



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Disability and Development Report

Realizing the Sustainable
Development Goals by,
for and with persons
with disabilities

2018



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New York, 2019

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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Disability and Development Report
Published by the United Nations
New York, New York 10017, United States of America

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ISBN: 9789211303797
eISBN: 9789210479035(PDF)
ePUB: 9789213582800

United Nations Publication Sales No. 19.IV.4

Design and layout
Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York

Chapter III. The way forward for disability-inclusive sustainable development

This report represents the first United Nations system-wide effort to examine the situation of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, at the global level. The report has reviewed statistics, laws, policies and programmes, and identified best practices; and used this evidence to outline recommended actions to promote the implementation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities. The evidence included in this report indicates that persons with disabilities are still at a disadvantage compared with those without disabilities in the global, regional and national efforts towards the achievements of the SDGs. Despite the progress observed in laws and policies in line with the CRPD, progress in implementing such measures has been slow. Discriminatory laws are also still in place in many countries. To meet the SDGs by 2030, international and national development programmes will need to prioritize inclusive development. In particular, concrete action is needed to make persons with disabilities and their situations visible in policymaking and to build just and inclusive societies. This action should focus on four fronts: (1) addressing fundamental barriers causing exclusion of persons with disabilities; (2) mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the SDGs; (3) investing in monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the SDGs for persons with disabilities; and (4) strengthening the means of implementation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities.

1. Addressing fundamental barriers causing exclusion of persons with disabilities

The fundamental barriers causing the exclusion of persons with disabilities need to be urgently addressed: discriminatory laws and policies, lack of accessibility in physical and virtual environments, negative attitudes, stigma and discrimination, lack of access to assistive technology and to rehabilitation, and lack of measures to promote the independent living of persons with disabilities. Removing these barriers requires building capacity in countries. National legislation should protect the rights of persons with disabilities, either through constitutional, anti-discrimination or other national disability legislation. All national legal and policy frameworks should reflect the rights of persons with disabilities and be aligned with the CRPD, namely by eliminating discriminatory legislation and language. Accessibility is best pursued by means of regulations and guidelines at the community level and by thematic area, mandated by national laws and accountability mechanisms. Negative attitudes often result from a misunderstanding of disability and the potential of persons with disabilities as contributors to society. Raising public awareness and understanding on disability is crucial to combat these stereotypes. Effective ways to combat negative stereotypes include awareness-raising campaigns, through the media and the education systems, as well as including persons with disabilities in public and social activities and in the mainstream education system.

2. Mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the SDGs

The report emphasized that in order to achieve the promise of the 2030 Agenda, disability must be mainstreamed into the implementation of all SDGs. Areas of particular importance for the realization of disability-inclusive development include social protection (target 1.3), education (SDG 4), employment (SDG 8) and basic services, including health-care services (SDG 3), water and sanitation (SDG 6), and energy (SDG 7). Accessible infrastructural development in urban and rural environments, public spaces, facilities and services (SDG 11) is also of paramount importance to the participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. Progress in these areas can catalyse progress across all SDGs.

In designing and implementing social protection systems, States should ensure a flexible combination of income security and disability-related job support to promote the economic empowerment and employment of persons with disabilities. Social protection schemes should also take into account extra costs related to disability. It is crucial that application processes be accessible, without discrimination and easy to understand for persons with disabilities. Discrimination remains a major barrier for access to employment, which must be addressed by States urgently, including through the robust enforcement of policies and laws as well as disability awareness campaigns among employers. These campaigns should stress the value added of including persons with disabilities in a diversified and productive workforce.

Winning the war against poverty and inequality, and achieving the SDGs, requires increased investment in human capital. Equal access to education is essential and must be ensured. Inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream education should be promoted proactively. Schools and educational facilities as well as learning environments must be accessible and adapted for students with disabilities. Improving access to education for persons with disabilities is critical because educational disadvantage often leads to higher exposure to social exclusion and poverty, and therefore has a significant impact on capacity and opportunity to participate in society and development, particularly in employment.

