/ Needing Ratio
Medical rehabilitation	91.1	67.9	0.75	78.5	38.04	0.48
Assistive devices	85.7	42.9	0.50	69.78	19.61	0.28
Specific training	66.1	12.5	0.19	64.26	16.91	0.26
Vocational training	53.6	10.9	0.20	63.7	15.46	0.24
Counselling	78.6	32.1	0.41	68.65	12.46	0.18
Counselling for family	78.67	25.0	0.32	64.52	7.04	0.11
Social worker	58.2	3.6	6.26	57.22	5.4	0.09
Health provider	92.9	51.8	0.56	85.13	44.61	0.52
Traditional healer	69.1	50.9	73.69	62.02	40.56	0.65
Others	50.0	25.0	0.50	17.51	4.64	0.26

(Source: Adioetomo, Mont, &Irwanto, SNSAP PWD – 2012)

Government assistance

Indonesia government does have social protection programs targeted at people living in poverty, including persons with severe disabilities. Assistance is provided in the forms of cash transfer, provision of assistive devices, education assistance, and health insurance.

The above statistics compared the Need/Getting ratio of important services of PwDs who received government assistance and those who did not receive government assistance. Although the ratio for both group of PwDs tend to be low, there were twice of PwDs who did not receive government assistance that they needed.

Legal Framework

Legal protection is an essential aspect of PwDs rights. Their rights to access education, health, and welfare services have been stipulated in the national laws. Our laws also protect PwDs from violence and discrimination – including in the work place. However, there are certain aspects of the law that still raise serious concerns. One is in the Law No. 1 Year 1974 on Marriage in which disability can be a condition that is used to file a divorce. Section V, Article 19 (e) allows a husband to file for divorce because of his wife's inability to perform her role as a (subservient) wife because of a disability. This is still widely practiced and no political forces to this date are able to amend this law. Another concern in our legal framework is the implementation of "Mentally and Physically Sound" requirement, without a clear explanation, to prevent PwDs to strive for certain career or political (public) position (Adioetomo, Mont, Irwanto, 2014)

Social Well-Being

Limited qualitative assessment indicates that living with disability means paying more costs of living and spending less productive time in the labour market. This situation leads to significant decrease in financial ability and put PwDs at risk of living in poverty (Irwanto, Christiane, & Natalia, 2010; Adioetomo, Mont, Irwanto, 2014). Although our law has mandated that all private and government sectors to employ PwDs (1% of total employees), the

current mechanism could not effectively enforce the law. In most cases, the best chance of getting employed is to employ themselves (self-employed). Unless PwDs are able to buy government insurance, they would not be able to buy any other forms of health insurance (Widagdo, 2015). Limited assessment and observation also indicated that children with multiple or severe disabilities as well as those who experience intellectual and mental disabilities find it seriously difficult to access appropriate services (medical rehabilitation, education, etc.). Many parents have to let their children get institutional care because they do not have the capacity or resources. Parents also experience difficulties in finding special education or inclusive education for their children with special needs. A lot of children with disabilities were bullied in school and the community (Irwanto, Shinaya, Pandia, Widyawati, & Irwan, 2011; Irwanto, Kasim, Lusli, Frasiska, & Okta, 2011).

Disability and the Church

Earlier in another meeting during this conference, I indicated that although I work in a Christian based institution, I have serious reservations regarding church institutions especially due to my work with marginalized population (PLHIV) and my own stigma that I carried after the suicide of my brother. The church has never neglected me in my disability struggle. In fact, I enjoyed the church services that were provided to me in hospital or at home although I wish they were less ‘blaming’ or ‘sinning’ approach in their services.

When I studied the issue of disability deeper and broader, not only as a survivor but also as an academic researcher and activist, I began to see that my case was very special. There are a lot of persons with disabilities, children, young and old, who do not enjoy the services that I took for granted. They were much more invincible because of their social economic status or because their parents or significant others were not able to overcome their grief and shame.

In my limited knowledge of the Church, I felt that many accounts on disability and the church evolved around the “normate bias” of the majority of the congregation who were not living with disabilities. Their attitudes about disability were constructed by their cultural norms and values which were also informed by their beliefs. When they were informed that “...God

created man in his own image...” (Genesis 1:27), the disciples believed that the creation should be “perfect”. When, in reality, they were confronted by the fact that some men were not “perfect” – they were “defective”, they could not bring themselves to think that may be God was not perfect. They blamed the disabled as those who committed sins and being punished by God (John 9:1-2).

Bad people are rejected by God and this notion is transformed into arts and cultural symbols that portray deformed, wicked, and scary feature like the hunchback, Frankenstein, the beast, Zombie, Freddy, the little man, the giant, etc. which are traditionally used to scare and discipline children in most cultures. Unfortunately, our religious interpretation has been saturated by our cultural practices that may still be alive in our dreams.

Current, and my own, interpretation of this incidence suggests that a lot of Christians associate “perfection” in the creation of man to the observable or tangible bodily feature of mankind as if God presents Himself in a bodily form. People forget that the major features of God are his unconditional love, goodness, graciousness, forgiveness, wisdom, justice, holiness, and many other qualities that are not represented in bodily forms (Kruschwitz, 2012; Reinke, 2012). Cultural representation of disability has been engraved deep in our sub-consciousness that causes avoidance or repulsive reactions to unusual strangers and individuals with conditions that raise feeling of discomfort, safety and security.

We need to acknowledge, however, that the limited role of the Church as an institution in the lives of PwDs also stemmed from lack of information on disability and lack of resources to communal care. Many churches in Indonesia, for example, especially the Catholic Church, experience serious decline in the number of priests. Existing priests tend to be older and the rest are busy with church administration. If the congregation does not organize themselves to take care of the members of the church and the surrounding community, very soon the church will lose relevance to the community. Limited studies suggest that if you have a family member with disabilities – especially children with intellectual or developmental or mental disability, you are likely to be isolated – including from your spiritual community. Some of them isolate themselves because they do not know what to expect from

their church or because they are concerned about stigma and discrimination. Parents whose children are with disabilities often suggest that they prefer to grieve and pray to God privately – which means at home by themselves (Irwanto, Shinaya, Pandia, Widyawati, & Irwan, 2011). Individuals with disabling condition such as leprosy have to deal with both their own self-stigma and, in many occasions, felt-stigma by the community (Ruth et al., 20116). Earlier statistics also indicate that people with disabilities have difficulties in participating in religious activities because of all the above factors and lack of accessibility. In a recent assessment in Jakarta and Cirebon, Fransen (2017) found that her respondents (PwDs) often felt invincible (ignored, not noticed, not recognized) and their special needs were rarely if not ever discussed as an important topic in church like “orphan”, “poverty”, “unwanted pregnancy”, “divorce”, “mixed religious marriage” and other topics. No one in the congregation seemed interested in disability or children with special need in church.

