



The Time is Now

Ensuring Development for All:
**Disability and the Millennium
Development Goals**



September 2010



**Dochas**

The Irish Association of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Summary

In September 2000, 189 countries signed up to the historic Millennium Declaration which recognised that :

‘in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable.’¹

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed along with the Declaration provide an unprecedented collaborative framework to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

With only five years to go before the world is due to meet the MDGs, some of the goals remain well off target, with enormous variation in achievement geographically, socially and between goals. As world leaders gather to review progress to date, and learn lessons with regard to overcoming barriers to achieving the individual goals, voices are being raised arguing that the MDG framework itself needs to be reviewed, to better reflect the human rights and inclusion framework. In the drive to achieve the eight shared goals for all of the world’s people, Governments have tended to focus on those most easy to reach. It can even be argued that the MDGs have unintentionally reinforced the exclusion and often abject poverty of already marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities.

600 million people in the world have a disability and the World Bank estimates that 1 in 5 of the world’s poorest people has a disability. Yet, disability is not mentioned once in any of the 8 MDGs, the 18 targets or the 48 indicators.

¹ UN Millennium Declaration, 2000



The *White Paper on Irish Aid* (2006: 116) states that:

“People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable and marginalised in developing countries... It is clear now that, if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved, the needs of disabled people must be considered alongside other development challenges by national governments, donors, international organisations and NGOs.”

The MDGs have already brought some important progress², but as stated by Ireland’s Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power, at a Trócaire MDG roundtable in April: “It is crucial that we examine openly the uneven nature of that progress - the great variation among regions, as well as within population groups.”

In September 2010, UN member states will come together again to discuss what progress has been made and to draw up a breakthrough action plan, aimed at accelerating progress on the MDGs.

As set out in the Dóchas position paper on the MDGs³, Ireland has a vital role to play at the MDG Review Summit in September 2010, both in its own right and as an influential member of the EU, which accounts for 60 per cent of international aid flows.

Following on from discussions between Irish NGOs and Irish Aid on Ireland’s input to the MDG Review Summit, this paper (conceived by the Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group⁴) argues that it is only by addressing the needs of the most marginalised, such as those with disabilities, that we stand a chance of achieving poverty eradication and sustainable development for all.

² United Nations’ MDG Report 2010:

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202010%20En%20r15%20-low%20res%2020100615%20-.pdf>

³ “Supporting Accelerated Progress on the Millennium Development Goals - A Dóchas position paper on the 10-year progress review”, April 2010

⁴ The Dóchas Disability and International Development Working Group is a group of international development organisations and national disability organisations working together under the aegis of Dóchas to promote the centrality of disability in the fight against global poverty and inequality. For more information, visit www.dochas.ie

Moving forward on Inclusion and Disability

We recommend that Ireland build on its commitment to the MDGs as a cooperation framework and its stated focus on the uneven nature of progress towards the Goals by specifically addressing issues of inclusion and disability. Concretely, we recommend that Ireland:

- ★ Actively advocates to ensure that all programmes designed to accelerate progress towards the MDGs identify which groups are facing discrimination, collect disaggregated data and monitor implementation, in order to ensure that MDG efforts are specifically directed towards addressing discrimination and inequalities.⁵
- ★ Promotes a practical and decisive international action plan on the MDGs that not only addresses the commitment needed to reach individual Goals and targets, but also embeds social justice, equality and human rights within the MDG framework itself so that we can fulfil our duty *'to all of the world's people, especially the most vulnerable'*.
- ★ Urges that the international community produce a practical and decisive plan that not only addresses the commitment needed to reach individual Goals and indicators, but embeds social justice, equality and human rights within the MDG framework itself so that we can fulfil our duty *'to all of the world's people, especially the most vulnerable'*.
- ★ Highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs and realities of people with disabilities in order to reach the poorest and most vulnerable.

