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**EDAN is a quarterly publication of the WCC programme on persons with disabilities within the Cluster on issues and Themes, Justice, Peace and Creation Team.**

**Issues and views in this publication are position held by the members and contributors and not necessarily of EDAN or the WCC**

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## **From Bossey to Stockholm**

**A**s some of you might recall, we were to have a seminar organized jointly with Bossey Institute towards the end of this year but due to some unavoidable circumstances, this will not be possible. Bossey Institute is under renovation and will not be completed before the end of the year. Moreover, one of the major working documents for that seminar was to be the draft Interim Theological Statement on disability. This draft is not as yet ready and it is hoped that the drafting group will meet to finalise on in November.

We will, instead of the Bossey seminar hold a major conference to be attended by all of you and others outside our network between 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> May next year in Sweden. This conference will be organized jointly with the Stockholm school of Theology and EDAN among other things, explore the subject of theology and disability. Our draft statement will be the key working document. The second important aspect of this conference will be to bring together the global EDAN network to share our experiences and to plan ahead for the network. This is expected to be a great moment of fellowship for all of us in the network. We will let you have the details regarding travel and other logistics as soon as preparations are completed.

## **Support to EDAN Work Increases**

In general, we are receiving very good cooperation from the different regional desk secretaries in WCC. We have had very good discussions with the coordinator for regional Desk Marta Palma who also doubles up as the Desk Secretary for both Latin America and the Caribbean. In Latin America, she has promised to consider financial supplement for our activities this year. She has also promised to include our Regional Coordinators, Noel, (Latin America) and Gordon Cowans (Caribbean) in the Regional working groups. This is very important step towards integrating EDAN work in the work of the Regional Desks.

Our brother Joseph Ying Bo has informed us that he had a very successful meeting with the leadership of the Christian Conference of Asia during their meeting in Taiwan. Arrangements for him to participate in that meeting was made possible by Mathews George the WCC Asia Desk Secretary. The Regional Conference has pledged their assistance and cooperation with EDAN. Let me mention here that Mathews George as a Desk Secretary has been very helpful. He has pledged to work with us and in a very practical gesture, his Desk is to finance our first Asia conference to take place in Bangkok, Thailand at the end of January next year. Ying Bo and Mathews George with the cooperation of the Christian Conference of Asia are responsible for the planning and organizing of that consultation. We have also held discussions with the Africa Desk Secretary Dr. William Temu and are working out possible areas of cooperation.

## **EDAN in DOV**

During our planning meeting held in Cartigny Switzerland last October, a very strong recommendation was made to have EDAN involved in the WCC work on the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). This request met very positive response. Our Sister Razaka from Madagascar has now been appointed a member of DOV reference group as a representative of EDAN. She attends the first meeting of that reference group this June. We believe that she will be able to articulate



**Sam Kabue**

the disability concerns in the context of systematic wars, violence and human caused disasters and the place of women with disabilities in such environment.

## **EDAN Activity Line Up**

A number of activities are planned for this year. These include:

- \* Participation in the WCC Central Committee in September : Rev. Arne Fritzson and Gordon Cowans will represent EDAN and will organize a “Padare” to sensitize the central committee members and to provide them with a moment of reflection on disability as a subject within the churches.
- \* Second Latin America EDAN Network consultation. This event will take place in Southern Brazil in September and will be hosted by both the Anglican and the Lutheran church. Preparations for it are underway and our Brother Noel Fernandez is responsible.
- \* Indigenous blind peoples seminar in Latin America: This event will take place in Ecuador during the month of August, Noel Fernandez is again responsible for the planning and organizing of this event.
- \* Theological Statement drafting group meeting: This event will take place between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of November and will be attended by those who have been working on the draft.
- \* Two events relating to the African Decade for persons with disability are anticipated this year one to be organized by our Brother Abraham Berinyuu and the other to take place under my guidance in Eastern Africa. The dates for these two are as yet to be agreed on. These two events are carry over work from what should have been done last year.
- \* Our Brother Elie Rhabanny is planning an activity around the question of the rights of women with disabilities in the context of the environment, which he comes from. He is as yet to give details of exactly the form that this activity will take.

Keep in touch with EDAN office



# A Church for All

## The Church as a communion

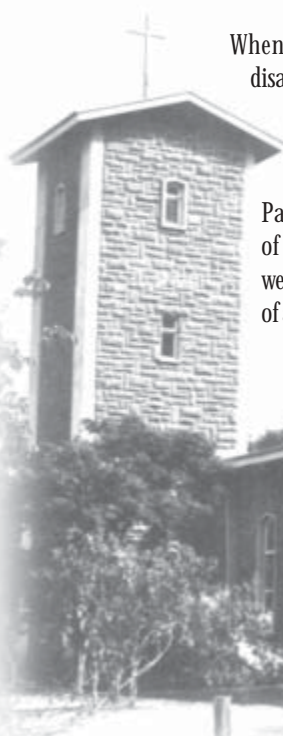
By John Chryssavgis

**T**he church is by definition a place and a process of communion, open to and inviting all people without discrimination. It is a place of hospitality and a place of welcome, in the manner that Abraham and Sarah received God's messengers in the Old Testament (Gen 18). It is an earthly reflection of a divine unity that is at the same time worshipped as Trinity. It is a community of people with different yet complementary gifts. It is a vision of wholeness as well as of healing, of caring and of sharing at once. The Gospel of Christ is challenging:

Just as the body is one and has many members...so it is with Christ... (1 Cor. 12:2)

We all accept and proclaim this is what the church is and stands for. It is the basis of our unity as Christians. Then why is it that, all too often, certain people among us and around us—usually those whom we consider as being unfamiliar or strangers, as somehow being different or perhaps disabled—are marginalized and even excluded, whether by our attitude or the lack of accessibility in our facilities? Wherever this happens, even by passive omission, the church is not being what is called to become. The church is denying its own reality. In the Church, we are called to act differently.

On the contrary, the parts of the body which *seem* to be weaker (we should notice that St. Paul does not say "*actually are*" weaker) are indispensable. (1 Cor. 12:22)



When we think of people with disabilities, too often we tend to think of people who are weak and require our care. Yet in his Epistles, St. Paul offers a different notion of weakness. He implies that weakness is not a characteristic of an individual or a particular

group, but of the entire church. Disability is not one issue that affects certain individuals, but a reality that involves all of us together as the people of God in a broken world. It is our world that is shattered, and each of us comprise one small, fragile and precious piece. We all hold the treasure of God's life in earthen vessels (cf. II Cor. 4:7). Yet we hold it; and, what is more, we hold it together. In our attitudes and actions toward one another, at all times, the guiding principle must be the conviction that we are incomplete, we are less than whole, without the gifts and talents of all people. We are not a full community without one another. Responding to and fully including people with disabilities is not an option for the Churches of Christ. It is the Church's defining characteristic.

### The Revelation of Gifts

Inter-dependence is the key here. Even though the secular world stresses independence, we are called to live as a community dependent on God and on one another. No one of us should be considered a burden for the rest; and no one of us is simply a burden-bearer. "We all bear one another's burdens in order to fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Perhaps it is the starting point in our attitude and in our response that requires redirection at this point. For, we should consider not simply the particular needs, but also the unique gifts of all people in the community. In another passage on the church as the body of Christ, St. Paul writes:

"For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function. So we, though we are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.... We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to each of us." (Rom. 12:4-6)

Every child and every adult, those with disabilities and those without disabilities alike will bring specific and special gifts and talents to the church.





