



# SPECIAL ISSUE ON DISABILITY

# PLANETARY

# HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

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## SUFFERING IN SILENCE: HOW KENYAN (AND MILLIONS OF OTHER) WOMEN LIVE WITH PROFOUND CHILDBIRTH INJURIES

Sasha is 22-years-old. She was married off when she was just nine and by the time she was 11, she was pregnant with her first child, and unprepared for childbirth. So when labour came, in the middle of the night – in her geographically isolated village in rural Kenya – she was unaware of the painful fate awaiting her. During childbirth the baby got stuck in her birthing canal. TBAs tried their best to help but she needed surgery, and quickly. She couldn't access emergency obstetric services and spent the next six days in labour. In the end, Sasha delivered a dead, rotten baby in macerated form. She was in grief and traumatized by her experience which left her with a double obstetric vaginal fistula. Across the world, there is an estimated two million women and girls like Sasha who live with vaginal fistulas and up to 100,000 new cases each year; few are treated.

Read more on The Star.



Credit: /FILE

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## LIVING WITH A DISABILITY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Here's a striking fact: 15 percent of the world, an estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities. In reality, that number should be much higher. I learned this while working as a Special Education Instructional Assistant a few years ago. I was working in a classroom that catered to 5-7 year olds with moderate to severe Autism. During this time I met some of the most involved parents and siblings I've ever seen. It wasn't just the children in my class that were living with disability. It was their entire families, whose lives revolved largely around the care of their child. [Read more on Global Citizen.](#)





## DFID MEETS WITH DISABILITY ADVOCATES ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Disability advocates, implementers, and politicians recently met in London to discuss how to ensure people with disabilities are not left behind by the Sustainable Development Agenda. Having fought hard to get disability included in the 2030 Agenda, where it is explicitly referred to 11 times — in contrast with the Millennium Development Goals, which made no mention of people with disabilities — advocates are keen to ensure these ambitions translate into national and regional policy changes and tangible reforms. Approximately 15 percent of the world's population has a disability, and nearly 90% of countries have now signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. People with disabilities are still systematically excluded from health, education and other services, caught in a cycle of disability, poverty and vulnerability. Women with disabilities are also at a higher risk of violence and sexual assault. [Read more on Devex.](#)

Credit: Hamid Abdulsalam

## FROM THE DAY THEY ARE BORN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN WEST AFRICA

Despite the building evidence on violence against children globally, almost nothing is known about the violence children with disabilities in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) experience. The prevalence of violence against children with disabilities can be expected to be higher in LMICs where there are greater stigmas associated with having a child with a disability, less resources for families who have children with disabilities, and wider acceptance of the use of corporal punishment to discipline children. This study explores violence experienced by children with disabilities based on data collected from four countries in West Africa- Guinea, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Togo. [Read more on BMC Public Health.](#)



Credit: Human Rights Watch



Credit: Hajire Halilu

## DISABILITY IN MALAWI

The National Statistics Office gathered some information about functional disability which allows for partial alignment with other census and surveys using the Washington Group questions. The census places the prevalence rate of disability in Malawi at 4%. This sits in sharp contrast to the World Report on Disability which estimates a global disability prevalence of 15–20%. The capacity of the national statistical authority together with the questions used to determine disability status could be improved to ensure that good quality data can be used to inform policy decisions and resource allocation. There is a marked over representation (91%) of disability in rural areas. Access to healthcare and higher rates of poverty leading to disease are some of the driving factors behind this. [Read more on Medium.](#)



Credit: Natasha Altin

## WHERE DOES CANADA STAND IN ITS OBLIGATION TO MAKE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL?

Today's public health situation is quite different from what it was in the 20th century. In many parts of the world we see populations living longer, surviving communicable and non-communicable diseases and injuries due to better healthcare and related factors. As the result, population demographics have seen increases in ageing population, number of people who have disability and in the burden of chronic disease. This brings a new set of challenges and opportunities to the public health field, as governments look for ways to support and meet the needs of the changing populations to remain independent, healthy and productive, thereby promoting the population's well-being, decreasing the impact of disease and disability on the person, their caregivers and society as a whole.

[Read more on Juxta Magazine.](#)

## WHAT SHOULD BETTER DISABILITY DATA LOOK LIKE?

Development for All 2015-2020, Australia's strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in its aid program, is being reviewed. Phase one assessed the extent of the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the program. Phase two focused on the effectiveness and impact of Australian advocacy. And phase three, to be released later this year, will look at overarching lessons to be utilized by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to ensure people with disabilities are included in aid investments. Thus far, the review has highlighted the importance of data to monitor disability-inclusive development within the Sustainable Development Goals, and suggested barriers.

[Read more on Devex.](#)



Credit: DFAT



Credit: mentalhealth.gov

## WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MENTAL DISABILITIES?

People with anxiety problems respond to certain stimuli with fear and physical signs such as sweating or a pounding heartbeat. If the individual's response to a given situation is not positive, then a diagnosis of a stress disorder is often made. Anxiety disorders include panic disorder, generalized anxiety, phobias and social anxiety disorder. Another name for mood disorder is affective disorder. This condition involves feelings of happiness and periods of sadness or a sudden transition from complete happiness to extreme sadness. Mood disorders include bipolar disorder, cyclothymic disorder and chronic depression. Psychotic disorders involve lack of self-awareness and distortion of thinking. Hallucinations and delusions are symptoms of psychotic disorders. An example of a psychotic abnormality is schizophrenia.

[Read more on Reference.](#)



## HOUSING ISSUES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Being part of the community and living as independently as possible are among the most important values and goals shared by people with disabilities, their families and advocates. A home of one's own – either rented or owned – is the cornerstone of independence for people with disabilities. However, people with disabilities, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), often face a severe housing crisis. The affordability gap for people with disabilities has exponentially worsened in recent years. According to *Priced Out in 2014*, approximately 4.9 million non-institutionalized Americans with disabilities are priced out of every rental housing market in the nation. In 2014, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment was \$780 per month – or 104% of the national average monthly SSI income for beneficiaries living independently. [Read more on The Arc.](#)

Credit: Laura Nelson

## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY: CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (CRPD)

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol was adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and was opened for signature on 30 March 2007. There were 82 signatories to the Convention, 44 signatories to the Optional Protocol, and 1 ratification of the Convention. This is the highest number of signatories in history to a UN Convention on its opening day. It is the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century and is the first human rights convention to be open for signature by regional integration organizations. The Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008.

[Read more on The United Nations.](#)



Credit: United Nation



## SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS HEALTH: LANDMARK STUDY REVEALS 'CLEAR EVIDENCE' OF MERCURY'S TOLL ON HEALTH IN GRASSY NARROWS, ONTARIO

More than four decades after mercury was dumped upstream from Grassy Narrows First Nation, the physical and mental health of the people there is by many key measures “considerably worse” than that of other First Nations in Canada, according to a landmark new government-funded survey. The survey found there are fewer elders in Grassy Narrows, suggesting people there are dying prematurely. The residents are also reporting higher rates of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts compared to other First Nations. And adult residents who reported eating more fish as children had experienced lower levels of success in school and have higher rates of disability, nervous system symptoms and disorders. [Read more on The Star.](#)

Credit: Todd Korol

**"We will put disability at the heart of everything that we do."**

**-Penny Mordaunt, U.K. Secretary of State and former Disabilities Minister**



## EVENTSTABLE

June	McGill University Summer Institutes in Infectious Diseases and Global Health	Montreal Canada	<a href="http://mcgill-idgh.ca/courses/tuberculosis-research-methods/">http://mcgill-idgh.ca/courses/tuberculosis-research-methods/</a>
June 22-24	Annual Conference, The Council of Canadians	Ottawa Canada	<a href="https://canadians.org/conference">https://canadians.org/conference</a>
Sep 29	7th Annual Action Global Health Network Conference	Ottawa Canada	Early Bird deadline for abstract is July 20th, 2017, please email <a href="mailto:aghn2017.research@gmail.com">aghn2017.research@gmail.com</a> for more information
Oct 8-12	5th Global Symposium on Health Systems Research	Liverpool England	<a href="http://healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2018/">http://healthsystemsresearch.org/hsr2018/</a>
Nov 15-19	4th People's Health Assembly	Dhaka Bangladesh	<a href="http://www.phmovement.org/en/node/10805">http://www.phmovement.org/en/node/10805</a>
Nov 19-21	Canadian Conference on Global Health	Toronto Canada	<a href="http://www.csih.org/en/events/canadian-conference-global-health">http://www.csih.org/en/events/canadian-conference-global-health</a>
March 8-10, 2019	10th annual CUGH Conference - Translation and Implementation for impact in Global Health	Chicago, USA	Panel and Abstract proposal deadline - August 25, 2018



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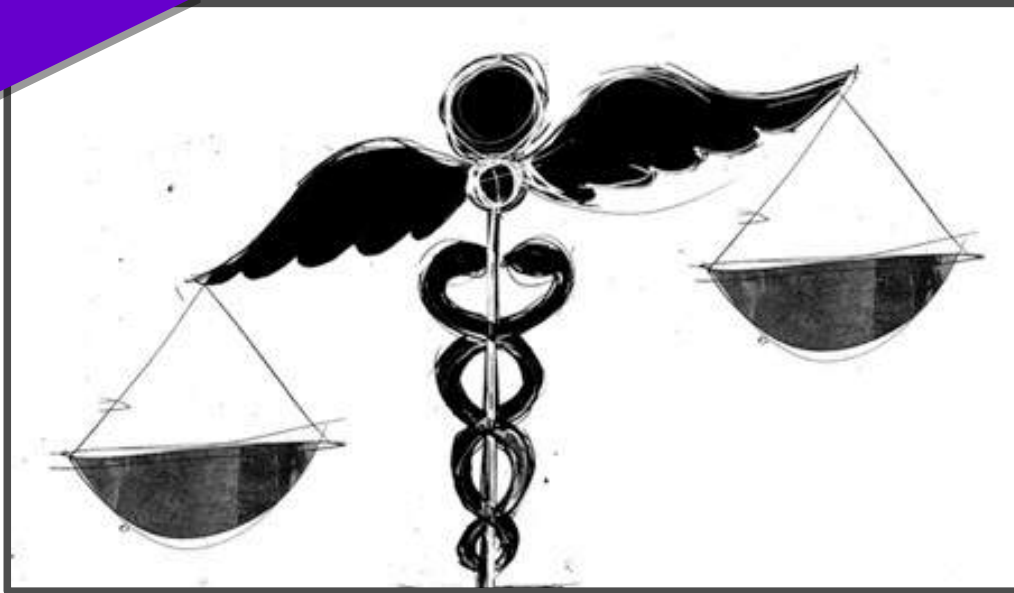
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# KEY HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN CANADA: A NATIONAL PORTRAIT, 2018



Credit: Swindon JSNA

The report describes the degree and distribution of key health inequalities in Canada, presenting results at the national level for 22 indicators of health status and determinants of health.

## **DISABILITY INEQUALITIES HIGHLIGHTS:**

The prevalence of disability among unemployed Canadians is 3.2 times more than employed Canadians. This corresponds to 13.7 more Canadians living with disability per 100 adults among unemployed versus employed Canadians.

The prevalence of disability among adults who are unemployed and still in the labour force is 1.9 times that of employed Canadians. This means there are 5.4 more cases of disability among those who are unemployed and still in the labour force compared with those who are employed per 100 adults.

The prevalence of disability is higher among women than men. However, the inequality in disability prevalence is higher among men (prevalence ratio = 4.1) than among women (PR = 2.7) when comparing unemployed adults with employed adults. This means there are 18.2 and 11.2 more men and women per 100 people living with disability who are not in the labour force, respectively, than men and women who are currently employed)

Inequalities in disability in Canada are particularly apparent between socioeconomic groups. Adults with less than a high school education have 11.3 more cases of disability per 100 people than university graduates, which is 2.2 times the prevalence of disability of university graduates. Canadians in the lowest income group have 9.1 more cases of disability per 100 people than Canadians in the highest income group.

Indigenous peoples (excluding First Nations people living on reserve and in northern communities) have a prevalence of disability 1.6 times that of non-Indigenous people. This means there are 8.0 more Indigenous adults living with disability than non-Indigenous adults per 100 people. The inequality in disability is 1.8 times higher among Indigenous women and 1.3 times higher among Indigenous men than non-Indigenous men and women.

[Read more on Statistics Canada](#)



# FACTSHEET ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Credit: Erica Pinsky

- Around 15 per cent of the world's population, or estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities. They are the world's largest minority.
- This figure is increasing through population growth, medical advances and the ageing process, says the World Health Organization.
- In countries with life expectancies over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5 per cent of their life span, living with disabilities.
- Disability rates are significantly higher among groups with lower educational attainment in the OECD countries. On average, 19 per cent of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11 per cent among the better educated.
- 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO.
- An estimated 386 million of the world's working-age people have some kind of disability. Unemployment among the persons with disabilities is as high as 80 per cent in some countries. Often employers assume that persons with disabilities are unable to work.
- Persons with disabilities are more likely to be victims of violence or rape, and less likely to obtain police intervention, legal protection or preventive care.

[Read more on The United Nations.](#)

## BLOOD TEST MIGHT HELP PREDICT BOTH PRETERM AND HEALTHY DELIVERY DATES



Credit: Jason Connolly AFP

For most women, one of the most stressful parts of giving birth is not knowing when it's going to happen. Roughly 15 million pregnant women face life-threatening spontaneous preterm birth every year. And doctors don't really understand why some pregnancies — nearly 10 percent of all U.S. births — end suddenly, weeks or even months before they should. Now it may soon be possible to use a blood test to improve predictions of both healthy and too-early due dates. Such predictions could also help better explain why some births begin in crisis.

Markers in the blood can — at least in a small group of pregnant women as reported in *Science* — predict as much as two months ahead of time when a preterm birth is likely.

The test measures levels of so-called cell-free RNA, bits of protein-coding instructions left behind when a cell dies. Every tissue in the body — including the placenta and fetus during pregnancy — contributes cell-free RNA to the bloodstream. Analyzing it provides a direct window into the biological processes that are happening during pregnancy.





# THE WHO AND HI DRAW ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE INSIDE SYRIA LIVING WITH INJURIES AND DISABILITIES



Credit: American Medical Society

The World Health Organization (WHO) and Handicap International (HI) call attention to the needs of an estimated 3 million people in the Syrian Arab Republic living with injuries and disabilities, and call on the international community to scale up its support for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

An estimated 30,000 people are injured in Syria every month and more than six years into the conflict, an estimated 1.5 million people have been injured. An additional 1.5 million people are living with permanent disabilities, including 86,000 people whose injuries have led to amputations. As the conflict rages with an intense use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the constant risks linked to a very high level of explosive contamination throughout the country, a growing number of people require access to rehabilitation services, which are becoming increasingly limited.

Less than half of all public hospitals and health facilities in Syria remain functional and only two physical rehabilitation centers provide artificial limbs. This severely restricted access to medical care causes up to 1/3 of people's injuries to turn into lifelong impairments, which otherwise would have been prevented with proper and timely care. [Read more on Relief Web.](#)



# THESE CANADIAN WOMEN SEW MENSTRUAL PADS FOR GIRLS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES



Credit: Days For Girls

Without access to items like sanitary pads, girls are often forced to miss school. In developing countries, many women and girls do not have access to sanitary products while on their period — but a group of Canadian women in Kamloops, BC, is trying to change that. The women are part of Days for Girls, an organization dedicated to increasing access to menstrual care and education around the world. Lack of access to sanitation facilities increases the number of preventable deaths globally. About 842,000 people die every year due to inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene in low- and middle-income countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

This lack of access to toilets also puts women and girls at risk in a whole new way, as finding hidden places to defecate increases their chance of rape and attack. It makes managing menstruation difficult and it perpetuates a cycle of poverty.

[Read more on Global Citizen.](#)



# A PHOTO EMERGES AND A SCHOOL SYSTEM'S USE OF SECLUSION COMES UNDER SCRUTINY



Credit: Jahi Chikwendiu

Thousands of schoolchildren, most of whom have disabilities, are involuntarily confined in U.S. schools each year. In the 2015-2016 school year, more than 36,000 students throughout the country were subjected to seclusion, according to federal data released in April. Nearly 86,000 more were restricted from moving freely by a school worker holding the child or by being immobilized by other restraints, such as handcuffs.

Read more on [The Washington Post](#).



Credit:  
David Zakus

**The Healing Family Foundation for  
People Living With Disabilities  
Chiang Mai, Thailand  
April 17, 2018**

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