

Factsheet: main messages and recommendations

The *World report on disability* is the first of its kind, providing global guidance on implementing the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) and giving an extensive picture of the situation of people with disabilities, their needs and unmet needs, and the barriers they face to participating fully in their societies. Successive chapters document data; health; rehabilitation; assistance and support; enabling environments; education; and employment. For each area, the Report highlights a range of good practice examples which Governments and civil society can emulate, to help establish an inclusive and enabling society in which people with disabilities can flourish.

The main messages of the report are as follows:

There has been a paradigm shift in approaches to disability. In recent decades the move has been away from a medical understanding towards a social understanding. Disability arises from the interaction between people with a health condition and their environment. The CRPD reflects this emphasis on removing environmental barriers which prevent inclusion.

Disability prevalence is high and growing. There are over one billion people with disabilities in the world, of whom between 110-190 million experience very significant difficulties. This corresponds to about 15% of the world's population and is higher than previous World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, which date from the 1970s and suggested a figure of around 10%. The prevalence of disability is growing due to population ageing and the global increase in chronic health conditions. Patterns of disability in a particular country are influenced by trends in health conditions and trends in environmental and other factors –such as road traffic crashes, natural disasters, conflict, diet and substance abuse.

Disability disproportionately affects vulnerable populations. Disability is more common among women, older people and households that are poor. Lower income countries have a higher prevalence of disability than higher income countries.

Disability is very diverse. Stereotypical views of disability emphasize wheelchair users and a few other “classic” groups such as blind people and deaf people. However, the disability experience varies greatly. While disability correlates with disadvantage, not all people with disabilities are equally disadvantaged. School enrolment rates differ, with children with physical impairments generally faring better than those with intellectual or sensory impairments. Those most excluded from the labour market are often those with mental health difficulties or intellectual impairments. People with more severe impairments often experience greater disadvantage.

People with disabilities face widespread barriers in accessing services (health, education, employment, transport as well as information). These include inadequate policies and standards, negative attitudes, lack of service provision, inadequate funding, lack of accessibility, inadequate information and communication and lack of participation in decisions that directly affect their lives.

People with disabilities have worse health and socioeconomic outcomes. Across the world, people with disabilities have poorer health, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities.

Many of the barriers people with disabilities face are avoidable and the disadvantage associated with disability can be overcome.

The cross cutting recommendations of the report, based on the main findings, are as follows:

1: Enable access to all mainstream systems and services. People with disabilities have ordinary needs, which can and should be met through mainstream programmes and services. Mainstreaming is the process by which governments and other stakeholders address the barriers that exclude persons with disabilities from participating equally in any service intended for the general public, such as education, health, employment, and social services. This requires changes to laws, policies, institutions and environments. Mainstreaming not only fulfils the human rights of persons with disabilities, it can also be more cost effective.

2: Invest in programmes and services for people with disabilities. Some people with disabilities may require access to specific measures, such as rehabilitation, support services, or vocational training, which can improve functioning and independence and foster participation in society.

3: Adopt a national disability strategy and plan of action. All sectors and stakeholders should collaborate on a strategy to improve the well-being of people with disabilities. This will help improve coordination between sectors and services. Progress should be monitored closely.

4: Involve people with disabilities. In formulating and implementing policies, laws and services, people with disabilities should be consulted and actively involved. At an individual level, persons with disabilities are entitled to have control over their lives and therefore need to be consulted on issues that concern them directly.

5: Improve human resource capacity. Human resource capacity can be improved through effective education, training and recruitment. For example training of health professionals, architects and designers should include relevant content on disability and be based on human rights principles.

6: Provide adequate funding and improve affordability. Adequate and sustainable funding of publicly provided services is needed to remove financial barriers to access and ensure that good quality services are provided.

7: Increase public awareness and understanding about disability. Mutual respect and understanding contribute to an inclusive society. It is vital to improve public understanding of disability, confront negative perceptions, and represent disability fairly.

8: Improve the availability and quality of data on disability. Data need to be standardized and internationally comparable to benchmark and monitor progress on disability policies and on the implementation of the CRPD nationally and internationally. At the national level, disability should be included in data collection. Dedicated disability surveys can also be carried out to gain more comprehensive information.

9: Strengthen and support research on disability. Research is essential for increasing public understanding about disability, informing disability policy and programmes, and efficiently allocating resources. More research is needed, not just about the lives of people with disabilities, but also about social barriers, and how these can be overcome.

Source: this fact sheet is based on the *World report on disability*. To download a copy of the report, please go to www.who.int/disabilities/world_report Copies of this document are available from the Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, Switzerland. Email: mackenzier@who.int



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