Rediscovering Disability in the Church

Disability is not about “them” – but it is about “us” as every one of us will experience disability at one juncture in our lives. In other words, everyone is vulnerable to disability. With the current prevalence of persons with disability (15% of global population) according to WHO and the World Bank (2011), they are undeniable members of any human community, including the church as an institution. Either acknowledged or not by the Church and its congregation, there is no doubt that spirituality plays a very significant (read: crucial) role in every life of people with disabilities. The Church can turn a blind eye on this issue or choose to be a compassionate community that is open to learning and experience the grace of of the Almighty through them. To accommodate disability as everybody’s concern and facilitate the Church as a caring institution, we need to refresh our knowledge of disability through continuing education and refreshed interpretation of the Gospel. As underlined by our Lord Jesus (John 9:3):

“... Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him...”

or in 1 Corinthian 1:27:

“... God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...” or

“... *The way we experience illness and disability is an index of the love we are ready to offer...*” -- Pope Francis

Re-learning the scriptures is an important start in rediscovering disability as manifestation of God's grace to deconstruct ages of culturally scary symbolism. Other than that, the congregation should be able to create a safe space for visibility of members with disabilities. The safe space will create opportunities for those with different spectrum of disabilities and those who do not experience disabilities to learn from each other. The Church as a spiritual institution and a representation of our bigger families should be able to respect and value the dignity of every member because:

“...*we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us...*” (Romans 5:3-5)

“*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

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SPECIFIC SITUATIONS: REPORTS FROM COMMUNITIES

Disability Situation in Bangladesh

Momota Bairagee

International Status of Disability: In 2004 the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated a world population of 6.5 billion people, of those nearly 100 million people were estimated to be moderately or severely disabled. According to World Report on Disability 2011 about 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, of whom 2-4% experience significant difficulties in functioning. The global disability prevalence is higher than previous WHO estimates which date from the 1970s and suggest chronic diseases, as well as improvements in the methodologies used to measure disability. According to recent data of World Report (July 2017) in most of the OECD countries, females have higher rates of disability than males.

The World Health Assembly in May 2001 approved the International Classification of Functions (ICF), Disability and Health. ICF is a classification of health and health related domains that describe a) body functions and structure b) activities and participation and c) environmental factors. The domains are classified from body, individual and societal perspective as follows:

Impairment: Impairment is the loss or abnormality of body structure psychological or of a psychological function.

Disability: A disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being

Handicap: A handicap is a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from impairment or disability that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal (depending on age, sex, and social and cultural factors) for that individual. (*Geneva, WHO 1980 and 1993*)

The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged. Statistics show a steady increase in these numbers. The reasons include:

- Emergence of new diseases and other causes of impairment, such as HIV/AIDS, stress, alcohol and drug abuse;
- Increasing life span and numbers of elderly persons, many of whom have impairments;
- Projected increases in the number of disabled children over the next 30 years, particularly in the developing countries, due to malnutrition, diseases, child labor and other causes;
- Armed conflict and violence. For every child killed in warfare, three are injured and acquire a permanent form of disability. In some countries, up to a quarter of disabilities result from injuries and violence, says WHO.

It is not specific to any one particular country, creed, color, age, or race. Anyone can become bodily or mentally dysfunctional at any point of time in life.

Scenario of Disability in Bangladesh: Bangladesh is one of the small countries of south Asia. The total population is about 1.8 billion (BBS 2010) and 1.8 million of the population is disabled. There are an estimated 16 million people with disabilities in Bangladesh, or 10% of the country's population. In 2004, the prevalence of disability was about 6% among those below the age of 18 and about 14% among those above that age (World Bank 2016). Perceptions of disability among most Bangladeshis remain largely negative. Especially in rural areas, disability is often viewed as a curse brought on by the misdeeds of parents, and is often believed to be contagious. There are many reasons for disability in Bangladesh. Many children become disable due to limitation of adequate health care, specially maternal and prenatal health care. Iodine deficiency disorders, the leading cause of preventable intellectual disability and impaired psychomotor development in young children, were found among 40 per cent of school-age children in

Bangladesh (Nutrition, National Micronutrient Status Survey 2011- 2012). The 2005 Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey Report estimated that 13,134 children develop permanent disabilities each year due to accidents. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 estimates that the majority of children with disabilities in Bangladesh do not go to school at all, and of the 72 million primary aged children worldwide that are out of school, one third have disabilities. Poverty is both a cause of consequence of disability. Achieving the Education For All (EFA) targets and Millennium Development Goals will be impossible without improving access to and quality of education for children with disabilities.

National Intervention for Disability: The Bangladesh Parliament adopted its first comprehensive disability legislation, the Bangladesh Persons with Disability Welfare Act 2001, in April of 2013. In 2002, The National Action Plan for People with Disability (PWD) was promulgated as a directive from the office of the Prime Minister. The government established quota (10%) for the disabled in government employment with punitive action for non-compliance.

The Action Plan stipulates what needs to be done to realize the goals of the Disability Welfare Act in five areas: education, health, employment, accessibility, and transportation. Currently there are 64 schools for Integrated Education Programs. The program is run by the Department of Social Services, Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of Bangladesh. According to the ‘Convention Right of the Child’ States parties recognize the Rights of child education and decent life. People in Bangladesh living with disabilities are entitled to government support.

Background of the organization (BMIS): The Baptist Sangha School for blind girls started in 1977 with five blind girls at a rented house at Mirpur, in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. Baptist Mission Integrated School is a non-profit organization and sister organization of Social Health and Education Board (SHED Board) that is registered by the NGOs Bureau no –134 in 1982. SHED Board is the social development wings of Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha (BBCS). BMIS is the regular member of National Forum of Organization Working with Disable (NFOWD).

Scope of intervention: About 90% of the world’s visually impaired people live in developing countries. Globally, every 5 seconds one person goes

blind and every minute one child goes blind. In the face of such an alarming situation, World Sight Day is observed every year to focus attention on the issue of avoidable blindness and vision impairment. It is the primary advocacy event for Vision 2020: The Right to Sight, a global effort to prevent blindness undertaken by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). According to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics approximately 314 million people in the world are visually impaired, of whom 45 million are totally blind.

