

AFRICA HEALTH REHABILITATION SUMMIT 2025

THEME : **Making People With Disabilities Embrace and Accept Their Identity**

TOPIC : ***STRATEGIES FOR SOCIETAL INCLUSION AND POLICY REFORMS***

The topic we have to work on is Strategies for Societal Inclusion and Policy Reforms and it essentially concerns people living with disabilities. What is social inclusion ? It is a concept that is increasingly emphasized and, above all, a value considered essential for building a more harmonious society. It is about integrating a person or a group of people, ending the situation of exclusion in which, that person or group finds themselves. Disability inclusion has become an integral part of development and human rights programs, and is receiving increased support and investment from the international community. By extension, inclusion aims to transform living environments to adapt them to the diversity of individuals.

This requires the implementation of effective policies aimed to promote accessibility and equal opportunities for people with disabilities. They must enjoy, like everyone else, fundamental human rights and equal opportunities to lead a life without discrimination in all areas, regardless of the nature and severity of their disability. Speaking of equal opportunity does not mean that everyone must have the same goals and achieve the same results, but rather that no one should be deprived of the chance to develop their own skills and use their specific talents and abilities to serve society. People with disabilities are actors with unique potential, talents, and strengths and must play an active role in major societal decision.

We could therefore mention, for example some societal inclusion policies:

- 1-**Improve accessibility to public spaces:** Develop public spaces, transportation, and buildings to facilitate access for people with disabilities; implement a generalized accessibility strategy for people with limited autonomy to enable "access to everything for everyone" in terms of education, employment, health, living environment, and social activities;
- 2- **Inclusive education:** Integrate children with disabilities into ordinary schools and adapt teaching methods, inculcate values of diversity and inclusion, and make them a true component of society.
- 3- **Inclusive employment:** Encourage companies to hire people with disabilities and adapt workplaces, implement financial and material support programs for people with disabilities.
- 4- **Awareness-raising and training:** Organize awareness-raising campaigns and training sessions to fight against prejudices and stereotypes, adopt vocational training programs for people with disabilities.
- 5- **Civic participation:** Encourage the representation of people with disabilities in political bodies. Encourage people with disabilities to participate in political and community life, and build a society more open to people with disabilities.
- 6-**Anti-discrimination legislation:** Adopt laws to prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities

All of these measures, to be effective, require the establishment of a strong legal framework capable of strengthening the rights of persons living with disabilities. In this sense, the adoption by the United Nations of a convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD), in December 2006, represents a major step in the recognition of disability as a human rights issue, but also a commitment to ensure that persons with disabilities play an active and participatory role in the processes of social life. The Europe Council , which has also recognised the necessity to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, has committed itself to implement its Action Plan 2006-2015 for persons with disabilities, adopted by the Recommendation of the Council of Ministers (2006) which claimed that “Achieve the full participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities, or ensure the full inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in society”. Is a major objective.

UNICEF developed a Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS)¹ to provide inclusive support and services to children with disabilities in their communities, and to integrate disability into the world we live in by 2030, a world where all children, including those with disabilities, will live in inclusive and unfettered communities, and where children with disabilities will be taken into account and supported at every stage of their lives, so that they can realize their rights and participate fully to the development of the society. The objectives pursued by those rights are:

- 1-Children with disabilities are recognized as the best defenders of their rights, empowered and considered essential for the development and sustainability of inclusion.**
- 2-Children with disabilities receive the support they need throughout their lives to live independently and be included in communities.**
- 3-Children with disabilities grow up in supportive environments where they have access to resources and opportunities to reach their full potential.**
- 4.-Children and people with disabilities benefit from UNICEF’s comprehensive range of programmes and organizational investments that address inclusion and diversity.**

Is it a better way to observe the various social inclusion strategies in practical than to talk about some community initiatives implemented around the world? The challenges faced in rural areas for example, which have seventy five percent of the poor people, are on great concern to national governments and international organizations. The work deficit is considerable and exacerbated by a lack of access to social protection, low rural incomes, a lack of labor law coverage, and a high degree of informality. Rural areas also face challenges that hamper economic growth, including weak labor market institutions, inadequate infrastructure, limited educational opportunities, and under investment. Furthermore, a part of the population have more difficulty accessing quality jobs, particularly women, people with disabilities, and youth.

In Burkina Faso, in collaboration with the International Labor Organization's (ILO) , a training program for the Strengthening of the Economic Autonomy of Rural Populations (TREE) was launched in 2009. The program aimed to promote rural employment through a community-based approach to skills development. This community-based training program includes people with disabilities in its standard curriculum, encouraging income generation and employment opportunities for disadvantaged women and men by developing skills and knowledge useful to their communities. It specifically targeted rural women, children, and men, 16% of whom suffer from mobility impairments, and who participate to the same training sessions as non-disabled people. To facilitate group cohesion, the training included disability awareness sessions.²

Despite several difficulties associated with high illiteracy rates, unqualified teachers and inadequate equipment, unequal roles between men and women in accessing education, childcare responsibilities, financial and non-financial difficulties in participating in training programs (due to high transportation costs), It quickly became apparent that skills development and training for these individuals were essential factors in overcoming the challenges associated with poverty in rural areas. By promoting employability, particularly for vulnerable groups, and increasing income-generating opportunities, vocational training can enable women and men to escape poverty and promote sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

A second example is the Canadian government's commitment in 2020 with the promise of the creation of a new Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PAIPSH)³. It is an historic approach aimed to promote a comprehensive strategy designed to encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities through a set of interconnected and complementary actions. Some of the objectives were:

- improving socio-economic inclusion and reducing poverty for Canadians with disabilities; - ensuring that inclusion was considered in all government and federal programs, policies, and services;
- promoting a culture of inclusion and reducing discriminatory attitudes.

This action plan was based on four key thematic pillars:

- financial security, with the creation of a Canadian Disability Benefit;
- employment, through the development of a national employment strategy targeting Canadians with disabilities;
- creating inclusive spaces for people with disabilities, to remove barriers to accessing public spaces;
- modernizing the approach to disability by ensuring an updated definition of the concept and an improved process for determining eligibility for government programs and benefits.

The expectations of this Plan which application is launched for 2025, as announced in the Budget of 2024 are so expected and the Canadian government is confident to continue the social inclusion and empowerment programs for people with disabilities.

The main objective of this work was to ensure that people with disabilities, those "on the margins" in the society, are heard, so that a greater inclusion of these people in all aspects of society improves everyone's quality of life by contributing to socio-economic, cultural, and political benefits. Finally, certain initiatives have shown that strengthening collaboration between partnerships, organizations, and other representatives and people with disabilities will significantly contribute to remove barriers of participation in societal development and advancing inclusion for all.

SOURCES:

1- "UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy: 2022-2030

2-BIT : Implementing and Learning from Community-Based Training/Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (CBT/TREE): CountryThe elements of disability in Training for the strengthening of economic autonomy of the Rural populations (TREE) (Genève, 2014), p. 2

3- Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PAIPSH) 2020

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