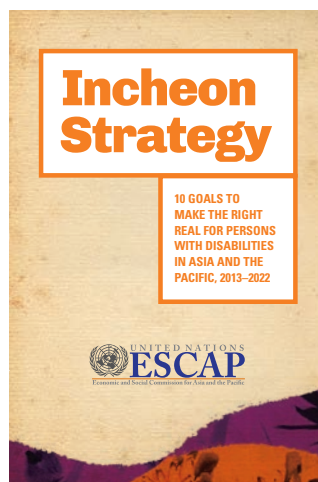


Accessibility and Facilities for the Built-Environment for Persons with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region

By Pang Soo Moi

When the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability 1993-2002 was declared by UN ESCAP, Malaysia was a signatory to the Proclamation on the “Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region” on May 16, 1994. The (UBBL) Uniform Building Bye-Laws 1984 was amended to include by-law 34A on the “Building Requirements for Disabled Persons”. Subsequently, three Malaysian Standards namely MS1184: Code of Practice for Access for Disabled Persons to Public Buildings, MS 1183: Code of Practice for means of escape for Disabled Person and MS 1331: Code of Practice for access for Disabled Persons outside buildings were correspondingly formed to assist the industry for the implementation of facilities of built-environment for Disabled Persons.

In addition, several guidelines on planning and building requirements by the



Town and Country Planning Department and the Local Government Department of the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry were also issued to guide planners, architects, engineers, builders, developers and local Government officers.

INCHEON STRATEGY

Towards the end of the second Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability 2003-2013, the Governments of the ESCAP region gathered in

Incheon, Republic of Korea, from October 29 to November 2, 2012 to chart the course of the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2013 to 2022. They were joined by representatives of civil society organisations, including those related to persons with disabilities. Also in attendance were representatives of inter-Governmental organisations, development co-operation agencies and the United Nations system.

The Incheon Strategy provides the Asia-Pacific region, and the world, with the first set of regionally agreed disability-inclusive development goals. Developed over more than two years of consultations with Governments and civil society stakeholders, the Incheon Strategy comprises 10 goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators.

The Incheon Strategy builds on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Biwako Millennium Framework for

Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

The Incheon Strategy will enable the Asia-Pacific region to track progress towards improving the quality of life, and the fulfilment of the rights, of the region's 650 million persons with disabilities, most of whom live in poverty. The ESCAP secretariat is mandated to report every three years until the end of the Decade in 2022, on progress in the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration and the Incheon Strategy.

General Assembly Resolution 48/96 of December 20, 1993 adopted the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, in which persons with disabilities are recognized as both development agents and beneficiaries in all aspects of development.

The Beijing Declaration on Disability-Inclusive Development adopted on June 8, 2012 by the Beijing Forum with the theme “removing barriers, promoting integration”, which, inter alia, recognized the significance of accelerating the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and incorporating the disability dimension in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 in diverse sectors.

The development of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific was derived from the experiences in

the implementation of two consecutive Asian and Pacific Decades of Disabled Persons, 1993–2002 and 2003–2012, as well as the historic adoption by the General Assembly, in 2006, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The responses of Governments and organisations of and for persons with disabilities to the ESCAP Disability Survey 2011–2012 on the final review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003–2012, provided a rich evidence base for developing the Incheon Strategy.



The Incheon Strategy is not intended to replicate the comprehensive coverage of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which will all continue to serve as the overarching policy framework for regional work in the field of disability.

The Incheon goals and targets are time-bound for accelerating implementation by focusing particular attention on the achievement of a set of priority goals and targets during the course of the new Decade, 2013–2022, as well as facilitating the measurement of progress to be attained by countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND POLICY DIRECTION

The Incheon Strategy is based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;
- Non-discrimination;
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- Equality of opportunity;
- Accessibility;
- Equality between men and women; and
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

In order to realize and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, the Incheon Strategy underscores the following policy direction:

- Legislative, administrative and other measures

supportive of rights fulfilment are adopted, implemented, reviewed and strengthened so that disability-based discrimination is eliminated;

