

## Disability Inclusion Helpdesk, February 2022

### Evidence digest focus issue: Social Protection and Disability Inclusion

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#### Guest blog: prioritising disability inclusion in social protection

To introduce this evidence digest, Alexandre Cote, Disability and Social Protection Specialist at UNICEF, discusses the importance of inclusive social protection for persons with disabilities.

**It seems that there has been in recent years a growing awareness and engagement on social protection for inclusion of persons with disabilities, including within the disability movement and international development. How do you explain this emergence?**

While there has been strong mobilisation in Europe in the face of austerity policies in the early 2010s, globally, there has been for a long time a significant misunderstanding and unease within the disability movement about social protection, often perceived as a demonstration of the charity model, which has limited engagement and voice.

Originally, social protection policies considered disability as a risk of loss of capacity to earn income or inability to care for oneself. This has led to adoption of so-called 'invalidity' pensions, which have provided important income security mechanism for workers, but have also officialised a divide between persons with disabilities who are deemed able to work and those perceived as unable to work, benefit from education or take part in community. This contributed, among other factors, to the development of segregated institutional care.

Approaches by governments with schemes labelled for "poor people with severe disabilities who can't work or care for themselves" have been widely internalised by disability rights activists, who often perceived social protection as demeaning expression charity rather than

as rights-based support. In countries with very minimal social protection systems, leaders of many organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) would rather focus on employment and livelihood programs with the argument “jobs not charity”, not always taking into account challenges faced by those with high support needs, children with disabilities and their families, or older persons with disabilities. As a consequence, in many low- and middle-income countries, the disability movement and their allies did not engage significantly in framing the emergence of social protection systems.

The CRPD, but also a broad mobilization for rights-based universal social protection, and its place in the 2030 agenda, has contributed to a significant shift in perspective. This can be seen in the [report of the special rapporteur on rights of persons with disabilities on social protection](#), the [joint statement on inclusive social protection system](#) co-facilitated by the International Disability Alliance and ILO as well as a number of new studies and research. OPDs in Senegal framed the development of the disability card and associated benefits and asked for it to be called equal opportunity card, which is great example of this progressive shift. ILO, UNICEF, the World Bank and others have also dedicated more attention on inclusive social protection and many countries have been working on developing new schemes to support children and adult with disabilities.

The growing awareness of the diversity and impact of [disability related costs](#) that persons with disabilities face to realise daily living activities and to overcome barriers to access services, go to school or work and the responsibility that government must tackle them including through social protection is also contributing to this change of perspective.

Adapting the value of mainstream social assistance programs, adopting a universal disability allowance for children and adults with disabilities, and prioritising them to benefit from Universal Health Coverage programs is not charity. It is a required measure to equalise opportunity in recognition of the fact that persons with disabilities and their families must spend more to achieve similar standard of living and participation and tend to earn less than those without disabilities. It is a critical precondition for inclusion.

### **What impact has the COVID-19 crisis had on mobilisation and engagement in the disability movement on social protection?**

While major economic crises increase poverty and inequalities, they also highlight the critical role of social protection. For instance, the broad mobilisation for Universal Social Protection really took off globally after the 2008-2010 crisis. In combination with the realisation of the unequal progress achieved by the Millennium Development Goals, social protection has been increasingly perceived as critical for economic development, poverty reduction and social inclusion. In the aftermath of the crisis facing austerity policies OPDs have mobilised to defend social protection support which is significant; In Europe, [more than two third of persons self-reporting activity limitation would be at risk of poverty without social protection benefits](#). This has raised a lot of awareness.

Due to the economic ramifications of the response to the pandemic, the COVID-19 crisis has again highlighted the great difference between countries with strong social protection systems and those with emerging systems in relation to their capacity and ability to support their population. They often combine social insurance that only cover those in formal

economy and poverty targeted schemes that have often low coverage leaving huge section of the population unprotected, the so-called missing middle.

What is true for the general population is magnified for persons with disabilities. Reviews of [social protection measures in response to COVID-19 crisis](#) showed that countries with universal or quasi universal-disability allowance and registries have been in a position to provide additional support to persons with disabilities swiftly, while others struggled because they did not have mechanisms in place to reach them.

