

Fact sheet on Persons with Disabilities

Overview

- Around 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. They are the world's largest minority.
- This figure is increasing through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process, says the World Health Organization (WHO).
- In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5 per cent of their life span, living with disabilities.
- Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP).
- Disability rates are significantly higher among groups with lower educational attainment in the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), says the OECD Secretariat. On average, 19 per cent of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11 per cent among the better educated.
- In most OECD countries, women report higher incidents of disability than men.
- The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged.
- Women with disabilities are recognized to be multiply disadvantaged, experiencing exclusion on account of their gender and their disability.
- Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. A small 2004 survey in Orissa, India, found that virtually all of the women and girls with disabilities were beaten at home, 25 per cent of women with intellectual disabilities had been raped and 6 per cent of women with disabilities had been forcibly sterilized.
- According to UNICEF, 30 per cent of street youths have some kind of disability.
- Mortality for children with disabilities may be as high as 80 per cent in countries where under-five mortality as a whole has decreased below 20 per cent, says the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, adding that in some cases it seems as if children are being "weeded out".
- Comparative studies on disability legislation shows that only 45 countries have anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws.

- In the United Kingdom, 75 per cent of the companies of the FTSE 100 Index on the London Stock Exchange do not meet basic levels of web accessibility, thus missing out on more than \$147 million in revenue.

Education

- Ninety per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO.
- The global literacy rate for adults with disabilities is as low as 3 per cent, and 1 per cent for women with disabilities, according to a 1998 UNDP study.
- In the OECD countries, students with disabilities in higher education remain under-represented, although their numbers are on the increase, says the OECD.

Employment

- An estimated 386 million of the world's working-age people have some kind of disability, says the International Labour Organization (ILO). Unemployment among the persons with disabilities is as high as 80 per cent in some countries. Often employers assume that persons with disabilities are unable to work.
- Even though persons with disabilities constitute a significant 5 to 6 per cent of India's population, their employment needs remain unmet, says a study by India's National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, in spite of the "People with Disabilities" Act, which reserves for them 3 per cent of government jobs. Of the some 70 million persons with disabilities in India, only about 100,000 have succeeded in obtaining employment in industry.
- A 2004 United States survey found that only 35 per cent of working-age persons with disabilities are in fact working, compared to 78 per cent of those without disabilities. Two-thirds of the unemployed respondents with disabilities said they would like to work but could not find jobs.
- A 2003 study by Rutgers University found that people with physical and mental disabilities continue to be vastly underrepresented in the U.S. workplace. One-third of the employers surveyed said that persons with disabilities cannot effectively perform the required job tasks. The second most common reason given for not hiring persons with disabilities was the fear of costly special facilities.
- A U.S. survey of employers conducted in 2003 found that the cost of accommodations was only \$500 or less; 73 per cent of employers reported that their employees did not require special facilities at all.
- Companies report that employees with disabilities have better retention rates, reducing the high cost of turnover, says a 2002 U.S. study. Other

American surveys reveal that after one year of employment, the retention rate of persons with disabilities is 85 per cent.

- Thousands of persons with disabilities have been successful as small business owners, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The 1990 national census revealed that persons with disabilities have a higher rate of self-employment and small business experience (12.2 per cent) than persons without disabilities (7.8 per cent).

Violence

- For every child killed in warfare, three are injured and acquire a permanent form of disability.
- In some countries, up to a quarter of disabilities result from injuries and violence, says WHO.
- Persons with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence or rape, according to a 2004 British study, and less likely to obtain police intervention, legal protection or preventive care.
- Research indicates that violence against children with disabilities occurs at annual rates at least 1.7 times greater than for their peers without disabilities.