Report from a meeting on the ‘Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities’

14-15 September 2012, New York

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1. About this document

This document is a report from the first meeting of the ‘Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities’. The meeting was on 14 and 15 September 2012 in New York.

The ‘Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities’ is a group of organisations, governments, researchers and companies.

They got together to make things better for children with disabilities.

Organisations that work on rights and organisations of persons with disabilities are also part of the group.

To make it shorter, we will use the word ‘partnership’ to talk about the ‘Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities’ in this report.

This report says what happened in the meeting.

In the meeting, the partnership talked about how they can make things better for children with disabilities.
2. What life is like for children with disabilities in different countries?

Children with disabilities often have fewer chances to have a good life than other children.

For example:

They are more likely to become ill than other children. They have fewer chances to get good healthcare. They have fewer chances to go to school and learn new things. They are more likely to be poor than other children.

There is little research on how children with disabilities live.

Governments often forget about children with disabilities when they make decisions about:

- helping children,
- helping people with disabilities,
- helping poorer countries.

The partnership wants to change this.

In the meeting, people talked about what life is like for children with disabilities.

They talked about the facts that:

- Children with disabilities often cannot take part in school and activities as other children.

  They are often sent to live in large group homes, far away from their family and friends.
• Children with disabilities are often discriminated against. This means they are treated unfairly because of their disability and because they are young.

• Some children with disabilities are discriminated against also for other reasons. For example, girls with disabilities have fewer chances than boys with disabilities because they are girls.

• Governments often forget about children with disabilities when they make decisions about:
  – helping people in poor countries,
  – helping people with disabilities,
  – helping children to use their rights.

This means that children with disabilities in poor countries get less support than other people: for example adults with disabilities and children without disabilities.

• Children with disabilities, their families and organisations rarely get the chance to take part in the decisions that are important for them.
3. What needs to be done to make things better for children with disabilities?

The partnership wants to make sure that governments think about children with disabilities. It is important to give children with disabilities the support they need.

In the meeting, the partnership decided to do the following:

- Work together to make sure that children with disabilities can use their rights and take part in society.

- Tell people about the rights of children with disabilities and how they can make things better.

- Make sure that governments and organisations think about children with disabilities when they make decisions.

- Make sure that there is enough support for children with disabilities.

- Help governments to make things better for children with disabilities in their country.

- Make sure that the rights of children with disabilities are respected and protected.

- Ask governments and researchers to collect information about children with disabilities.
• Make sure that projects to help people in poor countries include children with disabilities.

In the first year, the partnership will work on projects that:
  – make sure people have enough food,
  – help children go to school,
  – help people during wars or after disasters such as floods or storms.

• Help children with disabilities, their families and organisations to speak up for their rights.

• Plan the work of the partnership for the year 2013.

The ‘partnership’ would also like to:

• Help children with disabilities even if we do not see that they have a disability.

• Help to make a difference in countries where children with disabilities get no support.

• Use new technologies in their work.

• See how organisations that work on rights and organisations of persons with disabilities can have a say in the way rich countries help poor countries.

People in the meeting said that the partnership needs to be well organised to do all the work.
In the next meeting, the partnership will talk about the organisation of their work.
4. What happened in the meeting?

People in the meeting said that more and more governments and organisations now understand that children with disabilities need their help.

But there is a lot to do to make things better for children with disabilities.

A lot of people still think that there are only very few children with disabilities in the world. But this is not true. 1 in 10 children in the world has a disability.

Helping children with disabilities will make things better for everyone.

At the conference, people spoke about helping children with disabilities in poor countries have a better life.

They also spoke about protecting the rights of children with disabilities.

People from governments and organisations talked about what they plan to do to make things better for children with disabilities in their country.

They told each other about their ideas.
Helping children with disabilities in poor countries

Life is often harder for children with disabilities in poor countries. Some of them are hungry. Some cannot go to school. Some cannot get treatment when they are sick.

Governments and some organisations in rich countries help people in poor countries. But they often do little to help children with disabilities.

There is a world plan on what needs to be done to help people in poor countries. This plan ends in 2015. It does not talk about children with disabilities.

Countries are now working on a new plan to help people in poor countries after the year 2015.

The partnership wants to make sure that this new plan will talk about helping children with disabilities. Children with disabilities should benefit from the plan like all the others.

Therefore, the partnership will do the following:

- Make sure that people who prepare the new plan talk to people with disabilities and their organisations about what they think.

- Take part in talks about the new plan and speak about the rights of children with disabilities.
• Make sure that the ‘Beyond 2015 Campaign’ includes children with disabilities.

A campaign is when you organise different activities to make people think about something.

The ‘Beyond 2015 Campaign’ makes people think about what should be in the new plan on helping people in poor countries.

• Make sure that everyone who works on helping people in poor countries knows that children with disabilities need help.

• Get more information about the lives of children with disabilities.

