



Ecumenical

Disability

Advocates Network

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - MARCH 2005

A photograph of a person in a wheelchair moving away from the camera down a brightly lit hallway. The person is wearing a plaid shirt, a blue cap, and has a large oxygen tank mounted on their back. The hallway has light-colored walls with wooden handrails and a polished floor that reflects the person and the wheelchair. There are some notices or posters on the wall.

**A new platform for
development**

WHAT'S INSIDE

▶ CCA Pre-Assembly Workshop

▶ Introduction to Beautiful Gate

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a Difference



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EDAN is a quarterly publication of the WCC programme on persons with disabilities within the Justice and Peace Creation Team. Issues and views in this publication are opinions held by the members and contributors and not necessarily of EDAN or WCC.

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Weaving the web of interdependence of persons with disabilities

This issue of our Newsletter comes to you late and we want to apologize for this and to explain that the quarter was characterized by an unusual succession of a number of activities away from our office in Nairobi, which occasioned travel on various missions in our course of duty.

In January, we traveled to New York where we participated in the 5th United Nations Ad Hoc Committee working on an Integral International Convention on the Promotion and protection of the Rights and dignity of Persons with disabilities. This is a process in which we have been involved since last year when we participated in the 3rd and 4th Sessions. The 5th Session, like the others before took two weeks during which the Committee had twenty sittings covering informal negotiations of Articles seven through to 15. We have included a detailed report on this in a report, which we publish in this issue.

In February, we had two main activities, which took us to Geneva and to Stockholm. In Geneva, we attended the Central Committee whose main highlight over and above the usual business was the planning for the 9th WCC General Assembly to take place in Porto Alegre, Brazil in February 2006. Our participation was important as it gave us an opportunity to ensure that concerns relating to the participation of persons with disabilities in the Assembly were in the Agenda of the planning Committee. It is logical that EDAN as a product of the 8th Assembly attends the 9th Assembly and get an opportunity to report what it has done as a decentralized programme of the World Council of Churches within the Justice Peace and Creation Team. There is a lot of support for the participation but ensuring active involvement as participants is not that obvious.

Participation of persons with various disabilities call for early planning to avoid frustrations arising from barriers in the built environment and to ensure their issues is given a hearing. These are some of the issues discussed with the staff in the Assembly planning office. We have since then been assured that the team of staff which went to Porto Alegre thereafter to assess the venues for various activities were fully briefed on the needs for persons with disabilities and that the local organizing committee is looking into all the recommendations that we gave.

The newly constituted Reference Group made up of five people met in Stockholm, Sweden immediately following the Central Committee meeting in Geneva. The purpose of the Reference Group is to assist in envisioning the work of EDAN and to provide guidance on implementation of various ideas from itself and from various other organs of the WCC. As was the case with the Central Committee, participation of EDAN in the General Assembly took the center stage in the deliberations of the Reference Group. It was affirmed that there would be a three days disability/EDAN pre-assembly event to take place in Porto Alegre on 11th, 12th and 13th February just before the commencement of the Assembly on the 14th February. The event will among other things explore in details some of the themes that EDAN has since 1998 engaged in, make an evaluation and provide recommendation for the next phase of the work. These recommendations will be presented to the General Assembly for decision and guidance.

The Reference group recommended that the EDAN Pre-assembly event be open to a wide participation of persons with disabilities since participation in such



events have been known to be central to ecumenical experience with life long transformation for many. However, the major challenge is how to finance such participation and especially the travel expenses. There is a limited group of carefully selected delegates from each of the WCC region having taken consideration to different disabilities and gender who will receive full sponsorship but we also have opened the possibilities of participation by self sponsored delegates or those who can secure sponsorship. Such intending participants are requested to get in touch with our office to ensure that their individual needs are catered for and that they are accounted for as participants. Partial sponsorship to cover accommodation and board may be considered for those able to pay for their travel to Porto Alegre. Application for this will need to reach our offices before 15th July. We want also to appeal to member churches and Ecumenical agencies to provide

to strive towards inclusion, participation and active involvement of PWDs in the spiritual, social, economic and structural life of the church.



sponsorship to persons with disabilities who are their members to take part in this important event.

The other highlight of the quarter was a very successful disability Pre-assembly for the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), which took place in Crystal Spring House, Chiang Mai, Thailand between 26 and 30th March. There were twenty-two participants from different parts of the region and the main discussion was around the theme of the paradigm shift from independence versus dependence to interdependence. There were also discussions around the theme of eco-justice movement and the place of persons with disabilities. The workshop also explored the subject of globalization with its positive and negative effects on persons with disabilities. Whereas economic globalization was considered to very negatively affect persons with disabilities in the poorer parts of the world, the introduction of jobs that do not require muscle power and the assistive technology was seen as playing a significant part in making the lives of persons with disabilities better. However, such technology was seen to be largely unaffordable for the majority of persons with disabilities.

The Bible reflections were around the Old Testament view of disabilities with its emphasis on pure/clean and impure/unclean and the shift to the New Testament with the examples of restoration of persons with disabilities into the life of the society through the healing miracles of Jesus. The reflections were led by Professor Unha Chae from Korea who is herself physically disabled and currently teaching in one of the theological colleges in Korea. The Pre-assembly had an opportunity to look at the disability encounter in the Bible from the viewpoint of persons with disabilities under the guidance of a theological scholar who is herself a person with a disability.

