

Learning brief

Making Sustainable Development Goals implementation and monitoring disability inclusive

A case study from Pakistan





Women with disabilities advocating for their rights at the Shadow Disability Summit 2018, organised by Sightsavers and DFID Pakistan.

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Context: Pakistan's commitment to the 2030 Agenda

Pakistan is committed to fulfilling the vision of the 2030 Agenda and is the first country in the world to localise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) after a unanimous parliamentary resolution was passed on 19 February 2016.

To achieve the SDGs, the federal government of Pakistan established a special section in the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI) responsible for the implementation and reporting of SDGs progress. The section also has an SDGs support unit, established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to support and augment SDG implementation in the country.

To date, the federal SDGs section has published reports on poverty; had the national SDGs framework approved by the National Economic Council (NEC); published a report on multidimensional poverty in Pakistan; conducted social sector research and a series of seminars on SDGs. The section is currently

working on developing a progress report on SDGs implementation.

While the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Agenda 2030 provide a strong impetus towards the inclusion of people with disabilities, good quality disability data is essential to measure progress towards SDGs. Often, government and development actors assume a lack of disability data and fail to proactively plan for the inclusion of people with disabilities in policies and programmes.

Disability-inclusive voluntary national review of Pakistan (2019)

Pakistan adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as its national development agenda and presented a voluntary national report at the 2019 high-level political forum (HLPF). The priority goals reviewed at the forum were: Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17. Over two years (2018–2019), Sightsavers in Pakistan worked with strategic stakeholders and national partners to develop a voluntary national review (VNR) that focused on disability inclusion in SDG implementation, and encouraged the active and meaningful participation of people with disabilities in the VNR reporting process.¹

This work to develop the disability-focused VNR report included:



A series of discussions led by Sightsavers with the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms in Pakistan to develop a consultation workshop.



Multi-stakeholder consultations and interviews for the development of an alternative national UNCRPD report, led by Sightsavers.



National-level stakeholder consultations co-hosted by Sightsavers and DFID Pakistan to formulate the Pakistan Charter of Demands, in preparation for the Global Disability Summit in 2018.

The Pakistan Disability Perspective VNR report focuses on Goals 4, 8, 10, 16 and 17, and was supported and facilitated by Sightsavers through a collaborative effort of national partners. The national-level consultation, led by Sightsavers and MoPD&SI, engaged hundreds of people with disabilities championing inclusion in different spheres of life, as well as disabled people's organisations, national and district-level disability networks, and key stakeholders from civil society and government. The process was co-hosted and endorsed

by the Ministry for Planning, Development and Reforms (now the Ministry of Planning, Reforms and Special Initiatives) with high-level participation (from the parliamentary secretary and chief SDGs unit). This boosted the morale and optimism of people with disabilities, and their representative bodies, that their input would be considered and feed into the reporting process.

There was also a very active contribution in the national VNR report by Pakistan's largest civil society network, AWAZ/Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA), which is part of the Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) network (made up of more than 250 civil society organisations from over 60 countries). They conducted robust VNR consultations with more than 68 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in all domains of development in Pakistan. Sightsavers engaged closely with PDA to ensure that these member NGOs also involved people with disabilities in all their district-focused VNR consultation meetings.



A young and passionate man marking his strong presence at Shadow Disability Summit (2018)

What difference has this made?

As a result of this rich consultative process, the key recommendations of the Pakistan Disability Perspective VNR report was adopted by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI) for the national VNR report. The latest version of the report is available on the United Nations' HLPF website, and it makes strong reference to people with disabilities – a total of 15 times.²

This disability-inclusive VNR consultation process was commended by the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities at its fifth session in Bangkok in February 2019, and was highlighted as a case example of disability inclusion for VNR reporting. The government of Pakistan was asked to share its work at the UN's ESCAP-led regional workshop for VNR preparation.³

The current VNR report sets the way forward for the consideration and follow-up of all related legislatures, decision-makers, stakeholders and the people of Pakistan, who are the real beneficiaries and custodians of commitments made under Agenda 2030 for social transformation and sustainable development.