## The Centrality of the Cross

The presence of disability in our lives directly challenges fundamental assumptions and stereotypes that we have acquired over time. The way to respond to members of the community, and in particular to persons with disabilities, is essential to the message of the cross.

As Christians, we worship a God who became flesh and lay powerless, motionless and utterly incapacitated on the Cross. Ours is not a God of power and might, but of vulnerability and woundedness. So often, we choose to forego or forget the crucifixion, preferring to turn directly to the resurrection. Christ rose from the dead with his wounds. We too shall discover Him in our wounds and we shall discern His presence in our vulnerability and in our courage to live the lives we have been given.

We must remember that for us Christians, the cross of Jesus Christ is a symbol of life. When “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14), it was broken flesh of humanity that was assumed. Even when Christ rose from the dead, He did so with the wounds that He suffered on the Cross (Luke 24:36-39). And when St. Paul confessed his own “thorn in the flesh,” he received the revelation that God’s “strength is perfected in weakness” (II Cor. 12: 7-8). Indeed, long before any of the Gospels miracles of healing, perhaps the earliest account of God’s word being heard through disability is the example of Moses’ speech

impairment in Exodus (Ch. 4: 10-17). Here is an example of a person with a particular disability being chosen by God—not simply in spite of his disability, but with his disability—to be a leader among the people of Israel.

Finally, at the Last Supper, and in our liturgies that recall that event, we repeat the words of Christ holding before us, “for the life of the world,” his own damaged and disabled body: Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you.” (cf. Matt 26:26)

Our ministry to children and adults with disability presents us with more than a chance to serve our neighbour. It presents us with a challenge to our culture where worldly image (rather than God’s image) is a priority, where ideal perfection is valued and weakness criticised, and where virtues alone are emphasized and failures are concealed. It is a witness to the centrality and visibility of the cross in our lives and in our intentions.

Another fundamental attitude that is challenged by the presence of disability in our lives is the notion of forgiveness. Misconceptions of old, often affirmed in the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures and confirmed throughout Christian history have led us at times to connect disability with shame, sin or lack of faith. We must confess that in the past we have stigmatised disability, identifying it with wrong doing and incurring a sense of guilt. This is a difficult myth to dispel. When we are tempted to consider disability as punishment from God, or perhaps tempted to consider disability in a more refined way as being a test from God on that person or their immediate family, we should think otherwise. And when families are weighed down by such feelings imposed on them and ourselves to the reality taught by Christ. When asked about the man born with blindness, Christ responded:

“Neither those with disabilities nor their families have sinned. But the persons who have a disability are born in to this world in order that God’s works might be revealed in them” (John 9:3 paraphrase)

Each of us is born the way we are—with the gifts that we each have, as well as with the inadequacies that we each have—“ in order that God’s work might be revealed in us.”





When we think of forgiveness, we think of guilt and redemption. However the Greek word for forgiveness is *synchore-sis*. It is a word that literally means “fitting together” (*syn-chore-sis*) or “sharing the same place.” This connects the concept of forgiveness to the uniqueness and potential of each individual.

Each person, even someone with seemingly significant limitations, is endowed with the same potential that derives from our creation in God’s image. We know that all people are created in the image and likeness of God” (Gen. 1:26). Each of us reflects a part of that divine beauty and mystery. None of us reflects God fully or completely. Even if we do so in a blurred and perhaps broken way, in some incomplete and limited way. We are less than complete without each other and without God.

At the same time, no limitation can be dismissed as an accident. There are no coincidences in God’s world. We cannot assume that a soul within a body that is in some measure or severely limited is not called to realise this same potential. This is why every gift must be considered unique; and every circumstance should likewise be considered a gift. Otherwise, we are assuming a false vision of perfection. Christ did not heal people because He saw them as limited, as disabled, or as imperfect. He healed them because they asked for that healing as part of that process towards perfection. This is why not all people were healed. Because not all people with disabilities were considered as requiring healing.

## A Vision for the Kingdom

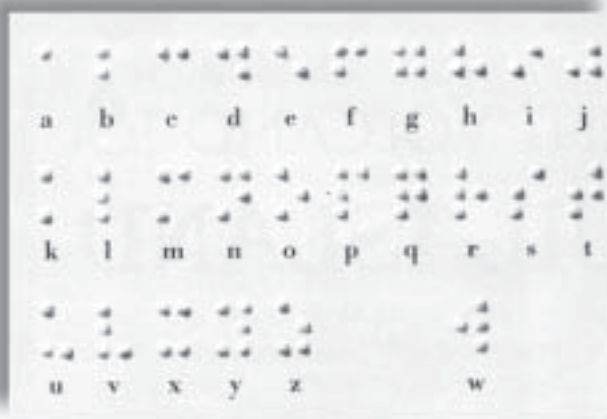
It should be the dream and desire of us all-someday soon, we hope-to see the old ways of inaccessibility and discrimination, of ignorance and segregation, of patronizing and exclusion, pass away through the example and covenant of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:17).

For you are all one in Christ. . . .There is no such a thing as Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female,” and- St Paul might also quite easily have added- disabled or non-disabled. . . .(Gal. 3:28).

We should all promote and work sincerely for a church where there is ample room for us all. This after all, is the literal meaning of the word forgiveness (*syn-chore-sis*). The church should contain a breadth that makes all its members comfortable, and where no member is stifled and where no single member is excluded.

Christ came to tear down the walls (quote from Paul). Whenever we consider the ways in which to respond to issues of disability, we would do well to remember that we have set up, all of the so human. Walls that shut people in or shut people out. Walls that prevent people from meeting and talking to others. In days gone by, people with disabilities were actually kept behind walls, inside institutions. Now we are all part of mainstream society. Yet people still find themselves isolated. Now there are walls of shame. Walls of prejudice. Walls of hatred. Walls of competition. Walls of fear, Walls of ignorance. Walls of theological prejudice and cultural misunderstanding.

*This portion is a text done by John Chryssavgis, a member of Faith and Order commission of WCC, as a contribution towards the EDAN process of an Interim Theological Statement on Disability. Your responses are welcome.*



**"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."**  
Galatians 6:2-4



# Report of Spring 2002 Geneva meetings held from 22<sup>nd</sup> April - 1<sup>st</sup> May 2002



Mr. & Mrs Graham, Alan Falconer and Carolyn Thompson at Geneva Cartigny Theological Statement Consultation

The EDAN Consultant in his capacity as a staff of WCC attended the spring 2002 WCC week of meetings which took place in the WCC Ecumenical House. The EDAN drafting team also met in Geneva during the same period. The following is a summary report of the proceedings of these meetings.

## JPC Evaluation Interview

The main theme of the week of meetings was evaluation. A team of external evaluators facilitated this exercise.

The EDAN team participated in the JPC evaluation. The interview process was facilitated by Ms Sylvia Raulo from Finish Lutheran church.

The key areas of this interview process included:

1. To test the validity of the whole evaluation process and its relevance to the WCC constitution
2. To obtain input from JPC staff as well as obtain clarification of certain issues arising from the ongoing evaluation process.

The following issues were discussed

- Who the JPC constituency is.
- Feedback- how is feedback received, is there a predetermined format and how is it analyzed and processed and shared out to bring the desired changes.
- 3. To explore the area of methodologies
- The question of inclusiveness and involvement of all stakeholders during the designing of projects was discussed intensively.

## Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network theological statement drafting team meeting held at Chavannes de Bogis, Geneva from 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> April 2002.

The opening devotion for the drafting process was facilitated by Arne Fritzson. He read from I John 3:2. He noted that we are sons and daughters of God. He continued to share that we share in this identity and we have a journey together but we don't know yet what we are to become. As we journey, he exhorted; let us have this common identity in mind and encourage one another.