- Development policies and programmes are disability inclusive and gender-sensitive and harness the potential of combining universal design with technological advancements for enabling persons with disabilities to fulfil their rights;
- Development policies and programmes address the basic needs of persons with disabilities and their families who live in poverty;
- Effective and timely collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated disability data are pursued for evidence-based policymaking;
- National, sub-national and local policies and programmes are based on plans that are explicitly inclusive of persons with disabilities and that also prioritize the active participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organisations, in relevant decision-making processes;
- The necessary budgetary support is provided at all levels for disability-inclusive development and tax policies facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- All national, sub-regional, regional and international entities concerned with development include disability dimensions in their policies and programmes;
- National, sub-national



and local co-ordination, with sub-regional and regional linkages, ensure that disability inclusion in development policies and programmes is strengthened through intensification of multi-sectoral consultation and collaboration, to expedite and review Decade implementation and share related good practices;

- Community and family-based inclusive development is promoted in order to ensure that all persons with disabilities, irrespective of socio-economic status, religious affiliation, ethnicity and location, are able, on an equal basis with others, to contribute to and benefit from development initiatives, particularly poverty reduction programmes;
- Persons with disabilities are included in mainstream community life and are supported with life choices equal to those of others, including the option to live independently;
- Persons with disabilities have access to the physical environment,

public transportation, knowledge, information and communication, in a usable manner, through universal design and assistive technologies with reasonable accommodation provided, and taking into consideration the need to accommodate economic, geographic, linguistic and other aspects of cultural diversity, which altogether constitute a critical bridge to fulfilling their rights;

- Diverse disability groups are empowered that include but are not limited to the following under-represented groups: girls and boys with disabilities, young persons with disabilities, women with disabilities, persons with intellectual, learning and developmental disabilities, persons with autism, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons who are deaf, hard of hearing and deafened, persons who are deaf/blind, persons with multiple disabilities, persons with extensive disabilities, older persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities living with HIV, persons with disabilities arising from non-communicable diseases, persons with disabilities affected by leprosy, persons with disabilities caused by medical conditions and intractable epilepsy, persons with disabilities caused by road traffic crashes, indigenous and ethnic minority persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities who are

homeless and inadequately housed, persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and the occurrence of natural and human-made disasters, persons with disabilities who are victims of landmines, persons with disabilities who do not have legal status, persons with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence, particularly women and children, and family advocacy groups, as well as particularly marginalized persons with disabilities living in slums, rural and remote areas and atolls;

- Organisations of and for persons with disabilities, self-help groups and self-advocacy groups, with support, as required by families and caregivers, participate in decision-making, as appropriate, to ensure that the interests of marginalized groups are adequately addressed;
- Action on raising awareness is strengthened and continued, including through the provision of adequate budgetary support, in the Asian and Pacific region during the Decade to improve attitudes and behaviour and mobilize effective multi-sectoral engagement in implementation modalities.

INCHEON GOALS AND TARGETS

The Incheon Strategy is composed of 10 interrelated goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators.

The time frame for achieving the goals and targets is the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013 to 2022.

The 10 Goals describe the desired end results. Targets are aimed to be achieved within a given time frame. Indicators measure progress towards the targets and verify that the targets have been achieved.

There are two types of indicators: core indicators and supplementary indicators.

Among the 10 goals, the goals related to accessibility and build environment are:

GOAL 3 - Enhance access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication

Access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication is a precondition for persons with disabilities to fulfil their rights in an inclusive society.

The accessibility of urban, rural and remote areas based on universal design increases safety and ease of use not only

for persons with disabilities, but also for all other members of society. Access audits are an important means of ensuring accessibility and must cover all stages of the process of planning, design, construction, maintenance and monitoring and evaluation. Access to assistive devices and related support services is also a precondition for persons with disabilities to optimize their level of independence in daily life and live in dignity.

Ensuring the availability of assistive devices for those living in low resource settings involves encouraging research, development, production, distribution and maintenance.

Target 3.A

Increase the accessibility of the physical environment in the national capital that is open to the public.

Target 3.B

Enhance the accessibility and usability of public transportation.

Target 3.C

Enhance the accessibility and usability of information and communications services.

Target 3.D

Halve the proportion of persons with disabilities who need but do not have appropriate assistive devices or products.

