

S U M M A R Y

WORLD REPORT ON DISABILITY



World Health
Organization



THE WORLD BANK

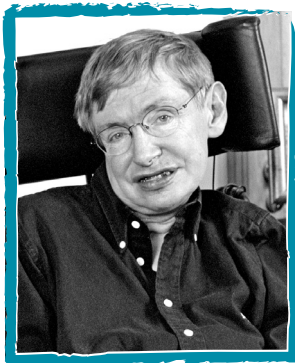
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Foreword

Disability need not be an obstacle to success. I have had motor neurone disease for practically all my adult life. Yet it has not prevented me from having a prominent career in astrophysics and a happy family life.

Reading the *World report on disability*, I find much of relevance to my own experience. I have benefitted from access to first class medical care. I rely on a team of personal assistants who make it possible for me to live and work in comfort and dignity. My house and my workplace have been made accessible for me. Computer experts have supported me with an assisted communication system and a speech synthesizer which allow me to compose lectures and papers, and to communicate with different audiences.

But I realize that I am very lucky, in many ways. My success in theoretical physics has ensured that I am supported to live a worthwhile life. It is very clear that the majority of people with disabilities in the world have an extremely difficult time with everyday survival, let alone productive employment and personal fulfilment.

I welcome this first *World report on disability*. This report makes a major contribution to our understanding of disability and its impact on individuals and society. It highlights the different barriers that people with disabilities face – attitudinal, physical, and financial. Addressing these barriers is within our reach.

In fact we have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation, and to invest sufficient funding and expertise to unlock the vast potential of people with disabilities. Governments throughout the world can no longer overlook the hundreds of millions of people with disabilities who are denied access to health, rehabilitation, support, education and employment, and never get the chance to shine.

The report makes recommendations for action at the local, national and international levels. It will thus be an invaluable tool for policy-makers, researchers, practitioners, advocates and volunteers involved in disability. It is my hope that, beginning with the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, and now with the publication of the *World report on disability*, this century will mark a turning point for inclusion of people with disabilities in the lives of their societies.

Professor Stephen W Hawking



Preface

More than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability, of whom nearly 200 million experience considerable difficulties in functioning. In the years ahead, disability will be an even greater concern because its prevalence is on the rise. This is due to ageing populations and the higher risk of disability in older people as well as the global increase in chronic health conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and mental health disorders.

Across the world, people with disabilities have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. This is partly because people with disabilities experience barriers in accessing services that many of us have long taken for granted, including health, education, employment, and transport as well as information. These difficulties are exacerbated in less advantaged communities.

To achieve the long-lasting, vastly better development prospects that lie at the heart of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals and beyond, we must empower people living with disabilities and remove the barriers which prevent them participating in their communities; getting a quality education, finding decent work, and having their voices heard.

As a result, the World Health Organization and the World Bank Group have jointly produced this *World Report on Disability* to provide the evidence for progressive policies and programmes that can improve the lives of people with disabilities, and facilitate implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into force in May 2008. This landmark international treaty reinforced our understanding of disability as a human rights and development priority.

The *World Report on Disability* suggests steps for all stakeholders – including governments, civil society organizations and disabled people’s organizations – to create enabling environments, develop rehabilitation and support services, ensure adequate social protection, create inclusive policies and programmes, and enforce new and existing standards and legislation, to the benefit of people with disabilities and the wider community. People with disabilities should be central to these endeavors.

Our driving vision is of an inclusive world in which we are all able to live a life of health, comfort, and dignity. We invite you to use the evidence in this report to help this vision become a reality.

Dr Margaret Chan
Director-General
World Health Organization

Mr Robert B Zoellick
President
World Bank Group

Summary

Disability is part of the human condition – almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. Disability is complex, and the interventions to overcome the disadvantages associated with disability are multiple and systemic – varying with the context.

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), adopted in 2006, aims to “promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”. It reflects the major shift in global understanding and responses towards disability.

The *World report on disability* assembles the best available scientific information on disability to improve the lives of people with disabilities and facilitate implementation of the CRPD. It aims to:

- Provide governments and civil society with a comprehensive analysis of the importance of disability and the responses provided, based on the best available evidence.
- Recommend national and international action.

The *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF), adopted as the conceptual framework for this Report, defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Disability refers to the negative aspects of the interaction between individuals with a health condition (such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, depression) and personal and environmental factors (such as negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social supports).

What do we know about disability?

Higher estimates of prevalence

More than a billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability, or about 15% of the world’s population (based on 2010 global population estimates). This is higher than previous World Health Organization estimates, which date from the 1970s and suggested around 10%.

According to the *World Health Survey* around 785 million (15.6%) persons 15 years and older live with a disability, while the *Global Burden of Disease* estimates a figure of around 975 million (19.4%) persons. Of these, the *World Health Survey* estimates that 110 million people (2.2%) have very significant difficulties in functioning, while the *Global Burden of Disease* estimates that 190 million (3.8%) have “severe disability” – the equivalent of disability inferred for conditions such as quadriplegia, severe depression, or blindness. Only the *Global Burden of Disease* measures childhood disabilities (0–14 years), which is estimated to be 95 million (5.1%) children, of whom 13 million (0.7%) have “severe disability”.

Growing numbers

The number of people with disabilities is growing. This is because populations are ageing – older people have a higher risk of disability – and because of the global increase in chronic health conditions associated with disability, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental illness. Chronic diseases are estimated to account for 66.5% of all years lived with disability in low-income and middle-income countries (1). Patterns of disability in a particular country are influenced by trends in health conditions and trends in environmental and other factors – such as road traffic crashes, natural disasters, conflict, diet, and substance abuse.

Diverse experiences

Stereotypical views of disability emphasize wheelchair users and a few other “classic” groups such as blind people and deaf people. However, the disability experience resulting from the interaction of health conditions, personal factors, and environmental factors varies greatly. While disability correlates with disadvantage, not all people with disabilities are equally disadvantaged. Women with disabilities experience gender discrimination as well as disabling barriers. School enrolment rates differ among impairments, with children with physical impairments generally faring better than those with intellectual or sensory impairments. Those most excluded from the labour market are often those with mental health difficulties or intellectual impairments. People with more severe impairments often experience greater disadvantage, as shown by evidence ranging from rural Guatemala (2) to Europe (3).

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