

The 2013 Philippine Parallel Report on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Voices of the truth from an invisible sector

For the first time in the history of the human rights movement in the Philippines, disabled peoples' organizations (DPOs) have come together to make their voices heard before the United Nations.

The Philippine Coalition on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a civil society alliance representing over 65,000 Filipinos with disabilities from at least nine disability constituencies, presents an evidence-based document on implementation by the State of its commitment to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Filipinos with disabilities.

The 60-page document, a product of three years of data gathering and analysis on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Filipinos with disabilities brings together never-before considered questions and information from a sector which has, for the longest time, remained largely unheard of, unseen, and forgotten.

The Report considers the extent of the impact of the Convention, ratified in 2008, on the lives of Filipinos with disabilities – for those living in urban or rural areas, in conditions ranging from abject poverty to legalized institutionalization, and through the eyes of women, or children, or elderly Filipinos with disabilities. It unflinchingly presents the day-to-day realities of a Filipino with disability as s/he struggles in the home, in the classroom, at the polling place, at the workplace, in the hospital, and even in the courtroom. It publicly discloses for the first time, images of Filipinos with disabilities struggling to survive and live in the streets, in mental institutions, in prisons – facing relentless barriers of environment and attitude, from birth to the point of rape, torture and death; facing blatant discrimination from individuals or organizations; and injustice perpetuated by practice, and even legislation.

The Report speaks plainly and draws numerous examples of denial of *reasonable accommodation*, of squandered opportunities for *progressive realization*, and the *maximum use of available resources*. It describes the lack of awareness that has led to gaps in policy, implementation, financing and monitoring. It clarifies once, and for all, that impairment is *not* equivalent to disability, and that disability is not a tragic destiny of the individual, but a learned pathology by society. Thus, it underscores the need to radically shift the view of disability from that of charity, and of cure / treatment, to one of dignity, diversity and humanity.

Despite the tremendous challenges relating to transparency and availability of gathering of government data, the Coalition asks for the very first time, the question "*how much is the State spending for persons with disabilities?*" The Report proceeds to also describe how many, and

which, of the few Filipinos with disabilities, are able to actually receive benefits from programs or services for health, education, social protection and justice.

This Report speaks the truth on the situation and lives of Filipinos with disabilities, and it is not a pretty picture, or one that the State or the public may want to see, or feel comfortable to accept. Yet, for things to get better, we must see the truth clearly. Frustration, emotion and even anger, will perhaps come through between the lines of this Report, and we do not apologize for it. The words in this Report speak for those who cannot do so, or come forward for themselves, or for those who no longer have breath to speak. We bring these messages of truth boldly and with conviction, for *all of us who have lived lives of quiet suffering and desperation.*

We do however believe unwaveringly, in the hope of how things can be made better. We believe that looking in earnest, through our eyes, at the complex lives of all Filipinos with disabilities, shall help us start the many, many conversations needed to start changing things for the better. We insist that we be part of the process, and that our voices be heard, from now on, and all the time. We claim our place equally with all other Filipino citizens in all aspects of life and community, because our humanity give us the right to do so. And we hold fast to the vision that *all rights for all disabilities* is a journey that we all need to walk together.

We take the first step with this Parallel Report.

Listen to us, see through our eyes, and give us space beside you.

Philippine Coalition on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Alyansa ng may Kapansanang Pinoy

Autism Society Philippines

CALL Foundation of the Blind

Deafblind Support Philippines

Government Union for the Integration of Differently-Abled Employees

Katipunan ng mga Maykapansanan sa Pilipinas

Las Pinas Persons with Disability Federation

Leonard Cheshire Disability Philippines

Life Haven

National Organization for Visually Impaired Empowered Ladies

New Voids Association

Nova Foundation

Parents Association of Visually Impaired Children

Philippine Alliance for Persons with Chronic Illness

Philippine Association for Children With Developmental and Learning Disabilities

Philippine Chamber for Massage Industry for Visually Impaired

Philippine Deaf Resource Center

Philippine Federation of the Deaf

Punlaka

Quezon City Federation of Persons With Disabilities

Tahanang Walang Hagdanan

Women with Disabilities Leap To Social and Economic Progress