

At MDAA we do **advocacy**. This means we work together with people with disability, families, and the community to promote, protect and secure the rights and interests of people from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability and their families and carers in NSW.

How we can help you and your family

Individual Advocacy: A worker, called an advocate, works with you when your rights are ignored. The advocate will 'stand beside' you and support you, so you can make your own decisions and get what you need. An advocate can help you stand up for your rights, for example, when you have problems with housing, immigration, work, school, and disability services.

How we can help your community

Advocacy Development: We work together with groups of people with disability and their families to learn more about standing up for your rights and needs. This can help you to have a say about the things that are important to you.

Community Development: MDAA can work with your community to increase knowledge and awareness about disability, disability services and the rights of people with disability.

Systemic Advocacy: We lobby politicians and government departments to make things better for people from a NESB with disability and their families.

Our advocacy and community development services are free.



opening doors
Disability experienced
in South-Korea and
Australia



Working for a NSW where the diversity of disability and culture is anticipated, supported and celebrated

Acknowledged by



Australian Korean Welfare Association



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Disability experienced in South-Korea

This introduction focuses on experiences of disability for South-Korean people and families. Some of the attitudes and beliefs discussed are also common to other cultures.

How we treated people with disability in the past

Korea is a racially and linguistically very homogeneous country and there are hardly any other ethnic communities. The community's homogeneity magnified the differences between people with disability and other people. Disability has generally been considered as social deviance and a threat to social norms and rules.



In the past, our attitudes towards people with disability were usually more negative than positive. People often tried to hide their disability from others, as they felt ashamed that they were different from others. Many parents did not want to let the community know that one of their children had a disability. If the family could afford it, it was common to give the child with disability into the care of an institution.

Physical and sensory disability were more apparent and recognised in the community than intellectual disability or mental illness. It was uncommon to see people with disability in the streets. If we saw any, we generally did not know how to react and we were fearful.

Jin-Ho

Jin-Ho had a physical disability. When he wanted to go for a walk he always failed, because as soon as he crossed the street in front of his house people 'helped' him and took him back to his house. They simply couldn't understand that he wanted to be outside his house.

In the past the Korean government ignored social welfare for people with disability and did not support them or their families. Social discrimination, exclusion and stereotyping were common attitudes towards people with disability. Generally, there were not many opportunities for people with disability to enjoy lives independently. People with disability were generally excluded from political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life, such as education and employment and children with disability were unable to attend any schools.

Our patriarchal society valued boys more than girls and accordingly women with disability had more difficulties in getting married than men. Families often opposed marriages of persons with disability, in particular when the woman had a disability and her partner did not, because they feared the wife's influence on the children and that she could not do the housework properly. It was not uncommon for people with disability to commit suicide.

What are the myths or beliefs about disability in Korea?

Across Korean society disability is often stigmatised and we usually tend to see disability as an embarrassment within the family. When there is a family member with disability often the whole family will feel shame about it and it is common that people do not want to marry into the family.

A common tradition was and sometimes still is that families organise professional matchmakers or fortune-tellers to match couples for arranged marriages. When matching couples, more importance was usually placed on families than individuals. If there was a person with disability in the family, especially if the person had an intellectual disability or mental illness, matchmakers generally did not want to arrange a marriage with this family. This confirmed parents' behaviour of not letting the community know about their child with disability because then their other children would have better chances of getting married.

We have many beliefs about disability, such as the belief that the birth of a child with disability brings bad luck. Another belief is that God is punishing the parents of children with disability for their sins in their present or past lives. We also believe that you will have an unfortunate day if you see a blind man in the early morning.

Even now we do not speak much about disability. Some negative perceptions of people with disability still prevail. Some of us still consider people with disability as a burden, who cannot live independently, need to be protected and cared for and that others know better what they need. Public attitudes often tend to be prejudiced against people with disability and we sometimes regard them as second-class citizens and lesser human beings.

