



Christian Conference of Asia

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Statement on International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)–2022

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), which is observed on 3 December each year, raises awareness and promotes the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in political, social, economic, and cultural life. It also upholds and secures the right of people with disabilities to participate fully, equally, and effectively in society along with others, and face no barriers in all aspects of their lives.

Almost 60 percent of the world's 650 million persons with disabilities live in Asia and the Pacific, according to United Nations estimates. The Asian and Pacific region has by far the largest number of people with disabilities in the world. Most IDPDs are poor, their concerns unknown and their rights overlooked; they are excluded from social opportunities. Less than five percent of children with disabilities attend school in Asia Pacific countries. Women and girls frequently suffer double discrimination and have even less access to education than men.

Asian cultural and societal perceptions of disabilities as being related to sin or misconduct in a previous life also increase the stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities. In some instances, a family member with a disability is perceived as a disgrace to the entire family—which is another important reason for raising public awareness and destigmatising disability issues.

Asian churches must evaluate their own capacities to make visible the needs of those with disabilities in our communities. In many Asian churches, for instance, church buildings themselves still remain inaccessible to those with disabilities, and the voices of the IDPDs are rarely heard in decision-making. The churches are called to act and reiterate commitments to persons with disabilities.

The Biblical narrative of 'The Healing at the Pool' (John 5:1-9) is exemplary. Jesus came to the disabled person and asked him for a favour; he heard his voice and healed him. Jesus' compassion and action must be a compass for churches to welcome and serve people in the spirit of true inclusion, provide better support systems for persons with disabilities, and open access for them to participate in church life. On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the CCA urges its member churches and councils to motivate their members to embrace persons with disabilities, in keeping with the ministry of Jesus, for a fuller and more inclusive koinonia through advocacy and diaconal services in church and society.

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