

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 The Sustainable Development Goals afford us an opportunity to rectify this and 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, 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. Better access to basic services 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 indicators* (top priorities in bold)

GOAL 1

Target 1.3

- **Percentage of children receiving a child or other social grant (disaggregated by the child's poverty and wealth status, disability, gender and location)**

GOAL 16

Target 16.1

- **Homicide and conflict-related deaths per 100,000 people (disaggregated by age, sex and cause)**

Target 16.2

- **Percentage of young women and men aged 18-24 years who have experienced sexual violence by age 18**
- **Percentage of children aged 1-14 years who experienced any physical punishment by caregivers in the last month**

Target 16.9

- **Percentage of children under 5 whose births have been registered with civil authority**

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 because 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. It also prepares children with disabilities to develop to their full potential.⁵

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 to 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 often 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.

The absence of disability components in the education indicators would harm the ambition and achievement of the targets under Goal 4. In particular, the targets that mention disability such as 4.5 and 4.a must include indicators that explicitly disaggregate disability status as laid out below.

Suggested indicators

GOAL 4

Target 4.1

- **Percentage of children who achieve minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics at end of: (i) grade 2, (ii) primary and (iii) lower secondary**
- Completion rate (primary, lower, secondary, upper secondary)
- Gross intake ratio to the last grade (primary, lower, secondary)
- Out-of-school rate (primary, lower secondary)

Target 4.2

- **Percentage of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being (ECD Index, other measures)**
- **Percent of children aged 24 months and above who attend an organized early learning/care and education programme**

Target 4.4

- Percentage of youth/adults who are computer and information literate

Target 4.5

- Parity indices (female/male, urban/rural, bottom/top wealth quintile and other characteristics including disabilities) for all indicators that can be disaggregated

Target 4.6

- Percentage of youth/adults proficient in literacy and numeracy skills
- Youth/adult literacy rate

Target 4.a

- **Percentage of schools providing (i) electricity; (ii) internet; (iii) computers; (iv) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (v) basic drinking water; (vi) basic sanitation facilities; and (vii) basic handwashing facilities**

Progress for children with disabilities must be mainstreamed and measured.

One of the main explanations for the difficulty to include persons with disabilities in development plans and frameworks is the lack of data. Given the cross-cutting nature of disability, it is important that disability is mainstreamed across goals, targets and indicators. Without the disaggregation of data on disability, progress for persons with disabilities cannot be measured. UNICEF welcomes all indicators that have a disability component and is concerned about indicators that do not have disability components even when the corresponding target explicitly mentions disability. Because the indicators will measure progress made towards goals and targets, it is crucial to have disaggregation of data by disability across all targets that mention disability as well as other relevant targets.

Suggested indicator

GOAL 10

Target 10.2

- UNICEF believes that global SDG monitoring should have an explicit focus on the progressive reduction of inequality gaps (ratio of disadvantaged/advantaged groups and/or the rate of change in this gap or ratio) disaggregated by age, sex, wealth, ethnicity, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant to national contexts

For more information on Children and the Post-2015 Agenda: <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/>

*A complete list of UNICEF's proposed indicators is available at <http://www.unicef.org/post2015/files/PriorityIndicators.pdf>

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).