'NIMBY', which means 'Not In My Back Yard', is a common concept in Korea even now. It names the prejudice in our community that nobody wants to have centres for people with disability or special schools for children with disability in their close neighbourhood, because they are seen as decreasing the value of the property.

Were there any events that changed attitudes to people with disability?

In the 1950s and 1960s during the Korean War and the Vietnam War, many Korean soldiers were injured, traumatised and acquired physical disability or mental illness. Between the 1960s and the 1970s the whole country suffered from poverty, lack of public sanitation and the bad economic situation. These factors increased the numbers of children and people with disability and disability became more common and visible in the community. We started to think differently about disability and to have more awareness towards people with disability.



Korea and its economy developed very quickly and our attitudes towards people with disability are changing due to influences of foreign media. We are also one of the world's highest Internet users, in urban as well as in rural areas. Many Koreans moved abroad for education and some came back with greater awareness about many issues,

including disability. Under these influences and due to increased community education, information about disability spread widely among the community and disability has become a subject for public, social and political discussion in recent years.

Another important moment, which changed public attitudes towards people with disability, occurred in 1981, when the Korean government established the 'Day for the Disabled' on the 20th of April. It has been celebrated every year since then. On this day for example, an annual meeting for families with a child with disability takes place in Seoul. Politicians are invited and the parents demand changes to disability policies. In 1988 the Paralympics were held in Seoul. They made people start to think about rights of people with disability and the government started to build more facilities with improved access for people with disability.

Hyang-Sook Jang

Hyang-Sook had Polio as a young child and cannot use her legs. She grew up in the countryside and did not get any formal education but always read books in her room. When she was 22 she overcame her fear of going out. She became a frontline campaigner to achieve equal rights for women with disability and to increase the public's awareness and understanding of the barriers people with disability face in their effort to be part of the community. Today in 2004, aged 46, Hyang-Sook has been elected as a Member of the National Parliament in South Korea.

What role do families play in caring for people with disability?

The structure of Korean families has been strongly influenced by Confucianism, which focuses on a clear hierarchy of social relationships and patriarchal structures in families and society. Despite the changes that have taken place in Korean culture, Confucian values still have great force in our lives.

Family is very important for all Koreans and parents, especially fathers, participate in any decision that might affect the life of any of the family members. Due to a lack of social support by the government, community and care organisations, the family has the most important role and responsibility in supporting a family member with disability.

Traditionally mothers care for the children, keep the household and are the main carers for children with disability. This is changing as more mothers work outside the home, childcare and the care for a family member with disability often becomes the responsibility of the grandmother or older siblings.

Has the language we use to talk about people with disability changed?

In the past we used to talk about people with disability in a negative way. The word disability had mostly a negative connotation and was used reluctantly because of its stigma. At school children with disability would often be teased and called names.

Nowadays this is changing for the better and we talk about people with disability in a more friendly and sensible way. One of the latest changes is that we say *'fellow or friend with a disability'* instead of *'person with disability'*. Nevertheless, negative terms, such as *'cripple'* or *'handicapped'*, are still in everyday use.

Are there differences in the way city and country people respond to disability?

In Korean cities we generally have more and better services and facilities as well as better service access and more schools for people with disability. In country areas there is usually more compassion for, but also more teasing of people with disability than in cities. The concept of *'NIMBY'* (*'Not In My Backyard'*) is more common in small villages where residents reject the building of facilities and services for people with disability near their village for fear of a decrease in value of their houses. *'NIMBY'* and the lack of transport in rural areas are reasons for people with disability moving to bigger cities.

What services are there for people with disability?

Korean organisations for people with disability estimate that the number of Korean people with disability is 4.5 million today, however the government estimates are 1.5 million. As the society becomes more aware of disability, our government has increased

its expenditure for people with disability slowly but consistently. In 1989 they established a welfare law, which grants people with disability a low support pension.



Public and political attitudes and social support services and programs for people with disability are generally based on sympathy and do little to assist people with disability to live independently as full citizens of our society. The government supports more residential rehabilitation institutions and programmes rather than vocational rehabilitation and personal assistance services.

