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# Discussion paper: Disability and poverty reduction strategies: How to ensure that access of persons with disabilities to decent and productive work is part of the PRSP process

InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability

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# Discussion paper: Disability and poverty reduction strategies: How to ensure that access of persons with disabilities to decent and productive work is part of the PRSP process

## **Abstract**

[Excerpt] In 1999, the IMF and the World Bank launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach to poverty reduction in low-income countries in order to ensure that concessional funding through the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and the World Bank Group's IDA, as well as debt relief under the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) Initiative address poverty reduction more effectively. At present, nearly 70 low income countries are engaged in the formulation of national PRSPs that, once approved by the World Bank and IMF Boards, become the basis of concessional assistance from the two institutions.

## **Keywords**

GLADNET, disability, development, poverty, initiatives, rights of disabled people, impoverish, ILO, work, decent, productive, PRSV, process, debt relieve, World Bank, IMF, low-income

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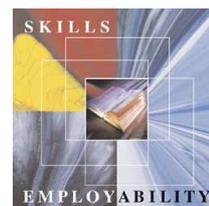
# **DISABILITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

**How to ensure that access of persons with disabilities to  
decent and productive work is part of the PRSP process**

**Hans Roeske**

ILO Skills and Employability Department

November 2002



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

DPOs	Organizations of and for persons with disabilities
HIPC	Highly-Indebted Poor Countries
IDA	International Development Association of the World Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
(I)PRSPs	Interim PRSPs
JSA	Joint Staff Assessment
MACOHA	Malawi Council for the Handicapped
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility of the IMF
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategies Paper
SP	Social Protection
WB	World Bank

## 1. Introduction

1. In 1999, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach to poverty reduction in low-income countries in order to ensure that concessional funding through the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and the WB Group's International Development Association (IDA), as well as debt relief under the HIPC (Highly-Indebted Poor Countries) Initiative address poverty reduction more effectively. At present, nearly seventy low-income countries are engaged in the formulation of national PRSPs that, once approved by the WB and IMF Boards, become the basis of concessional assistance from the two institutions.
2. Whereas former approaches, such as Structural Adjustment Programmes, were mainly donor-driven, prescriptive, top-down approaches that had some success in putting the macro-economic indicators right, the PRSP approach is expected to be country-driven, fostered by domestic and external partnerships and based on broad consultation of all layers of society, including the poor themselves. Participation of the poor is sought at all stages of the PRSP process: formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
3. In low-income countries, persons with disabilities belong to the poorest of the poor. The PRSP process, therefore, could be expected to be a unique opportunity to reduce poverty of this part of the population of low-income countries, especially as the PRSP approach is increasingly being embraced by the countries' other external development partners.
4. However, examination of all 29 currently<sup>1</sup> available African Interim PRSPs [(I)PRSPs] shows that – apart from some notable exceptions – persons with disabilities have again been either “forgotten” or treated in a way that does not correspond to their aspirations to socio-economic integration. Up to now, persons with disabilities have not been involved in an opportunity to be included in the most important poverty reduction initiative of recent years.
5. The relative absence or inadequate treatment of the disability issue in currently available African (I)PRSPs reflects the fact that persons with disabilities and their organizations have not been given the opportunity to participate or have not sufficiently participated in consultative PRSP processes; that they have not been able to formulate their needs; that they have not been heard, even in broad-based consultations of the poor on poverty reduction; that they were overruled by more powerful or vocal stakeholders when it comes to negotiate a consensus; or that they have not succeeded in convincing other partners that practical solutions for socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities are possible, in sum: that voicelessness is an especially important dimension of the poverty of persons with disabilities, and that empowerment strategies for disabled persons are essential.
6. Missing recognition of the disability problem is particularly disappointing in countries emerging from armed conflict, as well as in those where the ILO had made an important vocational rehabilitation technical assistance input in the past.
7. People with disabilities are of course included whenever PRSPs mention “vulnerable groups”, “marginalized groups of society”, or “disadvantaged groups”. But experience shows

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<sup>1</sup> Oct. 2002. Two non-African PRSPs have also been examined: Cambodia and Honduras. These two countries belong to the group of five countries (Cambodia, Honduras, Mali, Nepal, and United Republic of Tanzania) selected by the ILO, in consultation with the IMF and the WB, for an especially-focused effort to demonstrate the effective role of the ILO Decent Work Agenda (see ILO GB.283/ESP/3). No documents were available on Nepal's PRSP exercise on the IMF's or the WB's website.

that whenever the *specific* exclusion mechanisms and *specific* needs of persons with disabilities are not explicitly identified, the related strategies and programmes also miss their specific target. A category like “vulnerable groups”, though useful at certain levels of analysis, becomes an obstacle when it hides essential differences in poverty determinants of various vulnerable sub-groups and in strategies to apply. As we will see, these distinctions are essential even within the category of disabled persons themselves.

8. But local limited understanding of disability policy is not the only issue here: the problem is already “at the source”. The WB has prepared a PRSP Sourcebook to guide countries in the development and strengthening of poverty reduction strategies. The Sourcebook reflects the thinking and practices associated with the Bank’s Comprehensive Development Framework, as well as lessons emerging from its forthcoming World Development Report on Poverty, and good international practices related to poverty reduction.

9. The treatment of disability and persons with disabilities in the PRSP Sourcebook conveys a wrong impression about the abilities and aspirations of the majority of poor persons with disabilities, and is not in keeping with the current human rights approach to disability. Many working age persons with disabilities can and want to work, and do not wish to be considered as “welfare cases”. The PRSP Sourcebook does not reflect basic ILO principles, as set forth in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159) and Recommendation (No. 168), both adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 1983, nor does it reflect current practice in many developing countries. The limited “Social protection” (SP) approach of the Sourcebook has negatively influenced a number of (I)PRSPs, including those that have tried to include measures concerning disability and disabled persons.

10. There has been growing ILO involvement in the PRSP process, as indicated, inter alia, by GB.283/ESP/3 “Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP). An assessment of the ILO’s experience”, or GB.280/WP/SDG/1 “Poverty reduction and decent work in a globalizing world”, and most recently, ILO Circular 232: “ILO participation in the PRSP process”, that calls upon all ILO Headquarters technical units to support ILO field offices and country-level work to contribute to PRSP processes.

11. The present discussion paper is part of this effort. They are based on the accumulated ILO knowledge and on the ILO mandate in the field of socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities. They are further based on current thinking and practice of representative international organizations of disabled persons (DPOs) themselves and are in line with policy statements of the international disability community.<sup>2</sup> This accumulated knowledge on disability policy constitutes a coherent and widely-accepted policy framework and set of interconnected programmes that will be outlined in the course of this document.

12. The objective of this paper is to contribute to the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities living in poverty by complementing the SP approach proposed by the Sourcebook. It is intended for use by ILO’s development partners, as well as by ILO constituents (governments and workers’ and employers’ organizations), civil society organizations, including DPOs, and ILO HQ technical units, field offices and MDTs.

13. The paper focuses on fields within the competency and mandate of the ILO. The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men, including persons with disabilities, to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Decent Work is the theme that unifies the four strategic objectives of the ILO:

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, “The United Nations standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities”, adopted in 1993, and “The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development”, 1995.

the promotion of rights at work, employment, social protection, and social dialogue. The ILO Global Employment Agenda (GEA) guides ILO efforts in promoting decent work through the creation of employable skills development and employment opportunities. Insisting on *decent* work is especially important for extremely poor and excluded population groups like persons with disabilities, as for them and by them, access to *any* work is often considered as an achievement.

14. However, while the paper deals specifically with the objective of decent work, it is clear that *all* sector policies, especially education and health, contribute directly or indirectly to this objective and may therefore be considered as complementary elements of a global employment<sup>3</sup> policy. Furthermore, a global, comprehensive disability policy only makes sense if all sectoral elements are integrated in a coherent, mutually-reinforcing way. Throughout, the paper will insist on comprehensiveness as a prerequisite for successful socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities. As other sectoral aspects relevant to disability policy, like special education, are widely addressed by the Sourcebook, countries may refer to the respective chapters for advice on disability policy in these sectors.

15. Section 2 of the paper provides conceptual background sections on relevant topics and, if accepted, may be directly copied or adjusted to fit into the PRSP. Strategy and action proposals specify options. The choice of options is to be guided by country circumstances, depending on, for example, the existence of a disability policy and disability services, the type of government structure in charge of disability policy, policy approach, for example, multisectoral integration versus social assistance approach, ratification of ILO Convention No. 159 or not, strength of DPOs, representation of persons with disabilities in government, parliament, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), presence of international disability NGOs with special competencies (for example, Rehabilitation International), available knowledge base on disability (statistical data, qualitative information, research).

16. The paper starts by summarizing the reasons *why* it is essential to include persons with disabilities in the PRSP process. It then presents the conceptual background explaining *how* persons with disabilities should be included in the PRSP, for example, the grounds on which the following strategy and action proposals are based. It continues with a brief analysis of the unsatisfactory way the disability issue has been treated in the Sourcebook and makes proposals for improvement, followed by a description of the place given to persons with disabilities in currently available (I)PRSPs. Based on this, future guidelines will present proposals on what ILO units and constituents:

- a) can do to contribute to introduce and maintain a focus on the disability issue in the PRSP *process*, and
- b) should propose to ensure that poverty reduction of persons with disabilities through participation in productive work is adequately treated in the PRSP document itself.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “employment” will be used in this paper in the larger sense of productive work, including self-employment, membership in cooperatives, participation in labour-intensive public works programmes, and family labour. Indeed, in the prevailing economic context of low-income PRSP countries, employment opportunities for persons with disabilities are predominantly, but not exclusively, found outside the formal sector.



## 2. Persons with disabilities: Between participation in economic growth and social protection - The rationale for widening current PRSP concepts

### 2.1 *Why participation of persons with disabilities in productive work should be part of the PRSP*

17. According to UN estimates, persons with disabilities represent between 7 and 10 per cent of any country's population. This percentage remains relatively stable through different types of societies, as reduction of disability rates in younger age groups in industrialized countries is roughly compensated by an aging population structure and by the emergence of new types of disabilities. Disability rates, of course, may rise considerably in countries affected by armed conflict or other natural or social disasters. The above estimates clearly indicate that persons with disabilities are not a marginal minority, particularly if it is considered that one person's disability does not only affect their own situation, but also the situation of their family and even of their community. The number of persons directly or indirectly concerned by the problem of disability is therefore considerable.

18. Available data, though scarce, indicate that people with disabilities in developing countries usually belong to the poorest of the poor.<sup>4</sup> Unemployment rates are systematically higher than for any other population group, up to 80 per cent in many PRSP countries. Disability is cause and consequence of poverty alike: disability is stuck in a vicious circle that leads from the appearance of a disability to poverty which increases the risk of disability which in turn increases poverty. Any government has the obligation to break this circle; any poverty reduction strategy has to place the disability issue in a prominent position. Perhaps more than for others, poverty for individuals with disabilities is not only monetary poverty. The Sourcebook insists very clearly on the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.<sup>5</sup> Among the dimensions put forward in recent poverty concepts, "voicelessness" and "powerlessness" are particularly important to understand the specific determinants of the poverty of disabled persons.

19. Provided certain conditions, the majority of men and women with disabilities *want and can do productive work*, instead of being a charity case or living on formal redistribution mechanisms. This fact defines their exact place in poverty reduction strategies based on "sustainable growth in which the poor participate."<sup>6</sup> There is sufficient evidence today that socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities is not only a question of social justice and a right, but also the best solution in terms of social costs/benefits, even when there are no disability benefits. Access to employment is the most cost-effective way to reduce the poverty of children, youth and adults with disabilities, their families, and their communities. In this case, economic rationality and human rights go hand in hand. But it is important to recognize that socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities means more than the reduction of

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<sup>4</sup> Lack of statistical information about the poverty situation of persons with disabilities (absence of the disability dimension in censuses and surveys, lack of statistical exploitation of collected data) is in itself a symptom of the marginalization of people with disabilities.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, chapter "Overview".

<sup>6</sup> Sourcebook, chapter "Overview", p. 4, where "Macro and structural policies to support sustainable growth in which the poor participate" is defined as the first "Priority area for public action in PRSPs".

social costs: for many individuals with disabilities, socio-economic integration is direct “*participation in economic growth*”. A WB study estimates the annual loss of GDP globally, due to having so many people with disabilities out of work, at between US\$ 1.37 trillion and US\$ 1.94 trillion.<sup>7</sup> This is the perspective in which the question of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for persons with disabilities should be stated in the framework of the PRSP. Whenever possible, the objective should be to reduce poverty of persons with disabilities by “unlocking their economic potential”, and not by re-distributive policies. Costs in terms of accessibility, technical devices, and workplace accommodations are to be seen as *investments* and not as unproductive social welfare expenditure. Of course, a certain number of individuals with disabilities will always rely on social protection or a mix of social protection and non-social-protection policies; these have been identified by the Sourcebook, as well as in many PRSPs. The present paper focuses on what has been left aside by both, and what is relevant to the majority of disabled persons: their potential to contribute to economic growth.

20. A disability is the *social* outcome of a physical or mental *impairment*. An impairment only becomes a handicap in the context of a given society, often because this society does not respect the needs and the rights of its citizens living with an impairment. Disability, therefore, is not a natural, but a social fact. Furthermore, disability is not only an individual destiny, but also the outcome of situations and decisions for which the disabled person is no more responsible than any other citizen, like bad sanitary and health conditions, war, etc. The disabled person carries the consequences of collective situations and decisions. Society, in turn, has a special collective responsibility to eliminate the exclusions that turn an impairment into a disability.

## 2.2 *Basic concepts in current disability thinking and practice*

21. The present section outlines the conceptual background that underlies the comments on the Sourcebook and on currently available (I)PRSPs as well as the following strategy proposals. Understanding of these concepts is especially important as it conditions the access of persons with disabilities to the whole range of ordinary policies, programmes and services from which they are at present largely excluded. Otherwise, strategies, even well designed, will remain ineffective.

22. Persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. They are widely spread over an autonomy continuum reaching from total to zero autonomy. Disability policies and programmes are located on a parallel continuum reaching from “social assistance” to “access to productive work”. A fraction of individuals with disabilities will always be totally dependant on social assistance policies (for example disability benefits), because they may be too severely disabled, or too old. A social assistance policy will therefore be a significant part of any disability policy. There are other individuals with disabilities for whom a mix of social assistance and access to work programmes, such as supported employment or sheltered employment programmes, may be adequate. But the majority of youth and adults with disabilities are “potentially autonomous”: adequate support measures are sufficient to neutralize the impairment so that it does not constitute a disability. If the mobility problems of physically-disabled persons are resolved by adequate transport and accessibility, there will in principle be no difference between them and any other non-disabled persons. The same holds true for persons with communication problems. Consequently, these persons, in principle, do not need social assistance or protection. They only need the guarantee that opportunities are equal. The logic of the approach to disability has completely changed.

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<sup>7</sup> See Robert L. Metts, “Disability issues, trends and recommendations for the World Bank”, World Bank, Washington, 2000, quoted in: Simon Zadek and Susan Scott-Parker, “Unlocking potential: The new disability business case”, ILO and The Employers’ Forum on Disability, 2001.

23. In principle! Why is this so rarely the case in reality? Because in reality, an impairment triggers off a long series of *exclusion mechanisms*. Exclusions are linked together, accumulate and get worse. How could disabled children who did not go to school because there was no adequate transport, no accessible school building, no place in the classroom adjusted to their needs, no special schools, no training and jobs for special teachers, no inclusive education, no special education service at the Ministry of Education, children who later in life did not get vocational training because they did not get a sufficient basic education, how could anyone imagine that these children, once grown up, would get a job? They have accumulated too much exclusion. Even a generous and voluntarist employment policy would not help, because of a lack of basic requirements for employment. The accumulation of exclusions produces secondary incapacities that were not inherent in the nature of the original impairment, but gradually turn it into a disability: the lack of mobility or the inability to speak or to see was not a disability, the lack of education and vocational training certainly is.

24. In order to break these mechanisms, disability policy has to provide a comprehensive set of support measures intended to compensate, *at all levels*, for the original impairment. What is the nature of these support measures or services? Special attention should be paid to defining the limitations of such services; they should not be confused with services that are parallel to ordinary services and lead to exclusion of persons with disabilities in special service ghettos. We are talking about measures that have *only* the function to compensate for discrimination or an impairment and to give the person with a disability access to *ordinary* policies, programmes, services and opportunities, not more and not less. This may be a wheelchair or a pair of crutches to compensate for a mobility problem, a Braille keyboard or simultaneous sign language translation to allow a blind or a deaf person to compete with non-disabled colleagues, or a qualified special teacher to accompany a blind or a deaf child in ordinary classes: in each case, we are talking about *access facilitating tools*, and not parallel services. In order to emphasize their role as an intermediary between the disabled person and the ordinary service or structure, that, in principle, is open to all, we will call them “*interface services*”.

25. Such services are absolutely necessary, as can be seen from the examples above, but they are also *strictly limited* to their access facilitating function. This is the point where misunderstandings often start. In many cases, it may indeed be easier to set up a reduced but complete model of parallel services for persons with disabilities than to design and handle a complex coordinated network of interface services with ordinary sectoral policies and programmes.

26. It should be noted, however, that in many instances, individuals with disabilities need special access facilitation support services only because policies that should be universal in principle, are limited in practice (for example, basic education policies). Effective universal and free basic education would often be sufficient to give many disabled children who are at present out of school, automatically access to schools, without any special facilitation measures.

27. Disabled persons’ needs cut across *multiple sectors* like the needs of anyone else: education, vocational training, health, employment, urban planning, housing, culture, etc. However, the temptation has always been strong, and indeed still is, to set up all sorts of parallel sectoral policies and programmes for “vulnerable groups” in general, and persons with disabilities in particular, within the framework of the ministry in charge of “Social Affairs”: special education services, vocational training in vocational rehabilitation centres, management of micro-credit schemes, business skills training for disabled entrepreneurs, among other programmes. With the following result:

- As the personnel of the social affairs ministry cannot be specialists in all relevant sectors (education, vocational skills training, small business development, employment services, micro-credit management), such services provided by social affairs personnel to persons with disabilities are necessarily second-class services;
- As “Social Affairs” are already in charge of sectoral services to individuals with disabilities, the competent technical ministries can easily pass off their responsibility for this population group. Persons with disabilities are thus not only excluded from access to sectoral financial resources, but also from the technical expertise of the competent technical ministries;
- The exclusion of persons with disabilities from the administrative supervision of the technical line ministries excludes them for a second time, on the symbolic level. In many countries, for example, it has taken a long time before Special Education Services were set up in the Ministry of *National Education*, and not (only) in the Ministry of Social Affairs, thus denying these children their dignity as full citizens of the country.
- Former economic reform policies, for example, Structural Adjustment Programmes, often increased social problems by national budget restrictions, while financial and personnel resources of ministries of social affairs remained stable or even diminished. The result has often been that Ministries of Social Affairs had to deal with often increasing social problems with reduced resources.

For all these reasons, Ministries of Social Affairs might be the last address to which persons with disabilities should be referred.

28. If it is accepted that disabled persons’ needs cut across all sectors just like the needs of everyone else, and that special services for persons with disabilities are only tools to facilitate access to ordinary sector policies and programmes, it follows that the needs of children, youth and adults with disabilities should first of all be taken into account in each of these sectoral policies and programmes themselves. Disability policy has to be multi-sectoral: the socio-economic integration of disabled persons is not the affair of the ministry of social affairs but of all sector ministries. A young disabled person looking for a job should no longer be directed to the social affairs ministry, but to the ministry in charge of employment. Setting up the institutional framework for such a multi-sectoral disability policy will be a key element of any poverty reduction strategy for persons with disabilities.

29. By radicalizing this approach, it could be said that there would be no need for a special disability policy if all sectoral policies were well conceived in an integrative manner. However, experience shows that this is not the case. Persons with disabilities need some structure that *makes sure that their needs and interests are correctly taken into account in all sectoral policies*. This is the exact definition of the new role of the ministry “in charge of persons with disabilities or disability issues” in the framework of a multi-sectoral disability policy, and it is structurally not different from any other target group policy (for example, gender policy).

30. Sector policies are different from target group policies. The main functions of a sector policy approach may be described as:

- policy orientation
- advocacy
- coordination/networking
- provision of specialist knowledge, and only then:
- delivery of specific support services

31. Contrary to fears often expressed by the concerned social affairs ministries, a sector policy approach does not represent a devaluation of their role, but a revaluation, *a promotion*. A multi-sectoral framework of the disability policy implies considerably more important functions and requires higher competencies than the traditional social assistance approach.

32. The most important new qualification to start with is the requirement to be knowledgeable about the different sector policies and programmes, thus being able to advocate efficiently the interests of their target groups in negotiations with technical line ministries. It may be said that the more marginal the target group, the more comprehensive and “encyclopaedic” must be the competency of the ministry in charge. Instead of being only the specialist of a marginal target group, the multi-sectoral policy requires the ministry in charge to be the all-round connoisseur of a whole set of sectoral policies and programmes. Up to now, Ministries of Social Affairs had neither the competencies nor the necessary access to the relevant information channels that would allow them to follow sector policies. More than any other ministry, the Ministry of Social Affairs was, and often still is, marginalized in a way that often mirrors the marginalization of its own target groups. One of the first actions of a multi-sectoral poverty reduction strategy for persons with disabilities would therefore be the redefinition of the mandate and the strengthening of the competencies of the ministry in charge.

33. Multi-sectoral integration is one of the implications of the vast conceptual revolution which has taken place in the understanding of disability in recent years. It was initiated by the international DPOs, and has gradually influenced national policies as well as the thinking of international development organizations. It may be roughly summarized as follows: policy and programmes in favour of persons with disabilities are no longer viewed as a means to rehabilitate and adapt the disabled individual to society, but *to adapt society to the needs of the disabled individual*. The concept of *rehabilitation* has given way to the concept of *creating an enabling environment*; the concept of *social assistance* to the one of respect of a society for the *rights of its minorities*. More recently, the minority concept has been embedded into the more inclusive one of *social diversity*, of *a society for all*. Even though this revolution has occurred in minds and in policies, the profound changes it implies are often not understood. The place obsolete concepts like “sheltered workshops” or “centre for handicapped” still enjoy in public perception of vocational rehabilitation is there to testify.

34. The social diversity or minority rights aspect implies considering the political dimension of the issue. There is no historical example of any excluded or oppressed minority group that obtained recognition of its rights without having had to fight for it. Recognition of the rights of disabled persons cannot be obtained by a government policy and programmes *for* persons with disabilities alone, it requires the emergence of persons with disabilities and their representatives as *actors* of this policy. Development programmes advocate “participation” and “participative approaches”, but participation is obviously not enough. The issue is *empowerment* of persons with disabilities, including empowerment on the political level. Persons with disabilities and their organizations have made the experience worldwide: things only began to change when DPOs became sufficiently self-confident, vocal and powerful to replace the non-disabled who previously spoke in their name, and when they took *themselves* possession of the struggle against discrimination. Wherever DPOs are strong, societies have begun to adapt themselves to the needs of their disabled citizens; wherever they are weak, disabled persons simply have to adapt to society. A strategy to reduce the poverty of people with disabilities thus cannot be a simple government programme in favour of disabled persons, but has to be strategy of economic and social empowerment of persons with disabilities.

35. A poverty reduction strategy for persons with disabilities only makes sense as a *comprehensive and coherent whole* of different sectoral parts. The system aspect is decisive. Employment promotion programmes remain inefficient if policies and programmes to assure

access to education, vocational training, the provision technical devices and appliances, accessibility<sup>8</sup> of schools, workplaces, offices, public buildings and housing are not simultaneously put in place in a coherent manner. Each element depends on all the others, and all of them are directly or indirectly elements of a strategy of socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities. There is no use to introduce one or the other isolated element into the PRSP: only a comprehensive and coherent whole will have any significant impact.

36. The following list enumerates, for easy reference, what may be considered as the main sectoral strategies and programmes to be included in such a comprehensive and coherent strategy for socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities:

- Access of disabled children to **education**
  - special schools for special education
  - recruitment and training of specialized teachers
  - curriculum development for the training of specialized teachers
  - provision of learning material and special equipment (Braille, audio cassettes, sign language, etc.)
  - scholarships for disabled students
  - accessibility of schools, classrooms
  - support for disabled children in inclusive education
  - establishment/reinforcement of a Special Education Service in the Ministry of Education
- Access to **health** services
  - training of orthopaedic surgeons
  - establishment/reinforcement of medical rehabilitation centres
  - provision of appliances (orthoses, prostheses, hearing aids, etc.)
  - national prevention programmes against certain illnesses (polio, leprosy)
- Effective coverage of disabled persons needs concerning **technical devices** for mobility and communication such as wheelchairs, crutches, white canes, sign language translation, Braille machines, keyboards, paper, and audio cassettes.
- **Physical accessibility** of schools, training centres, workshops, universities, offices, public buildings and places, and residences.
- **Accessibility of information**
- Access to **vocational skills training**
  - access to traditional apprenticeship (schemes)
  - provision of training places adjusted to the needs of individuals with disabilities
  - inclusion of specialized vocational training structures and courses into the policy, programming and budgeting of the ordinary vocational training policy of the ministry in charge of vocational training

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<sup>8</sup> Accessibility is not only physical, but also communicational, financial or social accessibility.

- **Employment promotion policy**

- *Legislation:*

- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities in employment; definition of sanctions against discrimination; introduction of disability-related issues into the general framework of economic and social regulations (Labour Code, etc.), including regulations concerning information accessibility and physical accessibility requirements of training and workplaces, regulations concerning standards for workplace adjustment; physical, communicational, educational, financial accessibility of the legal system, and affirmative action measures.

- Consideration to introduce realistic quota legislation, requiring employers to reserve a certain proportion of jobs for people with recognized disabilities and to pay a contribution into a central fund to be used for vocational rehabilitation purposes, or workplace adaptations, if they do not fulfil this obligation.

- Knowledge and competency on disability-related matters concerning employment and training.

- Specialized services for individual disabled jobseekers who require additional support in ordinary employment services, covering formal and non-formal work opportunities, including training opportunities, and access to credit.

- Vocational rehabilitation services, including early intervention and referral services, vocational assessment, and establishment of individual rehabilitation plans.

- Participation of workers', *employers'* and DPOs in the design, implementation and monitoring of the policy.

- **Sectoral employment promotion programmes**

- employment and *training* programmes for employment of persons with disabilities in the public and private formal sector (though marginal in quantitative terms, such programmes have a high symbolic and public awareness-raising value)

- access to productive *work* in the agricultural sector

- access to productive work in the urban and rural SME and cooperative sector

- participation in labour *intensive* public works programmes

- Establishment/reinforcement of the multi-sectoral ***institutional framework*** for disability policy, with the participation of ministries in charge of employment, vocational training, finance, planning, social affairs, education, health, the social partners and DPOs, including the redefinition of the mandate of the ministry of social affairs and reinforcement of its capacities.

- Strengthening of the capacities of DPOs.

- Improvement of the ***collection, analysis and publication of statistical data*** on poverty and disability, as well as the participation of persons with disabilities in the world of work.

- ***Research***, collection and dissemination of available knowledge on disability, including association with existing international disability research networks.

These sector policies and programmes related to the socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities, have to be completed by ***social assistance policies and programmes*** for those disabled individuals who cannot benefit from access to productive work.

In all these sector policies and programmes, *gender and the situation of girls and women with disabilities* should be given special attention, due to their family responsibilities, double disadvantage and often more vulnerable situation.

