

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2014

Breaking the vicious circle of disability and extreme poverty

People with disabilities make up some 1 billion, or 15 per cent, of the global population. They represent the world's largest minority group. An estimated 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. They represent some 20 per cent of the most vulnerable and marginalized population in these countriesⁱ.

There is a link between poverty and disability that creates a vicious circle. Poor people are more at risk of acquiring a disability because of lack of access to good nutrition, health care and sanitation as well as safe living and working conditions. And, people with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty due to discrimination and barriers to participation in all spheres of society – from accessing education, to employment, health care, and transportation – that can help them escape poverty and break down prejudices.

Inclusion in all development activities is critical to breaking this cycle of poverty and disability that makes disabled persons more likely to live in poverty than their non-disabled peers. While a great deal has been accomplished through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be

The Millennium Development Goals:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

achieved by 2015, much work remains. Increasingly, it has been recognized that the gains made through the MDGs have not equally benefited all people. The poorest and most marginalized, in particular, people with disabilities have been excluded. In negotiating the Post-2015 Development Agenda, it is critical that the voices of people with disabilities be heard and that action to tackle disability issues be explicitly included.

The inclusion of persons with disabilities in development programming also makes economic sense. In addition to heightening their risk of poverty, excluding them from

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty aims to promote people's awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution worldwide, particularly in developing countries.

Disability and poverty

- Disability disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, such as indigenous peoples. It is more common among women, the elderly and poor households.

- Women with disabilities experience double disadvantages based on their sex and disability.

- Three-quarters of the world's poor people live in rural areas of the developing world. Most disabled people who do work in rural areas are engaged in income-generating activities as subsistence farmers or small-scale entrepreneurs in the informal economy. They frequently lack access to essential business development services and microfinance, particularly credit, because of the mistaken assumption that people with disabilities are not 'credit-worthy' or constitute a 'high risk' group.

- In both developed and developing countries persons with disabilities have lower employment rates and educational attainment than persons without a disability.

- In OECD countries, employment rates of people with disability are significantly lower and unemployment rates are typically twice the overall level. Very many do not take part in the labour market. But addressing the barriers and vulnerabilities of people with disabilities can unlock their potential and benefit society as a whole.

- Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school, thus experiencing limited opportunities for human capital formation and facing reduced employment opportunities and decreased productivity in adulthood.

Sources: WHO/World Bank, World Report on Disability, 2011, Geneva; and, OECD, Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers, A Synthesis of Findings across OECD Countries, 2010, France; ILO: Rural Policy Briefs, Empowering People with Disabilities for Rural Development, 2011, Geneva.

ILO - Irish Aid PROPEL project

People with disabilities can benefit from development projects. The ILO, through the government of Ireland supported PROPEL (*Promoting Rights and Opportunities for People with Disabilities in Employment through Legislation*) programme is working in five countries to facilitate access of persons with disabilities to mainstream skills development programmes and other relevant training, promote respect for their rights, and foster an enabling legal and policy environment prevent discrimination. In addition to the countries listed below, Botswana, Mongolia and Myanmar are due to benefit.

Ethiopia - From 2012 to 2013, the ILO through its implementing partner the Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development in collaboration with Info Mind Solutions, a private employment agency, worked to promote internships for disabled university graduates in Addis Ababa, Amhara and Tigray Regions. As a group, the graduates face problems applying for and acquiring decent jobs, in part, due to discrimination but mainly because they lacked skills in finding and applying for jobs. Through targeted interventions that combined CV writing and job search techniques, assertiveness training, awareness raising aimed at human resources professionals on how to create inclusive work environments and broad-based sharing of job vacancies, more than 20 job disabled graduates received internships with organizations and businesses. In addition, of the 86 disabled job seekers who received ECDD training and employment support, 76 per cent obtained full-time jobs in government, private companies, higher learning, public schools, non-governmental organizations, and public enterprises.