This intervention with MoPD&SI has also paved the way for Sightsavers' partnership with the secretariat of the National Legislative Assembly of Pakistan, which has proved to be instrumental in the following outcomes:



Formal partnership memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Sightsavers and the National Assembly.



Approval of the Rights of Disability Bill in February 2020 by the National Assembly and the parliament of Pakistan.



Translation of the Constitution of Pakistan into braille.



The National Assembly's website was made accessible for visually and hearing-impaired people.



A disability access audit, led by a team of people with disabilities, was carried out for the parliament house building, followed by the implementation of the recommendations of the audit.



Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan endorsing Sightsavers' Equal World campaign's key ask for the approval of the national disability bill.



Partnership with SDG units and MoPD&SI The journey and key milestones

We have been working with MoPD&SI and the respective SDGs sections at federal and provincial levels to develop strategic links and regular follow-ups. This was partially supported under the project, The Right to Health: Breaking down barriers to eye health in South Asia, funded by UK aid.

The formal partnership between MoPD&SI and SDGs sections started in 2018, with the following key events and developments.



Phase one

Ensuring inclusion and facilitating a consultative process

- Sightsavers and MoPD&SI co-hosted national and provincial-level consultations for the development of the Disability Perspective VNR report in 2018 (as explained in the previous section).
- Sightsavers also supported MoPD&SI in adapting SDGs key documents, i.e. Goals and targets in Urdu and braille. The Pakistan Association of the Blind (PAB) helped with the wider dissemination of braille SDGs documents to the blind population of Pakistan.



Phase two

Exploring disability disaggregated SDG indicators

In October 2020, Sightsavers co-hosted a consultative workshop with MoPD&SI to explore the existing data sources and mechanisms for disability-related information that can feed into the SDGs implementation monitoring dashboard. The workshop was attended by concerned representatives from the SDG sections, the Planning Commission, and SDG support units from the provinces Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K). Representatives from national-level organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) also participated in this consultation. During this workshop, detailed discussions unfolded the existing system of collecting data on disability-related indicators, and it was agreed that a detailed mapping or situational analysis of all data sources nationwide would be done. Sightsavers was nominated to take a lead on this, in collaboration with MoPD&SI.

Sightsavers completed this mapping study from November 2020 to February 2021. The mapping study report identified all the relevant ministries, provincial departments and NGOs from which data about disability-related SDGs could be collected for the SDGs dashboard. This includes types, sources of data, and mechanisms of data collection and its dissemination. The draft report was shared in March 2021 with the MoPD&SI for its final review and input. In April 2021, the report was formally endorsed by MoPD&SI.