⁵ Supporting Accelerated Progress on the Millennium Development Goals - A Dóchas position paper on the 10-year progress review", April 2010

- ★ Supports the development of national capacities to collect, monitor and report on disaggregated data on disability (also required by gender) in development programmes, and particularly within MDG planning processes and country narrative reports.
- ★ Calls for the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to propose options to the Inter-Agency Expert Group on MDG indicators to mainstream disability in its work. This would be in line with the recommendations of the UN Expert Working Group on mainstreaming disability in the MDGs, pushes for the inclusion of disability in current indicators to promote the inclusion of disability data.
- ★ Promotes implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 64/131, *Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities*, in MDG-related processes around the MDG Review Summit and beyond.
- ★ Promotes implementation in future MDG planning and processes of Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which Ireland and the EU have both signed up, which specifically demands the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in International Cooperation. Ireland should also promote Rule 14 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, which stipulates that the “needs and concerns of persons with disabilities should be incorporated into general development plans and not be treated separately.”⁶

⁶ UN (20 November 2009) Report of the Secretary-General to the UN Economic and Social Council

What are the Millennium Development Goals?



Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger



Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education



Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women



Goal 4: Reduce child mortality



Goal 5: Improve maternal health



Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases



Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability



Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Introduction

The Millennium Declaration and global political commitment to the eight MDGs at the dawn of the new millennium provided an unprecedented opportunity to lift billions of people in the world's poorest countries out of poverty. For the first time, the global community began to imagine a world without extreme hunger and want. Governments, both donors and recipients, and the NGO community embraced the potential of the MDGs, making the Goals the most influential framework shaping development cooperation over the last decade.

Yet, as highlighted by Dóchas in its MDG position paper and by the Minister of State for Overseas Development Peter Power in his speech to the MDG Roundtable in April 2010, progress has been uneven between the goals, between regions and, crucially in the context of this paper, between population groups. While there have been great strides towards achieving the goal of universal primary education, the figures show the continuing exclusion of already marginalised groups. For example, children with disabilities still account for one-third of the 72 million children who await the chance to go to school, while nearly 60 percent of those out of school are girls.⁷

⁷ UNESCO (2010) Global Monitoring Report



MDGs, human rights and inclusion

As a benchmark for minimum standards of health, education and livelihoods, the MDGs have provided the global community with a unifying set of measurable goals, along with indicators of success. Many are concerned, however, at the absence of an intrinsic human rights basis to the MDGs, with former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, for example,⁸ expressing concern that: “even if the MDGs reflect many parts of the human rights agenda (including the rights to food, education, health, decent living standards etc), most of the strategies to achieve the MDGs currently operate in a predominantly economic and still incipient human rights framework.” The problem, she stated then, was that the MDGs had become separated from the Millennium Declaration, which, in addition to the eight MDGs, includes six commitments to promoting human rights, democracy and governance.⁹

Dóchas, particularly members of the Disability and International Development Working Group, is concerned that the lack of specific attention to marginalised groups in the MDG targets and indicators creates a real danger that efforts to achieve the MDGs will push some of the world’s poorest people to the periphery. In particular, the exclusion of a category of people such as people with disabilities who cannot access mainstream social, economic and political life, and have limited access to almost all areas of development is problematic.¹⁰

⁸ Millennium Project (Commissioned by the UN Secretary General and supported by the UN Development Group) Human Rights Perspective on the Millennium Development Goals: Conference Report, <http://www.chrgj.org/images/NYUHRGJMDGREPORT2003.pdf>

⁹ The UN Millennium Declaration, UN Doc.A/RES/55/2 (2000); *World Leaders Adopt ‘United Nations Millennium Declaration’ at Conclusion of Extraordinary Three-Day Summit*, reprinted in, G.A.

¹⁰ Gooding, K. And Mulligan, D. Sightsavers (2009) *The Millennium Development Goals and People with Disabilities*

Poverty and Disability

“There is a definite and inextricable link between poverty and disability. Symptoms of poverty, such as inadequate medical care, unsafe environments and malnutrition, are all causes and exacerbators of disability.”

UN Special Rapporteur on Disability, Sheikha Hissa Al Thani (2003-2008)¹¹

Chronic poverty is multi-dimensional and severe, and linked with intergenerational transmission, whereby people are born in poverty, live in poverty and pass that poverty onto their children.¹² Disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty,¹³ associated not just with poverty in general but with its most intense and severe form: chronic poverty, defined as “those individuals and households who experience poverty for extended periods of time or throughout their lives”. The chronically poor are those “for whom poverty persists”.