There are about 40,000 visually impaired women and children in Bangladesh, of whom an estimated 12,000 have cataract. It is a matter of concern that 80% of the visually impaired persons live in rural areas where the treatment facilities are very poor as 90% of the doctors and paramedics are urban-based. Blindness and low vision have a tremendous impact on quality of life. The blind are heavily affected economically, as 90 % of blind individuals cannot work. Half of the blind people in impoverished countries report a loss of social standing and decision-making authority, and 80% of all women note a loss of authority within their families. Blindness often leads to unemployment, loss of income, higher levels of poverty and hunger and low standards of living. 3.2% of total disabled people are visually impaired (June 2011). There are an estimated 40,000 blind children (0 -15 years of age) and approximately 90,000 to 120,000 children with low vision. Helen Keller International/ Bangladesh conducted an assessment of educational opportunities for children with visual impairments in Bangladesh and found that only 602 visually impaired children are enrolled in grades 1 to 10 in formal government and non-government schools, approximately 0.8% enrollment and these two thirds are boys. The gap is large, with approximately 85,000 visually impaired children not having access to or enrolled in formal education.

The problems associated with the education of children with visual impairment are large, for example inappropriate environment, in terms of classroom setups, learning materials, teaching methods, etc. Besides, there is very little orientation among the school authorities that it is possible to mainstream children with visual impairment. The visual impaired children are found to be behind in education mainly due to dependency in mobility. Braille books are not available. Besides, teachers in a regular school are not trained in Braille

Vision

Our vision is for a society where blindness or partial sight is not a barrier to the fulfillment of personal aspirations: people in society can see the ability not the disability.

Mission

BMIS exists to provide education and training services to girls who are blind or partially sighted and to enable the girls to overcome any discrimination, social exclusion and poverty they experience.

Objectives of BMIS

- To integrate the special group of people in the mainstream of social life
- To build capability of blind children through education and proper training
- To rehabilitate the blind girls and women in the family as well as community
- To raise awareness against blindness among the community peoples

Stakeholders

BMIS is implementing Special Education Program from grade I to grade VII for visually impaired children especially girls aged 5+ to 20 are the direct beneficiaries of the education programs. The school has opportunity to provide accommodation for girls from grade I to XII. The capacity of the dormitory is 80. Blind girls irrespective of caste, creed, or religion from all over the country are accepted into the institution. There is capacity for 200 students for general education and integrated education. General students are also developed as peer educators of the special group in integrated classroom. Other same minded NGOs and GOs are sharing their experiences and opportunities. 300 parents participate in the monthly and quarterly parents meeting and are aware about the causes of blindness.

Current Projects:

- Education Program (Integrated & Special)
- Braille Press (Text Books, Literature & Magazine)
- Rehabilitation & Vocational Training (Handicraft, Computer etc)
- Residential Program.(Food & lodging, Medi-care, cultural)
- Capacity building

Share a Seat Beside You...Towards Perfect Unity

Cynthia Shinde

At some point in our life we all encounter disability in some or the other way. The focus here is not much on the practical consideration on accessibility and accommodation; it may or may not be important nor speak about the experiences of persons with disabilities but with the strong presence of a Biblical Mandate of inclusion of PWD, the focus is on experiences of the church and its community to the presence of a PWD in the church and growing in its capacity to welcome PWDs and bonding together spiritually. We are family members, neighbours, fellow commuters and colleagues. Sometimes these roles are not acknowledged; sometime we would love to step into this shoe and fulfill our role but cannot because of the various myths and fear pertaining to disability

In simple words Accessibility means Ramp; ramp is a bridge that begins in our minds and accessibility is a process that begins in our hearts, with recognition of and desire to eliminate existing attitudinal and physical barriers and to replace them with attitudes of patience, welcome and acceptance to accompany.

Hence, if a person with disabilities enters your church or find a member or any of their relatives to be disabled, immediately take initiatives to get awareness and recognize the important needs of the person with disability. Cite the examples of the myths of disability and the perfections mentioned in the Bible, share the good news and welcome the forgotten member or relative into the Church.

Bartimaeus is the ideal example of faith in Mark's Gospel, which makes it all the more important. Mark's narrative compels us to consider the various roles characters play in this scene, and also the various situations in and around our congregational and communal life. It not only depicts the ministry of reconciliation started by Jesus proclaiming the Inclusive community 'Of' all and 'For' all but also can be viewed in other different perspectives modes. The simple impelling conviction of Bartimaeus that Jesus will hear and rescue him and the other, the attitude of the society that

stops or suppresses the voice of the PWD which rang the social privilege ladder that existed during the time, and lastly the transformation to follow ... towards the inclusive Community.

Practice the Acronym of SHARE.

Practicing the Acronym of SHARE through Gospel of Mark (10:46-52) which tells of the cure of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus (literally “Son of Timaeus”, one of the few recipients of healing who are given names

It stands for:

S – Slow down

H – Hear

A – Adapt

R – Relate

E – Empower

Adopting these techniques can strengthen our relationships with the disabled and guide us through difficulties in all communal interactions, as we are all different in our own ways yet each individual is a unique creation of God.

Slow Down

Jesus in His ministry often emphasized His accompaniment along with the PWD through the mandate of an inclusive ministry. When Bartimaeus called out to Jesus for help, the crowd tried to stop him and wanted Jesus to ignore him but Jesus ‘slowed down’ to meet his needs. Very often, in this fast paced world we forget that we have left someone may be a friend, relative, sibling or parent behind. This also acquaints us with the gaps existing in the society. When Bartimaeus first called Jesus, the crowd tried to stop him but Jesus slowed down to meet his needs and gave him the time to come to Him and in the process...we often notice that persons with disabilities take a little time longer than needed to accomplish their task ...So slow down to offer assistance.

Hear

We often try to decide what is good or assume for ourselves what they need rather than hearing and giving them an opportunity for them to decide. Here Jesus not only slowed down but also gave him a chance to decide. By doing so Jesus gave Bartimaeus his rights to decide and say what he wants. We often, though not intentionally, forget to ask what their needs are or how you can offer your help to them, thus they are left out of decision making process. So we need to slow down to hear what they have to say giving them the dignity to make their own decision. The point here is people with disabilities know their limits and when they need help, so take a few seconds more to HEAR them.

Adapt

Most often the persons with disabilities in order to show that they can also be independent or to not trouble anyone, try to adapt to their surroundings. As accompaniers we also need to take some initiatives to adapt them into our mainstream communal life. Here Jesus adapted to Bartimaeus by having him come to Him, which would have involved Bartimaeus following His voice. Proper adaptation, though, can require forethought. There are different ways to adapt in order to help someone who is disabled. For instance, when leading a blind person, have the person hold your arm at the elbow and walk a step behind; we need to remember that benches and pillars will not move out of the person's way. Hence follow the Disability etiquettes everything else follows logically. A very good adaptation occurs when we make an honest effort to slow down, hear and adapt through accessibility.

