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ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SCRPD	Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SINTEF	Stiftelsen for industriell og teknisk forskning
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Health Survey
WPA	World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons

Executive summary

Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities

Disability and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This report represents the first United Nations systemwide effort to examine disability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level. The report reviews data, policies and programmes and identifies best practices; and uses this evidence to outline recommended actions to promote the realization of the SDGs for persons with disabilities.

Over 200 experts from United Nations agencies and international financial institutions, Member States and civil society, including research institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities, contributed to this report. The report covers new areas for which no global research was previously available, for example, the role that access to energy plays in enabling persons with disabilities to use assistive technology. It also contains the first global compilation and analysis of internationally comparable data collected with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics Short Set of Questions. Reviews of legislation from 193 United Nations Member States were conducted and analysed for this report to highlight best practices and to assess the current status of discriminatory laws on voting, election for office, right to marry and others. More than 12 major databases of disability statistics, from international agencies and other organizations, were analysed – covering an unprecedented amount of data from over 100 countries. In addition, more than 1.2 million data points of crowdsourced data have been examined to inform analysis of the accessibility of physical spaces.

The report shows that despite the progress made in recent years, persons with disabilities continue to face numerous barriers to their full inclusion and participation in the life of their communities. It sheds light on their disproportionate levels of poverty; their lack of access to education, health services and employment; and their underrepresentation in decision-making and political participation. This is particularly the case for women and girls with disabilities. The main barriers to inclusion entail discrimination and stigma on the grounds of disability; lack of accessibility to physical and virtual environments; lack of access to assistive technology, essential services and rehabilitation; and lack of support for independent living that are critical for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities as agents of change and beneficiaries of development. Data and statistics compiled and analysed in the present report indicate that persons with disabilities are not yet sufficiently included in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs provide a powerful framework to guide local communities, countries and the international community toward the achievement of disability-inclusive development. The 2030 Agenda pledges to leave no one behind, including persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups, and has recognized disability as a cross-cutting issue, to be considered in the

implementation of all of its goals. The Agenda also includes seven targets and 11 indicators explicitly making reference to persons with disabilities, covering access to education and employment, availability of schools that are sensitive to students with disabilities, inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities, accessible transport, accessible public and green spaces, and building the capacity of countries to disaggregate data by disability.

The 2030 Agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and grounded, inter alia, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. The 2030 Agenda is therefore linked to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and its implementation, by, for, and with persons with disabilities should be in line with the CRPD to incorporate the disability perspective in all aspects of its realization, monitoring and evaluation.

The commitment of Governments to disability-inclusive development has also been demonstrated in other recent development agreements, which provide further guidance in their respective areas of focus. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in March 2015, included persons with disabilities as agents of change. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted in July 2015, addressed the needs of persons with disabilities in the areas of social protection, employment, education, infrastructure, financial inclusion, technology and data. The World Humanitarian Summit, held in May 2016, launched the first-ever Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. Habitat III in October 2016 adopted a disability-inclusive New Urban Agenda, guiding urban development with the principles of Universal Design and accessibility for all.

Striving to achieve disability-inclusive development is not only the right thing to do, it is also the practical thing to do. Sustainable development for all can only be attained if persons with disabilities are equally included as both agents and beneficiaries as countries strive for a sustainable future. The success of the 2030 Agenda requires a participatory and inclusive approach in which all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, are engaged. The 2030 Agenda therefore presents an important opportunity to advance the goal of the United Nations: to promote economic and social progress and human rights toward a peaceful and prosperous world for all.

Ending poverty and hunger for all persons with disabilities (Goals 1 and 2)

Persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty than persons without disabilities due to barriers in society such as discrimination, limited access to education and employment and lack of inclusion in livelihood and other social programmes. National data on income poverty disaggregated by disability remain scarce, but **available data show that the proportion of persons with disabilities living under the national or international poverty line is higher, and in some countries double, than that of persons without disabilities.** Regarding food security, in developed countries, available data shows that the average percentage of persons with disabilities who are unable to afford a meal with protein every second

day is almost double that of persons without disabilities. More women with disabilities than men with disabilities are in such a situation, and the gender gap between women and men in terms of access to meals with protein is wider among persons with disabilities. In developing countries, data shows that persons with disabilities and their households are more likely to not always have food to eat, than persons without disabilities and their households. While financial inclusion can help persons with disabilities out of poverty, access to financial services such as banks remains restricted by the lack of physical and virtual accessibility of these services. In some countries, persons with disabilities find that more than 30 per cent of banks are not accessible.

