

INTRODUCTION

What is disability? The CRPD recognises people with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which when combined with negative attitudes or environmental barriers, prevent them from taking a full and active role in society. Often, it is the interaction between the individual and his or her environment that leads to disability, not that person's physical limitations. Such an understanding of the social nature of disability helps to promote disability as a human rights issue.

Throughout the world, youth are dropping out of school and being excluded from the economy. However, young women and men with disabilities commonly face more discrimination and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities, even in developed countries. For many young people with disabilities, exclusion, isolation, and abuse, as well as lack of educational and economic opportunities are daily experiences. Youth with disabilities are amongst the most marginalized and poorest of all the world's youth, whose basic rights are not well met and for whom full societal acceptance is often out of reach.

Disparities in education, employment, and relationships are more pronounced in youth with disabilities. Like adults with disabilities, youth with disabilities do not enjoy the same human rights or equal access to goods and services as peers without disabilities. The international community recognized this and after three years of negotiation, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2006 to ensure that persons with disabilities, including the youngest ones, enjoy the same human rights as everyone else. Effective implementation of the Convention requires a focused effort by all sectors to guarantee that young people with disabilities participate in mainstreamed as well as in disability specific programs on an equal basis with others.

Variations in definitions of disability, data collection methods, and sophistication of statistical analysis make international comparisons difficult. Additionally, questions on disability are often excluded from national surveys such as the census or when included may be too narrow to gather holistic information about the economic and social living conditions of people with

disabilities. Although the actual figures are uncertain, it is clear that individuals with disabilities form a significant proportion of the youth population in every society.

The number of youth with disabilities is likely to increase due to youthful age-structures in most developing countries and medical advancements which promote higher survival rates and life expectancy after impairment-causing diseases, health conditions, and injuries. Youth themselves can be a contributing factor, as young people are at an increased risk of acquiring a disability through such incidents as road traffic accidents, injuries from diving and other sport activities, violence and warfare.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of collecting all important data and information required to be processed for establishment of this report content, secondary data collection is chosen to gather all available information regarding youth and human right. Different sources from different web sites were used to extract and gather all factual information regarding youth and human right. A similar method were also used to gather all responses from the various stakeholders. The sources were carefully chosen in order to ensure the quality of the content, relevance, and ease of comprehension. The main reason for choosing secondary data collection method is based on a fact that varieties of sources are largely available in the internet.

FACT SHEET

- ✚ Youth with disabilities are amongst the most marginalized and poorest of all the world's youth.
- ✚ UNESCO estimates that 98% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school and 99% of girls with disabilities are illiterate.
- ✚ Youth with disabilities face dual disadvantages as individuals with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty even in developed countries

- ✦ There is a significant dearth of empirical research on prevalence of disabilities among youth (between ages 15-24 as per the United Nations) and on their living conditions.
- ✦ Estimates suggest that there are between 180 and 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide and nearly 80% of them live in developing countries
- ✦ Statistics from several countries show that the incidence of spinal cord injury is highest among youth. In Canada, for example, over half of those with spinal cord injury were aged between 15 and 24 at the time of their accident (Canadian Paraplegic Association, 2003).
- ✦ In Australia, the incidence rates of spinal cord injury are also highest for those aged between 15 and 24 (Cripps 2006).
- ✦ Youth are also increasingly involved in war and conflict – approximately 250,000 individuals under 18 years of age are participating in armed conflicts (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2006),
- ✦ Over 300 million youth live in countries affected by armed conflict and warfare (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2007) - and are at severe risk of violence, abuse, and injury (United Nations, 2008).

RESPONSES FROM VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES

The UN Social Policy and Development Division (DSPD) Disability is the focal point on matters related to persons with disabilities. A major role/task of DSPD Disability is to serve as the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SCRPD). SCRPD works to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in society and development, with mandates stem from the World Programme of Action (1982), Standard Rules (1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), as well as other relevant human rights and development instruments.

SCRPD focuses its work on the following: supporting inter-governmental bodies such as the General Assembly and ECOSOC; servicing the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; promoting international normative framework on

disability; implementing international norms and standards relating disability at national, regional and international levels; technical cooperation; mainstreaming disability in development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals. Within the UN system, SCRPD co-chairs the United Nations Inter-agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (IASG). For more information about the work of the UN for Persons with Disabilities, please visit: <http://www.un.org/disabilities>

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

The United States Federal Government realizes that opportunity for employment is an important way to give people with disabilities the means to provide for themselves, while lowering federal support costs. There are several unique programs such as the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program, the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), and the Ticket to Work that have been set up to help people with disabilities succeed at work while maintaining their benefits. The disability employment benefits system can assist with housing, jobs, medical costs, and career security.

