

DCDD Newsletter 11, October 2005:

The Millennium Development Goals cause great debate worldwide, also in this 11th DCDD newsletter. This article is a collection of eight responses to a discussion statement on the MDGs, from Asian countries and from Dutch development NGOs.

People with disabilities excluded from Millennium Goals?

There is a great debate taking place as to whether the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be reached or not. In general, criticism dominates. What is certain, however, is that if disabled people are excluded from development processes, then the Millennium Development Goals will only ever be words on paper. According to World Bank figures, 17% of all people with an income of less than one dollar are disabled or suffer from a chronic disease. However, none of the indicators mentions people with disabilities. It cannot be proved that there is a mainstreaming effect for people with disabilities. A so-called inclusive approach will not work if no specific attention is given to this group of people who are in a disadvantaged situation. If development included disabled people as well, the world would have a much better chance of reaching the goals that were set for 2015.

Discussion statement:

"Without specific attention being paid to people with disabilities the Millennium Development Goals will not be reached."



Exclusion will become a greater burden

Poverty reduction and improving the quality of life for all the people in Asia and the Pacific has become the overarching objective of the World Leaders. Unfortunately this goal is unlikely to be achieved because disability, which is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, has not been included in the Millennium Development Goals. People with disabilities are among the poorest of the poor, especially women and children with disabilities. They are also among the most vulnerable, deserving special attention because their standard of living falls far below the poverty line and their capacity for participating in economic activities can be severely limited by disability. To exclude people with disabilities from the Millennium Development Goals will have a negative effect on social and economic development. It will place a burden on every country throughout the world. A development, in which all groups, especially people with disabilities, are not mainstreamed in economic, social, political, and cultural development activities, will make people disillusioned and frustrated.

Ng y San, Program Manager for Disability Action Council in Cambodia. Contact by email: ngysan@dac.org.kh

The wearer of the shoe knows where it pinches

The Millennium Development Goals are quite ambitious and broad-based and thus have a tendency to tackle issues halfway. Unless specific attention is paid to people with disabilities, the threat remains that these goals will not be realised. Whilst the goals talk about eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, we, the disabled, remain the poorest of the poor all over the world. It is ironic to try and achieve these goals without paying attention to us. It is only the wearer of the shoe who really knows where it pinches, hence the need for our support. Let the disabled take a leading role in finding lasting solutions to their own problems. We are still discriminated against in educational systems. Infrastructure and social systems make it hard for us to participate actively in the development processes. No focus has been paid to fighting HIV/AIDS amongst disabled people. Giving specific attention to people with disabilities in the implementation of the millennium goals will inject expert knowledge from us to scale up the efforts towards meeting the target goals by 2015. Nothing about us - without us!



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Do the disability check

When the Millennium Development Goals were formulated by the United Nations, the member states were looking for minimum standards of the quality of life of poor people. Unfortunately in these millennium goals, people with disabilities are not mentioned at all. This means discrimination from the development process by the UN and its member states. For me it really is a shame to see these thought patterns in world leaders, policymakers and peace builders. There is a vicious relationship between poverty and disability. Addressing this should have been one of the main tasks of the Millennium Development Goals. No-one's life should be turned into a disabled one because of poverty, and no-one should become poor anymore because of disAbility. The

millennium goals should be for all, otherwise a whole group of people will be excluded. disAbility experts or disabled people should be involved in all the steps, so that, in the Millennium Development Goals, special attention can be given to the mainstreaming of disadvantaged groups. Documents like the millennium goals need be judged or checked as to whether they are disability sensitized or not.

Shahidul Haque, Chief Executive of SARP (Social Assistance and Rehabilitation of the Physically Vulnerable) in Bangladesh. Contact by email: shaque@bd.drik.net. Read a more extensive version of the reply by Shahidul Haque at the end of this document.

People, not averages

Without improving the lives of disabled people, achieving the Millennium Development Goals is not possible. But the problem with the millennium goals is that they are about averages and do not differentiate between different groups of vulnerable people. For governments and donors eager to show results to their tax payers, it is tempting to go for the quick wins. But if averages may then rise, this by no means implies that the situation of the worst-off has improved. Those who are amongst the



most difficult to reach and who need the most attention, such as many disabled people, are often not visible in the Millennium Development Goals graphs. From a human rights perspective – which is, after all, where the millennium goals originated from - this is totally unacceptable. So the millennium goals are helpful, as they show the urgent need to reduce poverty, to provide more and better aid, to promote fair trade and to increase debt relief, but policy makers need to be constantly reminded that Millennium Development Goals are about people, not about averages.

