

## **EDITOR'S COMMENT**

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are a little more than half way through their term. The disability sector has been critical of these goals, which do not explicitly address issues specific to people with disabilities. In defense, one has heard the oft repeated statement that concerns of people with disabilities are supposedly inherent and implicit in the MDGs.

The recent mid-term review of the MDGs in different parts of the world has however, highlighted the fact that sufficient attention has not been paid in the MDGs to some disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities. This review has brought out the need to include people with disabilities in the MDG targets.

It is evident that for each of the 8 goals, there is a clear rationale to include issues specific to people with disabilities. For MDG 1 on eradication of poverty and hunger, there is sufficient evidence to show that people with disabilities in developing countries constitute a significant proportion of the population that lives in poverty. For MDG 2 on universal primary education, evidence has highlighted the exclusion of children with disabilities. In relation to MDG 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment, it has been documented that disabled women and disabled girls are particularly vulnerable to abuse. For MDG 5 on child mortality, studies have shown that mortality rates are higher for disabled children even in countries with a low under-five mortality rate. MDG 6 is about maternal health, and it well accepted that improved maternal health can significantly reduce incidence of some impairments that can cause disability. For MDG 6 on HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, again there is evidence to indicate that people with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, besides having limited access to information and other support systems. MDG 7 is about environmental sustainability: a poor environment can perpetuate conditions that lead to ill health and impairments, and environmental barriers are a major reason for exclusion of people with disabilities. The last goal talks about global partnership for development. This has implications for inclusion of disability issues in all mainstream development processes.

It is clear that for the remaining term of the MDGs, the specific concerns of people with disabilities in relation to each goal need to be explicitly stated and taken into consideration in

the implementation process. The process of achieving this is already initiated. Efforts are underway to develop supplementary targets and indicators to the MDGS, which would include the concerns of people with disabilities in the remaining term of these goals. This is a very welcome move and needs to be supported by all countries that are implementing the goals. Only with this can the aim of mainstreaming disability issues into the development process, be realised.

The APDRJ team wishes all the readers a Happy New Year!

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