Having and maintaining good health is fundamental for achieving all SDGs, particularly for persons with disabilities who tend to need more medical attention. Increasing access to health for persons with disabilities requires accessible health services and training of health professionals on ways to adequately care for persons with disabilities.

Ensuring inclusive access to water and sanitation for person with disabilities requires accessible designs, including accessible toilets, water points, water carriers, bathing places and handwashing facilities. Access to energy is critical for persons with disabilities because many of them require electricity to use assistive technology that is necessary for independent living and participating in the society.

3. Investing in monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the SDGs for persons with disabilities

Further research and robust data and analysis are required to ensure that persons with disabilities occupy their rightful place in the SDG framework and its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The lack of data and research on the situation of persons with disabilities severely constrains the international community from monitoring the situation of children, youths and adults with disabilities. Many relevant global and country indicators are still not disaggregated by disability status. Many countries collect data on disability, but the data remain unpublished. Countries should focus on establishing indicators to be collected and disseminated regularly to assess the situation of persons with disabilities and the challenges they face, including disability-specific indicators to capture progress in implementing policies and programmes aimed at their inclusion. Indicators should allow for the monitoring of the well-being of persons with disabilities in comparison to persons without disabilities, as well as of accessibility, including accessibility of physical and virtual environments. This monitoring exercise should engage persons with disabilities in the process.

In addition to disaggregating data by disability, double disaggregation will be needed to achieve the SDGs for those who experience disadvantage based on more than one aspect of their identity, such as women and girls with disabilities. For example, data should be disaggregated by disability and sex to monitor girls and women with disabilities, by disability and age to monitor children and older persons with disabilities, by disability and income groups to monitor the poor with disabilities, by type of disability to monitor, among others, persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, and by disability and social groups to include indigenous persons with disabilities. Moreover, data should be collected on the extra costs associated with disability.

This report includes a number of indicators disaggregated by disability, in some cases in line with the SDG indicators. This demonstrates the feasibility of the disaggregation of data by disability. However, greater political commitment and actions are required to scale up these efforts. To inform the development of disability-inclusive national policies and programmes, it is critical for disability disaggregation to become standard in all relevant monitoring systems of Governments and civil society organizations.

Studies on the impact of policies and programmes promoting disability inclusion are scarce. These studies will be needed to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities, in particular to help policymakers in designing new policies and in deciding to scale up, refine or discontinue existing policies. There are well-established methodologies to evaluate the impacts of policy. The capacity of countries to use these impact-evaluation methodologies and interpret their findings should be built.

Given the increasing availability of data, including internationally comparable data, cross-country studies are becoming increasingly possible. Establishing an international repository of disability data, updated on a regular basis, combined with a regular assessment and report of progress for persons with disabilities towards the SDGs is necessary to better guide the efforts of the international community in implementing

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition, a global analysis of the impact of policies could further assist countries in identifying best practices and policies for promoting disability inclusion. In order to improve accountability at the global level, the United Nations General Assembly and the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD could request regular global assessments of progress and Member States could use the voluntary national reviews for the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development to conduct a joint assessment in this regard.

4. Strengthening the means of implementation of the SDGs for persons with disabilities

Finance

Adequate financial and other resources should be allocated to support (i) the enforcement of laws protecting the rights of persons with disabilities; (ii) the implementation of national disability policies and plans; and (iii) the delivery of essential services to persons with disabilities. Effective mainstreaming of disability in development finance requires clear technical guidelines, robust partnerships between disability and sectoral experts and a system-wide obligation requiring results to be disaggregated by disability to avoid siloed approaches or disability being treated as an 'add on'.

Financing for sustainable development should be used to advance disability-inclusive development, including by incorporating accessibility in all efforts funded, and by focusing on supporting disability services such as assistive technology, community-based services, social protection programmes, and employment assistance. Further support should be provided to organizations of persons with disabilities to enable them to engage in advocacy, planning and programming for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

Member States, donor agencies and international organizations should regularly monitor financial commitments for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. In particular, official development assistance (ODA) plays a vital role for mobilizing public resources and can catalyse disability-inclusive development. Disability inclusion markers are needed to monitor progress in ODA in this area. At the country level, effective financing should be pursued by including disability in the design, implementation, monitoring of budgets and fiscal policies and programming, and ensuring that the most marginalized persons with disabilities are included.

