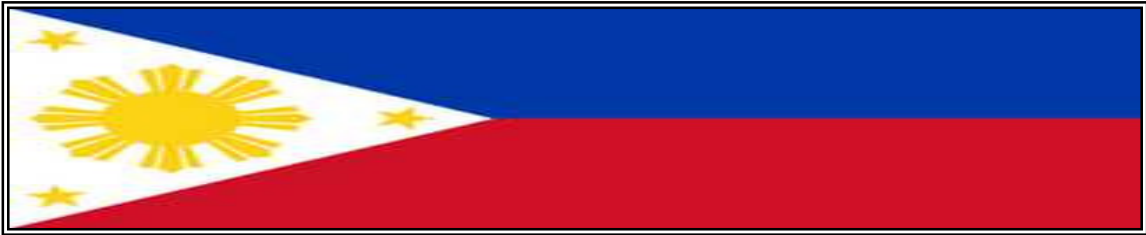


**“UNDERSTANDING THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
WITH PHILIPPINE ORIGIN”**

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“UNDERSTANDING THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WITH PHILIPPINE ORIGIN”

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OUTLINE

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- ✿ Institutional Mechanisms for the Upliftment of PWDs

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I. CURRENT SITUATION OF PWDS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 8.4-M Filipinos or 10% of the total Philippine population are afflicted with various disabilities broken down as follows:

● Thirty-Three(33%) Percent	2,772,000	Speech & Hearing Impaired
● Thirty-Two(32%) Percent	2,688,000	with Behavioral and/or Learning Disabilities
● Eighteen (18%) Percent	1,512,000	Visually Impaired
● Seventeen (17%) Percent	1,428,000	Physical and Orthopedically Impaired

Interestingly enough, 96% of the disabled come from the poorest & most destitute families. But due to a lack of Registry, there is no available data as to their exact numbers. According to recent estimates, only 5% of the disabled are able to acquire education up to the secondary level. Even less than 1% are able to graduate from college.

In the Philippines, families cope with disabilities through the help of the family, friends and faith in God. The slightest improvement of the disabled is viewed as a miracle. Nevertheless, parents need to feel that they could do something to alleviate the condition. When families learn of disability, their initial reactions are shock and disbelief. As reality sinks in, parents immediately seek assistance from relatives, friends and professionals. When financial and moral resources dwindle, the family turns to its religion and faith as a reservoir of hope and strength. After overcoming the initial grief, they make the disabled their priority at home, learn to accept the condition and start to discover ways to cope with the condition.

Generally, Filipino families have a positive attitude toward the persons with disability and displays a deep pity towards the family. Neighbours do not display a change of attitude but may not accept the disabled person as their boarder or employee. While city dwellers are willing to let the family take care of the disabled person, they would prefer institutionalization.

Filipinos's attitude towards people with disabilities has a spiritual component. Commonly, they believe that these persons are "gifts from God or they are bringers of luck, specially in businesses". Other families however may think that having a disabled person in the family is a "punishment". Unless they have

relatives who have disabilities, they rarely know anything about it and are at a loss on how to react when they encounter persons with disabilities. They do not know what to do or where to seek help. In most cases, they just do not know how to behave without hurting the feelings of the disabled and their companions or caregivers.

Rehabilitation services in the Philippines are very limited. Such services are dependent on few advocates, cause-oriented groups, charitable institutions and civic organizations. Most of the Filipinos specially in the rural areas have no or limited information about or exposure to persons with disabilities. Majority of the rehabilitation services are based and concentrated in urban areas and cater only to three percent or less of the estimated persons with disabilities. In 2001, one third of the Philippine population is suffering from poverty and poverty is hindering the development of rehabilitation services. Among those that need rehabilitation, only 2% have access to services. Most institutions can provide rehabilitation only to certain types of disabled people and for certain age group only. Modern medical facilities and rehabilitation services are available in modern hospitals in the urban areas and some government-funded medical centers. However, they are costly and can be afforded only by those with excess resources.