37. Even a superficial look at this list of policies and programmes shows that no correct identification is possible by dissolving persons with disabilities in the vague category of “vulnerable groups”. Many needs as well as supports are specific to disabled persons. PRSPs must identify the specific determinants of poverty of persons with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis section and define specific strategies, actions, indicators and targets in the programmatic sections.

38. All the above-mentioned elements of a policy of socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities are contained in ILO Convention (No. 159) concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities and Recommendation (No. 168) concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), both adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 1983. Countries that have ratified the Convention have accepted the obligation to put in place such a policy.

39. Convention No. 159 not only contains all key elements of an integrative disability policy itself, but also of the *process* of getting there: It clearly demands that such a policy be formulated with the participation of the social partners and of DPOs. This is a particularly important hint as regards any successful strategy to get the disability issue into the PRSP: Convention No. 159 suggests a practice of including DPOs, and employers and workers into the process of formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the PRSP.

40. We do not want to create the illusion that socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities is easy, and those participating in PRSP consultations should not do so either. It is not. It requires political will and vision and the capacity to defend (re)allocation of scarce resources against competing demands. But we should demonstrate that a policy of socio-economic integration of people with disabilities *is possible*, that technical solutions and adequate strategies exist, and that the PRSP exercise is a unique opportunity to mobilize financial and political support, if only there is the will among key stakeholders to do so. We should also make it clear that the final benefit for a country will be more social justice, cohesion, tolerance, diversity and peace.

### **2.3 *The treatment of persons with disabilities in the WB Sourcebook***<sup>9</sup>

41. Given the above principles that increasingly guide international theory and practice in the disability field, the approach of the WB “Sourcebook” is out of date, and fails to reflect these new concepts and international developments. The following comments will address two interrelated, yet not identical issues: the limited social protection approach, and the non-inclusive vocational rehabilitation concept of the Sourcebook.

#### **2.3.1 *A limited “social protection” approach to disability***

42. The Sourcebook makes numerous references to disability, especially in the chapters on “Participation”, “Education”, “Health”, “Urban poverty”, and “Social protection” (SP).

43. However, there is a clear conceptual difference between these chapters concerning disability. The chapters on “Education” and on “Participation” are probably closest to the concepts outlined above. The “Education” chapter makes a fervent plea for inclusive education

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<sup>9</sup> The Sourcebook has been conceived as an “open document”. Readers are invited to make comments in view of future updates of the text.

of children with disabilities, which is also reflected in the corresponding treatment of special and inclusive education in several PRSPs. The chapter on “Participation” gives valuable advice on how to integrate vulnerable groups into the formulation, implementation and monitoring process of the PRSP that are most useful not only for persons with disabilities and their organizations, but also for ILO units as advocates and providers of technical support for persons with disabilities in the PRSP process.

44. In these chapters, disability has been clearly identified as one of the major *determinants of poverty*, and people with disabilities as one of the poorest groups of society. Identification of persons with disabilities in some sectoral strategies would have been enhanced by explicit references to disability when it comes to the measurement of poverty. However, the chapters on “Well-being measurement” and “Strengthening statistical systems” do not mention disability, thus reflecting the actual scarcity of statistical data about disability. But the Sourcebook might have gone further by denouncing the fact itself and thus contributing to a better coverage of disability data in the course of the preparation and implementation of PRSPs.

45. The Sourcebook strongly insists on “pro-poor growth”; on “growth in which the poor participate” as key PRSP strategy, but recognizes that some categories of the poor will continue to depend on redistribution measures. The strategies for these categories of poor people, the “vulnerable”, are treated in the SP chapter. The Sourcebook notes that even for these groups of the poor, a mix of social protection and non-social protection measures will generally be most appropriate.

46. How does the Sourcebook situate persons with disabilities with respect to participation in economic growth and dependence on redistributive poverty reduction? There is a special Technical Note on “Disability Inclusion Programmes”<sup>10</sup> attached to the SP chapter that summarizes international experience in this field. It makes reference to the specific needs of persons with disabilities and indicates specific policy measures for disabled persons. The note also emphasizes the inclusive approach of these policies: inclusive education, vocational education and training, job insertion subsidies, etc., together with more classical social assistance measures. It could have been a relevant basis for guidance concerning social and economic integration of persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, the body of the SP chapter does not seem to have assimilated the content of this Technical Note: whenever it refers to persons with disabilities, these are mentioned as part of those “who cannot provide for themselves”, i.e. as objects of social assistance.

47. Some quotations may demonstrate the Sourcebook’s exclusive SP approach to disability:

“Among the chronic poor, one should distinguish between the economically active (able-bodied) and those who would be economically inactive (children, aged, disabled and mentally ill).”<sup>11</sup>

or:

“Programme 19: Needs-Based Cash Transfers (Social Assistance)

Best suited to these groups: One of the few options for those who cannot be expected to work: the disabled, the elderly, children. Is also a feasible means of supplementing the income of the working poor.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Programme 22, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Chapter “Overview”, p. 15.

48. In these quotations, persons with disabilities are said to be “*economically inactive*” or to belong to “*those who cannot be expected to work*” - without any further distinction. The remark is apparently innocent and seems acceptable because it reflects frequent common assumptions about persons with disabilities. It should be noted that persons with disabilities *are not explicitly defined* as persons who cannot provide for themselves. The important point is that they *are mentioned only* when the Sourcebook refers to those who cannot provide for themselves. There is no formulation like “those persons with disabilities who cannot be expected to work”; the Sourcebook refers exclusively to “*the disabled*”. Whenever examples are sought for groups that cannot work and need social protection, disabled persons are explicitly mentioned. But in the whole Sourcebook, there is no single reference to persons with disabilities in the context of competitive, productive employment/work or related sector policies.

49. There is another interesting definition of “Disability programmes”:

*“Examples of Social protection activities:*

Disability programmes: Help the disabled through community-based services, including family support (respite care, child care, counseling, home visiting, domestic violence counseling, alcohol treatment and rehabilitation), support for people with disabilities (inclusive education, sheltered workshops, rehabilitation, technical aids), help for the elderly (senior citizen centers, home visits), and out-of-home placements (foster care, adoption).”<sup>13</sup>

50. The quotation is interesting because it combines under the heading “Disability programmes” programmes like “domestic violence counseling, alcohol treatment, and help for the elderly”. This is symptomatic for a sort of unconscious confusion that is widespread and contributes to placing persons with disabilities into the neighborhood of all sorts of social problems, that determine the public perception of disabled persons, but in fact have no relation whatsoever with disability.

51. The second interesting element is the fact that the *only explicit reference* of the whole SP chapter to persons with disabilities in relation to *work* relates to “*sheltered workshops*”.<sup>14</sup> This question will be treated below.

52. In omitting to make the essential distinction between persons with disabilities who can and want to do productive work and those who cannot, in referring to “the disabled” as a homogeneous category of persons who all need the same type of policies and programmes, i.e. social assistance, the Sourcebook reproduces and reinforces the common prejudice that *all* persons with disabilities are unable to work and to care for themselves, but without ever making such an explicit statement. It contributes to push the vast majority of persons with disabilities back into a ghetto of social exclusion, paternalism, and social assistance, from which they struggled so hard to emerge in recent decades.