Nevertheless, since the Korean War and especially in the past decade the number and range of services for people with disability have increased a lot and equipment for people with physical disability is more available. Non-government organisations and religious organisations have established new facilities, mostly with the help of volunteers and sometimes with government subsidies and they run community centres, care and work rehabilitation centres for people with disability. In recent years the accessibility to services and public buildings has improved and people with disability are eligible for income tax deductions, small concessions for public transport and museums and some reduction to their telephone and electricity bills. Some airlines give people with disability discounts on airfares.

We have special schools for children with mild disability, but they are generally few in number and quite competitive, as students are required to pass a test to get a place. Children with severe disability often miss out. As primary school education is compulsory in Korea, children with disability who miss out on a place in a school for children with disability have to go to afternoon classes. These are held in local schools and taken by untrained teachers.



In 1989 the *Korea Polio Foundation* developed an employment model for people with disability and set up the first non-profit factory of its kind, *JungLip Electronics* (JungLip means 'Stand Right'), which produces electronic products,

collaborates between the non-profit and the private sector and is government subsidised. People with disability are employed and production facilities and equipment are specially designed for them. Through employment and support at the workplace (so called 'independent living services', such as information, referral, housing and individualised services) *JungLip Electronics* empowers people with disability to live independently and to have more control of their own lives. This model is now copied by other organisations, for example *Samae*, an organisation that runs rehabilitation centres for people with disability, promotes their rights and aims to increase awareness of disability in the community.

What does the community know about the rights of people with disability? How has this changed over the years?



Some decades ago disability was not discussed in Korea, either in the community or in government. Along with social democracy movements, attitudes towards people with disability have changed over recent years and we have become more aware of disability. Gradually the rights of people with disability have become a political issue and some

non-government organisations have been established to protect people with disability against discrimination still prevalent.

The four most important laws for people with disability are the *Special Education Promotion Act* (1977, revised in 1997), the *Welfare Act for People with Disability* (1981), the *Employment Promotion Law*

for People with Disability (EPLPD, 1990) and the *Accessibility Act for The Elderly and Disabled* (1997). The EPLPD, enacted by the Korean Congress, ensures that companies with more than 300 employees include 2% of employees with disability. Through the 'Five-year Welfare Development Plan' of 1998, our government has also tried to improve job opportunities for people with disability and subsidises sheltered workshops.

Despite the efforts of the Korean government, people with disability still have lower participation in the labour market, higher rates of unemployment and lower wages. We are slowly becoming more aware of the real needs of people with disability, but there is still a lack of acceptance that people with disability can be employed.

Hyung-Sik

Hyung-Sik has a physical disability and went to school in his wheelchair. After school he got his driving and taxi licences and decided to become a taxi driver. He had many difficulties in finding a company that would employ him. Finally he found a job as a taxi driver, but his salary is much smaller than his colleagues.

Women with disability started organising themselves in the 1990s and '*Korean Disabled Women United*' (KDAWU) was founded in 1999 to encourage women with disability live with self-respect and hope. Today KDAWU has many members and runs educational seminars, which teach women with disability to fight for their rights, and symposiums and open forums to inform people of the problems women with disability face.

Attitudes towards people with disability are changing. More people contribute their knowledge and time to assist people with disability fight against discrimination and advocate for their rights. Korea has made rapid progress in the economic sector. Despite still poor social conditions, attitudes towards people with disability are slowly changing.

Web Sites used in writing this document

<http://www.din.or.jp/~yukin/DII.html>

<http://www.sttar.org/resourcing/profiles.asp?CultureChoice=Korean&SectionSelect=all#KoreanHealth>

<http://www.dinf.ne.jp/doc/english/asia/resource/z00ap/004/z00ap00408.htm>

<http://www.diversityinhealth.com/regions/asia/korean.htm>

<http://www.disabilityworld.org/Aug-Sept2000/Women/korea.html>

Disability experienced in Australia

What is Disability?

