3. Convening for disability access and equity

Community-based rehabilitation is a powerful tool to reach communities with required services and ensure no one is left behind. Three Pacific subregional community-based rehabilitation forums – for countries in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia – were convened to bring together civil society, government policymakers and service providers to understand how to improve community-based services for people with disabilities, their families and the community.

The Meeting on Rehabilitation as Part of the Continuum of People-Centred Health Care, held in the Republic of Korea in December 2016, convened various stakeholders, including government representatives from health and social affairs sectors, to improve access and availability of rehabilitation services.

While rehabilitation services often are a prerequisite for many people with disabilities to be able to participate in society, rehabilitation services benefit all people who experience functional impairment as a result of injury, illness or ageing.

Member States agreed to prioritize a range of interventions to improve the access to quality rehabilitation services in the Region. Rehabilitation plans and strategies, including the development of tools and guidelines as well as engagement across the whole of government, were highlighted by Cambodia, Hong Kong SAR (China), Mongolia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The development of improved data collection methods and the utilization of these data to strengthen rehabilitation programmes and policies were prioritized by Cambodia, China, Malaysia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. The Lao People’s Democratic Republic noted the need to focus on human resources for rehabilitation, and Viet Nam discussed plans to have more rehabilitation services covered by health insurance.

Many countries, including Malaysia, Mongolia and Viet Nam, committed to building awareness and strengthening training on disability-inclusive health services and rehabilitation. Macao SAR (China), Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam prioritized the need to improve community-based rehabilitation, including assistive technology.

While key priorities are evident, the broad application of rehabilitation services can serve as a mechanism to restore people’s ability to function and as a preventive mechanism to maintain health and well-being, aligned with SDG 3: ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring no one is left behind, equitable access to rehabilitation services for all, particularly people with disabilities, supports everyone’s participation in society.