



# WORKABILITY ASIA NEWSLETTER

Vol. 29

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## From the Board

### "Celebrating the Human Spirit"

*Dipesh Sutariya,  
Director of **WAsia**, CEO and co-founder **EnAble India**  
and Vice President **DNA(Disability NGOs Alliance)***



The Workability Asia and Workability International conference, in Hong Kong was held on 12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 at The Kerry Hotel. The conference with the theme "Creating a Sustainable Ecosystem for Persons with Disabilities at Work" was a lively, participatory, lovely, memorable experience. My heartfelt congratulations goes out to the Directors of both the organizations. My team at Enable India and DNA(Disability NGOs Alliance) and I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the organizers Hong Kong Joint Council for people with disabilities and the HKCSS, the support team, sponsors, speakers, presenters and all delegates of the conference.

There are many learnings and insights from the conference that we have taken back to India and the work we do. Different employment models and frameworks used by organizations in inclusion and employment of persons with disability. Enhancing accessibility and employment opportunities through different training models, post placement initiatives and livelihood approaches for different categories of disability, specially with intellectual disability and severe disabilities.

In India, similar to other countries, the government and the NGO sector work towards integrated development of persons with disability through multifarious schemes spanning across health, relief, welfare, education, training, rehabilitation, accessibility, barrier free environment, capacity building, employment, self-employment, inclusion, legal rights and dignity of persons with disability. One big takeaway for us is to focus more on parents and communities of intellectual disability and severe disability for holistic development.

I was very happy to present the concept of bringing in Corporate membership to Workability Asia, during the board meeting and the AGM. Workability Asia has 48 member organizations from 13 countries and areas working on preparing the supply, who are people with disability. It is envisaged that in order to complete the cycle it is time to include members from the demand side, who are the employers or corporates. The corporate members and the disability organizations together can work on creating inclusive working environment to create models to enable employment of people with disability across Asia and beyond.

It is a pleasure to be part of the Workability Asia board and bring my 25+ years of experience of working in the corporate sector and also working for the cause for economic independence and dignity for persons with disability in India.

I always feel that working on livelihood for persons with disability is a growing industry and we are setting up benchmarks and best practices. Also, with the digitalisation era, the economic scenario is rapidly changing and we need to keep up with it. This is a challenging task and this can only be achieved with collaborations and am very happy to be part of such a fantastic network of Workability Asia.

## From the Board... cont.

Mahatma Gandhi once Said, "Dreams at first seems impossible, then seem improbable, and finally when we commit ourselves, become inevitable.  
I am committed for the cause of economic independence and dignity for persons with disability.



Enable India delegates presented four papers in the conference. In the Private Sector Initiatives on CSR Policies and Collaboration Model With NGOs, Pooja Rao in collaboration with Rajendra Tripathi from Oracle presented on Using Technology to Reach the Unreached in Rural Parts of India and Santosh Kumar presented on TE Connectivity Collaborative Training for Deaf along with Enable India. In Successful Cases of PwDs Working At Home and Self-Employment, Shivaprasad presented on Placement Cell: A Collaboration Model with NGOs and Enable India and RUDSETIs/RSETIs. Under New Technology to Enable Working Beyond Limit, Priti Lobo in collaboration with Srilakshmi from Allegis Group presented on Livelihood of Visually Impaired.

And Mrs. Sarbani Mallick, Bubbles Center for Autism and Member DNA presented on Towards Workability ..... Using Performing Arts for Individuals with Autism.

It was also a proud moment for us as we were able to sponsor the trip for four Enable India delegates and presenters from our own subsidiary social enterprise Enable India Solutions Pvt. Ltd. Two more Indian delegates were sponsored by the Disability NGOs Alliance, India.

[www.enableindia.org](http://www.enableindia.org)

[www.enableacademy.org](http://www.enableacademy.org)

## **WI/WAsia conference 2017 in Hong Kong**

Jocelyn Cevallos Garcia,  
WAsia Auditor, Executive Vice President / Chief Operations Officer  
of Tahanang Walang Hagdanan, Inc.