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<sup>12</sup> Chapter “Social protection – Technical Notes”, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Chapter “Social protection”, Box 1 (p. 1).

<sup>14</sup>The chapter on “Urban poverty” contains an important reference to disability as a result of bad working conditions: “Urban poor are also prone to work- and employment-related diseases and accidents. Children are also sufferers of unhealthy work conditions. In carpet shops of Lahore (Pakistan) there are reports of children bonded to carpet masters at four years of age suffering from severe physical handicaps as a result of their working conditions (Drakakis-Smith 1996), see chapter “Urban poverty – Technical Notes”, p. 7.

53. Except from the unassimilated Technical Note on “Disability Inclusion Programmes”, there are no *specific* references to people with disabilities in the SP chapter. Persons with disabilities are only mentioned within lists of diverse vulnerable groups, as an example for demonstrative purposes. The SP chapter never indicates any *specific* disability-related need or strategy. Persons with disabilities are dissolved in the “vulnerable groups” concept: they are in fact ignored.

54. There are no indications that the authors of the chapter paid any attention to the crucial relationship between impairment and disability. The entry point into any specific poverty reduction strategy for persons with disabilities, such as the need to neutralize impairments in order to avoid exclusion and those secondary effects that constitute the real disability, or in other words, the interface nature of disability support services, has not been identified.

### 2.3.2 *Ambiguities of the Sourcebook’s “Social protection” concept in relation to employment*

55. The use of the “social protection” concept itself seems to be inconsistent. From the start, the SP chapter distinguishes between “policies that promote economic growth” and “SP measures that have a role to play in reducing the vulnerability, and protecting the welfare, of the poor.”<sup>15</sup> SP measures, thus, are not expected to be policies that promote economic growth. The Sourcebook does not give a definition of SP as opposed to non-SP measures, but it proposes several tables that present lists of SP and of non-SP measures/programmes. Under the heading of *SP programmes* are mentioned:

“Labour market interventions: Improve the ability of households to provide for themselves through work via the development of efficient and fair labour policies, active and passive labour market programmes, and pre- and in-service training programmes.”<sup>16</sup>

“Active labour market programmes, or labour-intensive public works, together with unemployment insurance and safety nets.”<sup>17</sup>

“Of those within the scope of SP, many are in the form of labour market regulation and programming.”<sup>18</sup>

“Employment legislation—hiring and firing rules (including severance), contracting for labour, minimum wages, etc.”<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the chapter “Analyzing labour regulations”<sup>20</sup> starts by the statement:

“In allocating labour to its most efficient use in the economy and encouraging employment and human capital investment, well-functioning labour markets contribute to long-run economic growth and poverty reduction.”

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<sup>15</sup> Chapter “Social protection”, Summary.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, Box 1, p. 1: Examples of social protection activities.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Table 1, p. 5, SP remedies.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10, box 4: Examples of social protection interventions.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11ff.

56. Obviously, some of the components of “social protection”, namely those related to labour market policy, play an ambiguous role.

57. The basic problem with the SP chapter seems to be that it does not clearly conceptualize the fact that the *Employment/Labour market dimension* always belongs both to SP, in so far as it procures income to a person, and to macro-economic growth. These are but two facets of the same reality. For the ILO, employment is *the* essential articulation of the relation between social and economic policy. In fact, the ILO argues that employment is to be considered as the key dimension of any poverty reduction strategy.

58. Employment/Labour is situated on yet another continuum: productivity. There are labour policies that intentionally maintain and support labour with very low productivity, in order to provide income to the poor. These labour policies are in fact mere social assistance policies, economically similar to cash transfers. Social logic prevails over economic logic. But they represent only one possible type of Employment/Labour policies, which are widespread over the whole continuum between their two poles. At any single point, labour policies belong both to SP and to the production of economic assets.

59. Labour-intensive public works programmes, for instance, are one of the means to provide income to the poor, mentioned frequently by the SP chapter under SP measures. There are some labour-intensive public works programmes, launched in very specific situations (for example, in countries emerging from armed conflict), where the productivity objective is marginal compared to the objective of providing some income to the very poor. However, ordinary labour-intensive public works programmes are designed to produce economic assets like any other labour while procuring income to the poor. They are also essential for other economic activities, such as moving goods to market. They are productive investments and not unproductive expenditure.

60. The SP chapter thus ignores the double nature of employment, labour and labour market policies. As with disabled persons’ ability to work, the Sourcebook does *not explicitly define* labour market policies as unproductive SP expenditure, but it mentions labour market policies *only* near to the unproductive expenditure pole of the continuum, in the immediate neighborhood of cash transfers, food supplies, etc., thus suggesting that labour market policies are different from, or even opposed to economic growth policies.<sup>21</sup>

61. We now understand how the Sourcebook comes to ignore the issue of socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities: the Sourcebook only recognizes the SP dimension of labour market policies; SP is essentially understood as unproductive social welfare expenditure; disabled persons are exclusively defined as cases for SP: *people with disabilities are thus excluded from productive work.*

62. If productive employment had been seen as belonging both to economic growth and to SP, the possibility of participation of persons with disabilities, and in fact of other “vulnerable groups”, in productive work would have become obvious. In fact, it would have been of minor importance whether services for disabled persons are to be considered as SP or non-SP services, as this is finally a matter of convention, as long as it is clearly stated that these services are, whenever feasible, services to assure access to productive, ordinary work.

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<sup>21</sup> With the remarkable exception of the phrase quoted in para. 55 - which is in fact in contradiction to the argumentation of the chapter.

### 2.3.3 *A non-inclusive approach to vocational rehabilitation*

63. Disabled adults would be all the more surprised by the treatment they get in the SP section, as they would have been used to quite progressive practices when they were children. Indeed, the “Education” chapter is a strong advocate for “inclusive education”. Integrative strategies seem to have better trickled down in the educational than in the employment field, as can be seen from the following quotation:

“Paying attention to the needs of children with disabilities is also important... Growing evidence suggests that the most cost-effective approach is not to build special schools for children with disabilities. More promising are the innovative and relatively low cost “inclusive education” approaches being adopted in China, Lao PDR, Nepal and elsewhere to “mainstream” the participation of children with disabilities into the regular school system by reducing physical and other barriers to their participation.”

64. There are further references to the training needs of teachers to deal sensitively with children who have disabilities or have other special needs, as well as references in the Health chapter to rehabilitation in relation to integration and income earning,<sup>22</sup> and there is the above-mentioned Technical Note on “Inclusive Disability Programmes”.

65. Inclusiveness, or mainstreaming, is a concept for life in society. It applies to all sectors and to all stages of the lifecycle. It is based on the radical changes in disability concepts and practice outlined above. Much progress has been made in mainstreaming people with disabilities in ordinary vocational training and employment, just like in education. Some have been mentioned in the Technical Note on “Inclusive Disability Programmes”. Unfortunately, these developments are completely ignored by the argumentation of the body of the Sourcebook itself. As mentioned above, the only reference to persons with disabilities in relation to work is the one on “sheltered workshops”.

