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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 opinions held by the members and contributors and not necessarily of EDAN or the WCC.

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To all the members of the Ecumeni

Receive warmest greetings and good wishes for a new and prosperous 2003. The gracious Lord had taken us through a rather difficult 2002 when the whole world was coming into terms with both the social and economic effects of the 11 September, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre. WCC was not spared these effects. At social level, there was the realization that we all, including the mighty and the powerful, are very vulnerable in a world where the sanctity of life no longer seems to be a consideration as people pursue their evil selfish motives. The suffering caused by the retaliatory acts of striking Afghanistan by the United States was an indication that violence needs not beget violence. Consequently there was more than ever before the felt need to intensify the campaign for a peaceful world through the activities of the Decade to Overcome Violence.

Suffices to mention that we in the disability fraternity have observed that amidst all these acts of violence, it is also easy to talk of the dead but rarely does the world expose the even larger numbers that are left either permanently or temporarily disabled and the suffering that follow in their remaining days of life. There is also the consequences of these systematic violence on those already disabled. Nobody for instance seems to ask themselves as to what may have happened to those with disabilities in and around the World Trade Centre when everyone was running away from the bombed site.

We in EDAN feel justified that for these and many other reasons we sought to be represented in the Decade to Overcome Violence reference group and we are very grateful that our request in this respect was honoured. Our representative is Mrs. Razaka Manantenaso of Madagascar, herself a woman with a disability and a member of the Lutheran Church. Razaka is especially interested to go deeper into bringing about an understanding of the specific perpetration and effects of violence on women with disabilities. She will appreciate any assistance in connection with this understanding from our members, friends and associates.

At the economic level, the slump in the value of all categories of investment had overriding effects on the fight against poverty particularly for those in the developing world. The consequent recession had greatly affected many projects and programmes that depend on donor funds. WCC was one of the organizations that seem to have been hard hit by the falling value of investment which left a major deficit in its Programme financing. This did as expected affect the entire council and EDAN too had a share of it. We as part of the council are not as yet through with the effects of these unfolding economic consequences that have led to a re-thinking of how best WCC work can be continued amidst these circumstances. Major cuts in programme financing will continue in the New Year and this will mean re-organization of WCC in general and for us





ical Disability Advocates Network

EDAN work in particular. Allow me to mention here that one of our major activity affected by this situation is the long awaited. International conference on Theology and Disability originally planned to take place in Sweden in May 2003. We will not be able to carry out this activity as planned. As we have been forced by circumstances to postpone it to 2004 at a date to be announced later.

We nevertheless, have much to thank God for in as far as the year 2002 is concerned. A number of activities were carried out as planned. Our work on Interim Theological Statement under guidance and assistance of Dr. Alan Falconer of Faith and Order continued to build up with two sessions, one in April and the other in November. These two were organized in Geneva. Although the November sitting was attended by a much smaller number of the working group members, there has been a lot of sharing with the rest of the progress of this work. EDAN was represented at the Geneva Committee by Ame Fritzson and Gordon Cowans and this was very useful because they participated in the discussion on the re-thinking of the entire WCC programmatic work approach. Most important, they helped to implement our planned 'Padare' offering which provided a time of reflection on disability work by some members of the Central Committee.



Sam Kabue

Some of the regional activities that took place during the year included a Latin America Consultation in Brazil whose main objectives was to strengthen the ecumenical network in that region and a consultation for indigenous blind people in Ecuador. We were also able to organize two seminars one in West Africa and another in East Africa on the African Decade for Persons with Disabilities. Our newsletter continued to be a forum for our fellowship and sharing. This particular issue is the fourth in the year. It is the only one that is a little late and we sincerely apologize for this.

Anjeline Okola our Administrative staff who was in Britain for further studies is now back with us. She brings with her new perspectives after her one year studies on Disability and Development. Jane Muhoro who stood in for her during the one year of absence has now left us. We wish her all the best in her new endeavors.

