

UNICEF Executive Board

2013 Second Regular Session

Special Focus Session UNICEF's work for Children with Disabilities

Tuesday, 3 September 2013
United Nations Conference Building, New York
Conference Room 3

Background Note

According to the *World Report on Disability (2011)*, 1 billion people have a disability; 80 per cent live in developing countries and at least 1 in 10 are children. By one widely used estimate, some 93 million children – 1 in 20 of those aged 14 years or younger – live with a moderate or severe disability of some kind. The end-of-cycle review of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan, 2006-2013 calls for increased attention to addressing the rights of children with disabilities, particularly the need to strengthen dedicated capacity on the issue.

The renewed equity focus of UNICEF reinforces inclusion and places children with disabilities at the core of the organization's work. To move from exclusion to inclusion and to ensure the rights of children with disabilities are realized, UNICEF is working with partners at country, regional and global levels in support of inclusive development practices: in child survival (including health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and HIV and AIDS); and in education and child protection. UNICEF also promotes the inclusion of children with disabilities in its work in humanitarian contexts. In 2012, from 112 reviewed annual reports, more than 85 country offices reported working to promote the rights of children with disabilities.

UNICEF actively engages with a range of mechanisms, such as the United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), to work with other UN agencies in a coordinated and coherent manner. It is also leading the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities (GPCwd), launched by UNICEF in 2012, with the support and partnership of Australia, Denmark, Mexico, Finland and other Member States.

Purpose

The Special Focus Session on UNICEF's Work for Children with Disabilities seeks to inform the Executive Board on the organization's work to achieve concrete results for children with disabilities, at the global level and in the field. In particular, the session will be an opportunity to share the main elements of the Disability Action Plan that will support the rollout of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

The special focus session will:

1. Provide Member States with an overview of the issues related to children with disabilities and the proposed work of UNICEF and partners in addressing them in the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, in accordance with the QCPR recommendations on disability mainstreaming;
2. Reinforce the commitment and leadership of UNICEF, established with the launch of *The State of the World's Children Report 2013: Children with Disabilities*;
3. Provide Member States with a strong base to advocate for children with disabilities during the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on disability and development (HLMDD), scheduled for 23 September 2013, and throughout the post-2015 development agenda deliberations.

Content

Opening. During his opening remarks to the Executive Board, the UNICEF Executive Director will make a brief statement, reaffirming the commitment of UNICEF to the inclusion of children with disabilities. He will draw upon *The State of the World's Children Report 2013: Children with Disabilities* to highlight how UNICEF's focus on equity makes it imperative to reach children with disabilities, who are often the most marginalized, and the work that remains to be done to protect their rights.

Video screening. The special focus session will open with a short video with messages from children with disabilities, talking about their daily lives and their aspirations, and with a call for inclusion. It will convey that children with disabilities, despite the barriers they face, are simply children, and that their needs and dreams are like those of other children.

Presentation. Ms Rosangela Berman Bieler, UNICEF Senior Advisor on Children with Disabilities, will provide an overview of UNICEF's work for children with disabilities, highlighting the progress made over the last three years. She will also explain the main areas of work of the UNICEF Disability Section, the team structure through which it carries out its mandate, and the impact the work for children with disabilities has had on UNICEF programmes.

Video screening. A second video will show a collage of UNICEF examples of concrete results for children with disabilities, at the global level and in the field, in both development and humanitarian contexts. Examples cover a range of programme areas from different regions.

Presentation. Following the video, Ms Berman Bieler will outline UNICEF's future actions –the “Disability Vision” and the main elements of the Disability Action Plan to support the rollout of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. She will also highlight the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities.

Guest Speaker. Mr Yannis Vardakastanis, Chair of the International Disability Alliance, a key UNICEF partner in its work for children with disabilities, will make a brief statement, in which he will highlight the joint collaboration and advocacy efforts for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda.

Discussion. The presentations will be followed by a question and answer session, offering Board Members the opportunity to make statements and comments.
