

**For consideration of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
Inputs on Art. 19, the right to live independently, and be included in the community**

*A Submission from the
Philippine Coalition on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
4 August 2014*

Among the first and greatest barriers that a Filipino with a disability has to overcome in order to be able to live independently, and be included in the community, are those imposed by her own family, and the very values of the culture and society that she has been brought up in.

The Philippine government lacks a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of Art. 19 which should provide for diverse needs such as personal assistance, accessible public transportation, training to ensure efficient delivery of services to persons with disabilities, and many others. Gaps however, arise from the formulation of non CRPD-compliant legislation, as well as inadequate programs and services particularly on the rights of equal recognition before the law, liberty, personal mobility, and liberty of movement. These are rooted in very limited, or even absent opportunities for education, health, employment, social protection and rehabilitation. This is the reality in the context of developing nations like the Philippines where most persons with disabilities reside in remote and rural communities. To avail of basic rights-based services like education and employment, one frequently has to escape from her rural setting to an urban area.

However, what the Coalition would like to highlight in this submission are the unique challenges faced by a Southeast Asian nation such as the Philippines. This Eastern context has to do with the cultural and societal mores experienced by all Filipinos, including Filipinos with disabilities. It leads to dilemmas in the person with a disability, as well as his/her family, and frequently presents a set of barriers that prevent her from fully realizing her right to live independently and be included in the community.

All throughout growing up, a Filipino is molded into carrying values which revolve around the authoritarian nature of the nuclear, as well as the extended family. Major life choices and decisions such as education, career planning, marriage, place of residence, rearing of children, and others, may be strongly influenced, or even dictated by elders in the family.

Furthermore, the values of conformity and harmony are ingrained in Filipinos from the early years of life, in school, and all throughout adulthood. Conformity is exacted toward family, peers, and authorities. Thus, a strong self-esteem frequently gives way to a submissive or even passive acceptance of the demands and preferences of family elders, all deemed as part of obedience, and the natural state of affairs. One dare not disobey or diverge from what its family decides for her. Assertiveness is not inculcated or desired in general, since the identity of the individual is in the context of family, and not the authentic self.

Even more pronounced are these pressures for Filipino women, and further, Filipino women with disabilities¹. Postcolonial and predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines is characterized by a deeply rooted patriarchy. This is evident in women and girls with disabilities who have much less opportunity and encouragement for education and employment, in comparison with men and boys in general, and even with those with disabilities². The decisions to date, marry and have children are frequently discouraged, or even denied, by family. Her loyalty is to the nuclear family she was born into, and at the point of marriage, is then transferred to her spouse.

In the few instances when persons with disabilities who are able to release themselves from this virtual bondage and then succeed in acquiring a good level of employment and livelihood, he then would find his family obliging him to

1 2013 Parallel Report on the Implementation of the CRPD in the Philippines. Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD.
<http://www.crpddparallelreport.net.ph/>

2 Tabuga, A. & C. Mina. 2011. Disability and gender: The case of the Philippines. Philippine Institute for Development Studies. Discussion Paper Series No. 2011-32. https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db_name=IAFFE2011&paper_id=235

still support the rest of the entire clan. The authoritarian rule of the elders catches up with him and he loses his independence all over again.

Unmarried children, most especially daughters, are expected to live with their parents, and are expected to provide full care and support as part of their filial responsibility. Frequently, it is also deemed a source of shame, and loss of face, to have nonmembers of the family (e.g., a personal assistant) to take care of a member who has a disability, including the elderly. Such a practice is taken as a sign of neglect or lack of concern to have to go beyond the family to provide care for a member who has a disability.

Such complex and interacting cultural and societal pressures, and deeply ingrained values are intensely personal barriers that negate even the most ideal programs and services provided by government. Such barriers characteristic of Eastern societies and cultures must be recognized and understood if the State aims to have social services that are effective, relevant and CRPD-compliant. These must also address the multiple pressures experienced by women with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct research and document the cultural and societal values and mores that prevent Filipinos with disabilities from fully availing of government programs and services; consequently formulate programs and services which take these into consideration;
2. Study and cost *unpaid work* given by carers within the family and formulate schemes where these can be tapped as sources of employment for personal assistance.

The *Philippine Coalition on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* was initially organized in 2010 and formally constituted in February 2011. The core group is currently comprised of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and nongovernment organizations (NGOs), covering nine disability constituencies, and several national federations. The Coalition as a whole represents over 65,000 Filipinos with disabilities.

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

Alyansa ng may Kapansanang Pinoy
Antipolo Multi-Sectoral Organization
Autism Society Philippines
CALL Foundation of the Blind
Calamba PWD Federation
Deafblind Support Philippines
Government Union for the Integration of Differently-Abled Employees
Katipunan ng mga Maykapansanan sa Pilipinas - National Capital Region
Las Piñas Persons with Disability Federation
Life Haven
My Refuge
National Organization of Visually Impaired Empowered Ladies
New Vois Association
Philippine Alliance of Persons with Chronic Illness
Philippine Association of Citizens with Developmental and Learning Disabilities
Parents Advocates of Visually Impaired Children
Philippine Blind Union
Philippine Chamber of Massage Industry for Visually Impaired
Philippine Deaf Resource Center / Deaf Resources Philippines
Philippine Federation of the Deaf
Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled
Psoriasis Philippines
Punlaka
Quezon City Federation of Persons with Disabilities
Tahanang Walang Hagdanan
Visually Impaired Brotherhood for Excellent Services
Vision-Impaired and Striving Individuals Optimizing Normalcy Aiming for Resiliency Independence Empowerment
and Spirituality
Women with Disabilities Leap to Social and Economic Progress