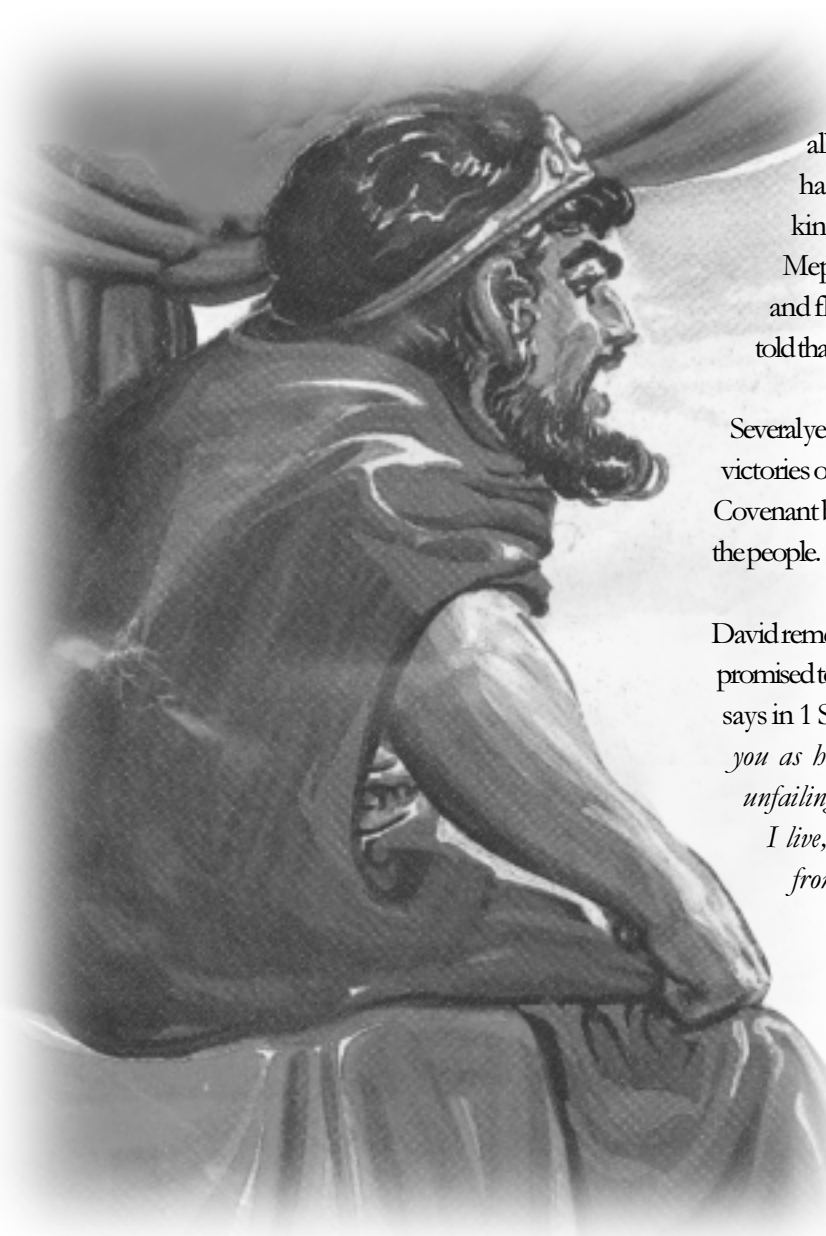
Finally, I wish to express our gratitude to many people including our readers, partners and friends. There are those at WCC in Geneva that have gone out of their way to ensure that EDAN functions. Among these is Aruna Gnanadason whose unfailing encouragement has kept us going. Alexandra her Administrative Assistant has been very helpful in the logistical aspect of relations with that office. I wish also to very sincerely to thank Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia who has also kept his pledge to support EDAN work. To all, I say may God richly bless you.





Accepting God's Grace

By Rev. John Naude



all members of the former monarchs family had every reason to live in fear once the new king took the throne. So the nurse picks up Mephibosheth, the 5-year-old son of Jonathan, and flees. But in her haste she drops him! We are told that Mephibosheth becomes disabled by the fall.

Several years later King David has accomplished several victories over his enemies has brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem and has won the hearts of the people.

David remembers the time when he and Jonathan had promised to preserve and protect one another. Jonathan says in 1 Sam 20 v13 onwards *May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live, ... and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family.*"

David remembers this promise, and seeks a way to make it good. The word kindness in Hebrew means mercy, loving-kindness or grace. So David asks his servant, 'Is there anyone still living in the family of Saul to whom I could demonstrate the same kind of grace that God has demonstrated to me?' The

There are many stories in the Bible, which reveal to us different facets of God's character. One of my favorites is the story told in 2 Samuel 9 of a man called Mephibosheth.

Let me set the scene: King Saul and his son, Jonathan, have just died in battle. News of this double tragedy travels back to Saul's household and panic grips them. It was a brutal era when all those in the family of the previous king were exterminated once a new dynasty took control. Naturally,

great thing about this question is what it does not ask. He does not ask 'is there anyone who is deserving, or qualified, someone I could use, or in good shape to whom I could add to my army?' Instead he says 'Is there anyone?'

The servant Ziba replies 'There is still a son of Jonathan; although he is disabled in both feet.' This person is called Mephibosheth. But David doesn't reply 'Oh, how disabled?' but rather 'Where is he? If there's somebody, anybody, bring him here.' Ziba advises David that he lives in Lo-debar. Lo-



debar means 'barren place'. It would be like saying he's in a place where there's no crops, just wilderness - a wasteland. Yet for David there is not a moment's hesitation.

This disabled man, because of his disability had no status whatsoever, never wanted to be found, was happy in his anonymity, and was sure that if the king knew of him he would be put to death. Yet he couldn't say 'no' to the king. Here he is before the king of all Israel. He comes before the king, frightened, covering, head to the floor, not even daring to look up. He is before the king of Israel. It's a bit like you and me coming before God, knowing our position before the creator of the universe.

David says 'don't be afraid, I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.' Mephibosheth says 'What is your servant that you should notice a dead dog like me?' Mephibosheth can give nothing of benefit to David; he has a lousy self-image. Yet David pours out this free gift of grace to Mephibosheth to provide all the privileges he would have given his own son.

Imagine the scene. From that time onwards he was welcome at the King's own table, a table of continued nourishment, uninterrupted provision. Undeserving, yet freely given, unconditional love.

The grace of God cannot be earned or deserved. It is freely shown towards all people, God's grace tells us how our Judge has become our Saviour. This story is so amazing, because Mephibosheth was unknown by David, a man of no consequence to the king, is disabled and can give nothing of benefit to the king, yet David gives him so much.

David the king, out of unconditional love for his beloved friend

Jonathon sought out anyone to whom he might extend his grace. In a like manner, God the Father continues to seek anyone to whom he might extend His grace.

