



ERADICATING EXTREME POVERTY: ADDRESSING THE DISABILITY DISCONNECT

SIDE-EVENT BY DISABLED PEOPLE'S INTERNATIONAL
(DPI)

Co-sponsors: UNDESA, JICA, The Hans Foundation, GCAP

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INTRODUCTION: As per the World Health Organisation (WHO) there are 1 billion people with disabilities in the world. Of this, 800 million live in the Global South. The World Bank says that people with disabilities comprise 20 percent of the world's poorest. It is therefore a given that people with disabilities are at a much higher risk of facing poverty, deprivation and neglect.

People with disabilities are the world's largest minority, an invisible minority, which has been at the periphery of human rights and development. Their absence from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is an indication of this.

Now that the world is discoursing on a new development agenda post-2015 that will replace the MDGs, it is imperative that disability is an integral part of this. The thrust of post-2015 development agenda seems to be towards eradicating extreme poverty as is evident from the report of the High Level Panel on Post-2015 and the subsequent Secretary General's Report.

DPI feels that the discourse on bridging the disconnect between disability and eradication of extreme poverty and that the time for action is now. The side-event was one such effort to draw the attention of the various stakeholders towards this.

The objective of the side-event was to underscore how development is closely linked with social justice and how without addressing disability induced inequalities, it will be difficult to 'leave no one behind'. It also aimed to bring back the focus on grassroots leadership and their involvement in this process rather than the present top down method.

The side-event was chaired by H.E Luis Gallegos, Ambassador and PR of Ecuador to the UN; moderated by Shuaib Chalklen, UN Special Rapporteur on Disability and Kumari Selja, Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India was the Chief Guest.

THE SIDE-EVENT: Javed Abidi, Chairperson of DPI, welcomed everyone. He highlighted the importance of the day and also the fact that so many people had turned up for the side-event to talk about the importance of the issue. He also expressed his gratitude to the co-sponsors, especially UNDESA for the support without which the event would not have been possible.



Akiko Ito, Chief of the Secretariat on CRPD, DESA underlined the importance of the High Level Meeting and the fact that an outcome document has been achieved. “Where shall we take this, where shall we go from here? How can we take the goals and objectives of this outcome document to real, practical, actual changes on the ground, especially in developing countries?” she said.

Ambassador Gallegos also underlined the need for inclusion of disability in the post-2015 development agenda and the challenges ahead. Poverty is one of the worst forms of human rights violations, he stated and that there is a linkage between disability and poverty. The world has so far been unable to put it on the agenda of development. In the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities this issue has been touched under international cooperation. He highlighted the need to understand the complexities of the linkage between disability and poverty; ageing and poverty and the fact that approximately 40% of the world households have someone who has a disability.

Shuaib Chalklen, UN Special Rapporteur on Disability drew the connection of right to food and poverty. He also urged on the need to talk more about marginalised groups even within the disability community such as those living with leprosy or the outbreak of polio in countries of Africa.

Kenji Kuno, Disability Specialist, JICA talked about practical examples on bridging the gap between disability and development; bringing policy changes and capacity building and other efforts by JICA. The key component of these efforts is towards making the persons with disabilities as change agents. The problem, he said, stemmed from the fact that disability and development are discussed as two different issues and not as a cause and result.

Axel Leblois, President of G3ict talked about the role of ICT in participation in the society. He cited from G3ict’s work. For instance, 84% of the countries today do not have any legislation copyright exemption for the blind; two-thirds of the countries have no policy for accessible telephony; 15% of those who have some policy have almost no implementation of their position. That means over 80% of the CRPD ratifying countries are really doing nothing today to ensure that ICTs are accessible to persons with disabilities.



The need to address financial inclusion to address the gap between disability and development was touched upon by Joshua Goldstein, Principal Director of ACCION, Centre for Financial Inclusion. To break the poverty and disability linkage, it is important that more and more people with disabilities are enabled to participate in economic activities as opposed to being forced to live on state support, which in many countries are either going broke or not having enough or are simply non-existent.

Sweta Rawat, Executive Director of The Hans Foundation spoke about the need for all stakeholders to cooperate to not only create mechanisms and structures but also to ensure that they work.

The event also included some notable voices from the global South. These included Danlami Basharu of DPI Nigeria; Mohammad Loutfy from DPI Lebanon; Saowalak Thongkuay, Regional Development Officer of DPI Asia Pacific; Abia Akram, Global Coordinator of DPI's Emerging Women's Network; Mosharraf Hossain, Country Director, ADD Bangladesh, among others.

Chief Guest at the event, Kumari Selja, the Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India spoke about India's commitment towards disability issues.

Saima Wajeed Hussain, daughter of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and a key voice for autism in the sub-continent, also spoke on the efforts needed to raise the discourse on disability.

The issues that were discussed and the experiences that people shared ranged from involvement of people with disabilities in the decision making processes; issues of women with disabilities; advocacy with agencies like the World Bank to getting disability on to their agenda and role of the private sector.

IMPACT:

- The side-event attracted very high profile speakers and participants from across the world, including the Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment from India. Therefore, it is hoped that the discourse will be taken up at the highest level.



- Only side-event organised by a disabled people's organisation in the UN premises on the day of HLMDD.
- The need to hear the voices from Global South firmly underlined.
- Other international organisations working in the area of disability now motivated to talk about Global South in their discourses, a phenomenon that is already being noticed.
- From the perspective of India, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, the nodal Ministry for disability, made aware of the international discourse on disability & development. We were instrumental in ensuring India's presence at the HLMDD.