A major achievement of that event was the participation of most of the Pre-assembly delegates to the CCA General Assembly and to present a statement committing the member churches to include disability issues in their agenda and to strive towards inclusion, participation and active involvement of persons with disabilities in the spiritual, social, economic and structural life of the church. CCA undertook to explore ways of addressing disability concerns alongside its other programmes and to get member churches and National councils to embrace this trend. There are all prospects that the Asia Ecumenical Network of persons with disability is on its way up with the commitment of those present and the support of CCA and

especially Rev. Dr. Lee Hong Jung under whom disability work in CCA falls. He pledged to include disability agenda in the Justice and International Department programme planning to which he is the Director. Our hopes are even more justified by the fact that the newly elected General Secretary Rev. Dr. Prawate Kid-arn has previously worked with EDAN and helped organize the first EDAN/CCA Conference in Bangkok, Thailand when disability was in his department before he became the Associate General Secretary. We are convinced that the New General Secretary will give all the necessary support to Rev. Dr. Lee Hong Jung in this work.

The Encounter and fellowship with persons with disabilities from different parts of the region, with different experiences and responsible for different initiatives was very enriching. One such initiative is that of Sia Siew Chin, a lady on wheelchair from the Methodist church in Malaysia whose story and initiative in promoting the improvement of the lives of persons with disabilities is featured in this issue. ■

Sam Kabue



A Proposal for a New Global Platform for Development

What is ACT Global?

ACT-Global is the provisional name being given to a proposed new global alliance of church-related agencies and specialised ministries¹ who work ecumenically in relief and development. The name is provisional as it

would need to be approved by the ACT International Emergency Committee. If the ACT Emergency Committee does not give their approval, another name will need to be found.



What is its history?

Since the end of World War 2, churches throughout the world have established ecumenical agencies or departments within national churches to respond to the needs of those suffering from poverty and injustice. Over the past 60 years these organisations, whether in the North, South or East, have become increasingly professional and are now at the forefront of responding to emergency situations and supporting or undertaking long-term development programmes. The Ecumenical Partners Survey undertaken by the World Council of

Since 2000, some agencies and specialised ministries have expressed the need for a new instrument to strengthen programmatic collaboration in the area of development, to provide a platform for discussing development issues, to strengthen accountability and to provide greater global visibility for their work. Discussions have taken place in various fora: the Heads of Agencies Network, a joint working group of this network and the WCC, a meeting of some agencies from the North and South in Copenhagen in November 2004 and more recently, a meeting convened by the WCC in Bossey in February 2005. Participants at the

Bossey meeting, who came from agencies, specialised ministries and churches from the North, South and East, asked the WCC to oversee the formation of a new global platform for development and relief organisations.

currently no adequate global platform where agencies and specialised ministries can discuss important issues of development and, where policies and other written resources can be shared.



What does ACT Global hope to achieve?

Agencies and specialised

ministries are at the forefront of addressing issues of global poverty and injustice throughout the world. However,

Churches indicates that this network now has a combined income of approximately US\$1 billion which makes it one of the largest relief and development networks.

Over the past 15 years, agencies/specialised ministries (as they have become known) have sought ways of strengthening their collaboration with each other. Agencies from the North met regularly as the Heads of Agencies Network from the early 1990's-2004. In 1995, following extensive discussions, Action by Churches Together (ACT) was established to provide a coordinated response to emergencies. In 2000, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) was formed to coordinate the advocacy of churches and church related organisations on particular issues (currently HIV/ AIDS and trade). In 2002, the WCC Round Table was established as a forum for enhancing cooperation between WCC and its funding partners.

- ✿ there is currently no adequate global platform where agencies and specialised ministries can discuss important issues of diakonia, development, gender, the environment, human rights, justice, international affairs and so on and where policies and other written resources can be shared
- ✿ lack of coordination and collaboration between organisations means that agencies and specialised ministries are not as effective or efficient as they could be
- ✿ there is no coordinated approach to developing the capacity of agencies and specialised ministries in the South
- ✿ lack of consistent reporting requirements by funding agencies in the North places extra



such as Oxfam or Save the Children, despite being one of the largest global networks

- many funding organisations, particularly in Europe, are now giving preference to funding coalitions rather than individual organisations.

ACT Global will therefore:

- ensure that there is a platform where agencies and specialised ministries from the North, the South and the East can discuss development issues, share analyses and policy documents, reflect theologically on their work, hold each other accountable through a code of good practice and learn from each other
- encourage agencies and specialised ministries to work collaboratively in responding to the long-term development needs of local communities
- encourage agencies to work collaboratively in building the capacity of church-related agencies and specialised ministries in the South
- explore strategies for harmonising the reporting requirements of Northern agencies and specialised ministries
- work closely with ACT International to ensure an integrated approach to relief and development
- work closely with the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and encourage

burden on churches, agencies and specialised ministries in the South

- there is a lack of integration between relief and development which negatively impacts on local communities
- advocacy initiatives could be much more effective if they were coordinated (as is seen through the work of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance)
- the ecumenical family receives little visibility and recognition compared with other families

agencies and specialised ministries to cooperate in their advocacy work

- enhance visibility of the ecumenical family through the use of a family name such as *ACT Global*. This name will be mostly used in conjunction with national names; for example, Christian Aid, a member of *ACT Global*
- explore possibilities of making joint funding proposals for particular programmes.



What won't ACT Global do?

ACT Global will not be a funding mechanism in that it won't have funds to allocate to programmes. However, as noted above, its members may collaborate in exploring the possibility of seeking funds as a consortia from major donors such as the EU and UN funding agencies, trusts and foundations.

How will ACT Global relate to existing ecumenical instruments?

The agencies and specialised ministries who have expressed a need for ACT Global are committed to strengthening existing global ecumenical structures, especially the WCC, ACT and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. They



ACT Global will encourage agencies to work collaboratively in building the capacity of church-related agencies and specialised ministries in the South



ongoing role of WCC in the new platform will be developed in the coming months.

Why ACT Global when we already have ACT International?

