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Bangkok Rubber Public Company Limited  
MAS Intimates  
American Chamber of Commerce  
Nokia  
Accor Asia  
PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Associated Merchandising Corporation/Target Corporation  
Federal Express Pacific, Inc.  
Employers' Federation of Ceylon  
Yum! Restaurants International

Westpac  
Nike  
CJ Telenix  
IBM  
HSBC

**Unlocking Potential:  
A Multinational Corporation Roundtable  
on Disability and Employment**

**Asia and the Pacific  
Proceedings of the Meeting**



**Bangkok, Thailand  
6 July 2005**



# **Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment**

**Asia and the Pacific**

**Proceedings of the Meeting**

*Bangkok, Thailand  
6 July 2005*

Organized by the ILO in collaboration with  
ESCAP and the Employment and Poverty Alleviation Task Force of the Thematic Working Group  
on Disability Related Concerns for Asia and the Pacific

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## Preface

Those who attended *Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment* found it to be worthwhile, uplifting and encouraging. Consider the words of Mark Bagshaw of IBM at the day's conclusion: *"It was probably one of the most innovative events I have been involved in over 25 years of disability reform."*

These proceedings are designed to pass on some of the excitement that was present that day and to recount the remarkable partnerships and examples of good practice that multinational corporations and their partners shared. These proceedings suggest and chart a simple course of action for how to build upon the day's findings and activities and the good intentions that were expressed. However, the long-term impact of the Multinational Corporation (MNC) Roundtable on the employment of people with disabilities and the realization of the business case for hiring them will be the Roundtable's true measures of success. That success is in the hands of the participants – the representatives of multinational corporations, governments, non-government and disabled persons organizations and United Nations (UN) agencies.

In the first three months after the meeting, three countries began a process of replicating the MNC Roundtable, several multinational companies began exploring what they can do within their corporate structures to foster change and several stakeholders began dialogues that hopefully will result in additional examples of good practice. The International Labour Office (ILO) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as well as the Employment and Poverty Alleviation Task Force of the Thematic Working Group on Disability Related Concerns, sponsors of the MNC Roundtable, will do their parts to monitor and further the impact.

Events like the MNC Roundtable require significant human and financial resources. I wish to thank the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and ESCAP for providing these resources and the moral support to make the event a success. I want to thank, in particular, Anne Holopainen, ILO Associate Expert, for her diligent work, perseverance and expertise that resulted in a successful day. She worked with the assistance of two ILO interns, Karin Boman-Röding and Sanjay Kumar Kaushik, who also contributed their time and energy to assist in planning the meeting and in researching and preparing the supporting manual and products. Michael Clyne, another intern, assisted with final editing and layout of this document.

Thanks also go to Charles Bodwell, Chief Technical Advisor of the ILO's Factory Improvement Project and Ivanka Mamich of the ILO Subregional Office for East Asia for recruiting some of the company participants. Teerasak Siriratanonthai and Sugunya Voradilokkul of the ILO and Tipayang Dheeranond of ESCAP provided tremendous administrative and logistical support that contributed to the meeting's success. I also want to express my gratitude to task force members, Pecharat Techavachara, Bryan Woodford, Jason McKey and Aiko Akiyama, for their contribution in making the meeting successful.

As you will read in these proceedings, many other individuals contributed to the MNC Roundtable by participating, sharing and presenting. Many thanks for their expert contributions and active participation. The multinational company representatives must

be specifically acknowledged for taking the time and expending the resources to attend the meeting. Most had to travel, often at significant distances, at the financial expense of their companies and the time expense of their personal work schedules. Hopefully, the event will prove to be a worthwhile, long-term investment for all. It is the sincere ambition of the ILO, which served as the secretariat, that the MNC Roundtable will be a seminal event that results in continued networking and the realized potential of people with disabilities and companies in the region.

Debra A. Perry  
Senior Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation for Asia and the Pacific  
ILO, Bangkok Office

# 1. Overview

## 1.1 Background

In today's global economy, managing diversity is a major factor in a corporation's efficiency, productivity and overall business success. Many multinational companies and human resource professionals have discovered the potential of people with disabilities to make significant contributions to a diverse and productive workforce and are reaping those benefits. For other companies, however, the recruitment, hiring and retention of disabled workers are not components of their diversity strategies.

Promoting the business case for employing people with disabilities and "unlocking the potential" of disabled persons were the two major themes of *Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment*. The International Labour Office (ILO)'s regional AbilityAsia Disability Programme, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Employment and Poverty Alleviation Task Force of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Disability-Related Concerns for Asia and the Pacific organized the Multinational Corporation (MNC) Roundtable. The ILO Factory Improvement Project provided additional organizational assistance.

The MNC Roundtable explored the business case for hiring people with disabilities and identified and discussed ways to overcome barriers that prevented disabled persons from fully developing their skills and engaging in training and employment.

The business case states that hiring workers with disabilities can positively impact a corporation's bottom line because:

- People with disabilities make good, dependable employees.
- People with disabilities are more likely to stay on the job.
- Hiring people with disabilities increases workforce morale.
- People with disabilities are an untapped resource of skills and talents.
- People with disabilities have insight into an overlooked and multi-billion dollar market segment – disabled persons and their families and friends.

The Background Note that was distributed prior to the meetings more fully describes the business case and the barriers and issues related to disability and employment (see Annex 1).

## 1.2 Meeting objectives and expected outcomes

The MNC Roundtable had two major objectives:



- To start a dialogue among stakeholders in the region, including multinational corporations, on how to stimulate the hiring of people with disabilities from the business case perspective; and,
- To identify needs and action steps, regionally and nationally, that would contribute to the training and hiring of workers with disabilities.

The expected outcomes included:

- Improved networking among stakeholders in the region;
- Increased awareness among multinational companies about the business case for hiring disabled workers and the good practices of some companies;
- Development of at least one or more partnerships that improve the training or hiring of people with disabilities at the national level;
- Identification of good practice examples; and
- Consensus about several action steps that the stakeholders and meeting organizers can take to move the business case agenda forward in the region.

### 1.3 Programme

The MNC Roundtable was a one-day meeting with morning sessions geared to technical and good practice presentations (see sections 2–5 of these proceedings). The afternoon sessions were devoted to discussions and charting the path forward (see sections 6 and 7). The programme of activities and speakers were as follows:

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Programme</b></p>	
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6 July 2005

United Nations Conference Centre

Conference Room 3

<b>8:30</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>9:00</b>	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b> <i>Mr Shinichi Hasegawa, Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</i> <i>Ms Thelma Kay, Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division, ESCAP</i> <i>Ms Debra Perry, Senior Specialist in Vocational Rehabilitation, ILO</i>
<b>9:30</b>	<b>The Business Case for Hiring People with Disabilities</b> <i>Mr Mark Bagshaw, Centre Manager, IBM Australia/New Zealand Accessibility Centre</i>



- 10:00**                    **The Status of People with Disabilities in the Region**  
*Mr Topong Kulkhanchit, Regional Development Officer,  
Disabled Peoples' International*
- 10:15**                    **Break**
- 10:30**                    **Multinational Panel Showcasing Good Practices**  
Chairperson: *Ms Anne Knowles, Senior Specialist in Employers' Activities, ILO*
- Presenters:
- Ms Robbin Suess, Vice President, Human Resources, IBM*
- Mr Brett Bjorkman, Environment, Safety and Health Manger for Asia, Nike*
- Ms Samornrat Vatanatham, Ph.D., Executive Director, Bangkok Rubber Public Company Limited, Nike Subcontractor*
- Ms Niki Kesoglou, Practice Leader Diversity, People & Performance, Westpac*
- 11:45**                    **Win/Win Partnership Panel – Business and the Disability Community Working Together**  
Chairperson: *Ms Anne Knowles, ILO*
- Presenters:
- JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong and Hong Chi Association*
- Ms Sandra Ng, Director of Human Resources, JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong*
- Ms Nora Wong, General Secretary, Hong Chi Association*
- CJ Telenix and Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled (KEPAD)*
- Mr Jung Gyu An, President, CJ Telenix*
- Ms Eona Kim, Senior Researcher, KEPAD*
- Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), Motivation Charitable Trust and MAS Intimates*
- Ms Meghamali Aluwihare, Senior Industrial Relations Advisor, EFC*
- Ms Sharmini Constantinescu, Manager Employment Placement Programme, Motivation Charitable Trust*
- Ms Shanaaz Preena, Director Human Resources, MAS Intimates*
- 1:00**                    **Lunch**

<b>2:15</b>	<b>Roundtable Instructions</b> Chairperson: <i>Ms Debra Perry, ILO</i>
<b>2:30</b>	<b>Roundtable 1: Challenges and Solutions</b> – by stakeholder group (companies, governments and NGOs)
<b>3:00</b>	<b>Roundtable Discussion Findings</b>
<b>3:30</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>3:45</b>	<b>Roundtable 2: Working Together</b> – mixed stakeholder groups
<b>4:15</b>	<b>Roundtable Discussion Findings</b>
<b>4:45</b>	<b>What Will We Do Next? Multisector Panel</b> Chairperson: <i>Mr Jason McKey, Managing Director, Job Placement Limited</i>
	<b>Panel:</b> Representatives of companies, ILO, governments, NGOs and disabled persons organizations
<b>5:50</b>	<b>Closing Comments</b> <i>Mr Mark Bagshaw, IBM</i> <i>Ms Debra Perry, ILO</i>
<b>6:00</b>	<b>Reception</b>

## 1.4 Participants

Eighty-eight participants attended from 17 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. Significantly, this included 24 representatives from multinational corporations and employers' business networks. Most of the corporate participants had regional oversight of human resources or a related function. There were 47 representatives from non-government organizations (NGOs) and government agencies, 11 from UN agencies and six interpreters and personal care assistants.

For a complete list of participants, please see Annex 2.

## 1.5 Resource material

Each participant received a manual that contained all relevant background and meeting documents:

1. Programme
2. Background Note
3. List of participants
4. Opening speeches and technical presentations
5. Instructions for roundtable discussions
6. The ILO *AbilityAsia Resource Manual for Employers in Asia and the Pacific: Draft*
7. Relevant ILO and ESCAP documents, including:
  - *ILO Code of Practice for Managing Disability in the Workplace*, 2001
  - Tripartite Declaration of Principle Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, 2001
  - Convention 159 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983
  - Recommendation 168 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983
  - Recommendation 99 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1955
  - Biwako Millennium Framework of Action: Towards an Inclusive Barrier-Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, 2003
8. Forms for evaluating the MNC Roundtable and contributing to the ILO *AbilityAsia Resource Manual for Employers in Asia and the Pacific: Draft*.

Of particular significance among the resource materials was the draft resource manual for employers. This document includes a host of resources designed to educate and assist employers on the skills development and employment or retention of workers with disabilities. It includes references to relevant publications and websites, specific examples of policy and good practice from a range of businesses, including many of those multinationals making technical presentations during the MNC Roundtable. It also contains a list of relevant national organizations where job seekers can be sourced, on a country-by-country basis within the Asia-Pacific region. It also contains fact sheets and checklists on employing people with disabilities and a submission sheet for organizations to send further information to the ILO.