The task ahead for the day included:

- 1) Looking towards the future: the Bossey and Stockholm consultations.
- 2) Examining the texts
- 3) Drawing the participants for the next drafting process.
- 4) Inter-linking processes in WCC which have taken place.

It was reported that Bossey would not be physically ready for the November Seminar and that the meeting would have to be planned for somewhere else.

The following are important events that were put in perspective while drawing the drafting process time scale :

- August -September 2002 - There will be a WCC Central Committee meeting and a "Padare". The team proposed Arne Fritzson and Gordon cowans to represent EDAN and sensitize the central





committee members on disability. Appropriate questions from the drafting process will be formulated for the padare sessions.

- **November 2002** - Theological Statement drafting team meeting to include the reference group to be held in Geneva.
- **May 2003** - Stockholm Conference to present the Theological Statement and further input.
- **September 2003** - Central Committee meeting: The plans are that EDAN will present the interim statement for reception and dissemination.
- **2006** - The WCC General Assembly.

## Stockholm Conference

(10-13<sup>th</sup> May 2002)

The Stockholm conference is meant to offer a platform for theological reflection concerning disability and to raise questions concerning a theology of disability. The tool of reference for this conference will be a first draft of the interim statement on disability that EDAN is working on. The conference will be international and will be a part of strategic work by the WCC to have a final draft towards the General Assembly 2006.

The partners of this conference are World Council of Churches through the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN) and a Swedish Network consisting of the Stockholm School of Theology, the Sweden Research department and Christian Disability Union of Sweden.

Two people from Sweden had been invited to assist with the conference's groundwork and arrangements. They were Anna Skagersten, a professor of homiletics, Liturgy and music and Goran Gunner, a researcher and a senior lecturer, both of Stockholm School of Theology. A draft text of the Theological Statement is needed before the Stockholm meeting. So a prior meeting was planned for November 2002 to complete the draft. This meeting is now planned to take place in



Yee Ja Lee, Pal Gado and Sarah Babirye

Geneva.

The Stockholm process is intended to involve a bigger group of people. A list of participant was proposed as follows- EDAN network members, people from Scandinavian countries, representatives from different disability organization. Other resource people and church leaders from various parts of the world.

Discussing on the content of the Stockholm conference the following were highlighted as important:

- a) How the theological work could influence a special convention on disability. On this issue the UN special Rapporteur on disability, Mr. Bengt Lindqvist, was proposed to be invited. He comes from Sweden and would bring a worldview in to the process. A Swedish disability ombudsman was also proposed to take part in the panel to take questions regarding this process.
- b) Group discussions and reflection on the various issues on the text.
- c) Consolidation of the various inputs and views/ EDAN network meeting/ house keeping and future strategies.

The meeting proposed that this meeting should have a publicity aspect. That some form of activities be organized to have some public interactions and a tour to Stockholm City.

## The drafting process

The EDAN consultant restated the objectives of the drafting process as from the cartigny meeting as to come up with a document that:

- a) can provoke discussions in the churches on the issue of disability
- b) can inform and teach the churches on the issue of disability
- c) Can act as a basis of reference for advocacy.

Arne added that the process will assist to communicate a basic attitude to the churches and details will only be used as examples but "we are not trying to come up with a dictionary of disabilities". The theological Statement drafting process was guided by the following checklist:

### 1. Differentiation: Issues of differentiation



Gordon Cowans, Pal Gado, John Hull & Sam Kabue



2. **Hermeneutical issues/ interpreting**
3. **Imago Dei**
4. **Challenges to theology**
5. **Healing**
6. **Giftedness of each: Church in societies**
7. **Church for all**

Other areas that needed more work and research to be done include - the issue of suffering, economic depression, sin inform of injustice contributing to disability, voices for the voiceless, standing with the voiceless so that they can articulate their voices, gender issues, the issue of parents, families and carers, abuse and violence towards disabled people especially in institutions and hospitals.

This process is ongoing and the drafting team is meeting again in November.

## **Justice, Peace and Creation (JPC) core group meeting**

AJPC core group meeting had been organised to look at the work of JPC on behalf of JPC advisory group.

### **Introduction:**

Samuel Kobia the head of the Cluster of Issues and Themes where JPC is situated confirmed the role of JPC in WCC. He gave the team background saying that ecumenical work in this area can be traced to the life and work movement, which held its first conference in Stockholm in 1925 and merged with the Faith and Order to form the WCC in 1948. The WCC sixth Assembly first used the phrase "Justice, Peace and the integrity of creation"(JPIC)" to emphasize on the inter-relatedness of these concerns and to call on the churches to commit themselves to recognise JPIC towards conciliar fellowship. In the new program established in 1992, the unit of JPC brought together WCC work on economy, ecology, church and society, racism, youth and women, indigenous peoples, international affairs and human rights. In 1998, a new JPC team was formed. Its specific mandate is defined in the WCC's constitutional function of enabling churches to promote "one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life" EDAN is located in this team.

Detailed discussions were held on the following issues:

- The methodologies JPC uses to deliver its programs.
- Feedback from the churches and ecumenical networks
- Linkages to other teams within and outside the cluster on issues and themes.

## **New Bill on Disability Proposed in Kenya**

Disabled people may be exempted from taxes if a bill that has just been published becomes law. The bill proposes wide-ranging benefits and incentives for them, including exclusion from paying tax on income from jobs.

Materials, articles and equipment, including motor vehicles that are modified or designed for their use, will also be exempted from import duty and value added tax.

The law will also ensure that both public and private reserve 5 % cent of jobs - casual, emergency and contractual to them.

The Bill, which seeks equal opportunities for the disabled, proposes the formation of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities.

Published by the attorney general Amos Wako on June 4, the bill has provision for free legal representation. Those denied bail must be held in custodies with modified facilities and their cases must be disposed off quickly.

The proposed Council will have at least 20 members - Those nominated by organizations of persons with disabilities, three from organizations for persons with disability and eight representing the

relevant ministries. Two others will come from employers and employees umbrella bodies. However the Council membership should not exceed 27.

The Council will have a Chairman, a vice-chairman and a director.

It will ensure that the disabled are educated, employed and participate fully in sporting recreational and cultural activities.

The AG says the council will start projects that will offer regular or self-employment for persons with disabilities.

A private employer who engages a person with a disability with required skills or qualifications will be entitled to apply for a deduction from his taxable income equivalent to 25% of the total amount paid as salary and wages to such an employee.

The Bill proposes that an employer who improves or modifies physical facilities for the benefit of employees with disabilities will be entitled to an additional deduction from his net taxable income. This deduction will be equivalent to 50 % of the direct costs of improvements, modifications or special services.





