

UN Flagship Report on Disability 2018: Sustainable Development Goal 8 – Disability Employment

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AT	Assistive Technology
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

I. Introduction

This report looks at international and national action, or the lack thereof, to address the UN's SDG 8. It highlights a success story of inclusive employment and tentatively designates UN actions.

II. International legislation, policies and programs

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – a legally binding international human rights treaty – was launched in 2006 addressing the needs, freedoms and rights of persons with disabilities. SDGs came into effect in 2016 and 147 countries signed agreements supporting the 2030 Agenda and SDGs (UN, 2015).

Forty-two per cent of countries proposed the date for the voluntary national review (UN, 2016a) but little implementation of disability employment and AT is evident (UN, 2016f).

Disability as global burden (all countries lose GDP due to non-inclusion) and inclusive employment SDG 8, 8-1, 8-5 (UN, 2016b) are placed in focus by international bodies such as the International Labour Office, UN Development Group, UN Development Programme; UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and SDG Fund Support (Parmenter, 2011; UN 2017c). The UN Secretary-General's Progress Report describes SDG actions, but lacks disability and inclusion data (UN, 2016c). This also applies to the SDG Progress Report (UN, 2016d). High-level political forums 2016 and 2017 (UN, 2017b) emphasise insignificant disability employment.

The human rights of persons with disabilities will probably be deferred from SDG implementation because the SDG metrics framework does not sufficiently identify persons with disabilities (Brolani, 2016). This is exacerbated by the weak legal standing of UN documents and the lack of resources to implement them (Yeo, 2005).

III. Currents status and trends

Poverty underpins disability as 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries where healthcare is poor and jobs are scarce (Yeo and Moore, 2003; Stevens, 2004; Filmer, 2008; Heumann, 2011). Conflict, political instability, land and resource grabbing, militarism, patriarchy and fundamentalism, corporate culture and terrorism impede disability employment programs (UN, 2017d). Furthermore, conflict, disability and poverty form a vicious triangle in developing countries that lead to new disabilities.

As infrastructure and AT have proven to be a baseline for the advancement of disability employment (Aspinall, 2007; Johnston et al., 2014), expertise and financing from and coalitions with developed countries have become a prerequisite for SDG 8 realization.

Disabled persons should succeed in their own creative endeavour (WHO & World Bank, 2011), but how can these be unlocked? Entrepreneurial initiatives, self-employment and customized employment opportunities appear to be feasible (Parmenter, 2011; Kirakosyan, 2012; Ouimette & Rammler, 2017). Three interventions are needed: in-house training, rehabilitation counselling, and a personal support network (Phillips et. al, 2016).

Negative attitudes towards and constant rejection of persons with mental disabilities destroy their self-confidence (Van Staden, 2011). Thus, it is crucial to include individuals with disabilities in decision making (Charlton, 2000), in international development organizations (Yeo and Moore, 2003), and to promote self-determination in career development through community support (Shogren et. al. 2016).

IV. National programs and initiatives

International legislation and programs led to wide national responses (e.g. European Commission, 2012, 2013; Sustainable Development goals and reports (UN 2016b; UN 2016f), Development Programme South Africa (2017c).

The EU model of fulfilling SDGs and SDG 8 emerged through the European Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (EC, 2010) and the European Assistive Technology Information Network (2007). This model is slowly being integrated in EU developing countries.

Asian and Pacific countries have started implementing SDGs, including SDG 8 (UN, 2016e). The Asia-Pacific Program of Education for All has few accounts of disability inclusion (UNESCO, 2005). Partnerships with small isolated nations are crucial for the Asia-Pacific region (Japan International Cooperation Agency's program, 2015).

In North America, Australia (Women with Disabilities Australia, 2017), Austria (Fembek and others, 2017), Norway (Academic Network of European Disability Experts, 2007) and India (Employment Development Department, 2017) multiple SDGs and SDG 8 programs have emerged. Without an appropriate interface between the government, industry, international agencies, and the voluntary sector, neither education nor employment is possible (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, 2013). National programs exist in the Middle East where multiple SDGs and SDG 8 programs have sprung up (Human Resource Development Fund, 2014).

The World Economic Forum on Latin America (WEF, 2017) initiated discussions and set guidelines on how to implement SDGs and enable people with disabilities through entrepreneurship, innovation, free trade and sharing. Disability initiatives in Latin American countries are slowly appearing (Dudzik, Elwan & Metts, 2017).

African countries are starting with integration of SDG 8 and disability employment as reflected in national policies such as the National Development Plan 2030 (UN, 2015) and the Global Goals in Africa (UN, 2016f)), but the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the Central African Republic do not provide assistive devices and do not employ disabled people. Consequently, there is a need for financial support and innovative strategies to support SDG 8 and AT enactments.

Successful Stories

Box 1

Emilea: Finding the Resources to Start a Coffee Shop

Emilea lives in a small town in Iowa. With the support of her family, Emilea planned for a career and then used local contacts and several funding streams to start her coffee shop. A benefits planner at Iowa Work Incentive Planning and Assistance connected them with the family of another entrepreneur with a disability.

Emilea used start-up grants to hire a job coach. They placed a large sticker on the coffee grinder so Emilea could distinguish the caffeinated beans from the decaffeinated beans. Emilea's espresso machine was marked with orange puffy paint so that she would know which button to push for the correct shot of espresso for a small or a large drink. Emilea also learned to listen for audible clues from the machinery while she worked.

Emilea is managing two employees with disabilities, running the cash register and talking with customers.

www.emscoffeeco.com

V. Conclusions and UN activities

Analysing programs, documents and trends, it is clear that employment of people with disabilities (SDG 8-1, 8-5) and implementation of AT make slow progress in developing countries. This implies the following tentative activities by the UN:

- A1. Re-examine the SDG metrics framework as it does not adequately recognize persons with disabilities in 'each and every SDG – not only three' (Brolani, 2016, 13);
- A2. Appeal to developed countries to share their disability employment solutions;
- A3. Support the growth of sustainable financing systems to ensure sound application of AT as cash transfers are not a sustainable instrument to address the needs of persons with disabilities (World Bank, 2016);
- A4. Sponsor the stakeholders and their governance to work in synergy and reduce physical and environmental barriers to inclusive employment;
- A5. Assist with coaching programs for institutions and private sectors in developing countries;
- A6. Generate programs, guidelines and governance for innovative and entrepreneurial capabilities of persons with disabilities;
- A7. Enforce legislation towards obligatory AT in work environments.

VI. The way forward

Investments in AT and information and communications technology networks, empowerment of innovation and entrepreneurship competencies, together with a redistribution of human, research and financial resources are paramount in resolving disability employment and SDG 8 globally.

Subsequently, if disability issues are not integrated into educational programs in early schooling to develop awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities and to prevent stigma, particularly for mental disability, it is likely that segregation, abuses and human rights breaches will take place in work environments.

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