Disability is a complex issue to address because it is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Statistics give us little idea of the exclusion and suffering of individuals, but do at least capture some of the scale of the problem:

- ★ It is estimated that 100 million people worldwide have impairments which are caused by malnutrition and poor sanitation, and are therefore preventable.¹⁴
- ★ Malnutrition can result in a number of disabilities, such as stunting of growth, blindness and diabetes. Malnutrition is estimated to cause 20 percent of impairments.¹⁵

¹¹ United Nations Commission for Social Development at the Economic and Social Council E/CN.5/2005/5 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development* (2005)

¹² Kate Gooding (2006) *Poverty and Blindness*, Sightsavers

¹³ DFID (2000) *Disability, Poverty and Development*, Department for International Development: London

¹⁴ Helen Lee (1999) *Discussion Paper for Oxfam: Disability as a Development Issue and how to integrate a Disability Perspective into the SCO*. Oxford

¹⁵ DfID (2000) *Disability, Poverty and Development*, DFID, UK



- ★ The World Health Organisation (1992) estimates that in Africa and Asia, 50 percent of hearing impairment and 70 percent of childhood blindness is preventable or treatable.¹⁶
- ★ In addition to half a million women who die each year due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth (99 percent in developing countries), a further 9 million suffer complications that can result in life long pain, disability and socio-economic exclusion.¹⁷
- ★ Iodine deficiency is the world's leading single cause of preventable brain damage and mental retardation. In 1990, some 26 million people suffered from brain damage associated with iodine deficiency.¹⁸
- ★ The International Disability and Development Consortium estimates that 98 percent of children with disabilities in developing countries are denied any formal education.¹⁹

Such statistics present us with a stark image of life for people with disabilities living in poverty, especially in developing countries. They also provide a clear illustration that, if the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015, it is critical to consider the rights and needs of people with disabilities, together with prevention of the causes of disability.

Failure to systematically embed disability across the MDGs will ensure our failure to meet the individual Goals and the ambition set out in the Millennium Declaration of 'making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.'²⁰

¹⁶ Rebecca Yeo (2001) *Chronic Poverty and Disability*, Chronic Poverty Research Centre

¹⁷ DfID (2007) *Maternal Health Factsheet*, quoting United Nations Statistics Division: Progress towards the MDGs 1990-2005 Report on MDG 5 (2005)

¹⁸ World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders, "Global Prevalence of Iodine Deficiency Disorders," Micronutrient Deficiency Information System Working Paper No. 1 (WHO, Geneva, 1993)

¹⁹ IDDC (1999)

²⁰ UN (2000) *Millennium Declaration*

MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Poverty and exclusion mutually reinforce one another. People with disabilities are disproportionately represented among the world's poorest people and communities. Disability is deeply connected to issues of hunger and malnutrition, with malnutrition causing avoidable disability, while poverty and hunger may force people to live and work in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, which can lead to disability. People with disabilities are also much less likely to be able to access vital health, education and livelihood opportunities.

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education

Education has long been identified as a key determinant in achieving both sustainable and equitable development, and economic growth. As Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, Nicholas Burnett, notes: "Policies to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV & AIDS and ensure environmental sustainability will fall short of their desired impact if they fail to include an educational component."²¹ World Bank research suggests that disability has more impact on participation in education than gender, rural residence or household economic status.²² When an estimated one-third of the 72 million out-of-school children have a disability²³ and 98 percent of children with disabilities in developing countries are not in school, MDG 2 will be impossible to achieve unless children with disabilities are specifically targeted.

MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

According to some estimates, women represent 70 percent of the world's poor people. Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property.²⁴ Beyond that still, disabled women and girls face a complex and layered experience of discrimination and disadvantage, which suggests that the target of eliminating gender inequality in all levels of education by 2015 will not be reached without specifically considering disability.²⁵ Women in the developing world are at high risk of developing a disability due to complications and lack of adequate healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth.