In several countries, we have seen organisations of persons with disabilities play a significant role in facilitating outreach and quick identification of persons with disabilities in the absence of inclusive social protection information systems and effective national disability registries. OPDs have been [critical in advocating for and providing vital assistance to people with disabilities](#). We have been working with IDA and its members since the onset of the crisis as they organised regional webinars and national workshops for OPDs on social protection, publishing [report on south Asia](#) and issuing a [call for action in Africa](#) for equal access to social protection programmes.

I believe that the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the reconciliation of the disability movement with social protection, and this is great news. This mobilisation as well as the greater attention from development agencies in recent years (UNICEF, ILO, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, FCDO, Norad, GIZ or DFAT, UNESCAP, UN ECLAC, UNESCWA among others<sup>1</sup>) for inclusive social protection, and also for inclusive humanitarian cash transfer programming contributes to a very positive momentum. This is illustrated for instance with the first global conference on Disability, Inclusion and Social Protection that will take place in March just after Global Disability Summit 2022 and before the Universal Social Protection (USP) 2030 membership assembly.

However, considering the significant public resources (both domestic but also ODA) required to build inclusive social protection systems, sustained advocacy from OPDs at national level is needed to generate and maintain political will to develop and scale up schemes providing basic income security and coverage of health care and disability related costs for children and adults with disabilities.

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## The latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion and social protection

### Research

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)

The Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert Advice (SPACE) initiative produced a number of resources on disability inclusion in social protection. In March 2021, they produced a paper '[Inclusive Information Systems for Social Protection: Intentionally Integrating Gender and Disability](#).' The paper found that gender and disability exacerbate the potential risks of exclusion from social protection programmes and considers how to develop information systems in a way that is inclusive and rights-based. The paper finds that information systems that pay explicit attention to reducing and removing these barriers can offer significant opportunities to promote inclusion as well as enabling a more tailored approach to the needs of women and girls and persons with disabilities. SPACE also produced [How Targeting Mechanisms Can Identify People With Disabilities for Inclusion in Social Protection Programmes](#) in March 2021. This guidance note includes a brief introduction to the definitions and terminology surrounding disability and the concept of inclusive social protection, a summary of the rationale for the inclusion of persons with disability in social protection programming and examples for overcoming the challenges for outreach, identification, and registration, and needs assessment. In September 2021, SPACE produced a paper, [The case for including persons with disabilities in social protection in Pacific Island Countries](#). This paper was developed specifically for organisations of persons with disabilities in Pacific Island Countries, to support their advocacy for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in social protection programmes. It responds to the increased focus on social protection in the region in response to the social and economic effects of COVID-19 and reflects the global conversation on disability and social protection.

The Asian Development Bank produced a policy brief, [“Disability and Social Protection in Asia”](#) in December 2021. This brief is based on expert inputs from various consultants on disability and inclusion, and senior social development and social protection specialists. It discusses the rights of persons with disabilities, the building blocks for adequate social protection for persons with disabilities, the barriers to accessing social protection for persons with disabilities, and the methods for measuring social protection coverage for persons with disabilities. The brief also includes four case studies looking at the state of social protection coverage for persons with disabilities in the Republic of Korea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Bhutan. The brief highlights the low coverage of social protection for persons with disabilities in the region, with only 21.6% of persons with significant disabilities covered by disability benefits. It states the urgent need for social protection programmes to become more comprehensive and responsive to persons with disabilities by acknowledging the additional costs of disability, for example when calculating eligibility, and supporting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in these programmes.

The Official Journal of RESNA (Assistive Technology) published a paper, [“Social protection and access to assistive technology in low-and middle-income countries”](#) in October 2021. This paper explores how social protection systems are often a gateway to accessing assistive devices through health insurance, integration in universal health coverage, subsidies, cash transfers, or in-kind provision. Further, it finds that the broader issues of access to assistive technology such as lack of awareness, information and human resources, are compounded by the barriers persons with disabilities face in accessing social protection.