Social protection programmes for persons with disabilities, which can be vital in facilitating an escape from poverty, have been adopted in many countries. **At least 168 countries have disability schemes that provide periodic cash benefits to persons with disabilities, while lump-sum benefits are provided in 11 countries.** In half of the countries with periodic benefits, these benefits cover mainly workers and their families in the formal economy, excluding children with disabilities and persons with disabilities who have not had the opportunity to contribute to social insurance for a sufficient period to be eligible for benefits. In 87 other countries however, schemes are fully or partially financed through taxes and have improved coverage. In only one third of these countries, schemes cover all persons with assessed disabilities regardless of their income status. In the rest of the countries, programmes cover only persons or households whose economic means fall below a certain threshold. Despite their existence, many persons with disabilities are not able to access social protection. **In some countries, more than 80 per cent of persons with disabilities who need welfare services cannot receive them.**

To end poverty and hunger for persons with disabilities, a number of actions should be considered:

- Design social protection policies and programmes to include persons with disabilities.
- Remove barriers and obstacles that persons with disabilities face in accessing and fully benefiting from social protection on an equal basis with others.
- Sensitize personnel of grant offices about barriers experienced by persons with disabilities to access social protection and approaches to overcome these barriers.
- Improve access to and accessibility of banking and other financial services, including mobile banking.
- Disaggregate data on poverty and hunger by disability status.
- Establish national monitoring and evaluation systems that periodically assess all social protection programmes regarding inclusion and positive impact on the situation of persons with disabilities.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being (Goal 3)

Persons with disabilities generally have more health-care needs than others – both standard needs and needs linked to impairments – and are therefore more vulnerable to the impact of low quality or inaccessible health-care services than others. Compared to persons without disabilities, persons with disabilities are more likely to have poor health: **among 43 countries, 42 per cent of persons with disabilities versus 6 per cent of persons without disabilities perceive their health as poor.** In some countries, less than 20 per cent of persons with disabilities report poor health, while in others more than 70 per cent of persons with disabilities report the same. The number of persons with disabilities who report poor health tends to be higher in countries with lower gross domestic product per capita, suggesting that increased availability of financial resources may provide the accessible health, basic and community services needed to achieve better health.

Access to health-care services remains a challenge for persons with disabilities, who are more than three times as likely to be unable to get health care when they need it. Access to rehabilitation services is also a challenge. In some countries, more than 50 per cent of persons with disabilities have an unmet need for these services. Lack of financial resources, lack of access to and accessibility of medical facilities and transport, as well as inadequate training of health personnel to accommodate persons with disabilities remain major challenges. Some countries have endeavoured to reform legal and policy frameworks and/or to address access to health-care services directly, including through anti-discrimination laws related to the health sector, disability laws or policy plans, and laws that guarantee access to health care for persons with specific health conditions (e.g. spinal cord injury) or specific populations (e.g. veterans). Although many of these laws are general and do not target disability-specific barriers, **six countries have explicit laws that guarantee access to health care for persons with disabilities.**

To achieve the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities, the following actions should be considered:

- Strengthen national legislation and policies on health care in line with the CRPD.
- Identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility in health-care facilities.
- Improve health-care coverage and affordability for persons with disabilities as part of universal approaches to health care.
- Train health-care personnel on disability inclusion and improve service delivery for persons with disabilities.
- Empower persons with disabilities to take control over their own health-care decisions, on the basis of informed consent.

- Prohibit discriminatory practices in health insurance and promote health insurance coverage for assistive products and rehabilitation services.
- Improve research and data to monitor, evaluate and strengthen health systems to include and deliver for persons with disabilities.