In addition, all participants received copies of *Unlocking Potential: The New Disability Business Case*, developed by the Employers Forum on Disability in the United Kingdom and jointly published by the ILO. Several participants also distributed brochures, information sheets and other materials.

## **2. Welcome and Introductions**

Chairperson: *Ms Debra Perry, Senior Specialist on Vocational Rehabilitation, ILO*

After welcoming and thanking all participants, Ms Perry explained that the MNC Roundtable is a joint meeting organized by ILO and ESCAP and introduced the opening speakers.

### **2.1 Opening speeches**

*Mr Shinichi Hasegawa, Director, ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*  
*Ms Thelma Kay, Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division, ESCAP*

Mr Hasegawa noted that the MNC Roundtable was an inaugural meeting for the region, bringing together a diverse range of multinational corporations, NGOs and government representatives to discuss the business case of employing disabled people. He applauded the commitment of those multinational companies attending.

Thanking ESCAP and the Employment and Poverty-Alleviation Task Force of the UN Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Disability-Related concerns for co-organizing the meeting, Mr Hasegawa explained that the ILO was dedicated to promoting decent work for all in conditions of freedom, equity, dignity and human security. Referring to the ILO's commitment to disability issues since 1925, he noted that people with disabilities face many barriers and inequities in the workplace but that the MNC Roundtable was unique in focusing on the business case perspective: that a diverse workforce, including people with disabilities, is vital in contributing to a corporation's overall business success.

He also explained that this meeting would celebrate some of the successes of people with disabilities whose contributions are often overlooked and that it was an important opportunity to discuss how multinational companies could attract more people with disabilities into their workforces. He concluded that people with disabilities not only have a right to decent work but could be integral to a positive work environment.

In her opening remarks, Ms Kay referred to the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF) for the decade 2003–2012, explaining that it was designed to ensure that persons with disabilities would be an integral part of efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the area of poverty alleviation. In the Asia and Pacific region it is estimated that of the 400 million people with disabilities, more than 40 per cent live in poverty and lack access to opportunities available to other members of society, including training, employment and livelihood programmes. She noted that persons with disabilities should have the right to choose what they want to do based on their abilities – not their disabilities – and hoped that participants learn more about how the disability-inclusive response to globalization can affect the quality of life of persons with disabilities as well as meeting corporate social responsibility standards.

### **2.2 Opening activities**

Ms Perry explained that this was the first time that multinational corporations had been invited to such an event, and due to high interest, it was necessary to restrict participation primarily to TWG members and other representative of NGOs, government agencies and disabled groups that coincided with corporate interests.

### **3. Background Presentations**

Chairperson: *Ms Debra Perry, Senior Specialist on Vocational Rehabilitation, ILO*

In introducing the two background speakers, Ms Perry noted that Mr Mark Bagshaw, Centre Manager for IBM Australia/New Zealand Accessibility Centre, has worked for IBM for more than 25 years and been integral to considerable achievements and contributions for people with disabilities in Australia. She explained that Mr Topong Kulkhanchit, Regional Development Officer for Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), would explore the perspective of people with disabilities, and employment realities for them, in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### **3.1 Including People with Disabilities – The Business Case**

*Mr Mark Bagshaw, Centre Manager, IBM Australia/New Zealand Accessibility Centre*

Mr Bagshaw noted that this inaugural MNC Roundtable marked an attitude change in thinking about people with disabilities. Over the past ten years there has been a dramatic shift in the perception of people with disabilities, from being recipients of welfare to being individuals who deserve to have their basic human rights ensured. He said now is the time to recognize that people with disabilities could be vital, contributing members of society.

Business, he pointed out, relies on three main resources: money, raw materials and people. There are currently about 1 billion people in the world with a disability, making up about 20 per cent of the total population by some estimates, Mr Bagshaw noted, adding that it makes little sense so many people lack the opportunity to contribute to the world's businesses. From a business perspective, people with disabilities are a valuable resource as consumers of products, and integrating them into the economic mainstream would produce benefits far greater than the costs. Including people with a disability makes good business sense.

Businesses are increasingly challenged to find new opportunities for growth and many are approaching stagnation as they exhaust existing markets. Some businesses, explained Mr Bagshaw, are realizing that the one billion disabled persons represent the largest untapped market in the world. Unfortunately, many businesses still need convincing that many people with disabilities do not want, or need, to be welfare recipients and that they are employable and can make a valuable contribution to business.

Using the United States (US) as an example, Mr Bagshaw commented that only 56 per cent of people with disabilities participate in employment there, as opposed to 84 per cent of people without disabilities. This results in a differential gap of more than 17 million people. If this group were in the workforce, welfare benefits would not only decline but US businesses could be more productive, benefiting the US economy by US\$621 billion annually. He clarified that this cost is also based on a productivity rate of those with disabilities being half the rate of "average" workers. However, he added, evidence indicates that those with disabilities tend to have better productivity rates, contrary to general business assumptions, so the figure potentially could be much higher.

## **Disability reform...Why bother?**

The fundamental challenge of changing employers' attitudes, Mr Bagshaw insisted, is the need to really understand what it is like to live with a disability. Employing someone with disability does not just involve changing the work environment to accommodate him or her. Having a disability affects the lives of disabled persons in everything that they do. He emphasized that reforms must take this reality into account. Mr Bagshaw then outlined three major obstacles that affect people with disabilities from entering the workplace and require employer sensitivity:

### **1. Infrastructure**

Many barriers are not related to disability itself but to the working environment, for example, a lack of lifts or appropriate technology. All infrastructure barriers affect efficient productivity, irrespective of ability or disability. If working environments accommodated people with disabilities they would instantly be more productive members of the workforce.

### **2. Community expectations**

Society has low expectations of people with disabilities being employed and, as a result, does not provide them with decent, accessible education. Attitudes need to change to accept that people with disabilities are eminently capable of being productive workers; otherwise, there is no incentive for them to undertake the training and education to be part of the workforce.

### **3. Disempowerment**

Living with a disability can be overwhelming and should not be underestimated.

To remove the infrastructure barriers, Mr Bagshaw explained that the business sector also needs to realize that there is a business opportunity in delivering products and services to people with disabilities. A national marketing strategy is needed in every country to change perceptions of people with disabilities and to establish pathways that enable them access to life-long learning skills, vocational training and university education. Creating this opportunity requires social investment from all segments of society.

In addition to new market opportunities, opening up businesses to include people with disabilities as workers and as consumers can bring the following four benefits:

### **1. Employee productivity increases**

Evidence shows that when given the opportunity and tools to be productive, people with disabilities are reliable, safe and often more productive than the average worker. A person with a disability often has a unique range of skills because of his or her unique life journey. Such life skills can be enormously valuable for businesses.

### **2. Corporate culture improves**

When companies employ people with disabilities, subtle changes take place among the employees and with customers. Companies such as Pizza Hut that employ people with intellectual learning difficulties have seen workforce morale improve and internal perceptions about the corporation enhanced. They also

found that their customers liked to buy products from a corporation whose workforce reflected the real world.

### **3. Market image improves**

Companies that deliberately position themselves as organizations that include people with disabilities, whether by employing them in their workforce or by marketing appropriate products, reflect an image that they are businesses that embrace diversity. As a result, they are more likely to be a preferred supplier to more customers. Increasingly, both customers and investors choose their products and investments at least partially based on whether or not a corporation is a good corporate citizen.

### **4. Business opportunities expand**

Relatively few companies have taken advantage of the business opportunities available by investing in and developing products and services for people with disabilities. Contrary to assumptions that all people with disabilities are disadvantaged and have no income, research conducted by Australia's Deakin University (in Victoria) found that 101 million people with disabilities have access to an average weekly wage and some form of disposable income. They are prospective customers and this is a significant business opportunity.

The main barriers that keep people with disabilities from spending money are difficulties in accessing businesses and shops and a lack of appropriate products and services. People with disabilities tend to be avid consumers, an articulate and intelligent market that is quick to try new technology (because it can make a huge difference to their lives). This represents a massive business opportunity that is largely unrealised by many business leaders. IBM estimated that if people with disabilities were each spending US\$10,000 on purchasing products, there was a potential trillion dollar market left untapped.

## **Embracing people with disabilities: A four-stage model**

Mr Bagshaw's presentation included the following four-stage journey that businesses often take toward including people with disabilities, as both employees and customers:

### **1. Compliance driven**

Initially, the vast majority of businesses employ or attract people with disabilities because of a need to comply with national legislative standards, whether by putting in ramps to shop doors or meeting hiring quotas, etc. The attitude focuses on the business costs to meet minimum required standards and sees no competitive advantage in the business market. This first-level attitude serves only as a basic level in providing real opportunities or services to people with disabilities.

### **2. Experience driven**

Businesses that understand the importance of making their products and services accessible and desirable for people with disabilities have a greater competitive advantage. Because they want to achieve these changes, these businesses start to attract customers from the untapped market of people with disabilities and away from their competitors.

### **3. Relationship driven**

At this stage, businesses make sure that they know all about their customers, including the specific needs of people with disabilities, so that they can anticipate and incorporate them into their customer relationship management systems.

### **4. Life-needs driven**

Opportunities exist for businesses to transfer information and link with each other with regard to services needed by individual customers with disabilities throughout their lives. Mr Bagshaw offered a personal example, “Information that Quantas needs about my power wheelchair is information that my hotel needs when I get to the other end.”

## **Attitudes toward those with disabilities**

Mr Bagshaw concluded by introducing a scale of attitudes. He urged businesses to objectively assess their attitude to see if they truly were ready and willing to take advantage of the business opportunities in employing and marketing products and services to people with disabilities.

1. I believe in including people with disabilities.
2. If I have to, I will...
3. I never even thought about working with people with disabilities.
4. I tried working with people disabilities before, but it didn't work.
5. I don't even understand people with disabilities – they are not like me.

## **3.2 The Status of People with Disabilities in the Region**

*Mr Topong Kulkhanchit, Regional Development Officer, Disabled Peoples' International*

Mr Kulkhanchit urged businesses not to regard people with disabilities as special – they are people with rights to employment and the marketplace like any other consumer.

The World Programme of Action, adopted by the UN in 1982, has the ultimate goal of establishing full participation and equality for persons with disabilities, Mr Kulkhanchit noted. Its framework involves the following aims: prevention of disability, rehabilitation of those with disabilities and equality of opportunities for those with disabilities. The first two objective areas were addressed through the work of social workers, medical professionals and NGOs, with disability organizations being instrumental in pushing the agenda of the third objective.

Mr Kulkhanchit also noted that definitions of disabilities have changed over the past two decades. Though there are still disagreements on terms, since 1982 “disability” and “impairment” were preferred in referring to individual conditions while “handicapped” describes the disadvantage resulting from the relationship between individuals with impairments and their environments.

By 2001, the World Health Organization presented an International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health. It promotes the social model. Whereas the medical model of disability regards individuals as having impairments, the social model addresses the significance of the environment on the impact of disability. Mr Kulkhanchit



added that major partner organizations, such as the World Bank, have begun to integrate Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) for Action<sup>1</sup> concepts, also based on the social model, into their work. The BMF is replacing charity-based approaches to working with disabled people with a rights-based approach aimed at empowering people through rehabilitation and addressing environmental issues.