Ellen Verheul, Project Leader at Wemos, The Netherlands. Contact by email: ellen.verheul@wemos.nl



Averages lead to deterioration

Cordaid does not entirely support the discussion statement because there are many different factors which play a role in attaining the millennium targets, not just giving specific attention to people with disabilities. We believe that a specific focus on people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups of people is necessary to enable these groups to participate equally in society. Unfortunately there isn't a specific Millennium Development Goal aimed at improving the living conditions and the position of vulnerable groups in society. Generally, the Millennium

Development Goals have been formulated as improvements of the national averages. This can even make the situation of the poorest and most vulnerable groups deteriorate, because policymakers may decide to exclude the groups that are most difficult to reach in their attempts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is an important shortcoming of the millennium targets that they can be achieved without giving any specific attention to handicapped people. It is, therefore, necessary to reformulate the millennium targets so that these targets must also be achieved for at least half of the poorest and most vulnerable groups of people.

Rens Rutten, Policy Officer of Cordaid, The Netherlands. Contact by email: rens.rutten@cordaid.nl

Supporting policy is required

There is nothing wrong with the way that the millennium targets are formulated in themselves. They focus efforts made in the development sector and make the concept of poverty alleviation more concrete and tangible. This makes it clear publicly that there is still a lot to do. But time and time again it becomes clear that there are groups of people who are not reached by regular poverty alleviation programmes. These groups may be older people, minority groups or women but also, and all too often, people with disabilities. Where the millennium targets speak of 'halving' of 'reducing', it is the most vulnerable groups who will lag behind. That is why VSO Nederland believes that interventions aimed specifically at these target groups also must be supported. It is only in this way that they can be reached and can profit from the intended improvements. However relevant it is in itself that the millennium targets can be realised for people with disabilities, without supporting policy aimed directly at these groups, they will not profit from the outcome of all the efforts made.



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Education, disabled women and child mortality



It was probably assumed by the architects of the Millennium Development Goals that combating hunger and disease, illiteracy and child mortality, HIV/AIDS and gender empowerment would somehow also include in its net the 1 billion people with disabilities who escape all other development programmes because of their lack of a voice. Logically it would seem that if hunger was eradicated, if health was for all, if education knew no discrimination, then the disabled would automatically receive their just place in society. The risk of poverty is the tip of the iceberg and not the base of the pyramid! A social protection framework would thus have to be set in place to ensure that support is equitably provided for society's poorest and most vulnerable members. Suggested inclusions: education, since approximately 98% of

children with disabilities in developing and/or poor countries are out of school, women with disabilities who face dual discrimination, and infant and child mortality since the risk of death 'in utero' and after birth is greatest for those with disabilities. Without specific mention, this would escape the attention of implementers.

Madhumita Puri, Director of the Society for Child Development in India. Contact by email: madhumita@disabilityindia.org. Read a more extensive reply by Madhumita Puri at the end of this document.

Disabled children and positive attitudes

In the whole process around the Millennium Development Goals, the focus of attention has not always been on those people who are the most difficult to include with regard to the goals. Extra effort is needed to reach out to the most marginalised, and more importantly to help to change this imbalance for them – now and also after 2015. This can be reached by giving them special attention during the years leading up to the attainment of the millennium goals, and also by making the global society aware of the fact that some groups are easily overlooked. One of the most important groups which is easily overlooked is disabled people, and especially disabled children. Plan Nederland recognizes the importance of including all children, and especially the most marginalized, in development processes. In our programmes we are starting to recognize the importance of paying special attention to the access of disabled children, to the development of a positive attitude towards handicapped and disabled people and to enhancing the capacity of communities to include people with a disability.



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This article can also be found online at www.dccd.nl?2816.