According to this paper, fewer than 10% of persons with significant disabilities who are likely to need assistive technology in low-income countries, receive disability benefits. It highlights some of the key issues to be tackled by social protection systems to enable better access to assistive technologies in these contexts. This includes the need for social protection systems to cover disability-related costs, including assistive technology, as a precondition to the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Social Sciences and Humanities Open published a paper [“Nothing about us, without us’: Voices of leaders of disabled people’s organisation in management of disability fund”](#) in 2021. This paper explores the cash grants established by the Ghanaian government for persons with disabilities in 2005 as part of the financing mechanism for direct assembly. The grants aimed to support persons with disabilities to improve their livelihoods. It finds that, despite these cash grants, persons with disabilities still live in challenging conditions. Interviews with leaders of the Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in four districts of Ghana found that the OPDs were not consulted over the allocation of grants to persons with disabilities, likely to be a contributing factor as to why the cash grants programme has not achieved its aims. The paper concludes that bureaucrats must respect and involve persons with disabilities concerning matters that impact their lives.

The Disability Evidence Portal produced an evidence brief entitled **“How do we ensure that social protection assistance initiatives work for people with disabilities?”** in August 2019. This brief includes a number of recommendations: 1) where social protection does not target persons with disabilities, disability status should be added to the eligibility criteria or persons with disabilities should be exempt from other criteria; 2) support targeted at persons with disabilities should include integrated benefits packages including financial assistance, transport and housing; 3) programmes, policies and evaluations should be designed and implemented in partnership with persons with disabilities; 4) strong disability inclusive policies are essential for ensuring accountable and transparent programming; and 5) all social protection should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

The **Handbook on Social Protection Systems** published in August 2021 provides a globally relevant review of the instruments, actors and design features of social protection systems, as well as their applications and impacts in practice. **Chapter 19** covers disability and social protection and considers what is needed for inclusive social protection systems that support the empowerment of persons with disabilities.

The Australian Government (DFAT) funded social protection program Mahkota published [COVID-19 Impacts on People with Disabilities in Indonesia: An In-Depth Look](#) in December 2021. The study reflected on the extent to which the social protection response reached and helped persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the crisis, only 5 percent of persons with significant disabilities were covered by the disability specific social protection program. To respond to the pandemic, the Indonesian government expanded existed schemes and rolled out new programs at an unprecedented scale, cash and food transfers, electricity subsidies and grants for micro enterprises. The study found that implementation of COVID-19 social protection response programs achieved good coverage



among persons with disabilities, highlighting the role of the initial disability registry and the responsiveness of local authorities.

## Guidance, Training and Case Studies

**Development Pathways is running an online interactive course** on inclusive social protection between 1<sup>st</sup> February and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2022. By the end of the course, participants *“will be able to effectively design a social protection system and make the case for increased investment, while incorporating dignity into the equation in their countries, organisations and at an international scale”*. Details for how to sign up can be found on their [website](#).

The United Nation’s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific developed a guidance note, **“How to Design Disability-Inclusive Social Protection”** in 2021. This guidance note explores why social protection schemes that are inclusive of persons with disabilities are important and also explains the key concepts that are necessary for developing them.

## The latest evidence and guidance on disability inclusion: Other topics

### General

The Journal of Special Education published a paper entitled **“Perspectives on Disabilities in Sierra Leone”** in December 2021, which explores the important cultural variability in how disability is conceptualised across different countries. Researchers conducted 199 interviews with a diverse group of people living in Sierra Leone to better understand a) the experiences of community members with disabilities, b) the employment options and other resources available to persons with disabilities, and c) how community members perceive persons with disabilities.

The African Association of Disability and Self Advocacy Organisations will host a virtual and an in-person conference on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 on **Disability and Social Inclusion in Africa- Advancing an Inclusive, and Sustainable Post-Covid-19 World**. This conference will cover education, public health, transportation, inclusive employment and early education. Information about how to register for the conference can be found on their [website](#).

Development Initiatives published a report entitled, **“Uganda’s disability data landscape and the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities”** in November 2021. This report finds that there are key gaps in legislation, implementation and leadership that limit the enabling environment for inclusive employment and inclusive data. It also finds that, while data on disability in Uganda does exist, it is limited and spread across various sources. There is not a culture of regular data use in Uganda, and to date there has been limited demand for this type of data, which has been exacerbated by limited capacities to use data and challenges with the data that is available. It recommends the development of a Strategy for the

Development of Disability Data that is endorsed by relevant power holders and implemented. It also recommends the establishment of a cross-government and civil society working group.