To businesses considering employing people with disabilities, Mr Kulkhanchit stressed the importance of the environment in relation to individuals. He asserted that businesses should recognize talent, not disability, harness that talent and liberate people with disabilities from prejudice. He also asked the business sector to consider investing in people with more severe disabilities, citing statistics from Thailand where many people with less severe disabilities have access to vocational training and rehabilitation schemes through government funding. Those with more severe disabilities have less opportunity due to the lack of investment.

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<sup>1</sup> The BMF is an international instrument to achieve the targets of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012. The BMF was adopted in Japan in October 2002 and entails seven priority areas of action: 1) self-help organizations; 2) women with disabilities; 3) early detection, early intervention and education; 4) training and employment; 5) access to built environments and public transport; 6) access to information and communications; and 7) poverty alleviation.

## **4. Multinational Corporations: Showcasing Good Practice**

Chairperson: *Anne Knowles, Senior Specialist in Employers' Activities, ILO*

This panel involved presentations by three multinational companies that demonstrated good practice examples of businesses employing or addressing the employment needs people with disabilities. The first panellist presented an overview of IBM's inclusion policy for people with disabilities through its work in the Asia-Pacific region; the second panellist outlined the policies and procedures for people with disabilities currently being developed at Nike Inc. and the third panellist presented the work that Westpac is doing to champion the cause for people with disabilities.

### **4.1 Inclusion of People with a Disability at IBM Asia-Pacific**

*Ms Robbin Suess, Vice President, Human Resources, IBM Asia-Pacific*

Employing people with disabilities has been a business imperative for IBM, explained Ms Suess. Accessing a previously untapped resource provided the corporation with an invaluable skill pool and labour force and proved wise for product growth and development. People with disabilities are leading consumers of new technology, particularly concerning accessibility, which is a major growth area for IBM. Ms Suess cited research that indicates that people with disabilities stay in their jobs 25 per cent longer than non-disabled counterparts. Employing people with disabilities also ensures that IBM's workforce reflects its community and clients, enabling it to be socially responsible and more responsive to its customer base, she said.

After summarizing the history of IBM's global strategy for inclusion of people with disabilities, which was initiated in 1914, Ms Suess highlighted current practices: In 2000, IBM launched the first Global Leadership Conference. It involved eight task forces, made up of different constituent groups including people with disabilities, who were consulted about the barriers to employment and growth of opportunity at IBM. She explained that the conference proved to be a significant moment for IBM in understanding the real barriers for different groups – including those with disabilities – to succeeding in employment. The 2004 conference involved 120 people from 20 countries, with key objectives focused on the three "A's" within the IBM Global Strategy for people with disabilities: attitude, accommodation and accessibility.

Nine Accessibility Centres, including one in Australia and one in Japan, enables IBM to develop new ways in helping people with disabilities become more successful at IBM, or in any workplace, through the application of accessible technology. In 2001, IBM introduced the Global Building Accessibility Checklist to ensure that IBM workplaces were accessible for all of its 300,000 employees, particularly in terms of mobility. This resulted in IBM establishing a worldwide set of guidelines and a team to check that all locations were compliant in reaching the minimum standards. Ms Suess acknowledged that this had been a challenge, particularly in countries such as China and India where government standards were significantly lower and costs greater. IBM had currently spent US\$5.3 million on making such changes. (website: [www.ibm.com/ability](http://www.ibm.com/ability))

Ms Suess explained that some IBM managers are reluctant to spend money for accessibility from their budget lines. In order to alleviate this disincentive, IBM allocated

resources at the senior management level, thus assuring necessary accessibility for employees with disabilities.

Another good practice Ms Sues highlighted is the Disability Executive Task Force, which is a global task force that devises strategies to attract and retain a diverse workforce who have the key skills to achieve IBM's marketplace goals. Its mission is to create a culture that attracts, retains and promotes talented and dedicated employees with a disability. Ms Sues also talked about IBM's regional Diversity Councils whose members play key leadership roles in raising employee awareness, increasing management sensitivity about employees with disabilities, and encouraging the effective utilization of IBM's diverse workforce. Lastly, she explained that the regional People with a Disability Networking Group has enabled IBM employees to work together by helping their members become more effective in the workplace.

Ms Sues then described three specific projects developed by IBM in the Asia-Pacific region to address some of the barriers to succeeding in a job that people with disabilities face:

**1. IBM Australia: Video remote interpreting**

IBM Australia and the Deaf Society of New South Wales partnered in 2004 to help IBM employees who had a problem in communication accessibility. Employees were unable to access sign interpreters "on demand" and it was restricting their productivity. The partnership developed a solution by using video conferencing technology to enable deaf employees to access sign interpreters whenever they needed them. This reduced opportunity costs accrued by the business by not being inclusive and overcame the limitations of telephone relay services. It also enhanced work productivity by reducing the time spent securing local interpreting services and allowed an employee to communicate in his or her preferred language.

**2. IBM Japan: Join project with Nagano University**

Some people with disabilities had been unable to enter the IBM workforce because of transport accessibility problems. To address this issue, IBM Japan and Nagano University took the workplace and technology into the home environment. This resulted in developing "mobile" employees who are able to work as translators from home. Such an employee might work in his or her home environment for six hours a day by having access to appropriate technology, such as using the Internet, to successfully carry out a job. In addition, a key support system was put in place by IBM Japan in conjunction with the employee's family, which included regular contact with the IBM office with bi-monthly meetings facilitated through technology provided by IBM.

**3. IBM Japan: IT camp for students with a disability**

University partnerships are important for IBM in building pools of future employees. IBM Japan launched its first programme for students with disabilities at the Yamato Lab, Japan in July 2004. It involved eight girls with hearing impairments from six different junior high schools and 30 IBM employee volunteers (including four with hearing impairments). Since hearing impairment levels differed from person to person, classes were conducted through the use of sign language and summaries were displayed on PCs and on power-point screens. The students were very keen to chat with each other on their PCs about

what they were learning, and learned new sign language for unfamiliar computer terms, such as “hard disk” and “install”. The aim of the programme was to give them an experience unobtainable at school.

Ms Suess concluded her presentation with a short IBM video entitled “Help Wanted” that is being used internally as a tool for senior and general managers to increase their awareness and understanding of the positive benefits of employing people with disabilities.

## **4.2 Uncovered Information**

*Mr Brett Bjorkman, Environment, Safety and Health Manger for Asia, Nike Inc.*

*Ms Samornrat Vatanatham, Ph.D., Executive Director, Bangkok Rubber Public Company Limited, Nike Subcontractor*

In preparing his presentation, Mr Bjorkman explained that he gradually “uncovered” Nike’s strategy policy on people with disabilities and the different approaches implemented internally. While Nike’s intentions were good, he acknowledged there was more to be done in developing and communicating a policy.

Mr Bjorkman collected most of the information by consulting with Nike’s US Human Resources Department and by referring to Nike’s Disability and Employment Policy and the US Nike Employee Handbook. Nike’s global policy, he discovered, was not as comprehensive as its US approach. In the US Nike complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act, but in Asia, where Nike has 15 liaison offices employing over 1,000 employees, Nike adheres to national laws, regulations and codes. Nike also has 500 contracted factories in Asia manufacturing Nike products that collectively employ more than 500,000 employees. These factories are held accountable to Nike’s Non-Discrimination Standard and many factories have examples of good practice relating to hiring people with disabilities.

Mr Bjorkman emphasized Nike’s commitment to people with disabilities, including sponsoring a range of activities and events for people with disabilities, such as the Paralympics and Special Olympics.

### **Nike’s brand mission statement**

Nike’s mission statement reflects an active commitment to diversity by continuously striving to meet and exceed its own expectations and values, as expressed in the mission statement:

To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete\* in the world.

*\* “If you have a body, you are an athlete.”*

Although there is an awareness of issues concerning people with disabilities, there is also a lack of understanding and acceptance of what inclusion really means internally within the corporation, reported Mr Bjorkman. Nike’s brand mission statement is reinforced by its marketing and advertising campaign and its advertising teams. Nike takes a strong stand on diversity issues, but he concluded the issue of disability may not be specifically addressed through these efforts.

Mr Bjorkman then outlined the main activities of the Nike Disabled Employee & Friends Network (DEN) that is part of Nike's Employee Diversity Network. In working to communicate the ideals and achievements of people with disabilities internally and externally, the people within the network put together awareness-training and educational forums. They actively participate on business boards addressing disability and diversity issues, and members work in collaboration with US-based agencies dealing with vocational rehabilitation. The DEN also facilitates involvement in community-based activities by encouraging Nike to sponsor a series of sporting events for persons with disabilities during National Disability and Awareness Month.

### **Nike workforce**

Statistics indicate that 20 per cent of Americans have a disability, which could mean, Mr Bjorkman said, that potentially between 2,000 and 2,500 employees of Nike's 12,600 US workforce could have some kind of disability. However, Nike does not have any process in place to track the number of employees or applicants with disabilities, an issue, he noted, that may require consideration.

He added that Nike was beginning to realize the influence of its sponsorship of athletes with disabilities and marketing to people with disabilities. In the US, as many as 54 million Americans live with disabilities and consumers with disabilities are typically very loyal to companies with products that work for and speak to them. He acknowledged that people with disabilities represent an untapped workforce and consumer base that needs addressing.

### **Future goals**

Mr Bjorkman described how the DEN had been in talks with Nike's new president and raised the case about the untapped market and labour potential of including people with disabilities in Nike's workforce. It was also exploring how Nike senior management could assist the DEN in creating measurable changes in Nike's workforce, workplace and marketplace.

He outlined the DEN's future goals, which included encouraging Nike to increase its sponsorship of athletes with disabilities and including more of those athletes in advertising campaigns. He noted that the DEN wants to see more products being developed and marketed to people with disabilities and examples of good practice benchmarked against other companies. The DEN also hoped to increase its membership and see an increase in awareness and participation of educational forums by Nike employees.

Mr Bjorkman concluded by emphasizing that Nike has a integrated and defined strategy for hiring people with disabilities in the US. In Asia, however, it needed to establish clearer policies and procedures and shift from awareness building to measurable change.

Ms Vatanatham of Bangkok Rubber Public Company spoke next. Aware of time constraints in the session, she did not deliver her full presentation and focused on one example concerning an employee with a disability in her company:

We have 43,000 employees in our company, many of whom have disabilities. We are very happy with these employees. They are very loyal and hard-working. I talked to one employee who cannot walk. Although he has worked for the company for three years and has never been to school, he can read and write. When I suggested that I could make him supervisor if he had some training, he was shocked, because he had never thought that he could be anything more than an ordinary member of the workforce. The following day he enrolled in an adult education course, knowing that within two years he could be a supervisor, and saying that now he wanted to really concentrate on his education.