Relate

Mark's narrative Gospel not only talks about slowing down and accompanying by eliminating the attitudinal or the physical barrier but also to build a strong relationship. Jesus did not just help Bartimaeus and then forget about him. Jesus started a relationship that even involved Bartimaeus becoming a follower. The persons with disabilities simply don't want to be just assisted to occupy their seat and then to be left alone but need friends to share joy and sorrow like everyone else does. Hence be motivated and also encourage the PWD to open up and build relationship.

Empower

Jesus did not just adapt or relate to Bartimaeus, He empowered him. Empowerment means helping a disabled person be as if there was no disability. While healing like Jesus did may not be our path at present, there are other things we can do to empower people. We can certainly avoid harsh words or actions that hinder their empowerment and stop them from exercising their rightful rights in the society. These only echo prejudices. Hence, motivate the person with disabilities to realize that they are a part of the family and help him to identify his God given talent and finally encourage the person to learn the independent skill to empower them with new experiences.

Conclusion

In the book of 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 discusses the different gifts of God and that we all are one body in Christ without any division and that we should have equal concerns for each other. So follow the inclusive model of Christ... slow down to hear the cries, adapt by coming down, relate by inviting to pray together, and to empower just as Jesus empowered us with the Holy Spirit and eternal life for all. Hence the church and its congregation can practice advocacy, and architecture imperfectly embodied proclaiming the wholeness to which Jesus restored Bartimaeus with His compassion and grace, thus motivating opportunities to empower through the acronym of SHARE.

Being a Person with Disability in Indonesia

Prof. Dr.Irwanto

John 9:3 - Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Indonesia is a vast and the fourth most populous country in the world. Person with Disabilities (PwDs) have been defined by our previous Law No. 4 Year 1997 as: "...an individual who has mental or physical anomaly or both..." This impairment concept of disability is made even worse when "anomaly" or "abnormality" is attributed as core identity of the person (in word of law: "*penyandang*" or the "bearer" of the abnormality). Current statistics suggests that Indonesia is the home of 16 million PwDs.

In real life, PwDs have always lived in the margin of, what I call, the residual public policy. It means that when it comes to investment for the welfare and well-being of PwDs, it has always been minimum and made for politically correct attitudes. Before the ratification of UNCRPD in 2011, only the Ministry of Social Affairs, through its poverty alleviation program, was the focal point of disability affairs. Investments in special and inclusive education, treatment and care, tend to be very low. Social protection program is barely adequate, and legal protection of the rights of PwDs tend to be weak (Irwanto, et al., 2011; Adioetomo, Mont, &Irwanto, 2014). Children with multiple and severe mental, developmental, and intellectual disabilities have almost no support from the government. Parents and religious organizations have more significant roles in care and rehabilitation than government institutions. After the ratification of the convention and, especially, after the enactment of the new Law No. 8 Year 2016, matters are changing very slowly.

What about the Church? Like it or not, there is still a strong notion that disability is culturally believed as "a curse from God" due to sin and unfaithfulness³. Communities in Indonesia are no exception.

3 Sunanto, J. (N.d.).SikapdanperilakuumatKristianiterhadappenyandangCacat: Perspektifilosofinklusi. Download: http://file.upi.edu/Direktori/FIP/JUR._PEND._LUAR_BI-ASA/196105151987031-JUANG_SUNANTO/Prilaku_Umat_Kristiani_Terhadap_Penyandang_Cacat.pdf

Lack of knowledge and information has contributed to stigma and discrimination. This includes maltreatment of persons with mental and intellectual disorders as well as people affected by leprosy and other

disfiguring diseases. The lack of attention and care by the Church is indicated by lack of attention to construct physical accessibilities, lack of outreach to families with disabled members, lack of programs for care, treatment, and rehabilitation, and lack of interest in employing PwDs. Resource are often times spent for maintaining the aesthetic aspect of the physical infrastructures of the church and less (much-much less) to help persons and their families heal and grief for the disability. Helping the Church to recognize the problem through sensitivity training, establish outreach unit (e.g., Leticia – for the blind) and open employment opportunities, establish care, treatment and rehabilitation units (such as assistive technology workshop by Yakkum, hospice for children with multiple disabilities by a Catholic Church in Malang and across the country, promoting inclusive policies in schools) have been proven effective.

Dismantling the Stigmas: The Task of Seminaries in Indonesia

Isabella Novsima

Context

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Jakarta(Jakarta Theological Seminary)
Gereja Kristen Indonesia Kayu Putih (Indonesia Christian Church Kayu Putih Congregation)

There are two main areas when we talk about dismantling the stigmas. Firstly, the task is in the theological discourse itself, and secondly the task is in the theological institution. Both of these bring impact to the life of the church in each local congregation. I argue that the work of seminaries in Indonesia in doing disability theology will bring possibilities of transformation in the life of the church and also, in vice versa, the local congregations could also enrich seminaries in the task of constructing disability theology together.

First Challenge - Theological Discourse

We still opt to use one metaphor of God that narrows the possibilities to experience God in the experience of people who are deemed as able in “the normal” culture. In general, the metaphor of disabled God is not preferred because it sounds like a decrease in the divinity of God. The other challenge is in the way of interpreting the biblical text. The healing narratives are mostly seen in the lens of “curing” instead of “healing.” The implication is that people’s disability is caused by their (or their family’) sin, and if they are not cured it is assumed that they lack faith. Therefore, disability hermeneutics should be considered as a course in seminaries.

Second Challenge - Theological Institutions

Most seminaries in Indonesia are not accessible for students with physical disabilities. The access to classrooms and libraries (books) are provided for students who are considered as able. This is also caused by the lack of financial support to provide more accessible building and tools of learning.

Third Challenge - Local Churches

Most pastors are not familiar with theology from the perspective of disability, because theology of disability was not part of their curriculum (of their generation) when they were seminarians. In addition, the local churches do not have a statistic of the members of the congregation living with disabilities. Not to mention, some of the church buildings are inaccessible for people with intellectual disabilities. This includes the attitudinal barriers that come from some church members. This attitude makes people with disability reluctant to be part of the worship or any other church programs. However, some local churches now have their department of disability. They work both in proposing inclusive programs and in listening to the church members who are living with disabilities and working with the family of person with disabilities.

Conclusion

From these three challenges, we know that seminaries and churches have a major task in dismantling the stigmas through the transformation of paradigm and through an accessible infrastructure and structure of the theological institutions and churches.