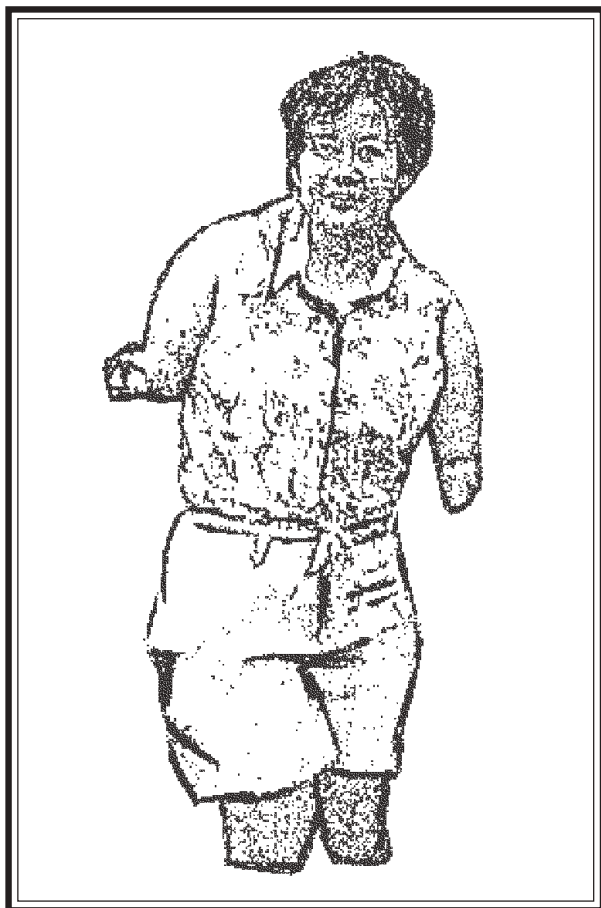
# No hands, No feet, No problem

What others would call a disability has never-ever- stopped Maggie

By Christine C. Rivero

Growing up in Negros Oriental, Maggie often played tag with her classmates. "You can't catch me! You can't catch me!" they would yell, running away from her. Maggie you see, was also often the *taya*.

"But I did catch some of them," Maggie says, now grinning, "because I can also move really fast when I want to."



*Maggie touches the lives of those who meet her*

Being born without hands or feet has never stopped 28-year old Magdalena Tano from doing what other people do, even if she has to do it while running, walking or standing on her knees. "I can also ride a bike," she adds with a playful twinkle in her eye, "so long as it is attached to a side gear."

When she finished high school, Maggie rode a ship to Manila by

herself to meet her mom who worked there, and also to study college. She then enrolled at a computer college because she wanted to become a programmer. Now, how, you might ask, does someone without hands use a computer? Simple, there are small round ends on the tips of Maggie's limbs and these are what she uses to push buttons and type away.

Unfortunately, Maggie had to stop after the first year of her studies. "We were having financial problems and I had become sick," she relates, "I had also started taking care of an abandoned child."

The child was a nephew left in Maggie's care because his parents could no longer afford to take care of him. "I had to support him so I looked for a job," says Maggie. Her typing skills landed her a job as a secretary at their barangay hall.

At the same time, Maggie also became active in church, attending Bible sharings and volunteering to teach catechism to kids. The when her parish started helping a group that looked out for disabled or abused women and children, Maggie decided to work for them too.

"I knew that with my own experiences, I could also help them with their lives," says Maggie.

To these women and children, Maggie shares the most important lesson she has learned in her life. "First of all, you have to know yourself," she begins, "you have to know what you are good at and what you are not so good in."

"Then you have to accept that," she says, "and thank God for everything."

Now, not only can Maggie do what other people do, but she is also making a difference in other lives too.

***Green and Purple Sanctuary is a church group from Philippines. Their special concerns are overcoming violence and work with persons with disabilities. They can be reached through: Green and Purple Sanctuary-Bahay K 19 Couper street, SFD, QC, Philippines 1104 Tel 632-4141789.***



## News on women, children and family

We at Green and Purple Sanctuary have many to thank this year. As in all of God's time, this is a god year.

We welcomed the year 2002 in solidarity with four (4) women and their children who are survivors of domestic violence.

From our experience, violence against women and children can only be stopped if a bill is passed making domestic violence a crime, with the corresponding stipulation allowing the state to intervene while violence is taking place in the homes.

While technology and civilization have advanced far beyond our expectations, we still cannot and have not put a stop to domestic violence which is destroying the basic foundation of all societies—the family. Peace and love should first unfold in our hearts and in our homes.

By April 2001, three teens became part of our lives and our families. Their resiliency and faith in the goodness of life continue to amaze us, for while we have experienced unexpressable pain they now excel in their schools, belonging to the top ten of the best students in their respective classes. We thank everyone who continue to provide for their daily allowances, school projects, uniforms and their food.

May their spirits soar. May they learn to love their goodness. May they feel the love given out of unconditional acceptance of their goodness, from just humane relations. May they develop the heart to be there for others in need.

Aside from regular work to organize women, children and families in District 1 of Quenzon city, we started our work with Persons with Disability with the support of the National Co-ordinating Office of Liliame Fond. By October, we journeyed with eleven (11) children, mostly from Bgy. Sto. Domingo. We are now in the process of identifying more children with disabilities.

In November, Melanie had her operation to correct a progressive bone deformity on her left leg. She may still have to undergo a second operation this December. We ask for your prayers and thank Congressman Rey calalay, the Salvatorian sisters and the Jamoralin family for their support, love and care for Melanie.

Journeying with Melanie and her family, who belong to a different religion, we lived one element necessary in building the church of the poor.

A church of the poor, is a church where no one is so rich as to

have nothing to receive, and where no one is so poor as to have nothing to give.

As project partners of the Socio-Pastoral Institute:

- We participated in the conduct of a participatory action research on the impact of globalization on women.
- We spoke on the importance of gender-fair relations and feminism to end violence in all aspects of life at the Asian Synod of the World Council of Churches' Decade Against Violence.
- We participated in a consultation on basic ecclesial communities where the issues of globalization, women/gender-fair relations and sustainable development were discussed.

The challenge for us church, individually and collectively is to consciously name the impact of globalization and the value of gender/feminism and sustainable development in fulfilling the following priorities of the church of the poor (PCP II):

- Families as a focal point of evangelization
- Formation and animation to mission of all peoples
- Building and strengthening participatory communities towards building the parish as a communion of communities.

We have "miles to go before we sleep", so says poet Robert Frost. We will continue what we have began: formation-organizing women, children, families; journeying with survivors of abuse, domestic violence and the differently abled; daily savings among our members; being a solidarity network for women, children and families at risk in District 1.

By 2002, we hope to be able to engage in household/community-based recycling as our expression of thanks and love for Mother Nature.

Indeed, this has been a good year, because we have taken some small steps towards becoming a family of faith, a communion of communities.



# “Matching Priorities North & South” - Dutch Coalition on Disability and Development

By Huib Cornielje

The DCDD was established in 2000, in response to demands of disability activists in developing countries, to counteract the declining interest for disability within the Dutch Development Co-operation. The disability movement, development organisations and service providers in The Netherlands join forces in the DCDD. The DCDD intends to fill a gap in Dutch Development Co-operation; to promote a dynamic network of disability activists & experts in order to learn and to realise joint activities; to support key DPOs (Disabled Peoples Organisations) in developing countries; to collaborate with like minded western coalitions in Europe; and to create an inspiring voice in The Netherlands providing persons with disabilities the dignity they deserve.

The DCDD aims to conscientize and activate the policymakers in the Dutch development co-operation to implement the 1994 UN ‘Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities’. The DCDD focusses her network and strategy at the following spearheads:

- Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) for advocacy and awareness raising
- Access to education and where possible integration in education
- Capacity building, of disability organizations, training of personnel and of grassroot level organisations
- Accessibility of society and availability of assistive technology
- Early detection and treatment of disabilities or Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of disability
- Employment

The DCDD strives to be a true catalytic organisation, and a virtual network [www.dcdd.nl](http://www.dcdd.nl), which is dynamic, informative and inspiring for coalition members and also for policy and decision makers in the field of disability and development.