This disabled man had nothing, did nothing, and deserved nothing. He didn't even try to win the king's favour. All he could do was humbly accept it. We too, without hope and totally undeserving, in no way worthy of God's favour - can only humbly accept it.



MEPHIBOSHETH

The king restored Mephibosheth from his miserable existence, a place of barrenness and desolation to a place of fellowship and honour. God our Father has done the same for us. From our own personal Lo-debar of brokenness and barrenness, He rescued us and brought us into a place of spiritual nourishment and intimate closeness.

David adopted Mephibosheth into his royal family, providing him with uninterrupted provisions, nourishment and blessings. God by His amazing grace offers all people this unconditional love. For all people and particularly disabled people, are like Mephibosheth. We have been

invited into the presence of the King, not based on what we can do or not do, but based on the fact that the King offers it to us. Our worth is elevated so that we can approach the royal throne and sit and eat with the King.

The gift of God's grace also has an outworking in our lives. I hope and pray that we may model something of the grace that David showed Mephibosheth, but most of all, that we may we know God's grace of in our own lives.



Poverty and Disability.

Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Eliminating world poverty is unlikely to be achieved unless the rights and needs of people with disabilities are taken into account.

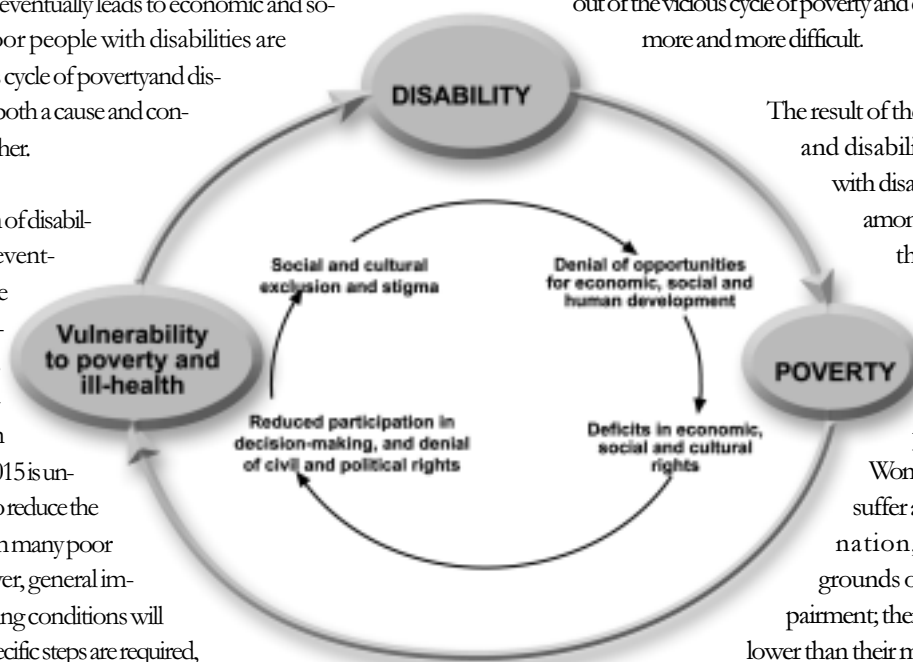
According to the United Nations, one in 20 has a disability. Three quarters of them live in a developing country. Recent World Bank estimates suggest that one in five of the world's poorest is a person with disability. Disability limits the access to education and employment that eventually leads to economic and social exclusion. Poor people with disabilities are caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and disability, each being both a cause and consequence of the other.

A large proportion of disability however is preventable. Achieving the international development targets for economic, social and human development by 2015 is undoubtedly aimed to reduce the levels of disability in many poor countries. However, general improvements in living conditions will not be enough. Specific steps are required, not only for prevention, but also to ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate fully in the development process, obtain a fair share of the benefits and claim their rights as full and equal members of society.

The majority of people with disabilities find their situation affects their chances of going to school, working for a living, enjoying family life and participating as equals in social life. It is estimated that only 2% of people with disabilities in developing countries have access to rehabilitation and appropriate basic services. Poor nutrition, dangerous working and living conditions, limited access to vaccination programmes, health and maternity care, poor hygiene, bad sanitation, inadequate information about the causes of impairments, war and conflict and natural disasters all cause disability. Many of these causes are preventable. According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) as many as 20 million women a year suffer disability and long-term complications as a result of pregnancy and childbirth. The most common causes of motor disability are injuries from accidents on the road at home or workplace; war and violence, including landmines; birth trauma; and infectious

disease such as polio leprosy. Children are often disabled as a result of malnutrition.

In turn, disability exacerbates poverty, by increasing isolation and economic strain, not just for the individual but often for the affected family as well. Children with disabilities are more likely to die young, or be neglected, malnourished and poor. People with disabilities who are denied education are then unable to find employment, driving them more deeply into poverty. Breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty and disability becomes more and more difficult.



The result of the cycle of poverty and disability is that people with disabilities are usually amongst the poorest of the poor and their literacy rates are considerably lower than the rest of the population. Women with disabilities suffer a double discrimination, both on the grounds of gender and impairment; their literacy rates are lower than their male counterparts.

Recent UNESCO studies have suggested that only 1-2% of children with disabilities in developing countries receive education. Boys with disabilities attend school more frequently than girls with disabilities. Studies also show that women with disabilities are twice or three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than women with no disabilities especially as regards their reproductive health problems.

