

Summary Report on the International Symposium International Panel I “Disabled Sports in Asia”

Adapted Physical Education and Exercise Joint Sport Congress in Hokkaido
(July 16th, 2016, at Iwamizawa-shi, Hokkaido)

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This summary report is a partial recapitulation of the presentations given at the international symposium “Disabled Sports in Asia”. The symposium, which was held in Iwamizawa City, Hokkaido on July 16th 2016, was planned and organized by The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center as International Panel I of the academic research conference Adapted Physical Education and Exercise Joint Sport Congress in Hokkaido 2016, sponsored by the Japan Society for Adapted Physical Education and Exercise (JASAPE), Society of Rehabilitation Sport, and the Hokkaido Adapted Sports Society. The symposium’s program of speakers and the topics of their presentations are shown in Table 1.

The Purpose of “Disabled Sports in Asia”

Kazuo OGOURA

By way of an overall introduction to the relevant issues, I would first like to explain why this kind of symposium is being held. First, Japan’s goals and principles for holding the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo are still somewhat undefined. This in turn affects the question of what sort of legacy the Games can leave – not just for Tokyo and Japan, but for the world.

In addition, on a daily basis, research being conducted by The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center reveals several gaps relating to disability sport around the world. The first gap concerns countries’ participation. Of the 200-odd countries which participate in the Olympic Games, only around 160-170 countries compete in the Paralympics, and around 30 do not send even a single athlete to the Paralympics.

Table 1 Timetable of “Disabled Sports in Asia”

Timeline	Contents
10: 30-10: 35	Opening Remark Moderator: Kensuke IWAOKA (Professor, Kanazawa-seiryu University / President, JASAPE) Introduction for “Disabled Sports in Asia” Chair: Kazuo OGOURA (President, The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center)
10: 35-10: 55	Para Sport Development and its History and Background Kesone SISONGKHAM (Secretary General, Lao Paralympic Committee)
10: 55-11: 15	Disability Sport in Malaysia: Development and perception Selina KHOO (Associate Professor, Sport Centre, University of Malaya)
11: 15-11: 35	Making History and Making a Better Future through Organization of the Paralympic Games Justin Y. JEON (Professor, Department of Sport and Leisure Studies, Yonsei University)
11: 35-12: 00	Panel Discussion, Q & A Kazuo OGOURA, All Panelists

Of the countries with a history of participation, around half have never won any medals. On top of that, only a handful of countries win gold medals. In short, there are countries that have never participated to begin with; countries that have participated but have never won any medals; and some countries for which a gold medal is a very far-off goal indeed.

Given these circumstances, as the host nation of the Tokyo Paralympics, shouldn't Japan be setting goals other than winning such-and-such a number of gold medals? Aren't things amiss if winning gold medals is set as the main goal for the Paralympics?

A second gap involves both the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The greater the spectacle that these events become, arguably the more removed they become from the lives of “ordinary” people. There is no hiding the huge disconnect between elite athletes and the average person, particularly between athletes competing in Paralympic Games and the average person with a disability. Some argue that the Olympic and Paralympic Games are becoming ever more alien events to the average person.

International cooperation and discussion will be needed in order to overcome these

gaps. For that discussion and cooperation, however, we will need to gain an understanding of matters as they currently stand and at the same time identify what the tasks are.

This symposium was planned to serve as an opportunity to share and deepen the discussion on the current state of affairs and tasks relating to the Paralympics, first from an Asian perspective. One reason is that English is the language in which almost all Paralympics research is conducted, which has made it relatively difficult to gain an understanding of disability sport in Asia today, as well as to identify tasks for Asia. We have invited people specifically from Asia to this symposium.

I will now introduce the speakers. Dr. Kesone from Laos is a medical doctor specializing in rehabilitation. Dr. Khoo from Malaysia specializes in general theories on sports policy in her country. Dr. Jeon from South Korea has been engaged for many years in Paralympics research in the ROK. With these three speakers the presentations represent a diverse range of standpoints.

Para Sport Development and its History and Background

Kesone SISONGKHAM

The Lao Paralympic Committee (LPC) was established in 1996 and throughout the years, the LPC, as a government-responsible agency, has taken up its significant role in developing competition sports for persons with disabilities on the national level. With the support of foreign NGOs, the LPC has accumulated the organizational experiences of para sports promotion and cultivated athletes with disabilities at a steady pace. The para sports development practices which the LPC and Ministry of Education and Sports have implemented in the last 10 years definitely reflect the country's strong commitment to advance para sports in Lao society. Through the power of sports, the government of Laos is aiming to encourage 10% of the population of persons with disabilities to participate in sports. Additionally, the Lao government has set up a 5 year strategic plan for the development of universal sports and competition sports for persons with disabilities in Laos in accordance with Decree N. 004/DSA, a national plan dated 21 January 2016, and outlined below:

1. To organize grass roots sports clubs of universal sports and competition sports of persons with disabilities in communities, villages, districts, provinces

and the capital Vientiane.

2. To develop personnel for the administration and management of universal sports and competition sports for persons with disabilities, develop personnel for organizing and managing the competitions and equipment, develop instructors, judges and athletes for national and international competitions.
3. To support the inclusion of sports which have concise rules and can be played in overseas competitions and in the national Para Games.
4. To promote the understanding and importance of universal sports and competition sports for persons with disabilities.
5. To reserve land areas, allocate sites and places for exercising and sport competitions in communities, villages, districts, provinces and the capital Vientiane.
6. To promote sport competition activities on national and international levels.

Although the government made its mandatory decree to promote para sports with a systematic plan and strong commitment, capacity building of human resource is still overwhelmingly lacking, and financial resources are also limited. Expertise of para sports promotion has to be nurtured among Lao relevant personnel who are engaged in para sports development including coaches, trainers and athletes with disabilities. Para sports are also not well-recognized among ordinary citizens in society.