The 2017 Hong Kong Conference held in Kerry Hotel Hong Kong from June 12 – 14, 2017, started with a big bang through the Marching Band and Lion Dance performance that thrilled and filled everyone with excitement. The ambiance is so festive that each one was so interested and eager to start the day. Around 429 delegates and guests attended, of which 210 local delegates from Hong Kong and there were 219 international delegates coming from 25 countries/areas; Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, France, India, Japan, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, USA, UK, and Vietnam. 40 persons with disabilities attended the said conference, 4 from Hong Kong and 36 from overseas.

This was the joint annual conference of Workability International and Workability Asia. The Conference had scheduled two-day meetings that included plenary and parallel sessions and a one-day study visit to establishments that provide rehabilitation, training and/or employment to persons with disabilities. The Workability Asia/International commended Ms. Deborah Wan, Chairperson of Organizing Committee for 2017 Hong Kong Conference, for bringing together the participation from different countries including those with less resources through sponsorship.

The theme, “CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT WORK,” has much social significance and creates an ambiance of collaboration between the corporate sector and the advocates on work and employment of persons with disabilities in both the government and non-government sectors alike. With the objective of providing a forum for the member organizations for exchanging information, international trends, strategies and good practices, this greatly enhances the possibilities for persons with disabilities of finding work and decent employment.

The Hong Kong government is taking up its obligation on the UNCRPD seriously, as stated by Mr. Stephen Sui, the Secretary for Labor and Welfare, by promoting an inclusive barrier-free society and providing more opportunities for work and employment for persons with disabilities coupled with local policies and legislations.





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### Hong Kong conference ... cont.



It is heart-warming to note through the message of Mr. Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, the Chief Secretary for Administration of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, of their commitment in building a caring and supportive society by partnering with the business sector, the local communities, government departments and non-government organizations and in promoting employment of persons with disabilities.

Succeeding Mr. Patrick Maher as President of Workability International-

al this 2017, it is with eagerness and positive aspirations to welcome Mr. Jerry Davis in continuing WI's VISION of equity in employment for PWDs everywhere and its MISSION to champion the right to work of any person with a disability. A wider global membership base means we could touch the lives of more PWDs and wider knowledge through our interaction with them. Meeting the needs of the business sector through aligned training and placement strategies increases the chance of PWDs of landing a job or employment.

Some speakers talked about innovative technology that will bring about change on the lives of persons with disabilities especially on employment concerns and they can offer more adaptive technology. Other than by word of mouth, technology has become a key factor in the exchange of information for PWDs. Many times they would request information or assistance to PWDs through the internet. Commonly also, they would relay information or communication through tools using the internet. PWDs seeking for jobs can now use the internet, even through their mobile phones, to look for job opportunities and submit their job applications online. Games and applications (apps) are now used to train and develop the skills and abilities of PWDs. Also, it is now common practice for visually-impaired persons to use text-to-voice applications in the performance of their daily work. Other and more advanced adaptive instruments or devices are being used to assist PWDs in the performance of their work. Undoubtedly, technology has become one of the key factors in the promotion or communication of our advocacies, skills training and development of PWDs.

There were several plenary and parallel sessions on the first and second days. The participants had chosen their fields of interest. The plenary speakers were experts in their fields and one could gain so much knowledge from their expertise and experiences. The topics were very relevant to the theme and as such, the resource speakers were able to share the best practices in their own country.

## Hong Kong conference ... cont.

The Social Enterprise session was a learning experience. The presenters drew the interests of the participants because of the varied and rich experiences of the resource speakers. The research conducted was comprehensive in nature, touching on the different factors that hinder PWDs from acquiring work and employment in the business mainstream, such as social, economic, environmental and physical. Its results showed a need for career development, skills training and preparation of the PWDs in a working environment should be relevant to the labor market in order to match the employers' needs in the business sector. This can all be captured somehow by transition to work program.

There is also a talk about preferential procurement policy, knowledge sharing by the business sector, and character of a good social enterprise such as the presence of double bottom line, this is to balance financial return and social impact. Strategies was also discussed one example is the product re-branding, this is to scale-up positive image and not to be construed as a purchase out of charity.