As many as 50% of disabilities are preventable and directly linked to poverty. For example, the WHO currently estimates that worldwide there are 1.5 million blind children, mainly in Africa and Asia. In developing countries up to 70% of blindness in children is either preventable or treatable. The WHO also estimates that around 50% of disabling hearing impairment is also preventable. In 1995 this affected a total of 120 million people worldwide (including seven million children). Dealing with poverty is dealing with disability issues.

(Adapted from the DFID's *'Disability, Development and Poverty'*)



Rights and Social Exclusion

“Disability is a Human Rights issue. So long as people with disabilities are denied the opportunity to participate fully in society, no one can claim that the objectives of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been achieved” *Bengt Lindqvist, UN Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.*

There is an important and fundamental difference between disability and other forms of disadvantage. People with disabilities can only organize themselves to claim their rights when their additional practical needs; such as for mobility aids have been met. People with disabilities have a right to be included in all aspects of life. In order to fight for the right to inclusion, people with disabilities need to live in an environment in which they are empowered.

People with disabilities face numerous barriers in realizing equal opportunities; environment and access barriers, legal and institutional barriers and attitudinal barriers that cause social exclusion. Social exclusion is often the hardest barrier to overcome and is usually associated with feelings of shame, fear and rejection. This is through the negative stereotypes commonly attached to disability reflected in them being assigned a low social status and in some cases considered worthless.

“If the much-needed radical change in our attitude to disability is to come about then we must realize that disability is about rights and not charity, empowerment and not pity. Only by working together for equality and celebrating diversity can we become the truly inclusive community we are meant to be”

Roy McCloughry

Cross-cultural differences in the interpretation of disability show that the lives of people with disabilities are made more difficult not so much by their specific impairment as by the way society interprets and reacts to disability.



The social model of disability identifies three major types of discrimination:

- Institutional discrimination;
- Environmental discrimination and
- Attitudinal discrimination.

Institutional discrimination exists, for example, where no legal or other provision is made to ensure that children with a disability can attend school. Environmental discrimination is where a person with a disability is unable to participate due to physical barrier, such as inaccessible public transport or inappropriately designed buildings. Attitudinal discrimination is often expressed through fear and embarrassment on the part of a non-disabled person when confronted with a person with a disability. Also, low expectations of people with disabilities are discriminatory and undermine the confidence and aspirations of people with disabilities.



Attitudes towards Employment and Disability Analysed in Britain

by *Laurel Richards*



From “*Insufficient Concern*” A report on attitudes towards employment of both people with disabilities and employers in a borough outside London comes this assessment of the exceptional role employment plays in individuals’ lives by authors Miles Rinaldi and Robert Hill:

“Work is not only the most significant way out of poverty, but can also provide valued social roles outside the family, including a sense of responsibility that transcends the individual. Employment can thus offer an important sense of social inclusion and an important way of

structuring one’s sense of identity. Similarly the well-catalogued consequences of prolonged periods of unemployment go beyond mere financial hardship and challenge both the individual and the community of which they form a part.”

Undertaken between February 1999 and June 2000, the study collected information on the experiences of 56 employers and 241 disabled individuals living in the London Borough of Merton was undertaken between February 1999 and June 2000. Of the disabled participants, over one-third were currently working, one-half had previously worked but were not currently working and about a tenth had never worked. These participants also represented a range of disabilities – 102 had a physical impairment, 98 had a mental health problem, 19 had a visual impairment and 22 had a hearing impairment.

In summarizing the study results, Rinaldi and Hill separate the findings into observations and comments from three participant groups.

From the Perspective of Employers: Rinaldi and Hill found that almost one-half had employed people with disabilities. About 60 percent were not aware of the Disability Employment Advisor program located within local Employment Service Job Centres through which assistance is available in areas such as accessibility, equipment and training needs. Of the 40 percentage that did know of the program, only two-thirds knew how to contact the agency. A third of employers stated that their employment criteria would be different for people with mental health problems as opposed to disabled people generally. Just over a third of employers thought that employees’ attitudes were more important as their skills while 62% thought that employee’s skills were just as important as their attitudes. Rinaldi and Hill observe that employers are looking for a number of generic skills such as self-confidence skills, assertiveness skills, coping with stress, communications skills and work experience. Over 40 percent employers thought that they could not make change and /or adjustments to their workplace for a disabled person and 17% did not feel they were able to employ a disabled person.



From the Perspective of People Currently Working: Sixteen percent of these individuals had received advice not to work and over 75 percent had received this advice from their health care providers. Almost 60 percent of respondents had never received any form of career guidance or advice and some three-quarters applied for employment without help. Eighty-seven percent already had an impairment when they started their current job and 87 percent reported informing their employer about their impairment. Over two-thirds reported that their employer had been flexible in their working arrangements and/or made reasonable adjustments for them. Of respondents reporting that they had experienced barriers, 53 percent reported discrimination, 25 percent focused on the structure of the work/work environment and 9 percent on their experience, education or potential being discounted. Not surprising, 57 percent of respondents felt that their career development was limited by their impairment.

From the Perspective of People Not Currently Working or Who Have Never Worked: Fifty-one percent of the respondents wished to return to work. Nearly 45 percent had received advice not to work. Half of respondents did not possess any qualifications. Fifty-eight percent had never received any form of career guidance. Only a quarter of respondents stated that they hoped to achieve employment with assistance from a disability employment advisor. And almost half reported negative attitudes towards them in applying for employment.