The DCDD recognises that persons with disabilities in the South and in Newly Independent States, often, do belong to the hardcore poor. At the same time the fact is recognised that poor people face more risks to contract disabilities. Therefore, we as participants, partners and advisors of the DCDD recommend the following action points:

- We commit ourselves to work for common understanding of disability from a human rights perspective

- We join forces between disability movement, development organisations and service providers to advocate for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in development co-operation and disaster relief programmes, funded by The Netherlands
- We demand equal opportunities for persons with disabilities both in the South and in the North which is enhanced by adequate legislation and subsequent implementation in visible actions
- We promote a major say of international representative partners in disability in the profile and strategy of the DCDD to ensure that we respond to the real needs and issues.

The DCDD will utilize the outcome of this workshop to develop a strategic plan for the next 3 years, which will be communicated in Winter 2001/2002 to the DCDD constituency.

Based on the recommendations of the key-speakers (the members of the International Advisory Board of the DCDD) today, and taking into account the outcome of the working groups, the DCDD and its participants will take steps in their own job, position, constituency to:

- 1 Strive for empowerment of persons with disabilities and Disabled Peoples Organisations
- 2 Strive for substantial earmarked budget allocation on disability-specific development programmes
- 3 Strive for inclusion of people with disabilities in development organisations
- 4 Endeavour change of perceptions, attitudes and commitment towards disability issues within all societies
- 5 Recognise the specific needs of girls and women with disabilities
- 6 Contribute to building the DCDD as a catalyst network for its’ members in the areas of information exchange, support towards relevant policy development and exchange in expertise.
- 7 Develop capacities of persons with disabilities to be on boards of relevant disability and development organisations
- 8 Recognise the needs of caretakers and legal representatives of children with physical or mental impairments
- 9 Influence the Dutch government and EEC governing body policies in this respect.





# Kenyan's with disabilities and the constitution making debate

The following is the 1st part of a serialization of a paper presented by Mr. Samuel Kabue, EDAN Consultant during the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) for peoples with disabilities at Kenya College of Communications Technology Workshop on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2002.

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***The presentation was on Governance, Constitution making and election Vis-a-vis disability***

***The first part of the serialization is on governance***

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According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, the term governance has been described as the activity or manner of governing. Mr. Joel Barkan, former Governance Advisor at the USAID described governance as "nothing more or less than a predictable and legitimate art of relationships between the ruled and the rulers". Although Mr. Barkan does not elaborate on who the ruled and the rulers are, it is clear that these two categories include all the people within a nation. In this case, people with disabilities are part of the ruled and the rulers though as we know it today, representation in the latter is almost non-existent. However, be thus as it may, they are included in the relationships between the ruled and the rulers.

Going back to the general usage of the ruled and the rulers as understood by Mr. Barkan, in order for this relationship to be predictable and legitimate, it will be necessary to put into place systems to regulate it. The basis of such systems is the law of which the constitution is supreme. The regulatory systems in place in our country today as is the case with other world democracies include the establishment of power centres or instruments of governance through the constitution as seen in the legislature, executive and judiciary. Each of these instruments or arms of the government are vested with certain powers which, when taken away, the predictability and legitimacy of the relationships between the rulers and the ruled is undermined. Where these relationships are unpredictable and marked by capricious exercise of power by individuals, rulers or by a defence of the law, there cannot be said to be a stable system of governance. Likewise, where the relationships are predictable but are not regarded as legitimate as may be the case when the constitution is disregarded, those in power will seek to exercise their will on an unwilling population which in its part will seek to resist the rule. The result will be repression rather than good governance. In this situation, the weak that include persons with disabilities, children and women bear the brand of the consequences of such repression. They are unable to escape the resulting suffering which they are largely not responsible for instigating.

In the recent past, the donors in reference to Kenya have defined good governance in terms of the absence of corruption and effective performance of governmental agencies in their assigned tasks. Closely related to this has been the respect for human rights. In a situation where rampant corruption and disregard for human rights prevail, people with disabilities are not spared. They either become part of the corrupt society in whatever little way they can or go through extreme suffering as a consequence of rampant corruption. When the general infrastructure is destroyed through corrupt deals, it is the people with disabilities who suffer most because of lack of physical access communication and therefore impeded interactions. Very rarely does the state at its best consider the rights of persons with disabilities. In a situation where the general human rights are largely disregarded, those of people with disabilities are never spoken of. Where inefficient delivery of service in assigned tasks prevail, necessary social services like education, health care and general security of persons with disabilities will be at stake. Reduced resources in these sectors have for instance seen either closures or serious reduction of intake in educational and vocational institutions of persons with disabilities. Thus, governance seen in this perspective of corrupt state of affairs, abuse of human rights and inefficiency in service delivery is very detrimental to the lives of both children and adults with disabilities.

According to yet another school of thought, governance is a process of creating a conducive environment in which all human potential can fully develop in a participatory manner. This is probably the best definition in Kenya today for persons with disabilities. Lack of conducive environment in which people with disabilities can develop their potential has been the greatest enemy. The need for a conducive environment for personal development and opportunity to participate in societal affairs is the most difficult goal to achieve. Provision of such an environment would form the most ideal living conditions for persons with disability and it is therefore the goal to aim and fight for in the search for our rights. Persons with disabilities should live for this struggle whether through advocacy, influence or at best through the constitutional review. In general, governance seen in the light of an enabling environment for self fulfillment, one could conclude that good governance entails an exercise in self determination, self discovery, emergence of alternatives and, or room for dissenting views and providing for consensus building in matters of public interest.



As can be observed from the foregoing, the essential elements of good governance and hence a stable national life include: ethical principles, truth, love, justice, selflessness, observance of human rights, security for all, respect and recognition of the contribution of all in the society. These are ideals which we, disabled or non-disabled should live for.

Absence of these would result in economic, social and political regression. This regression may in turn take two forms. First, the country gets torn by rampant corruption as seen on our roads with the traffic police, public offices, grabbing of public and sometimes private property as reported on our media from day to day as well as corrupt deals in high levels as seen in the regular reports of auditor and controller general.

Secondly, there results decline of ethical standards contrary to all world known religions with the consequent disregard not only of human rights but also human life. This manifest itself in brutality in exercise of power, insecurity on the part of all including law enforcement agents, society fragmentation and hence pursuit for group rights, group self protection with the emergent

ethnicity and sectionalism. The end result of all these is chaos. Whereas every body in this circumstance is affected, the vulnerability of people with disabilities, women and children is increased as they are at the mercy of providence in such absence of order.

Going back to Mr. Joel Barkan's contention that governance is "nothing more or less than a predictable and legitimate art of relationships between the ruled and the rulers", we saw that to help in the predictability and legitimizing of this relations calls for putting into place systems to do so. This is largely achievable through laws of which the constitution is supreme. Its review or amendment is rare and far part. To live at a time when there is an opportunity to have it reviewed by the nation is a privilege that we should enjoy for a better today and tomorrow. This is why it is absolutely necessary for people with disabilities to participate in the current constitutional review for self and posterity.

***To be continued in the next issue.***

## ON CONSTITUTION MAKING DEBATE

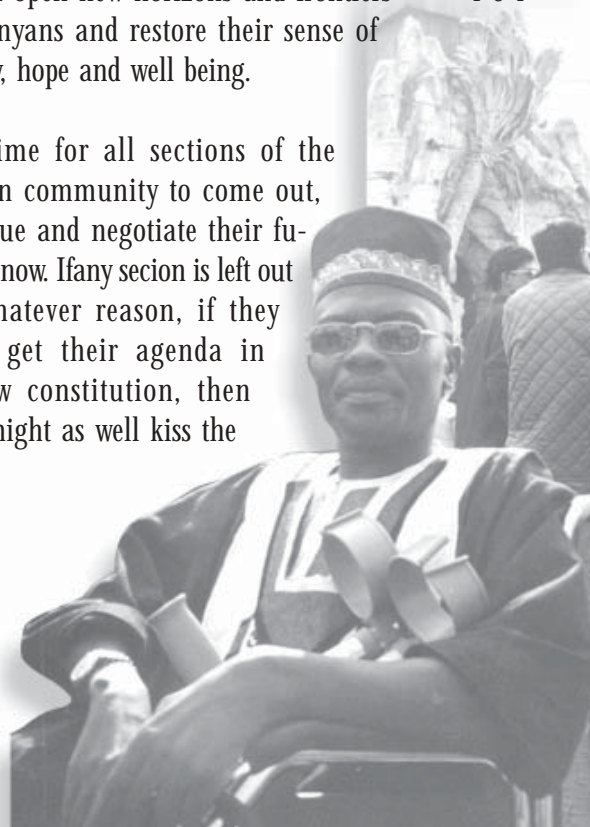
***BY Phitalis Were Masakhwe***

"The provision for the declaration call for the respects for the rights of all human beings- recognition of the dignity of all humans, with or without disabilities. We must all beware that no society can enjoy full development without proper consideration of all members and that there is no acceptable future for a society where individuals are excluded and deprived of their rights and dignity, "Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for human rights during the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of human rights."

That the constitution making is a great historical event for any democratic state is incontestable. This is the only time that the members of any given society, small and big come together to negotiate how best they can co-exist harmoniously. It is a time for all and sundry to come and reason together for the good and posterity of their nation. Even if things had gone so bad for some members of that nation, the time to sort them out, to heal the hands of the past is constitution making time.

Kenya is now undergoing a serious constitution review process. If handled well this promises to get Kenya out of the present economic slump and political polarization. It promises to make Kenya break with the present system of exclusion. The new constitution should open new horizons and frontiers for all Kenyans and restore their sense of dignity, hope and well being.

The time for all sections of the Kenyan community to come out, dialogue and negotiate their future is now. If any section is left out for whatever reason, if they don't get their agenda in the new constitution, then they might as well kiss the death.





## Constitution making debate

Persons with disabilities are one such group. For so long this group has suffered disadvantage in all facets of life. In a society where difference is reluctantly appreciated, their legitimate grievances have not been apprehensively addressed. For so long we have assumed that men/women are so good that they would freely and voluntarily create room and accommodate those with disabilities. History and experience has, however proved that leaving the affair of people with disabilities and other similar groups to human good will, is not only misplaced but a bad gamble.

Because men and women are incapable of living without laws, we must legislate almost everything. Too bad! As UN Special Rapporteur on disability Lindqvist observed, “the idea and concepts of equality and full participation of persons with disabilities have been developed very far on paper, but not in reality. In all countries, in all types of living conditions the consequences of disability interfere in the lives of disabled persons to a degree which is not at all acceptable...” when a person is excluded from employment because he/she is disabled, he/she is being discriminated against as human being. If a general education system is being developed and disabled children are excluded, their rights are being violated”

The superior law of the land, the Constitution, must therefore reflect the diversity of the Kenyan Nation. The preamble of the new constitution must affirm and reflect that principle. One of the crucial diversities of the Kenyan nation is disability.

Nation legislation, embodying the rights and obligations of citizens, should include the rights and obligations of persons with disabilities. States are under an obligation to enable persons with disabilities to exercise their rights, including their human, civil and political rights, on an equal basis with other citizens.

This principle is recommended by International instruments on Disability. Rule 15 on legislation of the UN standard rules on equalization of opportunity for persons with disabilities says, “legislative action may be needed to remove conditions that may adversely affect the lives of persons with disabilities, including harassment and victimization. Any discriminatory provisions against persons with disabilities must be eliminated.

Nation legislation should provide for appropriate sanctions in case of violations of the principles of “non dis-

crimination”.

But for people with disabilities to bring their agenda to constitution making table, a lot of groundwork is required. They will need a lot of support to mobilize and get their act together.

To start off, the constitution review Commission of Kenya (CRCK), must ensure that all places that will visit, are friendly to all people with disabilities. The CRCK must make a deliberate attempt to ensure that people with disabilities are enabled to air/ present their view even if it is in their own vernacular. I am referring to accessibility of the venues of all the places the Commission will visit in the Constituencies. The other factor to consider is the presence of sign language interpreters and the provision of essential materials in Braille for those with visual impairments.

Civic education is key, knowledge is power. For people with disabilities to make informed and plausible submissions to CRCK, collective efforts by all stakeholders should be channeled towards the provision of civic education to this group. But for it to have impact Civic Education initiative should also take cognizance of the special needs and problems surrounding disablement.

A lot of resource for logistics and mobilization for civic education is also required. The donor, civic society organizations and private sector groups, may find this interesting and worthy of support.

If there was a time that people with disabilities needed support from true friends, honest allies and partners, that time is now. A friend in need is a friend indeed. It is either now or never! By supporting their course you will be supporting Kenya. To be able to dramatize and publicize their cause throughout the Constitution Review process, those from the disability fraternity will desperately need the media. They need regular programs preferably in Kiswahili and English. This is the only way they will reach their comrades in the rural villages across Kenya and also reach out to like minded and progressive Kenyans, including MPs to lobby for the support of their course. They therefore need air-time on Radio and Television and space in the print media.

Persons with disabilities cannot do it on their own. They need everyone to be their honest keeper. The time for every Kenyan to see the needs of each and





every other Kenyan as her/his needs is now. Kenya will not be secure as a Nation if the needs of everyone are not guaranteed. That is the true patriotism we should all aspire for.

Finally people with disabilities must be more organized than before. While they will and should reach out to all other Kenyans for support, they will eventually be called upon to lead the process. The time to unite for a common purpose is now. They must shun all petty, sectarian and frivolous differences and come together for the constitutional review process. They must put their heads and brains together and come up with a watertight and comprehensive agenda for the review process. But that is just one piece of the task ahead. The major task lies in lobbying the various stakehold-

ers in the constitutional review process to buy their agenda so that they too can sing the disability song. The challenge of keeping the disability agenda alive throughout the review process is not easy. They must be organized to ensure that the final outcome of the constitutional review process is disability friendly.

People with disabilities have loudly and legitimately complained about their issues and concerns. But, the time to remedy their situation is now. Let them seize this Godsend opportunity to either put up or eternally shut up! Over to you folks.

The writer has a physical disability and can be reached on [mphitalis@yahoo.com](mailto:mphitalis@yahoo.com).

## Reflections on DCDD'S strategic Planning Workshop

By Huib Cornielje

On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2001 DCDD organised its strategic planning workshop, which was attended by most members of the international Advisory Board. Within the limits of their speaking time they presented a mix of future strategies. Many visionary ideas were expressed, but solid practical suggestions were also made. These suggestions in particular must be regarded as valuable pointers for the further development of DCDD.

Being politically correct is not enough, to have a vision is a must; but the ability to generate good ideas for political activities is of vital importance at this stage of DCDD's development. It will help DCDD to develop in to a meaningful organisation for all its members, and through them, directly or indirectly also for people with disabilities living in the south. The resolution taken by DCDD at the end of the workshop states the point of the action and attention for the coming years. Generally speaking the participants learnt that lessons can be taken equally from the South as from the North. Some countries in the South are miles ahead compared with the developments in the North. For example, the political involvement of disability rights organisations in certain southern countries was noted, disability issues in those countries being a political factor contributing towards quality of opportunities. The political power gained by people with disabilities in a number of African and Asian countries eg South

Africa, Bangladesh is significant and could be an example for those in the North, where in, some instances, the disability movement

has become a bureaucratic body, reactive at best and certainly lacking a proactive approach.