There are a number of important differences between ACT Global and ACT International.

recognise the need for a close working relationship between global ecumenical instruments which focus on relief, development and advocacy. One vision is that in the long term, ecumenical work in emergencies, advocacy and development might come together under one umbrella with a common name. This does not mean that all instruments would have a similar organisational structure, but rather that they would share a common mission and values.

What is the role of the World Council of Churches in ACT Global?

At the request of a number of organisations, WCC has agreed to facilitate the formation of ACT Global. The

- ACT International is a network for responding to emergency situations. ACT Global will focus on long-term development needs. However, the two bodies will work closely together to ensure an integrated approach from relief to development.
- ACT International is a funding mechanism which mobilises resources and facilitates a coordinated response to emergency situations. ACT Global will not facilitate the transfer of funds between donor and implementer.



- ✦ ACT International was established by the WCC and the Lutheran World Federation who continue as their parent bodies. While WCC will play a central role in ACT Global, it will not be a 'parent' role and ACT Global will be independent of WCC structures.

However, many agencies/ specialised ministries are engaged in both emergency response and long-term development and therefore it is essential that ACT International and ACT Global work closely together.

Why will *ACT Global* engage in advocacy when we already have WCC and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance?

There are a number of ecumenical actors engaged in advocacy. WCC has an active advocacy agenda which it carries out on behalf of the churches. The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance has a broad and diverse membership and focuses on two major issues; global trade and HIV/AIDS. The work of WCC and EAA in advocacy receives strong support from many agencies and specialised ministries. However working in the field of development highlights other issues where advocacy is required and many agencies and specialised ministries have specialist staff working on



advocacy and campaigns. *ACT Global* would encourage greater collaboration between these organisations and would assist in communicating their work to the wider network.

Why use the name *ACT*?

If greater visibility is to be achieved, a common 'family' name for agencies and specialised ministries involved in relief and development is necessary. As noted above, it is not expected that organisations will give up their national name, but rather will use the ACT name as a sub-title, or 'family' name, e.g: Christian Care Zimbabwe, a member of *ACT Global*. ACT is a name that is gradually gaining visibility as the global ecumenical instrument for emergency response. It is hoped that using the name *ACT Global* will help reinforce this name recognition as well as highlight the close working relationship between ACT International (for emergencies) and *ACT Global* (for development). If another name is used, there is concern that attempts to gain global visibility for two different names could be detrimental to both.

Who can be members of *ACT Global*?

ACT Global will be an alliance of church related agencies and specialised ministries who work



ecumenically in relief and development and who want to work more collaboratively with others. Churches differ from country to country in the structures they have established for undertaking development and relief work. Some churches have joined with others to establish separate ecumenical agencies while others have established a department within their own church. Criteria for membership will not be based on the structure of the organisation but rather on the following:

- ✿ adherence to the vision, mission and code of good practice of *ACT Global*
- ✿ willingness to work together with other church-related agencies and specialised ministries in mutual accountability
- ✿ support being offered to all people regardless of race, gender, belief, nationality, ethnic origin or political persuasion.

Working in the field of development highlights other issues where advocacy is required.



- ✿ members must not be part of another global body which has a similar purpose (this does not include membership of a Christian World Communion).

The membership criteria will be further refined during 2005.

What are the next steps?

A small Steering Group has been established comprising churches, church related agencies and specialised ministries from the North and South to work closely with the WCC to develop *ACT Global*. A consultant has also been contracted to assist with the process. It is hoped that *ACT Global* will be launched in late 2005. Until then, the Steering Group will work on drafting founding documents (values, mission statement, objectives and a code of good practice)

and will establish two or three pilot projects. They will also engage in a consultation process with churches and church-related organisations engaged in relief and development to ensure that their needs are taken into account and that there is broad consensus in how this new platform develops.

Please let us know your thoughts...

The Steering Group wants to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to share their thoughts, comments and any concerns they may have about *ACT Global*. Please contact either Beth Ferris at WCC (egf@wcc-coe.org; tel: 41 22 791 62 05) or Jill Hawkey (jha@wcc-coe.org; tel: 44 1843 580 479) with your comments. Please also let us know if you would like to receive regular updates during the year as the platform develops.

Steering group members:

- Beth Ferris (WCC-convenor)
- Baffour Amoa (FECCIWA-Ghana)
- Noemi Espinoza (CCD Honduras)
- Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel (Bread for the World, Germany)
- Leonid Kishkovsky (Orthodox Church of America- USA)
- Daleep Mukarji- Christian Aid (UK)
- John McCullough- Church World Service, USA

Ex-officio:

- ACT International
- Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
- Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa

March 14 2005 ■

- 1 Church-related agencies are defined as those which have been established by the churches (usually at the national level) to undertake relief, development and/or advocacy work on their behalf. Churches are represented on the governance of these agencies and agencies are accountable to the churches. Specialised ministries are those departments within a church (usually at the national level) established to undertake relief, development and/or advocacy work on behalf of that particular church.
- 2 This includes adherence to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.



Communiqué

CCA Pre-Assembly Workshop on People with Disability (Differently Abled people)

*Weaving the Web of Interdependence of People with Disabilities for
Eco-justice and Peace In the Age of Information Technology*



We, the participants of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) Pre-Assembly Workshop on People with Disabilities (PWDs), representing various denominations and organizations from different countries, gathered at Crystal Spring House, Chiang Mai, Thailand from 26-30 March, 2005 to deliberate on issues affecting PWDs in church and society under the theme

come to the conclusion that the Bible is the foundation of all the work that we need to do in the area of disability.