People with Disabilities, HIV and AIDS, and Church Responsibility

Dr. Alphinus R. Kambodji

Facts and Challenges

Currently around 10 percent of the total world population, or roughly 650 million people, lives with a disability⁴. They are believed to be asexual, less likely to use drugs or alcohol, and at a lower risk of violence or sexual assault than the general population. In reality, people with disabilities are just as sexually active as others. They are up to three times more likely to be victims of physical & sexual abuse, and rape by caregivers, partners and strangers who may see them as defenseless. Most people assume that people with disabilities are at lower risks of HIV infection than non-disabled. HIV infection rate among people with disabilities. In many Asian countries, individuals with disabilities have very limited or even no access to police, legal counsel for protection, and they often have less access to medical care, psychosocial counselling support than their non-disabled peers. People with disability who are HIV positive suffer a double stigma, and have barriers to access testing, counselling, treatment and support, and they may be considered a low priority for treatment. They are stigmatized, discriminated and isolated even from the church activities and community services. It can happen because of: (1) Higher risk of violence and lack of legal protection (have limited access for protection, care and support); (2) Lack of education (they are often considered a distraction in schools, or incapable of learning); (3) Lack of sexual health information (commonly assumed that they are not sexually active).

What can the Church do?

From the human rights perspective, people with disabilities⁵ (1) have to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others; (2) have the right to be actively involved in planning and carrying out HIV policies and programs, especially those directly impacting them; (3) Government must protect a broad range of rights including the right to individual autonomy and independence; (4) Government must provide persons with disabilities with the same quality and standard of health care

and programs as provided to other people, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health and population-based programs; (5) Governments must also enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain their maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life.

The Church is called to be an Inclusive Community that engages in creative listening, hearing the stories of people and sharing, where the church can also be the place where all people feel safe and valued as being made in the image of God; the place where God's provision is revealed and people begin to better understand and support each other, and invite people into a community characterized by love, mutuality, independence and respect.

Therefore, We as the Church At Least Have to:

- Break the silence on the issue of People with Disabilities and HIV & AIDS by training the church leaders and church workers, and mainstreaming this to the church program and ministry.
- Reach out to the people with disabilities and disabled peoples in the church/community, and identify their specific needs.
- Provide advocacy and education for persons with disabilities to have full sexual and reproductive rights, to be free from physical and sexual access to harm reduction services, and;

Train persons with disabilities and especially HIV-positive persons with disabilities as peer workers in HIV programs.

4 Disabled World - Disability News & Information: 2017-07-29 - World health and disability statistics including data and facts on age, area, types, and population numbers of people with disabilities.

5 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), articles:3,4,5,16,19,21,22,24,25,26.

Socialization and Advocacy of the Disabilities of Christian Church of Asia

Ritson Manyonyo

I. Introduction

Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) gives the statement, “A Church of All and for All.” Thus, the people with disabilities (PwDs) are the image of God who also have the potential to be together with the church to answer the call of His ministry. Referring to the data of the World Health Organization that one in seven people in the world are persons with disabilities, that is, if the world population is 7 billion people then there are one billion people with disabilities. Furthermore, there are six hundred million people with disabilities spread across the continent of Asia. As for ASEAN alone, there are about ninety million people. Meanwhile there are about two hundred and fifty million people who need spectacles due to impaired vision. In Indonesia, the number of people with disabilities according to WHO and ILO is 10-15 percent of the total population which means there are about twenty-five to thirty-six million people. Based on these data, where is our position as a state, government, church and disability rights movement organisations as well as its activist?

II. Position or Response of Churches Towards People with Disabilities

The Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) in May 2003 called for the church’s position to be of all to all. It was followed by a conference at the Elspeet in the Netherlands and challenged the church to be able to identify people with disabilities and ensure their full life participation as the witness of the church. EDAN organisation is the project of the World Council of Churches.

From October 23 - November 5, 2013, in the congress of worldwide churches in Korea, the issue of PwDs was discussed again, but the response of Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) to the existence of people with disabilities was still in the stage of calls for action and in the form of studies but had not yet entered a special program that would become a joint movement for the churches in Asia.

III. Hope of Disabilities on the Church

1. As an inseparable part of the church, what can be given and done or contributed by persons with disabilities to the church and its ministry to the congregation are the growth and development of theology, social and humanitarian functions, education and arts, politics and law, human rights and protection of children and women, the prevention of sexual violence, drugs and abortion, managing LGBT people, pluralism, tolerance, solidarity and solidity of congregation and ecclesiastical, victims of natural disasters and discrimination, humanity and discrimination, the marginalised and the poor as well as development of nation's democracy and utilisation of digital-based information technology for the quality and quantity of church services for all.
2. PGI, and CCA as one of the churches in Indonesia and Asia, are expected to open up to PwDs in Indonesia, and incorporate the matters into an existing department or to establish a new department to run the program on disability issues.
3. The subject of PwDs will be one of the strategic and formal policies of the PGI and CCA by which it will be synodically adopted by the local churches.
4. Persons with disabilities may be given equal opportunities with other issues to discuss at the pre assembly or at the official and formal hearings of PGI and CCA.
5. Persons with disabilities are given the same or equal opportunity to become partners of God's Ministry or fellowship for churches in Indonesia and Asia and even the world.
6. Church infrastructure, culture and self-actualisation/role in ministry, for the stability of the existence of persons with disabilities.
7. Expect at the synodal level in their respective countries, to open integrated services for persons with disabilities in the form of formal and non-formal education institutions, social institutions, training

centres and so on. Pay great attention to people with dual disabilities, especially those who need special assistance for a lifetime and are unable to learn, by opening integrated social services.

8. Encourage the transformative diocese church program for persons with disabilities towards the empowerment of resourceful human resources.
9. To include the issue of persons with disabilities in the curriculum of Christian schools from early childhood to high school / vocational school as well as the theological schools under the synod or church.
10. Provide socialisation, seminars, workshops and trainings for priests, councils on synod and local churches as a response to persons with disabilities.
11. The change of paradigm and policy is final and binding, whether from theological, sociological aspects, accessibility of the building / facilities.
12. Provision of the accessibility of Christian church buildings and facilities, infrastructure, and other Christian institutions to be friendly and suitable to PwDs.
13. Creating suitable and disabled friendly country or city or church for people with disabilities as a pilot project.
14. To bring the people with disabilities within the wider church not as a show and objects but as motivators and inspirators to dynamise and accelerate church movements to be consistently within the scope of *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda*.
15. Encourage Christian media to provide and open opportunities to cover and address topics related to the issue of PwDs.
16. Encourage Christian universities to produce results of study and research in all aspects including modern tools for persons with disabilities, to create ideas or solutions for the prevention of disease or viruses that cause a person to be disabled, including the latest discovery

of sophisticated, inexpensive, and friendly drugs and equipment to support persons with disabilities.

17. Call upon the world to stop war and military emergency because the consequence of warfare is not only killing, but surely increases the number of people with disabilities due to the impact of bombs, mines, gunpowder, bullets, missiles, atomic bomb, chemical weapons, and so on.

Abilities of the Deaf

Daw Nyunt Nyunt Thein

What is Deaf?

- Hearing impaired
- Hard of hearing
- Deaf
- Lack of hearing capacity

Abilities They Possess

- Visually sound
- Physically sound
- Intellectually sound
- Instant observation
- Utilize own language
- Able to learn and teach through Finger Spelling and Sign

Language

- Gifted and talented
- Good concentration
- Easy to memorize, good memory

Challenges

- *Visual learners
- *Limitation in understanding
- *Limited Sign Language
- *Can't understand words and meanings

*Communication difficulties

*Can't respond if it is not their language

*Can communicate only with those who know Sign

Language

*Always need interpreter (radio and TV news, shopping, hospital, job interview, dealing with the offices, court etc.)

Achievements

*University graduates

*Successful massagers at SHIATSU

*Skillful Handicrafts

*Kitchen staff at the five stars hotels and restaurants

*Security

*Winner of Myanmar Culinary Arts Competition ဖုတ်ဇာ

*Conduct own businesses

*Teaching/teachers

*Office work in IT

“Who Is Disabled”

Tony Wong

*If you fail to see the person but only the disability,
then who is blind?*

*If you cannot hear your brother's cry for justice,
then who is deaf?*

*If you do not communicate with your sister but separate her from you,
then who is disabled?*

*If your heart and your mind do not reach out to your neighbor,
who has mental handicap?*

*If you do not stand up for the rights of all persons,
then who is Cripple?*

*Your attitude towards Persons with Disabilities,
Maybe our biggest handicap and yours too.*

“Those who see what GOD SEES find ways TO HELP the HELPLESS.”

“Let's see the world with GOD'S EYES”

Fellowship of the Blind

Rev. Thein Lwin

I would like to greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am Rev Thein Lwin from Myanmar. I serve the Lord as General Secretary of Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blinds, an organization founded in 1975 by the grace of God, when the formation of associations was not allowed under the military led Myanmar Socialist mono party government.

1. Problem

Myanmar has been facing many problems under the long rule of military authoritarian governments. The list of problems includes economic, social, education, employment opportunity and other difficulties. According to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, there are 2.3 million of persons with disabilities comprising 4.6 percent of the total population of the country. Among them about 1.3 million people (2.5 percent of the total population) are persons with visual disabilities. Even though the population of the persons with visual disabilities is high, there are only 8 special schools for the blind in the whole country. Most of the children with visual disabilities have not received the opportunities for habilitation service to continue the Inclusive Education.

The children with visual disabilities are highly marginalized in the accessibility to Inclusive Education. Among the 330 townships in the country, the Ministry of Education, Department of Basic Education allocated one High School and one Middle School each in 8 townships where the school for the blinds are. The children with visual disabilities who cannot afford to stay in those townships cannot learn the basic education. The development and implementation of the inclusive education is already encouraged in the Myanmar Disability Rights Law (2015), but the implementation is still weak.

2. What We Are Doing

- 2.1 Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blinds (MCFB) is habilitating the young children with visual disabilities and children with multiple disabilities in independent daily living and Braille in the Primary Education to be able to join the middle school education in the public

middle schools and high schools. For the students from the remote areas, the boarding house is also operated in Yangon Education Center for the Blind, Yangon Region and Myitkyina Education Center for the Blind in Kachin State.

- 2.2** The MCFB is also conducting awareness and advocacy in collaboration with NNER (National Network for Educational Reform) a civil society organization that strives to provide students with increased knowledge, thinking skills and life skills and to put in place a free and equal-opportunity educational policy for all people. The NNER is also trying to partner with Ministry of Education for the purpose of educational reform.
- 2.3** The MCFB is also conducting awareness and advocacy activities to the policy makers and grass-root level churches, including the persons with disabilities to understand the UNCRPD and becomes self-advocates.
- 2.4** MCFB has two special programs, one for the development employment opportunities training massage technicians and other vocational programs. Another program is producing the learning aid materials and text books for the students with visual impairment and educational journals and periodicals. Moreover, we evangelize to the people including blinds with our fellow blinds. On the other hand our Precious Grace Baptist Church is an inclusive church for the blinds and sighted.

3. Policy Recommendations

Policy makers are eager and willing to change and recognize the human rights of the persons with disabilities. They are interested and open to meet the representative of the persons with disabilities. According to the Disability Rights Law, the government formed a National Disability Rights Committee chaired by a Vice-President consisting 60 members of various ministers and representatives from Disabled People Organizations.

However, due to reluctance to change and lack of empathy and technical skills the ministerial level and department level personnel are still slow to implement the policies and plans.

But God has already provided us the Blinds with the Constitution and Legislation.

1 Jh 4:16- *God is Love.*

Lk 4: 19 *Recovery of sight to the blind;*

So that by the Grace of God, we can do all things through Jesus Christ.
AMEN.

People with the Disabilities : Sharing from the Philippines

Rev. Rex Reyes, Jr.

At the outset, let me admit that this is one area that the National Council of Churches in the Philippines has not given much attention to. For this reason we welcome this conference.

Timeline of Laws Relative to People with Disabilities in the Philippines

June 11, 1978 – creation of the National Commission Concerning Disabled Persons (NCCDP) by virtue of Presidential Decree Number 1509. The third week of July was eventually declared as the National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week.

July 22, 1987 - the name NCCDP was changed to National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons. The mandate of the NCWDP is to “serve as the central authority of the government which will direct, coordinate and integrate planning and management as well as implementation of all activities, public and private, pertaining to the welfare of persons with disabilities”

March 22, 1992 – Republic Act 7277 known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons was enacted into law amended subsequently in April 2007 by Republic Act 10754. The amendments provide for discounts.

In tone the Magna Carta follows the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The implementation is something else and therefore not attuned to the UN Convention (e.g. discrimination in employment, mass transportation and public services, no adequate health insurance or rehabilitation services, more than 90% of children (as of 2014) do not have access to public school system).

According to the state’s National Statistics Office, in 2010, the Philippines had 1.4 million PWDs. Our population at that time was placed at 92 million+. Of this, 50.9% were males and 49.1% females. Forty percent belonged to the

15-49 years old bracket followed by the elderly (65 and above) at 22.1%, ages 50-64 at 19% and 14 years old and below at 18.9%.