²¹ Burnett, Nicholas (2009) *MDG Insights*, Issue 02, UN

²² Filmer, D. (2005) *Disability, Poverty and Schooling in Developing Countries*, World Bank: Washington DC

²³ UNESCO (2010) *Global Monitoring Report*

²⁴ UNIFEM, http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/facts_figures.php

²⁵ *Developments* Online Magazine, <http://www.developments.org.uk/articles/disability-key-to-tackling-poverty/>

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality

Mortality for children with disabilities under five can be as high as 80 percent in the developing world. Mortality for children with disabilities (of all ages) can be as high as 80 percent, even in countries where under-five mortality is below 20 percent.²⁶ Without initiatives specifically targeting healthcare, but also social stigma and exclusion, the Goal to reduce child mortality cannot be achieved.

MDG 5: Improve maternal health

'Up to 20 million women a year are affected by disabling impairments associated with pregnancy and childbirth,' according to the UK's Department for International Development.²⁷ Without implementing widespread, safe, preventive health services for women at risk of becoming disabled due to maternal complications, the Goal to improve maternal health cannot be achieved. When women with disabilities often excluded from sex education and reproductive health initiatives, and there is a complete lack of disaggregated data on women with disabilities for maternal health planning, it is impossible to gain a true picture of the situation for women with disabilities, let alone create programmes to target this most marginalised group of women.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Lack of equitable access to healthcare and exclusion from prevention initiatives places certain vulnerable groups at huge risk. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and other diseases, which are in turn a major cause of disabling impairments. World Bank research reveals that women with disabilities are at a higher risk of contracting HIV or AIDS due to lack of awareness and lack of access to traditional HIV and AIDS programmes.²⁸ A particular problem arises with the failure to clearly identify neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) under 'other diseases' in MDG 6, which virtually ensures that these diseases will be neglected in the drive to achieve the MDGs. Yet, one-sixth of the world's population is infected with one or more NTD and a further two billion people are at risk. It is estimated that 57 million disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) are lost every year to NTDs.²⁹

²⁶ DfID (2000) *Disability, Poverty and Development*, DFID, UK.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/gender/www.html

²⁹ Conteh, L., Engels, T. and Molyneux, D. (2010) 'Socioeconomic Aspects of Neglected Tropical Diseases', *The Lancet*, Volume 375, No 9710

MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Without access to safe water and sanitation facilities, many communities in the developing world, and in particular excluded groups within those communities, are at risk of potentially disabling conditions such as Trachoma. This infectious eye disease is a leading cause of preventable blindness, with four million people affected by the condition worldwide and six million permanently blinded. Trachoma can be prevented with access to safe water for washing face and hands. Studies have shown that without capacity to adapt, move or change lifestyles, people living in poverty in developing countries are at greater risk from increasingly erratic climatic conditions. Often excluded from both informal and formal support networks and initiatives, people with disabilities are very much at risk from both sudden and progressive climatic events. In many instances, they bear the burden of its day-to-day effects – living miles from a safe water source, for example.

MDG 8: Develop a global partnership for development

In order to develop a true global partnership for development, citizens of developing countries must be able to actively engage with, and contribute to, the development of their communities, their nations and the wider global agenda. An inclusive global partnership for development will continue to elude us for as long as people with disabilities continue to remain outside development policy, planning and programming.

In the strongest indication yet of an increasing awareness of the urgency of mainstreaming disability within the global MDG framework, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in his guideline report for the 2010 MDG Review that:

“Attention must be focused on the special needs of the most vulnerable and the large and increasing inequalities in various economic and social dimensions including geography, sex, age, disability, ethnicity and other vulnerabilities... Children with disabilities remain among the most marginalized and least likely to go to school.”³⁰

³⁰ *Keeping the Promise: A Forward-looking Review to Promote an Agreed Action Agenda to Achieve the MDGs by 2015*

Ireland's role in achieving the MDGs for all

The MDGs are the most widely accepted set of unifying development objectives of the global community. The MDGs are used not only to shape the development practices of donor countries and international development work, but also many of the development planning, policies and practices of developing countries. If Ireland wishes to hold true to its commitment to help eliminate global inequality, then it cannot ignore disability as a pivotal issue within the global development framework.