Philippine Government's Policy and National Plan Towards PWDs

The Philippine Government began addressing the needs of PWDs by enacting legislative measures which was first seen in 1982 with the passing of the Accessibility Law (BP 344). However the most significant legislation for PWDs was in 1992 when President Ferdinand Marcos signed Proclamation No. 125, which mandated that *The Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons* be observed.

Philippine Laws and Legislation

The Philippine Plan of Action. The National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP), including its member agencies, was directed to give the Agenda for Action the widest possible dissemination to the private and public sectors. Non-government organizations and self-help groups among the disabled, as well as professional associations were hereby enjoined to take full cognizance of the said Agenda and to fully cooperate in the attainment of its goals, objectives and activities by gearing their policies and aligning their programs thereto. The Philippine Plan of Action was adopted to set into motion

the directions for the programs and services by the concerned sectors. It is within the context of the current development efforts enunciated in Philippines 2000 or the Philippine Medium Term Development Plan. This Plan ensures full participation and equalization of opportunities for PWDs. It seeks to institutionalize the prevention of the causes of disability and the rehabilitation of disabled persons within the Decade of Disabled Persons in the Asian Pacific region.

The Economic Independence of Disabled Persons Act. The Act was passed in 1999 and requires that all governmental agencies, instrumentalities and government owned and controlled corporations to source at least ten percent of their supplies and equipment requirements from cooperatives of PWDs that are engaged in the manufacturing and fabrication in order to support their economic independence.

Child and Youth Welfare Code (Presidential Decree No. 603, s. 1995). This provides that among others, "children with emotional disabilities or with difficulties in social adjustment shall be treated with sympathy and understanding, and shall be entitled to treatment and competent care; and children with physical and mental disabilities shall be given treatment." Additionally, it provides for the creation of special classes in every province and if possible, special schools for persons with physical, mental, emotional disabilities and the specially gifted.

The **Magna Carta for Disabled Persons** (s. 1992) was a landmark legislation. It provided for the rehabilitation, development and provision of opportunities towards self-reliance of PWDs and their integration into the mainstream of society. There are also tax exemptions and benefits for employers of disabled persons and those that provide accessibility facilities in the work place per this Magna Carta.

Accessibility Law (Batas Pambansa Blg. 344, S. 1982). The Accessibility Law was to enhance the mobility of people with disabilities by requiring certain buildings, institutions, establishments and public utilities to install accessible facilities and other devices, including transportation and communication devices. Implementing rules and regulations (IRR) were issued to further amend the law, increasing the penalty for violations while providing stricter identification of specific individuals and offices liable for violations. The amended IRR also

provides for the accessibility requirements with regard to public transportation, which was not included in the original IRR.

Care and Protection of Disabled Children. Passed in 1935, the Act provides the rights of every child in the Philippines to live in an environment conducive to his physical, moral and intellectual development and the duty of the government to promote the full growth of every child.

White Cane Act (R.A. 6759, s. 1989). For the purpose of raising public awareness of persons who are blind, the Act provides that the 1st day of August each year be declared "Whit Cane Safety Day." This is to recognize that the "white cane" is a symbol of the needs of blind persons for specific assistance and as a reminder of the individuals' duty to care for and provide respect to PWDs.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Upliftment of PWDs

There are several governmental agencies that carry out various responsibilities in the care of PWDs, but these two agencies are directly dedicated for PWDs.

The National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP) is the Philippine government agency that serves as the focal point for all disability-related concerns and issues. NCWDP formerly the National Commission Concerning Disabled Persons was organized in 1986 after the EDSA Revolution through Executive Order 232. The NCWDP is comprised of national government agencies, NGOs, representatives of organizations of PWDs, civic and cause-oriented groups. It is mandated to formulate policies and coordinate the activities of all agencies, whether public or private, concerning PWDs. The NCWDP is the lead agency tasked to steer the course of program development and the delivery of services to the sector and is attached to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). It is likewise responsible to monitor the implementation of several laws to ensure the protection of PWDs civil and political rights.

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The Department manages the social welfare services delivered to PWDs including the NCWDP. It operates three disability-related vocational rehabilitation centers, a National Rehabilitation Center and a special office for the Early Child Development Project. Below highlights specific projects for PWDs under the DSWD.

II. SPECIFIC PROJECTS FOR PWDs

The Early Childhood Development Program (ECD). The Early Childhood Development Program is jointly funded by the Government, the World Bank and the ADB. The project was implemented in 5 years, which ended in 2003. The Project is implemented by 3 agencies, namely DSWD, DOH and DECS. The DSWD is the lead agency for the implementation and is responsible for overall project management.

Vocational Rehabilitation Training Centers. The DSWD provides training and employment to the sector through its National Vocational Rehabilitation Centers, which are located throughout the country along with providing Rehabilitation Sheltered Workshops in various parts of the country. According to the ADB, a total of 2,587 PWDs were trained by these facilities as of 2000.

Integrated Community Health Service Program. The Department of Health (DOH) has implemented the Integrated Community Health Service Program for the prevention of disabilities and management of special hospitals. It also operates the Collaborating Center for Disability Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation (CoCen for DPTR) which provides accessible rehabilitation and other health services to PWDs. The Cocen for DPTR creates a link between PWDs, the DOH and other governmental agencies, NGOs and local governments to work together in promoting the general welfare of PWDs. Some key interventions of the Cocen for DPTR include improvement of access to quality health and social services, upgrading of facilities and services in all DOH retained hospitals, provincial and district hospitals and rural health units, establishing Community-Based Rehabilitation Program in all Local Government Units, and the provision of training activities for Local Governmental Units on CBR & other skill courses among others. The DOH also operates the National Orthopedic Hospital and Rehabilitation Medical Center, which is a 700-bed center established in 1945.

Employment Opportunities to Trained and Qualified PWDs. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) provides employment opportunities to trained and qualified PWDs. In order to adhere to its mandate as provided for by the Magna Carta legislation, which is "To assist in the integration of PWDs in the mainstream of society, through training and employment.", the DOLE

prescribes to a Skill Map (e.g. a national registry of PWDs and a map skills showing the distribution of PWDs by area, type of disability, age, sex, skills, educational attainment, work experience and other demographic characteristics); Training, and Wage Employment.

Creation of a Special Education Council, The Department of Education (DepED) promotes inclusive education that mainstreams students with disabilities into regular classes. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the DepED maintains records that indicate that on average 500 deaf and blind students are placed in regular schools annually. In 1993, the DepED issued an order for the creation of a Special Education Council, while in 1999 the Department issued an order for the production of textbooks for learners with visual impairments. In 2000, the Department created Special Education Centers throughout the country. DepED oversees special education schools including the Philippine National School for the Blind and the Philippine National School for the Deaf. DepED conducts training of teachers on special needs education and according to the ADB, 2,527 teachers underwent training during 2001.

Provision of Civil infrastructures/accessible facilities for PWDs. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) The DPWH has allocated a continuing annual budget for the construction/renovation of government buildings, including primary/secondary schools to provide accessible facilities for PWDs.

Assistance Packages for PWDs for Marketing of Their Products The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) The DTI has Assistance Packages for PWDs including the marketing of products. Additionally, the Department has drafted the Philippine Standards for Wheelchairs Manual.

Government's Public Awareness Program

The Government has established an annual National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week (in July), as a vehicle for the promotion and advocacy of disability issues, which is held every third week of July. Other annual observances include:

- Mental Health Week
- Autism Week
- Deaf Awareness Week

- Eyesight Conservation Week
- Mental Retardation Week
- White Cane Safety Day
- International Day of Disabled Persons

The Government has also conducted Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns to generate awareness in order to effect behavioral modifications on the public perceptions of disabilities and PWDs. As part of this effort, the Government supports a regular weekly broadcast on the following radio programs that are aired nationally. These programs are anchored by PWDs and focus on disability issues:

- Ako'y Ikaw Rin, (one hour);
- K-Forum, (two hours);
- Mano-mano, (one hour).

Access to Information and Communication

A Philippine Dictionary of Signs was developed in 1999, including VHS tapes, which were used to standardize sign language for Filipinos with hearing impairments. The Dictionary was funded through a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and was circulated in schools and organizations of the deaf and other interest parties. Two national television programs in the country provide sign language interpretation, which include interpreters during national events, conferences and meetings. Closed caption television sets and films with subtitles for people with hearing impairments as well as telecommunication devices (TDD) for people with hearing impairments are available. .

Interregional Seminar and Demonstration Workshop on Accessible Information and Communication Technologies for Persons with Disabilities.

The workshop was held in March 2003 with the theme "Empowering Persons with Disabilities through IT". The event was funded by UN-DESA in cooperation with the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons, the United Nations Development Program and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Two documents were produced as a result of the workshop, "Manila Declaration on Accessible ICT" and Manila Accessible ICT Design Recommendations".

CICT'S Efforts for PWDs

The Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT), having been created to take the leadership role in Government's ICT efforts, recognize that, for the Philippines to achieve an ICT-enabled society, all stakeholders, especially those marginalized have to be provided access to information and knowledge. Thus, efforts have been undertaken to ensure that even PWDs are provided access to ICT. Together with our APEC Digital Opportunity Center (ADOC) Partner Office, our Digital Bridges Program conducted seventeen (17) courses (attended by 283 participants). These courses are as follows: Computer and Internet Literacy Course (CILC) for OSY and CICT dependents; Advanced Literacy Course (i.e. Adaptive, Basic ICT Lit for Teaching the Visually Impaired).

III. BEST PRACTICES

In relation to the best practices on the promotion of non-handicapping environment in all areas/aspects of development and which contributed to all sectors' increase of awareness on accessibility concerns/issues, the Council's Sub-Committee on Accessibility and Telecommunications has undertaken the following:

1. Monitoring Inspections

- private and public establishments specifically fast food restaurants and malls
- compliance of banking institutions on B.P.344
- inventory of accessibility facilities for government/private institutions and establishments conducted by DPWH
- training of person with disabilities as part of the monitoring team

2. Access Workshops



- undertaken to generate awareness, support and commitment to the implementation of B.P. 344 or the Accessibility Law in almost all

regions of the country in partnership with the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP), Department of Public Works & Highways (DPWH) and the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP)

- facilitated the issuance of DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2006-11 providing for free Access Workshops to LGUs

3. Access Audits



- incorporated in the access Workshops as a component to teach participants skills/knowledge on how to monitor/inspect buildings/establishments
- access audit on government offices/agencies to determine member-agencies of the NCWDP Governing Board's compliance with the provisions of B.P. 344 or the Accessibility Law


4. ADEPT Training

- facilitated request for trainings on Assisting Disabled and Elderly People Who Travel. It utilizes the ADEPT Manual and provides pointers regarding assisting passengers with disabilities for land, air, and sea travel to be confident and at ease.

5. "Project for the Handicapped"

- allocation of specific budget by the DPWH for the installation/construction of accessible features/facilities to elementary schools, high schools and universities and colleges.

6. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)

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- coordination meetings conducted to fast track the adoption of ATM Consortia on the installation of accessible ATMs for person with disabilities on selected sites/malls

7. Meetings/Consultations with transportation companies i.e. LRT & MRT and other attached agencies of the DOTC i.e. MARINA, LTO, LTFRB and utility companies such as MERALCO, PNR, MWSS on compliance with B.P. 344 and MMDA to address mobility/traffic problems for the benefit of person with disabilities
8. Issuance of Discounted ID Transportation Fare and facilitating issuance of parking stickers for person with disabilities



9. Selection of Disabled-Friendly Establishments for the Apolinario Mabini Awards



10. The Country is very fortunate to have seven (7) Filipinos who participated in the Regional Training Course for Trainers on the Non-handicapping Environment held in Bangkok from 2000 - 2004. There is a long list of international conferences attended by the PWDs and representatives of the Philippines.

.....Our goal for the sector with disability is to improve their quality of life and facilitate their integration in the development process. Most importantly, our vision is for the Philippines as a non-handicapping/barrier-free and inclusive country to serve as a "model" for the Asia-Pacific Region.....

End of the Report