66. “Sheltered workshops” is the model type of non-inclusive work for individuals with disabilities. It was the main approach to work for disabled persons for many years. It was based on the misunderstanding that persons with disabilities cannot be competitive with non-disabled workers. It developed on humanitarian grounds with the aim to shelter individuals with disabilities from competition on the open labour market, but resulted in their isolation, and sometimes in open exploitation of their labour force. Persons with disabilities do not want shelter and paternalism, they want equal opportunities and full participation. Sheltered employment may be necessary for some more severely-disabled individuals, or for certain limited stages in the vocational rehabilitation process, but it is no longer the general approach. Far more emphasis is placed now on integrating jobseekers with disabilities into competitive employment, with supports, if required, rather than providing them with work in special centres.

67. Sheltered workshops are relatively simple to design and to manage, compared to the complex network of support measures and programmes required to assure access of persons with disabilities to competitive employment/work. The change from sheltered workshops to competitive work is one of the multiple expressions of the broader change from simple institution-based to more complex integrative social policies as, for example, policies for people with mental disabilities, or for older people. It is interesting to note that these changes are in fact changes affecting modern industrialized societies. Low-income PRSP countries are not even concerned by them. Institution-based solutions, where they exist, have been imported, mostly by technical cooperation in earlier years. This is particularly obvious in the case of sheltered workshops. The change from institution-based models of work for individuals with

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter “Health”, p. 25, and Technical Notes.

disabilities to mainstreaming in ordinary work will be all the more evident for most PRSP countries as it means returning to traditional social and cultural values. “Sheltered workshops” have been a simple detour that should not be favoured by the PRSP. As noted above, they may make sense as a well-delimited element within a comprehensive strategy. This is not the case in the Sourcebook, where “sheltered workshops” stand alone in a conceptual desert, more or less for illustrative purposes. All other elements of a comprehensive employment strategy for persons with disabilities are missing.

#### **2.3.4 Disability in currently available (I)PRSPs. Summary of findings.**

68. The following review of 31 currently available (I)PRSPs<sup>23</sup> examines some *typical* shortcomings in the treatment of socio-economic integration of people with disabilities. The aim is to help countries to better situate their own weaknesses or strengths in the treatment of the disability issue and to improve future updates of their PRSP by adopting respective missing elements from the options provided by this paper.

69. The review examines:

- a) the recognition of persons with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis, including participation of persons with disabilities in the consultative process, and
- b) the treatment of socio-economic integration, or economic empowerment of persons with disabilities.

70. a) Recognition of persons with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis:

- A considerable number of (I)PRSPs<sup>24</sup> do not make specific reference to persons with disabilities or to disability, not even in the lists of the different vulnerable groups.
- Most countries, however, do mention people with disabilities in their poverty diagnosis. Honduras<sup>25</sup> introduces a special chapter on persons with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis. Yet, (I)PRSPs produce no quantitative or qualitative information on the poverty situation of people with disabilities. In most (I)PRSPs, the reference to persons with disabilities remains purely illustrative. Exceptions are Cambodia with statistical data on different categories of persons with disabilities and causes of disability, especially on landmines, and Malawi with statistical data on education of disabled children. (I)PRSPs do not recognize the unavailability of such data as a problem and a symptom.
- Disability has in many cases been recognized as a determinant of poverty, but the specific mechanisms that lead from impairment to disability to exclusion to poverty have not been analysed.
- No (I)PRSP recognizes the special significance of the dimensions of powerlessness and voicelessness of persons with disabilities.

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<sup>23</sup> See note 1, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Cameroon ((I)PRSP and PRSP-PSR), Cap Verde ((I)PRSP), Djibouti ((I)PRSP), The Gambia ((I)PRSP), Ghana ((I)PRSP and PRSP-PSR), Mali ((I)PRSP and PRSP-SR), Sao Tome and Principe ((I)PRSP), and Senegal ((I)PRSP, but one reference to persons with disabilities in thematic discussion groups in the PRSP-PSR).

<sup>25</sup> See note on the Honduras PRSP following in para. 74.

- Participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations in the PRSP consultative process has been reported only by Guinea, Honduras and Malawi. In all other (I)PRSPs, participation of persons with disabilities (if any) has passed unnoticed.
- Only Malawi mentions the impact of past or present poverty reduction policies and programmes on the situation of persons with disabilities.<sup>26</sup>

71. b) Treatment of persons with disabilities in respect to socio-economic integration

Lacking identification of the specific determinants and mechanisms of the poverty of people with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis has had very damaging effects on their recognition in poverty reduction strategies. A closer look at the reality of persons with disabilities would have helped to avoid many of the most common following shortcomings of (I)PRSP strategies in this regard:

- Persons with disabilities are generally treated as a homogeneous group. In respect to social and economic policy, their assumed common characteristic is their inability to work. Like the Sourcebook, most PRSPs fail to make the necessary distinctions and mention disabled persons exclusively in the context of inability to work, but without such an explicit definition. Prejudices function best when they remain implicit. There are some exceptions, like Malawi, that distinguish between “critical disabilities” and non-critical disabilities.
- Strategies and programmes for persons with disabilities are implicitly or explicitly included in policies and strategies for “vulnerable groups”. As indicated above, this means that the specific needs and the specific responses to the needs of persons with disabilities are not identified, and are effectively ignored. It should be noted that “vulnerable groups”, too, are generally treated as a homogeneous group and the above remarks about lacking differentiation apply to the category as a whole. However, for no other vulnerable group, refusal of the recognition of its ability to work seems as “natural” as for persons with disabilities.
- Once considered as a homogeneous group unable to do productive work, it is logical that persons with disabilities are automatically treated as cases for “social protection”, understood in the sense of social assistance: cash transfers, nutrition programmes, health care, community care, etc. Employment/work issues for persons with disabilities, are treated as part of “Social Action”, and not as part of employment policy. A certain number of PRSPs are in fact more explicit about the role of employment in social protection of vulnerable groups than the Sourcebook. But even then, the understanding of the double-faced nature of employment is generally abandoned when it comes to employment for persons with disabilities. There is no confidence in straightforward economic integration of disabled individuals in productive work. Again, there are some notable exceptions.
- The reasons for the predominance of the social protection aspect over the aspect of economic asset production, and thus for the difficulty to define inclusive strategies for persons with disabilities in employment/work, go far beyond

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<sup>26</sup> Explicit reference to the intervention of a DPO, the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) in the PRSP, p. 64.

disability policy or policies for vulnerable groups in general: they are rooted in the weakness of employment policies and strategies in general in the PRSPs, similar to the weakness of the guidance provided in the Sourcebook. A recent “Assessment of ILO’s experience with PRSP” notes that “the first wave of interim PRSPs and PRSPs are disappointingly meagre in their coverage of employment issues, both in terms of the quantity of jobs that need to be created and raising the quality of conditions of work. Given that income from work is the overwhelmingly most important means of survival for the poorest, this is somewhat surprising”.<sup>27</sup> The weakness of employment policy and strategies *in general* prohibits in turn an adequate consideration of employment of persons with disabilities.