Technology

Access to technologies, including assistive technology, is critical in facilitating the independent living of persons with disabilities and their participation in and contribution to society. Inadequate support for access to assistive products can undermine the equal participation of persons with disabilities in society and development and hamper the realization of the SDGs.

In addition to the priority assistive products,⁵⁰⁸ there are many assistive products that have been developed for persons with disabilities in recent years, particularly ICTs. Gaps in access to assistive technology remain in many countries, particularly developing countries where assistive technology is often unavailable, unaffordable or inadequate. Moreover, ICT has a huge potential to improve the lives and participation of persons with disabilities and to contribute to the disability-inclusive achievement of the SDGs. As such, the promotion of accessibility in ICTs, following the principles of Universal Design, should be prioritized. Incentivizing research and development of and promoting accessibility to mainstream technologies, including assistive technology, through national policies and programmes can help further accelerate the availability and dissemination of the technologies to benefit persons with disabilities and the general population. International trade policies and agreements can also facilitate access to affordable assistive products in developing countries.

Capacity-building

The report has emphasized the need for capacity development for policymakers and other key stakeholders at the national level to support the formulation and implementation of laws and policies to advance disability-inclusive development. There is also a need for capacity development for service providers to increase the quantity and quality of their services for persons with disabilities, and for persons with disabilities themselves to gain knowledge to exercise their rights and to better access available services and products that may benefit them. Good examples of organizations having disability-inclusive development policies and programmes are highlighted in this report, but many other organizations working on programmes related to the implementation of SDGs lack understanding and awareness of disability issues. Building their capacity is key for the success of any disability-related projects, products and services.

Capacity development opportunities are also needed for development and humanitarian actors and other stakeholders who have a role in protecting persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises and disasters. Capacity development programmes on accountability mechanisms are also needed. Furthermore, capacity-building is critical to support skills building for the monitoring and evaluation of SDG implementation for persons with disabilities.

Policy and institutional coherence

Many countries have established some form of public institution or mechanism dedicated to promoting the rights, inclusion and well-being of persons with disabilities. However, these institutions often lack the necessary human and financial resources to achieve their mandates. Moreover, disability issues are often spread across several ministries with no coordinated action among them. Establishing a robust institutional mechanism and coordination at the national level with adequate resources is critical for the effective implementation of the SDGs, as is the participation of persons with disabilities in the institutional arrangements. In addition, as countries revise laws and policies to align them with the CRPD, there is a

need to ensure that national legislation and development plans are coherent and that legal and policy provisions do not contradict each other.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

The report has highlighted the important role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in realizing the SDGs for persons with disabilities. Such partnerships may involve Member States; United Nations agencies; development, humanitarian and human rights actors; peace and security actors; local authorities and communities; the private sector; and civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. These partners can collectively ensure that development activities and programmes include the perspectives and consider comprehensively the needs of persons with disabilities.⁸²²

Data collection, dissemination and disaggregation by disability, would also benefit from more cooperation among various stakeholders. Data activities require robust and systematic coordination among responsible ministries, working in partnership with civil society communities such as non-governmental organizations, particularly organizations of persons with disabilities, the private sector and research institutions.

Disability-inclusive development is an essential condition for a sustainable future. In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, pledging to leave no one behind in the global efforts to realize the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Without the world's one billion persons with disabilities - 15% of the world population - being included as both agents and beneficiaries of development, these Goals will never be achieved. Yet, persons with disabilities are still invisible and often left behind.

This United Nations flagship report is the first publication to address, at the global level, the nexus between disability and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also the first global analysis based on an unprecedented amount of data, legislation and policies from over 100 countries to understand the socio-economic circumstances of persons with disabilities and the challenges and barriers they face in their daily lives. This report examines new areas, like the role of access to energy to enable persons with disabilities to use assistive technology, for which no global research was previously available. And explores the linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as other international relevant norms and standards relating to disability. Against the backdrop of all the available evidence, the report identifies good practices and recommends urgent actions to be taken for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities.