

Disabilities and Inequalities in the Sustainable Development Process

Briefing Paper for the Open Working Group Session on Promoting Equality – 5th of February 2014

Why is this crucial?

According to the World Bank (WB) and World Health Organization's (WHO) 2011 World Report on Disability, "people with disabilities experience inequality—for example when people with disabilities are denied equal access to health care, employment, education or political participation because of their disability." In addition, persons with disabilities, due of the nature of impairment, age, gender, geographical location, socio-economic and cultural background experience significant levels of discrimination and exclusion.

There is wide recognition that progress within the existing MDG framework has not been equitable and that *persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented among those left behind* by recent development gains. The human rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) need to be realized into the new sustainable development framework.

Intra-country inequalities have widened, of which persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented. An estimated 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, often representing 15-20 per cent of the most vulnerable and marginalised poor in such countries.¹ In order to leave no one behind, the UN Secretary-General now calls for actions to promote equality of opportunity.²

The High Level Panel identifies persons with disabilities as one of the groups frequently excluded from development. To ensure equality of opportunity, relevant indicators should be disaggregated with respect to disabilities. This has been suggested by the High Level Panel, which states "Targets will only be considered 'achieved' if they are met for all relevant income and social groups."

The [Outcome Document](#) of the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development, stressed "the importance of ensuring accessibility for and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development and of giving due consideration to all persons with disabilities in the emerging post-2015 United Nations development agenda."

Further, the Rio+20 Outcome Document clearly recognised the participation of persons with disabilities in the sustainable development agenda.

Without a concerted effort to highlight and protect citizens with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda, inequalities will endure. Failure to address this inequality is inconsistent with a UN Charter that speaks of ensuring the dignity and worth of every human.

¹ O' Reilly, A. (2007). The right to decent work of persons with disabilities. ILO, Geneva.

² A/68/202 SG Report to GA "A life in dignity for all - accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015."

Key recommendations on how inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities could be addressed in the post-2015 agenda:

- **Upholds human rights for all, eliminates discrimination and diminishes inequalities:** The post-2015 agenda should address eradication of the inequalities that persons with disabilities face. This can only be done through overt focus on the realisation of human rights with a clear focus on equality, equity and non-discrimination that is based on the fundamental values of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This will also help national governments meet their obligations towards disability inclusive development.
- **Integrating a focus on inequality throughout all the goals, targets and indicators:** When setting the goals for the post-2015 development agenda, disability must be one of the cross-cutting issues to be taken into account when designing goals, targets and indicators. Disability-specific targets will reduce deep-rooted inequalities leading to better development outcomes overall.
- **Disaggregation of data in order to address inequalities within all goals, targets and indicators:** Disaggregation of data will help measure the gaps between economic and social groups including persons with disabilities and identify who is being left behind. Setting targets to reduce these gaps (e.g., in health and education outcomes, in incomes and employment) will ensure that the most deprived are not “left until last”. This will further help to focus attention on and address direct and indirect discriminations between groups that underpin inequalities.
- **Builds on equal and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities at all levels:** In line with the Outcome Document³ of the High Level Meeting on Disability and Development: “the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond,” key actors and stakeholders are requested to closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the emerging post-2015 goals.

³ http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/hlmdd/a_68_l1.doc