

Reflection from the Post-GDS Regional Workshop and the Bridge CRPD–SDGs Training Module 2

Wardah Bagis, Komunitas Spina Bifida Indonesia

In October 2025, I had the opportunity to participate in two significant regional initiatives that strengthened my understanding of disability-inclusive development and deepened my engagement in global and ASEAN-level advocacy. Beginning with the **Post Global Disability Summit (GDS) Regional Workshop on 10–11 October**, hosted in Bangkok and followed by the **Bridge CRPD–SDGs ASEAN Training Module 2 from 12–18 October**, these experiences broadened my perspective on advancing inclusive development commitments through both global frameworks and grassroots movement-building.

Post-GDS Regional Workshop: Advancing the Amman–Berlin Declaration

The Post-GDS Regional Workshop brought together OPDs, international organizations, development partners, and regional experts to reflect on the outcomes of the Global Disability Summit 2025, particularly the Amman Berlin Declaration, and to identify how these aspirations can be translated into concrete actions at the national and regional levels.

Day 1 – Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

The workshop opened with welcoming remarks from representatives of the German Embassy, the ASEAN Disability Forum (ADF), and UN ESCAP. These opening messages set the tone for the two-day dialogue: strengthening collaboration, ensuring accountability, and advancing disability-inclusive development as a shared regional priority.

During the strategic overview session, participants were provided with a clear explanation of the GDS cycle and the significance of the Amman–Berlin Declaration. This helped contextualize global commitments with existing regional challenges, highlighting why Southeast Asia plays a key role in shaping inclusive development approaches.

The panel discussion that followed brought together experts from ADB, CDPO Cambodia, UNICEF, and global disability networks. They explored the practical challenges of implementing GDS and CRPD commitments, especially in areas like data systems, humanitarian preparedness, and strengthening OPD leadership. One key insight was that inclusion must not remain aspirational; it must be intentionally embedded in development operations through policy, budgeting, and participatory mechanisms.

A particularly meaningful session for OPDs was the discussion on engagement roadblocks, where organizations openly identified the barriers they face in accessing policymaking spaces, influencing donor agendas, and receiving adequate resources. This created space for honest reflection and cross-learning among country delegations.

The day concluded with a stakeholder marketplace, in which OPDs met directly with development actors. For many participants including myself, this space offered valuable

opportunities to strengthen networks, introduce national advocacy priorities, and explore potential partnerships.

Day 2 – OPD-Only Space

The second day created a safe and empowering environment exclusively for OPDs. It began with a collective debrief of Day 1, allowing participants to clarify concepts, share insights from discussions, and identify follow-up questions.

This was followed by a deep-dive session on understanding the GDS monitoring framework, including how commitments are tracked, what the Amman–Berlin Declaration expects of governments and development partners, and how the DAC Disability Marker plays a role in monitoring resource flows.

The most interactive part of the day was the group work on mapping gaps and needs, where OPDs worked in small groups to analyze their country situations. We reviewed what commitments had been made, what capacities OPDs still needed, and which regional collaborations could help fill those gaps. The final plenary allowed each group to present their findings, reinforcing a shared sense of responsibility and momentum for collective action.

As an IF member of the **International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IFSBH)**, I also had the meaningful opportunity to meet **Carla dan Jessica dari Spina Bifida Support Group Foundation, Inc. – Philippines** during the workshop. In this brief but valuable exchange, we discussed shared challenges faced by people with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, ranging from access to inclusive health services to the need for stronger family support systems and more robust OPD-led advocacy in national policy processes.

Overall, the workshop clarified how the Amman Berlin Declaration especially commitments such as the “**15 percent for the 15 percent**” target can serve as a roadmap for strengthening disability inclusion in national development programs. It also reinforced the indispensable role of OPDs in ensuring that these commitments translate into real change.

Bridge CRPD–SDGs ASEAN Training: Building Capacity and Strengthening Regional Advocacy

Immediately following the workshop, I continued my regional engagement through the Bridge CRPD–SDGs ASEAN Training Module 2. The Bridge program is a long-term capacity-building initiative intended to strengthen leadership, CRPD competency, and advocacy skills among persons with disabilities and their representative organizations across Southeast Asia.

This module was part of the second installment of the training series. The first module, held in February, introduced foundational knowledge on CRPD principles, rights-based approaches, and regional advocacy frameworks. The second module, held in October, built on this foundation through more advanced sessions, technical discussions, case studies, and collective exercises.

Throughout the training, I gained a more structured and in-depth understanding of the CRPD and its relevance for national and regional advocacy. I learned practical tools for analyzing policies, legislation, budgets, and institutional practices through a CRPD lens. The training also strengthened my skills in communication, leadership, and collaborative advocacy—skills that are essential for promoting meaningful participation in policy processes in Indonesia.

A particularly meaningful aspect of the training was the opportunity to meet with regional and international stakeholders, including **UNICEF, ESCAP, UNFPA, AICHR, and CBM Global**. These conversations broadened my understanding of multi-level partnerships and demonstrated how OPDs can collaborate with institutions shaping development policies across ASEAN.

Key Takeaways / Lessons Learned

1. CRPD is the foundation of all meaningful advocacy.

Understanding how each article connects to national policies ensures OPDs can effectively engage in reform processes.

2. Meaningful participation requires preparation and strategy.

Tools like stakeholder mapping, SWOT analysis, and message development help OPDs advocate more confidently and systematically.

3. Evidence strengthens advocacy credibility.

Data-making and analysis sessions emphasized using facts, testimonies, and lived experience to influence policy.

4. Inclusive development must be intersectional.

Gender, youth, and other identities intersect with disability—advocacy must consider these layers to be effective.

5. Collaboration enhances impact.

The module demonstrated how OPDs can work together to shape broader regional priorities and push for harmonized policies.

6. Skills must translate into action.

The training reinforced the importance of applying CRPD knowledge to national contexts, ensuring change is grounded at the local level.

Moving Forward

Looking ahead, I plan to apply the lessons from this training to strengthen CRPD-aligned advocacy within Indonesia—particularly by integrating rights-based analysis into policy discussions and supporting OPD networks to use strategic tools more effectively. I will also share these insights with colleagues and local communities to expand collective capacity at the grassroots level.

As part of my ongoing involvement with the Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus community, I am committed to ensuring that the needs, rights, and lived experiences of this group are better represented in national advocacy efforts. Strengthening this focus will help ensure that disability inclusion reflects the diversity of our community and remains grounded in real-life challenges.