Rinaldi and Hill also developed sets of recommendations for the various parties associated with employment of people with disabilities,

including employers, employment services, organizations working with disabled people, employed disabled individuals and disabled individuals not currently working. They also provide recommendations pertaining to social policy and areas for future research. Selected recommendations have been highlighted as follows:

Recommendations Arising from the Study Recommendations for the Employer

- Employers need to seek help and assistance from the national disability employment program team and/or disability organizations.
- Employers need to ensure their application forms and supporting information are available in a variety of formats, to ensure their business meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and that they are practicing equality of opportunity.
- Employers need to ensure they are aware of what place adjustments can be made as well as what financial support is available to them.
- The negative stereotyping uncovered in this research may be leading to businesses rejecting candidates who could offer great skills, experience and loyalty to their business. The attitudes shown could also be considered discriminatory.

Recommendations for the Employment Service

- There needs to be greater understanding by the national disability employment program team of employers' needs



and attitudes to disabled people. This can only be gained by working directly with employers in these issues.

- The Employment Service tends to work more with employers who come to them; however, the research has shown that in Merton, a large number of employers do not take this route. The agency needs to develop a proactive role in working with employers rather than expecting employers to come to them.
- The employment Service needs to be aware that a large number of disabled people surveyed had not used its services. Therefore, the Employment Service needs to establish why disabled people are not using their services and to question how they are going to reach out to disabled people who are unaware of their services.
- The DEA needs to be instrumental in identifying a lead agency to provide Careers Advice/ Guidance for disabled people.

Recommendations for Organisations Working with People with disabilities

- Organizations working with people with disabilities need to be aware that employment is a high priority and should look at the feasibility of setting up employment-related support services.
- Organizations need to outreach and network with employers to ensure that information, advice and assistance are available on all aspects of employing and retaining people with disabilities.
- Organizations working with people with disabilities need to work in partnership with ethnic minority organizations to ensure access to services and equality of opportunity.
- Organizations should actively support disabled people who wish to utilize DDA when they face discrimination in the workplace.
- Social services and/or other health professionals should examine whether their services are assisting or discouraging disabled people from taking up and retaining employment.
- Organizations need to work more closely with other organizations responsible for providing training to ensure that disabled people's training needs are incorporated within their services.
- Social services and/or other health professionals should examine whether their services are assisting or discouraging

disabled people from taking up and retaining employment.

- Organizations need to be proactive about offering work experience to people with disabilities.

Recommendations for the Individual In Work

- Individuals need to be more proactive with regard to the adjustments they need and towards fighting the discrimination they face within the workplace. The DDA can be used by people with disabilities to fight such attitudes and ignorance.
- However we recognize that for many people with disabilities this would be difficult. We therefore feel that although the responsibility is on the individual, other organizations such as the unions and voluntary organizations should be more proactive in assisting people with disabilities to attain their rights.

Recommendations for Individuals Not Currently Working

- Many employers now require at least some qualifications in basic literacy and numeracy. There are few jobs in Merton where people with disabilities without qualifications are going to be offered employment. Therefore it is important for this group of people with disabilities to look at education as a means of attaining employment. We are aware that many people with disabilities have access needs with regard to attending local colleges. Those that rely on Social Services provision should explore the option of using direct payments, as a means of enabling them to meet their access needs to acquire additional education.
- People with disabilities need to take responsibility to seeking employment by making contact with relevant organizations and the DEA.
- People with disabilities should ensure that skills and experiences match the type of employment they are seeking. Where there is a discrepancy between the individual and the employer, the individual should address this through education, training and work experience.
- Individuals should actively seek meaningful work experience in order to gain both practical and generic skills and as a way to demonstrate to employers that they have the ability to work. Work experience also allows individuals to examine their vocational interests and skills in a real work setting and to plan their future careers accordingly.



Recommendations That Impact upon Social Policy

- The UK's Disability Discrimination Act currently exempts 3 percent of Merton's employers. The qualifying number of staff should thus be examined if changes at the root level are to occur.
- The research highlights a set of generic skills that are prioritized by both employers and potential employees. Such skills should therefore be prioritized in both vocational programmes and work search programmes.
- There is need to challenge employers on their perceptions of the skills and abilities of those classified as long term unemployed, as this undoubtedly results in a form of indirect discrimination against certain members of the population.
- Statutory and non-statutory agencies need to develop links with employers and build on the experiences and findings from the survey.
- The current financial arrangements for personal assistant users appear economically punitive and

send out a negative message.

- Ignorance and stereotyping, particularly regarding mental health, needs to be continually challenged.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Research on employment needs of young disabled people (16-25 years), both those who are in contact with employment services as well as those who are not.
- User-led research on employment needs for people with hearing impairment.
- Research on the extent to which employers are discriminating against long-term unemployed individuals with impairments.
- Research on work retention.
- Research on causes of work-based stress within small and medium sized enterprises and how employers can work with physicians and other health professionals to manage and reduce work-induced stress.

