



World Health Organization

Description of Committee

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the authority on international health within the United Nations system. Established April 7, 1948, the WHO is responsible for producing health guidelines; promoting health research and helping countries address public health issues.¹ Along with its Member States, the agency works for the “attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.” The organization defines health as not just the absence of physical illness, but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being.²



World Health Organization

The WHO is governed by the World Health Assembly (WHA). Composed of 193 member states and two associate members, WHA meets at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland each year to set policies, programs and the annual budget for the Organization.³ The Assembly also elects members of 34-member Executive Board for three year terms⁴ and Director-General for five year terms. The current Director-General is Dr. Margaret Chan of Hong Kong.⁵ Additionally, six regional committees focus on health matters of regional nature.⁶

To overcome global health concerns, WHO and its Member States work with many partners around the world, including other UN agencies, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), WHO collaborating centers and the private sector.⁷ It also employs thousands of public health experts around the world, including doctors, epidemiologists, managers, administrators and other professionals.⁸

Since the day of its establishment the WHO had Achieved many successes, some of them include eradication of small pox in 1979, in 1983 the WHO was the first one to identify HIV (France), established global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988, in 2003 adopted its first treaty “WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control” and etc.



Disabilities in the Context of Global Health and Poverty

Introduction

Defining Disability and Poverty

Poverty is a state when a person lacks a certain amount of material possessions.⁹ There are approximately 1.2 billion people in the world living in extreme poverty, which is living on less than \$1 per day.¹⁰ It is important to understand that an issue of poverty goes far beyond a lack of financial capita; people living in poverty are facing poor living conditions, lack of sanitation, or lack of access to clean water every day. More than that, the relationship between ill health and poverty is cyclical. Ill health can drive a person into poverty and vice versa. When a poor individual falls ill, he or she can lose the ability to work for a period of time, thus losing income needed to maintain his or her livelihood. Following from that, family members may also need to stop working or attending school to look after the sick. Due to absence of income, many families are forced to sell land or livestock, lessening their ability to earn money in the future. This downward spiral of lost income and high healthcare costs makes it extremely difficult for household for household to escape poverty once the poverty-ill health cycle begins.¹¹



The WHO defines disabilities as an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an *activity limitation* is a difficulty encountered by a person in executing a task or action; while a *participation restriction* is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.¹² (WHO) We can conclude, disability is a consequence of damage on physical, emotional, mental, sensory, cognitive, or developmental health of a person. Disability can be present from birth or obtained during person's life. Since, some disabilities occur later in life, a good example would be when an individual in the developing world obtained a disability on the workplace, and due to that could not work anymore. So the poverty-ill health cycle had begun.

To get a better understanding of disability, it is important to look at it as a part of human condition. It is most likely that somebody in your family has a disability, or had it for a short period of time, for example when somebody breaks a leg, and can't go to work anymore. The rest of the family has to make changes in their own schedules that can lead to somebody missing class or work.

Disabilities in the Developing World

Today, around ten per cent of the world population, or 650 million people, live with a disability. They are the world's largest minority group. According to the WHO, due to medical advances, population growth and aging process the figures are increasing.

Facts on people with disabilities in the developing world:





- Eighty percent of people with disabilities live in the developing world, according to UN Development Program,
- Organization on Economic Co-operation and Development says that on average 19 per cent of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11 per cent among the better educated, so disability rates are much higher amongst groups with lower education,
- In most developing countries women report higher incidents of disability than men. Women with disabilities are recognized to be multiply disadvantaged, experiencing exclusion