Recent reports from the Canadian federal government, the Ontario government and various disabilities think tanks have all signalled that people with different types of disabilities can be well integrated into the work force (Rethinking Disability in the Private Sector, Government of Canada, 2013; Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario, Lankin, F. & Sheikh, M. A., 2012). These reports recommend shifting the focus of employment training efforts from creating a “supply” of workers (i.e. YWD) through training and skills development to increasing employers “demand” (i.e. labour market and employer) for YWD in the employment market. Understanding and matching the business needs of the employer to the abilities of the youth employee is still a major challenge and a key area of research and solutions development for further exploration. Another important area to explore: the roles of private sector employment intermediaries, i.e. human resource services and recruitment agencies versus community employment agencies.

The 2012 National Transition Conference, hosted by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), will take place from May 30 – June 1, 2012 in Washington, D.C. This conference will bring together partners in the transition community, including young adults and families, to promote practices, policy and research that lead to successful employment outcomes and self-sufficiency for young people with disabilities, including Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

As part of the conference, on Thursday, May 31, 2012, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m., an interactive panel presentation will highlight Project SEARCH, a high school transition program for urban youth with disabilities, which, three years ago, expanded its implementation sites to include five sites within four federal government agencies (the departments of Labour, Health and Human Services, Education and the Interior). A panel of partners in this initiative, including now-employed youth with disabilities, will review the program and discuss successful marketing, recruitment and implementation strategies; accomplishments; challenges; best practices and lessons learned; and opportunities for replication in federal, state and local governments.

Each project site is a partnership among a federal agency, a school or local education agency, a community rehabilitation agency and the District of Columbia's Department on Disability Services and its vocational rehabilitation agency. Youth, who have successfully completed the program and are now employed, will share their stories and the difference the program has made in their lives and prospects for attaining their current customized or competitive jobs with competitive salaries and benefits.

PRIVATE SECTOR RESPONSES

US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) companies recognize that the “gold standard” of disability-inclusive hiring starts with building the talent pipeline through effective partnerships. While internships have long been recognized as an essential strategy in this regard, since Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) was launched as a White House Initiative back in 1999, mentoring youth

with disabilities has also gained prominence. Today, DMD is hosted annually by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and celebrated on the third Wednesday of each October. I'm proud that many USBLN companies regularly participate in DMD.

During the 2011 USBLN Annual Conference, the discussion topic for the Industry Sectors Roundtable was, "How does your company develop the current and future applicant pipeline including young adults with disabilities?" Participating Fortune 1000 companies shared that their DMD involvement resulted in the recognition that mentoring youth with disabilities is a business strategy to increase sourcing of qualified future job candidates with disabilities. In fact, several companies reported leveraging their Employee Resource Groups and partnering with local high schools and colleges to include youth with disabilities in long-term mentoring opportunities. Some also expressed an interest in a more structured mentoring program.

As a result, the project selected for the 2012 Strategic Alliance between the U.S. Department of Labour's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and USBLN was a pilot mentoring program using the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) database of college and university students with disabilities. This pilot was conducted in partnership with Cornell's Employment and Disability Institute (EDI)—and synched perfectly with the Campaign for Disability Employment's (CDE) "Because" campaign, launched that same year, to highlight the importance of influencers, such as mentors, in the life of a young person with a disability. (The CDE is an ODEP-funded collaborative of leading business and disability organizations committed to promoting positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

NGO RESPONSES

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and why is it important for young people "Through the CRPD, we can actively participate in the programmes of non-disabled people and share our ideas and opinions. There will be less discrimination and non-disabled people will pay more respect to youth with disabilities." Dianne, Philippines. May 2008 marked a turning point in the history of disability rights, when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) came into force. There is now fuller understanding that it is not the physical limitations of persons with disabilities, but rather the physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers

generated by society that create inequalities. Today, the CRPD provides young people with disabilities considerable potential for improving the opportunities available to them, and it provides support for all their efforts in working towards full inclusion. The CRPD calls upon its States Parties to make changes, adopt new measures, including legislative action to achieve the goal of full and equal participation in life and society for persons with disabilities

The CRPD covers the whole range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to education, work, health, justice, life, independent living, personal mobility and participation in recreational activities. It emphasises that all development should be inclusive of, and benefit people with disabilities, making it the first international human rights treaty to highlight this need clearly. The Eight Guiding Principles of the CRPD.

- ✚ Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
- ✚ Non-discrimination
- ✚ Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- ✚ Respect for difference and acceptance of disabled people as part of human diversity and humanity
- ✚ Equality of opportunity
- ✚ Accessibility
- ✚ Equality between men and women
- ✚ Respect for the evolving capacities of disabled children and respect for them to preserve their identities

The CRPD and the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) are important tools, which help ensure that countries introduce laws that make it easier for children with disabilities to go to school; to receive the health care they need; to feel safe and protected; to be able to enjoy the benefits of group participation and new technology; and to learn about their cultural heritage. The CRPD mentions all of these issues and more, and emphasises that all development initiatives should be based on the principles of non-discrimination, full and effective participation, accessibility, and diversity. In addition, all of the issues contained within the WPAY also appear in the CRPD, which indicates both that young people with disabilities face the same challenges as their non-disabled peers.

