



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDP/87/WG.3/3/Rev.1  
27 October 1987  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA**

Meeting of the ESCWA Inter-Organizational Task  
Force on Disability  
21 - 23 October, 1987  
Amman

UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION  
FOR WESTERN ASIA

**FINAL REPORT**

1. The first Meeting of the ESCWA Inter-Organizational Task Force on Disability was held from 21 to 23 October 1987 in Amman, Jordan. The Meeting was sponsored by ESCWA and attended by representatives of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO, The United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA). A representative of ESCWA chaired the Meeting and ESCWA served as the Meeting secretariat (see annex I).

2. The agenda of the Meeting covered the following four major items.

(a) Agency statements concerning achievements and constraints with regard to programme activities on disability, with special reference to the ESCWA region;

(b) Identification of priorities and proposals for approaches and future regional activities on disability issues;

(c) Fund-raising;

(d) Other matters (see annex II).

3. A working paper prepared by ESCWA, entitled "Plans and activities of ESCWA in regard to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons" (E/ESCWA/SDP/87/WG.3/2 and Rev.1) served as a basis of discussion for the Task Force, supported by other documentation including a paper prepared by WHO for the Meeting (see annex III). The Meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, who stressed that the magnitude of the problem of disability in the region had recently increased both in size and in scope, and that the conflicts and wars in some countries of ESCWA had added considerably to the gravity of the problem. He said that United Nations inter-agency collaboration and co-ordination was crucial. He stated that there was an immediate need to develop a common vision and a united approach for the United Nations agencies concerned, leading to a framework for action and a concrete and convincing work plan which could attract the necessary extrabudgetary funds.

4. The Meeting chairman welcomed the agency representatives and expressed the hope that there would be collaborative effort in the task ahead. He emphasized that the discussion should be as informal as possible and lead to the completion of the first important step in the formulation of a long-term plan which would stimulate activities during the second half of the Decade, and indeed go beyond it.

#### A. Agency statements

5. In reviewing individual agency activities in the field of disability in the ESCWA region, a number of issues were discussed and agreement reached on ways to resolve them, as elaborated on below.

6. Great progress was made in the past five years in collecting and organizing available statistics on disability, thanks mainly to efforts made by the Statistical Office of DIESA. However, significant gaps remain, particularly with regard to recent data on the ESCWA region. It was noted that some countries seem to be reluctant to give statistical information already at their disposal. Therefore, the agencies represented at the Meeting will intensify and systematize the exchange of statistical information among themselves. The Statistical Office will keep the members of the Task Force informed of developments in this field at appropriate periodic intervals.

7. In order to develop and implement a systematic plan of action, a dynamic base of information is needed regarding institutions, resource persons and activities in the region. ESCWA has already begun to collect information for a roster of resource persons, a roster of institutions and a bibliography on disability studies on the region (see annex III). Efforts should also be made to identify Arab experts on disability working outside the region as well as expatriate experts working in the region for the purpose of utilizing their expertise when necessary. Two additional reference lists are deemed necessary: first, a list of projects and activities of international organizations in the region should be compiled and systematically presented in directory form. For this purpose, ESCWA will devise a simple reporting form and send it to members of the Task Force to fill out and return. Secondly, a list of eminent persons from the region who themselves have disabilities should be compiled and distributed among the members of the Task Force. These persons could be solicited to assist in fund-raising and other future activities. In collecting all the above information, it would be useful to contact the regional offices of agencies (when they exist), various concerned ministries in governments, universities, prominent experts and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

8. Communication in the field of disability among experts, NGOs and international agencies remains quite limited in the ESCWA region and every effort should be made to involve regional NGOs and experts in the formulation and implementation of United Nations regional programmes. ESCWA intends to hold a meeting of experts and NGOs in 1988, to which the agencies will be invited, to further elaborate and refine the plans for future regional activities. This includes activities that will promote communication among the above-mentioned groups (e.g., directories of institutes and resource persons, newsletter) but ESCWA should eventually provide continuous clearing-house functions in this regard.

9. It is clear that national policies and programmes in the region dealing with various aspects of disability are often lacking in comprehensiveness. This is reflected in inadequate technical and geographic coverage, insufficiency of qualified manpower and services, lack of involvement of disabled persons and low quality of service. The situation needs to be corrected urgently in order to face the increasing magnitude and complexity of the problem.

10. It has become important that technical advisory services be strengthened, particularly in order to assist governments to develop mechanisms for co-ordinating both the formulation and implementation of programmes and policies relating to disability. In this regard, it is useful

to investigate the possibility of revitalizing national committees or similar co-ordination bodies initially established in conjunction with the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 if this is deemed the most efficient way to create the required institutional structure. In this respect, the Task Force took note of the forthcoming interregional meeting of national committees or similar bodies to be convened by CSDHA in 1988.