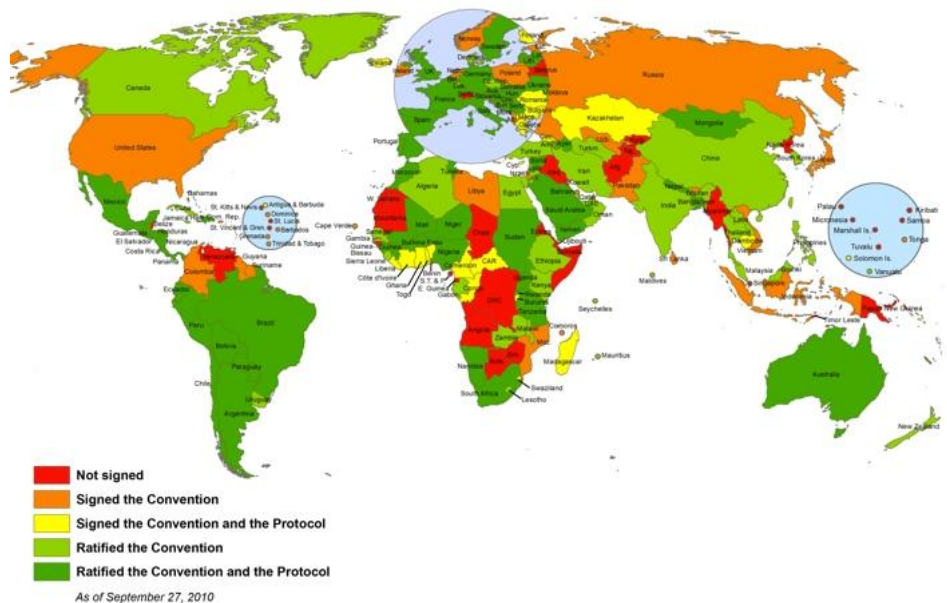
on account of their gender and their disability. Women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. A small 2004 survey in Orissa, India, found that virtually all of the women and girls with disabilities were beaten at home, 25 per cent of women with intellectual disabilities had been raped and 6 per cent of women with disabilities had been forcibly sterilized,

- 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,
- According to UNICEF, 30 per cent of street youths have some kind of disability,
- Comparative studies on disability legislation shows that only 45 countries out of over than 150 have anti-discrimination and other disability-specific laws,
- According to UNESCO, ninety per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school,
- 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,
- 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,
- 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,

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



- Research indicates that violence against children with disabilities occurs at annual rates at least 1.7 times greater than for their peers without disabilities.¹³

People with disabilities have to face a spectrum of injustice, starting with lack of education, bullying, employment, gender and other kinds of discrimination. Unfortunately, overall people with disabilities are more likely to experience social and economic disadvantage.

Moreover, disability is a human right issue, because in spite of a disability every human has a set of rights he is obliged to.

“People with disabilities experience inequalities – for example, when they are denied equal access to health care, employment, education, or political participation because of their disability. People with disabilities are subject to violations of dignity – for example, when they are subjected to violence, abuse, prejudice, or disrespect because of their disability. Some people with disability are denied autonomy – for example, when they are subjected to involuntary sterilization, or when they are confined in institutions against their will, or when they are regarded as legally incompetent because of their disability.”¹⁴

This also makes disability a development issue. Social and economic problems that are derived from disability on a bigger scale lead to low country’s GDP and high poverty rates. Because poverty and disability are closely correlated it is impossible to address one issue without touching basis with another. Interestingly, when a person has a disability, a family has to spent more money on healthcare, which makes household of the same income less economically equal.¹⁵

International Action

The United Nations formally agreed on the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, it is a first human rights world treaty to ever enhance and protect the opportunities of the biggest minority in this world. In 2011 there were 99 countries out of 147 signatory, had ratified the convention. These countries are required to adopt national laws and in some cases remove old ones, so persons with disabilities have equal rights in education, employment, can inherit and own property, not be discriminated against in marriage, and not be unwilling subjects in medical experiments.¹⁶

Other UN agencies do close or related work to disability issue. The WHO works very closely on this issue; it prepares annual world report on disability and brings more awareness to this global problem. There and many Non- Governmental Organizations, such as Health and Disability, that work closely with persons with disabilities on helping them declare their rights and lead a full life.

MDGs



Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals that were set by the UN during the Millennium Summit in 2000. These goals are set to tackle poverty by the year of 2015. The MDGs are a compact between the developing and



developed world, which aims to illuminate poverty by trade, development assistance, debt relief, access to essential medicines, and technology transfer. When some background information mentions people with disabilities, they are they are not referred to in the MDGs, or in the material that describes how to achieve them.¹⁷ Many believe that their plan has omitted discussion of issues that specifically involve serving those who are disabled. Nearly 70 per cent of the disabled live in the developing countries, the WHO also established that 575 million of those live below the poverty line.

As a response, the 2010 MDG report mentions disabilities as an important aspect of achieving the goals. Limited opportunities facing children with disabilities, and the link between disability and marginalization in education contribute and stand as an obstacle on the way of tackling poverty. The Ministerial Declaration of July 2010 recognizes disability as a cross-cutting issue essential for the attainment of the MDGs, emphasizing the need to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination, or excluded from participation in the implementation of the MDGs.¹⁸

The General Assembly in September 2010 adopted the resolution “Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals,” which recognizes that “policies and actions must also focus on persons with disabilities, so that they benefit from progress towards achieving the MDGs”.



QUESTIONS/IDEAS TO CONSIDER

1. What is the WHO? Who governs the WHO, and what is the name of Director-General?
2. What are the main achievements of the WHO
3. Define poverty and disability? What makes a person disabled?
4. Explain the cyclical relationship between poverty and ill health on the example of disability. Why can't we talk about disability without taking into account poverty?
5. Why is it a global issue?
6. Why is it important to address an issue of disability especially in the developing world?
7. What privileges do people in the developed world have that people in the developing world don't?
8. What kind of injustice do people with disabilities face on a daily basis, give examples?
9. What do world organizations do to bring attention to the issue of disability?
10. What are MDGs? List all eight goals?
11. Why can't MDGs be faced without taking into account disability?
12. Do you know anybody with a disability?
13. What can we do in our daily life to help people with disabilities feel more inclusive?

Additional Resources

“World Report on Disability” WHO http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240685215_eng.pdf

The report contains a lot of valuable information on disabilities in the developing countries, and suggests ways of reaching development while at the same time accounting for the disabilities

www.who.org An official WHO website has a lot of valuable information and fact on different world health problems, as well as disability

www.idrmnet.org International Disability Rights Monitor, the website has a lot of good resources and data on the topic

United Nations Enable Film Festival 2012

1. Think big. Overcome barriers (1.47) (Global)
2. The British Paraorchestra - True Colors (4.13) (United Kingdom)
3. Carry on (3.40) (Kenya)
4. Inclusion (7.00) (Japan)
5. My Story - Kazol Rekha (3.23) (Bangladesh)
6. Long Shot: The Kevin Laue Story (7.00) (United States)
7. Don't Leave Me Out! (3.30) (Global)
8. Džina Kadrić – My Story (2.21) and Nadza Suljovic (1.00) (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
9. Creating a World as it Should Be: The Power of Disabled Women Activists (12.29) Global
10. London 2012 – Best Games Ever (4.02) (Global)



11. Diverse Universes (6.49) (Argentina)
12. My wish upon a star (11.14) (Hong Kong, China, SAR)
13. Body and Soul (54.00) (Mozambique)

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- ³ “Working for Health”, p.2
- ⁴ “Executive Board.” WHO. <http://ww.who.int/medicentre/events.governance/eb/en/>.
- ⁵ “Director=General: Dr. Margaret Chan.” WHO. <http://www.who.int/dg/en/> .
- ⁶ “Working for Health.” P.2
- ⁷ Ibid. p.2
- ⁸ www.who/about
- ⁹ "Poverty (sociology)". britannica.com. Retrieved 2010-10-24.
- ¹⁰ World Bank
- ¹¹ Walraven, Gijs:Health and Poverty (Washington DC, Earthscan 2011), p. 3
- ¹² WHO disability
- ¹³ “Factsheet on persons with Disability.” United Nation Enable. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=18>
- ¹⁴ “World Report on Disability.” WHO. Report p. 9 http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240685215_eng.pdf
- ¹⁵“World Report on Disability.” WHO. http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789240685215_eng.pdf . p11
- ¹⁶ ^ "UN Enable – Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". United Nations. Retrieved August 11, 2012.
- ¹⁷ MDG world
- ¹⁸ Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. New York, United Nations, Economic and Social Council, 2010 (E/2010/L.8, OP 9).

TERMS AND CONCEPTS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Term: definition

Term 2: definition...