YOUTH RESPONSES

During the 2006 fiscal year, the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) planned and hosted its first national level Next Generation Roundtable to hear concerns and suggestions directly from youth with disabilities on youth leadership and employment. When asked their perspectives on the challenges facing youth with disabilities who seek employment, Roundtable participants talked about the need for youth-friendly language, less bureaucracy in the benefits system, enforcement of existing federal laws and regulations, the need for more internships, as well as other concerns. One summary point from the roundtable discussion was that existing benefits programs and services have both negative and positive aspects.

Perceptions of youth with disabilities have changed over the last 50 years. The community that people once referred to as a "class of invalids" has now joined the ranks of American workers and is becoming a more visible part of an ever-changing America. Youth are talented, motivated, and driven people who want to make decisions for our own lives in order to live independently. Many support programs remain tied to the outdated thinking that youth with disabilities "need to be cared for."

Legislators and other federal officials should listen to what youth with disabilities identify as needs/priorities. Often, a need is not about material possessions or more money, but much more about self-determination and self-empowerment. It is important to get perspectives directly from youth with disabilities regarding concerns about unmet needs in transition from school-to-work, daily living, and employment. As young people, we want to work side by side with other Americans, go to college, purchase our first home, and become productive citizens. We are equal members of society.

We recognize the many advances and social programs created to assist us in gaining independence and meaningful employment, and for these we are thankful. However, we need to take the next step in creating equal opportunities. Meaningful actions that result in changing negative perceptions or attitudes and levelling the playing field for health care options, enforcing the laws, and revising the benefits system can usher an increased number of youth with disabilities into the working world.

MEDIA RESPONSES

The social media offer additional advantages for youth with disabilities. Social networking can open up a new world of communication, integration, and community participation. Young adults can express themselves, including their thoughts and feelings, more easily and without fear of the rejection or stigma they may experience in real life. Research also suggests that these young adults may be more willing to ask for help online than in face-to-face situations. Furthermore, young adults who experience difficulty with social skills can socialize anonymously, and can experiment with different personas and practice initiating and maintaining online friendships. They can also respond to others by taking advantage of having time to review and edit communications before sending it on. Ultimately, this skill may carry over into “real life” and give a sense of new courage to make and maintain friendships in everyday life.

To help millions of people recognize what they can do to make a difference in the lives — and future careers — of young people with disabilities, the U.S. Department of Labour’s Campaign for Disability Employment has released a new video public service announcement titled “Because.” The PSA features real people with disabilities — not actors — who are pursuing and realizing their goals and passions as a result of the support they received from everyday people in their lives. Because nearly 1 out of 5 Americans has a disability, the PSA is intended to replace myths and misperceptions about disability employment with new views of what people with disabilities can do. “Many people who achieve success and have found satisfaction in their careers have done so because one person believed in them and urged them to set their expectations high,” said Kathy Martinez, assistant secretary of labour for disability employment policy. “This PSA challenges viewers to rethink their ideas about what people with disabilities can achieve and consider what they might do to encourage young people with disabilities to pursue their personal and career goals.”

The PSA is being distributed to more than 1,400 television, including cable, English- and Spanish-language stations. “Because” is the latest product of the Campaign for Disability Employment — a unique collaboration of leading business and disability organizations with the Department of Labour’s Office of Disability Employment Policy that promotes the hiring, retention and advancement of people with disabilities. Campaign members include the American Association of People with Disabilities, the Job Accommodation Network, the National Business

and Disability Council, the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, the Society for Human Resource Management, Special Olympics and the U.S. Business Leadership Network. To download the PSA and posters or learn more about the Campaign for Disability Employment, visit <http://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org>.

CONCLUSION

Youth with disabilities often face marginalization and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities due to a range of factors from stigma to inaccessible environments. As countries look towards the post-2015 era to ensure poverty reduction and equitable development, it is essential to ensure that all youth have equal opportunities to become productive and contributing members of their society and enjoy all rights and privileges of citizenship, including youth with disabilities.

The experiences that people face in their youth shape the rest of their lives. Youth with disabilities face the same issues and concerns as their peers without disabilities, but societal prejudices, barriers, and ignorance exacerbate their concerns. To date, most societies have not fully integrated youth with disabilities, leading to segregation and the condemnation of a whole segment of the population. Clearly, more work is required. Providing opportunities for full and equal social, civic, and economic participation is beneficial not only to youth with disabilities, but also their societies and countries as the youth can contribute fully to the country's development and economic growth.

The Convention offers hope for improving the current situation. In many places it is facilitating the process that empowers youth with disabilities to address the multiple societal challenges they face. However, its implementation and realization requires a focused effort by all stakeholders, and especially Governments and policy makers, to ensure that a significant proportion of their population does not remain an isolated and invisible segment but one that can realize its full potential, have equal access to all opportunities, and exercise the same rights as the rest of the citizens.

RESPONSES OF WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH

In recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis of its action WAY seeks to promote equality among all youth, equal treatment and access to resources for youth living with disability. WAY seeks to eliminate discrimination against the youth living with disability, empower the disabled and raise an informed youth generation on the issue. Retrieved from

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