We believe that our life as people with disabilities is sustained by a strong faith in God who is love. The 'image of God' in which we have been created implies that all human beings, irrespective of their diversity, share a common humanity. Therefore, any form of discrimination amounts to distortion of God's image in us, and hence deemed sin. For us, the love of God has been most concretely manifested in the person and work of Jesus Christ, our liberator, in whom we also find our proto-type. Jesus provided a

paradigm shift vis-a-vis issues around disability. The Nazareth Manifesto (Lk.4:18-19) with which he commenced his ministry, is for us, a revolutionary statement of integral liberation with clear reference to and ramifications for people with disabilities. Healing the sick and the disabled was, for Jesus, a fundamental aspect of establishing God's reign of justice on earth. In the process, Jesus challenged the unjust social, economic, cultural and

Jesus never blamed the victims, rather confronted the systems that caused pain and sickness to others



"Weaving the Web of Interdependence of People With Disabilities for Eco-justice and Peace in the Age of Information Technology"; aware of the deliberations of the previous conference, organized jointly by CCA and the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) in

Bangkok in 2003 for this same purpose; and cognizant of the paradigm shift from independence versus dependence to interdependence; and having taken time to discuss this paradigm shift and its significance to relationship, especially inclusion, participation and active involvement of PWDs in all spiritual, social, economic and structural life of the church and society; have identified six areas of concern that the church needs to address. Further, having explored in our Biblical reflections, we have

religious barriers that stood in the way of approximating this just world order. Jesus' way of healing the sick was holistic and organic. It had an earthly touch about it. For example, when he healed the blind man (Jn.9) he did it by using mud and saliva, thus recreating the blind man as an earthling. This means that our relationship with nature is important for our well being, both literally and symbolically. When indigenous peoples are displaced from their homeland (earth) they actually get 'disabled'. Healing, here, would require us join the struggles for land rights and eco-justice. Jesus also challenges the traditional sin-sickness correlation here when he makes it clear that the cause of blindness here was not the sin of the blind man or his parents. Blindness and other forms of disability are also caused by structural sins, sinful activities carried out by structures of injustice. Differently put, Jesus never blamed the victims, rather confronted the systems that caused pain and sickness to others. The



response of Peter and John to the plea of the lame person in Acts 3 is an example of a healing sign that challenged the logic of charity and materialism (gold and silver). The gospel challenge is to embrace the God of justice, not Mammon, the god of globalization. The Cornelius story in Acts 10, once again, establishes the gospel truth that every one is equal and dignified. The reign of God that Jesus inaugurated is one where every one enjoys dignity and equality.

Following our extensive discussions, we wish to recommend the following from the six sub-themes which were the focus of our discussions.

1. STRENGTHENING ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

1.1 Destruction of the natural environment causing disease and natural disasters making people disabled

We recommend that campaigns be intensified for the protection of the environment by:

- Avoiding the use of chemicals that are now known to cause disabilities.
- Conserving and protecting the environment to avoid natural disasters that are known to cause disabilities
- Assisting organizations of the disabled to link up with other environmental groups that support similar causes
- Promoting environmental conservation projects such as tree planting, mangrove planting etc.
- Encouraging eco-friendly farming that generates income and provides eco-therapy for the general society
- Strengthening Campaigns against illegal nuclear testing by industrialized nations to the south
- Strengthening campaigns against illegal dumping of hazardous nuclear and chemical waste by industrialized nations to the south

1.2 Built Environment is not Barrier-free

We recommend removal of all forms of barriers in the built up environment by:

- Influencing local authorities and personnel such as architects, town planners, policy makers etc to consider access for PWDs in their designs
- Encouraging local authorities to consult with PWDs on development projects
- Encouraging the enforcement of existing laws and regulations on the built environment

1.3 Indiscriminate waste disposal resulting in environmental damage

We recommend reduction of harmful waste through the practice of reducing, reusing and recycling by:

- Reducing, reusing and recycling of waste in society especially in churches
- Promoting recycling programs in which PWDs could take part

1.4 Inequitable distribution of resources e.g. general land distribution, business opportunities for marginalized groups

We recommend equitable distribution of available natural resources by:

- Giving due consideration to PWDs in the distribution of resources
- Including PWDs in the sustainable development agenda
- Including PWDs in poverty reduction strategies

2. RECONSTRUCTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

Disability is often looked upon as a charity issue and not a justice issue. It is the right of PWDs to be included in the society, particularly in the areas of education and employment. We recommend that:

- Awareness Campaigns on disability issues be organized in the church.
- PWDs be involved in consultative and participatory processes on discussions for the rights of PWDs
- Programs, courses and curriculum on human rights to include the rights of PWDs
- CCA and NCCs urge their governments to support the development of the UN



Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Dignity of PWDs and the Biwako Millennium Framework

- ☀ CCA and NCCs support organizations of PWDs to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and legislation that affect them
- ☀ CCA and NCCs support the education of PWDs to enable them to survive in a competitive world
- ☀ Advocate for the intensification of primary health care as a means of curbing incidences of disabilities

3. ENHANCING PEOPLE'S SECURITY AND PEACE

In the area of enhancing people's security and peace, we recommend that:

- ☀ PWDs be included in discussions on peace and security
- ☀ Awareness raising on violence and abuse of PWDs be organized in the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) work
- ☀ Campaigns against discrimination of PWDs in matters pertaining to migration, especially in conflict situations be organized

4. BUILDING GENDER JUSTICE

In the area of building gender justice to promote inclusive societies, we recommend that:

- ☀ Women with disabilities be included in all fora that address women's issues in general
- ☀ Women With Disabilities be included in ecumenical structures
- ☀ Deliberate efforts to promote inclusive education for Women With Disabilities
- ☀ Opportunities for Women With Disabilities be expanded to serve in the church at all levels including as parish ministers

5. CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

Realizing the need that diversity is to be celebrated we recommend that:

- ☀ Intensive advocacy be made for the recognition of gifts and abilities of PWDs to enhance the life of the church

- ☀ Churches to be made fully accessible to PWDs to ensure full participation in worship and other church activities
- ☀ CCA and NCCs establish coordination programs for disability issues
- ☀ Encourage the development of assistive devices and local products using technologies and materials that are appropriate to the local conditions

6. INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY TO INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Realizing the need for assistive technology and accessibility of ICT on accounts of costs we recommend that:

- ☀ Advocacy be carried out for lowering and subsidizing the costs
- ☀ Efforts be made to bridge the Digital Divide by encouraging the establishment of learning centers that are accessible to PWDs
- ☀ Designers and developers be encouraged to adopt Universal Design that caters for everyone with special reference to PWDs
- ☀ PWDs be encouraged and provided opportunities to train as designers and developers of ICT

In conclusion, appreciating the initiative of CCA to organize the PWDs Pre-Assembly, we would like to call on them to find ways to ensure continuity of disability work in CCA beyond the Assembly and to extend it to the NCCs, other ecumenical organizations and the member churches in the region. In order to do so, we propose the establishment of a taskforce with adequate representation of PWDs; responsible to CCA and working with the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) of the WCC. This taskforce should be mandated with the responsibility of establishing a network and process to keep the disability agenda alive in the life of the church, sharing experiences and to engage in theological reflection.

We further urge the General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia to support the implementation of the recommendations in this Communiqué. 📄



ECUMENICAL DISABILITY ADVOCATES NETWORK

Report of the participation at the 5th Session of the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Integral International Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities

NEW YORK, 24TH JANUARY TO 4TH FEBRUARY 2005

By S. N. Kabue, EDAN.

INTRODUCTION:

In its resolution 56/168 of 19 December 2001, the UN General Assembly decided to establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, based on the holistic approach in the work done in the fields of social development, human rights and non-discrimination and taking into account the recommendations of the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission for Social Development.

EDAN has in line with the WCC August 2003 Central Committee recommendation endeavoured to participate and make a contribution to this on-going UN process towards the development of this convention on the promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The Ad Hoc committee made up of member states

delegations and Non Governmental Organizations in disability field is charged with the responsibility to formulate the convention. It has so far had five sessions of two weeks each. EDAN participated in the 3rd and 4th, both of which took place in 2004.

In its resolution 59/198 of 20 December 2004, the General Assembly decided that the Ad Hoc Committee should hold, within existing resources, prior to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, two sessions in 2005, of 10 working days each, to be held, respectively, from 24 January to 4 February and in July/August.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS:

The fifth session which is the subject of this report took place as planned between 24th January and 4th February 2005 at the usual venue in the UN



headquarters, New York. Our participation during this session was possible through assistance from the United Church of Canada and the Norwegian Church Aid office in Nairobi who jointly financed the airfares, accommodation and board for me and Anjeline my assistant. WCC UN office organized a venue for our accommodation as they had done in the previous sessions.

PARTICIPATION STATUS:

As was the case in the 3rd and 4th sessions in the previous year, EDAN participated as part of the official Kenya delegation. Although we could have participated as WCC, which has an observer status and a Permanent UN representative office,

The main question was whether disabled persons have the legal capacity for decision-making and whether the convention should allow for substituted or assisted decision-making.



participation as part of an official government delegation provides us an opportunity to take part in all aspect of the discussion. The normal procedure is that the task of formulating conventions is the responsibility and prerogative of the member states. Non Governmental Organizations in this particular process normally participate as observers and are only allowed to make contribution at the discretion of the committee coordinator. This is especially so in the informal negotiation stage at which this process is now in.

THE PROCESS:

In the course of its 5th session, the Ad Hoc Committee held 20 meetings. During these meetings, the Committee conducted informal discussions on articles 7.5 to 15 of the draft convention [and reviewed draft articles 16 to 25] and proposed additional articles in accordance with the programme of work adopted at its first meeting,

on 24 January 2005.

The Kenyan delegation during this session was larger than ever before and included government officials, representative from the human right institution and the newly formed Disability Council. There were three of us in the delegation who were incorporated into the delegation but were not government staff. Two members of staff from the Kenyan UN mission were also attached to the delegation and they were very helpful in assisting the delegation to understand the procedures in the UN systems. Among those from the Government were some who did not either have any previous experience in the process or in disability work. It was therefore necessary to ensure proper coordination to enable effective participation not only in the informal

negotiations but also in the various side events. We therefore met at the Kenyan UN mission each morning to recap the previous days work and to plan our participation ahead of time.

DISCUSSIONS AND MAIN EMERGING ISSUES:

As had happened before, those of us who had participated in the previous session had held several meetings to revise the Kenya delegation position and had prepared a working document which became a major point of reference in our participation. The Kenya delegation relationship with the rest of the members of the Africa Group was very cordial. We were able to agree on various articles on which it had earlier been agreed were of interest to the region and that there was need for the Region to take a common stand.

The first of such articles in the session was article 9 on equality before the law and the whole question of legal capacity. Kenya had been selected to take lead in the discussion on this article on behalf of Africa and EDAN was selected from among the Kenyan delegation to be the plenary presenter of the Africa Group Position. Extensive consultation to arrive at a common position had been carried out not only with the members of the Africa Group but also with other delegation. The major issues in the



article included the question on whether disabled persons have the legal capacity for decision-making and whether the convention should allow for substituted, supported or assisted decision-making. Africa held the position that all persons should have the legal capacity and where assistant may be required to exercise that capacity, this should not be taken as an excuse to deny them the opportunity to make their own decision. The time taken to discuss this article and the many reference made to it in later discussions was an indication of its importance to most of the delegates.

