

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
OF DISABLED PERSONS (IYDP)

ORGANIZED UNDER THE JOINT AUSPICES  
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY,  
THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA AND  
THE IYDP SECRETARIAT  
IN CO-OPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SOCIALIST ETHIOPIA  
6-7 OCTOBER 1980

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    Disabled Persons

## A. INTRODUCTION

### Organization and objectives of the Seminar

1. The Regional Seminar on IYDP was held at Africa Hall, Addis Ababa, on 6 and 7 October 1980. It was organized under the joint auspices of the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the IYDP secretariat. The Government of Ethiopia provided host facilities for the Seminar.
2. The Seminar, whose aim was to consider the most effective ways of attaining the objectives of the Year and of ensuring observance of the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons and of the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and to contribute to the drafting of a long-term programme of action, was convened in accordance with the provisions of the Plan of Action for the Year adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 34/154 whereby the regional commissions were urged to organize regional meetings or seminars that would provide a forum for sharing experiences and seeking the most effective ways of implementing initial and complementary measures in order to attain the objectives of the Year. The Seminar was also organized in accordance with the provisions of OAU resolutions CM/594(XXI) and CM/Res.724(XXXIII) and ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 396(XV) concerning activities to be conducted for and on behalf of disabled persons in observance of the Year.

### Attendance

3. Delegations from the following countries participated in the Seminar: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, the Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, Uganda, the United Republic of Cameroon, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zaire and Zambia.
4. The following United Nations organizations were represented: UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, UNDP and ILO.
5. Representatives of the following organizations participated as observers: the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, Rehabilitation International, the League of Red Cross Societies, the Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb, Goodwill Industries of America, the Pan-African Women's Organization, the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa), the African National Congress, ALERT (Ethiopia), World Vision International, the Lutheran World Federation, Christian Relief and Development, the Commission for the Handicapped of the United States, and the Association for Social Work Education in Africa. A representative of the Advisory Committee for IYDP was also present.

### Opening of the Seminar

6. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, personally presided over the opening meeting of the Regional Seminar on IYDP. His Excellency Mr. Kassa Kebede, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Ethiopia and also Chairman of the National Council of the International Year of Disabled Persons, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Government of Ethiopia. Then Mr. N. Djoudi, Acting Secretary-General of OAU, Mrs. Zala N'Kanza, Executive Secretary of IYDP, and Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of ECA, each made an opening statement.

### Election of officers

7. The Seminar unanimously elected the following officers:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Chairman             | : Mr. Kassa Kebede, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Ethiopia  |
| First Vice-Chairman  | : Mr. F.Q. Amegah, Minister of Labour, Youth and Social Affairs of Ghana   |
| Second Vice-Chairman | : Dr. M.A. Tayeb, Member of the National Committee of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya   |
| Third Vice-Chairman  | : Mrs. Oliveira, Minister of Social Affairs and the Protection of Women of Gabon   |
| Rapporteur           | : Mr. Mordecai A.S. Khumalo, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Swaziland                                    |
| Vice-Rapporteur      | : Mr. Gaoussou Traore, Chief of the Section of Disabled Persons of Mali and Permanent Secretary of the Malian Committee for IYDP |

8. A steering committee, consisting of the officers and one representative each of the IYDP, ECA and OAU secretariats was also set up to co-ordinate the work of the Seminar.

### Adoption of the agenda

9. The Seminar adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the report of the Regional Technical Meeting<sup>1/</sup>
2. Regional co-operation concerning disability prevention and rehabilitation of the disabled

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<sup>1/</sup> The Seminar decided that the national statements submitted by the delegations would be attached as annexes to the report of the Regional Technical Meeting.

3. Long-term programme of action
4. Other matters relating to regional activities
5. Adoption of the report.

### 3. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE REGIONAL TECHNICAL MEETING

10. The Chairman of the Regional Technical Meeting, Mr. Mahary Masho, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Ethiopia briefly introduced the report of the Regional Technical Meeting and its conclusions and recommendations, which are attached as an annex to this report.