## Political Participation

The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities published the guidance note **“Political Participation of Persons with Intellectual or Psychosocial Disabilities”** in November 2021. This guide draws on primary and secondary research, examining international human rights standards related to disability and political participation in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania, Egypt, Israel, Nepal, New Zealand, Mexico, Peru, Latin America, Moldova and Spain, Georgia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Slovenia among others. The guide highlights the specific challenges of persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities who are most at risk of being denied the right to vote or stand for election. It also provides detailed and measurable indicators of the elements of inclusive elections for persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, and practical advice for a range of institutions about what they can do to achieve electoral inclusion. An easy read version of this guidance note is available.

The Lancet published a Personal View paper entitled, **“On CRPDs and CRPD: why the rights of people with disabilities are crucial for understanding climate-resilient development pathways”** in November 2021. This paper explores how the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the lived experiences of persons with disabilities can improve our understanding of climate-resilient development. The paper considers social justice and equity as normative goals, the ethical underpinnings of social choices, the inequitable relations that drive marginalisation and the ways society navigates uncertainty through inclusive politics.

## Employment

The Disability Evidence Portal produced an evidence brief entitled **“What is the evidence of successful interventions that increase employment and livelihood participation for people with psychosocial disability?”** in August 2021. This evidence brief provides the following recommendations: 1) persons with psychosocial disabilities should be explicitly included in all national policies and programmes on disability; 2) programmes should address workplace stigma and discrimination against persons with psychosocial disability using social contact interventions; 3) affirmative action efforts should be tailored to the needs of persons with psychosocial disabilities; 4) effective mental health services should be affordable and accessible to persons with psychosocial disabilities (multi-stakeholders should coordinate their efforts to ensure this occurs); 5) funding should be allocated to assist persons with disabilities in supported employment, particularly individual placement and support; and 6) funding should be provided to develop the evidence base to inform and guide policy making.

## Humanitarian Response

Light for the World produced a **short guide to inclusive emergency responses**. This guide is based on quick-fire questions to their experts, who provide tips on how to ensure an inclusive response to humanitarian emergency. They argue that humanitarian organisations should

care about inclusion because of the massive impact that these crises have on persons with disabilities. They highlight the importance of partnering with organisations of persons with disabilities and in ensuring collaboration between development partners, humanitarian agencies, government officials and parents of children with disabilities. Their formula for designing an inclusive response is known as ACAP - **A**ccessibility, **o**ffer inclusive **C**ommunication, **a**ddress **A**ttitudes around disability, and ensure full **P**articipation of all people with disabilities. They also provide further links to guidance about disability- inclusive humanitarian responses. The guide is available in English and Portuguese.

Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre produced a factsheet in December 2021 entitled, “**Armed Conflict and Persons with Disabilities**”. This factsheet provides an overview of the number of persons with disabilities living in conflict contexts, which is estimated to be higher than the 15% across non-conflict populations. It also explores how conflict affects persons with disabilities, including their experience of exclusion from evacuation and humanitarian response efforts. It discusses why persons with disabilities are not protected by law in conflict contexts, and what the Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre are doing to address this.

The Centre for Humanitarian Action hosted a **panel discussion** on the implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on disability inclusion in Syria in October 2021. The recording, presentation slides and graphic recording can be found on their website. The presentation slides are available in an accessible format and International Sign Interpretation and Live Captioning in English is provided in the recording. This panel discussion brings together Davide Amurri, the Deputy Manager for the UN Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Gulnaz Ibrahim, the Ambassador for persons with disabilities in Northeast Syria, Ibrahim Kader, the Emergency Programmes Coordinator for Mercy Corps, and Ralf Südhoff, the Director for the Centre for Humanitarian Action. They explore the experiences of persons with disabilities from diverse genders, age and socioeconomic backgrounds in accessing humanitarian assistance in Syria. They also examine whether the IASC guidelines have helped donors and humanitarian actors strengthen the inclusion, protection and safety of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. Finally, it highlights the challenges of applying the IASC guidelines and including a more diverse group of the affected population.