Interesting to know also from a presenter from the Creative Industry for people with disabilities how they were able to find employment or livelihood projects for PWDs, such as dancers, actors, singers, clowns in the Performing Arts, the marketing of artworks of PWD artists to different companies. The sharing of the best practices done by other member organizations opened wide our perspective on other job opportunities and how to better help the PWDs in our localities in their search for work.



The typhoon signal no. 8 did not prevent the conference to move forward, although some participants were requested to leave early for their safety.

The changeover ceremony of the Workability Asia Secretariat from Japan to Thailand reminds us of the journey of Workability Asia. In the year 2004, we witnessed the establishment of Workability Asia (WAsia) as a regional group of Workability International (WI), starting with 11 member organizations in 7 countries/areas. As of April 2017, it has grown with 41 member organizations in 13 countries and areas (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong/China, India, Japan, Macau/China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand).

In its 13 years of existence, changes in structure and amendments to some rules were approved towards a more sustainable Workability Asia structure and organization. The number of directors was increased from 5 to 7 to provide a more balanced regional representation, with 3 directors from East Asia which has 22 member organizations, 2 directors coming from Southeast Asia with 12 member organizations, and 2 directors coming from South Asia with 11 member organizations.

## Hong Kong conference ... cont.

A major move of WAsia at the Board meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in January 2016 was to move the Secretariat from Japan to Thailand in 2017 to enable other capable member countries to handle the Secretariat. The WAsia Secretariat has been handled since its establishment in 2004 by Japanese member organizations. Mr. Hiroshi Ueno will pass the Secretary General leadership to Ms. Sakulthip Kheeratiphantawong on October 1, 2017, as the Secretariat office will transfer from Kyosaren, Japan to the Workability Thailand office in Bangkok, Thailand.

On the last day of the conference a "Study Tour" was organized on 10 different routes. The delegates had pre-registered their participation on the said tour according to their preference. Each one visited at least 3 to 4 organizations/places during the study tour. At the end of the day, exhausted they may be but each one has its own story to tell. They have seen the different activities of the organizations such as rehabilitation, training, and actual employment of persons with disabilities including their products and services.



In summary the conference comprised of the sharing of actual experiences, building networks and resources at the same time creating friends, advocates and allies globally. The diverse people and culture coming together is already a great experience in itself.

Commendation and congratulatory message was given by the members and officers of Workability Asia and Workability International to Ms. Deborah Wan, and to the Organizing Committee of Hong Kong for the success of the conference.



## Making a Big Leap Forward in a New Era

**Hiroshi Ueno**  
**Secretary General**

WI/WAsia Hong Kong Conference was completed with a great success. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all people concerned in Hong Kong for giving us such excellent conference. Everything was so wonderful such as scientific programs and study tours but their warmest hospitality was before all.

The conference was also the time for me to step down from the office of Secretary. After passing away of Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, the first Secretary of Workability Asia I was appointed at the Annual General Meeting of Workability Asia in 2009 in Manila, Philippines but before this I had involved WI/WAsia movements in Japan.



8 years of my time as Secretary was very challenging. I have given efforts to try to enlarge member organizations in Asian countries and make a stable foundation as a network of disability organizations and service providers promoting employment of persons with disabilities. The number of members has grown to 48 in 13 countries/areas as of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017. This is thanks to strong commitments and contribution of members particularly the Board members. Most fundamental event of Workability Asia is holding the conference annually in a different country/area hosting by a member organization. Among 9 times of my responsibility it was cancelled twice because of unstable political situation and financial challenge. It is not easy for an organization to host the conference however members know that it is a good opportunity to raise awareness of employment of persons with disabilities in their country. It is indeed a very good forum to exchange successful initiatives and practical models among members.

## **Making a Big Leap Forward ... cont.**

In recent years my attention has been how to make Workability Asia more sustainable and we have discussed on this topic at every Board meeting. A regular change and diverse participation to the leadership may be a response to this topic. I am very proud to be replaced by Ms. Sakulthip, the Secretary General of Workability Thailand who is a young and talented lady with full of leadership. At the same time the Secretariat of Workability Asia will move to Thailand from Japan. The biggest delegate to the Hong Kong Conference was from Thailand so I am very much sure that all stakeholders there can give a maximum support to the new Secretariat. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Japanese member organizations for accepting the role of the Secretariat since the start of Workability Asia.