On the other hand, the experience of Northern countries in the fields of service and development, including early identification, access issues and inclusive education, are important issues for the south as well, since the southern countries usually lack expertise and resources. Through the information exchange, research and training, North and south can help each other. DCDD could play a facilitating role in terms of influencing overall policy in development co-operation, whereby it should focus on promoting inclusion of people with disabilities in all Dutch programmes for development assistance.

A young organisation, DCDD is proud that it was able to organise such an important event. A lot was learnt from the members of the Advisory Board, but the workshop was also a good experience in terms of matching the different groups represented in DCDD: service providers, people with disabilities and development aid organisations. Opinions among and within these three groups may differ significantly at times. For instance while accessibility for wheelchair drivers is an important matter when choosing accommodation for gatherings such as the workshop, some people simply don't take this in to consideration and take accessibility for granted. Certainly the workshop has brought the three groups closer together, providing an opportunity to learn from each other.

*For more information contact DCDD WEBSITE: [www.dccd](http://www.dccd)*



# Disability and The Christian Message

By Reverend John Naude



I would like to write something that is based on some of the Scriptures that I have discovered over the years, and which tend to clash with some of the historical messages received towards Disabled People.

As a former disability equality/awareness trainer I still come across some people from within the Disability Movement who have asked me 'How can I be a Christian, or be working for an organisation (the Church), which has perpetuated a negative message about disabled people? So often people can distort the Christian message. We get caught up in our own little agendas and get distracted from what the Bible says or from seeing how God himself deals with issues. The reality is as the apostle Paul says: **'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'** Rom 3:23. **Church is full of people who know where they stand before God, lost without Christ, and that also includes the leaders!**

As Christians we can often distort the truths of the Christian message, sometimes due to wrong teaching, sometimes because it can seem too good to be true, and we create limits to make it more readily acceptable. For me the biggest mis-truth has been about trying to earn God's love, through obedience to the Law. We somehow believe we can present ourselves before God, and show him our works and say that this should make us eligible to enter heaven. As Paul tells us, we can only enter through the gates of heaven through God's grace, by belief in His son Jesus. But I digress slightly, but only slightly!

The Christian message is one of tremendous hope to us, a message that gives us a purpose, an identity and a life full of worth. This is a message that many people within the Disability movement have not heard. They see some of the messages within the Bible about disabled people, and the way people in the name of Christianity have therefore dealt with disabled people. However, if we look deeper both through the Old and New Testaments, we see God very much at work with and through disabled people. In the next article I will write about a man called Mephibosheth from 2 Samuel 9, so have a read of it if you wish beforehand.



Throughout history we can see different forms of discrimination towards disabled people, some by the Church, but also through society. Sadly, nowadays the church is generally behind some of the developments that have happened with society, but things are changing. Which is why CHAD still has a purpose to fulfil, in educating the Church. Some things have been done in the name of Christianity rather than in line with God's character. However, we have seen some people through their Christian commitment try and change things. People like Lord Shaftesbury, John Grooms etc. have been instrumental in changing the way society has viewed disabled people. Some may say that they have continued to perpetuate a message of charity, where disabled people are not of equal worth. I personally disagree with that, they were instrumental in enabling disabled people to begin to find our own voice, a voice that can now work with these organisations.

I believe these organisations started by seeing the inequality between disabled and non-disabled people. The passage in Gal: 3: 26-28 that says 'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ***There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ.***' (NIV) This passage reminds us that we are ALL ONE, before God. Rather than being a message that divides and devalues, the Christian message is one that unites and builds up people. Instead of looking towards people, and the past, we should be looking at Scripture and towards God on how best to respond to disabled people, but also how best to see ourselves. For everybody, is of equal worth before God, because of Jesus Christ.



## Disability and the christian message

For those involved in the Disability Movement, who have been persecuted and discriminated by the Church, all we can say is that this is not a true reflection of the Christian message. If we look towards God we see a God who builds up people, who affirms their identity, and who sees the potential in each one of us. Whether the person has an impairment or not! See how the Psalmist writes; knowing that he was created by God, and that he is fearfully and 'wonderfully made'. For the disabled person who reads this, where we have been put down and devalued by society, and even by the Church at times, before God we are rejoiced about. As King David danced can you imagine God dancing with joy over his creation of you and me. Every person on God's earth is 'wonderfully made', no matter how severe a person's impairment, whether they have no verbal communication, mobility, hearing, sight, or have a learning disability. They are wonderfully made, because it is God who is the creator.

It does mean that we have a message to proclaim, not just to ourselves, saying that we know our worth, but also to others that they to are valuable to God. When Jesus said 'love your neighbour as yourself', we tend to get caught up in the loving of the neighbour, and forget to love ourselves. When we know our worth before God, we are so much more able to value others. That same love given by God to you and me is given freely to all people.

*Written by John Naude. John Naude was one of the founder members of EDAN. He was the first interim chairman of the group. He is now the chairman of Church Action on Disability (CHAD) and a church minister of Anglican Church in UK*



Moses and the burning bush



## Proposed United Nations Convention

On February 18, members of the Mexican delegation to the United Nations presented to members of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) their plans to win fast-track approval of a first ever UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. But the incoming chairperson of IDA, Kicki Nordstrom of Sweden, expressed concern the approach entailed risks that might ultimately backfire or result in weak convention.

Luis Alfonso de Alba, Deputy Representative for the UN Mexican delegation, told Disability World that Mexico

is preparing a draft of a document that spells out the need for and general features of a convention. He said it will be circulated to disability leaders from around the world who will be invited to discuss it at a meeting in Mexico City in April or May. De Alba said he hopes a single consensus document will emerge which can be presented when the ad hoc committee of members and observers that will explore the need for a convention meets this summer. "We are speeding up the process," he said.

Mexico trying to avoid bureaucratic delays  
In December 2001, Mexico put forth Resolution 56/





## Proposed United Nation Convention

168, calling for consideration of a convention. With the backing of the Third Committee (responsible for social issues), it passed easily through the UN General Assembly without a vote. Luis Alfonso de Alba said the process from here would usually be for UN officials such as the Secretariat to prepare a report recommending a convention, which could take years. "We're just trying to avoid some of the bureaucracy," he said. De Alba said this strategy was employed to make the UN Convention on Land Mines a reality within two years of passage of the initial resolution. He said he doesn't know if a disability convention could come about that quickly, but he hopes to win official UN approval as quickly as possible.

But Kicki Nordstrom, president of the World Blind Union (WBU), said she's skeptical that this approach will work in this case. "Disability is different (from land mines). Disability is very complicated," Nordstrom said. She thinks the Mexican delegation might come up with a more viable document if it takes time to get input from disability organizations and to sell the idea of a convention within the UN. Nordstrom said, "It's not easy forcing the UN down a different direction. If they manage to do that I will applaud them. If they don't they will cause problems. I hope they're right."

Tomas Lagerwall, Secretary General of Rehabilitation International (RI), said he would consider it a victory if the convention were to come about in four to six years. In addition to WBU and RI, IDA member organizations are the World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of Deafblind, Disabled People's International, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry and Inclusion International.

Contributions from many countries De Alba said it's a misconception that Mexico is preparing the draft in a vacuum. He said many delegations are contributing, such as, Brazil, China, Cuba, Ireland, Sweden, South Africa, Chile and Algeria. The United States and Canada, he said, are taking a wait-and-see attitude as the process unfolds. "They have been active on the issue but they're not so enthusiastic about the process."

