ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Capacity Building Workshop “Action Research on Disability, Livelihoods and Poverty”

16-18 January 2012
Bangkok

REPORT OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP
“ACTION RESEARCH ON DISABILITY, LIVELIHOODS AND POVERTY”
I. BACKGROUND

1. The Capacity Building Workshop “Action Research on Disability, Livelihoods and Poverty” was held in Bangkok from 16-18 January 2012. The list of participants is attached in annex 1.

II. OPENING SESSION AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

2. The meeting was opened by Ms. Nanda Krairiksh, Director of the Social Development Division who set out the objectives of the workshop which included strengthening the working relationship between DPOs and ESCAP, developing methodologies that would provide comparable data and conducting research with the active involvement of persons with disabilities to ultimately improve the livelihoods of persons with disabilities. She indicated that this research could be used to influence disability policy and create sustainable livelihoods for persons with disabilities at the national level. The findings of the research and the voices of persons with disabilities would serve as a basis for a report to be launched at the High Level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012 which would be organized by ESCAP in Incheon, Republic of Korea in October 2012. In view of this, Ms. Krairiksh stressed the importance of adhering to the time frame for conducting the research, and reflected on the expectations resting on the outcome of the project. She concluded by reiterating ESCAP’s commitment to working with DPOs as partners and to ensuring that the voices of persons with disabilities were heard.

3. Mr. Donovan Storey, Section Chief, Social Policy and Population Section, ESCAP set out the research framework for the project. The work would be guided by the key themes and directions decided by the Stakeholder Consultation, June 2010, the Disability, Livelihoods and Poverty Expert Group Meeting, October 2011, and the Regional Stakeholder Consultation held in December 2011.

4. Mr. Storey indicated that the project focused on understanding the dynamics of disability, livelihoods and poverty from the perspective of persons with disabilities themselves which would contribute to a better understanding of poverty and livelihood prospects for persons with disabilities. It would also enhance the relationships between DPOs, governments and persons with disabilities. Throughout the project, both quantitative and qualitative participatory research methods would be used and the data generated would provide evidence to inform policy for a new Asia Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons. Preliminary findings would also feed into and support the Incheon Strategy, in particular Goal 1 on poverty and employment.

III. CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

5. Mr. Jorge Carrillo, Project Consultant, provided an overview of the livelihoods approach which formed the framework for the research. He reviewed the concepts on sustainable livelihoods, and provided an overview of types of assets and strategies used by poor households to meet their livelihoods. The disability/poverty cycle in which the interrelationship of impairment increases a person’s chances of being poor was also presented and discussed.

6. Ms. Celia Reyes, Senior Research Fellow, The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (NEDA), provided a comprehensive overview of designing and using surveys. This included determining research objectives, sampling, designing and testing surveys and other data collection instruments, data encoding, selection and training of enumerators, conducting the survey and interpretation of results. Participants broke out in to small groups to discuss survey design in the context of their own research, including developing
research objectives, methods for identifying respondents, and designing data collection instruments.

7. Ms. Wanda Munoz, Technical Advisor, Handicap International Federation (HI), provided an overview of HI and its work, and an overview on Quality of Life indicators. She then introduced ways to measure quality of life of persons with disabilities, drawing from a HI livelihoods project in Cambodia which used a Quality of Life tool. Participants then broke into small groups to discuss how such a tool could be adapted to their country context.

8. Discussion from the groups included proposed modifications to the Quality of Life tool such as, including participation in religious activities, and noting that medical attention is not only required when a person is sick, as well as that access to an accessible toilet should be covered under the category on housing, decision making in family/community events, and participation in DPOs should also be included. Although the tool did not address distribution of resources within the household, it could be supplemented by other tools to address this. It was noted that using the tool would be time consuming if considered separately, but participants suggested adapting parts of it to use in the current research.

9. Ms. Lesley Chenoweth, Head of Campus, Griffith University, presented field approaches for qualitative data collection focusing in particular on narrative and life story research. She noted the trend in moving from participatory to inclusive research. It was important to be clear about the position of the action research on the continuum of inclusion. Ms. Chenoweth further noted the challenges of conducting research that is relevant across contexts and regions. She presented the “1000 Voices” disability life stories project, and discussed research methods such as narrative/life story analysis, situated and walk along interviews, photovoice and layered observations which could be used to augment and strengthen traditional quantitative approaches.