Prior to discussion on article 9 was the heated debate on article 8 on Right to life. The major issue hear was the question of what kind of life. Thus, most delegations were convinced that right to life is not enough. One has to have right to quality life and states will need to ensure that people live lives that are not mere survival but rather lives that have a measure of quality.

The issue of when life begins and the need to protect unborn children under threats because of anticipated disabilities came up quite strongly. Non Governmental organization that are against abortion lobbied the delegation to ensure that this concern was addressed but there was deliberate efforts on the part of some to ensure that issues of abortion are not included in the convention.

The other article, which elicited heated negotiations, was article 10 on Liberty and security of the person. The main argument was on what happens if a person with a disability has to have his liberty deprived on account of the Law. The disability in this case has to be considered in regard to confinement to ensure that the deprivation of liberty does not degrade their dignity and respect. Most important, no person should be deprived of his or her liberty on the basis of disability. There were argument as to whether residential education provision should be viewed as deprivation of liberty especially where this is the only delivery strategy available.

Article 11 was on Freedom from Torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The major issue arising in the discussion of this article was the forced medical intervention or the consideration of medical intervention without consent as torture. There were arguments for and against medical intervention without consent. One delegate gave an example of degrading treatment on account of mental illness where painful treatment with long-term side effect was administered on her in the name of medical intervention. Another gave an example of how his life was saved because treatment was administered on him while he was unconscious and therefore not in a position to consent to treatment. This last case was seen as more of an exemption compared with the treatment that most psychiatric users go through.

Article 12 was on Freedom from violence and abuse. There were a lot of similarities on the main argument in this article and that on article 11. Forced institutionalization and the treatment that goes on at homes and institutions were of concern in the



discussions of this article. Exploitation of all type, abuse and help to recover from the effects of all these where they have already taken place featured in the discussion. There were arguments that some of the issues addressed in this article should form a different article as they did not quite relate but this was not resolved.

Article 13 on Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information did not raise many issues, as there was unanimity that the need for information to persons with disabilities seemed very obvious to most delegates. However, the term public information raised questions as to whether it is only the public sector, which is obliged to provide information. The argument in this was that in many

The major issue arising in the discussion of article 11 was the forced medical intervention or the consideration of medical intervention without consent as torture.



states, a lot of what used to be public services are being privatized and thus private organizations providing information to non-disabled persons should be obliged to provide the same to persons with disabilities.

Article 14 on Respect for privacy, the home and the family raised very serious division among the various delegations when it came to issues of freedom of expression on matters of sexuality. To some, this was very important as persons with disabilities are usually denied all means of sexual expression and freedom. To others, to bring about right to sexual expression into this instrument is to introduce rights that are not in any other human right instrument. One delegation reminded the Committee that their work is not to create new rights but rather to provide for the promotion and protection of the already known rights. The Arab delegations and the Holy Sea delegation were totally opposed to having any

mention of freedom of sex in the document. A compromise was suggested by Mexico to indicate that persons with disabilities shall exercise their sexuality in accordance with the customs, practice and the law of their country on equal basis with others. Even this did not appease those who were opposed to the idea of including right to one's sexuality.

Article 15 on Living independently and being included in the community also brought about a lot of argument based on the cultural understanding of living independently. To many in Africa and other parts of the greater World, the concept of living independently does not have a lot of meaning because most people live in community and in an interdependent manner whether or not they are disabled. To those from the West, independent living is a political concept with a long history of struggle and they would like to maintain that heritage as it has some implication in the lives of persons with disabilities there.

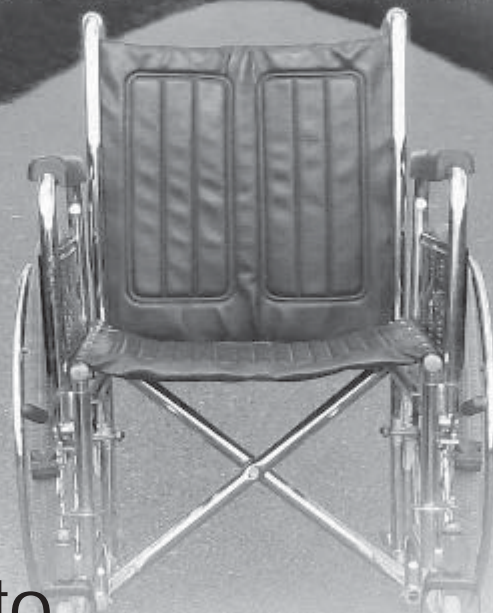
The South, therefore, argued for being included in the community as this is the norm traditionally though it is under

the threat of the emerging trend on individualism and nuclear family concept brought about by the monetary economy and more recently made worse by globalization emphasis on economic production for all individuals.

CONCLUSION:

On 4th February, at its 20th meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee was presented with the report of the Coordinator on the progress of informal discussions on draft articles 7.5 to 15. This report is herein appended. The Committee decided to continue to review the draft convention at its next session.

The 5th Ad Hoc session report of the informal discussion coordinator can be found at the following Website: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc5reporte.htm>



Introduction to beautiful gate

Beautiful Gate Disabled People Caring Centre, Petaling Jaya was established by Chinese Methodist Church since 1995 . Subsequently 2 other centres were set up in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur and Kampar , Perak.

Throughout the years, they have provided accommodation, training services and education advancement to a total of 88 members and have successfully trained 30 of them who have developed enough skills to be independent. The others are still undergoing training.

They also provide information and counseling services, job placement, organized recreation activities and training programmes to more than 800 disabled members in their programmes.

Their goal is for the trainees to be integrated into society, independent and self-supporting through the skills they have acquired and the personal growth achieved.

Their Primary Principles

They believe man is created in God's image, this supernatural value cannot be limited by biological defects.