But Rami Rabby, social affairs officer for the U.S.

delegation, said that the U.S. would be interested in giving input on the draft but at that point had not been informed of its substance. Rabby pointed out that the U.S. has joined in the consensus in moving the resolution forward so far

De Alba said he hopes the fast pace will demonstrate a sense of urgency that will forge a political will for a convention among the powers that be in the UN. "I know that 90 percent of it is political will. It depends on the disability community, how strong they want it and defend it." Holding a convention is imperative, Alfonso de Alba said, because conventions produce binding powers absent in the UN Standard Rules. "We can force some action." However, he was careful to emphasize, it's only the approval process Mexico seeks to accelerate. Determining goals and agendas for a convention should be much more deliberate. "We don't want to hurry when it comes to discussing things of substance," he said.

Support from Commission for Social Development  
The convention idea has also picked up support on other fronts. On February 21, The Commission for Social Development approved a resolution which, "welcomes the adoption of resolution 56/168." The resolution was put forth by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and South Africa. The resolution expresses deep concern "about the disadvantaged and vulnerable situation faced by six hundred million persons with disabilities around the world." It also, "notes with appreciation the valuable work undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on Disability."

IDA records support for UN Disability Rapporteur  
The rapporteur, Bengt Lindqvist, presented his report at the same session of the Commission. Lindqvist urged in his report that the UN keep making progress toward bringing about a convention. But he also urged the adoption of a supplement to strengthen the current existing Standard Rules on Equalization of



Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Lindqvist included the supplement, entitled “Reaching the Most Vulnerable” in his report. IDA issued a statement supporting Lindqvist’s conclusions. It said the Commission should “invite member states and international disability organizations to comment on the Supplement, so that a decision can be taken by the United Nations not later than 2003.”

But besides supplementing the Standard Rules and pursuing a convention, IDA also advocated, “developing a disability dimension to the present human rights monitoring system.” Lagerwall said this would mean that

all reports on the status of human rights should also explore from a disability perspective when applicable. IDA also said the Commission should request the Secretary-General to appoint a new rapporteur to replace Lindqvist when his term expires at the end of the year. Lagerwall said Lindqvist has served for 9 years and is not willing to accept another term as Rapporteur. “But,” he said, “not everyone in the UN supports continuing on. For example, India has questioned whether we need a rapporteur. This is

something we may have to fight for.”

*For more information contact Mike Erwin at: (Mervin4241@aol.com)*

## Disability in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Rethinking Disability

By Cindy Higgins

In a recent article by medical anthropologist Nora Groce of the meaning of disability in various cultures, she suggests that cultures view disability in three ways: by its cause, by its effect on valued attributes, and by the status of the disabled person as an adult.

With regard to cause, people are treated well or poorly depending on cultural beliefs about how and why they became disabled. For instance, some cultures explain disability by witchcraft, reincarnation, divine displeasure, and genetics. In others, disability has a positive association—in northern Mexico and Botswana it is reported that the birth of a child with a disability is evidence of God’s trust in a parent’s ability to care for that child. With regard to attributes, if a society values physical strength, then people with physical disabilities are at a disadvantage. If a society values intellectual accomplishments, then the fact that a person uses a wheelchair is not as limiting. As for adult status, the willingness of a society to give resources to people with disabilities often depends on whether or not that individual will have an adult role in the community. Will that individual have a job? A family of his or her own?

Groce observes that although improvements have been made to the quality of life for many people with disabilities, much remains to be done. According to

United Nations reports, 10 percent of the world’s population, 600 million people, have a disability. Of that number, men have a literacy rate of three percent. Women have an even lower literacy rate (1 percent). Moreover, the most common form of employment for people with disabilities in less developed nations was begging. UNICEF estimated that half the street children begging had some type of disability before they went to work on the streets.

According to Groce, health care professionals across the globe can help implement positive changes in how people with disabilities are perceived and treated. One change open to them is to insist that health policies and programs related to disability are tied to broader social and economic programs. She notes that international disability organizations as well as national disability organizations can work with health care professionals to make a difference.

In this report on cultural views of disability, Groce finds a truism to be alive and well and all over the world: people with disabilities are far more limited by society’s view of disability than by their actual disability.

*The citation for a report on this study is Groce, N. E. (August 28, 1999). Disability in cross-cultural perspective: Rethinking disability. The Lancet 354, 756-757.*



### Network silence worrying

Dear EDAN

Well, I am glad the packets finally made it to you....I have not had any response yet from people in the network, other than you, which is kind of interesting. You all went overboard by printing both copies of my letter in the newsletter!!! Keep me informed about the meetings. Will be glad to help any where I can. Keep up your good work.  
Bill Gaventa, M.Div.

### My New Address

Dear EDAN

The last number of our magazine arrived safely to our hands, ofcourse it delay so much but there is no other alternative for their envoy to Cuba.

I will like my address at the directory to appear in this way please,

Rev. Noel Fernandez  
Latin America coordinator  
P.o. Box172, Ciego de Avila 65100,  
Cuba  
Phone 053 33 2 7129  
Home: 053 33 2 5223  
E- mail: [fernolla@enet.cu](mailto:fernolla@enet.cu)

Also in the promotion of the activities that will be held in the region under the leadership of EDAN, will be:

1. August 7<sup>th</sup>- 11<sup>th</sup> 2002: First gathering of indigeneous Blind Christians. Riobamba, Chimbroazo, Ecuador.
2. September 11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> 2002: Second Latin America Consultation about disability, role of the Churches and Future Strategy, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil.
3. November 19<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002: Latin America encounter for deaf interpreters and Christian deafs, Canaan, Vira Clara, Cuba.

**Noel O. Fernandez.**

### Plans for West - African Conference

My main reason for writing is to inform you that they are working frantically for the West Africa Edan consultation perhaps in the first week of September.

By next week, they will submit me a budget and I will pass that over to you. Because of that I have cut short my stay here. I will leave for Ghana on the 14th of June, 2002.

Mr. Baffour of FECCIWA and other prominent people are busy putting things together including the programme

### EDAN welcomed by Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

Dear EDAN

It was a nice day and more than 30 participants attended the general meeting of (CCA). I brought 35 copies of the draft report of EDAN consultation held in Nairobi, in 1999 and some newsletters with me handing to evryone and highlighted the background,the mission, goal and purpose of EDAN to share our vision. At the beginning I shared the first and second paragraphs of the Interim Statement on the theological and Empirical understanding of the issue of Disabilities which we took from the 18<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of WCC in Harare to introduce the origins of EDAN. To the end I made two requests to all participants to support the Asia consultation and providing name list for joning us. It took me less than ten minutes and got excitingresponses

The CCA staff, Mr Prawate Khid- Arnjoint executive secretary for justice ,international affairs, development and service, has given his promise to support us and will keep in touch with us.. Matthew also told me that that Mr. Priwate will take the responsibility of helping us to arrange the Asia consultation. Mattew asked us to visit CCA in Hong Kong before Asian Consultation and I agreed with him.

Besides another staff, Miss Mandy Tibbey of CCA, was very interested in this issue and had made a special interview to me for producing EDAN and Asia consultation in CCA network-ing: [www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)

I think CCA will be an important resource for setting up EDAN Asia networking. That is all I have done during the four hours I stayed in the CCA meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2002.

**Joseph Ying Bo Tsai**

and inviting West Africa delegates.

However, by the grace of God, I hope to improve my two manuscripts. I hope to drop one to a publisher. I have to add some personal stories in the book on Disability and theology from an African perspective. So I want one from Ghana, Togo, may be North Africa. Looking forward to hearing from you

**Yours Abraham Berinyue**





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