

Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002

Introduction

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992, coincided with a period of economic dynamism throughout much of the Asian and Pacific region. The concluding years of the United Nations Decade also witnessed major breakthroughs in peace-building in the region marked by significant improvements in conflict resolution and rapprochement between diverse states.

It was in this hospitable context that the *Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Towards the Year 2000 and Beyond* was adopted by the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development, held at Manila in October 1991. The Strategy has the ultimate aim of improving the quality of life of all the people of the ESCAP region. With that aim in mind, the basic objectives of the Strategy are the eradication of absolute poverty, the realization of distributive justice and the enhancement of popular participation. Within the framework of those aims and objectives, the Strategy assigns priority to the region's disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups, including persons with disabilities.

Further to the priority given to the concerns of persons with disabilities in the regional Social Development Strategy, thirty-three countries attending the forty-eighth ESCAP session in April 1992 joined in sponsorship of resolution 48/3 on an *Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002*. In adopting the resolution, the Governments of the region expressed their collective commitment to the full participation and equality of people with disabilities.

The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons provides an opportunity for the 56 countries and areas of the ESCAP region to consolidate the efforts initiated during the preceding United Nations Decade through a new emphasis on regional cooperation in support of progress at the national level. In particular, it provides a context for the strengthening of technical cooperation among developing countries, as well as between the region's developing and developed countries, in the resolution of key issues that affect the lives of people with disabilities.

To achieve the objectives of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, an agenda for action is needed that translates the World Programme of

Action concerning Disabled Persons into an agenda for the Asian and Pacific region, in response to the review and appraisal of the achievements of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992, in the Asian and Pacific region as contained in document SD/DDP/1, 1992.

The present document provides a framework for the formulation of that agenda for action. The framework consists of the major *policy categories* under which efforts will be required for the implementation of ESCAP resolution 48/3. These basic policy categories include:

- National coordination;
- Legislation;
- Information;
- Public awareness;
- Accessibility and communication;
- Education;
- Training and employment;
- Prevention of causes of disabilities;
- Rehabilitation services;
- Assistive devices;
- Self-help organizations;
- Regional cooperation;

Each of the policy categories constituting the framework contains a list of areas of concern of direct relevance to the development of policies in support of the full participation and equality of people with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

The formulation of an agenda for action for the Decade should be neither an exercise in regional target setting nor an attempt to prescribe a uniform implementation strategy for all countries. Given the vastness and diversity of the

region, ESCAP members and associate members will necessarily differ on the details of their respective national action programmes. There will be differences in the relative priority to be assigned to particular activities. Specific short- and long-term objectives, as well as approaches to and the pace of implementation will also vary from country to country. In the final analysis, however, the agenda for action will provide the basis for a regional initiative aimed at realizing the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities, which comprise the objectives of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002.

Furthermore, the agenda for action is to be viewed in the context of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and other relevant United Nations international instruments, mandates and recommendations.

Areas of concern

1. National Coordination

Establishment of a national coordination committee on disability matters or strengthening of an existing one:

- (a) As a permanent body with adequate infrastructural support;
- (b) With representation from concerned government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, including adequate representation from organizations of people with disabilities;
- (c) To serve as the national focal point on disability matters and facilitate the continuous evolution of a comprehensive national approach to the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and this agenda for action by undertaking the following:
 - Review and coordinate the activities of all agencies and non-governmental organizations working for and on behalf of people with disabilities;
 - Develop a national policy to address issues faced by people with disabilities;

- Advise the Head of State/Government, policy makers and programme planners on the development of policies, legislation, programmes and projects with respect to their impact on people with disabilities;
- Render guidance services to ministries in the enforcement of legislation to protect the rights of people with disabilities, and in the elimination of interpretations that are unfavourable to people with disabilities;
- Mobilize support for the development of a national data base on disability-related issues;
- Translate the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and this agenda for action into the national (and local) languages and in appropriate formats for widespread dissemination at all levels;
- Operate a scheme to upgrade the competence of staff of the national coordination committee, particularly on management skills, policy and programme development, and to include persons with disabilities in staff recruitment and training;
- Promote resource mobilization for dealing with disability issues, including through the creation of adequate funds with donations from industry, philanthropists and other donors;
- Promote the integration of people with disabilities, including children and women with disabilities, in national plans and in programmes and projects supported by international agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);
- Review with donor agencies their funding policies from the perspective of their impact on persons with disabilities;
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and programmes on the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities, and disseminate the results to concerned parties;
- Facilitate national participation in regional cooperation activities related to the implementation of Commission resolution 48/3;

- Establish schemes to accord public recognition of outstanding contributions to progress in pursuance of the goals of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons;
- Encourage the use of the relevant United Nations guidelines for the establishment and development of national coordinating committees on disability or similar bodies.