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Three of the contributors had a more extensive reply to the discussion statement. In the DCDD newsletter article as printed above there was no space for including the full text. Hereunder you can find the complete responses of Shahidul Haque, Madhumita Puri, and Carlien Huijsmans

Shahidul Haque, Social Assistance and Rehabilitation of the Physically Vulnerable

IF MDG IS LOOKED AT CONSIDERING DISBALED PEOPLE THAN IT WILL BE FOR ALL OTHERWISE IT WILL BE FOR A SECTION OF PEOPLE

For the global peace and standardization of the quality of people life in terms of rights perspective When Un and its member state thought for minimum standardization of the quality life of the poor people MDG has been set up unfortunately there is no mention of disabled people in this document which is showing another discrimination from the development process by the UN and its member state.

As the definitions of vulnerability are varying from area to area there in this Efforts especially in MDG, which is the development, document of the UN, Government, Donor, Researcher, Academicians, NGOs so what they get reflection from this MDG goal. Where they in this sector specially mentioned about the gender balanced as quite often we are use to see that woman are being excluded so now by rules it is being trying to ensured. Same as for the disabled people being a human being it is very strange to me that disabled persons identity is neither man, woman nor children we are disabled this really a shame to see the thinking pattern of the guider, policymakers and peace builders.

In MDG if it is the major task of the UN and member state to give special attention of MAINSTREAMING OF DISADVANTAGED GROUP in the development process and to bring out them from the poverty risk factor there in no way disabled people should be out of this process.

There is a keen relationship with poverty and disability and disability and with poverty so in MDG one of the main task should be to address so that due to poverty people life do not turn in to disability and due to disability so that they do not become poor any more.

With out involvement of the disabled children in the education as education for all is not acceptable and at the same time this education will not help to understand the problem of the people and society.

Like this in child mortality issue due to development of the medical science if parents knows about the problem of their future child in that case that child is loosing his/her right even to born in this world but nothing has reflected in this MDG how that situation can be handled and facility is their if such thing happens.

There is another danger is being observed that is due to lack of calcium vitamin D is not functioning to the children and as result a large number of children are becoming affected by rickets and as result their life is turning into physical disability. This is not only the scenario of Bangladesh it has been found in Tibet, Nigeria and India also. But none is raising these threats and are thinking also to discuss in the MDG discussion table.

But here first priority should be given to the disabled, elderly person so that environment and safe water facility is ensured for this target group but nothing is here so as it is going on with traditional approach means discriminating the disabled and elderly both this two factor is an obstacle for them to get access in this facility.

In my opinion PRSP is a strategy through which MDG will be tried to achieve but in that strategy paper if all this vulnerable groups are not been addressed than how it will be possible to address for all.

What I feel in all this steps now the UN and of its each state mandatory wise in each sector one disability expert or disability sensitized persons should be involved to check monitor and to justify that this program is for all so that including disabled people, elderly and ill people can also avail this facility. When we all are talking mainstreaming all then definitely disability issue is not out of mainstreaming rather now in all mainstreaming program should be judged or checked whether it is disability sensitized or not if not then it is not mainstreaming

Shahidul Haque (Ashoka Fellow)
Chief Executive
SARPV-Bangladesh
Facilitator of Abilis Foundation in Bangladesh.

Madhumita Puri, Society for Child Development

THE MGDS ARE LACKING!

Dr Madhumita Puri

Fifteen targets and eight goals to be met in varying degrees from 2005 to 2015, each addressing issues of global importance involving more than half the world's population make the Millennium Development Goals the most ambitious project – ever. It was probably assumed by the architects that combating hunger and disease, illiteracy and child mortality, HIV/AIDS and gender empowerment would somehow also include into its net the 1 billion people with disabilities who escape all development programmes by virtue of their voicelessness.

People with disabilities, especially those with the mental disabilities require now more the ever social safety nets, social funds, labor market interventions, and social insurance to enable them to rise above the quagmire of inevitable poverty that they caught in. Logically it would seem that if hunger was eradicated, if health was for all, if education knew no discrimination then the disabled would automatically receive their just place in society. But, does the world work that way? – would the over 95% persons with mental retardation see a better life, until and unless every goal and plan of action makes a special effort to see that it happens? Would the child who cannot walk, or hear or see be able to reach a local school and access equitable education, unless there was an impetus to see that it does?