### **4.3 Westpac championing the cause for people with a disability**

*Ms Niki Kesoglou, Head of Diversity, People & Performance, Westpac*

Ms Kesoglou began by describing Jane, a Westpac employee (see box below) with disabilities. She explained how the culture and mindset of the Westpac workforce was the key to enabling someone like Jane to reach her full potential as an employee.

Jane has been in a wheelchair since she was 10 years old, having fallen out of a tree and severing her spinal cord. Today, Jane is a highly valued member of Westpac's human resources team, and has worked for Westpac for more than eight years. She is also a Paralympian who has won two silver medals in Sydney and Athens. Jane is one of almost 4 million people in Australia who have some kind of disability and one of Westpac's 25,000 employees.

She then outlined four main priorities adopted by Westpac to successfully recruit and retain employees like Jane, by providing the right infrastructure, support and a culture that embraced diversity:

#### **1. Commitment to community and corporate responsibility**

Westpac's commitment to corporate responsibility began ten years ago when it decided to focus on communities after perceiving that the public's negative image of profiteering banks was bad for business. Westpac recognized that its employees, all over Australia and New Zealand, are an integral part of its communities, uniquely placed to understand local issues. Led from the top, its corporate responsibility policy includes the following:

- All Westpac employees have one day's leave to volunteer in the community, which totals more than 200,000 hours every year.
- Westpac established a gifts programme, matching every dollar raised for charity by employees. Over eight years more than AUS\$9.3 million was donated to 800 charities around Australia.

Ms Kesoglou said that this policy has made a huge difference to the morale and pride of the Westpac workforce, impacting employee commitment and productivity. Westpac strongly believes that engaged and committed workers lead to satisfied customers, which in turn leads to better shareholder returns.

## **2. Creating a culture that embraces diversity**

Westpac's diversity policy originally was compliance-driven and steered by the human resources team focusing on meeting legislative standards in relation to gender equity and employing indigenous Australians and people with disabilities. Recognizing the need for sustainability, Westpac now sees that diversity is a business imperative and has changed its focus to business outcomes that have positively impacted its commitment to employ people with disabilities.

## **3. Supporting our own people**

Of Westpac's 25,000 employees, 5 per cent have a disability and more than 16 per cent care for a family member with an illness or disability. Westpac has established the following strategies to address this reality:

- Flexible work options to attract different groups of people (e.g., women and people with caring responsibilities); a range of time-off provisions (e.g., carers' leave); information on eldercare to help raise awareness of support options.
- Ongoing assessments of Westpac's success as an employer, including annual employee surveys to see whether the right employee support.
- Investment in technology and infrastructure to create the right working environment for all employees (e.g., addressing accessibility issues).
- Ensuring policies and practices embed the diversity agenda through clear aims and objectives.
- Annual disability awareness training for all employees.
- A leadership model that reinforces the importance of diversity as a key aspect of Westpac's values.

## **4. Disability discrimination action plans**

Westpac wrote its first Disability Discrimination Action Plan in 1995, with further plans being written in consultation with external bodies, such as Disability Works Australia, the Royal Society for the Blind, and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Its fourth Disability Discrimination Action Plan covers:

- Enhancing disability awareness among employees
- Increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- Improving access to Westpac's website and Internet banking services
- Improving access to telephone banking services
- Utilizing new technology to enhance access to self service facilities
- Ensuring all premises are fully accessible
- Marketing products and services.

Ms Kesoglou described various Westpac achievements resulting from their inclusion policy for people with disabilities. Westpac uses disability recruitment specialists to work with job placement agencies and human resource managers to assist with workplace assessments and modifications and incorporates disability awareness into selection skills training. Westpac installed Internet banking kiosks designed for wheelchair access in branches around Australia and audio ATMs have been piloted and installed for use by people with visual impairments. Westpac regularly reviews its complaint-logging systems with monthly reports on data relating to disability and upgraded its Internet pages to meet Australian Banking Association Industry Standards and World Wide Web standards.

Westpac audits its technology and branches to achieve compliance with the Building Code of Australia for those with disabilities.

In concluding, Ms Kesoglou noted that Westpac's policy for including people with disabilities entails four goals:

- Caring about corporate responsibility
- Building the right culture
- Taking care of your own people
- Acting specifically on disability

She emphasized that although Westpac is pleased with its success and believes that this approach has given it a competitive edge in the market, Westpac recognizes that it is an area requiring ongoing development and innovation.

#### **4.4 Open discussion**

Referring to Mr Bagshaw's statement that business requires three components: people, money and materials, Mr Pecharat Techavachara, President, Foundation for the Employment Promotion of the Blind, said that technology is also very important. Without access to the right technology, blind people cannot work competitively. But technology, he emphasized, requires a considerable amount of investment from multinationals and governments.

Mr Goat See Godfrey Oi, Deputy Executive, Malaysian Association for the Blind, commented that many agencies offering job placement services are poorly equipped, staffed and skilled. He suggested that research into developing appropriate job placement systems could be useful. As an example, he commented that blind people who are trained to become good speakers can in turn become trainers themselves.

Ms Anne Knowles then commented that NGOs can be a useful bridge between people with disabilities and multinationals.

Mr Monthian Buntan, President, Thailand Association of the Blind, then asked the panel whether making a significant investment in hiring people with disabilities was of real economic benefit or more of a social approach.

Ms Kesoglou responded that at Westpac it was a key economic imperative to develop products and services for those with disabilities. She cited the example of Westpac's audio ATM: after working with the Royal Society for the Blind to test the product, the association had marketed Westpac's new service to their own members and increased the number of Westpac customers.

Ms Suess said that IBM had found that by meeting specific legislation in the US for those with disabilities, it was in a better position to compete for government business tenders as compared to those who did not meet this legislation.

Mr Bjorkman commented that Nike's sponsorship of activities involving people with disabilities had led to more people with disabilities buying Nike products.



Ms Debra Perry referred participants to the following resource material, although she emphasized the difficulties of quantifying a dollar-for-dollar analysis:

- Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARNWORKS), US: [www.earnworks.com/Private\\_Employers/priv\\_businesscase.htm](http://www.earnworks.com/Private_Employers/priv_businesscase.htm)
- *Unlocking the Evidence: The New Disability Business Case*, Employers Forum on Disability, UK: [www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/index.htm](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/index.htm)

Ms Perry also described research done by Dupont, a multinational chemical corporation, which had tracked their disabled workers from 1950 to 1990, finding that their workers with disabilities were equal or better than their non-disabled peers in issues of performance, safety and attendance.

## **5. Win/Win Partnership Panel: Business and the Disability Community Working Together**

Chairperson: *Anne Knowles, Senior Specialist in Employers' Activities, ILO*

The panel featured examples of different partnerships among multinationals, NGOs, government agencies and disability groups and highlighted the issues, benefits and outcomes of such alliances. The panellists included representatives from the JW Marriott in Hong Kong, CJ Telenix in Korea and the Employers Federation of Ceylon and MAS Intimates in Sri Lanka as well as their respective government and NGO partners.

### **5.1 Spirit to Serve Our Communities**

#### **JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong and Hong Chi Association**

*Ms Sandra Ng, Director of Human Resources, JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong*

*Ms Nora Wong, General Secretary, Hong Chi Association*

Ms Ng began by explaining that the JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong has a corporate philosophy called "Spirit to Serve", which aims to make a difference to people's lives, whether involving customers, business partners, associates or neighbours. It has developed a strong community outreach programme called "Spirit to Serve our Communities", in partnership with a local NGO, the Hong Chi Association.

The JW Marriott/Hong Chi partnership started in May 2001, at a time when the Hong Kong job market was shifting from manufacturing to service industries. Ms Wong became aware that Hong Chi's vocational training programmes were no longer yielding jobs for graduating students. To confront the challenge, Hong Chi wanted help in retraining their trainees for jobs in the service industry. The ILO suggested that she contact the JW Marriott Hotel because of its corporate history working with disabled persons. Ms Wong received an immediate and enthusiastic reply from JW Marriott.

The JW Marriott Hotel had been looking for a new community partner at the time of Ms Wong's call. After a consultation period, which had included visiting the Hong Chi Pine Village to see the range of activities it provided, Ms Ng decided that the two organizations were a match. In addition to training Hong Chi's trainers, the JW Marriott Hotel constructed two replica hotel rooms at Hong Chi. The hotel was being renovated at that time and the JW Marriott Hotel was able to persuade their construction company to do the construction at Hong Chi for free. Trainers from the Hong Chi centre were sent to the JW Marriott Hotel to work with its staff to learn housekeeping skills and to develop an appropriate training curriculum.

Hong Chi opened its new training centre in March 2002 and training began. After completing the course, students went to the JW Marriott Hotel to receive paid on-the-job training and, on attaining certain standards, were then employed by the hotel. To help students integrate fully into the workplace, parents were also invited to the hotel to see the working environment and meet peers and supervisors so that they would better understand and appreciate the scheme.

Ms Ng said that the subsequent success of the scheme led the JW Marriott Hotel and Hong Chi Association to consider ways to collaborate further, in particular in developing more employment opportunities for the students from Hong Chi. They realized the

potential lay in both direct and indirect employment ventures. Ms Ng presented the partnership to the Hong Kong Hotel Association, hoping that some of the other 60 hotels in the city might be interested in the scheme. It resulted in two sister hotels and three others hiring trainees from Hong Chi.

Ms Wong outlined other examples of their joint ventures: The JW Marriott Hotel donated baking ovens and provided appropriate training to Hong Chi trainers so that bakery courses were added to the curricula, enabling Hong Chi staff and students to produce high-quality bakery goods for the JW Marriott Hotel as well as other hotels. Marriott also commissioned orders from Hong Chi's sewing workshop including aprons and environmental bags. In addition, a more recent project has included the growing of organic salad vegetables at the Hong Chi Pine Village nursery for sale to the JW Marriott Hotel, which has required the expansion of the nursery because of this increased demand.

Ms Ng also noted that the JW Marriott Hotel has provided a horticultural designer to develop a multi-sensory garden for one of Hong Chi's rehabilitation service units. Money for the project was donated by one of the Marriott Hotel's suppliers who was impressed with the partnership's achievements and wanted to participate.

Ms Ng outlined the partnership benefits for the JW Marriott Hotel and how they helped define the hotel's role in working in the community. Although it could not contribute large resources, Marriott's leaders realized that they could offer a wide range of expertise and knowledge of great value to helping others develop their potential. In turn, it enhanced customer loyalty; Ms Ng recounted how one customer said the partnership actually resulted in his decision to stay at the JW Marriott Hotel over its competitors. She also noted the increased morale and pride within the corporation, as a result of the partnership. With the current stronger economy, the Hong Chi Association is providing an excellent resource for recruiting reliable, skilled and committed staff. Finally, the Hong Chi Association is now one of the JW Marriott Hotel's business partners, becoming a supplier of several products, including aprons, bags, welcome cards and salad vegetables.

The benefits for the Hong Chi Association, explained Ms Wong, include revisions to the vocational training curriculum based on labour market needs and retraining of vocational trainers in new fields, thus enabling them to retain their jobs. The partnership also opened many additional business opportunities by providing training for new and existing products – such as high-quality bakery goods, cards and sewing goods. In addition, working for a recognized and established corporation such as the JW Marriott Hotel has boosted trainees' self-confidence and ability to integrate into the job market.

