

Executive Summary

Disability, poverty and the new development agenda

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Executive summary

Despite numerous policies and statements regarding disability and poverty reduction, it is still estimated that 50,000 people, including 10,000 disabled people, die every day as a result of extreme poverty. This is not an abstract theory, but a disastrous crisis. It would be deceptive to claim that this injustice is anybody's conscious intention. However, it can be argued that it is the inevitable and logical result of existing global relations. Earlier in 2005, many thousands of people took to the streets to protest against this injustice.

Disabled people are among the most disadvantaged people in the world and are over-represented among the poorest of the poor. The relationship between disability and poverty has often been referred to as a vicious circle. This paper argues that this representation may obscure the similarities between the processes of marginalisation experienced by disabled people and poor people.

There appears to be a widespread assumption in the disability sector that inclusion is necessarily good, with little assessment of the wider context. This leads to the bizarre situation where many community organisations are campaigning against, for example, the World Bank's poverty reduction strategies, claiming that the Bank's approach perpetuates poverty, while the disability sector fights for inclusion within the Bank's strategies. If the existing system is the cause of the problem, then inclusion within it cannot be the answer. Wider assessment of the context is urgently required and alliances need to be built between marginalised people, if there is to be any real chance of creating a more humane and just society.