23. Spurring UNDP action on disability-inclusive development

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Inclusion of people with disabilities in development programmes requires comprehensive approaches

While persons with disabilities account for a large proportion of the world's population, they have been consistently left out of the gains made by global development. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requires that international development programmes be inclusive of, and accessible to, persons with disabilities. The CRPD particularly emphasises the importance of mainstreaming disability issues, thus ensuring that disability is an integral part of sustainable development.

In 2016, the Independent Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) concluded an evaluation1 of UNDP support to disability-inclusive development.2 Its findings suggested that there was a strategic role for UNDP in supporting partner governments to address the rights of, and provide support to services for, persons with disabilities.

The evaluation noted that while UNDP had taken positive steps towards leaving no one behind, it had yet to develop a comprehensive approach to disability inclusion in its support to partner countries. It could also more effectively leverage its role as a trusted convener, knowledge broker, technical advisor and facilitator of dialogue to partner governments to help them meet their obligations under the UN Convention on the CRDP.

The evaluation also considered UNDP's internal practices and concluded that conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment presented barriers for persons with disabilities, and UNDP had not taken the necessary steps to ensure that its facilities were accessible. The evaluation recommended ways to improve disability-inclusive programming and country-based services at UNDP, and suggested changes to UNDP internal culture and procedures.

Strengthening disability-inclusive programming through specific guidance, results frameworks and funding targets

UNDP management welcomed the evaluation and detailed the actions it intended to take to enhance disability-inclusive development. Since the evaluation, UNDP has updated its policy framework, with the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 promising an increase in support for effective, accountable and inclusive governance, with particular attention to the inclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities and other traditionally excluded groups. The Plan supports the mainstreaming of the needs of persons with disabilities in the organisation's Country Programme Documents. An associated "Integrated Results and Resources Framework" sets targets and outputs, as well as outcome and output indicators, in some cases disaggregated by disability.

UNDP will launch updated guidance on disability-inclusive development in December 2018 highlighting the mutually inclusive link of this work to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the overall aim to leave no one behind. UNDP has developed guidance to better align employment and livelihoods' programming with the CRPD and has set a goal of having at least 10% of programme resources/funds dedicated to employment and livelihoods support reach the disability community.

A notable effort with respect to employment opportunities has been the development of a Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities, sponsored by UNDP and UN Volunteers. This is designed to build a talent pipeline of highly qualified professionals with disabilities who can contribute to the attainment of the SDGs at national and global levels.

With respect to its internal culture and procedures, in 2017 UNDP launched a survey of its offices to collect information and review existing accessibility practices and opportunities. A funding mechanism is being developed to enable UNDP offices to cover costs related to the reasonable accommodation of needs of persons with disabilities, including those related to the accessibility of UNDP premises and facilities, processes, systems and information.

Evaluation helps draw attention to an organisation's objectives and improve results

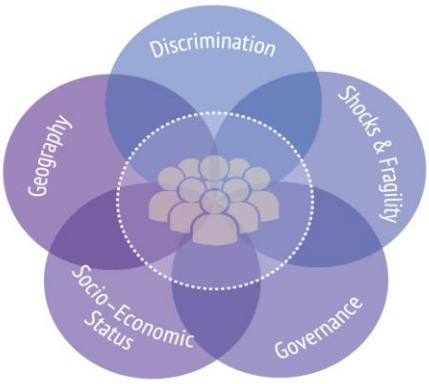
The UNDP approach to disability inclusion has advanced within the twin frameworks of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the SDGs. Evaluation has contributed to this process. The Independent Evaluation Office drew attention to gaps in UNDP development support to persons with disabilities, and management responded with specific actions that, together with other UNDP initiatives, hold out the promise of greater achievement in leaving no one behind.

What next?

A recent UNDP discussion paper and framework pose the question "What does it mean to leave no one behind?"[3] The paper emphasises the need to identify and address the intersecting disadvantages faced by persons with disabilities (among others) across the five key factors captured in Figure 23.1. UNDP is developing new programming to encourage, enable and support in-country action to:

- Examine who is being left behind and why.
- Help give a voice to, and enable meaningful participation for, those being left behind; and
- Enact inclusive, catalytic and accountable strategies, policies and budgets.

Figure 23.1. Who is being left behind and why: five key factors



Source: Authors.

UNDP's disability marker to support the principle to leave no one behind

UNDP has built a robust system of data collection from all country and regional offices on project interventions and project beneficiaries. In 2018, as part of that process several project level 'markers' have been introduced which will enable UNDP to monitor and report on its contributions to the SDG's principle to leave no one behind and specifically to include a monitoring and analysis tool which will elaborate on 'who' is being supported in its development efforts.

One such marker is for persons with disabilities. In each country context UNDP will be able to mark which projects have persons with disabilities as their project beneficiaries. This significantly improves how UNDP will be able to monitor the proportion of its programming that is supporting persons with disabilities including expenditures. It will also allow an analysis of trends at country, regional and global level in terms of this support.

Notes

[1] http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/disability.shtml.

[2] www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/rule-of-law--justice--security-and-human-rights/disability-inclusive-development.html.

[3] www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Sustainable%20Development/2030%20Agenda/Discussion_Paper_LNOB_EN_lres.pdf.

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UNDP (2018), *What does it mean to leave no one behind?*, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/what-does-it-mean-to-leave-no-one-behind-.html. [1]

From:

Case Studies on Leaving No One Behind

A companion volume to the Development Co-operation Report 2018

Access the complete publication at:

https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264309333-en

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2018), "Spurring UNDP action on disability-inclusive development", in *Case Studies on Leaving No One Behind: A companion volume to the Development Co-operation Report 2018*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264309333-25-en

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