Ms Ng attributed the partnerships' success to establishing a clear understanding of the partner NGO's needs and to identifying its own resources and expertise. She emphasized the importance of both partners being involved in brainstorming ideas, identifying opportunities and acting on them and maintaining effective communication. She also said that it was vital to involve the corporation's associates, business partners and their employees in the process, explaining that publicizing the Spirit to Serve Our Communities activity had ensured that other organizations, such as their suppliers, also got involved. She concluded by commenting that the integration of staff from the JW Marriott Hotel and Hong Chi students and staff through social events was also of great benefit.

Ms Wong identified the lessons learned by the Hong Chi Association as the importance of being honest in the partnership, particularly when addressing concerns or difficulties and the need for good communication at all levels between the two organizations. She emphasized that the strong level of trust between the Hong Chi Association and JW Marriott Hotel that developed has led to a healthy exchange of ideas.

## **5.2 CJ Telenix and Korea Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled**

*Mr Jung Gyu An, President, CJ Telenix*

CJ Telenix is a major Korean multinational corporation whose activities include food and food services, home shopping and logistics, media and entertainment and pharmaceutical products. CJ Telenix launched its Home Shopping Channel in Korea in 1995, where it has 9 million customers. In 2004, it launched a counterpart that already has 1 million customers and aims, as Mr An explained, to be the most influential on-line distributor in Asia by 2010.

He said to fulfil its social obligations, CJ Telenix decided to hire workers with disabilities as counsellors for their telemarketing section. CJ Telenix realized that there were many unqualified workers with disabilities who, with the right resources and technology, could work as full members of society at CJ Telenix. However, it was equally aware that the corporation did not have the skills or knowledge to hire and retain workers with disabilities. CJ Telenix sought help from the Korean Employment Promotion Agency for the Disabled (KEPAD).

With KEPAD's assistance, the corporation identified obstacles to hiring disabled workers: recruitment, training, identifying special needs of disabled workers and providing a suitable workplace and infrastructure for them.

To overcome these obstacles, CJ Telenix formed a cross-functional team from within the corporation, including staff from its human resources, IT, operations and general administration departments. Solutions were developed and implemented in partnership with KEPAD to recruit and train workers with disabilities and with its sister IT company, CJ Systems, to develop the right technology.

In recruiting people with disabilities, CJ Telenix and KEPAD decided to prioritize those with severe disabilities, representing a wide age range and seeking gender balance. To attract highly-qualified applicants, the corporation offered a special employment package that included flexible work hours and a 30 per cent higher salary than for regular tele-counsellors. They recruited through a mixture of application screening and individual and group interviews. Applicants had to take aptitude, job simulation and vocal tests.

CJ Telenix introduced several measures to assure that disabled workers could perform as proficiently as their non-disabled peers. KEPAD developed a high-quality training programme, which was followed by on-the-job training twice a month. Because disabled counsellors would work from home, the corporation assigned one supervisor to ten counsellors (in place of one supervisor per 20 counsellors) and an additional general

manager for this team. CJ Telenix also provided the necessary equipment to ensure optimal working conditions for the disabled counsellors, including computers, faxes and auxiliary devices.

As a result of this partnership, the percentage of employees with disabilities at CJ Telenix jumped from 0.15 per cent to 4.26 per cent. Where CJ Telenix had previously paid yearly fines for being below its government-allocated quota for disabled employees, it now receives subsidies for more than doubling its quota requirement. Its public image also has improved considerably by fulfilling these social obligations.

*Ms Eona Kim, Senior Researcher, KEPAD*

KEPAD is a government agency under the control of the Ministry of Labour that promotes employment for people with disabilities. Ms Kim commented that the positive attitude of Mr An, CEO of CJ Telenix, was key to the success of its disability initiative in deciding to employ people with disabilities and developing an appropriate working environment for them. She underscored CJ Telenix's unique case by noting that many companies in Korea prefer to ignore the quota system and pay a levy to the government rather than take the initiative to hire people with disabilities.

Ms Kim outlined how KEPAD has worked in partnership to support CJ Telenix. Initially KEPAD provided analysis about which roles might be suitable for employing people with disabilities, and the necessary changes required to attract and retain workers, such as flexible working hours. KEPAD also assisted with recruitment through media advertising, attracting 328 applicants, and by screening applicants. As a result, 57 people were hired. Working with CJ Telenix, KEPAD then developed a specific training curriculum, delivered by a specialized telemarketing instructor. It also provided a financial grant of \$30,000 to purchase the necessary equipment to make the changes to the workplace. Finally, KEPAD provided a follow-up support service for CJ Telenix and its new employees to respond to any adjustment issues or needs that arose in the short-term.

### **5.3 Employers' Federation of Ceylon, Motivation Charitable Trust and MAS Intimates**

*Ms Meghamali Aluwihare, Senior Industrial Relations Advisor, EFC*

The Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC) is the representative employer organization for employment and social issues in Sri Lanka. With a membership of 470 companies that employ more than 400,000 employees, the EFC vision is to promote social harmony through productive employment. Ms Aluwihare explained how an Employers' Network on Disability was set up by the EFC to address the needs and issues of employees with disabilities.

She described how the Employers' Network on Disability originated from an ILO-sponsored study of the Employers' Forum on Disability in the UK. The EFC realized that the Forum could be used as a model in Sri Lanka, with certain changes. As a result, a small steering group established objectives to include links between the business community and disability organizations to facilitate employment and training opportunities for people with disabilities in the private sector. The EFC realized that it needed expert

assistance with disability issues and developed a relationship with the international NGO Motivation Charitable Trust (Motivation) to address this.

Activities that have resulted from the partnership between the two organizations include awareness-raising campaigns for employers and publicity campaigns in the media, the establishment of a database of people with disabilities seeking employment training of disabled persons in job-seeking skills and the sponsoring of vocational training courses by businesses. As a role model to other companies, the EFC employed a visually disabled receptionist. It also has organized two job fairs, assisted by the ILO, that have resulted in 102 workers with disabilities being recruited by EFC member and other companies. The Employers' Network also conducted training for human resources professionals on managing disability in the workplace and produced a CD-Rom on basic sign language interpretation to improve communication with applicants with hearing impairments at interviews. Motivation also provided counselling services for employers and newly recruited disabled employees to facilitate employment opportunities and experiences.

Ms Aluwihare noted that EFC's facilitation of these services was of mutual benefit to businesses and people with disabilities. She identified the main benefits of the Employers' Network on Disability to the EFC members as greater access to an expanded labour market through the recruitment of a new source of skilled workers, a diverse and socially-inclusive workforce, increased staff morale, better team development and an enhanced company profile. Benefits to people with disabilities included increased access to training and employment that had enabled them to integrate into the mainstream workplace and enhanced confidence and economic stability.

*Ms Sharmini Constantinescu, Manager, Employment Placement Program, Motivation Charitable Trust*

Ms Constantinescu explained that Motivation Charitable Trust is an international NGO working to improve the quality of life of those with disabilities. In Sri Lanka, Motivation is implementing a disability support programme on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development. This work was being done in partnership with Rehab Lanka, a local NGO that specializes in providing industrial training for people with disabilities. Noting that Rehab Lanka is staffed by 43 people with disabilities, she described it as an organization for the disabled of the disabled.

She noted that in Sri Lanka that people with disabilities make up an estimated seven per cent of the population, with many unable to work or provide for their families. Disabled persons often live in poverty and social isolation. She explained that to fulfil its corporate and social responsibilities, the multinational corporation MAS Holdings had encouraged one of its suppliers, Slimline Associates, a member of the Employers' Network on Disability with more than 50 factories in Sri Lanka, to participate in "I Can Too", a partnership programme between Motivation and the Employers' Network.

I Can Too's objectives were to enable people with disabilities in local communities to be integrated into the mainstream through gaining employment and thus give them the opportunity to contribute their family's economic stability.

Slimline Associates established a training workshop at Rehab Lanka, specially designed to provide training in skills required for employment in the ever-growing Sri Lankan

garment industry. Vocational training in Sri Lanka for people with disabilities usually focuses on traditional industry and does not equip students to use modern technology required by current businesses. Rehab Lanka designed a market-oriented two-month training programme that cost US\$300 per trainee. This covered an allowance, travel and living expenses, resources, health coverage and trainer's salary.

Candidates who had friends or family in one of the Slimline factories were selected so that on successfully completing the training they could join its workforce. This would mean that they had access to existing support networks through friends or family already employed, which would make them more likely to succeed. She noted that not only did this enable people with disabilities to be more independent and confident, but it also helped the Sri Lankan garment industry adopt and implement equal opportunities policies, promoting diversity in the workplace.

The piloted I Can Too programme was selected from 75 other projects throughout the world as the most sustainable community service project and awarded US\$25,000, which Slimline handed over to Rehab Lanka to use toward the construction of a new hostel facility.

*Ms Shanaaz Preena, Director Human Resources, MAS Intimates*

Ms Preena explained that Slimline Associates is a supplier to MAS Intimates, a division of MAS Holdings, which is a multinational manufacturing corporation. MAS Holdings recognized and embraced the UN Global Compact principles, in particular regarding the elimination of discrimination in employment by fostering a culture of equal opportunities throughout the company. Although this had originated with gender balance and multi-cultural issues, it has now expanded to include people with disabilities.

Ms Preena noted the main benefits of MAS Intimates' involvement in the I Can Too programme and emphasized that MAS Intimates considers people with disabilities to be "differently-abled" rather than disabled. She also referred to Motivation's expertise in providing assistance in recruitment and specialized industrial training.

For MAS Intimates, I Can Too provided an invaluable link to a previously inaccessible labour market – workers with disabilities. These new workers were highly committed, loyal and productive and, as a result, have inspired the rest of the workforce, leading to increased staff morale. As well as strengthening bonds with local communities, MAS Intimates also found that the company profile was enhanced nationally and internationally. The benefits to their employees with disabilities included greater access to training and employment, increased integration in the workplace and enhanced self respect, confidence and economic stability.

The programme benefits, she concluded, have been equally important for Sri Lankan society by raising issues about people with disabilities and challenging entrenched prejudices and presumptions that people with disabilities are a burden to society.

## 5.4 Open discussion

Representing a hotel group with 100 hotels in ten countries throughout Asia with different owners and styles of management, Ms Suchada Saengarun, Human Resources Co-ordinator, Accor Asia, applauded JW Marriott Hotel for its Spirit to Serve programme. She commented that she was keen to take this model back to Accor Asia. Ms Saengarun explained that it was only in preparing for this meeting that she had discovered examples of workers with disabilities within Accor Asia. She gave examples from the Bangkok Novotel, Siam Square, where three workers with disabilities have been in their positions for a good length of time and are recognized as committed and reliable workers. Commenting that Accor Asia's approach to equal opportunities, and in particular those with disabilities, was too general, she emphasized the importance of networking. She invited organizations to e-mail her to explore possible partnerships throughout the Accor Asia region.

