

Editorial

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2015

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) has been commemorated since 1992 to promote awareness and mobilise support for critical issues relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development. The Day works to promote action to raise awareness about disability issues and draw attention to the benefits of an inclusive and accessible society for all.

Theme for IDPD (2015: Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities)

The estimated one billion people living with disabilities worldwide face many barriers to inclusion in many key aspects of society. As a result, people with disabilities do not enjoy access to society on an equal basis with others, which includes areas of transportation, employment, and education as well as social and political participation. The right to participate in public life is essential to create stable democracies, active citizenship and reduce inequalities in society.

Persons with disabilities must be able to fulfil their role in society and participate on an equal basis with others. It is important to focus on the ability and not on the disability of an individual. Often, the societal image of persons with disabilities is impacted by attitudes based on stigma and discrimination, as well as archaic ideas about disability and persons with disabilities that are often the greatest barrier to their full and equal participation in society and development on an equal basis with others. It is important to note that disability is part of the human condition, and that all of us either are or will become disabled to one degree or another during the course of our lives.

By promoting empowerment, real opportunities for people are created. This enhances their own capacities and supports them in setting their own priorities. Empowerment involves investing in people - in jobs, health, nutrition, education, and social protection. When people are empowered they are better prepared to take advantage of opportunities, they become agents of change and can more readily embrace their civic responsibilities.

Sub-themes for IDPD 2015:

- **Making cities inclusive and accessible for all**

It is estimated that by 2050, 66% of the world's population will be living in cities. Importantly, the New Urban Agenda must ensure that future cities, towns and basic urban infrastructures and services are more environmentally accessible, user-friendly and inclusive of all people's needs, including persons with disabilities. The International Day will be used to discuss and present some best practices of inclusive urbanisation.

- **Improving disability data and statistics**

The lack of data and information on disability and the situation of persons with disabilities at the national level contribute to the invisibility of persons with disabilities in official statistics. This presents a major obstacle to achieving development planning and implementation that is inclusive of persons with disabilities. In particular, to be internationally comparable, data should be collected in line with international standards. Data collected can be used the implementation and monitoring of internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities.

The International Day will be used to highlight measures to strengthen national capacities to improve and mainstream disability data collection, based on existing good practices. The Day will also be used to highlight challenges and map out strategies to involve persons with disabilities and their organisations in disability data and statistics collection and dissemination.

- **Including persons with invisible disabilities in society and development**

Persons with mental and psychosocial disabilities represent a significant proportion of the world's population. Millions of people worldwide have mental health conditions and an estimated one in four people globally will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. Almost one million people die due to suicide every year, and it is the third leading cause of death among young people. Persons with mental and psychosocial disabilities often face stigma and discrimination, as well as experience high levels of physical and sexual abuse that occur in a range of settings, including prisons, hospitals and homes. Persons with other invisible disabilities, such as persons with hearing impairments, are also at risk of exclusion from mainstream activities, education or social activities.

The International Day can be used to draw attention on the situation of persons with invisible disabilities, such as mental health and psychosocial disabilities, intellectual disabilities, as well as hearing impairments. The Day can be used to identify good practices of integrative and inclusive education, to organise social activities and awareness raising initiatives, as well as highlight good practices and make recommendations.

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