



Canadian Network on Disability and Development

DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Now is the time for Action

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**Paper presented to CIDA by the working group on Disability and
Development**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's International Policy Statement – "A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Development" underscores, and confirms Poverty Reduction as the over-arching goal of Canada's Official development Assistance. Over the years people with disabilities have received short shrift as potential beneficiaries of development assistance.

Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Eliminating world poverty will not be achieved unless the rights and needs of people with disabilities are taken into account. Some harsh facts:

- 10% of the world's population have a disability, with 70% living in developing countries
- people with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the poorest of the poor, comprising 20% of this group. It is not the impairment per se creating poverty and dependency in people with disabilities, but their exclusion from mainstream social, economic and political opportunities.
- Only 2% of persons with disabilities have access to rehabilitation and appropriate basic services
- Only 1-2% of children with disabilities in developing countries receive education
- Mortality of children with disabilities can be as high as 80% even in countries where overall under-five mortality is below 20%

Each of the millennium development goals are impacted by disability and plans for achieving them highlights the importance of addressing disability.

2006 marks the 25th anniversary of the International Year of Disabled Persons. It is also the eve of the completion of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been adopted by the ad hoc committee effective as of August 2006 and will go to the General Assembly for adoption in late 2006 or early 2007. As Canada has taken leadership in the elaboration of the Convention, it must be prepared to demonstrate leadership in its implementation through "disability friendly" policies.

We recommend a two pronged approach which includes: increased support for international initiatives on the part of disability specific organizations; and inclusion of disability in all development initiatives.

In summary, the issues of disability must be addressed in Canada's foreign policy. We stand ready as a group of Canadian based NGOs and academics involved with international development programs to work with the government to make this a meaningful reality.



1. WHO WE ARE

We are a group of **Canadian** based NGO's (including international NGO's with Canadian operations) and academics involved with international development programs for persons with disabilities. We have committed to work together to increase the profile of disability issues within the government of Canada and in particular, within the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). We have been meeting over the past 12 months to develop an approach to begin the process of raising these issues in Canada.

Our current members include:

Blindness International (through the Canadian National Institute for the Blind)
Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL)
Canadian Paraplegic Association
CBMI Canada (Christian Blind Mission International)
Disability Rights Promotion International
International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation, University of Toronto
L'Arche Canada
Ontario Council for International Cooperation
Operation Eyesight Universal
Transforming Faces



2. THE ISSUE: DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT: INFLUENCING CANADIANS

Canada's International Policy Statement – "A Role of Pride and Influence in the World: Development" is described as "an ambitious but achievable plan for enhancing Canada's role in the fight against global poverty"¹. This statement underscores, and confirms Poverty Reduction as the over-arching goal of Canada's Official Development Assistance.

Over the years people with disabilities have received short shrift as potential beneficiaries of development assistance. Impairments have hampered their access, and that is further compounded by widespread negative attitudes toward people with disabilities.

"Disabled people are not only the most deprived human beings in the developing world, they are also the most neglected. It is important to acknowledge that more than 600 million people in the world live with some form of disability. More than 400 million of them live in developing countries, often amidst poverty, isolation and despair. Not only are they typically the poorest of the poor, but they also need more money and help than able-bodied people to overcome their handicaps, and attempt to live normal lives."²

It is clear that, Canada needs to develop strategies to specifically reach people with disabilities in order to make its desired impact on the fight against global poverty.

2.1 Disability, Poverty and Development

"Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Eliminating world poverty is unlikely to be achieved unless the rights and needs of people with disabilities are taken into account."³

According to the United Nations, about 10% of the world's population have a disability, and in addition, the World Bank estimates that one fifth of the world's poorest people have a disability⁴. Not only do people with disabilities experience disproportionately high rates of poverty, but being poor increases the likelihood of disability. Those living in chronic poverty often have limited access to land, healthcare, nutritious food, shelter, education and employment. Furthermore people in chronic poverty often live and work in hazardous conditions. All these factors can predispose to disability.

¹ Canada's Intl. Policy Statement – message from the Minister

² Sen, A. Wolfensohn, J. D. (Nobel Laureates) helping Disabled people out of the shadows Korea Times 12/21/04

³ Department for international development (DFID), 2000, Disability Poverty and Development, DFID, UK

⁴ Elwan, A. 1999, Poverty and Disability: A survey of the literature, World Bank



As many as half of the impairments experienced by people with disabilities are preventable, and are directly linked to poverty⁵. Poverty limits the chances for people to lead full lives and to improve their lives: very few people with disabilities have access to rehabilitation and appropriate basic services⁶. Poverty in a community also makes the implementation of the most basic services difficult, and the fulfilment of fundamental and basic human rights such as the right to life, food, education, and health care, a distant dream.

It is not the impairment per se creating poverty and dependency in people with disabilities, but their exclusion from mainstream social, economic and political opportunities. Persons with disabilities require more human and financial resources from their families and communities to support daily needs and activities, such as mobility, communication, medicines, transport to school, or technical devices. Besides the direct cost related to his or her impairment, persons with disabilities are often unable to go to school, to contribute to the livelihood of the family or interact with their communities. The burden of a disabled family member is borne by the whole family.

Women are particularly disadvantaged by a disabled family member as responsibility for care of people with disabilities is overwhelmingly consigned to girls and women.⁷ Constant care responsibilities create additional barriers, which further limit women's participation in economic, educational and social activities.

Communities and governments have felt little or no responsibility to deal with the challenges faced by people with disabilities and their families. Therefore disability is rarely seen as a matter of public policy and duty. In the majority of cases in developing countries, when services for people with disabilities do exist, they are funded by a small segment of the NGO donor community.

A review of the literature on the relationship between poverty and disability reveals the following facts:

- Persons with disabilities comprise 20% of the 'poorest of the poor' in the world (World Bank).
- At least 70% of persons with disabilities live in developing regions (UN).
- Only 2% of persons with disabilities have access to rehabilitation and appropriate basic services (UNHCHR).

⁵ DFID op. cit.

⁶ Despouy, 1993

⁷ Factsheet: Women and Disability. This factsheet was prepared by Rehabilitation International and the World Institute on Disability in July, 1995, for use of delegates to the UN 4th World Conference on Women and associated NGO Forum. Updated in 1997. <http://dawn.thot.net/fact.html>, accessed 21-10-05.



- Only 1-2% of children with disabilities in developing countries receive education (UN).
- Mortality of children with disabilities can be as high as 80% even in countries where overall under-five mortality is below 20% (UK DFID).
- Persons with disabilities are extremely vulnerable in situations of conflict (UK DFID).
- The special needs of persons with disabilities are often overlooked in relief operations (UK DFID).
- Over 30% of all impairments are caused by malnutrition and infectious diseases (UN).
- There are approximately 15,000-20,000 new landmine casualties each year, survivors of landmine explosions often have long term disabilities (ICBL).
- Relatively low cost and simple interventions are highly effective against disability (UK DFID).
- Built infrastructures which fail to consider disability, accentuate the exclusion persons with disabilities face. Yet inclusion of disability considerations into an initial design, adds on average just 0.5% to 1.0% to the cost of a building project. (World Bank, 2000) The inclusion of disability considerations in the design phase enables projects to better mitigate and/or prevent possible causes of disability amongst users of the built infrastructure.
- International instruments aimed at promoting the equality of rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities include: the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities; the UN Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunity for Persons with Disabilities; and Convention 159 of the International Labor Organisation on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities; The World Bank Global Partnership for Disabilities and Development.
- A UN Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Promote and Protect the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities has been adopted by the ad hoc committee effective as of August 2006 and will go to the General Assembly for adoption in late 2006 or early 2007.

2.2 Disability and the Millennium Development Goals

One of the specific goals for Canada's development cooperation policy and programs is to: Deliver visible, durable impact on the world's key development challenges as identified in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁸

The World Bank has stated that "The Millennium Development Goals, a commitment for the international community to expand the vision of development cannot be achieved without taking into consideration the needs of people with disabilities"⁹

⁸ Canada's Intl. Policy Statement: Development 2005

⁹ Wolfensohn, James D. Disability and Development, May 2004



The following highlights the relevance and importance of addressing disability to attain each of the MDGs

2.2.1 Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Of the estimated over 600 million persons with disabilities worldwide (about 10% of the world's population), 70 per cent live in developing countries, and according to UN statistics, 82 per cent live below the poverty line¹⁰. The World Bank estimates that persons with disabilities comprise about 20% of the poorest of the poor¹¹.
- Disability affects not only the individual, but also their families and communities, eg. child carers of disabled family members are not able to attend school. The lives of 25% of the population in the Asia-Pacific region are believed to be impacted by disability¹² - this represents a significant burden on the potential productive human capital.
- As many as 50 per cent of disabilities are preventable and directly linked to poverty¹³.
- Hunger and malnutrition, and disability and poverty are undeniably intertwined; malnutrition causes about 20 per cent of impairments¹⁴.

2.2.2 Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

- United Nations studies show that only 1-2% of children with disabilities in developing countries receive an education¹⁵.
- United Nations Centre for Human Rights estimates that only 2% of persons with disabilities have access to rehabilitation and appropriate basic services¹⁶ (access to these services is essential to enable children with disabilities to attend school).

The Dakar Framework for Action – Education for All¹⁷, and the Salamanca Framework for Action on Special Needs Education¹⁸ provide guidance on actions to achieve this target with respect to children with disabilities.

¹⁰ Hope, T. 2003, 'DISABILITIES: Aid Groups Call for A UN Convention To Protect Rights', *UNWire*, 14 Feb.

¹¹ Elwan, A. 1999, *Poverty and Disability: A Survey of the Literature*, World Bank.

¹² Asian Development Bank (ADB) 2002, *Regional Workshop on Disability and Development – Draft Recommendations on Disability*, Manila, October 2002.

¹³ DFID. Op. cit

¹⁴ DFID, op. cit.

¹⁵ UNESCO 1998, *From Special Needs Education to Education for All*.

¹⁶ DFID, op. cit.

¹⁷ UNESCO 2000, *The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*.

¹⁸ UNESCO 1994, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*.



2.2.3 Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Women with disabilities are often doubly disadvantaged, through their status as women and as persons with disabilities, and hence represent one of the most marginalised groups in society.
- Girls with disabilities attend school less frequently than boys with disabilities¹⁹.
- Females with disabilities are twice to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than females with no disabilities²⁰.

2.2.4 Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

- Mortality of children with disabilities can be as high as 80% even in countries where overall under-five mortality is below 20%²¹.
- 1 in 10 children are born with, or acquire, a disability²².
- For every child killed by armed conflict, three are injured or permanently disabled. Over 10 million children are psychologically traumatised by armed conflict²³.

2.2.5 Goal 5: Improve maternal health

- As many as 20 million women a year suffer disability & long term complications as a result of pregnancy & childbirth, hence approximately every minute 30 women are injured or disabled from childbirth²⁴.
- A major cause of disability in children includes abnormal pre-natal or peri-natal events²⁵. A large number of perinatal disabilities in children can be prevented or ameliorated by skilled birth attendants.

2.2.6 Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

- HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis are the 1st, 6th and 9th leading causes of losses in disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in high mortality countries respectively²⁶. DALYs are the number of healthy years of life lost due to premature death and disability.
- Forty-two million people are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS²⁷. UNAIDS believes that HIV/AIDS should be considered a disability in terms of the discrimination that

¹⁹ DFID, op. cit.

²⁰ DFID, op. cit.

²¹ DFID, op. cit.

²² UNICEF, *Child protection, child disabilities: Global Magnitude and basic facts*. Available: <http://www.unicef.org/programme/cprotection/focus/disabilities/facts.htm> Accessed 13 June 2003.

²³ UNICEF, op. cit.

²⁴ UN Population Fund (UNFPA), *UNFPA Promotes Safe Motherhood*. Available: <http://www.unfpa.org/rh/mothers/index.htm> Accessed 28 April 2003.

²⁵ UNICEF 1980, *Childhood Disability: Its Prevention and Rehabilitation*, UNICEF Document E/ICEF/L/1410.

²⁶ WHO 2002a, *World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life*, Geneva.

²⁷ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2003, *Human Development Report 2003*, New York.



occurs due to HIV/AIDS, and in terms of the legal protection needed to guard against that discrimination²⁸.

- HIV/AIDS represents a significant threat to disabled individuals and populations at rates least comparable to and possibly greater than rates found in the general public. These individuals are not included in most AIDS outreach efforts. Given the size of the global population of people with disabilities and the degree of risk posed by the AIDS epidemic, it seems evident that the AIDS crisis cannot be addressed successfully unless people with disabilities are routinely part of the AIDS intervention programs.²⁹
- The estimated annual global burden of malaria is 1.1 million deaths, 300-500 million cases, and 44 million DALYs³⁰. About 1 in 10 children suffer from neurological impairment after cerebral malaria, including epilepsy, learning disabilities and loss of coordination³¹.
- Each year, 1% of the global population is infected with Tuberculosis, and 5-10% of those infected become sick or infectious, and can develop disabilities (e.g. epilepsy). The global burden of disease is over 36 million DALYs. The combination of Tuberculosis and HIV accelerates progress of the other disease^{32 33}.
- Globally, about 450 million people suffer from mental or neurological disorders. Major depression is the leading cause of disability, and five of the 13 leading causes of years lived with a disability are mental disorders. Poverty is a powerful determinant of mental disorders, and without support sufferers, and their families, are likely to fall into the vicious circle of poverty and mental disorder³⁴.

2.2.7 Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Indicator: Proportion of population with access to improved water and sanitation

- Trachoma is a main cause of preventable blindness, with four million sufferers worldwide, and six million permanently blinded. Trachoma can be prevented with access to safe water for washing of face and hands³⁵, in addition to environmental sanitation including fly control.

²⁸ UNAIDS 1996, Statement by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Forty-eighth Session, Item 16 of the Agenda, HIV/AIDS and Disability. Available:

<http://www.unaids.org/publications/documents/human/law/disabsc.html> Accessed 25 September 2002.

²⁹ World Bank/Yale University, *HIV/AIDS and Disability: Capturing Hidden Voices*. April 2004.

³⁰ WHO 2002b, *Malaria - Strategic direction for research*.

Available: <http://www.who.int/tdr/diseases/malaria/direction.htm> Accessed 29 July 2003.

³¹ Wellcome Trust, *Malaria and people*.

Available: http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/en/malaria/MalariaAndPeople/mp_neurd1.html. Accessed 28 July 2003.

³² World Health Organisation (WHO) 2001, *Fact Sheet No 165 – Epilepsy: Epidemiology, Etiology and Prognosis*, Revised February 2001. Available: <http://www.who.int/inf-fs/en/fact165.html>

³³ WHO 2003, *Tuberculosis Disease Information*. Available: <http://www.who.int/tdr/diseases/tb/diseaseinfo.htm> Accessed 29 July 2003.

³⁴ WHO 2002c, *Mental health: responding to the call for action, Report by the Secretariat*, 55th World Health Assembly A55/18, 11 April 2002.

³⁵ WaterAid 2003, *Issue Sheet 3: Water and sanitation related diseases*, WaterAid, UK.



2.2.8 Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- The active cooperation and participation of all members in the community is important for achieving sustainable development. National and international organisations in the world community, including Disabled Person's Organisations (DPOs), have an important role to play in the awareness-raising of disability issues, and the empowerment of persons with disabilities and their carers to participate in development. The strengthening of national DPOs and their alliances with relevant organisations in their own country, and in donor countries, should promote good governance with more accountable governments in relation to disabilities in developing countries.
- The inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream services is important, along with specialised interventions where necessary, and would constitute a twin track approach to disability in all development activities.

3. NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION

For many reasons now is the time for Canada to take action:

- Too many years have gone by without attention to this issue
- 2006 marks the 25th anniversary of the International Year of disabled Persons;
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is nearing completion and will likely be passed by the UN in Sept 2006 or early in 2007. As Canada has taken leadership in the elaboration of the Convention, it will also want to demonstrate leadership in its implementation through "disability friendly" policies;
- Prime Minister Harper announced, as part of his election platform, that his government is committed to the development of a National Disability Act. Again, federal departments will be expected to show leadership in this area.
- a number of other countries providing development assistance have already incorporated disability as a priority within their development programming objectives.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 2002 the process of mainstreaming disability in the development agenda has gained some momentum but faces major uphill challenges to move from general awareness of disability towards more operational commitment by governments, private sector and civil society.

Disability in development needs to be ratcheted up to the equivalence of cross cutting themes like gender, environment and sustainability.



A Two pronged approach is required:

- disability specific organizations
 - create a consortium in Canada who can advise and speak to international issues related to disability
 - increase support for international initiatives to address this issue in countries identified as development partner countries.
- inclusion of disability in all development initiatives for substantial and sustainable progress to occur.
 - create a disability lens through which to view development initiatives (similar to the lens applied to gender, environment, etc).
 - create positions within foreign affairs and CIDA who can advise on policy and programs.

5. SUMMARY

The issues of disability must be addressed in Canada's foreign policy. We stand ready as a group to work with the government to make this a meaningful reality.

Contacts:

Penny Hartin, Executive Director
Blindness International
The Canadian National Institute for the Blind
and
President, North America/Caribbean Region,
World Blind Union
1929 Bayview Avenue
Toronto ON M4G 3E8
416-486-2500 x 7689
Email: penny.hartin@cnib.ca

Penny Parnes, Director
International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation,
University of Toronto
500 University Avenue, Suite 160
Toronto, ON M5G 1V7
416 – 946-8556
Email: penny.parnes@utoronto.ca