Mr CK Mohan, Senior Director of Human Resources Asia, YUM! Restaurants International, asked JW Marriott Hotel and the Hong Chi Association whether it was possible for trainees from the Spirit to Serve programme to be recruited to work in his restaurant industry – such as KFC or Pizza Hut.

Ms Wong replied that some of their trainees were already working in Pizza Hut in Hong Kong, as well as at various McDonald's, but that further opportunities should be explored.

Mr Marcus Hurry, CEO, HSBC, asked the panellists to explain how the process of the development of the different partnerships had been documented. He asked what advice the panel could give on the balance between formal and informal elements of these relationships and how the panel saw these relationships developing in the longer term.

Ms Preena asserted that documentation had been very useful during their partnership. She cited an example that Rehab Lanka had documented in which there had been a 95 per cent conversion rate from the training courses to employment. Mr Hurry said that although documentation could be informative, in a climate of excessive documentation particularly in financial institutions, it was important to strike the right balance. Ms Preena replied that documentation could be shared between the partners to minimize the problem.

Ms Aluwihare cited an example as a result of one of their job fairs that involved people with disabilities being employed by Sri Lankan banks through a recruitment agency. This enabled an employer to employ a person with disabilities on a trial basis, and if successful the worker could then be fully employed by the bank directly.

Ms Ng asserted that there was no documentation from the Spirit to Serve programme, which was symptomatic of the flexible nature of the service industry. But she emphasized that the open communication between the partners had fostered a creative exchange of ideas.

Mr Wim Polman, Rural Development Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), commented that the vast majority of people with disabilities live in



rural areas. He asked all participants, and in particular the multinationals, to consider working in partnership with organizations and workers in more rural areas, suggesting that hotel businesses might be able work with farmers and manufacturing companies with rural textile workers and designers.

Mr Bryan Woodford, CEO and Managing Director, Yooralla Society of Victoria, Australia inquired about what ongoing support needs are provided for employees with disabilities and whether this is met by employers and other employees or local NGOs.

Ms Ng replied that in the first few weeks, the Hong Chi Association sends their trainers to the hotels to support the new employees and after that they have access to a mentor system, made up of other employees.

Ms Kim explained that KEPAD provides follow-up support for the employer if required.

Ms Preena confirmed that Slimline Associates had a three-month support programme in place.

## 6. Roundtable Discussions

Chairperson: *Ms Debra Perry, Senior Specialist on Vocational Rehabilitation, ILO*

Ms Perry explained there would be two roundtable discussions, which would allow participants a chance to discuss in more detail some of the issues raised by the morning's presentations.

### 6.1 Roundtable 1: Stakeholder groups

Ms Perry organized participants into the following three stakeholder groups: 1) multinational companies and employer representatives; 2) NGOs, disabled person's organizations (DPOs) and international organizations; and 3) government agencies. The first two stakeholder groups were divided into smaller groups with nine to twelve participants in each. Thus, a total of five groups, or roundtables, proceeded to discuss:

**What are the obstacles, barriers and challenges in employing disabled workers? What needs to be done about them and by whom?**

Their discussion notes were combined and presented by type of stakeholder group:

***Multinational corporation responses:***

#### **What are the obstacles, barriers and challenges?**

- **The mindset of employer**
  - Companies, particularly those that are sales-oriented, may be nervous about employing people with disabilities in front-line sales jobs, having concerns about customer reactions. They, therefore, tend to place them in a back-office role.
  - Confusion sometimes exists about whether employing people with disabilities is part of a corporation's corporate and social responsibility strategy or a human resources issue.
- **Sourcing skill sets**
  - Companies do not always ensure that people with disabilities are trained and equipped with the appropriate skills to be productive.
- **Infrastructure**
  - Better infrastructure is needed to accommodate employees with disabilities, such as significant investment in health and safety issues.
- **Lack of awareness of existing good practice examples within companies**
  - Success stories and examples of existing good practice in multinational companies need to be shared throughout the corporation, country and region, if not globally.
- **Lack of knowledge of available resources**
  - Companies are unaware of existing training, skills and information resources provided by NGOs, government agencies, schools and institutes.

- **Investment**
  - If costs become a barrier to employing disabled workers, what supports exist to enable the process?

### **What needs to be done? By whom?**

- **Leadership**
  - The CEO needs to be seen to advocate the case for employing people with disabilities. This is the key to changing the mindset of the whole corporation.
- **Skills sets**
  - Companies need to build “pipelines” to education and the NGO sector that can train employees and potential employees with disabilities. All employees, rather than just senior management, should be encouraged to be part of this process.
- **Investment in infrastructure**
  - Commitment toward investment is needed at CEO/senior management levels to ensure that appropriate working conditions are established.

### ***NGOs, DPOs and international organizations responses***

### **What are the obstacles, barriers and challenges?**

- **Employers**
  - There is a significant lack of understanding, knowledge, information and a proactive culture related to the inclusion of people with disabilities among the majority of employers.
  - Many employers are uncertain about the productive possibilities of employing people with disabilities. They also can have preconceived ideas about the ability of people with disabilities.
- **People with disabilities**
  - People with disabilities are unable to succeed in finding employment because they lack skills, information and access to appropriate job vacancies.
- **Lack of knowledge about the work of other organizations**
  - Gaps in the sharing and facilitation of resources, information and skills exist between NGOs, government agencies and employers. More understanding and closer collaboration are needed among the sectors.
- **Resources**
  - It is hard to source and access high-quality workers with disabilities.
  - The costs of addressing infrastructure requirements for employing people with disabilities (e.g., appropriate technology, building manuals and assistive devices) can be excessive and thus prohibitive.

## **What needs to be done? By whom?**

- **Change attitudes to employing people with disabilities**
  - Increase public awareness about employing people with disabilities to ensure that there is a real understanding about the capacity, capabilities and limitations of employing people with disabilities.
  - Develop support schemes for employers and employees to ensure positive employment experiences for both.
- **Improve communication**
  - Ensure that better dialogue exists between NGOs and governments.
- **Education and training**
  - Ensure that NGOS are more market-oriented so that they can advise companies about appropriate and up-to-date approaches to recruitment and training.
- **Accessibility issues**
  - Government agencies and departments can play significant roles in setting guidelines and enforcing legislation.
  - Lobby for increased legislation and ensure the implementation of existing legislation.
  - Facilitate access to disability job fairs and information centres.
- **Develop resources**
  - Develop resources through the establishment of databases and use of the Internet.
  - Develop and increase support schemes, including tax rebates and assistance grants for infrastructure changes.

### ***Government agencies response:***

## **What are the obstacles, barriers and challenges?**

- **Accessibility issues**
  - Working environments often are inaccessible and preclude people with disabilities from working in them.
- **Lack of education and skills**
  - People with disabilities often are unskilled and have been denied access and opportunity to appropriate training and information. They cannot meet the requirements or demands of job vacancies in many companies.
- **Mindsets of employers**
  - Employers as well as society in general make many assumptions about what people with disabilities can achieve.

## **What needs to be done? By whom?**

- **Accessibility issues**
  - Government agencies and departments can play significant roles in setting guidelines and enforcing legislation; for example, designing manuals to guide workplace accessibility.
  - Employers can work to make workplaces more environmentally friendly for people with disabilities.
  
- **Education and training**
  - Governments need to assist in developing and providing suitable educational and vocational training, with a greater emphasis on a more market-oriented approach.
  - Employers can help to provide practical on-the-job experience for people with disabilities.
  - Networking between appropriate organizations also can help place people in the right jobs.
  
- **Attitudes of employers to people with disabilities**
  - Produce and share convincing case studies about successful examples of companies employing people with disabilities.
  - Ensure that high quality education and training methods are adopted to develop skills and capacities of people with disabilities.

## **6.2 Discussion**

In opening the floor for discussion, Ms Perry observed that there seemed to be a general consensus on the issues raised in the roundtable discussion by all the different stakeholders. As a result, common objectives should be addressed by forging new partnerships. It was also emphasized that there is a need for NGOs to take a more market-based approach rather than just a rights-based one. She then asked participants for their comments and responses.

Mr Marcus Hurry, HSBC, questioned where the business case of employing people with disabilities should be placed in corporations – with social responsibility or human resources divisions. A few delegates responded to this question, suggesting that there is a need for greater clarity in outlining where the business case for employing people with disabilities lies.

However, another delegate commented that there is an important role to be played by government in ensuring that the vocational training provided for people with disabilities is appropriate to the fast-moving market. This comment stimulated further discussion, including issues relating to how trainers are equipped with the necessary tools and methods to provide the effective and high-quality training required. One delegate stated that an important means of achieving this was through certificated assessment.

Ms Perry cited several useful examples of the business sector working in partnership with other organizations to develop training programmes and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The first example involved IBM in the 1970s and its “Projects With Industry” initiative. IBM’s knowledge of the employment needs required by the

business sector provided a valuable resource for agencies and organizations in developing appropriate vocational training for people with disabilities. The second project described the partnership between CJ Telenix and KEPAD and involved identifying and developing existing jobs within CJ Telenix specifically for people with disabilities rather than looking to create new jobs. The project included the creating a customized training programme for CJ Telenix's new recruits. (A more detailed discussion of this partnership is presented in the technical presentation in section 5.2.)

### **6.3 Roundtable 2: Mixed stakeholder groups**

In this second roundtable, the participants broke into six groups, with a mixture of stakeholders in each. The groups were asked to consider solutions and ways forward for stakeholders to work together in overcoming the barriers preventing people with disabilities from being employed in the workplace, at both regional and national levels. Specifically, the groups were asked: How can employers, governments, NGOs, DPO's and IO's work in partnership at regional and national levels to bring people with disabilities into the workplace? Their discussion notes were combined into the following common findings:

#### **1. Develop collaborative approaches and networks between stakeholders:**

All the groups commented that networking between stakeholders was a vital component for success. It enabled the effective sharing of information, expertise, examples of best practice and resources that would, in turn, establish greater confidence and trust. The groups shared various ways about how stakeholders could network, for example, developing relationships between NGOs and smaller employers (including cooperatives and the self-employed) to further extend the possibilities of employing people with disabilities in the job market. The partnership between the Employers' Federation of Ceylon and Motivation Charitable Trust in Sri Lanka was cited as a successful model for the region in terms of successful relationships between NGOs and employers.

Specific steps to ensure progress after the MNC Roundtable included:

- A follow-up meeting to be organized in a year's time to assess and review progress of the issues discussed. One group suggested that the ILO and ESCAP should maintain the facilitation of these issues to help take them forward.
- A follow-up meeting to be organized in a year's time to assess and review progress of the issues discussed. One group suggested that the ILO and ESCAP should maintain the facilitation of these issues to help take them forward.
- Setting up some type of coordinating body for the Asia and Pacific region that encompasses the different stakeholder organizations. This unit would then work toward forming a regional employer organization that could develop and implement solutions for employing people with disabilities. Suggestions included a National Employment Committee and a Technical Working Group on Employment.

- All stakeholders present should pilot a partnership with another organization present to start creating a body of research that could demonstrate and publicize the business case of employing people with disabilities.