Accessing sexual and reproductive health-care services and reproductive rights for persons with disabilities (targets 3.7 and 5.6)

Persons with disabilities have equal needs to access sexual and reproductive health-care services as those without disabilities and have similar requirements for family planning and childbirth. However, misperceptions about persons with disabilities and the assumption that persons with disabilities are not sexually active has contributed to little attention being paid to ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to sexual and reproductive health-care services. **Limited evidence in a few developing countries shows that 29 per cent of births by mothers with disabilities are not attended by a skilled health worker and 22 per cent of married women with disabilities have an unmet need for family planning.** These percentages are higher in rural areas. Without access to sexual and reproductive health, persons with disabilities are at higher risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

Apart from the societal stereotypes, the barriers that persons with disabilities face to accessing sexual and reproductive health services include lack of accessibility of services and information. Persons with disabilities, particularly women and those with intellectual disabilities, also fear abuse and violation of their reproductive rights when accessing these services because many persons with disabilities have been subjected to involuntary sterilization in various countries.

While examples exist of national sexual and reproductive health policies and programmes that are inclusive of persons with disabilities, in most countries, persons with disabilities remain invisible in such frameworks, as well as in their monitoring and evaluation. A number of actions should be considered to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights:

- Develop national policies and laws that guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for persons with disabilities.
- Make sexual and reproductive health-care facilities and information accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Train sexual and reproductive care workers on disability inclusion, combat discriminatory practices and improve service delivery for persons with disabilities.

- Educate persons with disabilities, including adolescents with disabilities, on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track the implementation of policies and programmes on access to sexual and reproductive health for persons with disabilities.
- Improve research and data to monitor, evaluate and strengthen sexual and reproductive health and services for persons with disabilities.

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (Goal 4)

Persons with disabilities remain less likely to attend school and complete primary education and more likely to be illiterate than persons without disabilities. Available data reveals that, on average, one in three children with disabilities of primary school age is out of school, compared with one in seven children without disabilities. Primary school completion is also lower for children with disabilities. These trends are reflected in the lower literacy rate of persons with disabilities: **54 per cent of persons with disabilities compared to 77 per cent of persons without disabilities are literate. In some countries, more than 10 per cent of persons with disabilities have been refused entry into school because of their disability; and more than a quarter of persons with disabilities reported schools were not accessible or were hindering to them.** Crowdsourced data, mostly from developed countries, indicates that only 47 per cent of more than 30,000 education facilities are accessible for persons using wheelchairs.

Many countries continue to strengthen national policies and legal frameworks to improve access to education for persons with disabilities, with 34 out of 193 United Nations Member States guaranteeing in their constitutions the right to education for persons with disabilities or providing protection against discrimination based on disability in education. Yet, **only in 44 per cent of United Nations Member States, can students with disabilities be taught in the same classroom as other students. Despite this, progress has been made in recent years: 41 per cent of countries in 2017, as opposed to 17 per cent in 2013, provided appropriate materials and communication to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools.**

To achieve Goal 4 for persons with disabilities, in line with the CRPD, efforts are needed to implement and scale up the following actions:

- Strengthen national policies and the legal system to ensure access to quality education for all persons with disabilities.
- Build the capacity of policymakers as well as other decision makers at the community and national levels to enhance their knowledge on disability inclusion in education.

- Make schools and educational facilities accessible by creating an enabling environment for students with disabilities and by making physical and virtual environments accessible.
- Provide training to teachers and other education specialists to gain knowledge and experience in inclusive education for persons with disabilities.
- Adopt a learner-centred pedagogy which acknowledges that everyone has unique needs that can be accommodated through a continuum of teaching approaches.
- Engage civil society and local communities in inclusive education.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of policies and laws on inclusive education.
- Improve national collection and disaggregation of education indicators by disability.
- Explore online and smartphone crowdsourcing applications to obtain bottom-up information on the accessibility of schools for persons with disabilities.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls with disabilities (Goal 5)

Women with disabilities are often subjected to double discrimination due to their gender and disability status and continue to be at a disadvantage in most spheres of society and development. Available data suggests that **the gap is stark compared with men without disabilities: women with disabilities are three times more likely to have unmet needs for health care; three times more likely to be illiterate; two times less likely to be employed and two times less likely to use the Internet. Among those employed, women with disabilities are two times less likely to work as legislators, senior officials or managers.** Women with disabilities tend also to be in a worse position than women without disabilities. Moreover, women with disabilities are at heightened risk of suffering sexual violence compared to those without disabilities.

