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CALL FOR ACTION¹

Preamble

“We persons with disabilities from Africa, particularly of 12 countries, with representatives of national, sub-regional and pan-African organizations of persons with disabilities, meeting on 4 and 5 November 2020 in Niamey, Niger at the workshop "Inclusive social protection response for persons with disabilities to the Covid-19 crisis: a new path to inclusion".

- a. Recall that persons with disabilities with their difference are part of human diversity and humanity,
- b. Recall that states parties to the CRPD have to respect, protect and promote the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities including the right of social protection which has also been recognized in other different human rights treaties, including by the CESC, CRC and the African protocol on rights of persons with disabilities,
- c. Recall that persons with disabilities across the region have less access to education, and economic opportunities and are more likely to be poor, unemployed, and to face catastrophic health expenditures. They face significant disability related costs to overcome their functional difficulties and the barriers in the environment which undermine their and their household ‘escape from poverty and resilience to shocks,
- d. Recall the aggravated and multiple discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities,
- e. Recall also that children with disabilities are less likely to be enrolled or finished school due to multiple barriers that they face. Which will significantly limit their opportunities in employment and participation in all aspects of life,

¹ In 30 and 31 March 2020, the **Policy Dialogue Conference “Social protection in Africa: a new path towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities”** was held by the [African Disability Forum \(ADF\)](#), [International Disability Alliance \(IDA\)](#), [European project Bridging the Gap](#), the [ILO/UNICEF/UNPRPD](#) Inclusive Social Protection Project to trigger and reinforce the policy dialogue on inclusive social protection in Africa based on interesting practices across the continent.

- f. Recall that all nations, development agencies and members of civil societies have agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the commitments to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities,
- g. Recall that before the COVID 19 crisis only 6.1% of persons with disabilities with significant support requirements have access to disability-related social protection in sub-Saharan Africa²,
- h. Are deeply concerned about the failures of social protection and humanitarian crisis responses systems revealed by the Covid-19 crisis, increasing vulnerability of persons with disabilities to poverty and neglect in crisis,
- i. Recall that most marginalized groups among persons with disabilities such as children with disabilities, persons with Albinism, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons with deafblindness and autistic people require increased vigilance and response from policy makers, development organizations, humanitarian organizations as well as technical and financial partners to ensure that they take part to and benefit from disability inclusion efforts,
- j. Recall the Nairobi Declaration of March 2014:

“We want the post-2015 development agenda to eradicate poverty by promoting economic empowerment and social protection programs and policies that include persons with disabilities, as well as social protection schemes that enable persons with disabilities to cover the additional costs associated with their disabilities and to access support services, including for families of children with disabilities.”

Call on all African nations, technical and financial partners, and development agencies to promote inclusive social protection schemes that:

Meet the requirements of the diversity of persons with disabilities:

1. Progressively develop inclusive social protection system which provide country-specific combination of cash transfers, meaningful concessions and community support services. This combination should provide the diversity of persons with disabilities with basic income security, coverage of health care cost and disability-related costs, including those related to seeking and keeping work,
2. A key step towards such system is the progressive implementation of a universal individual disability allowance, aiming at covering disability related costs which would be compatible with work and other basic income security schemes (child grant, old age pension, household poverty allowance etc.). Considering the limitation of fiscal resources, countries could first prioritize children with disabilities and adults with higher support requirements,
3. Such universal disability allowance would reduce poverty, increase individual autonomy as well as strengthen resilience in case of crisis by facilitating increasing cash transfer to persons with disabilities and their families,
4. In addition to cash transfer, community services should be provided to children and adults with high support needs to enable their participation in the community and prevent exhaustion and loss of economic and education opportunities for family members who are providing support, in particular women and girls.

² Measuring financing gaps in social protection for achieving SDG target 1.3: Global estimates and strategies for developing countries / Fabio Durán-Valverde, José Francisco Pacheco-Jiménez, Taneem Muzaffar, Hazel Elizondo-Barboza; International Labour Office, Social Protection Department (SOCPRO). - Geneva: ILO, 2019 (Extension of Social Security series; No. 73)

Aim at empowering persons with disabilities and their access to income through employment or entrepreneurship:

Implement employment support systems for persons with disabilities through incentives measures such as (i) tax breaks and preferential clause in public procurement for companies that employ persons with disabilities (in line with quotas if any), (ii) support for funding reasonable accommodation for small and medium companies, and (iii) directly financing employer contributions to the social protection funds,

5. Support schemes (loan guaranty, grants, tax relief) for the benefits of persons with disabilities who start up in private businesses as well as support to be able to sustain economic independence,

6. Provision of universal disability-allowance and set of concessions to cover disability related costs of persons with disabilities, including for those working or seeking work, especially in the in the informal sector,

Take into account the health requirements of persons with disabilities:

7. Total coverage of the costs of health care including rehabilitation services and assistive devices should be ensured through universal health coverage policies and health care system as well as additional specific schemes if necessary,

Support access to early childhood development and education:

9. Families with children with disabilities should have access to a combination of schemes providing early detection and intervention and covering the disability related costs. This support should progressively include universal grant for children with disabilities, care allowance, support to inclusive community-based rehabilitation services and support to inclusive early childhood development programs,

10. We want social protection to facilitate access to education to learners with disabilities. Measures such as providing scholarships, transportation allowance, exemption from tuition fees, school feeding programs and support to access assistive devices should be taken in order to enable learners with disabilities to access education.

Support access to support services:

11. Persons with disabilities should be provided with support services across the life-cycle and especially during crisis such as the COVID-19 measures imposed by the lockdown by most of the countries. Therefore, support services systems should be responsive and gender and age sensitive in African countries, and supported by countries, international organisation and financial and technical partners.

Respectful to the specificities of the African context

African populations have a long tradition of community solidarity with spontaneous, mutual support mechanisms that exist at different levels, whether at the village or neighbourhood. Those mechanisms have been for most people with disabilities a key source of support Considering the limited capacity of national systems. And they will remain a critical element of support in the years to come. However, due to their lack of structure, limited resources and various other challenges, their impact remains limited with strong geographic disparities.

12. Development programs and policies should support the development and sustainability of those community-based mechanisms, schemes and services with strong connection with national social protection systems so that they mutually reinforce each other to provide the optimum support for persons with disabilities and their families across the country.

13. We want services based on the community solidarity approach to be seen as a useful and context relevant complement to national schemes but in no way should they be considered a substitute that relieves states of their responsibility to provide social protection.

An identification of beneficiaries based on human rights instead of the medical approach

In order to facilitate access to disability support and services, many countries provide a specific certificate or card following a disability assessment, which is sometimes associated with a database. While such system has proven, implemented well, a great support in the COVID 19 crisis, there are three main issues to consider:

14. In many countries, the disability assessment and determination is based solely on a medical examination that does not consider the support requirements of the diversity of persons with disabilities, and limit access to the assessment due to the scarcity of medical professional. Countries should adopt disability assessments systems that are available and accessible easily across the national territories and that focus on functional difficulties and support requirement for participation.

15. Countries should adopt the "equal opportunity card" that recognizes by the nomination of the card and its attribution that persons with disabilities benefit from support measures not because of their health conditions, but because of the barriers they face and their right to receive support for equal opportunities,

16. Such card should be associated with a national registry that would inform policy planning and budgeting for development of social protection systems, be used for case management, and increase responsiveness in case of shocks and crisis.

Implementation

In order to achieve such inclusive system, States and other stakeholders are invited to:

- i. Act to the maximum of the resources at their disposal, by providing budget lines to support the costs linked to disability, both in national and municipal budgets, including funding from international cooperation;
- ii. Consult closely and actively involve people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection schemes.