

Leave No One Behind

FOR AN EFFECTIVE INCLUSION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AND THEIR RIGHT TO DECENT WORK AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING



Source: United Nations DESA - Inclusive Social Development

From the moment we are born, we have rights solely on the basis of being humans but imagine being born different? With special needs? The status with which one is born shouldn't play a role in the way one's

human rights may differ yet reality begs to differ. On an average, one in every six people is a person with disability; 1.3 billion of the world population comprises of people with disability yet they fail to be



a priority when it comes to enjoying these rights.

The Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for 4”.

People with Disabilities have the same rights as that of any other person, however not all states adhere to these rights and there is discrimination often found at play. On paper most countries are in agreement with this declaration but the implementation remains on wobbly grounds. The perception of people with disability as dependants that evokes emotions of pity and sympathy in people and leads to considering people with disabilities as objects of care and not legitimate legal entities that deserve to enjoy the same respect and human rights is what creates an ‘us’ and them gap.

Despite the declaration of Human Rights, people with disabilities tend to be found below the poverty line and continue being marginalized. In her opening statement for the 17th Conference of State Parties to the Convention for People with Disability, Amina J. Mohammad, the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations stated that “the gap in employment between persons with and without disabilities is nearly 30 percentage points, a figure largely unchanged from the first Disability and Development report that was published six years ago in 2018.” As a society it is our duty to concern

ourselves with these issues to create a better future of safety, security and sustainability for our fellow members.

Need for Right to Decent Work for People with Disabilities:

Barriers created within society by its subjects is the cause of discrimination faced by people with disabilities. Whether intentional or not there is a clear divide created due to ableist prejudices which is why there is a need for the Convention for Rights of People with Disability to ensure that this gap can be bridged and that people with disabilities can integrate into society without being hindered by their impairments.

When discussing the need for right to decent work for people with disabilities, it is important to be intersectional in the campaign for inclusivity. While people with physical disabilities face struggle and discrimination, people with intellectual disabilities have it even worse. Michael Cox, the Down Syndrome Australia representative and panellist at the COSP 17 Roundtable stated that “there are approximately 20,000 people working in segregated employment and 75% of these have intellectual disability. Very few people in segregated employment transition to open employment. People in segregated employment are also often paid well below the minimum wage.”

“Disability is not an illness”, was the powerful reiteration provided by panellist Mariana Lozano Medina to remind the audience that we owe it to people with disabilities to rid our minds of the ableist



prejudice that infiltrates us. She highlights the necessity for adequate reforms and non-discriminatory legislation that allows for people with disability to lead full autonomous lives.

The youth is at a higher risk without employment and educational training especially with the emergence of AI and lack of proper support when it comes to assistive technology. Provisions must be made with consideration to rapid advancements in technology, economy and world politics, be it good or bad, so that the people with disabilities are not at risk of being collateral damage. During the conference, the co-chairs acknowledged the policies in place but also urged the countries to continue implementing these policies as there still existed a huge gap between policies and practice. This gap is the reason behind the need for the CRPD, there is still a lot of work to be done before we can admit that we are an inclusive community where everyone is treated equally.

17th Conference of State Parties to the Convention of Rights of People with Disabilities (COSP17):

The Conference of State Parties to the Convention of Rights of People with Disabilities (COSP17) took place over the duration of 3 days between June 11, 2024 to June 13, 2024 in New York at the United Nations Headquarters. The principal theme of the conference was to rethink the disability inclusion in the current international juncture and ahead of the Summit of the Future which will take place in September of 2024 with specific focus on sub themes such as inclusivity with regards to technological innovations, in situations of risk and humanitarian

emergencies and finally the rights of people with disability to decent work and sustainable livelihood. The roundtable meeting comprised of two parts; the first revolved around different countries sharing with all in attendance the policies in place to support people with disabilities, the second part was a panel discussion with panellists Yasin Somata (representative on behalf of Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, special UN representative) from International Labor Organisation (ILO), Michael Cox from Down Syndrome Australia, Josh Tseng from Digital Accessibility Services at Etch Empathy, Singapore and Mariana Lozano Medina from Human Rights Watch Colombia along with Co-chairs Ezekiel Kumwenda and Evangelos C. Sekeris, Greece Vice President of the bureau.

Some key highlights of the meeting included the ILO's efforts to accommodate neurodivergent workers as well and their announcement of launching two knowledge products to further facilitate inclusion for people with disabilities. Spain reminded the conference that wars are major creators of disability urging for peace and inclusion as priorities along with providing information on the new wording in their Article 49 to include a feminist perspective and the defence of the rights of children and youth with disabilities. The International Council of People with Visual Impairments representative Todd Reeves discussed the limitations faced in education systems when it comes to inclusion of people with visual impairments but also provided assurance that with advancements in assistive technology, a new world of education and



career opportunities are opening up. He also mentioned the book 'Mathematics Made Easy for Blind Children' and how the ICBI is working with authorities to spread it globally to further the agenda 'No One Is Left Behind.'

The main objective of the meeting remained inclusivity, accessibility and equal opportunities for people with disabilities which included people of all types of impairments, genders, ages, sexual orientations, etc.

Possible Reforms:

Throughout the conference different countries took to stage to discuss different policies, reforms and resources provided by them for their citizens with disabilities. While these resources are in place and are able to aid people with disabilities, the battle is far from won. Some innovative ideas that the panellists urged included implementation of mentorship programmes where people with disabilities could learn directly from CEO's and people in higher positions to not only provide them with a first-hand experience but also to allow for open discussions in the private sector. They urge the need for more training, counselling and support groups for people with intellectual disabilities along with promoting more social participation and peer to peer inclusion, not just in social institutions but also in recreation and entertainment activities such as gaming with the addition of assistive technology to allow space for fostering a sense of community.

Priority needs to be given destigmatizing the prejudice revolving people with disabilities but when

talking about inclusivity it must be ensured that no one gets left behind. When taking actions and thinking of reforms it is important to be intersectional in all regards. People with disabilities are people before their disabilities, it mustn't be forgotten that they are layered individuals and their identity includes their gender, sexual orientation, race, socio-economic backgrounds, their dreams and aspirations; they aren't their impairment, they are more than what they are reduced to being by society and this injustice must be rectified.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, we are all people and we owe it to one another to not just extend a helping hand when needed but it is also our duty to be conscient and intentional in combatting the barriers created by our own limitations and mental blocks. The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development is to 'Leave No One Behind' and in order to achieve that goal it is prudent to begin now.

"I want a world where people with intellectual disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else in a workplace and in life" were the parting words by Michael Cox which should be our collective goal as a race. Progressing as a society isn't solely dependent on technological innovations and economic growth but it also relies on how we navigate as a humanity in the face of these developments, how we lead forward; hand in hand, supporting and respecting one another as a civilization; rising above our differences.



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