Report of the Meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches

September 26th August – 6th September, 2002

The main issue that was discussed during the last Central Committee was the plans the council was undertaking to reorganize its Geneva- and New York-based staff around the five "historic" themes of the Council's work. These five themes are:

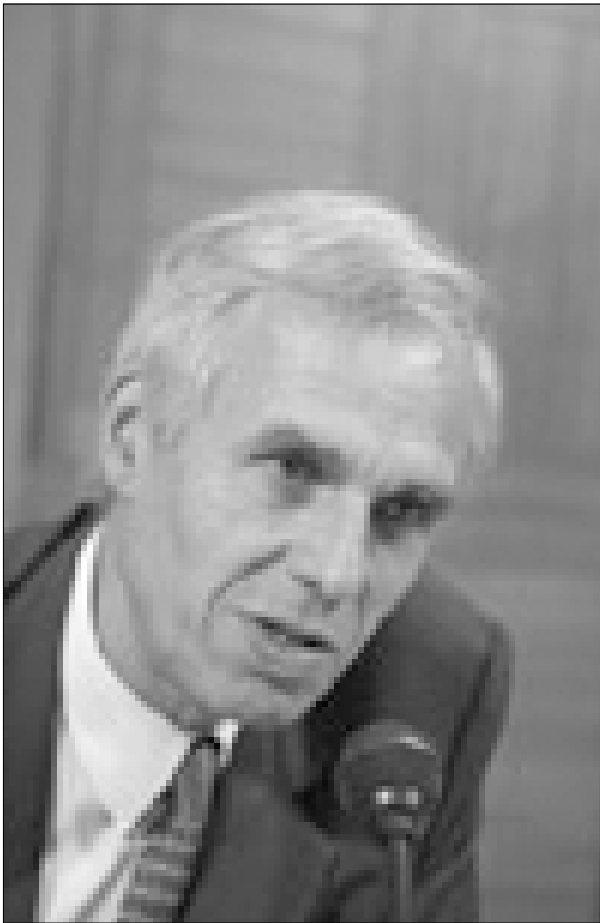
- Faith and Order;
- Mission and Ecumenical Formation;
- Justice, Peace and Creation;
- International Affairs, Peace and Human Security; and
- Diakonia and Solidarity.

The reorganization reflects the WCC's need to reduce planned expenses for 2003, and new thinking on how to fulfill the Council's mandate of seeking unity and cooperation among its 342 member churches worldwide.

According to WCC general secretary Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, "The Council, through this reorganization, has



manifested its will and its ability to respond constructively to a critical situation. The adjustment of the internal organization and leadership structure will result in a



Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser WCC General Secretary

clearer profile of the WCC's programmes and strengthen its cooperation with ecumenical partners."

This meeting of the WCC Central Committee was held at a crucial and hard moment for the life of the Council. The serious financial situation the Council has got into calls for some substantial reductions in the Council's programs and activities. These kinds of decisions are always hard to take. Financial pressure on the WCC is due to a combination of reduced contributions from donors and losses in the value of its investment portfolio. This led to a large drawdown on the organization's reserves over the last three years. Even though every program is important and has integrity, it was hard for a Central Committee to decide which program or activity can stay on and which one that should be taken off. Both the EDAN advisors took part in the meeting of the program committee that was mandated to look at the programmes of the Council. This meeting took place for 3 days.

The program committee recommended that the key question for any programme is: What is the unique role of the World Council of Churches in that particular programme? Then

the following questions were asked in order to assess every programme:

1. Does the programme relate to the primary purpose of the WCC as articulated in the constitution: "To call one another in visible unity in one faith and one Eucharist fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe?"
2. Does the programme involve collaboration with member churches and their constituencies so as to be responsive to their priorities?
3. Does the programme empower, affirm, strengthen, challenge and engage the member churches, enabling them to fulfill their mission with mutual accountability?
4. Does the programme draw upon the collective knowledge and wisdom of the member churches for mutual enrichment?
5. Does the programme have an international perspective not being addressed elsewhere?
6. Does the programme enable the fostering of ecumenical relationships that extend beyond what is being done nationally and regionally?

Since the programme committee did not have time to make an assessment of the programs that had been as deep and well informed as necessary to do the right prioritization that are needed in this critical stage in the life of the council, a small taskforce was formed to look at the programs in details. The programme committee did also suggest that the council should consider its working style regarding staffing, meetings organization and evaluation in order to see possibilities to cut costs.

An important event for EDAN during this central committee meeting was our Padare offering that we gave. A Padare offering is a 90 minutes long session of quite informal conversation around an important topic.

Arne Fritzson



Padare offering on Edan at the WCC Central Committee

By Arne Fritzon

The aim of Padare was to start a conversation with members of the Central Committee that can feed into the process of developing a new interim statement on the Theological Understanding of the Issues Concerning People with Disabilities.

The discussion on the Padare focused on four areas:

- Disability and Anthropology: People with Disabilities—who are they? How do the experiences of life with disabilities effect our understanding of what it is to be human and created as *Imago dei*? How do we understand disability in relation to human rights?
- Disability and Theology: How do the questions concerning people with disabilities change our theology, our understanding and our ways of talking about God and our faith? Does this concern have any implications for our Christology? How do we understand scripture passages about healing?
- Disability and Ecclesiology: In what ways do we have to change our ecclesiology so that the church can be truly accessible and inclusive towards people with disabilities? How does that change our understanding of the church as a body of Christ?
- Disability and the life of the churches: What implications

do this have for the life of the churches at different levels? How do the churches receive the gifts God wants to give through people with disabilities? How do we stop and prevent discrimination against people with disabilities? How do our liturgies have to change in order to be inclusive towards people with disabilities?

Unfortunately the attendance of the Padare was quite low. There were only around fifteen at the session, mostly composed of advisors, observers, guests and members of staff at the WCC. Very few members of the Central Committee did actually come to the meeting. Those who came had a special interest in the issues concerning people with disabilities. The conversation focused much around the different conditions people with disabilities have around the world. The main issue that was mostly talked about was concerning situations in societies where disabilities are highly stigmatized as in South-East Asia and Russia. There was a very moving contribution from the Russian Orthodox Church telling the forum about the work they are doing with children with disabilities who are left alone in institutions in that country.

Stairs, let's invent, said the Devil. A way for humans to get from one to another. So he made all central ramps have a zig-zag diagonal beville with each step ever so slightly smaller than any foot and saw it was good and called it: -
STAIR STAIR STAIR STAIRS

*Oh give me a world – share
A world without stair*

By H. Flint



Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Award

Ecuador's President Receives International Roosevelt Award
At UN Headquarters President Gustavo Noboa of the Republic of Ecuador received the sixth annual Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award on behalf of his country at a United Nations ceremony in September. The World Committee on Disability and the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute sponsors the Award. It is presented annually to a nation that makes noteworthy national progress toward the goal of the United Nations World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons: the full and equal participation of the world's 600 million people with disabilities in the life of their societies.

The Award consists of a bust of President Roosevelt and a \$50,000 cash prize for a non-governmental disability organization in the honored nation. This year, the cash prize is being awarded to the Foundation for the Psycho-Pedagogic Assistance for Children, Adolescents and Adults with Mental Retardation (FASINARM) in Ecuador. Previous winners of the Award are Thailand, Hungary, Ireland, Canada, and South Korea. The UN ceremony recognized Ecuador for placing equal opportunities for people with disabilities at the forefront of its national agenda. The Constitution of Ecuador was revised in 1994 to include guarantees of access for people with disabilities to healthcare, education, training and work.



President Gustavo Nabea of Ecuador receiving his FDR Award

UN Secretary General Praises Ecuador.

"I am delighted to congratulate the people and Government of Ecuador on receiving the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award for 2002. It is richly deserved," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "The enjoyment by all people of all human rights, including the full participation of persons with disabilities in society and development, goes to the heart of the work of the United Nations."

In response, President Noboa said: "Every nation has the responsibility to ensure the enjoyment of human rights by all individuals, and in particular by the most vulnerable - those with disabilities. Every State must provide all the necessary conditions for an inclusive society to become a reality, with equal opportunities for everyone. A deep change of attitudes throughout society is also crucial to eliminating all discrimination."



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan



Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Greatness.



President Delano Roosevelt

President Roosevelt, for whom the award is named, never took a step unassisted after he contracted polio at age 39. Nevertheless he was elected President of the United States four times, led the U.S. through the Great Depression and World War II, and was a founder of the United Nations—all while using a wheelchair. Reflecting on her grandfather's experience with polio, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, Co-Chair of the Roosevelt Institute, stated, "The experience of polio and learning to live with constant pain and disability gave FDR much of the strength, courage, and determination that made him the great President and world leader he was. FDR was not great despite his disability, he was great because of his disability."

Christopher Reeve Calls for UN Disability Rights Convention.



Christopher Reeve "Superman"

"This is a time of great hope and promise for the hundreds of millions of people with disabilities worldwide," said National Organization on Disability Vice Chairman Christopher Reeve. "When governments make it a priority to ensure equal opportunities for their citizens with disabilities, they maximize people's potential. People with disabilities want to make the most of their abilities, and this year's FDR Award winner, Ecuador, is to be commended for its dedication to making it possible for them to do so." Reeve also seconded Reich's call for the U.N. to adopt a convention on the rights of people with disabilities. "That convention would create a binding agreement to bring hope worldwide to the 600 million people

with disabilities... I hope that the convention will be adopted."

The World Committee on Disability is the international arm of the National Organization on Disability. The Committee's mission is to promote the full and equal participation and contribution of people with disabilities in all aspects of life as called for by the United Nations World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled People. Further information about the World Committee on Disability, and the FDR Award presentation, is posted at www.worldcommitteeondisability.org



Foundations for the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities in the USA

In response to the Second Vatican Council and new attitudes toward individual rights, the content of and motivation for the National Catholic Office for Persons with Disabilities in the United States of America has undergone significant development. The innate dignity of every person now receives greater emphasis and the ministry is seen more as a work of justice than charity. With federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which view people with disabilities as a minority group whose civil rights are protected, the expectation of inclusion has expanded and people with disabilities are no longer seen as “patients” with special needs. Rather, they are moving towards a greater sense that environmental factors and attitudes are what “handicap” their full inclusion in the mainstream of their communities. Increasingly, parents are coming to this same realization and are working to change the environments, which deny their children equal access and opportunity. People with disabilities are taking leadership and advisory roles in the secular world and expect less from their local parishes and the total church.

All Catholics are called to build a Church community that is inclusive of and welcoming to people with disabilities. In facing this challenging opportunity, the office is responding to the altered perceptions and expectations of people with disabilities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Ministry of people with disabilities is rooted in the simple sacred truth that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and has been called by the Creator to the eternal celebration of communion with the Blessed Trinity. The presence of a disability in no way diminishes this reality. In fact, vulnerability may be seen

as the catalyst to bring us into community and church with renewed recognition of our need for each other and our Lord. It is the acknowledgment of this interdependency that weaves the threads of the society and Church together.