2. Legislation

(a) Concerning existing legislation:

- Conduct of a survey to identify legal provisions that are restrictive to people with disabilities;
- Amendment or repeal of those restrictive legal provisions and elimination of interpretations that are unfavourable to people with disabilities;

(b) Enactment of a basic law on protection of the rights of all persons with disabilities and prohibition of abuse and neglect of these persons and discrimination against them;

(c) Enactment of legislation aimed at equal opportunity for people with disabilities, covering, for example:

- Affirmative action measures and incentives in favour of opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in education, training, job placement, employment and entrepreneurship;
- Tax relief and subsidies, as appropriate, for parents and guardians of children with disabilities, as well as for people with disabilities;
- Customs clearance and exemption from customs duty of imported vehicles, assistive devices, equipment and materials, including medical supplies, required to facilitate the daily life of people with disabilities;

(d) Enactment of legislation aimed at the elimination of architectural and logistical barriers to freedom of movement of citizens with disabilities, including incentives to encourage:

- Private and public sector involvement in improving accessibility of the built environment;
 - Facilitation of use, by persons with disabilities, of land, air and water transport systems;
- (e) Enactment of legislation aimed at the elimination of communication barriers to reduce the social and physical isolation commonly faced by people with disabilities, covering, for example:
- Production and dissemination of information, especially public information, in appropriate formats (e.g., large print, Braille, indigenous sign language, audio/video cassette and floppy diskette);
 - Facilitation of, and concessions and subsidies for, the use of postal and telecommunications equipment and services by people with disabilities;
- (f) Inclusion of the concerns of persons with disabilities in social security legislation;
- (g) Enactment of legislation for the promotion of health and safety in the workplace, in public places, and in the home, e.g.:
- Prohibition on smoking as a public health hazard;
 - Restrictions on the sale of firearms and fireworks;
 - Restrictions on alcohol consumption and driving;
 - Control over the roadworthiness of vehicles;
 - Standards for the safety of equipment, items for industrial, domestic and personal use, as well as toys and other items that children may have access to;
- (h) Development of means of ensuring the effective implementation and enforcement of legislation, including:
- Regulations on and guidelines for implementation;

- Mechanisms to promote enforcement (e.g., community-level committees, ombudspersons, enforcement tribunals);
 - Mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the enforcement of legislation;
- (i) Enactment of legislation regarding persons with extensive disabilities, of all ages, that assigns priority to the provision of community-based personal assistance services for daily living, to enable them to live in the community with self-determination and dignity, rather than in residential institutions;
- (j) Dissemination of information on legislation, particularly to people with disabilities and their advocates:
- Enacted specifically to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities;
 - Enacted for the benefit of broader population groups (e.g., legislation on an issue [poverty alleviation] or for a specific group [women]) among whom many people with disabilities are included;
- (k) Encouragement of the use of relevant United Nations guidelines on national disability legislation;
- (l) Encouragement of exchange of expertise and experiences among ESCAP members and associate members concerning the enactment and implementation of equalization legislation.

3. Information

- (a) Development of national capacity for:
- Collection and analysis of comprehensive and accurate data on the national disability situation;
 - Documentation of disability-related issues and projects in the country;
 - Responding accurately and quickly to queries on disability-related issues in the country;
 - Packaging of information for diverse user groups;

- Preparation and dissemination of directories of disability-related resources available within the country;
 - Identification of national strengths and needs for the purpose of regional cooperation in pursuance of this agenda for action;
- (b) Collaboration between public libraries, information centres and organizations of persons with disabilities to increase the availability of information material in floppy diskette, large print, Braille, audio cassette and video cassette formats;
- (c) Introduction of captions in films and television programmes, as well as those in video cassette format;
- (d) Establishment of means to protect the privacy of individuals with disabilities in the collection of disability-related data.