Throughout 40 years of the country's development, Laos has evolved from one of the most affected countries from natural disasters and heavy bombing during wars that affect the lives and ways of living of the people in its regions. This includes the unexploded bombs from the war which continue to kill and injure local villagers, leaving them disabled in many cases. Therefore, restoring the spirit of persons with disabilities has become an important task of the Lao government, reflected in its policy that aims to support and encourage social and political participation of persons with disabilities, to strengthen equality between the non-disabled and disabled, and to promote equal rights to education and sustainable employment of persons with disabilities. Sports have the answer. Sports have the power to change people's lives in a positive way. Universal sports (the work of the Ministry of Education and Sports) as an entry point of sports and competition sports for persons with disabilities (the work of the LPC) are an important approach to be promoted, and one of the

strategies that aims to strengthen the spirit, mind, and physical capacity as well as health improvement for persons with disabilities that will ultimately enable them to actively participate in society.

Disability Sport in Malaysia: Development and perception

Selina KHOO

This paper reviews the history and development of disability sport in Malaysia. It also documents the achievements of Malaysian athletes with a disability and analyses newspaper coverage of Malaysians in the 2012 London Paralympic Games.

Disability sport in Malaysia has a short history and not much of it has been documented. It started in the 1970s where sports were organised on an ad-hoc basis and Malaysians did not take part in many competitions. The disability sport movement in Malaysia is now more structured and organised with government and non-government organisations playing a role.

There is government support for disability sport through various policies and programmes. The Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 mentions the rights of persons with disabilities to participate in recreation, leisure, and sports activities. The National Sports Policy 1988 stresses the importance of “Sport for All”. Government involvement includes funding the Paralympiad (a biennial national multi-sports and multi-disability competition) and funding athletes to participate in international competitions. The Malaysian Paralympic Council, established in 1989, is the umbrella body for disability sport. The objectives of the Council are to encourage an active lifestyle for persons with disabilities and introduce new sports and recreation programmes.

Malaysian athletes have participated in international competitions including multi-sport and multi-disability competitions such as the Paralympic Games, Asian Para Games, and ASEAN Para Games. Malaysia has also hosted various international events including the ASEAN Para Games and the FESPIC (Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled) Games. Despite the country’s involvement in disability sport competitions since the 1970s, there is limited media coverage of disability sport. This is evident from the newspaper coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games.

Even though we can be proud of what has been achieved in terms of disability sport, more can be done, especially for mass participation. More needs to be done to break down barriers and create opportunities for participation in sport for persons with disabilities and also to create awareness among the public and media.

Making History and Making a Better Future through Organization of the Paralympic Games

Justin Y. JEON

It has already been almost 30 years since the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games. The Seoul Paralympic Games have had a huge impact not only in South Korea, but on the entire Paralympic Movement. There are three areas in which the 1988 Paralympic Games have had an impact domestically. First, the Paralympic Games in Seoul promoted the development of Paralympic Sport in South Korea. In the 1984 Paralympic Games, South Korea won no gold, two silver and two bronze medals, ranking 37th. In 1988, South Korea won 40 gold, 35 silver, and 19 bronze medals, ranking 7th. After the Seoul Paralympic Games, South Korea ranked in the top 15 in the majority of the Paralympic Games. Secondly, the Paralympic Games in Seoul changed the perception of disabilities in both people with and without disabilities. The number of registered people with disabilities significantly increased, which reflects the change in how people with disabilities viewed themselves. Furthermore, people without disabilities began to view people with disabilities as more abled than disabled.

Consequently, the human rights of people with disabilities significantly improved. Lastly, the organization of the 1988 Paralympic Games in Seoul laid the foundation for the beginning of the Korean National Paralympic Committee (KPC) and the Korean Sport Association for the Disabled (KOSAD). Before the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games, there was no KPC or KOSAD. The Department of Disability within the Ministry of Health and Welfare was in charge of sports for people with disabilities along with many other responsibilities. However, the importance of sports for people with disabilities was realized in the preparation and organization of the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games. With the surplus of about 3 million dollars from organizing the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games as seed money, KPC/KOSAD were launched. I personally believe that the organization of the Seoul Paralympic Games advanced the

human rights of people with disabilities, and the development of the Paralympic Movement in South Korea by 10 to 20 years.

The organization of the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games also contributed to the development of the Paralympic Movement itself worldwide. Right before the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games, the Games were organized in two different countries because Los Angeles, USA refused to organize the Paralympic Games along with the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. The international Paralympic Body (International Coordinating Committee for the World Organizations of Sports for the Disabled, ICC) did not have a strong governing authority, nor did it have strong support from the public. In 1984, the Paralympic Games were held in New York, USA and Stoke Mandeville, UK. In the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games, the same venues were used for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, echoing the 1964 Tokyo Games. As a result of the huge success of the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games, along with many other factors, the International Paralympic Committee was established with its first elected president, Dr. Robert D. Steadward, from Canada. Furthermore, the Organizing Committee of the Barcelona Paralympic Committee participated in the 1988 Seoul Paralympic Games as an observer. Watching the Seoul Paralympic Games, they analyzed the successes and mistakes of the Seoul Paralympic Games and organized an improved Paralympic Games in Barcelona. The current CEO of the IPC, Mr. Xavier Gonzalez, was one of the observers of the Seoul Paralympic Games.

Now, both South Korea and Japan are organizing the winter and summer Paralympic Games, in 2018 and 2020. We believe that both countries can use this opportunity to promote the Paralympic Movement domestically and internationally, making a difference once again.