They believe God loves the world, even for those who are neglected and become outcasts of society such as the disabled.

They believe that all man are equal in God's eyes, the disabled also have the rights, values, and honour that God had given to each of them. They believe the disabled poses similar thinking capability, emotional feelings and spiritual needs



although they have different outward appearance compare to the others.

They believe the disabled can live an independent life if they had appropriate training and support.

Goals

Their goal is to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities, and assist in their total integration into mainstream Malaysian society. This is achieved based on Christ's love through mutual support, advocacy, personal skill development and campaigns to raise public awareness.

Services

Services include Skill Training Services, Social Work Services, Educational Services, Mobile Therapy Services and Awareness Activities. Concepts of Independent Living are used to train the disabled trainees to live independently.

Awards received

(i) January 2000

Beautiful Gate was featured in Malaysia Book of Records for presenting the largest participation in a wheelchair dance at Putra Stadium, Bukit Jalil.

(ii) September 2000

Sia Siew Chin, the executive director of Beautiful Gate was awarded "Outstanding Young Malaysian

year 2000" by the Junior Chamber Malaysia under the category of Humanitarian and Voluntary Service.

(iii) February 2001

Sia Siew Chin, the executive director of Beautiful Gate was awarded the "Outstanding Young Disabled in Asia Pacific Region" by the Taiwan Disabled Association.

(iv) December 2003

Beautiful Gate was again featured in Malaysia Book of Records for organising the largest 3-wheel motor convoy started from Sunway Pyramid.

(v) December 2004

Sia Siew Chin, the executive director of Beautiful Gate was awarded 'Tokoh OKU' by Ministry of Women, Family and Social Development of Malaysia.

The training includes:

- ✿ Skill Training Programme
- ✿ Psychological Rehabilitation Program
- ✿ Out Door Activities
- ✿ Job Placement
- ✿ Information Service
- ✿ Social Awareness Campaign

Meet the

Executive Director - Pastor Sia Siew Chin

She is a pillar of strength to her flock. Pastor Sia Siew Chin may have muscular dystrophy that impairs her movement and confines her to the wheelchair most of the time. But one of the winners of the 2004 Disabled Persons of the Year Award, Sia is a picture of grace and gentleness.

There is not even an iota of bitterness or self-pity in this petite 38-year-old mother of one, given the many trials and tribulations she has gone through because of her inherited genetic problem. Five of her siblings have the same disorder as her. And last year, Sia found out that her daughter who is now five, has not been spared either. "At first,

there was pain in my heart. It was very hard for me to accept this. But in the end, I trust and believe that God will lead my daughter in life."

condition worsened over the years. "I used to be able to run until I was eight years old. But as I grew older, my muscles became weaker. I can only manage to walk a short distance now. Breathing can be painful too at times." Sia is indeed a model of courage. She is always upbeat, no matter what obstacle or adversity lies in her path.

"Don't get discouraged. You have to persist," Sia advises the disabled. It is largely because of her



determination and drive that Beautiful Gate was set up in 1993.

At that time Sia who has a degree in divinity, was an active member of the Society of Chinese Disabled Persons. One day she had a vision in which she saw many sad, desperate people crawling around on their hands and knees. She realised that there was a need to reach out to the disabled, to provide an avenue for them to learn so that they could earn a living and live independently.

Thus Beautiful Gate was set up under the aegis of the Chinese Methodist Church. Since then, three other centres have been set up in Kepong (Kuala Lumpur), Kampar (Perak) and Seremban (Negri Sembilan). Another centre in Batu Berendam, Malacca, is being planned. There are also two group homes in Balakong, Selangor, to enable former trainees of Beautiful Gate to lead independent lives.

For Sia, it is imperative that the disabled be healed spiritually and emotionally to be able to get on in life.

"It is important that we take care of our heart, without which one can easily succumb to self-condemnation and inferiority complex. Many of us ask 'why me' in times of trouble. I believe that whatever happens, God allows it for a reason," says Sia.

The important thing for the disabled, says Sia, is to strive for independent living. And this is what she has been trying to teach to those who come to Beautiful Gate.

The centre's daily activities are open to all, irrespective of race and religion.

There are five areas of skill-training being offered at Beautiful Gate. Living Skill training involves cooking, washing, cleaning, marketing, motor-cycle riding and teamwork living practices. To help members to be gainfully employed, Beautiful Gate offers computer lessons with help from Lim Kok Wing University College. Systematic College Petaling Jaya, Lion Clubs of KL Central and Jen Software have also joined forces to provide IT training.

Beautiful Gate also conducts language classes, book-keeping and handicraft services. Physiotherapy and sport activities are available. In fact, annual tournaments of wheelchair badminton and table tennis are held to encourage group participation. More importantly, Beautiful Gate provides counselling for the disabled and their families.



Pastor Sia Siew Chin

In 2003, Beautiful Gate set up its own Performing Art Troupe.

To help members who are unable to find employment, Beautiful Gate set up a recycling workshop at its premises in SS2, Petaling Jaya, last year. Members are tasked to sort and pack recyclable items before selling them to the respective factories.

"We urge the public to donate their recyclable items to us," says Sia.

Despite a tight budget of RM17,000 per month per centre, under Sia's leadership Beautiful Gate is able to provide accommodation, training services and fee advancements to 150 resident-members. So far 25 disabled persons have set up their own businesses with the support of Beautiful Gate.

Beautiful Gate welcomes donations and volunteers who can teach IT, English, and book-keeping among others. The main centre is located at No 29, Jalan SS2/59, 47300 Petaling Jaya (019-2198440/03-78756739/ fax: 03-78762686.

*Borrowed from an article on 'Learning To Cope'
By PANG HIN YUE* 



Coming together to make a difference

What is the WCC Assembly?