11. He said that the national statements submitted by the experts from different African countries had confirmed the absence of reliable statistics on the situation of disabled persons in Africa. He added that the scope and magnitude of the problem of disability was such that it necessitated the development of a concerted plan of action to cope with a situation affecting over 45 million persons. He stressed in particular that progress had been limited in the areas of disability prevention and the rehabilitation of the disabled, where no appreciable radical change had been observed. He emphasized the need for African Governments to take concerted action to combat effectively the causes of disability.

12. The Chairman of the Regional Technical Meeting summed up the five major areas on which the experts had focused their attention and exchanged views.

- (a) Disability prevention;
- (b) Equal rights and opportunity;
- (c) Appropriate technology for the disabled;
- (d) Technical co-operation;
- (e) Follow-up action to the activities undertaken during IYDP.

13. He also pointed out that the experts had taken into account certain basic considerations, which had guided them in formulating their conclusions and recommendations. Those considerations included wars of liberation; aggression perpetrated against African peoples, proving that some disabilities which affected Africans had their origin outside the continent; and the socio-economic environment, and are all factors contributing to the increase in the number of disabled.

14. The experts also felt it important to keep in mind the African traditions of solidarity and hospitality, while at the same time acknowledging that the nature and magnitude of problems relating to disability in Africa were such that the international community should assume its responsibilities.

15. The Vice-Chairman of the Regional Technical Meeting read out the seven chapters containing the conclusions and recommendations.

16. The Seminar took note of the report of the Regional Technical Meeting and endorsed its conclusions and recommendations.

C. REGIONAL TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION CONCERNING DISABILITY PREVENTION AND THE REHABILITATION OF DISABLED PERSONS

17. Consideration of that item was based on the report of the Regional Technical Meeting and on document OAU/ESCAS/IYDP/WD3, submitted by Dr. Owosina, an OAU consultant, on the subject of the scope and dimensions of the problem of disability, major causes of disability and measures likely to reduce or prevent disability.

18. The Seminar felt that co-ordination and co-operation should begin with:

(a) A publicity campaign at the national level in which National Committees (including NGOs) should play an essential role in co-ordinating IYDP activities;

(b) An inventory of national, subregional and regional technical resources and material and human potential, which would lead to the establishment of a regional research and training institute or the reinforcement of existing institutes, the establishment of factories for assembling or manufacturing rehabilitation equipment and technical aids (canes, crutches, prosthetic devices, wheelchairs) using local materials, the manufacture of braille paper making it possible to develop a Braille press and Braille literature for the visually handicapped, the establishment of laboratories for vaccine production and control, etc.. Such co-operation would help to avoid duplication and waste of human and financial resources at the regional level.

19. The Seminar felt that the basic principles that served as a basis for modalities of co-operation with the United Nations agencies needed to be defined and recommended that:

(a) United Nations agencies should offer technical advice and contribute to the financing of projects;

(b) Such projects should be designed and planned by countries themselves on the basis of their specific needs under national development plans;

(c) Foreign experts should have detailed knowledge of the realities and needs of countries to which they lend their services and priority should be given to African experts, of whom an updated list should be prepared by ECA and OAU;

(d) Non-governmental organizations should integrate their activities and programmes into national plans for economic, social and cultural development.

20. The participants stressed the fact that Africa was overly dependent on the outside world and that Africa needed first and foremost to rely on its own human and material resources and use them judiciously within the framework of intra-African co-operation which was increasingly being felt as an urgent and vital necessity.

21. The participants, having noted the lack or proven inadequacy of all types of co-operation at all levels among African countries, stressed the need to promote subregional and regional co-operation with a view to finding a common solution to problems facing African States. According to the participants, international co-operation should, its evident importance notwithstanding, serve to support and strengthen the efforts already made by States in the region.

#### D. LONG-TERM PROGRAMME OF ACTION

22. The Executive Secretary of the International Year of Disabled Persons, in introducing agenda item 3, mentioned that the Plan of Action for the Year, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/154, recommended that at the international level "A draft long-term programme of action should be prepared by the Secretary-General in consultation with member States, the relevant organs, organizations and bodies within the United Nations system and international non-governmental organizations of and for disabled persons, which should be considered by the Advisory Committee at one of its proposed future sessions; and the draft long-term programme of action should then be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session" (in 1991).<sup>2/</sup>

23. Pursuant to that General Assembly recommendation and to serve as a basis for consultation, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had submitted a conceptual framework for consideration by Governments, United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations. The framework had been sent to the various bodies mentioned above under cover of a note verbale from the Secretary-General in March 1980. Owing to the little time available, as of June 1980, Governments had not been able to transmit to the Secretary-General their comments and suggestions on the conceptual framework. It had thus been necessary to take advantage of regional consultations in order to elicit the views, suggestions and comments of Governments, agencies and non-governmental organizations in each region.