10. Small group discussions noted the following challenges to narrative research: overcoming memory limitation of persons narrating, the differences between reality and perception, over rating or under rating the situation, that recalling bad experiences could aggravate the problem of the narrator, ensuring that the stories of grassroots people were not ignored, time needed to develop trust between the person with disability and interviewer, and communications barriers.

11. Solutions identified included: spending more time interviewing and observing day to day life, narrator sharing their own story, interaction with peer support groups would help recall true stories, involving the family and/or other information to triangulate in the case of persons with intellectual disabilities, ensuring confidentiality, and training interviewers well.

12. It was agreed that such methods were relevant for all countries involved in the action research, and they could influence programmes and policies as well as attitudinal change of stakeholders, and also help to understand the dynamics of the relationship between poverty and disability plus the turning point of change.

13. Ms. Nandini Ghosh, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Institute of Development Studies in Kolkata, India made a presentation on gender issues in conducting research with persons with disabilities. After an overview of the key concepts related to gender and gender inequality, Ms. Ghosh reviewed research on women with disabilities, which revealed, in particular, issues concerning reduced access to education and rehabilitation services for women with disabilities, and that women with disabilities were more likely to be unemployed or in employment with low pay requiring limited formal skills. However women with disabilities could sometimes have more freedom to take work outside of usual gender roles. Break out groups developed gender-related questions for use in DPOs research to ensure that voices of women with disabilities were represented. The session
highlighted the multidimensional challenges women with disabilities face and the need to elucidate this through qualitative analysis.

IV. DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH ISSUES

14. Mr. Donovan Storey provided an overview of thinking on research methods and asked for reflections on the draft questionnaire which comprised both closed and open ended questions. The survey questions provided by ESCAP comprised the core questions and must be included but DPOs could add a limited number of additional questions, keeping the focus on livelihoods. It was indicated that DPOs should aim to conduct around 150-200 surveys and a cross disability focus would be preferable. DPOs were given the flexibility to choose which tools, and in what combination to use, for the qualitative component e.g. narratives, life stories, focus groups. The number of qualitative interviews could be less than quantitative interviews but the focus should remain on livelihoods and depth of understanding.

15. It was agreed that ESCAP would provide DPOs with the survey template, a project discussion board where DPOs could communicate and share documents, and a support mission to each country, if requested. The deadline for submission of responses (data table and summary report) would be mid-June 2012. It was important that this was adhered to so that the findings of the research could be included in a publication which would be launched at the Incheon meeting in October 2012. DPOs would be invited to the launch. A short meeting in Bangkok in July or August 2012 might be held to gather comments on the draft publication.

16. The sharing of existing databases was encouraged and would be used in the contextual chapters of the report. A target group could be identified and chosen, so the survey was not spread too thinly. Persons with disabilities both meeting and not meeting their livelihoods should be included. The qualitative data did not have to be directly linked to results of survey, but would be supplementary and would tell an individual story that can stand alone. This would then be used to highlight and illustrate key themes in the report.

V. COUNTRY RESEARCH PLANS

17. Having presented an overview of their organisations and their past research work, DPOs worked in break-out groups to further define their research strategy and action plan. Each DPO then presented their plan to the meeting, for discussion and clarification.

Thailand

18. Data would be collected using an existing mechanism, the National Association of Persons with Disabilities, which had provincial offices which covered the whole country. A capacity development workshop would be held to train representatives of this organisation to be enumerators, to empower them and build their research capacity. Six focus groups by type of disability would be held. Persons with disabilities would be recruited according to proportion of different types of disabilities in the population. The key concern raised was the tight time frame.

Philippines

19. One hundred quantitative surveys as well as around 6-7 focus group discussions and face to face interviews would be conducted. The Department of Labour and Employment would be involved, as well as local government units at the Barangay level, and DPOs in 17 regions of Philippines. An orientation of local officials and vocational institutions and rehabilitation centres would be conducted. There would be a cross disability focus, including psycho-social disabilities. The age range covered would be 18-50 years old which was in line with an ongoing KAMPI project. Persons with disabilities in both rural and
urban areas would be included and efforts would be made to ensure gender balance among respondents.

20. Key challenges identified included the need to ask consent of respondents and families and time taken to get this, transportation in remote areas, communication barriers for the hearing impaired, and managing expectations of participants. The possibility of covering persons with disabilities younger than 18 was raised as many people already have entered the workforce by that age.

