



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

PRESS RELEASE

Afghan Government pushes for the National Program for Action on Disability

30 March 2005, Kabul Afghanistan: The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) signed a cooperative agreement with UNDP, ushering in the National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD).

NPAD is a 3-year programme that will invest US\$10.6 million into improving the condition of disabled people in Afghanistan. UNDP proposes to work in partnership with the lead ministries MMD and MoLSA, and with the technical collaboration with the Ministries of Education (MoE) and Public Health (MoPH), to support national policy development and programme definition in disability.

UNDP will provide funds to be channeled into technical support for line ministries and into the provision of targeted services for disabled people. Additional Funding for services and technical support in disability has also been provided by the Governments of Japan and the United States.

There are at least 1 million people in Afghanistan living with disabilities. There are many causes that contribute to disability. The effects of war and armed conflict are the most obvious, but not the most prevalent. Surveys from field work have found that about 25% of causes can be directly related to war or conflict. The remaining 75% is linked to poverty, poor health and rehabilitative services in the country.

In Afghanistan, a country with a long history of armed conflict, physically disabled people are more visible and have generally received greater attention. However, the majority of disabled people in Afghanistan are less visible. These are people with severe disabilities who cannot easily move out of their homes; these are people with visual and hearing impairments; and these are women with disabilities.

While the rights of disabled people are recognized in the Constitution of Afghanistan, there is a lack of adequate legislation or legal protection to uphold these rights. Disabled people face immense barriers that exclude them from fair and equal participation in society. Public services for disabled people are limited to a few locations in the country and therefore only meet the needs of a few.

The government is not only constitutionally committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities. H.E Sediqa Balkhi the Minister of Martyrs and Disabled recognizes that people with disabilities have special needs and that society has a moral if not legal obligation to make sure that these needs are met. In order to deliver services to meet their needs, the Government must push strongly for a unified approach among respective ministries to ensure that all national programs respect the needs and rights of disabled people. Existing government policy states that people with disabilities are to be mainstreamed into society; that is, they must be integrated into every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

Media also play an important role. The Government will work with media to promote a better understanding of disability issues in Afghanistan, which will in turn foster greater understanding and commitment to ensuring the rights and well being of people with disabilities. Greater public awareness of disability will contribute to greater public awareness of the strengths and abilities of all people bring towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The main expected outcomes of the programme will be a clear and strong Government policy and increased services for people with disabilities, greater resource allocation for disability programmes and improved coordination between government, NGOs and organizations representing disabled people.

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