Compared with men with disabilities, women with disabilities are more likely to have unmet health-care needs; more likely to be unemployed or inactive in the labour market; and less likely to work as legislators, senior officials or managers. In poverty, lack of access to education and the Internet as well as physical violence, the evidence does not seem to indicate a further disadvantage for women with disabilities relative to men with disabilities, suggesting that in several countries attitudinal and environmental barriers against disability, not gender, are the major factor driving the disadvantage experienced by women with disabilities. However, for lack of access to employment and sexual violence, environmental barriers and negative attitudes against both gender and disability seem to play a significant role.

Many countries still address gender and disability issues separately without focusing on the intersection between the two, but there are increasingly positive initiatives. For instance, in Latin America, 17 out of 20 countries include disability in their national gender plans. However, only 6 out of 19 countries address gender in their disability laws. To fully achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls with disabilities, efforts should focus on the following:

- Address the needs and perspectives of women and girls with disabilities in national strategies or action plans on disability and on gender.
- Develop policies and programmes focused on women and girls with disabilities aiming at their full and equal participation in society.
- Support the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities by investing in their education and supporting their transition from school to work.
- Raise awareness on the needs of women and girls with disabilities and eliminate stigma and discrimination against them.
- Enhance the collection, dissemination and analysis of data on women and girls with disabilities and disaggregate and disseminate data by sex, age and disability.

Ensuring availability of water and sanitation (Goal 6)

Persons with disabilities, especially those living in developing countries, encounter challenges in access to water, sanitation and hygiene, including physical, institutional, social and attitudinal barriers. This is particularly true for persons with severe disabilities. Furthermore, in many countries persons with disabilities are less likely to live in households with access to improved water and sanitation, and less likely to live in a dwelling with hygiene and sanitation facilities on the premises. This can create difficulties for persons with disabilities who experience difficulties in mobility, in locating the bathroom and in waiting in line. Moreover, **evidence from a limited number of developing countries indicates that more than one in seven persons with disabilities finds the toilet at home hindering or not accessible.** Lack of accessibility of toilets outside the home is also a challenge and prevents persons with disabilities from participating in society. **Crowdsourced data, mostly from developed countries, indicates that only 69 per cent of public toilets are accessible for wheelchair users.** Evidence also suggests that many primary schools do not have sanitation facilities that are accessible by persons with reduced mobility.

Assistive technologies, such as specially designed handles for water pumps or toilets, ramps and handrails, and wider doors that are designed for persons with disabilities, have been used to overcome such challenges and make water, sanitation and hygiene accessible. Some countries have also made communal wells safe and physically accessible for persons with disabilities and have provided moveable toilet seats

to households with latrines, which have helped persons with disabilities and leg and/or back problems by reducing the need to sit or crawl on a wet latrine floor.

To achieve Goal 6 for persons with disabilities, it is imperative to focus on programmes that target challenges in access to water and sanitation through various steps:

- Involve all stakeholders, especially persons with disabilities.
- Invest and allocate financial resources to make water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in households and in settings outside the home accessible, prioritizing schools, workplaces, health facilities and communal facilities.
- Adopt a twin-track approach: mainstream disability in water and sanitation policies and programmes while at the same time developing disability-specific programmes.
- Share information and build capacity about low-cost inclusive interventions to scale them up.
- Raise awareness and end discrimination and stigma.
- Monitor progress through the collection of individual data.
- Collect, analyse and disseminate census and survey data on water, sanitation and hygiene access for persons with disabilities and disaggregate these data by type of disability, age and sex.
- Explore crowdsourcing applications to obtain bottom-up information on the accessibility of water and sanitation facilities for persons with disabilities to inform accessibility policies.
- Mainstream disability in international fora and global mechanisms working on water, sanitation and hygiene.

Ensuring access to energy (Goal 7)

Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy is vital for persons with disabilities. Assistive technology, used by many to facilitate equal participation in society and independent living, often requires electricity. Persons with disabilities are more likely to spend longer periods in their homes and therefore to consume more electricity, for example, to maintain adequate room temperature. Higher electricity consumption contributes to higher energy bills.

In many countries, persons with disabilities face more challenges in accessing modern energy than persons without disabilities. In 37 out of 44 developing countries, the percentage of households with access to electricity is lower for households with persons with disabilities than households without persons with disabilities. **In 17 countries, less than 50 per cent of households with persons with disabilities have access to electricity.** In developed countries, persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, are less likely than persons without disabilities to be able to keep their homes warm.