Pakistan

21. Surveys would be conducted using a cross disability enumerator team, including women, with a view to obtaining more than 200 responses. A training session for the research team would be organized. The views of key informants in government, as well as the private sector, would be included. Using existing networks, several DPOs in up to 4-5 areas would be contacted ensuring coverage of rural and urban areas, men and women, all disabilities and all ages. Some focus group discussions would be just for women. One would mix employed and unemployed persons with disabilities together, and the focus groups would be video taped.

22. Challenges included designing a consent form and finding participants willing to be interviewed. Caution was expressed that too much variety would preclude looking at trends.

Republic of Korea

23. Longitudinal and cross sectional national databases covering quality of life were already in existence. The quantitative part of the survey would be conducted and semi structured interviews covering the past five years would be used for the qualitative research (around 40 households). Respondents would come from both rural and urban areas. A research team of staff and persons with disabilities representing DPOs would be established. Local government would provide support in selecting respondents and obtaining consent.

India

24. The survey would cover 40-50 villages in close proximity, with male and female respondents between 18-50 years, covering all employment statuses. Local DPOs would work to collect quantitative data, and face to face interviews, life stories, discussion groups would be used to collect qualitative data. Discussion with local governments and also service providers such as NGOs would be included. An expert would be involved in the analysis of the data. It was noted that for qualitative research it would be best if interviews could be recorded to avoid the distraction of writing while interviewing. Concerns were raised over coverage, but the number of staff assigned to the project meant it would be feasible.

Kazakhstan

25. 200 surveys (150 in the city and 50 in rural southern Kazakhstan) would be conducted on an equal number of male and female respondents. The research would look at gender aspects in expectations, choices and opportunities of persons with disabilities. DPO members of the network and a research agency would be involved. For qualitative research, 4-6 focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and the Quality of Life tool would be used.

26. While disabilities were categorised into three main types in Kazakhstan, it was agreed that for comparison purposes the six groups in the questionnaire would be used. Translation was noted as a key challenge, but participatory rural appraisal methods could be used.
Japan

27. The research would aim to discover the real needs of persons with disabilities and their livelihoods. Sources of data would include national data collection (from the Government), and data collected by DPOs. 11 DPOs would be chosen from which 20 respondents from each DPO would take part in the initiative (a total of 150 to 220 participants). Semi-structured interviews would be used to conduct case studies for the qualitative research. The number of case studies would be discussed with DPOs. Key challenges would include the timeframe and survey translation.

Fiji

28. A sample size of up to 200 respondents, ensuring for gender balance, and with a cross disability focus would be used. Persons who were disabled at birth and those who had acquired a disability later in life would be differentiated. Face to face interviews and household visits would be conducted. Focus group discussions would be disability specific and involve narrative story telling and audio/video recording. Some parts of Quality of Life tool may be used. Persons with disabilities would be recruited as research assistants. Information from other Pacific Island countries through DPOs would be collected where possible. Barriers to be overcome included traditional protocol, approval of research proposal, perceptions of the research team as educated and from outside the community, and managing the expectations of people wanting to be included.

China

29. China Disabled Persons Federation could not join the research project as a formal partner but would share information to the extent possible. Two choices existed for the qualitative survey, an outline would be submitted to ESCAP. A small provincial qualitative survey had been conducted in 2007. New data could be compared with this.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

30. The workshop concluded with a brief review of the roles and responsibilities in conducting the research and a review of good practices. ESCAP’s role as partner was discussed and DPOs indicated they would like feedback on their outline and strategy before testing the survey. The best timing for country missions would be during the research process and support in analyzing data after collection would be appreciated. The importance of informing local authorities about the research was noted, and organizing meetings among the enumerators every month was recommended. A key concern raised by all DPOs was the timeframe however the importance of meeting deadlines so that the research could feed into the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012, to held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in October 2012 was stressed. DPOs were encouraged to contact the resource persons from the meeting for guidance.

Follow up actions

- DPOs would share their research plans with ESCAP and indicate the best time for country missions. ESCAP would provide feedback on these.
- The Letters of Agreement would be extended to reflect the new deadline for submission of data in mid June 2012.
- ESCAP would circulate some reference materials on research, the final version of the questionnaire and a flat file template in which the data should be submitted.
- ESCAP would continue to provide support for the DPOs in coordinating the research and in the analysis of the results.
Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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