



**Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive
Development Centre**

**The Potential Impact of the Global Economic
Downturn on People with Disabilities in Developing
Countries**

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1. Executive Summary

This paper will explore the potential impact of the global economic crisis upon people with disabilities in developing countries. Although it is premature to determine with any degree of certainty what the ultimate outcome of the economic downturn will be over time an attempt will be made to predict what impact the global economic crisis will have on people with disabilities in developing countries. Notwithstanding the uncertainty regarding the long-term trajectory, depth and severity of the economic crisis, it can nevertheless be reasonably concluded that its continuance will only exacerbate those deeply entrenched structural forces that militate against the sustainable social inclusion of people with disabilities in developing countries.

It is estimated that there are globally approximately 650 million people with disabilities, 80% of whom live in developing countries. There is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that they are one of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups within any society. Furthermore, during the past 10 years, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are increasingly recognising that disability issues constitute an important policy area that needs to be addressed, inexorably linked to the implementation of a rights-based agenda to international development., This is reflected in the United Nations Convention on the People with Disabilities, in the first human rights treaty of the 21st century, which came into force in May. 2008.

Notwithstanding the increasing profile of disability issues within the international development community, the global economic crisis has the potential to have a significant detrimental impact on people with disabilities in developing countries. Particular areas of concern include unemployment and underemployment (where in many developing countries, unemployment rates of people with disabilities are in excess of 85% even in relatively good

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economic periods); education, where it is estimated that 95% of children with disabilities do not complete primary education (UNICEF, 2007); and in sectors such as health care, where there continues to be a significant inability of people with disabilities to access mainstream services.

Poverty is both a cause and consequence of disability. Hence, if one has a disability, there is a greater possibility that one will be poor, given that the vast majority of people with disabilities do not complete formal primary education and consequently, find it extremely difficult to secure long-term, sustainable employment. Conversely, there is a greater likelihood that the chronically poor will also have a disability, due to lack of access to adequate health care provision, substandard housing conditions and the inability to access clear water and adequate food (Yeo and Moore, 2003). However, the evidence for this symbiotic relationship between disability and poverty is primarily anecdotal in nature. What is known is that people with disabilities find it extremely difficult to access micro-finance and with some notable exceptions throughout the developing world, there are few designated social protection programmes for people with disabilities (Gooding and Marriot, 2009). However, social protection as a mechanism for poverty alleviation is not without its critics. In both Western and developing countries, if the economic crisis continues, unemployment and the number of people eligible to claim state benefits will continue to rise. If social protection programmes are perceived to be the optimum modality to address poverty, then this raises the politically and ideologically-charged question regarding to what extent the state be intrinsically involved in the provision of social and economic policies. Such fundamental debates have taken place since the inception of overseas development assistance and the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions (Leys, 1996, Easterly, 2007).

When there is a significant downturn in the economy, these long-standing issues can only be anticipated to further compound the impact that the worsening economic situation has on this already vulnerable population. By its very nature, the global economic crisis will result in "shocks" to the social, economic and political fabric of all societies, and will be particularly acute

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within developing countries. Moreover, it is argued here that people with disabilities, due to their systemic and entrenched social exclusion and marginalisation, will be especially vulnerable to such shocks. This The situation of people with disabilities in the current economic climate is of increased concern because they are so rarely included in programmes and policies intended to mitigate the economic impacts of the downturn on the population. . In this realm, reference will also be made to what contingencies bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are and should be making in response to the global economic crisis to ensure inclusion of people with disabilities and their representative organisations in developing countries., It is argued here that the economic downturn in the global economy will undoubtedly adversely affect the political, social and economic status of people with disabilities, in both Western and developing countries. While it is not possible to predict, with any degree of certainty the duration and severity of the economic crisis, what is clear is that it will only exacerbate those systemic, structural factors that deepens the level of poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation encountered by people with disabilities in developing countries. Furthermore, we note at the outset that it is not possible to disentangle the effects of global economic crisis from more generic debates within the development policy discourse, such as the utility and efficacy of participatory approaches to development the reform of the architecture on aid modalities (including the MDGs and PRSPs); and the potential change in the nature of international relations as a result of recent political change, such as the successful election of the Obama Administration.

The following paper sets out the anticipated ramifications of the global economic downtown on people with disabilities, both in developed and developing countries over the coming months and year. It has been compiled by a group of scholars with expertise in global disability research and is intended as a background discussion to help economists, international development practitioners and policy-makers anticipate and plan for the needs of people with disabilities as they seek to address the looming economic crisis.

2. Introduction and Global Context

This paper will attempt to provide an analysis of the potential detrimental impact that the current economic crisis will have on people with disabilities in developing countries. It will add to existing studies of the impact upon other poor and marginalised groups, but will specifically provide an analysis of the particular significance that it will have within the disability sector.

The following paper sets out the anticipated ramifications of the global economic downturn on people with disabilities, both in developed and developing countries over the coming months and year. It has been compiled by a group of scholars with expertise in global disability research and is intended as a background discussion to help economists, international development practitioners and policy-makers anticipate and plan for the needs of people with disabilities as they seek to address the looming economic crisis.