4. Public awareness

- (a) Strengthening of national capacity for improving public awareness of the goals of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons through measures such as:
- Training of information service and media personnel and representatives of organizations of people with disabilities on communications about people with disabilities and the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons;
 - Encouragement of the use of United Nations guidelines on improving communications about people with disabilities;
 - Requests to regional broadcasting and media organizations and agencies to support the building of national capacity in this regard;
 - Promotion of monitoring of the quality of media coverage of issues related to the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons and feed back to media agencies on their observance of the United Nations guidelines;
 - Enlistment of development communications organizations, street theatre and folk media groups, and popular media personalities to

assist in the communication of information to counter deep-rooted superstitions about disability and persons with disabilities;

(b) Development of sustained national campaigns to promote the competence of and shape positive attitudes towards people with disabilities, directed at:

- The general public;
- Groups in a position to effect change (e.g., community leaders, people with disabilities and their families, children, students, policy makers, administrative authorities, professionals);
- Removal of stigma attached to deformities;
- Promotion of respect for the right of persons with disabilities to parenthood and family life;
- Enhancement of the dignity of persons with disabilities in, and elimination of discriminatory terminology from, advertising campaigns and other mass media activities;

(c) Promotion of endeavours that focus public attention on people with disabilities as equal citizens, such as:

- Cultural events and competitions involving people with disabilities, including in integrated activities;
- Direct involvement of people with disabilities in media activities, including mainstream ones that are unrelated to disability;

(d) Encouragement of the use of terminology to describe individuals with disabilities that focuses on the person and not the disability, such as "people/persons with disabilities" and not "the disabled" or "the handicapped".

5. Accessibility and communication

(a) Review of the planned and existing built environment and practices employed in its extension and maintenance, with a view to the development of measures for improving its accessibility;

(b) Development of barrier-free design codes to cover new construction as well as renovation and expansion (including office and residential buildings, public facilities, areas around buildings, roads and transport infrastructure);

(c) Amendment of existing codes to include accessibility features at the same level of importance as fire safety features;

(d) Introduction of accessibility concerns, with the assistance of people with disabilities, into programmes for the training of professionals and technicians engaged in the construction and maintenance of the built environment, including transport infrastructure;

(e) Development and implementation of guidelines for electronic accessibility to:

- Increase the availability of electronic equipment that people with disabilities may use either with or without special peripherals (i.e., special aids that provide access to electronic equipment, e.g., large print and Braille displays, spoken input and output mechanisms, and keyboard enhancement and replacement products);
- Encourage public and private sector agencies and organizations to consider electronic access for persons with disabilities in their procurement and renting of equipment;

(f) Encouragement of citizens'/corporate initiatives to develop approaches to the introduction of accessibility to all areas of society, including key areas such as education, information, housing and commerce;

(g) Selection, by national bodies, of appropriate approaches to the improvement of accessibility for replication on a wider scale;

(h) Training of personnel whose work involves contact with the public, to improve their communication with people with visual impairment and people with cognitive limitations;

(i) Support for sign language development aimed at:

- Improving the availability of sign language interpretation services;
- Facilitating communication between people with hearing impairment and hearing people, including those in public service (e.g., in

community centres, legal aid agencies, banks, employment exchanges, police departments, hospitals);

(j) Expansion of telecommunications services, such as telecommunications relay services and closed captioning, for individuals with hearing and speech impairments;

(k) Support for enhanced availability of information to vision-impaired people, through such means as:

- Expansion of Braille/audio cassette/computer and voice synthesizer information services;
- Provision of reading services;
- Training in the use of Braille and computer equipment;
- Encouragement of the production of information in floppy diskette, as well as in large print and high contrast format, and with tactile markings;
- Increase of the availability of low-cost low vision aid devices;

(l) Encouragement of the production of simplified information (e.g., in pictorial modes) to aid users with cognitive disabilities.