24. The Seminar reviewed the conceptual framework and adopted the four major priority aspects proposed by the Secretary-General for which solutions might be found in the context of international co-operation : the humanitarian aspect, the psychological aspect, the disability prevention aspect and the aspect of participation in development. After an exchange of views, participants formulated recommendations that might serve as the region's contribution to the formulation of the draft programme of action. The following recommendations were formulated on the basis of the major chapters of the conceptual framework of the World Plan of Action, namely, the aim and scope of the programme, the fundamental principles on which the programme should be based, the organization of the programme and specific measures and conclusions.

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<sup>2/</sup> A/34/150, para. 74(c).

(i) Aim and scope of the programme

25. (a) The relevant recommendations of the IYDP Advisory Committee as contained in the IYDP World Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/154 should be taken into account.

(b) Provisions should be made for monitoring, evaluation and review mechanisms in the programme in order to ensure its effective implementation.

(c) In drafting of the programme, particular stress should be laid on the importance to be accorded to activities carried out by disabled persons themselves and on the promotion of organizations of disabled persons at the national, subregional and international levels.

(ii) Fundamental principles on which the Programme of Action should be based

26. (a) To the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes should be added that of the legitimacy of the struggle for national liberation in the face of the hostile refusal on the part of the Colonial Powers to grant peoples under their domination their independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The international community must accord that right to the peoples of South Africa, Namibia and Palestine. The environment created by the persistence of colonialism in those regions and the continued racist and apartheid policy of the Pretoria regime forced the people to resort to armed struggle to regain their independence and their dignity.

(b) The international and regional instruments adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the Organization of African Unity concerning disabled refugees should be included.

(c) Reference should be made to the principle of the right to work and the fact stressed that the disabled had the same right to independent work as other individuals.

(d) The right to education, training and information should be included among the fundamental principles since it was a prerequisite of the full participation of the disabled.

(iii) Organization of the programme and specific measures

1. Humanitarian aspect

27. (a) The broad use of the word "humanitarian" should be clarified. While the concept frequently connoted charity, generally it covered the notions of both human rights and social justice.

(b) Provision should be made for machineries at the regional and, if possible, international levels in addition to the national commissions to study the various forms of discrimination against the disabled.



## 2. Psychological aspect

28. (a) Specific measures should be developed to educate the public in general and the families of the disabled in particular so that they might become less sensitive and rid themselves of feelings of shame and withdrawal. The role and responsibility of mothers of disabled children in that context were essential. Without training or information, they implanted in their children and their families attitudes which prevented the disabled from realizing their full potential and that of their environment in general.

(b) Within the framework of public information and training campaigns, and particularly within the schools, provision should be made for pamphlets, posters, special lessons and personal contacts to change attitudes and behaviours towards the disabled. All information media available should be mobilized to that end.

(c) Religious and other charitable organizations should be requested to make efforts to modify those parts of their teaching which had become obsolete in the light of scientific knowledge. In certain forms religious education might sometimes convey negative attitudes marked by condescension and pity with respect to the disabled.

(d) The need should be emphasized to include a section on the psychological aspects of dealing with the disabled as part of the curriculum of training programmes for administrative personnel who would be concerned with problems of disability prevention and rehabilitation of the disabled.

## 3. Disability prevention aspect

29. (a) In that chapter of the programme of action, the relevant recommendations made by the Regional Technical Meeting and the Seminar relating to disability prevention in Africa should be included as priority issues.

(b) Stress should be placed once again on the need to appeal to the international community to condemn the racist regime of Pretoria which, through its apartheid system, was responsible for a considerable number of both physical and mental disabilities.

(c) Particular emphasis should be laid on the need to ensure that rural populations benefited from the preventive measures chosen.