This paper is not intended to be used in lieu of robust quantitative statistical data. Rather it is intended to frame the parameters of an ongoing debate regarding these issues that can serve as a starting point for future analysis. Furthermore, the foregoing analysis assumes that the impact on the economic crisis will only exasperate already existing trends that militate against the sustained social inclusion of people with disabilities in their respective societies.

This paper will begin with an introductory analysis of the nexus that exist between disability, poverty and international development, and placing this debate within the broader context of current debates regarding the social, political and economic consequences of those living in developing countries. It will then examine some specific areas where the impact of the global economic crisis is likely have the most detrimental impact upon the livelihoods of people with disabilities. It will conclude by making some tentative recommendations to the international development community on what actions can be taken to ensure that the negative feedback loop that exists

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between disability, poverty and vulnerability does not further deteriorate. By their very nature, “crises”, results in uncertainty, turmoil and the fundamental disturbance of the status quo. The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines crises as “*a situation that has reached an extremely dangerous or advanced point; a time of disagreement, uncertainty and suffering*”. This indeed characterises the present global political and economic landscape. However, economic crisis and political instability can also lead to positive opportunities. For example, in Sierra Leone disabled people’s became much stronger in the aftermath of the conflict (Santos-Zingale and McColl, 2006).

Several studies have already speculated on what the impact of the current economic crisis will be on developing countries in general, (Handley et al 2009; te Velde et al 2009). In addition, the Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank have both produced working papers examining the extent and trajectory of impact that the economic crisis will have on their respective regions (Hasan, Magsombol and Cain, 2009; African Development Bank, 2009). However, there is scant consensus amongst policy-makers, academics and development practitioners regarding how long the current economic crisis will last and how detrimental its long-term effects will be. But there is little dispute that it will significantly have an impact on the design of the architecture of international aid modalities (McCulloch and Sumner, 2009). Therefore, what follows is a tentative analysis of the potential impact of the economic crisis, based upon the assumption that it will last for least the next 18 months.

It should also be acknowledged that the social, political and economic vulnerability of people with disabilities is not solely at risk because of the current economic crisis, but are contingent on other equally important, dynamic and interrelated factors, hotly debated within the contemporary international development discourse. These include ongoing discussions on the reform of international aid modalities (including the Millennium Development Goals), and the inclusion of people with disabilities in the PSRP process and other national development frameworks (Mwendwa et.al 2009). Furthermore, it is imperative that developing countries institute an appropriate

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implementation architecture, with robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks, so that the human rights commitments enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities can be upheld (Lang, 2009 forthcoming). However it is duly acknowledged that these issues, as important as they are, fall without the remit of this paper.

Moreover, the political architecture of international development is currently undergoing a significant sea change, which is linked to a fundamental revision of political economy within many industrialised societies. Therefore, within the next 18 months, the modus operandi for international development may very well be very different from what is at present. Several significant disparate yet related factors will inevitably act as a catalyst for this change, some of which can be foreseen. These include the publication of a new White Paper by the U.K.'s Department for International Development, and the possibility of the election of a Conservative Government in the UK, where it is expected a greater recognition will be given to the role played by the private and voluntary sectors. Furthermore, the Obama Administration in the United States is attempting to redefine its foreign policy objectives, especially in the Middle East. This will undoubtedly have far reaching consequences for the appropriation of overseas development assistance.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the U.K's Overseas Development Institute has recently published a preliminary economic analysis of the impact of the economic downturn and the respective government responses in 10 countries, these being Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia (te Velde, 2009). This study explicitly examined the principal "transmission belts" (trade, private capital flows, and international aid). Although economic trajectories, both positive and negative, inevitably differ between countries, some common trends can be discerned. These include:-

- There has been a general decline in trade and economic growth in all countries. While some countries have been more affected than others,

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it is estimated that by the end of 2009 that the total loss of incomes in developing countries will be about to \$750 billion, of which \$60 billion will be in sub-Saharan Africa alone. For all the countries participating in this study, there was a general consensus that the overall economic situation would continue to decline during 2009, and this is in agreement with IMF forecasts.

- This in turn will result in a significant increase in unemployment and a significant increase in the number of those living in poverty and hunger. By the end of this year, the ODI report estimates that an extra 50 million people will be living in absolute poverty, nearly 1 billion having insufficient food to eat.
- In all countries, there has been a deterioration in the terms of trade between low-income and western economies. For example, in Indonesia the Stock Exchange Index decreased by 51% in 2008 and in Nigeria stock market capitalisation decreased by 46% over the same period.
- There has also been a significant decrease in remittances, (financial resources sent back to developing countries by Diaspora living abroad). Indeed, the World Bank estimates that such remittances have virtually halted altogether. This has a serious detrimental impact upon the economies of developing countries, for in some cases, remittances often constitute up to 5% of a country's GDP. In some countries, the level of remittances exceeds the total amount of overseas development assistance. A sharp decline in remittances have a direct impact on poverty, because they are routinely used to cover the expenditure of food education and healthcare (African Development Bank, 2009:12).
- A compounding factor is that there has also been a decrease in the number of workers securing employment in other countries. Initial evidence would suggest that the Middle Eastern Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE are no longer issuing work permits, particularly for migrant workers from Bangladesh.
- It is too early to determine what the long-term impact will be on the level of overseas development assistance to developing countries.

