

Report on CBR Asia Pacific Congress and Network

By

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The First Asia-Pacific CBR Congress organized with over 650 participants from the entire Asia Pacific region and round the globe. It was indeed a big gathering of CBR people – planners, policy makers, and implementers, People with Disabilities, organizational representatives, UN Agencies, Developmental Agencies, Government agencies and individuals in Bangkok, Thailand. Leading experts from across the world shared their experiences, as a joint initiative of the UN agencies, Governments and civil society. The major theme of the Congress was "Community-based Inclusive Development: people with disabilities and their families" with several sub-themes such as "CBR as grass-root strategy to promote Inclusive development" and "Stakeholders' roles for promotion of CBR and inclusive development".

Objectives of Congress were:

- Bring key stakeholders together to share resources and to be updated
- Develop an alliance and resource base for the Asia-Pacific region among UN, Governments (GO), NGOs, DPOs and others.
- Promote CBR as an effective multi-sectoral strategy to reduce poverty, ensure rights and enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities and their families
- Promote the importance of the implementation of the CRPD, the BMF and BMF plus Five.
- Promote community-based inclusive development for people with disabilities and their families.
- Introduction of CBR Guidelines; a joint publication of WHO, ILO and UNESCO in in partnership with civil society.

- Promote research and evidence - based practice related to CBR artnership with civil society.

Achieved outcomes:

- Formed CBR Asia-Pacific Network which will be ultimately part of CBR Global Network
- Developed multi-sectoral partnership and establishing Multi-sectoral CBR Strategy to operationalize the provisions of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Linked up CBR with BMF, Millennium Development Goal (MDG), Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), and other mainstream development initiatives.
- Active participation of persons with disabilities and their families/organizations in CBR.
- Member states to initiate/support/strengthen CBR within the country.
- Future Plan of Actions on identified needs including research and good practices.

The colorful program was initiated by traditional Thai dance and was followed by the opening ceremony. There was representation from senior level people from the Thailand government, United Nations, WHO, ILO etc. Post all this the proceedings of the Congress was initiated. The Organizers of the Congress were Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) Thailand, World Health Organization (WHO), Foundation of Asia Pacific Development Center on Disabilities (APCD Foundation) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and supporters were different Ministries of Royal Thai Government, JICA, APCD, CBM and LCDI. Many other stakeholders also played a vital role like DPI AP, HI, WVI, AIFO, Sightsavers, APDF and many other organizations.

During the 3 days a range of topics were covered through discussions, presentations, debates (as well as side meetings over tea and lunch). Some

of the topics that were covered included UNCRPD, CBR Matrix, CBR and women with disabilities, BMF, CBR and alliances, Research and evidence based practice in CBR, CBR and accessibility, CBR networks, CBR and self help groups, etc. There were pre-cbr and post-cbr congress events, like AIFO's CBR and Rights of Person with Disabilities 16 and 17 February, APCD CBR training workshop on 21 February, Leprosy Workshop 21 and 22 February 2009. In side meetings people from different organizations like AIFO, HI, Sight Savers, LCDI and People with Disabilities held meetings. Same time many countries have separate meetings and elected coordinators for their respective countries to represent in CBR Asia Pacific Network.

While some of the presentations were really useful, some were not at all informative and some did not even speak on the topic assigned (and rather spoke on their organisation and what they were involved in). While at times it was hard to choose which of the concurrent sessions to attend, at times the choice was evident (but not the learning's that we all garnered!). People with Disabilities also provided opportunities to express their views about CBR.

The Congress provided an excellent platform to network with representatives from across the region and interact with many others about whom we had only heard or just were introduced on emails only. Sending this report will also support those who not attended the CBR Congress and now may contact with their country coordinators and support them to develop a strong CBR Network on national level with equal opportunities to Organizations of People with Disabilities.

A CBR Network developed, evolved or formed among CBR implementers/practitioners, People with Disabilities, Gender equalization and various type of organizations to promote and strengthen CBR, really it is a natural network without any out side intervention. Now the strength of the network depends on the strength of individual or organizational members and the co-ordination and collaboration between members. It is expected that the benefits from the network will be greater than those from individual efforts.

It is anticipated that the CBR AP Network will become very active in promotion of CBR across the World, continent and in countries. The Congress provided a great opportunity to form the assembly of the proposed CBR AP Network and a group of leaders. First meeting of CBR

AP Network held in Hotel Prince Palace and three immediate tasks adopted:

1. Website of CBR AP Network will be designed. Till CBR AP Congress website can be used (see link below).
2. Constitution of CBR AP Network will be drafted.
3. Action plan of CBR AP Network will be developed up to 2011 (till next congress).

The other tasks for the CBR Asia Pacific Network, defined:

- Develop the CBR Asia-Pacific Network, set up a secretariat and seek funding (APCD will be requested to provide facility for the secretariat and WHO will provide initial funds for staff)
- Collate or develop a regional resource base, promotional materials in regional languages on National level.
- Facilitate the formation of CBR National Networks and provide support to the countries. As the each country coordinator will be responsible to strength National CBR Network.
- Organize training workshops to promote CBR and strengthen CBR implementation in line with the forthcoming CBR Guidelines at continental level and support similar initiatives at country level
- Support research initiatives that will contribute to making CBR more evidence-based, such researchers forum separately met and will support CBR AP Network in research field.

- Develop and establish the linkage between CRPD and CBR.
- Facilitate linkages between different stakeholders and develop a strong alliance with Government, National/International NGOs including DPOs
- Organize regular CBR continental congress. Next congress proposed in 2011 India and Philippines showed interest to organize in their respective countries.
- To provide support towards CBR World Congress to be held once in four years starting from 2012.

The key to the success of CBR Asia Pacific Network is linked to the CBR National Networks or sub-regional networks.