Key recommendations that emerged from the mapping study

- The federal SDGs unit needs to develop a list of targets and indicators, enabling the SDGs dashboard to capture information about the status of people with disabilities. In this regard, the federal SDGs unit may build the capacity of the concerned officials regarding these targets and indicators, and how to collect and report the information to the respective SDGs units.
- The Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination may be requested to liaise with provincial governments to collect data concerning disability-related SDGs.
- A coordination committee comprising representatives of relevant ministries, UN organisations, INGOs and leading NGOs working for people with disabilities at federal capital may be constituted to observe the situation of data collection of all disability-related SDGs under the convenorship of the SDGs section at the Planning Commission.
- All SDGs sections and units established at planning and development departments of four provinces (GB and AJ&K) should be advised by the Planning Commission to collect data about disability-related SDGs and communicate it to the SDGs section at the Planning Commission, at the federal level, to incorporate in the national dashboard.
- Some focal people, federal and provincial SDGs unit team members, officers of each department, and representatives of NGOs concerning disability-related SDGs need to know more about disability-related issues. For example: prevalence rates, types, services and institutions, national and provincial policies and legislations, international commitments (CRPD, Incheon Strategy, Marrakesh Treaty and SDGs etc.), and challenges. They may receive training and orientation on these issues from Sightsavers or any other INGO or UN agency under the umbrella of SDGs section of the Planning Commission.
- The focal people of each ministry or department may not be transferred for at least three years, so that there is consistency in SDG implementation plans for a certain time period.
- All heads of ministries (federal level) and departments (at the provincial level) should monitor the progress of collection and the flow of data concerning disability-related SDGs.
- SDGs sections and support units at the federal and provincial levels should convene meetings regularly (at least quarterly) with the focal people of concerned ministries and departments at federal or provincial level to monitor the progress of data collection.
- The SDGs section and support units at the federal and provincial levels should nominate an officer to develop a coordination mechanism with all ministries and departments concerning data on disability-related SDGs.
- At some of the federal and provincial ministries and departments, there is a need to improve liaison for sharing data about disability-related indicators of SDGs with the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and provincial bureaus of statistics.
- Data about disability is not given due importance at federal and provincial level departments. The SDGs section at the Planning Commission should take special measures to improve this situation.
- Presently, there is no formal system of collection of data from private sector organisations. This is mainly due to a lack of interest on the part of concerned government departments, and also certain restrictions imposed by the government. SDGs units at the federal and provincial levels should approach the registration authorities (under which the NGOs have been registered) for the collection of data concerning disability-related targets and indicators of SDGs.
- The PBS and provincial bureaus of statistics could approach the concerned ministries and departments at the federal and provincial levels to send data on disability-related SDGs to them.
- The National Council for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (NCRDP) at the federal level, and provincial councils for the rehabilitation of disabled persons (PCRDPs) at the provincial level, have data about people with disabilities to whom disability certificates are issued and who have been employed under employment quotas in the public and private sector. National Database and Registration Authority offices also have data on people with disabilities who have been issued special computerised national identity cards. These organisations may be advised to communicate this data to the SDGs units (federal and provincial).
- Social welfare and special education departments, with the collaboration of health departments, may collect data about people with disabilities from grassroots level through the services of Lady Health Workers (LHWs). The LHWs compile monthly reports on various health-related issues. They may be advised by the concerned health authorities to include disability-related data (only statistics of people with disabilities) in their monthly reports as well.



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Way forward: Our plans to build on this success

Keeping in view the findings of the report 'Mapping of disability-focused data sources from relevant departments and organisations at federal and provincial levels', it was agreed in July and early August 2021, between the MoPD&SI and Sightsavers, to make the SDGs monitoring process disability inclusive by further unpacking the data sources.

This means that disability-related indicators and available data sources will be reviewed for each SDG in a phased manner. This process will be started with SDG 4 “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

In this regard, Sightsavers and MoPD&SI are collectively working – and will soon start consultations with relevant government and civil society organisations in the education sector – to develop mechanisms and tools

for disability-focused data reporting for the SDGs monitoring. We aim to complete the consultation for SDG 4 within the last quarter of 2021, and then we will review the whole process. This will be a learning pilot process and if proved successful, will be replicated for the rest of the SDGs. We also plan to engage with and support the disability disaggregation of provincial-level SDG frameworks once the process at the federal level is completed. The addition of new disability-specific indicators will also be explored later in the process.

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The main lessons we will take from this work

Enabling factors

- Pakistan has ratified the UNCRPD, which reaffirms that all people with disabilities must be able to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- UNCRPD also has an explicit social development dimension. Of particular relevance is Article 31 'Statistics and data collection', which lays out a legal framework for collecting disability data. COSP has indeed met yearly since ratification in 2008, with disability data key to evaluating implementation.
- Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. LNOB compels us to focus on discrimination and inequalities (often multiple and intersecting) that undermine the agency of people as holders of rights.
- Under the umbrella of the LNOB agenda, identifying inequalities and discrimination requires the generation of evidence and data collection and disaggregation that go beyond gender, geography and age, to include all grounds of discrimination, especially disability.

Challenges and solutions

- The lack of systematic data gathering and analysis disaggregated by disability is often seen by development actors as a barrier to including people with disabilities within their programming.
- Disability, however, is a complex phenomenon, with definitions of disability varying across contexts, as well as variations in methodologies that are employed to measure it.
- Lack of understanding and capacity to engage in consultations on the technical data side. To address this, it would be important to ensure relevant training and support.

Key learnings

During the various consultation meetings with stakeholders at national and provincial levels and the mapping study of disability-related data sources, it was realised that:

- Disability data disaggregation is generally perceived as very complex. Therefore, this requires intensive training and follow-up support for data collectors at various levels in various departments and organisations in the public sector. Civil society organisations can also play an important role in providing technical knowledge and support.
- Considerable time is needed for disability-related data cleaning and analysis, and to understand the implications of integrating it into any provincial or national level SDGs focal points and dashboards.
- If we anticipate embedding disability inclusive SDGs, monitoring tools and systems, then we need to consider what advocacy costs and technical or financial inputs would be required.
- We need to decide how the data will be aggregated; collation tools can be adapted to add disability as another disaggregate. The level of details required needs to be established during our consultative meetings with different stakeholders for each SDG.



Mehnaz, on the behalf of women with disabilities, is requesting for the approval of the National Disability Bill on World Disability Day 2019 (Parliament House Building, Islamabad)

Other important learning

- Policy change is a long-term process and requires continuous engagement and advocacy (i.e. people should not give up in the early stages of the process). Rigorous and continuous advocacy is always a key to the desired policy changes.
- Always work in collaboration with the public sector from the beginning. Invest in existing systems and structures to ensure the long-term impact and sustainability of the changes you are advocating for.
- The meaningful participation of people with disabilities and their representative bodies is key for a truly inclusive process. This seems challenging in the beginning, but if we keep ourselves engaged in disability networks and alliances, this risk can be mitigated. One success of this process is that people with disabilities were truly heard and this resulted in concrete actions.

Key principles and approach

There is always a need to learn from people with disabilities, identify their challenges and support their capacities to participate effectively in mainstream consultative processes. That is why we always arrange learning opportunities for existing and new members in the disability networks that we partner with. This is done in both formal and informal ways, and we believe this is a mutual learning process. Sightsavers as an organisation benefits hugely from developing advocacy strategies well-informed by the rich experiences of people with disabilities.

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Potential impact

Disability inclusive SDGs implementation will have the following key implications.

- Pakistan SDGs unit and MoPD&SI would be able to monitor the status of the SDGs for people with disabilities, which are more than 10 per cent of the country's population. Disaggregated data can improve planning and budgeting for reasonable accommodation to realise the human rights of people with disabilities.
- Various social protection and poverty alleviation programmes at national and provincial levels can benefit from this information (status of **SDG 1**), which would help ensure these efforts also benefit people with disabilities.
- National health insurance schemes in Pakistan are currently unable to capture information regarding how many people with disabilities are included in the schemes. Disability inclusive reporting of **SDG 3** status could help capture this information, which would, in turn, inform more inclusive insurance schemes.
- Similarly, if the current education management information system at the federal and provincial levels becomes disability inclusive for reporting of the **SDG 4**, this can help the government to identify and cater for millions of out-of-school children with a disability or impairment.
- The VNR process will become more disability inclusive, strengthening and promoting the LNOB agenda.
- This will enable policy planners and key decision-makers to better understand issues around accessibility and other barriers people with disabilities face in being included in different development projects and programmes. It is anticipated that this could have a positive impact on their decision making.

References

1. www.tinyurl.com/sdg-pakistan-blog
2. <https://tinyurl.com/bmnau325>
3. www.tinyurl.com/make-it-right-real

We work with partners in low and middle income countries to eliminate avoidable blindness and promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities

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