## **2. Establish tangible aims and objectives**

Several groups suggested that real change could only be achieved after agreeing on common aims and objectives. High-level targets need to be established and monitored regularly. One group suggested engaging the top 30 companies in Thailand and the top 300 companies in Asia as flagship organizations to push these issues forward. Another group proposed that a project-led approach to get agreements on combined goals in different countries might be appropriate for some NGOs. The 2007 Biwako Millennium Framework review was suggested for use as a milestone for any aims and objectives.

Specific steps to ensure progress included:

- The establishment of a coordinating body as a way to develop an appropriate policy framework.

## **3. Raise awareness about employing people with disabilities**

The importance of raising the awareness of issues regarding employing people with disabilities was reinforced. It was suggested that a consistent, unified message should be developed and adopted by all stakeholders to maximize its impact, rather than a variety of unique messages by individual organizations. The role of government in raising the awareness of employing people with disabilities was also highlighted.

Specific suggestions for progress included:

- A follow-up meeting and the establishment of a coordinating body as effective tools for publicizing the business case through success stories, particularly to employers. It was also noted that it would be important to ensure that people with disabilities were properly represented in this group.

## **4. Develop resources for the region**

Another common issue centred on the need for more resources. This would enable greater access to existing models of good practice, case studies and other appropriate material about employers or partnerships working to employ people with disabilities.

Specifics on ways forward included:

- Establishing a database of different stakeholder organizations, detailing the needs of employers and potential employees.
- Organizing job fairs.
- Coordinating a regional “road show” publicizing existing good practice to act as a resource.
- Establishing a one-stop resource centre to provide information for anyone wanting to start schemes or partnerships.

## **5. Develop employment opportunities**

The need for all stakeholders to make individual efforts to develop more employment opportunities for people with disabilities was highlighted. This covered a wide range of efforts: Governments can provide better basic training and co-worker support and can engage each other at a ministerial level in discussing issues regarding employing people with disabilities; employers can build up relationships with relevant organizations to ensure a pipeline or conduit for appropriately trained disabled people in the marketplace; and NGOs can develop better awareness of current trends and shifts in the needs of the marketplace and to provide appropriate and regular advice to employers.

## **6. Improve accessibility devices and infrastructure**

Several groups highlighted the need for policy provisions to be acted on to ensure that accessibility devices and infrastructure are established in the workplace. This requires a joint effort by government, businesses and DPOs.

In closing the session, Ms Perry noted the wide range of suggestions and specific ideas that could be developed after the MNC Roundtable but also could be taken forward in the final session on “Next Steps”.



## **7. Next Steps**

Chairperson: *Mr Jason McKey, Managing Director, Job Placement Ltd., Australia*

The final plenary session provided an opportunity to summarize the issues and ideas that had surfaced throughout the day by an open forum discussion to establish a few focused action points to be developed after the MNC Roundtable.

### **7.1 Panel discussion: What will we do next?**

*Mr Pecharat Techavachara, President, Foundation for Promotion of the Blind*

*Mr CK Mohan, Senior Director of Human Resources Asia, YUM! Restaurants International*

*Ms Mary Ma, Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Health and Welfare and Food Bureau, Hong Kong SAR*

*Ms Deborah Wan Lai You, CEO, New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association*

*Mr Marcus Hurry, CEO, HSBC in Thailand*

Mr McKey introduced the session by commenting that the issues raised during the MNC Roundtable had been stimulating and informative, and participants seemed keen to forge new networks and partnerships. However, he emphasized that the final session needed to explore tangible aims and objectives to take forward to ensure that the momentum of the event was not lost when everyone returned home. He then asked each panellist to summarize what they considered to be the main issues arising from the MNC Roundtable.

Commenting that he was encouraged by the enthusiasm and energy of all the participants, Mr Techavachara hoped it would result in more people with disabilities finding employment. In particular, he urged people to continue networking to find ways to take the issues forward. He also suggested that a CD with all the information from the MNC Roundtable would be useful and that the ILO should organize another such event in the future.

Mr Mohan expressed his surprise at the range of work presented during the MNC Roundtable meeting. Initially, he had been unsure as to how useful he might find it. He said that it had not only galvanized him to forge a partnership with another organization in the next year but had made him aware of the existing work that was taking place within his company. He now recognizes the need to publicize such work internally. He commented on the importance of setting short-term tangible goals, suggesting that a regional coordinating group and a one-stop shop be established to act as a resource for corporations in individual countries.

Ms Ma commented that governments need to establish clear policies for promoting employment for people with disabilities and they should lead by example in employing more people with disabilities. She also suggested that they should increase their level of assistance to NGOs involved in finding jobs for people with disabilities.

Ms You added it is important for NGOs to adopt a more market-oriented approach in providing training for people with disabilities to ensure that the skills developed are responsive to business sector needs. She suggested that NGOs take a proactive approach in networking with multinational corporations and that it would be useful to

conduct individual country workshops, involving businesses, NGOs and government agencies, to discuss and share practices.

Observing the impressive range of resources made available for the event, Mr Hurry commented that his role now would be to persuade his organization to consider the business case for employing people with disabilities. He indicated that a possible way forward would be for HSBC to benchmark its approach against the examples presented at the MNC Roundtable. However, he strongly advocated the importance of multinationals taking a collaborative approach with NGOs and government agencies.

#### **Summary of suggestions by the Next Steps panellists**

- Create a strong network among all stakeholders by developing contacts from the MNC Roundtable and encourage participants to actively collaborate together.
- Disseminate a CD of the MNC Roundtable summary to all participants and publicize the proceedings to other interested and appropriate organizations.
- Coordinate a follow-up meeting to the MNC Roundtable in one year, facilitated by the ILO.
- Establish a regional coordinating group to steer aims and objectives established during the MNC Roundtable.
- Encourage all partners to set tangible and achievable short-term aims and objectives so as to maximize success.
- Establish “one-stop shops” to act as regional resources for multinational corporations to advocate the business case of employing people with disabilities.
- Utilize more effective internal communication systems within multinational companies to publicize existing and future best practice cases.
- Participants should establish at least one partnership in the next year with another stakeholder to ensure that something tangible develops as a result of the MNC Roundtable.
- Government agencies need to set examples for other organizations by employing more people with disabilities.
- Governments need to establish clearer policies and legislation to promote employing people with disabilities.
- NGOs need to take a more market-oriented approach in working with people with disabilities by consulting with multinational corporations.
- Workshops can be conducted at the country level with stakeholders to discuss and share best practices.
- NGOs can take a greater proactive approach in engaging the interest of multinational corporations in the business case.
- Multinational corporations can advocate the business case of employing people with disabilities more effectively inside their walls to encourage an active approach adopted by the whole organization.
- A common approach can be developed in advocating the business case among all stakeholders.
- Establish practical outcomes quickly to ensure that the momentum from the MNC Roundtable is not lost.

## **7.2 Concrete steps forward**

Ms Perry urged all participants to come up with a joint focused plan, suggesting they concentrate on two or three aims and objectives that could be realistically achieved as a result of the MNC Roundtable.

Mr Bryan Woodford, CEO and Managing Director, Yooralla Society of Victoria, suggested that there should be a concrete plan to organize another MNC Roundtable in one year, with participants reporting back on the developments that had taken place. This was agreed by all, with Ms Perry committing to contact all organizations present, particularly the multinational corporations, every three to six months to learn about the progress of activities and developments. She said that she would write up new findings into a brief report to be sent to all organizations.

Mr Woodford then asked Ms Perry about the “mentor programme”, initially described as part of the meeting’s activities. Apologizing that the scheme might not have been as evident as intended because of time constraints, Ms Perry explained that all the multinational corporation representatives had been allocated a disability mentor for the day to answer any of their questions and help them network efficiently. She indicated the possibility of continuing the scheme for multinationals corporations after the MNC Roundtable if individual companies were interested. She suggested that this concept also could be extended to other organizations and networks through the Employment and Poverty Alleviation Task Force and Rehabilitation International (RI).

Mr Joseph Kwok, Vice Chair, Rehabilitation International, expressed his enthusiasm at the suggestion and thanked the ILO for acting as secretariat for the MNC Roundtable. He suggested that it would be good to maintain and develop this network so that it might be possible to involve businesses in a major way in contributing to the Biwako Millennium Framework review in 2007.

Ms Grace Thomas, Human Capital Leader – Asia, PricewaterhouseCoopers, challenged the multinational companies present to bring another partner to the next MNC Roundtable to increase the pool of multinationals.

Ms Anne Knowles, Senior Specialist in Employers’ Activities, ILO, suggested to the multinational corporations that it could be useful to raise the issues arising from the MNC Roundtable with employers’ organizations, as they already have the skills and ability to act as a conduit between the business sector and other partner organizations as well as access employers of smaller firms. In addition, they might be useful in setting up systems to demonstrate best practice on a countrywide level. She emphasized that employers’ organizations have the resources to help multinational corporations find and develop partnerships with appropriate organizations rather than being overwhelmed by the number and diversity of potential partners.

Mr Mark Bagshaw, Centre Manager, IBM Australia/New Zealand Accessibility Centre, expressed his excitement at the development of the MNC Roundtable, commenting that it was probably one of the most innovative events he had been present at in more than 25 years of disability reform. Emphasizing that people with disabilities are now in a position to become full productive members of the community, he urged everyone present to take a major step toward including people with disabilities in the next week before the momentum is lost.

Noting that discussions had highlighted the need for a coordinating group, Mr Bagshaw proposed establishing a network based on existing country models, such as the Employers’ Forum on Disability in the UK and Employers Making a Difference in Australia. He said that such a network would be the first regional network in the world and that it would need to be driven by the multinational corporations, in partnership with

the NGOs and government agencies. He suggested that it could bring together all the information to demonstrate the business case and should aim to establish an Asia-Pacific Disability Employment Action Plan in the next year.



Ms Perry indicated that although she was willing to act as a catalyst in mobilizing those organizations present, the ILO did not have the financial and human resources to facilitate such a network. Emphasizing her belief in, and commitment to, Mr Bagshaw's proposal, she noted from the examples of other networks and the work involved, at least a full-time coordinator would be needed at the start and more staff thereafter. She urged all the multinationals present to commit to the proposal, stressing that its facilitation would need to go far beyond the reaches of the ILO and would need to be driven by employers. She also commented that the commitment would probably require financial contributions, as was typical in other networks. With a general consensus of interest from the majority of multinationals present, she agreed to follow this up through individual communication and suggested that donor or other funding would be required to launch such a network.

**Concrete steps forward, agreed upon by the MNC Roundtable participants**

- Arrange a one-year follow-up meeting facilitated by the ILO.
- Develop a mentoring project between multinationals and partner organizations.
- Facilitate a regional network of interested companies and employer organizations.
- Increase the pool of multinational corporations involved by encouraging companies to bring partner organizations to the next event.

### **7.3 Closing comments**

In her closing comments, Ms Perry encouraged all participants to document information about the Business Case for Employing People with Disabilities on their websites, directing them to the information contained in the *AbilityAsia Resource Manual for Employers*. She also hoped that they would continue, through networking, to form their own working groups and partnerships at country levels. Ms Perry committed to follow up with individual companies and participants to explore the impact of the MNC Roundtable.