Celebrating Diversity and Commonalities

Throughout His life, Jesus affirmed human dignity and each person's value to the community. He addressed the brokenness of the human family. His heart was open to all, and in a particular way to those alienated by society: sinners, tax collectors, women, people with disabilities, people shunned because of disease or illness. Jesus called all people to His Kingdom, teaching that all have a right to hear the gospel and be saved. However, people with disabilities and their families have often experienced rejection and feel unwelcome in the faith community.

Facilitating Participation Through Access

The incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ enriches, in fullness of redemption, the divine value of every human comprehension. The command of Christ to His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), includes people with disabilities, not because they are disabled but because they, as persons made in the image and likeness of God, enjoy the fullness of their human rights to receive the word of God and to participate in the divine redemption. Further, through their baptism they possess the right to share in the sacramental life of the Church. Membership in the church implies both the right to be served and the call to serve.



A burst of African drums played by the blind Tanzanian drummer. The late Morris Nyunyusa during the opening of the 3rd All Africa Conference of Churches in Lusaka Zambia on Sunday, May 12th 1974.



The current use and future potential of the UN Human Rights instruments in the context of Disability.

By prof. Gerard Quinn and Prof. Theresia Degener

The switch to the human rights perspective on disability took along time and is best exemplified in the famous UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for people with disabilities, which was adopted by the general assembly in 1993. These rules—which are monitored by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Standard Rules have played a vitally important role in raising consciousness about the human rights of persons with disabilities and in stimulating positive change throughout the world.

A long overdue and imperfect reform process is underway throughout the world to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy the same human rights shared in common by all of humanity. However the process is slow and uneven in some places almost non-existent. As a process, it is inspired by the values that underpin human rights: the inestimable dignity of each and every human being, the concept of anatomy or self determination that demands that the person be placed at the center of all decisions affecting him/her, the inherent equality of all regardless of difference and the ethnic solidarity that requires society to underwrite the freedom of the person with appropriate social supports.

The process of reform that is taking root across the globe could be immeasurably strengthened and accelerated if greater and more targeted use were made of the six existing United Nations Human Rights instruments in the specific context of disability.

Side by side with the UN Standard Rules sits a web of long established UN rights treaties which have been underused so far in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the Convention Against Torture (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

One major pre-requisite for the effective use of the UN human rights machinery has already taken place. People with disability everywhere are now framing their long felt sense of grievance and injustice using the language rights. One consequence is that isolated injustices are no longer experienced in isolation and are no longer divorced from the language of rights. Disability NGOs now themselves are beginning



to collect and process hard information on the alleged violations of the human rights of persons with disabilities.

The vital first step of framing injustice in terms of a violation of human rights provides the bridge between civil society and the international human rights system. It enables civil society to begin harnessing the elaborate UN machinery in order to advance the process of change.

Further more, national human rights institutions are themselves adopting the human rights perspective on disability. This important since these institutions act as an important transmission belt for the application of international human rights law and the values that underpin such law in national systems. They are strategically partners in the process of change and their increasing engagement on the human rights of people with disabilities.

A moment has therefore come for the international community to reflect on how best to capitalize on the UN human rights machinery in this regard.



BOOKREVIEW:

“Making a world of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disability”

By Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris

Reflections from the book “Making a world of Difference: Christian Reflections on Disability” By Roy McCloughry and Wayne Morris (SPCK, 2002) ISBN: 0-281-05423-1 Price: GBP 8.99

The book responds to an agenda being set by people with disabilities and the changes that have been brought about by the disability movement with its emphasis on the empowerment of people with disabilities and the importance of empowerment as an issue of human rights.

Disability worldwide is looked at especially the various disparities between the developing countries and developed countries. The rise of the disability movement has also been highlighted in the book especially the role that it plays in trying tirelessly to show that impairment makes people different, a fact that should be celebrated rather than feared.

The question on what causes marginalisation is also highlighted. Various factors are looked at, as whether it is the fear of difference? Ignorance of what it means to be disabled? Fear that people with disabilities remind others of the brokenness and vulnerability of their human condition in an industrialized world in which progress, fitness and success are celebrated and weakness or inability are seen as failure?

The book finally sums up that when persons with disabilities experience oppression or discrimination, God stands alongside them in their struggles. God's solidarity with those who are marginalized demonstrates that right at the center of each community is Christ, willing it to be a community of love and inclusion. At local levels, people with disabilities are rarely properly represented among church elders or on church councils, an issue that the church can pick up and make a difference.

INFORMATION



International Congress on Women and Disability and the Asian Consultation

The International Congress on Women and Disability is to be held in Valencia, Spain, February 27 - March 1, 2003. On the occasion of the European Year of Persons with Disabilities, the Directorate of Women Affairs and Integration of Persons with Disabilities, together with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, through the IMSERSO and the Institute of Women have agreed to organize this first International Congress on Women and Disability.

This event was proposed as part of the national state actions supporting the objectives of the European Year. It will be held at the Palacio de Congresos de Valencia, from February 27 to March 1, 2003. The Ministry of Health of the Valencia Government has also supported it with a Declaration of Scientific and Health Interest Event.

For more information, consult the Congress *Web Page*: (www.micongreso.gva.es). There you will find important information such as: Program of the Congress, Application Form, Honorary, Organizing, and Scientific Committees, Congress Secretariat, Presentation forms.

Asia Consultation

The Christian of Asia and the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network are organizing a consultation on Ecumenical Agenda of churches in solidarity with persons with disabilities. This will take place at the Royal Benja Hotel, Bangkok Thailand 10th – 15th March 2003.

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