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## Programme learning on social inclusion and disability inclusion

### Expanding Social Protection for Inclusive Development (ESPID)

ESPID is a UK aid funded social protection programme with a focus on social inclusion, implemented by Save the Children and Action Against Hunger in Nigeria. It is a continuation of the work done under the Child Development Grant Programme since 2013. ESPID aims to support a reduction in multidimensional poverty through more sustainable, accountable, and



inclusive social protection by working on strengthening social protection systems and building an enabling environment.

Inclusion is central to ESPID's lifecycle approach to social protection, including disability inclusion, due to the heightened risks and marginalisation persons with disabilities face. For example, ESPID has invested in sensitising the State Governments of Jigawa and Kano States on disability-sensitive social protection. Currently, Jigawa State has established a Disability Trust Fund and has an existing Disability Law. In Kano, the Disability Amendment Law is before the State Assembly with the expectation that its passage will lead to the establishment of a Commission for Persons with Disability.

ESPID organised engagements to assess the level of support needed to achieve the establishment of the Jigawa Disability Trust Fund and passage of the Law in Kano. This included consultations with a range of development partners, government, legislative, academic, traditional and community stakeholders. To adopt best practice, ESPID scheduled a study tour to Lagos where a range of programmes and policies for persons with disabilities have been in existence since 2003. On this visit, stakeholders had the opportunity to observe a variety of interventions on inclusive education, transport infrastructure and justice, highlighting the importance of a 'whole of system' approach in ensuring social protection is inclusive. This initiative, and the establishment of advocacy committees, proved to be effective in building support.

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## Disability inclusion policy news

The **Global Disability Summit** (GDS22) will take place virtually on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The Summit will be hosted by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Government of Norway, and the Government of Ghana. The Summit will mobilize efforts for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the principle of 'Leave No One Behind' (LNOB) and building back better and more inclusive with regards to Covid-19. More information and the registration details can be found [online](#).

On 17<sup>th</sup> February at 1.00pm CET, UNICEF, ILO, IDA, ADB, DFAT, FCDO, GIZ, HelpAge, Norad, UNPRPD and World Bank will host the GDS22 side event **Working Together Towards Inclusive Social Protection Systems**. The side event will be an opportunity for key stakeholders to 1) review their progress since 2018 on addressing the needs that have been identified, 2) present commitments and plans to further progress in the field of inclusive social protection, and 3) address lessons from the pandemic social protection response for persons with disabilities.

On 16-17<sup>th</sup> March the international conference "Disability - Inclusion - Social protection" organised by ILO, UNICEF, IDA, ADB, DFAT, FCDO, GIZ, HelpAge, Norad, UNPRPD and World Bank with socialprotection.org will explore the global and regional trends and features promising country practices in building social protection systems that promote inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Disability:IN produced a short blog, **“‘Non-Apparent Disability’ vs. ‘Hidden’ or ‘Invisible Disability’- which term is correct”** in January 2022. This provides guidance on the use of language to describe disabilities that are not apparent. It recommends using the term “non-apparent disability”.

Humanity and Inclusion published an article, **“COVID-19: Survey shows unequal access to vaccines for people with disabilities in Laos”** in January 2022. They conducted a survey on access to vaccination programmes by persons with disabilities in Laos between May to June 2021. The survey found that only 19% have been vaccinated; 61% are worried about the unknown impacts of the vaccine and the lack of information on its impact on persons with underlying medical conditions; 73% identified long queues and no priority lanes for persons with disabilities as a key obstacle to vaccinations; and 43% reported not having enough information on how or where to get vaccinated. Around 55% of people asked said they would be more likely to get vaccinated if they had more information and between 56% and 85% said they would get vaccinated if they had the opportunity.

The International Disability Alliance published an article **“Climate change is our crisis too! Persons with disabilities demand COP26 break the exclusion cycle”** in November 2021. This article highlights the way climate action decisions often ignore the rights and needs of persons with disabilities resulting in climate mitigation plans being adopted without consideration of the consequences for persons with disabilities and climate change reduction policies, such as carbon pricing schemes, failing to address the differential costs and burdens that they may impose on persons with disabilities. These examples of exclusion reinforce social inequality globally.

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## About the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk:

The Disability Inclusion Helpdesk provides research and technical assistance on disability inclusion to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office as part of the Disability Inclusive Development Programme. All our published reports are available on [our website](#). Contact us via: [enquiries@disabilityinclusion.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@disabilityinclusion.org.uk)