• Make sure that the rights of children with disabilities are protected like the rights of anyone else.

Protecting the rights of children with disabilities

All children with disabilities have the same rights as other children.
For example, they have the right to live in the community and take part in society.

However, many children with disabilities cannot use these rights.

Governments and many organisations work to make sure everyone can use his or her rights. This is not enough to help children with disabilities.
The partnership wants to change this.

In the next year, the partnership will work on:

- The right to food.
- The right to go to school.
- The right to get help in emergencies. This is when there are wars, floods, storms or earthquakes.
- Using new technologies like computers or internet to help children with disabilities take part in the community.

For each topic, the partnership set up a working group. The working group is also called ‘task force’.

The working groups will inform other members of the partnership about their work during the next meeting. The meeting will be in August or September 2013.

**The right to food**

Every person needs food to live and be healthy.

Not enough food can make children sick. Sometimes, they can also get a disability.

In poor countries there are problems with food. That is why many children with disabilities do not get enough food.
Sometimes, children without disabilities get food first and children with disabilities get what is left. This is wrong.

In the next year, the working group will:

- Find out who can help to make sure that children with disabilities get enough food.
- Find information to convince governments and organisations to do more effort and make sure children with disabilities get enough food.
- Make people aware of what they can do to make sure children with disabilities get enough food.
- Make sure that organisations and projects helping poor countries with food know about the needs of children with disabilities. These organisations need to learn how to help children with disabilities.

**The right to go to school**

It is important for all children to go to school.

Children with disabilities have the right to go to regular schools together with children without disabilities. This is called ‘inclusive education’.

But children with disabilities rarely go to regular schools.
In the meeting, people talked about changes that need to happen so that children can learn together in the same schools.

For example:

- Teachers need to get training on disability.
- All school buildings must become accessible.
- Children with disabilities need to get support to take part in classes.

In the next year, the working group will:

- Write a document about how countries should work together to make sure children with disabilities go to schools together with children without disabilities.
- Write rules for governments to follow to make inclusive education happen in their country.
- Bring together everyone who wants to work on inclusive education and help them share good ideas and examples.

The right to get help in emergencies

An emergency happens when there is a war or disasters like an earthquake or floods.

When emergency happens, children with disabilities are in more danger than other people.
But often, children with disabilities get less help and protection than other children.

Organisations which bring help people in emergencies do not always understand the needs of children with disabilities. That is why the help they give is often not accessible to children with disabilities.

In emergencies, children with disabilities also suffer because they lose the support they get.

In the meeting, people talked about what needs to be done to make sure that children with disabilities are protected when emergencies happen.

For example:

- Organisations of persons with disabilities should be involved in preventing emergencies and helping people when emergencies happen.

- In wars and disasters, many things, places and services get destroyed and they have to be built again. This is a chance to make the new things, places and services accessible for all.

- Make sure that everyone can get help in emergencies. This means, for example, that everyone gets access to water or healthcare.
• Talk to governments and organisations about their responsibility to protect adults and children with disabilities from danger.

The working group agreed on what needs to be done in the first year to make sure children with disabilities get help in wars and disasters.

In the next year, the working group will:

• Create a website where people can share ideas about helping children with disabilities in emergencies.

• Collect good ideas and tools that can help governments and organisations to protect children with disabilities and put these ideas and tools on the website.

• Make sure that countries, governments and politicians make an official promise to protect people with disabilities in emergencies.

**Using new technologies to make sure children with disabilities can take part in society**

Some new technologies like the internet or computers can help children with disabilities take part in society.

In order to do this they need to be accessible and cheap.

Tools that were made to help people with disabilities are called ‘assistive technologies’.
The working group wants to:

- Make sure that children with disabilities in every country can use these tools.
- Make sure that these tools really help children with disabilities be included.
- Make sure governments take action to make these tools available in their countries.
- Make sure that these tools can be widely used and shared.

In the next year, the working group will:

- Write a paper about tools that help people with disabilities.
- Find out which of free tools for people with disabilities could be used by children with disabilities.
- Choose 2 or 3 projects on tools that help people with disabilities.

5. **What will happen next**

At the end of the meeting, people agreed on the main tasks of the partnership in the first year. These are:

- To take part in the preparation of the new plan on helping poor countries after the year 2015.
• To influence governments before their meeting about the new plan on helping poor countries. The meeting will be in 2013.

• To change the way countries work together on rights to make sure children with disabilities get more support.

• Help to make a difference for children with disabilities in different countries.

People in the meeting also agreed that all materials of the partnership should be accessible for all.

Finally, they agreed to make sure that children with disabilities take part in the work of the partnership.

**Other documents**

There are some other documents about the meeting:

• a list of people who came to the meeting,
• a plan of the work of the partnership,
• a summary of the countries where the partnership will work,
• a summary of what the 4 working groups have to do in the first year.