

### **AHI's definition of disability:**

A long-term impairment that impacts the daily function of a person, which is compounded by negative societal perspectives which hinder the full and fruitful participation in society of a person on an equal basis with others.

### **AHI's approach to disability ministry:**

- **Theological:** We believe that humankind's rebellion against God and our distorted beliefs about God and God's image-bearers underlie society's neglect, abuse, and marginalization of those with disabilities. We believe that true hope for people with disabilities and their healthy inclusion in their communities begins with a right understanding of God and humankind. A fundamental belief that every human is made in the image of God and therefore has inherent dignity, value, and purpose is key to the transformation of people and societies toward loving, inclusive communities. We also believe that God's love through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus has the power to restore relationships and transform everyone, including those with disabilities. While we understand both disability and its effects, as well as society's attitudes toward disability, to be rooted in the brokenness of our world, we also know that God uses all things to demonstrate God's power and glory, and takes particular interest in demonstrating the power of God through weakness and vulnerability (1 Cor. 12:12-26, 2 Cor. 12:9-10). We believe that the effects of all broken relationships and systems can and will be redeemed (Col. 1:19-20), and that we are called to work toward that while we have life.
- **Wholistic:** Our approach addresses the complex needs of people affected by disabilities through wholistic programming and support. We know that people with disabilities are *people* - who happen to have a disability. They are not their disability. People are complex and integrated beings, and thus we cannot separate any one part of a person from the other parts that comprise him or her. For example, our economic success is connected to our relational health, our physical health is connected to our spiritual health, and so on. Our wholistic approach encompasses the following aspects of human life: dignity & purpose, emotional health, social & relational health, economic health and opportunity, physical health, intellectual health and opportunity, and spiritual health. AHI's inclusion of dignity and purpose as a primary component of a person's wholistic health, stems from the reality that unless a person affected by disability feels valued as a human being, growth and change in other areas of life will be significantly hindered. We will only engage in disability programs that integrate these aspects of human flourishing.

- **Relational:** We believe that broken relationships are a significant root cause of the poverty and difficult realities experienced by many with disabilities. As such, we focus on restoring those relationships for wholistic flourishing. We believe that God places people in families and communities and thus refrain from programs that short-circuit the restoration of God-given relationships between family members, church members, and community members. **Therefore, we do not support group homes and residential facilities for people with disabilities.** While these kinds of programs can be appropriate in extreme situations, we believe our ministry efforts are better focused on the transformation of attitudes and relationships around people with disabilities, in order to realize their long-term, sustainable integration into family and society. In addition, while presenting a compassionate façade, we have seen too many residential facilities harbor abuse and mistreatment of people with disabilities. We believe that if greater efforts were aimed at reconciliation of broken relationships and a biblical understanding of the image of God in all persons, people with disabilities would enjoy safer and more life-giving living situations.
- **Global and Local:** We believe God is at work through the Spirit in the body of Christ throughout the world. Therefore, we seek to honor and encourage local expressions of disability ministry that may differ from our own context. At the same time, we know that each part of the global body of Christ has unique strengths that can build up other parts of the body. As such, we seek to connect God's people around the world in order to facilitate learning, growth, and sustainability so as to more effectively come alongside those with disabilities.
- **Future Hope:** We believe the restoration available for people with disabilities in this life will culminate and ultimately be fulfilled in the life to come. God has promised to make all things new, which we believe will also result in the removal of impairment due to disability and give people with disabilities the opportunity to experience redemption and freedom from the societal hindrances of this earth in its fallen state (Revelation 21:1-4).