(d) Measures for early, rapid and effective detection and treatment should be provided for.

(e) The system of medical check-ups for school children and pregnant women should be made compulsory in countries where it was not institutionalized as it constituted an effective way of tracking down and preventing disabilities.

4. Aspect of participation in development

30. (a) "Full participation" should be considered as a basic human right. As disabled persons were victims of handicaps created by society, they could not solve the problem of their participation by themselves. Society had a moral responsibility which implied that Governments should take action through their national development plans. Such action called inter alia for adequate legislation to enable the disabled to participate effectively in development activities.

(b) Affirmative action should be taken to provide equality and equal opportunity to the disabled through special provisions on their behalf. For example legislation and administrative measures should be adopted which would set aside jobs for the disabled in both the private and the public sectors and would encourage the disabled to work independently in sheltered workshops.

(c) The direct action of the disabled should be considered as an essential complement to government action while recognizing the need for and the responsibility of Governments to act to ensure the full participation of the disabled.

(d) Prime importance should be attached to activities aimed at promoting the establishment of organizations of disabled persons in areas where they did not yet exist, as such organizations had been able to accelerate the implementation of various programmes, legislative measures and policies designed to ensure the participation of the disabled.

(e) Emphasis should be placed on the importance of respecting national and regional cultural differences and of avoiding situations where participation in organizations for the disabled would set disabled persons apart from the mainstream and prevent them from participating fully in existing professional associations and other organizations or any that might be established in their respective communities.

(f) Obstacles which prevented the access of disabled persons to human settlements should be eliminated. Specific measures should be provided for in the context of rural development and urban planning to promote local architectural characteristics that were in keeping with the climate and to favour both the social interaction and the full participation of the disabled.

(g) The relevant recommendations of the Regional Seminar on intra-African co-operation should be borne in mind, particularly those concerning the use of science and technology in the prevention of disabilities and rehabilitation of the disabled. The local population's ability to apply technology and the use of local raw materials should be considered essential factors in accelerating the development process.

(iv) Conclusions

31. An international convention should be drafted on the eradication of discrimination against the disabled, similar to other conventions adopted by the international community. The accession to such a convention by the member States and its ratification would be two of the major criteria for evaluating progress made in the implementation of the World Plan of Action for disability prevention and rehabilitation of disabled persons.

E. OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

32. The Regional Seminar on IYDP, after having listened to the statements made by the representatives of national liberation movements (ANC and PAC), prepared a draft resolution for adoption by the third Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs, on the consequences of the racist and apartheid policy in South Africa and Namibia.

F. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

33. The conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar are contained in two draft resolutions for consideration by the third Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs (see annexes I and II).

## ANNEX I

Draft resolution on the consequences of the racist and  
apartheid policy in South Africa and Namibia

The third Conference of the African Ministers of Social Affairs held in  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 3 to 10 October 1980,

Deeply concerned that the racist and apartheid policy of the regime in Pretoria with its practices of torture, imprisonment and armed repression constitutes one of the principal causes of the increase in the number of disabled persons among the black population,

Noting that apartheid intrinsically constitutes a source of mental repression and psychological disorder as a result of the mass and mandatory uprooting and resettlement of the population in so-called homelands,

Also noting that such uprooting divides families through the application of dehumanizing emigrant labour laws,

Aware that the resultant economic privation and poverty are causes of malnutrition, which leads to growth problems and mental retardation, not to mention the sense of inferiority, harassment and social insecurity experienced by the black population in South Africa and Namibia,

Bearing in mind the fact that the national liberation movements which are the spokesmen of the majority of the South African population are banned and this denial of the right of expression makes them less able to resist the oppression,

Aware that the front-line States, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe are the targets of attacks and bombings by the racist and apartheid regime in South Africa in its attempts to stop those States from supporting the liberation struggle in South Africa and Namibia,

1. Condemns the racist regime in Pretoria, which is the bastion of apartheid for:

- (a) The system of permanent and flagrant oppression which it continues to impose on the people of South Africa and Namibia;
- (b) The atrocities which are at the root of the ever growing number of disabled persons;
- (c) The refusal to grant the people their legitimate right to social justice.

