

A POST-2015 WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

ISSUE BRIEF: The Rights of Children with Disabilities



Why addressing the rights of children with disabilities is a critical component of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Around 15 per cent of the world's population, or an estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities.¹ Poverty and disability are inextricably linked considering that poverty is a major contributing factor leading to disability while disability traps people into poverty. Without explicit references to persons with disabilities, the Millennium Development Goals failed to effectively address the situation of this group, 80 per cent of whom live in developing countries.² A disproportionate number of all persons living in poverty in developing countries are persons with disabilities.³ The future development framework affords us an important opportunity to rectify this and truly ensure a framework that is inclusive of all.

Children with disabilities disproportionately suffer from poverty, exclusion and violence

Boys and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to social and economic exclusion; to exploitation in emergencies, post-conflict and alternative care situations; and to poverty, homelessness, and being marginalized in institutions or orphanages. Children with disabilities are almost four times more likely to experience violence than non-disabled children.⁴ Stigma and prejudice related to disability as well as barriers in the environment make it much more difficult for children with disabilities to go to school, to access healthcare or to participate in the community. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which has been ratified by more than 150 countries, urges states to take actions to enhance inclusion and address barriers faced by children and adults with disabilities. When boys and girls with disabilities have greater access to information and basic services, they are far more likely to experience inclusion in health, education and other areas throughout life and as adults. Access begins with providing free legal identities to all children, including children with disabilities, and ensuring that all children experience an inclusive environment as well as inclusive legal, economic and social systems.

Suggested Targets

- By 2030 provide legal identity for all including free birth registration
- End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children
- Increase the coverage of nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, with a focus on expanding coverage of the vulnerable and most marginalized
- By 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- By 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all and their protection under the law, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
- By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding

public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

- by 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

Educating all children, including children with disabilities, is a fundamental means to eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity and enhance inter-generational equity

Attention to early childhood development (ECD) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is important for all children, but it is particularly important for children with disabilities. All children under the age of 5 are more likely to reach their developmental potentials through access to quality ECD and ECCE programs and policies.⁵ The first few years of life provide a special opportunity to foster developmental gains through early intervention programmes that enable boys and girls to develop to their full potential.⁶ Early identification and assessment of a child's disability helps allow parents, healthcare providers, teachers and others to better understand and plan for the needs of children.

Children with disabilities have historically been among the most excluded from all levels of education. Boys and girls with disabilities aged 6–17 years, in comparison with peers without disabilities, are significantly less likely to be enrolled in school; more likely to drop out of school; twice as likely to have never attended school; and half as likely to progress to higher levels of schooling. In turn, children with disabilities exceedingly grow up to be excluded from the workforce, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Furthermore, this exclusion impacts entire families and communities: an increasing number of siblings and children of persons with disabilities, especially girls, are unable to participate in school due to caregiving responsibilities. Similarly, parents of children with disabilities may be unable to participate in employment.

Suggested Targets

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and

pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

- By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal and inclusive access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Progress for children with disabilities must be mainstreamed and measured

Given the cross-cutting nature of disability, it is important that disability is mainstreamed across goals, targets and indicators. Also, without disaggregation of data on disability, progress for persons with disabilities cannot be measured. One of the main explanations for the difficulty of including persons with disabilities in development plans and frameworks is the lack of data. In the past, many quantitative instruments—especially in developing countries—employed differing methodologies that not only greatly undercounted persons with disabilities but made international comparisons of data difficult. Recent advances in methods of identifying persons with disabilities through surveys, censuses, and administrative data systems are improving the ability to develop, monitor and evaluate policies aimed at promoting inclusion in an internationally comparative way. Therefore **it is crucial to have disaggregation of data by disability across all areas of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.**

Suggested Targets

- By 2020, substantially strengthen capacities for data collection and statistical analysis relevant to sustainable development with a focus on generating timely and high-quality data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, disability, ethnicity, and rural/urban location.

For more information

Please see UNICEF's webpage on Children and the Post-2015 Development Agenda: <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/>

¹ World Health Organization, 'Disability and health – Fact Sheet No. 352,' September 2013.

² World Health Organization, 'Disability and rehabilitation: Global Programming Note,' 2006-2007.

³ World Bank, 'Disability and poverty: a survey of the literature,' 1999.

⁴ World Health Organization, 'Violence against adults and children with disabilities,' 2012.

⁵ The Consultative Group on Early Childhood and Care, Early Childhood Development on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

⁶ United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child, G.A. Res. 44/25, U.N. GAOR, 44th Sess., Supp. No. 49, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (Nov. 20).