6. Education

(a) Specific inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in national formal and non-formal programmes to meet the goal of education for all;

(b) Specification of targets for girls and women with disabilities as beneficiaries of national literacy and education programmes and projects;

(c) Designation of a proportion of national and state/provincial budgets for programmes to support the education of persons with disabilities;

(d) Support for the participation of children and adults with different types of disabilities in the mainstream of the educational system through measures such as:

- Development of home- and community-based early intervention services for children with disabilities;

- Education of parents and families of children with disabilities;
- Conduct of positive attitude formation programmes aimed at non-disabled persons in the educational system (e.g., school authorities, teachers and students) to break stereotyping of persons with disabilities;
- Organization of logistical support (e.g., transport and accommodation) to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in education programmes;
- Introduction of parent-teacher consultative groups to assist schools in responding to the changing individual educational needs of children with disabilities, so as to ensure successful integration in individual cases;
- Gradual integration of special education into mainstream education;
- Modification of training/refresher programmes for school teachers to improve their capabilities for developing the full potential of students with disabilities;
- Dissemination of teacher resource materials for use with children with special learning needs;
- Organization of additional support for regular classroom teachers;
- Revision of procedures for the administration of examinations to enable children and adults with disabilities to obtain academic qualifications, including higher education qualifications;
- Use of technology and organization of services to improve access to textbook and reference material in appropriate formats.

7. Training and employment

- (a) Use of relevant international labour standards on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities as a guide and reference for the development and implementation of training and employment programmes;

(b) Special attention to the participation of girls and women with disabilities in training and employment opportunities;

(c) Development of pre-vocational training, including at middle and secondary school level, to give girls and boys with disabilities the necessary preparation, if they so choose, for subsequent vocational training and placement;

(d) Ensuring the:

- Quality of vocational training programmes in terms of their relevance and sufficiency in preparing persons with disabilities for gainful employment in the labour market;
- Overall functioning of job placement services for people with disabilities in order to place persons with disabilities in suitable jobs in the open labour market;

(e) Conduct of workshops and seminars involving workers, employers, representatives of cooperatives and non-governmental organizations, including organizations of people with disabilities, as well as other community leaders to:

- Identify new training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Encourage job adaptation and work-site adjustment;
- Develop training and employment schemes for persons with disabilities;

(f) Strengthening of vocational rehabilitation services through measures that, *inter alia*, emphasize:

- Training of vocational rehabilitation staff;
- Giving of due attention, through appropriate vocational assessment measures, to the interests and needs of people with disabilities in the planning of vocational rehabilitation services;
- Upgrading of the skills of job placement officers in ministries of labour and social affairs and rehabilitation centres for job identification, selection, recruitment, placement and follow-up concerning people with disabilities;

(g) Training of people with disabilities:

- To develop their self-confidence, mobility, as well as skills in business management, and use of advisory services;
- For gainful employment;
- On ways and means of searching for employment in their communities, including preparation for interviews with prospective employers;
- In mainstream human resource development facilities, whenever possible and appropriate;

(h) Support for businesses of people with disabilities through measures such as the:

- Identification of opportunities for the production of goods and services that are in high demand, taking into consideration the compatibility of these with the skills and interests of the persons concerned;
- Conduct of feasibility surveys to ensure the viability of such businesses;
- Provision of business advice, facilitation of access to loans and other resources from poverty alleviation schemes, as well as follow-up, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of rural-based people with disabilities;

(i) Support for the establishment and development of cooperatives that facilitate the equal participation of people with disabilities in their activities.

8. Prevention of causes of disability

Formulation of national policies, programmes and implementation guidelines aimed at:

(a) Information, education and communication:

- Identification, through a variety of means, of the relative proportion of different types of disability and their social and economic dimensions;
 - Promotion of public awareness of individual, corporate and state responsibilities concerning the prevention of accidents (including road and industrial accidents), violence against persons, abuse of drugs (including alcohol and nicotine), as well as the control of communicable and endemic diseases and malnutrition;
 - Promotion of public awareness of disability associated with child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and victimization in situations of armed conflict;
 - Promotion of public awareness of mental disability;
 - Development of media and campaign activities on the prevention of causes of disability that support the right of people with disabilities to live;
 - Dissemination of information on disability-related aspects of environmental and public health issues to lay persons, technicians, administrators and decision-makers;
- (b) Promotion of health and safety through measures that include:
- Improvement in ante-, peri- and neonatal care;
 - Training of traditional birth attendants and midwives in the prevention of obstetric trauma and the prevention and management of infections in the newborn, as well as the early detection of congenital anomalies and referral for treatment;
 - Development of skills for prevention of disability in the training of health care personnel, including traditional healers;
 - Expanded provision of safe drinking water, water management and sanitation systems;
 - Encouragement of community sanitation and personal hygiene practices;

- Expansion of immunization coverage with special emphasis on the control of measles and poliomyelitis;
 - Strict control of the use and management of hazardous substances;
 - Adherence to established safety criteria for the disposal of garbage;
 - Increase in the availability of low-cost protective devices and promotion of healthy and safe working conditions for workers in the industrial, agricultural and construction sectors;
 - Noise control;
 - Emphasis on transport safety;
 - Encouragement of rational use of drugs;
 - Emphasis on safety concerns in product design;
 - Urgent attention to respect for international law, to control of the production, sale and use of weapons that maim and kill even in times of peace, and to the neutralization and total removal of anti-personnel mines in affected countries;
- (c) Special attention to the production and consumption of foods through measures such as:
- Promotion of school and family food gardens to ensure adequate food supply to social groups at risk of being disabled as a result of deficiencies in total food intake and in micro-nutrients;
 - Distribution of iodized salt;
 - Reduction of the risk of toxicity in the food chain (production processing, preservation, storage);
- (d) Strengthening of assessment, management and referral covering, *inter alia*,:
- Early detection and management of congenital anomalies, infections, conditions and injuries that can lead to disability;

- Maintenance of records of children at risk of disability due to pre-, peri- and post-natal causes, and follow-up of those records for early detection and management of disability;
 - Development of routine screening programmes for children;
 - Conduct of eye and ear camp programmes for low-income groups;
 - Provision of training in testing, analysis of results and referral to health workers, school teachers and volunteers;
- (e) Improvement of access, particularly in rural areas, to timely surgical interventions through, e.g.:
- Development of basic surgical facilities using inter-disciplinary teams with delegation, where appropriate, to trained clinical personnel;
 - Support for mobile teams to provide services to people with disabilities in remote communities;
- (f) Support for the control of leprosy through long-term public education combined with improved access to multi-drug therapy, training, counselling, and protective aids to prevent progressive disability from nerve injuries and injuries to limbs and eyes.

9. Rehabilitation services

- (a) Development of rehabilitation services that are:
- Based on reliable data on the magnitude and nature of demand for those services;
 - Time-bound for individuals;
 - Accessible by economically marginalized persons with disabilities, including those living in remote areas;
 - Responsive to mental as well as physical disabilities;
 - Integrated into main development programmes such as those for primary health care and maternal and child health;

- (b) Strengthening and expansion of rehabilitation services through, *inter alia*,:
- Inclusion of rehabilitation as a specific component of national policies on human resources development, social development, health and disaster preparedness;
 - Coordination of the rehabilitation services provided by different organizations;
 - Continuous review of the level of demand for rehabilitation services, taking into consideration that the benefits of such services may not be well known or accepted;
 - Promotion of the participation of people with disabilities in the planning and implementation of rehabilitation policies and programmes;
 - Development of awareness programmes for district and local officers and community leaders to strengthen their role in facilitating the improvement of rehabilitation services;
 - Training of trainers at national, provincial, district and sub-district levels;
 - Upgrading of the professional capabilities of formally-trained rehabilitation service personnel through the regulation of national standards governing qualifications, quality of service and professional codes of conduct;
 - Promotion of the capacity of hospitals, health centres and clinics to provide rehabilitation services;
 - Development of rehabilitation activities, to the extent possible, in the context of everyday social and economic life;
 - Selective use of local cultural resources (e.g., relevant traditional practices) to enhance rehabilitation services;
 - Documentation of national experience on the development of rehabilitation skills for replication purposes;

- (c) Preparation and dissemination of information on rehabilitation resources:
- Through the mass media and other public service channels;
 - In formats that are appropriate for users with disabilities;
- (d) Development of community-based approaches as a means of improving access to rehabilitation services, including through:
- Provision of policy, institutional and financial support;
 - Adaptation of existing manuals to meet the needs of communities in diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic contexts;
 - Increase of training of field workers for work in slums and rural areas;
 - Strengthening of the referral system, focusing on the first referral level;
 - Support for people with disabilities and their advocates to initiate and develop community-based rehabilitation (CBR) activities;
 - Training of advocates and household members in basic rehabilitation techniques;
 - Use of experience gained from the self-help movement of people with disabilities to extend CBR services to persons with mental disabilities;
 - Conduct of research, evaluation and information exchange;
- (e) Expansion of the role of existing rehabilitation service delivery centres as resource centres to support the development of CBR through, *inter alia*:
- Training of CBR trainers, field workers and volunteers;
 - Dissemination of low-cost tools, including manuals, for training purposes;
 - Organization of specialized follow up as required;
 - Assistance in meeting demand for assistive devices;

- Research and networking.

10. Assistive devices

(a) National support for the development of regional cooperation on assistive devices through:

- Identification of national resources employed for the production of assistive devices;
- Development of a roster of national experts on assistive devices, including low-cost ones;
- Inventorization of items produced within the country to facilitate the promotion of intra-regional trade in appropriate assistive devices;

(b) Formulation of a national plan on assistive devices covering overall needs assessment, appropriateness and sustainability, production, import needs and export potential, innovation, distribution, repair and maintenance, and training;

(c) Improvement of the availability of services and equipment for field assessment of needs for assistive devices, as well as expertise for the correct fitting of assistive devices;

(d) Provision of policy and programme support for research and development (R and D) activities emphasizing the application of new technologies to improve the availability of assistive devices that are durable, repairable by local artisans/technicians, and attractive;

(e) Development of information exchange among R and D institutions, personnel (e.g., rehabilitation engineers, applied science researchers), consumers (i.e., people with disabilities), production workshops (e.g., artisans, mechanics, prosthetic/orthotic/ortho-optic technicians) and distribution channels (e.g., non-governmental organizations, business firms, schools, social welfare departments, hospitals and health centres);

(f) Documentation of user experience with locally-produced and imported assistive devices and materials (e.g., appropriateness, local adaptations, costs, factors pertaining to production and distribution) to facilitate R and D, and the promotion of intra-regional trade in appropriate assistive devices;

(g) Organization of a programme for the training of a national corps of trainers in the production of assistive devices;

(h) Support for training through, *inter alia*, the establishment of national standards of technical expertise, conduct of refresher courses and examinations, issuance of technical diplomas, as well as maintenance of a national roster of experienced trainers;

(i) Establishment of programmes (e.g., observation and dissemination of graphic materials and models) to encourage mechanics, technicians and artisans in the use of their skills for the production, maintenance and repair of assistive devices at the local level;

(j) Assistance to community-level bodies and groups, especially low-income groups, to obtain assistive devices (e.g., through the provision of revolving loan funds, use of donated funds to provide partial subsidies), in recognition of the additional costs of disability to the individual.

11. Self-help organizations

(a) Provision of policy, programme and resource support for the establishment and strengthening of self-help organizations of people with disabilities, including associations of advocates and families of persons with disabilities;

(b) Establishment and strengthening of those organizations to provide a means for:

- Exploration, through joint effort by those directly affected by disability, of ways to enhance the economic independence and social integration of persons with disabilities;
- Collective self-representation by persons with disabilities in policy and programme development;

(c) Conduct, by self-help organizations of persons with disabilities, of, *inter alia*, programmes to:

- Build self-confidence among members, through such means as peer counselling, positive role modelling, and skills development to meet individual needs;

- Strengthen their members' expertise for effective participation in national policy and programme development, especially on organizational management, public relations work, and technical knowledge for advocacy on specific issues;
 - Facilitate access for people with disabilities to information, in appropriate formats, on resources available to the general population as well as specifically for people with disabilities;
 - Strengthen understanding of gender issues;
 - Provide training on rights and responsibilities attached to different roles in society (e.g., as organization members, citizens, voters, employees, entrepreneurs and consumers of services);
 - Provide an avenue for cultural expression by people with disabilities;
 - Increase grass-roots membership;
 - Enhance the increased role to be played by persons with disabilities in decision-making on disability matters;
- (d) Encouragement of the leadership potential of girls and women with disabilities;
- (e) Support for self-advocacy by persons with developmental disabilities;
- (f) Advancement of peer counselling approaches to help meet the needs of people with emotional and mental problems;
- (g) Formation, by self-help organizations of people with disabilities, of a national forum representing all disability groups, with the assistance of national organizations and government funding;
- (h) Participation in efforts to improve national disability statistics, through the collaboration of the forum with:
- Government agencies to develop a national definition of disability that incorporates, in addition to clinical perspectives, consideration of functional limitations, for various stages of life, in the performance of major life activities (e.g., hearing, seeing, moving, speaking, cognitive processing, school attendance, working);

