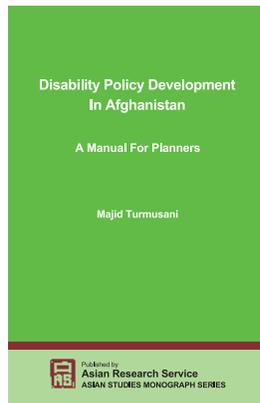

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Disability Policy Development in Afghanistan

by

Majid Turmusani



“This book on disability policy development in Afghanistan is a timely publication of a much needed ‘manual text’, for planning policy and services in the disability sector. This account not only documents and describes the specific processes of disability and development policy but also proposes specific analyses useful for the development of future disability strategy in Afghanistan. This significant contribution is compatible with the on-going debate to formulate an international convention to protect and promote the right of disabled people under the United Nations.”

A. Wardak, Minister of Martyrs and Disabled, Afghanistan

This book comes about as a result of an extensive consultation process involving all disability stakeholders in Afghanistan. The participation of disabled people is commendable and it is at the heart of the work. (ESCAP) to formulate disability and development policies to protect and promote the rights of disabled people.

This account draws directly on the experiences of disabled people and other disability stakeholders in Afghanistan. It is based on a number of focus group discussions and workshops organized under the National Task Force on disability during 2003. The account includes empirical evidence concerning the situation of disabled people in the city of Kabul as presented by Dr. Andrea Micangeli and Dr. Filomena Pietrantonio in Chapter Five on disability and education.

In brief, the subsequent chapters of this book describe and analyze critically various stages of disability policy development from the consultation stage to the final production of the policy document. Together, the chapters constitute a general framework that can be useful for the development of wider sector policy in Afghanistan and possibly in other similar contexts. For example, various chapters provide a list of policy guidelines including recommending the best practices in the field (i.e. hints and tips on disability policy research). This account outlines a number of determinants and conditions for the development of future disability strategy in Afghanistan. It is pertinent also to the on going debate for formulating international convention guidelines to protect and promote the rights of disabled people under the UN.

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Outline of the book

The book is organized into six chapters and the conclusion:

Chapter One analyzes the situation of disability in Afghanistan in terms of existing services, challenges confronting this sector and available assets which could be further exploited. It also highlights discriminatory practices against disabled people and potential opportunities for individual and group empowerment. This chapter briefly discusses approaches to disability and addresses the relationship between disability and war caused poverty such as malnutrition, poor sanitation, man made drought, poor education, and unemployment. The analysis regards political conflict and war as key factors for creating disability and presents stability and peace as environments for true development where disabled people find opportunities for full contribution in rebuilding their society.

Chapter Two gives a theoretical analysis of existing human rights statements in relation to disability and how it relates to Afghanistan. It focuses on the needed shift from a need based approach to a rights based approach as being promoted in various international statements. The importance of cultural specificity/sensitivity in its implementation is stressed. It also discusses in some detail the current efforts to reach universal convention on disability.

Chapter Three gives critical analyses of the process and progress of developing disability policy in Afghanistan as well as the final product of this work as endorsed by the government in late 2003. This chapter analyzes existing levels of coordination and recognizes the pressing need for a coordinated effort in meeting the needs of people with all type of disabilities, especially in rural areas. The chapter concludes by calling for the use of participatory planning in disability projects. Specifically, for the use of disability research methods that contribute to future empowerment of disabled people and enhance their independent living.

Chapter Four presents the analysis drawn from empirical policy research on rehabilitation and employment of disabled people. It includes extensive policy consultations with partners on issues of accessibility and DPOs under the Task Force of disability. These are priority areas which make up the sectoral priority policies for action.

Chapter Five presents a case study on the education of disabled children in Kabul. Empirical data was collected through field work. It highlights the socioeconomic situation of Afghan children, especially those with disabilities and reasons for the low attendance of disabled children in mainstream education. The study analyses current educational provisions and conclude by emphasizing a coordinated governmental effort to provide specialist support for disabled children not only in Kabul but throughout Afghanistan. Special education has to be provided within mainstream education and has to be as inclusive as possible. All stakeholders should play a role in this cooperation.

Chapter Six presents an approach to disability policy planning that is based on the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) model. CBR adopts a development perspective with a strong focus on human rights. There is a shift from needs to rights approach – charity to rights. It is about empowerment, participation, accountability and sustainability. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the potential role of CBR in policy planning as well as in peace building and overall community development.

Conclusion outlines a number of determinants and conditions for the development of future disability strategy in Afghanistan. A general set of policy recommendations are also included.