INDICATORS FOR TRACKING PROGRESS

Core indicators

- 3.1 Proportion of accessible Government buildings in the national capital
- 3.2 Proportion of accessible international airports
- 3.3 Proportion of daily captioning and sign-language interpretation



of public television news programmes

- 3.4 Proportion of accessible and usable public documents and websites that meet internationally recognized accessibility standards
- 3.5 Proportion of persons with disabilities who need assistive devices or products and have them
- 3.6 Availability of a Government access audit programme that requires the participation of experts with disabilities
- 3.7 Availability of mandatory technical standards for barrier-free access that govern the approval of all designs for buildings that could be used by members of the public, taking into consideration internationally recognized standards, such as those of the International Organisation for Standardization
- 3.8 Number of sign language interpreters
- 3.9 Availability of mandatory technical standards for barrier-free access that govern the approval of all ICT-related services, such as websites for the public, taking into consideration internationally recognized standards, such as those of the ISO

GOAL 7 - Ensure disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management

The Asia-Pacific region is the region that is most adversely affected by disasters, including



those caused by climate change. Persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are at higher risk of death, injury and additional impairments, as a result of exclusion from disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes. Public service announcements are often issued in formats and language that are not accessible by persons with disabilities. In addition, emergency exits, shelters and facilities tend not to be barrier-free. Regular participation of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness drills and other disaster risk reduction measures at the local and district levels could prevent or minimize risk and damage when disasters occur. Physical and information infrastructure that incorporates universal design principles would improve the chances of safety and survival.

Target 7.A

Strengthen disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction planning.

Target 7.B

Strengthen implementation of measures on providing timely and appropriate support to

persons with disabilities in responding to disasters.

INDICATORS FOR TRACKING PROGRESS

Core indicators

- 7.1 Availability of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction plans
- 7.2 Availability of disability-inclusive training for all relevant service personnel
- 7.3 Proportion of accessible emergency shelters and disaster relief sites

Supplementary indicators

- 7.4 Number of persons with disabilities who died or were seriously injured in disasters
- 7.5 Availability of psychosocial support service personnel that have the capacity to assist persons with disabilities affected by disasters
- 7.6 Availability of assistive devices and technologies for persons with disabilities in preparing for and responding to disasters

GOAL 8 - Improve the reliability and comparability of disability data

Persons with disabilities tend to be unseen, unheard and uncared. Increasingly in recent years, when they have been counted, definitions of “disability” and “persons with disabilities” that are used for collecting disability data have varied widely in the Asia-Pacific region. Taken together, data comparisons across countries are frequently unreliable. The Asia-Pacific region needs more accurate statistics on the population of persons with

diverse disabilities and on their socio-economic status. The adequacy of disability statistics would enable policymaking to be evidence-based to support the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Decade is an opportunity to enhance data collection aimed at generating comparable disability statistics over time and across borders. It is crucial that baseline data for the Incheon Strategy indicators are made available to enable effective progress tracking towards the achievement of goals and targets.

Target 8.A

Produce and disseminate reliable and internationally comparable disability statistics in formats that are accessible by persons with disabilities.

Target 8.B

Establish reliable disability statistics by the midpoint of the Decade, 2017, as the source for tracking progress towards the achievement of the goals and targets in the Incheon Strategy.

GOAL 9 - Accelerate the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of



Persons with Disabilities and the harmonization of national legislation with the Convention

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first disability-specific, international legal instrument that provides a comprehensive approach to respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities. The Convention explicitly empowers persons with disabilities as holders of rights, as distinct from being treated as objects of charity. The ESCAP region played an instrumental and historic role in the initiation and drafting of the Convention. As of October 30, 2012, 126 states globally are parties to the Convention and 154 are signatories, of which, in the Asia-Pacific region, 35 Governments have signed the Convention and 25 have ratified the Convention or acceded to it.

GOAL 10 - Advance sub-regional, regional and inter-regional co-operation

The experience of two Asian and Pacific Decades underscores the value of co-operation, at sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels, for facilitating mutual support, including through sharing lessons learned, good practices and innovative solutions. The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, adopted on December 1, 2011 by the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan, Republic of Korea) recognized the importance of international commitments on disability to form the foundation of co-operation for effective development. Civil society and



the private sector could play important roles in catalyzing innovative approaches to reaching the Incheon goals and targets.

CONCLUSION

As Malaysia progresses towards a developed nation status by 2020, it is important that the needs of the Disabled Persons particularly accessibility and facilities for the build environment are adequately addressed. The physical build environment for Disabled Person in public areas is a reflection of the level of national development and civic society. With this in mind, the Incheon Strategy should be used as an effective tool to achieve the wishes of the Disabled Persons for an inclusive society. ■

REFERENCE

UN ESCAP : Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” For Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific
Jabatan Kerajaan Tempatan : Guidelines on Buildings Requirements for Disabled Persons