The risk of poverty is the apex of the iceberg and not the base of the pyramid! A social protection framework thus would have to be set in place to ensure that support is equitably provided for society's poorest and most vulnerable members and help them - individuals, households and communities better manage the risks that lead to the top – the only top none want to be in!

What would this entail - It includes three strategies - prevention, mitigation and coping, three levels of formality - informal, market-based, public; and many actors - individuals, households, communities, NGOs, governments at various levels and inter-national organizations - against the backdrop of inclusion.

This strategy would protect basic survival and livelihood as well as promote. It focuses specifically on the poor since they are the most vulnerable to risk and typically lack appropriate risk management instruments, which constrains them from engaging in riskier but also higher return activities and hence gradually moving out of chronic poverty.

Suggested inclusions

Education: According a UNESCO report, approximately 98% of children with disabilities in developing and/ or poor countries are out of school. Yet, no specific mention has been made of this overwhelming fact. Within the 2% who are in school, an abysmally low number are girls with

disabilities or children with mental retardation. Due attention from the UN on the plight of this group is imperative.

Women with disabilities face dual discrimination: of being women first and then of being women with disabilities. There is a need to specifically include this as an agenda in mainstream gender issues.

Infant and Child mortality: The risk of death "in utero" and after birth is greatest for those with disabilities. Without mention this would escape the attention of implementors.

Carlien Huijsmans, Plan Netherlands

Disabled children and people: Have they been part of the MDG-process so far In the year 2000, 189 member states of the United Nations made a Millennium Declaration together to spread development amongst all inhabitants of the world. One of the main reasons for this declaration was the fear that in times of globalization certain groups of people would not be included in the global development. Two of the six main principles and values that have been the background to construct the declaration, have been equality and solidarity:

- Equality. No individual and no nation must be denied the opportunity to benefit from development. The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.
- Solidarity. Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.

These two values are at the core of the later established Millennium Declaration, and therefore taken into consideration when constructing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The MDG's of course are more specific and have indicators to be better measurable. All United Nations Members States have pledged to meet these goals in partnerships by the year 2015.

The eight MDG's are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

These goals are especially set to reach out to the most marginalized in the world and include them in the global development. According to the figures of the World Health Organization (WHO) about 600 million people live with disabilities of various types, a number that is increasing rapidly as a result of population growth, growth of aging population, chronic conditions, malnutrition, war, violence, Aids and other causes often related to poverty. Of this group the WHO stresses that 80% of people with disabilities, particularly in the child population, live in low income countries and poverty further limits their access to basic health services and rehabilitation services.

In the whole process around the MDG's, the focus of attention has been not always on those for who it will be the most difficult to be included in these goals. Extra effort will be needed to reach out to the most marginalised and more important to help to change for them this imbalance also after 2015. This can be reached by giving them special attention during the years of getting towards reaching the MDG's, but also by making the global society aware of the fact that some groups are overlooked easily.

One of the most important groups to overlook easily is disabled people, and especially disabled children. In low income countries according to the WHO (see above) living with a disability is even

a bigger risk to become excluded from development, because poverty limits access to health services. It is for everyone recognizable that poor children with a disability in low income countries also have little access to education programmes and to get them included has not been a priority in a lot of the education programmes so far. The link between malnutrition and disability is also quite often forgotten in analyses, or even the connection between Aids and disability. That the chances of getting disabled in low income countries during childhood are bigger than in high income countries has been proved, but still little attention has been paid towards including disabled children in general development efforts as in the MDG's.

Plan Nederland recognizes the importance of including all children, and especially the most marginalized, in development. In our programmes we are starting to recognize the importance of paying special attention to the access of disabled children, to the development of a positive attitude towards handicapped and disabled people and to enhancing the capacity of communities to include people with a disability. Plan Nederland is committed to partner in reaching the MDG's together. According to our view children's rights on participation and development, on non-discrimination and especially the rights of disabled children as mentioned in Article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be kept in mind and implemented in this process more. Disabled children need special attention in this case, because they have been structurally forgotten in many analyses. Because the MDG's efforts need focus to get to the results, this could lead to the disappearance of this group on the agenda. In our view this would be totally against the intentions of the Member States of the UN and their partners while they started this global effort to make development equal accessible for everyone.