- Social protection, though overemphasized in the treatment of people with disabilities, is in itself inadequately treated, generally as a collection of patchy measures and programmes, and not as a coherent policy.
- There are good examples of sectoral inclusive disability strategies, like the section on inclusive education in the Malawi PRSP, quoted as “Good practice example” No. 2 in Annex iii. There are also examples of what might be called “timid sector integration” for instance when special education appears under the education section, but appears again under the title of “Social Action”: sector integration is rightly perceived, but again there is no confidence in the straightforward sectoral solution. Most PRSPs indicate some isolated element of the disability policy, but they fail to present a coherent set of sub-programmes, i.e. a coherent and comprehensive policy. Certain elements have triggered down into the general public’s and planners’ awareness and have found their way into the PRSPs. Such patchy coverage will have little impact on the reduction of poverty of persons with disabilities.
- Lacking understanding of the importance of a comprehensive multi-sectoral disability policy for poverty reduction of people with disabilities leads to a failure to consider the institutional framework of such a policy, including consideration of the mandate of the responsible ministry.
- The very special nature of disability policy that has been described above as access facilitation, inclusiveness, equalization of opportunities, creation of an enabling environment, promotion of social diversity and minority rights is generally not understood. Some (I)PRSPs defined good mainstreaming strategies for certain sectors, especially education, but there are few explicit mainstreaming strategies for access to productive work.
- The important question of empowerment of DPOs has been overlooked.
- Proposals for persons with disabilities, but also for other vulnerable groups, are sometimes formulated in such a general, unspecific way that it is impossible to know what precisely is meant by the proposal. Action or strategy proposals are usually vague because those who formulated the PRSP had no technical knowledge (and did not ask for expert knowledge) about disability programmes.

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<sup>27</sup> See GB.283/ESP/3, point 31, p. 10. For another severe critic of the missing employment dimension in the IMF/WB PRSP guidelines and in some selected PRSPs, see “Mainstreaming employment in the PRSP process. Some thoughts based on selected PRSP documents”, paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of Directors, ILO Africa Region, Pretoria 2001.

The result is that planners will not know what they are supposed to do, and the poverty reduction impact will be nil. Vagueness of proposals often not only indicates lack of knowledge, but also scepticism about possible solutions.

- There are no strategies to improve the collection, analysis and publication of statistical data on disability.
- In a certain number of cases, strategies and programmes have been identified in the body of the document, but they fail to be taken up again in the strategy and action plan tables. In these cases, consideration of persons with disabilities remains a mere declaration of good will. The result is the same when no indicators or targets have been defined or no budgets allocated.

72. These are the dominant features of the treatment of persons with disabilities in presently available (I)PRSPs. In general, it would even be exaggerated to say that persons with disabilities have been treated at all: they have just been mentioned in some scattered references for illustrative purposes. But there are some encouraging counter-examples. The *Honduras* and the *Malawi PRSPs* are probably the ones that offer the best explicit recognition to their disabled population. A brief description of the strengths of these two PRSPs in respect to disability may be useful for other countries.

73. The *Malawi PRSP* is strong on mainstreaming of persons with disabilities in sectors like education, but it is the effort to trace the linkages of strategies for their inclusion in a comprehensive and coherent manner throughout the sectors and the stages of the PRSP that deserves recognition. The explicit participation of DPOs in the consultation process in Malawi leads to the identification of persons with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis and to references to specific disability policies in the evaluation of present poverty reduction strategies. Once the poverty situation of people with disabilities was identified in a differentiated way, the authors of the PRSP were bound to recognize the fact that persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and thus introduce the distinction between critical disabilities and others, which in turn leads to the understanding of the necessity for differentiated treatment. The Malawi PRSP then introduces a clear “Conceptual framework for safety nets” showing social protection as a continuum stretching from the poles “Welfare support” to “Productivity enhancement.” Target group for welfare support are, inter alia, “people with critical disabilities”, and not, as in so many papers, persons with disabilities in general.<sup>28</sup> Sectoral strategies and programmes are inclusive, and interconnected. Measures in favour of persons with disabilities in the health sector, for instance, are explicitly seen in the perspective of economic empowerment: “Technical support services [in the health sector] play a crucial role in *empowering persons with disabilities to undertake activities for daily living*.”<sup>29</sup> The Malawi PRSP also is the only one that recognizes the important role played by the national DPO, Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA), in present policies and programmes for persons with disabilities and emphasizes its role in future PRSP strategies and programmes. Finally, it is encouraging to note that all strategies and programmes mentioned in the body of the text are consistently taken up in the Action Plan, including budgeting, which makes the difference to the seemingly unserious professions of good will in so many other PRSPs.

74. The *Honduras PRSP* reports explicitly that consultations with civil society lead to the recognition of people with disabilities as a special target group for the PRSP, which dedicated a special chapter to persons with disabilities in the poverty diagnosis. But the most relevant

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<sup>28</sup> See annex 3, box 3.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

aspect of the Honduras PRSP is that it aims straight at the *disability policy level* by proposing to create a “National Disability Council” and a “Technical Unit for Integrated Rehabilitation to support for the National Disability Council in creating and implementing the National Policy, the National Plan and the agreements of the Council”. The proposed composition of the National Disability Council is multi-sectoral, including the participation of public and private institutions and associations of persons with disabilities. Honduras is also the only country to propose the creation of a “National Information System for Persons with Disabilities” and to “incorporate a module within the surveys of the National Statistics Institute, on various aspects of disability in order to identify, among other things, the geographic location and socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the population with disabilities.” The related programme on “Prevention, care and integrated rehabilitation of persons with disabilities” includes five projects:

- “i) equalization of opportunities (access to an appropriate physical environment for culture, sports, information, etc.);
- ii) support for the creation and/or strengthening of physical and sensorial rehabilitation centers and services (technical aids, orthoses, prostheses, centers for integrated rehabilitation, etc.);
- iii) creation and strengthening of support services for special educational needs;
- iv) orientation, training and work placement; and
- v) sensitive training and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.”

All key elements of a strategy for socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities are thus explicitly indicated. The only difference to the approach advocated by the present paper is the fact that the Honduras PRSP treats the entire multi-sectoral strategy in a special chapter on persons with disabilities within the section on social protection, thus following the Sourcebook approach. The target group approach dominates the sector approach, as described earlier in paragraph 29, which leads to neglecting the interface nature of the support services, whereas the present paper argues in favour of inclusion of such interface support services into the sectoral policies themselves. It is worth noting that Honduras succeeded to prompt the only explicit reference to persons with disabilities found in any Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) of (I)PRSPs.<sup>30</sup>

75. When considering the insufficient attention paid by (I)PRSPs to disabled citizens up to now, we would like to repeat what has been said in the introductory remarks: the missing recognition of the disability problem is disappointing, particularly in the case of countries emerging from armed conflict, as well as in those where the ILO had been heavily involved in vocational rehabilitation projects in the past.

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<sup>30</sup> “The (*Honduras*) PRSP explores the social profile of poverty with special emphasis on ethnic groups, women, disabled people, children, and senior citizens.” (11) The JSA, however, does not take notice of the exceptional recognition of persons with disabilities in the PRSP strategy.

**For more information**

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