China – Over the next two years, persons with intellectual disabilities will soon enter inclusive workplaces in Hunan, making it the first province in China to develop “supported employment” (SE) plans for individuals for whom work in a competitive and open labour market was traditionally not an option. Hunan is pioneering this innovative model of SE through a ‘place and train’ approach that reverses the traditional practice of ‘train and then place’. SE has been used in different countries since the 1970s, and was introduced in China in 1999. However, it was only in 2013 through the ILO working with the China Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families of the Chinese

The call to ‘Leave no one behind - Think, decide and act together against extreme poverty’ points to the urgent need to eliminate discrimination based on poverty, ethnic origin, gender, or economic and social status and to include people living in poverty as new partners in the effort.

Disabled Persons’ Federation (CDPF) and the Special Education Institute of Beijing Union University (BUU) that efforts to improve employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities under the SE approach began to take off. A seminar on SE in Dalian organized by the ILO together with CDPF and BUU provided an opportunity to highlight Hong Kong’s good practices in implementing the approach, drawing SE to the attention of a wider group of stakeholders. ([Link to story.](#))

Indonesia – In Indonesia, the ILO works to promote an enabling legal and policy environment for better employment and training opportunities for women and men with disabilities by fostering a disability perspective in the regular curriculum of the Faculty of Law at the University of Atma Jaya, with plans to expand this effort in three other universities at the province level. Introducing a disability perspective into a law curriculum helps provide a more comprehensive basic knowledge on disability for all students and expands understanding of diversity for both faculty and students. Over the long term, the initiative will help to ensure that future generations of lawyers and judges will routinely consider the impact of their work on people with disabilities and improve possibilities for creating legal frameworks that promote full inclusion in the open labour market.

Viet Nam – The ILO works to promote access of the persons with disabilities in mainstream vocational training system by providing technical advice and support in finalizing disability related provisions in the Vocational Training Law and in revising the curricula and materials used in general training centres. It further aims to build capacity and awareness of the government and representatives of employers’ and workers’ organization on effective implementation of legislation and policies to promote equality of opportunities in training. The ILO also supports Hanoi University of Law to include disability rights issues in the law curriculum as well as the university more broadly, and in establishing

networks with other universities on disability rights issues.

Zambia – Since 2012, the ILO has been collaborating with the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education to help people with disabilities enter general vocational education training. The project, launched under a ‘pilot phase’, aims to promote improved access for young men and women with disabilities to mainstream skills development programmes. Five pilot institutions participating in the inclusive vocational training initiative include Mansa Trades Training College, Kaoma Trades Training College, Lusaka Technical and Business College, Luanshya Technical and

Business College, and the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (NVRC), which previously catered only to students with disabilities. The pilot aims to increase the number of students with disabilities enrolled in the four mainstream colleges from the current total of 44 to 100. The ILO-Irish Aid initiative supports the implementation of the Technical Education Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) policy on increasing access to skills training aligned to the labour market demand. ([Link to story.](#))

The ILO’s work to promote decent work for persons with disabilities builds on strong legal foundations. Among the principle ones are:

- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention No. 159 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 168, 1983, based on equal opportunity and equal treatment for disabled persons. It calls for formulating a national policy for disabled persons and developing vocational rehabilitation and employment services for disabled persons in rural areas.
- ILO Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation No. 111, 1958. Around the world, the existence of employment discrimination prevents too many men and women, including disabled persons, from participating in the labour market and reaching their full potential. Convention No. 111 is one of the core conventions of the ILO.

The ***United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, adopted in 2006***, contributes significantly to the increased global attention to the issue of rights of persons with disabilities. The Convention includes equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and equality between men and women, among its eight guiding principles and obliges State parties to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy all human rights on an equal basis with others.

Supporting the effective inclusion of women and men with disabilities in mainstream society by removing the barriers that deny their access to essential services – *education, health, skills development, employment, among others* – and creating genuine partnerships with them as both beneficiaries and agents of change, can shape a world where all people can enjoy a decent life, decent work and a place in their community. The ILO contributes to this vision by providing technical advice in the consultative debate leading to the negotiation of the UN’s post-2015 development agenda.

For further information:

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ⁱ UN Enable: Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities, available at <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=18>, accessed on 24 September 2014.

ⁱⁱ Backup, S.: The price of exclusion: The economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work, Employment Sector Working Paper No. 43 (Geneva, ILO, 2009).