11. Services to the disabled provided through centralized institutional activities do not always reach large numbers of disabled persons, particularly in rural areas. A new approach in this regard has been the one utilizing community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes. Many agencies have introduced such programmes recently with varying success. One difficulty has been the shortage of trained personnel in this type of activity which necessitates programmes for training of trainers in CBR. At any rate, the time is becoming ripe for undertaking a systematic assessment of ongoing CBR programmes with a view to determining barriers and bottle-necks and devising solutions. In this regard, CSDHA plans a number of meetings for the second half of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons which could be used to review CBR experiences.

12. There is an urgent need to locate persons within the ESCWA region who would be available for sign language interpretation for regional United Nations meetings as well as appropriate equipment for the efficient production of documentation in Arabic Braille (as was done at the Global Meeting of Experts organized by CSDHA). Any information in this regard will be communicated to ESCWA which will in turn disseminate it to members of the Task Force and others.

13. A major instrument for inter-agency co-ordination at the international level is the yearly inter-agency meeting called by CSDHA. The next meeting is scheduled for March 1988. However, since the cost of the agencies' participation is to be borne by the agencies themselves, participation, particularly of the economic and social commissions; has been limited. This participation is necessary in order that the views on the Task Force be fully represented at the inter-agency meeting. CSDHA, therefore, should make every effort to obtain the financing necessary for regional representation at these inter-agency meetings, in view of their great importance for stimulating activities during the second half of the Decade.

#### B. Framework for regional activities

14. The Task Force discussed the plans proposed in the ESCWA paper and reached agreement on the following framework within which future regional activities might be elaborated, ESCWA serving as co-ordinator in that regard:

(a) Development of a data base on disabled persons and activities related to the strengthening of regional/national statistical capabilities on disability, with the following goals:

- (i) To compile existing data and information available on the extent and nature of disability problems in the region. The activity is being carried out in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the United Nations;

- (ii) To develop the most efficient methods and tools for the collection of data on disability issues (techniques used to collect data on disability from the results of censuses, surveys and registration systems);
  - (iii) To produce guides and manuals for data collection in this field dealing with concepts, definitions, classifications, census and survey questions, survey design and methods for analysis of data;
  - (iv) To integrate disability statistics into the regular rounds of censuses and national household survey programmes and civil registration systems in the region, to be undertaken in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the United Nations;
  - (v) To implement technical advisory services in the region that address disability issues in survey and census programmes including sample design, data collection procedures and recommendations for cross-tabulations;
  - (vi) To organize regional meetings of organizations responsible for collecting disability statistics in order to agree on ways of standardizing data collection and compiling disability statistics for regional development of disability indicators;
- (b) Identification and evaluation of institutions in order to determine their strengths and needs particularly in the areas of training and the transfer of technology. Offshoots of this review would include:
- (i) The development of a directory of the governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions available in the region. Included in this directory would be organizations of disabled persons, institutions with already existing outreach services for the community, institutions which provide public education and dissemination of information about disability, those that care for disabled persons' health, medical and rehabilitation-related needs and institutions doing local production of disability products;<sup>1/</sup>
  - (ii) The preparation of an analysis of the needs of institutions, and an overview of problems they face in the provision of services;
- (c) On the basis of the needs in the areas of training and the transfer of technology as determined by the above measures, a regional plan of action will be prepared that would help to satisfy these needs, utilizing suitable local institutions for this purpose. This plan of action could:

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<sup>1/</sup> A list of services and support that might be covered under the directory are summarized in the Report of the Expert Group on Development of Statistics on Disabled Persons (ECA/STAT/AC./8/7), p. 17.

- (i) Identify appropriate technologies in the field of disability, and promote their adaptation to local needs when necessary and promote the training of trainers in order to permit the absorption and dissemination of new technology;
- (ii) Ensure that special attention is given to the possibility of establishing a regional demonstration and training programme for trainers in the field of community-based rehabilitation;
- (iii) Promote the local production of disability equipment and prostheses and carry out feasibility studies for this purpose;
- (iv) Establish a small nucleus of a few highly specialized persons whose main functions will be to identify suitable technologies and to devise the most effective means for their transfer to the region through existing national facilities.

(d) Review of policies and legal provisions related to disabled persons. This would include:

- (i) Review of national policies in regard to disabled persons to promote the equalization of opportunities. Emphasis will be placed on policies that would adapt the environment to the disabled, including urban and rural planning, public transport, shelter, human rights, vocational and educational opportunities;
- (ii) A study to collect information on the legal provisions affecting the lives of disabled persons;
- (iii) A review to compile and collate existing information on disability policy available in the United Nations system and in publications and national communications;
- (iv) Programme activities formulated to assist governments in the development of mechanisms for co-ordination in the formulation and implementation of programmes and policies in the field of disability;

(e) Promotion of awareness among the public and policy-makers. At the midpoint of the Decade, it has become clear that action is especially needed to increase awareness of policy-makers and the public in regard to the goals and objectives of the Decade and of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. This would include:

- (i) Public information and education programmes on disability prevention in both rural and urban areas;
- (ii) Public education programmes leading to improvement of attitudes and increased integration of disabled persons in community activities, including leadership roles, employment, social and cultural life, and full participation as citizens;

- (iii) Promoting the participation of disabled persons in the making of decisions and in the implementation of programmes on their status and welfare;
- (iv) Increasing public participation in and awareness of sports and athletic events of disabled persons;
- (v) Joint meeting of policy-makers, and concerned NGOs to discuss disability issues and appropriate measures for their resolution;
- (vi) A regional newsletter in Arabic which would give disability-related information including international and national activities taking place in the region, international events, reference material, visitors, etc.;
- (vii) Other activities.

### C. Fund-raising

15. A number of donor agencies were identified that could finance regional activities in cash or in kind in the field of disability. Important among these are:

(a) At the regional level: AGFUND (the Arab Gulf Fund), the Islamic Bank and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development; the League of Arab States may also be interested in the co-financing of activities;

(b) At the multilateral level: UNDP/Impact, CSDHA trust funds including those for the disabled, youth and aging, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and the OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) Fund for International Development in Vienna;

(c) At the bilateral level: The international assistance programmes of major donor countries. In addition, contacts should be initiated with regional and international NGOs and prominent personalities to assist in fund-raising. Private companies may also be approached.

16. In the next few months, ESCWA will, through direct contacts with regional funding agencies, review available opportunities for funding projects within the scope of the framework for regional activities. Any aspects of the plan that arouse interest among donors will be brought to the attention of the agencies concerned in order to develop an appropriate project document. The lead agency and co-operating agencies will be identified at that time in accordance with the nature of the project and the respective field of competence of the agencies. During the same period, ESCWA, as well as any of the members of the Task Force, will attempt to identify areas of concern within the framework for regional activities that could be elaborated into project ideas for joint implementation. These will be circulated to members of the group for their comments and amendments. The resulting project ideas will also form part of ESCWA fund-raising activities in this field.

17. The ESCWA capability in the field of disability should be strengthened in order that it may adequately undertake its co-ordinating role. Among possibilities to be explored is the utilization of the services of junior professional officers (JPOs) and associate professional officers (APOs) from appropriate donor countries. Rich countries of the region should also be approached in this regard.



ANNEX I

List of participants

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**ANNEX II**

**AGENDA**

October 21

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 9.30 - 10 a.m.         | Opening Session  |
| 10 a.m. - 10.30 a.m.   | Coffee Break   |
| 10.30 a.m. - 1.30 p.m. | <u>Item 1.</u> Agency statements concerning their activities on disability with special reference to ESCWA region.           |
| 1.30 p.m.              | Luncheon   |
| 3.30 - 6.30 p.m.       | <u>Item 2.</u> Identification of priorities and proposal for approaches and future regional activities on disability issues. |

October 22

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|--------------------|---|
| 9.30 a.m. - 1 p.m. | <u>Item 2.</u>  |
| 3.30 - 6.30 p.m.   | <u>Item 3.</u> Fund-raising<br><u>Item 4.</u> Other matters |

October 23

- |                   |                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 9 a.m. - 12 noon. | Adoption of report<br>Closing |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|

ANNEX III

List of documents distributed at the Meeting

1. Agenda (E/ESCWA/SDP/87/WG.3/L.1/Rev.1).
2. List of participants.
3. Plans and Activities of ESCWA in regard to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.  
(E/ESCWA/SDP/87/WG.3/2) and Rev.1).
4. Provisional list of experts/resource persons in the ESCWA region.
5. Provisional list of institutions.
6. Provisional bibliography on disability.
7. Table showing countries in the ESCWA region having national registration systems.
8. Regional Plan of Action for the Disabled for Western Asia (in Arabic only).
9. WHO EMR statement on disability and rehabilitation.
10. Regional Plan of Action for the Disabled in Western Asia (ESCWA document in Arabic only), 1986.
11. Final report of the Meeting (E/ESCWA/SDP/87/WG.3/3).

Other documents available at the Meeting

1. Report of the Global Meeting of Experts to Review the Implementation of the World Programme of Actions concerning Disabled Persons at the Mid-point of the Decade of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Stockholm 17-22 August 1987 (CSDHA/DDP/GME/7) (in Arabic and English).
2. World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons. United Nations, New York, 1983 (in Arabic and English).
3. Manual on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons, United Nations, New York, 1986 (ST/ESA/177) (in Arabic and English).
4. Designing with Care. A guide to adaptation of the built environment for disabled persons: International Year of Disabled Persons 1981 (IYDP). Printed in Austria and issued as the result of a co-operative project between the Swedish International Development Agency, the United Nations and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements.
5. Development of Statistics of Disabled Persons: Case Studies, (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.1/2) (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E. 86, XVII.17) (in Arabic and English).



