

Day 1 of HLPF preparatory expert group meetings- May 2021

State on the situation of people with disabilities as regards to SDG8.

Persons with disabilities face significant physical, attitudinal and other barriers which restrict their access to employment, meaning they are less likely to be active in formal labour markets and tend to pursue informal and insecure livelihoods. Globally, the ratio of employment to population for persons with disabilities aged 15 or older is 36 per cent on average. That ratio is 60 per cent for persons without disabilities.¹ Moreover, the type and degree of disability may impact persons with disabilities and their ability to secure employment differently. Persons with psychosocial disabilities are half as likely to be employed as persons with other types of disabilities² but 30% of governments in Low- and Middle-Income Countries offer no social support to persons with psychosocial disabilities³.

Even when persons with disabilities are employed, they are more likely to earn less⁴, work in worst conditions and have fewer opportunities for career development than their peers. This is due to entrenched stigma, discriminatory attitudes and practices, as well as negative assumptions about disabilities in the workplace⁵. Barriers to accessing education and training, as well as inaccessible workplaces and difficulties obtaining financial support to start a business also add to the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing job opportunities. These many obstacles mean many persons with disabilities are not able to secure a job and remain an underrepresented segment in the labour force⁶.

The over-representation of persons with disabilities among the poor and in the informal economy has also increased their risk of acquiring COVID-19. At the same time, COVID has exacerbated the existing inequalities that arise from the multiple barriers such as stigma, inaccessibility of transport and public services, increasing the risk of persons with disabilities experiencing the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. Already facing exclusion in employment⁷, persons with disabilities are

¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011. [Disability and Development Report](#), p. 152,

² UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011. [Disability and Development Report](#), p. 155, and OECD, 2009. [Sickness, disability and work: Keeping on track in the economic downturn—background paper](#)

³ Lee, H and Fraser, E, Social Development Direct, Disability Inclusion Helpdesk. [Who are the “bottom billion”? People with disabilities.](#)

⁴ Kruse, D., L. Schur, S. Rogers and M. Ameri, 2007. Why Do Workers with Disabilities Earn Less? Occupational Job Requirements and Disability Discrimination. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*

⁵ World Health Organization, & World Bank, 2011. [World report on disability](#), p. 240

⁶ Lange, A, 2014. Public Policy Lessons from Chile: Individuals with Disabilities – An Untapped Talent Pool (2nd ed., Vol. 19, pp. 29 – 41). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Public Policy Review. 1083-7523 [ISSN]

⁷ UN DESA, 2018. Disability and Development Report, [Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities](#)

more likely to lose their livelihood and experience greater difficulties accessing work during the recovery⁸.

Persons with disabilities are often left out of social protection systems due to discrimination, exclusion from work or being active in the informal economy⁹. As highlighted by the former Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, social protection systems 'are not only a powerful instrument for providing income security and reducing poverty and inequality, but play an important role in enhancing human potential, enabling individuals to access food, health care, education, employment and financial means¹⁰.' The pandemic has shown the importance of ensuring comprehensive social protection systems that are inclusive of persons with disabilities to enable persons with disabilities and their families to have income security in times of crisis and beyond.

While many countries have taken steps to address barriers to accessing employment through disability-inclusive national employment policies, non-discriminatory legislation or inclusive technical and vocational education policies, there are often gaps in implementation and lack of adequate enforcement mechanisms can undermine the effectiveness of such policies and legislation¹¹. States need to take steps to ensure non-discriminatory policies and legislation are effectively implemented so they can have a real impact in increasing labour market participation of persons with disabilities.

The right to work is a fundamental right and essential for realising many other rights, including ensuring the economic independence of persons with disabilities and their families and allowing them to live in dignity. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market is crucial to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 8 and will also support the achievement of SDG 10 as it can reduce social stigma, promote social justice and help reduce inequalities by empowering persons with disabilities to have greater and more active participation in society.

Contact

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⁸ Mitra, S. and Kruse, D., 2016. Are workers with disabilities more likely to be displaced?. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 27(14), pp.1550-1579.

⁹ Lee, H and Fraser, E. Social Development Direct, Disability Inclusion Helpdesk. [Who are the "bottom billion"? People with disabilities](#)

¹⁰ UN OHCHR, 2015. [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities to social protection, A/70/297](#)

¹¹ World Health Organization, & World Bank, 2011. [World report on disability](#), p. 240