



14th June, 2024

Call for Inputs- Reaching the furthest left behind: The participation of persons with disabilities in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and post 2030 discussions.

Submission by:

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Title: Inclusion of young persons with disabilities and women with disabilities in the SDG monitoring spaces in the Asia- Pacific region- Barriers and Ways Forward

Introductions-

Historic Global targets set in 2015 in the forms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Agenda 2030 have been commitments by world leaders to ensure development of the world. The 17 SDGs, that form the foundation of this Agenda, provide a practical and effective framework for eradicating poverty, addressing human rights abuses, and combating climate change. Undoubtedly a lot of work has gone in implementing the SDGs, localizing the agenda at National level bringing it closer to people. SDGs have also been used by Governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the impact of programs on the developments and wellbeing of people¹. There have been examples of regular monitoring of the SDG indicators through various mechanisms that have been undertaken by National Governments, networks formed at National and Regional levels. However, how inclusive are the monitoring processes is something that needs to be re-evaluated and relooked.

Almost 16% of the world's population live with some or the other disabilities.² More than 690 million people with disabilities live in the Asia Pacific region.³ They constantly face invisibilization and discrimination from all spheres of society that exclude them from the economic, social and political life of their communities in particular and the larger world in general⁴. The 17 SDGs that are meant to improve and impact the lives of individuals across the world also include persons with disabilities. However, despite the commitments made at the regional, national and international communities for inclusive and sustainable development, attainment of the goals is a far-fetched idea with reference to the experiences of persons with disabilities.

Barriers experienced in participating in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the international, regional, national and/or sub-national levels

ARROW has been working on the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of persons with disabilities particularly women and girls with disabilities in the Asia Pacific region by partnering with individuals with disabilities and organizations working with persons with disabilities. Through the engagement over the years, ARROW and its partners have developed modules for building capacities around SRHR and disability rights, documented real life experiences of persons with disabilities in accessing SRH services and have advocated for the SRHR of persons with disabilities in Regional and Global Spaces. The learnings from these engagements reflect multiple barriers that persons with disabilities face with regards to follow up and review of the Agenda 2030 at the international, regional, national and/or sub-national levels-

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews>

² <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

³ https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Disability_The_Facts_2.pdf

⁴Women with disabilities take action reproductive and sexual health, W-Dare, The Philippines, Dr. Cathy Vaughan

- Due to invisibilization of persons with disabilities, they are most of the time not included in the process of reviewing the Agenda 2030. They don't receive information regarding the networks, bodies and groups which are involved in the review process. Often the dissemination channel is inaccessible and is not the right way for persons with disabilities to access the correct information.
- In the review processes at National and Sub Regional level, it is mostly traditional organizations working with persons with disabilities are invited to participate in the review processes. Often women with disabilities, young persons with disabilities, indigenous persons with disabilities and people with other intersectional identities are not included in the process and hence complicated issues regarding the SDGs are not covered.
- Although SDG 4,5,8,10,11,16 and their specific indicators have direct relationship with the lives of persons with disabilities, National level processes don't monitor these indicators well enough as compared to Global and Regional level. Hence voices of persons with disabilities on these indicators are often missed out.
- Indicators have been designed from the disability lens but holistic data collection doesn't give an account for disability segregated data and hence persons with disabilities often cannot comment on the same. Beside that other goals like Goal 1- No poverty, Goal 3- Good health wellbeing, and Goal 10- Reduce inequality, Goal -monitoring the SDG data. They have identified new perspectives in terms of issues covered from SDG but have not included perspectives of persons with disabilities.
- Selected countries that have set up monitoring committees to review SDG often don't include civil society organizations in the process due to biases and hence organizations working with women with disabilities are often left out.

Good practices in participating in these processes and advocating for the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Despite the challenges there have been efforts by regional and sub regional organizations who have taken up the idea of inclusion and accessibility into the processes of SDG monitoring. ARROW along with its co-conveners (Youth Lead, Y-PEER Asia Pacific, MGCY and CYMG to UNEP), every year organizes the Youth Forum prior to the Asia Pacific Forum for Development (APFSD) at Regional level. This results in production of Call to Actions that are further shared at the APFSD People's Forum and the APFSD intergovernmental fora at the regional level and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at the global level. The APFSD Youth Forum creates spaces for young people in all their diversities across the region to participate in the monitoring processes of the SDGs. This also includes persons with disabilities who also live with other marginalizations who provide their inputs from their first hand experiences of implementation of the SDGs.

This year in 2024 the Youth Forum monitored the progress on the theme as well as SDGs under review: Goal 1 (No poverty); Goal 2 (Zero hunger); Goal 13 (Climate action); Goal 16 (Peace, justice, and strong institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnership for the Goals). In addition, the Goal 5

on gender equality was also reviewed. Young people with disabilities provided recommendations on building leadership of women with disabilities in achieving gender equality and overcoming barriers to achieve SDGs, including youth and individuals with disabilities in the policy making process in order to make SRHR accessible to everyone. The Regional Call to Action also included an important point made by participants with disabilities that demanded 'increasing the leadership building skills of all youth and youth with disabilities. All public and private institutions including workplaces, educational institutions, judiciaries should be made disability friendly. Youth in all their diversities that include youth with disabilities should be included in policy making at all levels of the decision-making process'⁵.

Post this 7 young scholars who participated in the APFSD Youth Forum along with ARROW participated actively in the people's and intergovernmental forum processes at the APFSD 2024 and this included persons with disabilities as well. Young persons with disabilities not only highlighted the challenges faced by them in SDG monitoring and decision making processes but also stressed the importance of the need of collective call of everyone to support the access social protection systems, quality education and healthcare with human rights and gender equality for persons with disabilities.

Recommendations from ARROW and partners:

- Dissemination of information regarding SDG monitoring processes need to be done in an inclusive manner by choosing accessible channels of communication so that all the details about the monitoring process are circulated well and reach persons with disabilities on time.
- APFSD should build a disability Forum where Activists from Disability Community can raise the issues as well where Women with Disabilities will be included.
- There should be maximum inclusion of persons with disabilities in all SDG monitoring processes at all levels especially at the National level with reasonable accommodation in place.
- Important to also create and use SDG tracker on disability is important at the national and regional level.
- At the APFSD, 2024, ARROW's partner also discussed how the UN systems and processes have been challenging for young people including young people with disabilities, and with the establishment of a team particularly focused on young people's issues, this is an opportunity for young people in their diversity to meaningfully voice their concerns and demands. And this includes the processes of the SDG monitoring processes as well.
- Effective implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) at the National level by all the countries. One of the ARROW's partners from Nepal (where UNDIS is currently being piloted) who is a young person with disability also

⁵ https://arrow.org.my/apfsdyouthforum/wp-content/uploads/APFSD-YCA_2024_FINAL-1.pdf

recommended assessing how UNDIS has been effective in making the SDG monitoring process inclusive.

- Making the SDG monitoring tools and frameworks accessible to persons with all kinds of disabilities. It is also important to note that in the Asia Pacific region 40% of persons with disabilities live below the poverty line and hence don't have access to English language⁶. It is necessary that these tools are designed in the local language for persons with all kinds of disabilities for ensuring not only better accessibility but also inclusive and meaningful participation.
- ARROW's partners also recommend including persons with disabilities in Regional networks involved in SDG monitoring not just to ensure diversity and inclusion but also to make sure that their issues are well recorded and integrated.
- ARROW's partners stress that strategy and vision should be built in order to ensure the voices of persons with invisible disabilities, particularly those with psychosocial disabilities and are institutionalized, are also recorded in the monitoring process.
- ARROW and its partner also recommend the revival of National level CRPD monitoring committees as they will further aid the SDG monitoring processes and amplify the voices of persons with disabilities.
- ARROW and its partners recommend capacity building processes to be adopted for both persons with disabilities and organizations working with persons with disabilities to create awareness on their rights, especially sexual and reproductive health rights. ARROW with the help of its partners has developed an [exclusive manual](#) on SRHR and Disability rights that could be widely used in capacity building processes. This will ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the SDG monitoring process.

Describe whether you are currently aware and engaging in the process leading to the Summit for the Future 2024 and its outcome documents and the Social Summit in 2025. Please identify your thematic priorities, if any, when engaging in these processes.

ARROW is actively following the preparatory process towards the Summit of the Future 2024. ARROW strongly believes that the Pact for the Future must speak the language of equality, intersectionality, human rights and gender responsiveness. ARROW envisions the outcome document to be a progressive outcome document that speaks to the challenges and aspirations of women and young people in all their diversities including persons with disabilities from Asia and the Pacific region and, to truly reiterate the need to advance gender equality and health including sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially given the set back by the impact of COVID-19, the climate crises, and various global conflicts. We have been actively responding to call for written inputs and also making oral intervention in the preparatory process of the Summit of the Future 2024.

⁶<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/uncontrib-escap.htm#:~:text=Out%20of%20the%20estimate d%20600,the%20poorest%20of%20the%20poor.>