We know two thirds of persons with disabilities in the world are living in Asia and most of them are under difficult living condition due to poverty, diseases, natural disasters, conflicts, lack of socioeconomic systems, etc. These negative conditions deprive them of an opportunity to work and remain them under unfavourable situation. On the other hand there has been a plenty of wise knowledge and successful experiences to provide work and employment for persons with disabilities in Asia.

Workability Asia, as a unique network of promoting employment of persons with disabilities should step forward to achieving a gainful employment for all everywhere in Asia. Workability Asia is now entering a new era and I do believe that they will make a big leap forward under new leadership towards a society of full rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

Last but not least, I hereby would like to give tons of thanks to members of Workability Asia for supporting me long time.

Thank you so much and stay in touch.



## Message from Secretary General of Workability Thailand (WTH)

Ms. Sakulthip Kheeratiphantawong

I feel immensely privileged to be part of WAsia family, which has a long impressive history, from a few of Courageous leaders with the strong commitments to create opportunities of gainful employment for persons with disabilities in Asia. With their beliefs and dedications attracting liked-minded friends to join this movement together. Since then, more than 13 years, WAsia have grown up and have its member expanded across Asia with 41 members in 13 countries and areas.

In 2017, it's such a great endeavor and privilege for Workability Thailand to be appointed as Workability Asia Secretariat after the fantastic movement from Japan. We would continue to pursue the WAsia's principles and values, a shared vision, and share goals to gainful job opportunities and Inclusivity.



Our goals can only be realized with our strong commitment to strengthen our partnerships and cooperation of governments, companies, persons with disabilities and everyone to deliver the change in the new era of WAsia with no one left behind. In this occasion, I would like to express my highly gratitude to Hiroshi for his long contribution as Secretary General of WAsia, he has made "Workability" works, he has built not only the warm family but also the strong foundation of WAsia, and it's such my great honor to follow in his footsteps towards the prosperity of WAsia in the next generation to come.

Lastly, we would like to call for all Hearts and Hands, to believe in the value of people, value of diversity and inclusiveness, and to join us to tackle with the increasing of world's population of persons with disabilities and the lacking of accessibilities and opportunities to their employments. To enable the collaboration and grooming ecosystem across the policy to practice level, to open up an opportunity that we cannot take for granted, to support on person with disabilities' employment towards the sustainable development goals.

## From the Secretariat

# Workability Asia Secretariat Handover from Japan to Thailand

There was a handover ceremony during Hong Kong Conference. The new Secretariat is Workability Thailand based in Bangkok, Thailand from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2017.

## New Members

Workability Asia is very much proud to welcome such great organizations and believe they can add more value to the network.

HONG CHI ASSOCIATION (Hong Kong, China)  
THE HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE DEAF (Hong Kong, China)  
DIRECTION ASSOCIATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED (Hong Kong, China)  
PHAB ASSOCIATION (Hong Kong, China)  
WORKABILITY THAILAND (Thailand)  
BANGLADESH PROTIBANDHI KALLYAN SOMITY (Bangladesh)  
LIGHT FOR THE WORLD (Cambodia)



**From the Secretariat ... cont.**

## **WAsia Board Meeting**



WAsia Board meeting was held on July 12, just the day before the Hong Kong conference, at Kerry Hotel.

All of the WAsia Board members and WAsia auditor joined the meeting.

A new Secretary General was appointed and we discussed a concept note for inviting corporates partners to WAsia submitted by Dipesh.

These discussions will be continued at the next Board meeting, which will take place on Feb. 1-3, in Pataya, Thailand.

## **WAsia Annual General Meeting 2017**

The biggest number of WAsia members joined the AGM.

Some organizations declared their intention to become a new WAsia member during the AGM.

Many participants emphasized the importance of WAsia network and exchanged opinions about the WAsia's future including cooperating with the business sector.

Finally our Cambodian member announced the date for the next conference.

WAsia conference 2018 will take place on September 3-5, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.



## **EDITORIAL NOTES**

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