In the first half of 2010, Dóchas outlined its view on the steps required for the achievement of the MDGs.³¹ In that position paper, Irish NGOs called on Ireland and other EU member states to make particular efforts to deliver on MDG8, and advocated an approach towards the MDGs that focuses on people's rights, and specifically seeks to include marginalised groups in decision-making processes that affect them.

Dóchas also echoed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's statement that the norms and values of international human rights instruments must provide the foundation for engagement on the MDGs, especially the key human rights principles of non-discrimination, meaningful participation and accountability.³²

Focusing in on inclusion and disability, Dóchas is convinced that Ireland has an important role to play, in MDG discussions and beyond, both as a donor that has consistently sought to focus on the world's poorest and most vulnerable groups, and as an influential member of the European Union.

³¹ "Supporting Accelerated Progress on the Millennium Development Goals - A Dóchas position paper on the 10-year progress review", April 2010

³² Dóchas (2010) *Supporting Accelerated progress on the Millennium Development Goals: A Dóchas Position Paper on the 10-year progress review*

Dóchas commends Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power's confirmation that Ireland's focus for the 10-year MDG review includes³³:

- ★ the interconnectedness of the MDGs;
- ★ countries, regions and population groupings that are being left behind; and
- ★ the need for comprehensive social protection policies to provide a safety net for the world's poorest and most marginalised people.

³³ Minister Power (2010) keynote Address: Ireland's contribution to the MDGs and our priorities for the UN Summit in September, http://www.dci.gov.ie/latest_news.asp?article=1614

Conclusions

In the context of the 2010 MDG review, priorities for advancing achievement of the Goals and future discussions on post-2015 development priorities, Dóchas urges that Ireland:

- ★ Advocates to ensure that all programmes designed to accelerate progress towards the MDGs identify which population groups are facing discrimination, collect disaggregated data, and monitor implementation, in order to ensure that MDG efforts are specifically directed towards addressing discrimination and inequalities;³⁴
- ★ Promotes a practical and decisive international action plan on the MDGs that not only addresses the commitment needed to reach individual Goals and targets, but also embeds social justice, equality and human rights within the MDG framework itself so that we can fulfil our duty *'to all of the world's people, especially the most vulnerable'*;
- ★ Urges that the international community produces a practical and decisive plan that not only addresses the commitment needed to reach individual Goals and indicators, but embeds social justice, equality and human rights within the MDG framework itself so that we can fulfil our duty *'to all of the world's people, especially the most vulnerable'*;
- ★ Highlights the importance of addressing the specific needs and realities of people with disabilities in order to reach the poorest and most vulnerable;
- ★ Supports the development of national capacities to collect, monitor and report on disaggregated data on disability (also required by gender) in development programmes, and particularly within MDG planning processes and country narrative reports;

³⁴ Ibid

- ★ Calls for the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) to propose options to the Inter-Agency Expert Group on MDG indicators to mainstream disability in its work. This would be in line with the recommendations of the UN Expert Working Group on mainstreaming disability in the MDGs, pushes for the inclusion of disability in current indicators to promote the inclusion of disability data;
- ★ Promotes implementation of UN General Assembly Resolution 64/131, *Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities*, in MDG-related processes around the MDG Review Summit and beyond; and
- ★ Promotes implementation in future MDG planning and processes of Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which Ireland and the EU have both signed up, which specifically demands the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in International Cooperation. Ireland should also promote Rule 14 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, which stipulates that the “needs and concerns of persons with disabilities should be incorporated into general development plans and not be treated separately.



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Dochas is the umbrella organisation of Irish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved in development and relief overseas and/or development education in Ireland. Dochas aims to provide a forum for consultation and co-operation among its Members as well as to help them speak with a single voice on development issues.

Dochas, 12 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
Phone: +353 (0) 1 405 3801 www.dochas.ie



Dochas has signed the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages. Please send your feedback on our adherence to media@dochas.ie