- Consumer research entities to conduct surveys of the prevalence rates of disability from a functional perspective;
- (i) National forum action to:
- Conduct research and disseminate information on the issues that people with disabilities consider significant in their daily lives, as an instrument for policy enhancement;
 - Represent forum constituents in a national coordination committee on disability matters and in other bodies as required;
 - Undertake advocacy;
 - Mobilize resources for activities that directly benefit people with disabilities;
 - Facilitate contact between concerned agencies and organizations and various disability groups;
 - Organize programmes for meeting the training needs of member organizations;
 - Forge intra- and interregional links with similar self-help organizations;
 - Establish links with consumer protection groups and market research agencies to encourage the design of products and services that accommodate the needs of consumers with functional limitations;
 - Involve experienced members in improving the production and quality control of assistive devices;
- (j) Establishment of mechanisms for consultation between government agencies and organizations of people with disabilities on disability matters.

Regional Cooperation and Support in Pursuance of the Agenda for Action

While the focus of the implementation of Commission resolution 48/3 and the agenda for action is at the national level, the countries and areas of the region would benefit from sharing their experience and expertise.

1. Networking

Regional cooperation may take the form of building up a network of agencies and organizations concerned with supporting national pursuance of the agenda for action and undertaking specific activities in selected areas through the proposed network. The Asia-Pacific Inter-organizational Task Force on Disability-related Concerns, of which ESCAP serves as the secretariat, would assume responsibility for initiating the formation and functioning of the network subject to the availability of funds and absence of legal barriers for the establishment and operation of the network and its activities. The Task Force may be strengthened and may consider setting up a special working group to undertake this function.

The network would operate on a decentralized basis. Agencies and organizations whose work focuses on particular areas of concern could organize themselves into a sub-network. It is envisaged that networking could evolve in response to emerging needs for exchange in the priority areas for action listed in section II above. The totality of the sub-networks would constitute the information and technical exchange network for the implementation of resolution 48/3.

Furthermore, a number of ESCAP members and associate members have made notable progress in particular disability-related areas (e.g., the empowerment of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities, the production of assistive devices) over the past Decade. They would be in a position to serve as *lead entities* in the development of the sub-networks by providing secretariat infrastructure and support required for the operation of the sub-networks.

Each sub-network would assume responsibility for facilitating advancements in its particular area during the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, especially concerning the:

- (a) Increase in the availability of resources (e.g., technology, techniques, skills, materials) in the ESCAP region for the implementation of resolution 48/3 with respect to the particular priority area;
- (b) Facilitation of the exchange of information on that area;
- (c) Support for the strengthening of research and development methodologies for that area to improve the relevance of the techniques, technology and material generated to conditions in the developing countries of the region.

Each lead entity would, in turn, assume primary responsibility for undertaking activities such as:

- (a) Development of a regional information and data base on technical cooperation needs, resources, potential, on-going activities, implementation experience and key contact persons;
- (b) Initiation of networking arrangements among all agencies and organizations interested in furthering that particular priority area;
- (c) Ensuring the accessibility of current information on resources and needs concerning that particular area;
- (d) Development of a roster of experienced persons whose services could, upon request, be called upon to assist countries, particularly to promote technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) in the implementation of resolution 48/3;
- (e) Formulation and implementation of specific technical cooperation activities that will have a tangible and positive impact on persons with disabilities in the respective area.

The decentralized nature of the network would facilitate the funding of its activities through the sharing of the responsibility among the participants. The lead entities in particular would bear a major part of the cost of the activities of their respective sub-networks, as a part of their contribution to regional cooperation. The possibility of mobilizing adequate supplementary funding to promote the effective functioning of the network as a whole may be explored.

2. Monitoring and review

The ESCAP secretariat should establish, subject to the availability of resources, an advisory panel of representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, and other experts, to monitor and review the implementation of the agenda for action and to advise on means of attaining the aims and objectives of the Decade as enshrined in the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities.

The Commission resolution on an Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons calls on the Executive Secretary to submit biennial reports to the Commission until the end of the Decade on progress made in its implementation. ESCAP should conduct biennial regional surveys of progress achieved by the countries and areas of the region, and to convene biennial meetings of national coordination committees on disability matters to review achievements and to identify action that may be required to maintain the momentum of the Decade. At those meetings, the representatives of national coordination committees on disability matters would be invited to present country papers detailing national experience in pursuance of this agenda for action. Meetings of the Asia-Pacific Inter-organizational Task Force on Disability-related Concerns should be convened to review the endeavours of its members in support of the resolution.