	<p><b><u>Background Note</u></b></p> <p><b>Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment</b></p>	
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### **The Issues**

#### ***Business***

In today's global economy, managing diversity is a major factor in a company's efficiency, productivity and overall business success. Many multinational companies and human resource professionals have discovered the potential of people with disabilities to make significant contributions to a diverse and productive workforce and are reaping those benefits. For other companies, however, the recruitment, hiring and retention of disabled workers is not a component of their diversity strategy. Promoting the business case for employing people with disabilities and "unlocking the potential" of disabled persons are two challenges that the upcoming Multinational Corporation (MNC) Roundtable on Disability and Employment will address.

#### ***People with disabilities***

People with disabilities face severe unemployment in the Asia and Pacific region and throughout the world. It is not surprising that they make up a significant proportion of the world's poor, as high as 20 per cent. Yet, they are often excluded from the very experiences – social, educational and vocational – that could lead them out of poverty. More than half the world's disabled people – a total of 370 million – live in the Asia and the Pacific region. Of them, 238 million are of working age. No country can successfully develop when such a large segment – between 5 to 15 per cent of the population by various estimates – are excluded from the social and economic mainstream.

#### ***Meeting overview***

ILO and UN instruments promote the rights of people with disabilities to decent work and full participation in society. Too often, however, the contributions that people with disabilities make and could make to society and the workplace are overlooked. The International Labour Office, in collaboration with United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Employment and Poverty Alleviation Task Force of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Disability-Related Concerns for Asia and the Pacific, is organizing *Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment* in Bangkok, Thailand on 6 July, 2005. The Roundtable will explore the business case for hiring people with disabilities and how to overcome the barriers faced by all stakeholders in matching qualified disabled persons to jobs. It is sponsored by the ILO *AbilityAsia* Disability Programme and UN ESCAP with additional organizational assistance from the ILO's Factory Improvement Project.

## **The Business Case**

The business case basically states that hiring workers with disabilities can positively impact a corporation's bottom line. Here's why...

- People with disabilities make **good, dependable employees**.  
Employers of disabled workers consistently report that, as a group, people with disabilities perform on par or better than their non-disabled peers on measures such as productivity, safety and attendance.
- People with disabilities are more **likely to stay on the job**.  
The costs of job turnover, such as lost productivity and expenses related to recruitment and training, are well known to most employers.
- Hiring people with disabilities **increases workforce morale**.  
Many employers report that teamwork and morale increases when disabled workers become part of the staff.
- People with disabilities are an **untapped resource of skills and talents**.  
In many countries, people with disabilities have skills that businesses need, both technical job skills and transferable problem-solving skills developed in daily life.
- People with disabilities have **insight into an overlooked and multi-billion dollar market segment**.  
That market is disabled persons and their families and friends. The annual disposable income of disabled persons is estimated to be US\$200 billion in the United States, \$50 billion in the United Kingdom and \$25 billion in Canada. Ignoring this market may mean losing not only the disabled consumer but his or her family and friends. As the population ages, so does the incidence of disability. Doesn't it make sense to have employees who are disabled and know first-hand about product and service needs of this customer base?

It is difficult to measure "opportunity costs"; in this case the costs resulting from failing to tap the full range of human resources – a particularly critical issue when some labour markets in the region are facing shortages.

Many countries are beginning to measure the staggering costs of exclusion of disabled persons. These include the costs of workers' compensation systems that lack return-to-work services, maintaining a welfare approach to disability and separate training facilities and workplaces for disabled persons and a loss in taxes and other revenues from those who could work. A World Bank paper estimates that the costs of exclusion based on disability result in a global GDP loss of between US\$1.37 trillion to \$1.94 trillion.<sup>1</sup> These economic costs to society are shared by all, including business.

## **People with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific**

### ***Barriers to employment***

So, why aren't more people with disabilities working or self-employed? The barriers they face in this region are similar to those encountered by disabled persons throughout the world. They include:

- Fears, stereotypes and discrimination at all levels of society
- Lack of policy support to address their rights to full participation in society
- Lack of information about people with disabilities, which can render them "invisible" and forgotten; even when information exists it is often incomplete or inaccurate

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<sup>1</sup> Metts, Robert L., *Disability Issues, Trends and Recommendations for the World Bank*, Social Protection Discussion Paper, No. 0007, World Bank, February, 2000. Available in pdf format on the World Bank Web site, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

- Lack of access to education; for example, it is estimated that only 10 per cent of children with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region have access to primary school
- Lack of access to training, employment and other services that will improve their employability
- Lack of access to assistive devices, technology, support services and information
- Inaccessible buildings, communication and transportation systems
- Psychosocial issues that can arise from years of social exclusion.

### ***Regional policy and UN initiatives***

In the past, people with disabilities were considered objects of charity (the welfare model) or people who were sick or in need of medical interventions (the medical model). The disadvantages resulting from disability were perceived to be the result of the impairment. According to the social model, however, it is the environment that causes the disadvantages and barriers that people with disabilities face in accessing full participation.<sup>2</sup> The social model suggests policy approaches based on human rights, integration, inclusion and anti-discrimination.

The social model of disability is the foundation of a major policy initiative in this region: the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, which implements the second Asia and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003–2012. The BMF was adopted by the members and associate members of ESCAP represented at a high-level intergovernmental meeting in October 2002. The Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Disability-Related Concerns, a regional networking group under the ESCAP secretariat, is charged with promoting the successful implementation of the BMF. The TWG's Employment and Poverty Alleviation Task Force, chaired by the ILO, decided to organize *Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment* as one of its activities.

### **Meeting Information**

#### ***Rationale for the Roundtable***

Clearly, the full participation of people with disabilities in the workplace is a complex issue that requires intervention on many levels. The MNC Roundtable is one possible such intervention. The MNC Roundtable has two major purposes:

1. To start a dialogue among stakeholders in the region, including multinational corporations, on how to stimulate the hiring of people with disabilities from the business case perspective and
2. To identify needs and action steps, regionally nationally, that will contribute to the training and hiring of workers with disabilities.

The rationale for this intervention is based on the following:

- Many companies are committed to diversity, nondiscrimination and equal treatment and opportunity.
- Examples of good practice exist in the region, but have not been disseminated.
- Many companies are not familiar with the opportunities presented by the business case.
- Companies encounter barriers to finding and hiring or retaining qualified disabled workers even when they do want to hire.

<sup>2</sup> To illustrate the shift in thinking, consider a person with a mobility impairment confronted with stairs. According to the medical model, he or she is prevented from negotiating the stairs because of a physical handicap. According to the social model, he or she is disadvantaged not because of a mobility impairment but by an architectural barrier that needs to be fixed. The social model makes it incumbent on society to take action. This shift is critical because it removes the burden of accommodation from the disabled person to the society.

- The task force wanted to engage in a practical activity that could yield high impact regionally and nationally.
- It coincides with a major action identified in the BMF, which calls for greater collaboration among disability stakeholders with employers, trade unions and other social partners “to develop partnerships, policies and mutual understanding and more effective vocational training and employment services that benefit persons with disabilities working in formal, informal and self-employment settings.”

### ***Programme***

The MNC Roundtable will include morning information session and afternoon group discussions. The morning session will include a series of presentations, panels and open forum discussions that will provide an overview of the business case, the situation of people with disabilities and examples of what is being done by companies to train and employ disabled persons. The afternoon session will include two small group discussions. The first will focus on the barriers, needs or concerns of the different stakeholder groups with regard to optimizing employment opportunities for disabled persons. The second group will identify what needs to be done individually and collectively to move forward. Finally, it is anticipated that the MNC Roundtable will set forth overall recommendations. The morning information session is open to anyone who wishes to attend. The afternoon roundtable discussions are for registered participants.

### ***Participants***

The official participants are expected to number about 80 individuals. About 25 persons will come from more than a dozen multinational corporations that have already committed to participate. Most have regional oversight of human resources or a related function. Some of the participating corporations will share good practices; others are coming to learn and explore. The remainder of the participants will be from government offices or NGOs dealing with disability and employment issues, disabled persons’ organizations and UN agencies.

### ***Expected outcomes***

The meeting outcomes are expected to be:

- A higher level of awareness among all participants about the business case
- Identification of specific barriers and needs of the different stakeholders to promote hiring and more effective training of people with disabilities
- Specific suggestions, action steps and recommendations on how to address the barriers and replicate elements of good practice
- Linkages between companies and disability stakeholders that will result in specific partnerships or activities at the regional or national level
- Increased awareness among stakeholders outside the meeting to be achieved through the dissemination of the meeting proceedings, the collection of best practices and targeted publicity efforts.

Basically, the meeting organizers hope that the MC Roundtable is the beginning of strategic partnerships and activities that have long-term impact for all participants.

### ***Follow-up***

The nature of follow-up will depend on the MNC Roundtable recommendations and the individual needs of the participants. For any company interested in developing a country-based or in-house initiative, a disability expert will work with them to help identify resources, expertise and/or national level contacts.



## **For More Information**

### ***About the business case and best practices***

#### Publications:



- *ILO Code of Practice for Managing Disability in the Workplace*  
[www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/disability/policy\\_c.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/disability/policy_c.htm)
- *AbilityAsia: Hiring People with Disabilities – Employer Perspectives*, a video available from the ILO
- *Unlocking Potential: The New Disability Business Case*, contact the ILO or the Employers Forum on Disability (see Web address below)
- *Unlocking the Evidence: The New Disability Business Case*, contact the Employers Forum on Disability (see Web address below)
- *Disability: Dispelling the Myths – How People with Disabilities Can Meet Employer Needs*  
([www.uschamber.com/cwp/publications/reports/hiring.htm](http://www.uschamber.com/cwp/publications/reports/hiring.htm))
- *Moving Forward: Toward Decent Work for People with Disabilities – Examples of Good Practices in Vocational Training and Employment from Asia and the Pacific* (Refer to section on Partnerships in particular)  
[www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/ability/pub/ilopublications.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/ability/pub/ilopublications.htm)

#### Web sites:

- The ILO's disability programme in Asia and the Pacific Region: [www.ilo.org/abilityasia](http://www.ilo.org/abilityasia)
- Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARNWORKS), US:  
[www.earnworks.com/Private\\_Employers/priv\\_businesscase.htm](http://www.earnworks.com/Private_Employers/priv_businesscase.htm)
- Employers Forum on Disability, UK: [www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/index.htm](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/index.htm)

### ***About disability issues in the region***

- ILO: [www.ilo.org/abilityasia](http://www.ilo.org/abilityasia)
- ESCAP: [www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability](http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/disability)
- Asia Pacific Development Centre on Disability: [www.apcdproject.org](http://www.apcdproject.org)
- Disabled Persons' Organizations: [www.dpi.org/en/locations/regions/a\\_region.php](http://www.dpi.org/en/locations/regions/a_region.php)

	<p><b>Unlocking Potential: A Multinational Corporation Roundtable on Disability and Employment</b></p> <p><b>6 July 2005 Participant List</b></p>	
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