

Introduction

Persons with disabilities all over the world have persistently faced barriers to their full inclusion and participation in the life of their communities. The United Nations flagship report, *Disability and Development Report 2018*, was the first stocktaking of the situation of persons with disabilities vis-à-vis the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals. That report identified substantial gaps in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for persons with disabilities and, in order to help address this challenge, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in coordination with all relevant United Nations entities, “to provide an update on the Disability and Development Report to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session”.¹ The *Disability and Development Report 2024 – Accelerating the realization of the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities*, responds to that request and comes at a critical time. The *Report* is the second stocktaking of where we stand on key aspects of mainstreaming disability globally in light of the 2030 Agenda and it is released six years from the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This stocktaking is crucial to identify what is needed to make progress for persons with disabilities in society and development and to provide wide-ranging recommendations for transformative change. Ultimately, the report builds on the 2030 Agenda, together with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to offer a road map towards a more inclusive and sustainable world.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 SDGs and 169 targets were adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations in 2015. It set out a transformative vision for preserving our planet, promoting peace and ensuring that prosperity is shared by all. The central pledge of the 2030 Agenda is to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first. This historic and ambitious Agenda has direct relevance to persons with disabilities, who face numerous barriers to their full inclusion and participation in the life of their communities. The global commitment to the 2030 Agenda recognizes the promotion of the rights, perspectives and well-being of persons with disabilities as a cross-cutting issue in line with the CRPD, which as of June 2024, received 191 ratifications and has been implemented for over a decade and a half.

In line with the 2030 Agenda and the CRPD, this *Report* aims to place disability squarely at the centre of the sustainable development agenda. It reviews the current situation and progress made so far towards the SDGs and shows that efforts need to be accelerated to ensure that the goals and targets are achieved for persons with disabilities.

The following chapters focus on the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, providing available evidence on the situation and progress for persons with disabilities in relation to each SDG, as well as related best practices. The *Report* also identifies possible strategies to mainstream disability in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of each SDG.

The final chapter provides an overview of SDG progress for persons with disabilities and analyses how

disability, as a cross-cutting development issue, will impact the ongoing efforts of the international community towards inclusive and sustainable development.

Definition of disability

The CRPD recognizes “that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.² Similarly, in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health,³ disability is defined as a limitation in a functional domain that arises from the interaction between a person’s intrinsic capacity, and environmental and personal factors.

The overall experience of disability is diverse as it is the combination of limitations in functioning across multiple domains (for example, walking or seeing), each on a spectrum of severity, from little or no disabilities to severe disabilities, either within a particular domain or across multiple domains. For each domain, the level of functioning a person experiences depends both on the intrinsic capacity of the individual’s body and the features of his or her environment that can either lower or raise the person’s ability to participate in society. Since domains of functioning are on a continuum, in order to determine prevalence of disability some threshold level of functioning needs to be established to distinguish between “persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities”.

Countries, in their data collection activities, do not define persons with disabilities uniformly and have adapted practical definitions and thresholds for their own data collections on the basis of their policy needs. National definitions differ in terms of the meaning, scope and severity of disability. This *Report* uses country-led data in order to respond to current national circumstances and priorities, while considering methodologies for internationally comparable data developed by international organizations and groups operating under the aegis of United Nations entities. In particular, data produced using the UNICEF/Washington Group Child Functioning Module, the Washington Group Short Set of Questions⁴ and the World Health Organization’s Model Disability Survey⁵ are identified throughout the *Report*.

Sources of evidence

Over 200 experts from United Nations agencies and international financial institutions, Member States and civil society (including research institutions and representative organizations of persons with disabilities) contributed to this *Report*. Over a dozen major databases of disability statistics, from international agencies and other organizations, were analysed – covering an unprecedented amount of disability data from over 100 countries. These included databases from the Demographic and Health Surveys;⁶ the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; Eurostat;⁷

the International Labour Organization; Integrated Public Use Microdata Series;⁸ the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development; SINTEF;⁹ Sozialhelden;¹⁰ the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Children's Fund; the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; the United Nations Statistics Division; the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Database; the World Bank Group; the World Health Organization; and the World Policy Analysis Center.

The current *Report* covers a wider range of data than the *Disability and Development Report 2018* and contains the first global attempt to assess progress towards the SDGs for persons with disabilities. It also covers new areas for which no global research was previously available (for example, the role of international cooperation and global trade in enabling the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society). In addition, non-traditional forms of data were explored to complement data gaps: more than 1.7 million data points of crowdsourced data from computer and smartphone applications were examined to inform an analysis of the accessibility of physical spaces, and social media data were used to analyse the involvement of persons with disabilities in climate change activism and in the representation of women in services for persons with disabilities. Finally, reviews of legislation from all 193 United Nations Member States were conducted and analysed to highlight best practices and to assess the current status of discriminatory laws and inclusive legislation for persons with disabilities.

Assessment of progress

Throughout the *Report*, an assessment of progress is conducted for relevant indicators with data available over time. This progress is evaluated by forecasting the estimate for the target year, which is 2030 for most SDG indicators, although a few targets were set for 2025 and some were set for 2020.¹¹ Based on these analyses, the *Report* indicates whether the respective target is expected to be met by the target year, if the situation has deteriorated or stagnated, or if there was progress but this progress has been insufficient (that is, if the trends observed thus far continue, the target will not be met by the target date). In the latter case, the *Report* also indicates the acceleration in the observed trend needed to meet the target by the target date.

For indicators with an explicit numerical target, this analysis uses that number as the target. For indicators without an explicit numerical target, where relevant, the assessment is based on closing the gap between persons with and without disabilities by the target date.