The WCC assembly, held every seven or eight years, is the highest governing body of the World Council of Churches. The 9th assembly will be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil from 14-23 February 2006, around the theme "God in your grace, transform the world." Delegates from each of WCC's 342 member churches will come together to evaluate the Council's past work, to reflect together on the theme and to provide guidance and leadership for the Council's future work.

But just as the ecumenical movement is much broader than the WCC, so too the assembly is an opportunity for the larger ecumenical family to come together. Representatives of related organizations, of other churches and other faiths, advisors, and guests will be present as well as a large number of people from all regions who are interested in supporting and learning more about the ecumenical movement. In addition, many Brazilians and Latin Americans will come to the assembly.

While the number of official delegates will be relatively small (less than 800), the *Mutirão* will enable much broader participation in the life of the ecumenical movement. As an integral part of the assembly, the *Mutirão* will provide a space for workshops, celebrations, seminars and exhibits for the whole assembly community.

What is the Mutirão?

The word *Mutirão* comes from a Brazilian word meaning a meeting place and an opportunity to work together for a common purpose. In Brazil, for example, people in poor communities sometimes "make a *mutirão*" to build a house together. They ensure that there is the needed expertise on how to



build a house and then the community works together to realize a concrete objective.

The *Mutirão* at the assembly will provide a space for reflection, celebration, and exhibits. A full programme will provide a rich array of offerings on many different issues, organized by churches and related organizations in all parts of the world. The *Mutirão* will have a particular Latin American and Caribbean focus with many participants from the region and will have a special focus on youth.

Who will participate in the Mutirão?

The *Mutirão* is open to any person, congregation or organization that wishes to accompany the assembly in a spirit of ecumenical sharing, celebration and formation.

What will the Mutirão offer to the Assembly?

The *Mutirão* will offer workshops and seminars, cultural events and exhibits to all participants in the assembly. It will provide a space for home groups to meet. The *Mutirão* will provide an opportunity to deepen substantive reflections on the theme of the assembly and the plenaries presented in the first half of the assembly. Delegates are encouraged to participate in the *Mutirão* offerings and to bring these reflections into the decision-making process.

As an integral part of the assembly, the workshop offerings in the *Mutirão* are intended to supplement and accompany the assembly deliberations. Assembly insights and deliberations are expected to help guide the work of the many churches and ecumenical organizations that will participate in the *Mutirão*.



What will participants in the Mutirão do?

- ✿ Pray together with all assembly participants in morning and evening prayers as part of the assembly community and participate in worship services at midday
- ✿ Engage in daily Bible studies around the assembly theme
- ✿ Participate in some of the 15 workshops organized from 12.30-15h every day
- ✿ Attend seminars on ecumenical formation for those who are new – and not-so-new – to ecumenism
- ✿ Celebrate being together in Latin America by participating in programmes of music, dance and drama and by joining Brazilian youth in the Youth Space
- ✿ Participate in the Women's Space being organized by Brazilian women
- ✿ Follow the assembly plenaries on economic justice, unity, religious pluralism, the Decade to Overcome Violence, Latin America and the theme: "God in your grace, transform the world" as well as business sessions
- ✿ Worship in Brazilian churches and participate in the Latin American celebration on Sunday
- ✿ Browse exhibits prepared by churches, networks, ecumenical organizations, seminaries, and many other organizations
- ✿ Have the opportunity to meet well-known theologians, grassroots Christian activists and many others from all over the world

What can you offer to the Mutirão?

You can come to the *Mutirão* to participate in the many diverse offerings. You can bring a group from your congregation, your agency, your school or your organization. If you would like, we will try to provide a room at the *Mutirão* for your group, to serve as "home space" throughout the assembly.

You can propose to facilitate a workshop or seminar or cultural offering or exhibit. These will be organized by people coming to the *Mutirão* and offer an opportunity for reflection, discussion and celebration. Forms are available to propose a workshop or an exhibit. While the deadline for workshop proposals is 1 July 2005, you are encouraged to submit these as soon as possible. Decisions will be communicated by 1 September at the latest.

Workshops for the *Mutirão* should:

- ✿ encourage open exchange of experiences and ideas. Participatory and creative methodologies are encouraged.
- ✿ be proposed or endorsed by a WCC member church, church-related organization, a recognized ecumenical partner, or by WCC.
- ✿ address key issues facing the churches and the ecumenical movement in today's world and should
- ✿ relate to the theme of the assembly: "God in your grace, transform the world." There is particular interest in workshops which explore alternatives to the present world order and/or which are action-oriented.
- ✿ include youth perspectives to the extent possible. Priority will be given to workshops initiated by youth.

In deciding on workshops, attention will be given to ensuring a diversity of offerings as well as to regional and gender balance. Proposals from traditionally marginalized groups are particularly encouraged. If there are several proposals on a given issue, the proposers will be encouraged to work together in putting together a single workshop or to offer an alternative proposal.

How can you participate in the Mutirão?

To participate in the *Mutirão*, complete a registration form and return it to the assembly office. The assembly office will arrange hotel accommodation for you and include you in all mailings about the assembly. While WCC is able to provide subsidies for only a very few participants in the *Mutirão*, participants are encouraged to be creative in seeking funds to enable their participation.

The registration fee for the assembly ranges from USD100 to USD 350. The cost of a shared hotel room is about USD30 per day and 3 meals cost about USD15. The organizers are working to find lower-cost alternative lodging, particularly for young people.

How can you learn more about the *Mutirão*?

To propose a workshop or exhibit or to request more information about the *Mutirão*, contact mutirao@wcc-coe.org. Workshop proposals from Latin America will be forwarded to the appropriate bodies in the region.

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