2. Further condemns the racist regime of South Africa, the country of apartheid, for its attacks against the front-line States as well as Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe;

3. Appeals to the Organization of African Unity to provide the liberation movements with the necessary resources for the rehabilitation and the technical and vocational training of disabled persons;

4. Invites the deliberative bodies of the United Nations to ensure that the necessary budgetary credits are available to enable the IYDP secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme to assist the national liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity in implementing their programmes of action for the rehabilitation of the disabled and their socio-economic integration in their communities;

5. Urgently requests the Organization of African Unity and the financial institutions of the United Nations system to provide financial and material assistance to the front-line States as well as to Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

ANNEX II

Draft resolution on the conclusions and recommendations  
of the Regional Seminar on the International Year  
of disabled persons

The third Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs, meeting in  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 8 to 10 October 1980,

Having considered the report of the Regional Technical Meeting and the  
Regional Seminar on the aims of the International Year of Disabled Persons,

Conscious of the major causes of disability and the magnitude of the  
problems of the disabled in Africa,

Taking into account aggression and its effects on the incidence of  
disability,

Considering that the current socio-economic environment which gives rise  
to disability is frequently dictated by external circumstances, beyond the  
control of the Governments of the region,

In the light of the solidarity and hospitality which characterize African  
customs and traditions,

Recalling the two declarations adopted by the United Nations General  
Assembly concerning the rights of the mentally retarded and of disabled persons  
of 1971 and 1975 respectively,

Conscious that the magnitude and scope of problems are such that an  
appropriate solution cannot be found through conventional means but requires  
the application of science and technology,

Considering that because of the nature of the problem and in particular the  
underlying causes of disability, the countries of the region must discharge their  
obligations to society and undertake appropriate action with a view to changing  
the current situation radically and facilitating the integration of the disabled  
into society,

Considering also that the nature and problem of disability in Africa imply  
that the international community should discharge its moral and social obligations  
and make an effective contribution, particularly as the causes of disability are  
often imposed on Africa by external phenomena such as decolonization, struggles  
for liberation, aggression and socio-economic conditions resulting from an  
unjust international economic order,

Observing that the commendable efforts undertaken by African States are not generally developed and incorporated in the framework of socio-economic planning and that isolated action in this area often entails a waste of available resources,

Recommends that:

1. Priority action should be taken to establish an appropriate system of data collection with the aim of obtaining statistical data on the magnitude and scope of the problem of disability;
2. An exhaustive inventory should be taken of available resources for disability prevention, the rehabilitation of the disabled and their socio-economic re-integration;
3. The programmes provided for in the areas of disability prevention and rehabilitation of the disabled should be incorporated in socio-economic planning in the light of the statistical data mentioned above;
4. Budgetary allocations should be increased significantly so that intensive action might be taken against the principal causes of disability, in particular, measures such as campaigns against communicable diseases and co-ordinated programmes for the production, quality control and distribution of vaccines against these diseases;
5. A permanent national co-ordinating body should be established;
6. Administrative and legislative texts should be revised to bring them into line with the two General Assembly declarations on the rights of the mentally retarded and the rights of disabled persons;
7. Affirmative action should be taken to provide equal opportunity for the disabled and enable them to have access to social services and be integrated in their community;
8. All initiatives to adapt technology to the needs of the disabled, by using local low-cost materials particularly in the rural areas, should be encouraged;
9. Subregional and regional co-operation should be intensified with a view to finding common appropriate solutions to similar problems faced at various levels through a regional institute or other organ which would serve these ends;
10. The secretariats of ECA and OAU should be strengthened so that they might play a more important role in co-ordinating activities in the region for the implementation of the present recommendations;

11. A regional seminar, of a technical nature, should be organized under the auspices of ECA and OAU for the exclusive purpose of taking an inventory of the resources and means available in the region and held immediately before the fourth Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs;

12. The agenda of the fourth Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs should contain an item on the inventory of the region's resources and means;

13. Appropriate priority should be given to projects on disability prevention and the rehabilitation of the disabled in the context of requests for assistance submitted to the competent United Nations bodies;

14. The relevant United Nations authorities should be urged to take into account the regional characteristics of Africa in the Long-term Plan of Action, bearing in mind the above-mentioned recommendations;

15. The activities and programmes of non-governmental organizations should be consistent with national development plans.