A disability is something that stops a person from doing things they want to in their day-to-day activities. At least 19%, or one in five people in New South Wales, will experience one or more of the following:

- blindness or vision impairment (even when wearing glasses or contact lenses)
- deafness or hearing impairment (even when fitted with a hearing aid)
- chemical sensitivity
- speech difficulties in their first language
- blackouts, fits or loss of consciousness
- disorientation in unfamiliar environment
- slowness at learning or understanding
- acute anxiety
- difficulty making decisions
- incomplete use of hands or arms
- difficulty in gripping or holding or carrying small objects
- physical weakness over distance or long waiting periods
- lack of balance and coordination
- incomplete use of feet or legs
- difficulty walking on uneven ground, stairs and slopes
- pain, fatigue and discomfort
- difficulty breathing

- long term illness
- medical conditions and/or physical trauma leading to one or more of the above

In Australia disabilities are often categorised into different types, such as: physical disability (e.g. polio, arthritis, burns, obesity, broken bones, amputation), intellectual or learning disability (e.g. autism, down syndrome, attention deficit disorder), psychiatric disability or mental health problem (e.g. post traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, depression), sensory disability (deafness, blindness) and neurological disability (e.g. brain injury, spinal injury – paraplegia and quadriplegia, cerebral palsy, Parkinson’s, multiple sclerosis).

A disability can be permanent or temporary. Many people with disability say that what usually stops them from fully participating in the community is not their disability, but the barriers put up by society and the negative attitudes of the community.

What support can people with disability get?

In Australia people with disability have the same human rights as other people. This includes having the right to be part of the community, make their own decisions and receive services that assist them to have a reasonable quality of life.



People with disability have the right to all the services people without disability can get. General community services need to provide services to people with disability. Just because somebody has a disability should not mean that they cannot get general services. In many

instances people with disability can get support and assistance from the same places as people without disability.

However, to ensure that people with disability have the same opportunities there are specialist services available only to people with disability. These services include:

- Services assisting you to get a job or more training such as *Employment and Vocational services*.
- Services assisting you and your family to have a break from each other such as Centre-based and In-Home *Respite Care*.
- Services assisting you with your personal care such as *Attendant Care Services*.
- Services assisting parents when you first find out that your child has a disability such as *Early Intervention Services*.
- Services assisting mainly younger people with disability to learn more skills such as the *Transition to Work Program, Community Participation Programs, Community Access Services or Day Programs*.
- Services assisting you to live in the community with support such as *Accommodation Support Services*.
- Services assisting you with technology, equipment, therapy and para-medical specialist services, such as *PADP (Program of Appliances for Disabled People)*.
- Services assisting you to have your rights respected and to get information, such as *Advocacy and Information Services*.

How to find out more about services for people with disability

While there are many services for people with disability, it is not easy to find out about them or find out what the right service is for you. Also sometimes the services are full and have a waiting list, or sometimes you don’t know who to ask and what service to ask for.

Here we have listed only a few services, services that say they will organise an interpreter if you need one:

The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs is available to any person or organisation in Australia requiring interpreting services. TIS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

TIS phone: 13 14 50

You might have to pay a fee depending on the circumstances and depending on whom you are calling.

One good starting point to find out about things is Centrelink.

Centrelink phone: 13 10 21

Centrelink Multilingual Call Centre phone: 13 12 02

TTY phone: 1800 810 586

If you can go to your local Centrelink office, one good person to talk with is the Disability Officer.

Also a good place for you to start is the Commonwealth Carelink Program.

Commonwealth CarelinkCentres phone: 1800 052 222

TTY phone: 1800 555 677

Speech-to-Speech Relay phone: 1800 555 727

Another disability information service is IDEAS.

IDEASphone: 1800 029 904

You can also call the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA) which promotes and protects the rights of people from a non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability and their families and carers.

MDAA phone (02) 9891 6400 or 1800 629 072

