NEW WORLD REPORT SHOWS MORE THAN 1 BILLION PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FACE SUBSTANTIAL BARRIERS IN THEIR DAILY LIVE

9 JUNE 2011 | NEW YORK – The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank today revealed new global estimates that more than one billion people experience some form of disability. They urged governments to step up efforts to enable access to mainstream services and to invest in specialized programmes to unlock the vast potential of people with disabilities

The first-ever World Report on Disability provides the first global estimates of persons with disabilities in 40 years and an overview of the status of disability in the world. New research shows that almost one-fifth of the estimated global total of persons living with disabilities, or between 110-190 million, encounter significant difficulties. The report stresses that few countries have adequate mechanisms in place to respond to the needs of people with disabilities. Barriers include stigma and discrimination, lack of adequate health care and rehabilitation services; and inaccessible transport, buildings and information and communication technologies. As a result, people with disabilities experience poorer health, lower educational achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities.

"Disability is part of the human condition," says WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan. "Almost every one of us will be permanently or temporarily disabled at some point in life. We must do more to break the barriers which segregate people with disabilities, in many cases forcing them to the margins of society."

“Addressing the health, education, employment, and other development needs of people living

with disabilities is fundamental to achieving the Millennium Development Goals," says Robert B. Zoellick, President of The World Bank Group. “We need to help people with disabilities to gain equitable access to opportunities to participate and contribute to their communities. They have much to offer if given a fair chance to do so.”

Key Findings and Recommendations

The report shows that people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to find healthcare provider skills inadequate to meet their needs, and nearly three times more likely to report being denied needed health care. In low-income countries people with disabilities are 50% more likely to experience catastrophic health expenditure than non-disabled people. Children with disabilities are less likely to start school than nondisabled children and have lower rates of staying in school. In countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the employment rate of people with disabilities (44%) is slightly over half that for people without disabilities (75%).

The report recommends that governments and their development partners provide people with disabilities access to all mainstream services, invest in specific programmes and services for those people with disabilities who are in need, and adopt a national disability strategy and plan of action. In addition, governments should work to increase public awareness and understanding of disability, and support further research and training in the area. Importantly, people with disabilities should be consulted and involved in the design and implementation of these efforts.

The report highlights a number of approaches used by countries worldwide to enable people with disabilities to access services, infrastructure, information and jobs. Examples include:

- In Mozambique and Tanzania, training workshops with information in Braille and sign language ensure that HIV messages reach young people with disabilities;

- In Uganda, the Sustainable Clubfoot Care Project improves detection and rehabilitation of children with clubfoot by raising public awareness that clubfoot is correctable, improving the provision of foot orthotics, training primary health personnel, and subsidizing transport costs;

- In Curitiba, Brazil, an integrated public transport system improves access for people with disabilities by adopting universal design and sensitizing drivers and other staff;

- In Viet Nam, children with disabilities are able to learn in mainstream schools by revising policies, making buildings accessible, providing specialized support for individual students, and training administrators, teachers and parents;

- In Malaysia, the Return to Work programme enables people with occupational injury-related disability to return to full-time employment by coordinating rehabilitation services and welfare support.

Welcoming the report, renowned theoretical physicist Professor Stephen Hawking said, "We have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation for people with disabilities, and to invest sufficient funding and expertise to unlock their vast potential… It is my hope this century will mark a turning point for inclusion of people with disabilities in the lives of their societies."

Nearly 150 countries and regional organizations have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and 100 have ratified it, committing them to removing barriers so that people with disabilities may participate fully in their societies. The World Report on Disability, developed with contributions from over 380 experts, will be a key resource for countries implementing the CRPD.

RELATED LINKS

World Report on Disability - www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/index.html

For more information on The World Bank's work on disability, please go to: www.worldbank.org/disability

All WHO information can be found at: www.who.int