There is however a small civil society group called *Ligang may Kapansanan*. It advocates the rights of people with disabilities especially the right to education and access to medical care.

In 2018, the theme of the NCCP's Vacation Church School will focus on children with disabilities. Perchance this is a good way for the NCCP to start a more relevant ministry with and for people with disabilities.

Transition of the Disabled Movement in the Korean Church

Rev Kang Suk-Hoon

□ 5 Periods

- 1. 1884~1945: The beginning of the concern about the Disabled in Korea's modernization process** - The inclusion and the special education of the Disabled by the missionaries.
- 2. 1945~1988: The Liberation from the Japanese Colonial Rule (1945) and just before the Seoul Paralympics(1988)-** To continue the establishment of the independent Disabled Mission Organization of Korean church and the Disabled movement
- 3. 1988~2008: From Seoul Paralympics (1988) to just before enactment <the Act of aid and of prohibit discriminating against people with disabilities (2008)>** - The Disabled church movement and Disabled mission joined with the Human Rights Group of the Disabled
- 4. 2008~ 2013: Enact <the Act of aid and of prohibit discriminating against persons with disabilities (2008) and NOW** - <the Act of aid and of prohibit discriminating against people with disabilities> is challenging to Korean church on the recognition of the Disabled
- 5. The Core of the Disabled mission** - The Disabled movement and Church theology together listen to the Disabled's voice.

1-1. The beginning of the concern about the Disabled in Korea's modernization process

- Korean people had faced the process of National/Yi's Dynasty ruination, the oppression of colonialism, liberation from Japanese Imperialism, Korean War, division of territory.

- The Minjung/people faced oppression and discrimination. Furthermore, the disabled who were poor and marginalized lived an incompetent life and were regarded as the cursed and the worthless.
- At this time, the missionaries who had brought the Gospel to Korea gave people (including the disabled) hope and courage.
- In 1894 (10 years after Christianity was conveyed), Rosetta S. Hall, missionary of American Methodist Church, became concerned with O Pongnai, a blind girl, and began to teach the Bible (Ten Commandments) and prayer book of Korean language in Braille.
- Ms. Hall established the Blind school in 1903 and built the mute school in 1909. In succession, missionaries of Australian Presbyterian Church and Methodist Church of North America opened the hospital for Hansen's disease and school for the blind-mute and deaf-mute in Pyongyang (North Korea).

- The missionaries accepted the Korean Disabled as members of the community and showed the pattern of holistic mission. They gladly accepted the difference of the Disabled in God.

2-1. 1945~1988: The Liberation from the Japanese Colonial Rule (1945) and just before the Seoul Paralympics (1988)

- In 1946, the Korean church that was influenced by missionaries independently organized 'missionary department for the deaf - mute in Yongrak Church(PCK)
- Renamed 'Yongrak church for the deaf-mute' in 1975.
- Begin missionary organization for the Disabled
- Bethesda Mission (Feb, 1976), Korea Milal Mission a gram of wheat (Oct, 1976), the Siloam Mission*June, 1977), the Shinmangae Mission(1981) etc.

- Turning period of the Disabled movement in Korea was when ‘the Declaration of the International Year of Disabled Persons’(UN, 1981) was started.
 - Korea government also declared 1981 as ‘the year of Disabled Persons’.
 - 20th April appointed as ‘Day of the Disabled Persons’
- This situation contributed to the establishment of “the Research Institute of the Differently Abled Person’s Rights in Korea” in 1987, to enhance the consciousness of rights of the Disabled.

3-1. 1988~2008: From Seoul Paralympics (1988) to just before enactment of <the Act of aid and of prohibit discriminating against people with disabilities(2008)>

- the Disabled movement groups opposed the 1988 Seoul Paralympics led by the military regime(1961~1992) that was the symbol of anti-democratic and anti-human rights.
- More than 100 Disabled organizations of Korea formed ‘Korea Differently Abled Federation’ to legislate ‘the act for recovering on human rights and the life of equality of the Disabled’.
- In 1989, Amendment of the Welfare of Disabled Persons Act.
 - Need human rights and dignity for the Disabled, not as people who simply have to receive charity and dispensation.
- Meanwhile, NCKK went with the stream of UN and World churches
 - In 1985, it concerned the mission of Disabled as part of the project “The Equality and the participation”
 - In February 1989, established ‘the Committee of the Disabled movement’; claimed ‘the Week of the Disabled’(include 20th April, the day of the Disabled)

- In 1993, adopted ‘the Practical principle for the recovery of the Disabled’s human rights : 7 themes’

- In 2005, announced ‘the Disabled Declaration of NCKK’ - The Disabled is the Human Being itself in front of God’

Assembly of the PCK announced ‘the Disabled’s Charter” (April, 2001)

- This period, the Disabled church movement and Disabled mission joined with the Human Rights Group of the Disabled

4-1. 2008-2013: Enact <the Act of aid and of prohibit discriminating against persons with disabilities (2008) and present day

- Korea church and society collaborated on the related ministry of the Disabled without clear sense of the Disabled movement Motto “ From Awakening to Action”

- The Disabled were marginalized and regarded as subjects of compassion and dispensation.

- UN enacted “ the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”(2006),

- In June 2003, DPI- Korea, RI-Korea participated in the board of UN-ESCAP and in Sep 2003 organized ‘Korean Solidarity for International Convention on Rights of Person with Disabilities (- joined 13 the disabled organization).

They put the contents of ‘the Personal mobility’ and ‘the living independently’ into the draft.

- The Convention of UN influenced enactment (Mar 2007) and the enforcement(Apr 2008) of “the act to prohibit discriminating against people with disabilities”, which was the output of taking part in ‘the promote and enact solidarity of the Disabled activist’.

- At national level, big change for the policy of the Disabled needed
 - The meaning of enacting the law -
- Participation of the Disabled itself and solidarity of various movement groups, Environment/Peace/Human Rights,
- Paradigm shift from dispensation to Human Rights.
- Enhanced discourse on discrimination in Korean society.
- Korean Church got a challenge on discrimination,
- Korean church to set the practical task of the leading role to oppose the Disabled discrimination.
- For this, Korean church has to build up the Disabled Theology.

(From theology ‘for the Disabled’ developed ‘the theology with the Disabled’. Now Disabled theology is going forward to the theology of “the Disabled and the Non-Disabled together”).

5. The Core of the Disabled mission

- In 21st century, the core of the Disabled mission is to listen the voice of the Disabled absolutely.
- We all try to put the values of inclusion, participation, equality into the Disabled’s life.
- For this, we take the census of the Disabled population to plan the predictable social welfare policy and a short-long term budgeting.
- We should train specialists for the Disabled mission, establish the Research institute for the Disabled, and study the theology of the Disabled.

- The Kingdom of God, new heaven and new earth will be unfolded with the recovering of the Disabled.

The recovering is that the Disabled and the non-disabled respect and together sustain relationships with each other.

Home based Welfare Services in Taiwanese Communities – an Overview

Rev. Chen Ching-Yuan

At the end of 2016, the population of Taiwan's physical and mental disabilities reached 1.161 million people, accounting for 4.9% of the total population. In support of the United Nations Convention on the Rights and Interests of Persons with Disabilities, Taiwan welfare service is actively implementing and promoting its efforts to draw the public's attention to the human rights of the physically and mentally handicapped.

The main measures of physical and mental welfare services in Taiwan are as follows:

1. To protect economic security: According to the family economic situation, the level of obstacles, etc., to provide financial subsidies, day care and accommodation care costs, home care costs, social insurance premiums, tax relief, lease housing rent, housing loan interest subsidy and promotion of property trust system.
2. Home-based and community-based care services: personal care services such as physical care services, family service, room service, community residence, community day care, family care, community residence, etc. short-term care, caregiver support, caregiver training and study, family care visits and other support services to promote physical and mental health, social participation and self-reliance, and to strengthen the ability of families to take care of people with disabilities.
3. Institutional day care and accommodation care services: counselling for physical/mental welfare institutions to improve service quality and to assist them to improve facilities, equipment, and in response to care needs of the various types of physical and mental welfare institutions.
4. To promote the identification and needs assessment of the new system: In response to the international classification of physical and mental

disorders, the United Nations World Health Organization classification, the International Health Function and Physical and Mental Disorders Classification System (ICF) eight classification system, the full implementation of the identification and demand assessment of the new system, clearly identify the object of service in order to meet the exact needs of physical and mental disabilities, to provide appropriate services.

5. Establish a barrier-free living environment: commissioned to set up multi-functional, communication and information aids, orthodontics and action aids to promote the center, the establishment of public transport and public buildings barrier-free environment equipment and facilities to promote the network and information that obstruct the environment and promote the translation of public service sign language.
6. Expansion of social participation: Dedicated parking spaces for physically and mentally disabled persons, half-price concessions for public transport in domestic civil camps, preferential treatment for access to scenic areas, recreational areas or cultural and educational facilities, equal opportunities and full participation.

“I am Special”

Prapakorn Sukkho

When we talk about “Disability”, people have different understandings about it. It can refer to incompleteness or to a hereditary defect. Even though I am a disabled person, I look at myself as “I am Special”.

As far as I can remember, my grandmother told me that when I was a child, I couldn’t walk. The doctor diagnosed that I had cerebral palsy/CP. My muscle system worked too slowly. At that time, I had only my parents who tried to help me in all ways until I got the chance to be a patient of Queen Sirikit, King Phummipol’s wife; that had provided the proper treatment for my case. Every week, my father took me to the pool and taught me to hit my leg in the water and exercise other parts of the body while I wore a life jacket. I walked only 10 steps and then fell down, and kept practicing, but falling down became part of my life.

My parents passed away at the same time. So, I moved to stay with my grandmother. I studied at a local school in my village. My problem at that time was that I didn’t want to go to school because friends mocked me. But I tried to be patient during the time of torture. (From grade 2 until Secondary school, I received a scholarship because of the poor situation of my family and did not get any rights from the government for disabled person.)

Since I graduated, I wanted to have a college education. At that time my scholarship was over but I did not give up and tried to write a letter to the foundation to get supported. I got a scholarship for study and tried to work at a part-time job while I was a student. When I asked to get the government loan from university, there were 15,000 other people and the university would chose only 1,000 people.

Once I went to an interview but I was confused and did not know where to walk in and where to go for the interview. When I decided to get an interview with one professor, I was thankful to God who sent me to talk with her. She was a friend of Director of Rangsi School, one of the Christian schools under the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT). She prayed for me. If I got the

disability card, that would allow me to get free education and all the rights that disabled people should get. Therefore, I tried hard to contact government organizations until I got all the rights for disabled people. At that time, I was a 3rd year student of the College of Psychology, Ratchapat University. After graduation until now, I worked at the Red Cross center in Fang district, Chiang Mai province, in the position of full-time staff. My job is helping others and whenever I meet special people like me, I may talk to them and help them to get the rights that special people like us should get. That makes me happy to be a special person in the special way that I am.

List of Participants

No.	Participants Name
1	Dr. Alphinus Kambodji
2	Mrs. Anna Julian
3	Ms. AoWapangyingla
4	Ms. Baraigee Momota
5	Rev. Chen Ching-Yuan
6	Ms. Cynthia Shinde
7	Rev. Christopher Rajkumar
8	Ms. Dewi Lestari
9	Mr. George Shey
10	Ms. Indrawati Raman
11	Prof. Irwanto
12	Ms. Isabella Novsima
13	Mr. John Julian Andrews
14	Rev. Kang Suk-Hoon
15	Ms. Lee Ye-Ja
16	Mr. Ma Htu Seng
17	Mr. Mung Kham Cin
18	Ms. Mya Thida Lwin Precious Grace Baptist Church.
19	Ms. Naw Lily Htoo
20	Ms. Naw Shay Myar
21	Ms. Ngwa Tar
22	Mr. R. Norman Abraham Simson
23	Ms. Nyunt Nyunt Thein
24	Mr. Prapakorn Sukkho
25	Dr. Rey Ty
26	Mr. Ritson Manyonyo
27	Mr. Sai Aung Tun

28	Mr. Sajay Kumar
29	Rev. Sibulalichira
30	Mr. Soung Yein
31	Rev. Stephen Arulampalam
32	Mr. Suwanto Suwanto
33	Rev. Thaung Kyi
34	Rev. Thein Lwin
35	Mr. Wah Naw Bway Say
36	Ms. Yu Ya Myo Myint
37	Mr. Sunny Mollick
38	Mr. Nant Mi Mi Wai Zin,
39	Mr. Van Irene
40	Dr. Mathews George Chunakara



Participants



Workshop Session



Closing Session



Mr. Sajay Kumar (India), a participant draws a portrait by his leg during a session of the consultation

“All people with or without disabilities are created in the image of God and called to be in an inclusive community, in which they are empowered to use their various God-given gifts. Persons with disabilities have great capacities and gifts to be shared in the household of God, which should be a ‘caring and inclusive’ community. The Church is called by God to embrace persons, including those with disabilities, and assist them in exercising their various abilities and spiritual gifts.”

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA



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