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Initial indications suggest that bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are not decreasing their level of assistance, although this may well change if their economies continue to stagnate or deteriorate.

However, dramatic fluctuations and volatility in the stock market may well result in developing countries receiving less "value for money" for the amount of overseas aid received, especially if related to the Euro, Stirling and the US Dollar.

- The World Bank estimates that between 200,000 and 400,000 more children will die every year between now and 2015 than would have perished without the crisis (reported in *The Economist*, 12th March, 2009).
- Foreign direct investment is like to fall by 80% from \$929 billion in 2007 to \$165 billion in 2009 (DFID, 2009).

Donor agencies are now in the process of calculating the impact of the economic crisis, although as has been previously stated, it is far too early, with any degree of certainty, to say what these will be. DFID estimate that by 2010 there will be an additional 90 million people living on \$1.25 per day as a direct result of the crisis. Similarly, the World Bank estimates that the number of "new poor" in developing countries will increase from 46 million to 53 million.

The research undertaken by the African Development Bank states that Africa's relative isolation from the global financial system has to some extent shielded it from the earlier manifestations of the economic decline witnessed during 2007. However, declining prices in the commodity markets, particularly with regard to oil, copper, coal, timber and diamonds, in concert with currency fluctuations, have had particularly adverse effects. For example, the price of copper has fallen by 65.8% between July to December, 2008. As could be predicted, those countries with the highest concentration of natural resources have been hardest hit. Overall, the African Development Bank predicts that Africa will move from having a budgetary surplus of 2.3% of GDP in 2008 to a

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budgetary deficit of 5.5% of GDP in 2009. Moreover, oil exporters will have a budgetary deficit of 7.7% in 2008 (African Development Bank, 2009).

The analysis by the Asian Development Bank attempts to estimate the number of people living on less than \$1.25 per day for 2009 and 2010, but with varying assumptions regarding the rate of economic growth over this period. If it is assumed that there is a 1-3% decrease in GDP over this period, then it is estimated that there will be an additional 21-61 million persons living on less than \$1.25 per day and an additional 34-98 million people living on less than \$2.00 per day, compared with the baseline scenario when there was no economic slowdown (Hasan et al, 2009: 1).

Paul Collier, in his seminal book, *The Bottom Billion*, estimates that of the 5 billion people living in developing countries, approximately 1 billion are living in such a precarious situation that it is extremely unlikely that international aid, in its current form, will make any positive and sustainable impact (Collier, 2007). It is undoubtedly true that people with disabilities, for reasons that will be elaborated below, will constitute a significant proportion of this bottom billion. This is particularly the case in a multidimensional definition of poverty is utilized, that encompasses not solely economic factors, but which also encapsulates hunger, under-nutrition, social exclusion, and lack of access to mainstream education and health services.

Through statistical analysis, Collier identifies four "traps", that are commonplace in many developing countries, that seriously militate against the effectiveness of aid. These are 1) whether a country has previously or currently experiencing war or civil strife; 2) countries that have substantial amounts of natural resources, (especially oil and gold) but which also have gross income inequalities; 3) countries that are landlocked, which increases the loss of international aid; and 4) countries that have an inadequate governance architecture, that supports democratic processes and the efficient and effective implementation of social and economic policy. While it is not a foregone conclusion that such countries with one or more of these characteristics will inevitably "fail", there is nevertheless a greater statistical

probability that they will do so. However, Tim Brauholtz has argued that those who are born into a state of chronic poverty are not necessarily destined to stay in such a position, as poverty is a dynamic – not a static phenomenon. Chronically poor people, through their own ability to obtain long-term and sustainable employment, or who have some fixed assets such as some land, in concert with access to the benefits accrued from public goods such as education and health services, are able to gradually improve the status of their social and economic livelihoods (Brauholtz, 2007: 3). However, for people with disabilities, such options are not always available, nor indeed in many instances achievable, primarily because of negative social attitudes and discrimination.

3. Contextualising disability within international development

At this juncture, it is important to contextualise disability issues within the broader context of international development. The United Nations estimate that there are approximately 600 million people with disabilities globally, 80% of whom live in developing countries. There have been some national household surveys that examines the living conditions of people with disabilities in developing countries, such as the National Disability Survey in Afghanistan, (Trani and Bakhshi, 2008), and household based Disability Living Conditions surveys in South Africa, Malawi and Mozambique conducted by the Norwegian research think tank SINTEF(Leob, Eide and Mont 2007; Leob et al 2008). Such studies have not only examined the relationship between poverty and disability but how also considered other causal factors that compound the exclusion and marginalisation of people with disabilities, including gender disparities and different categories of impairment.

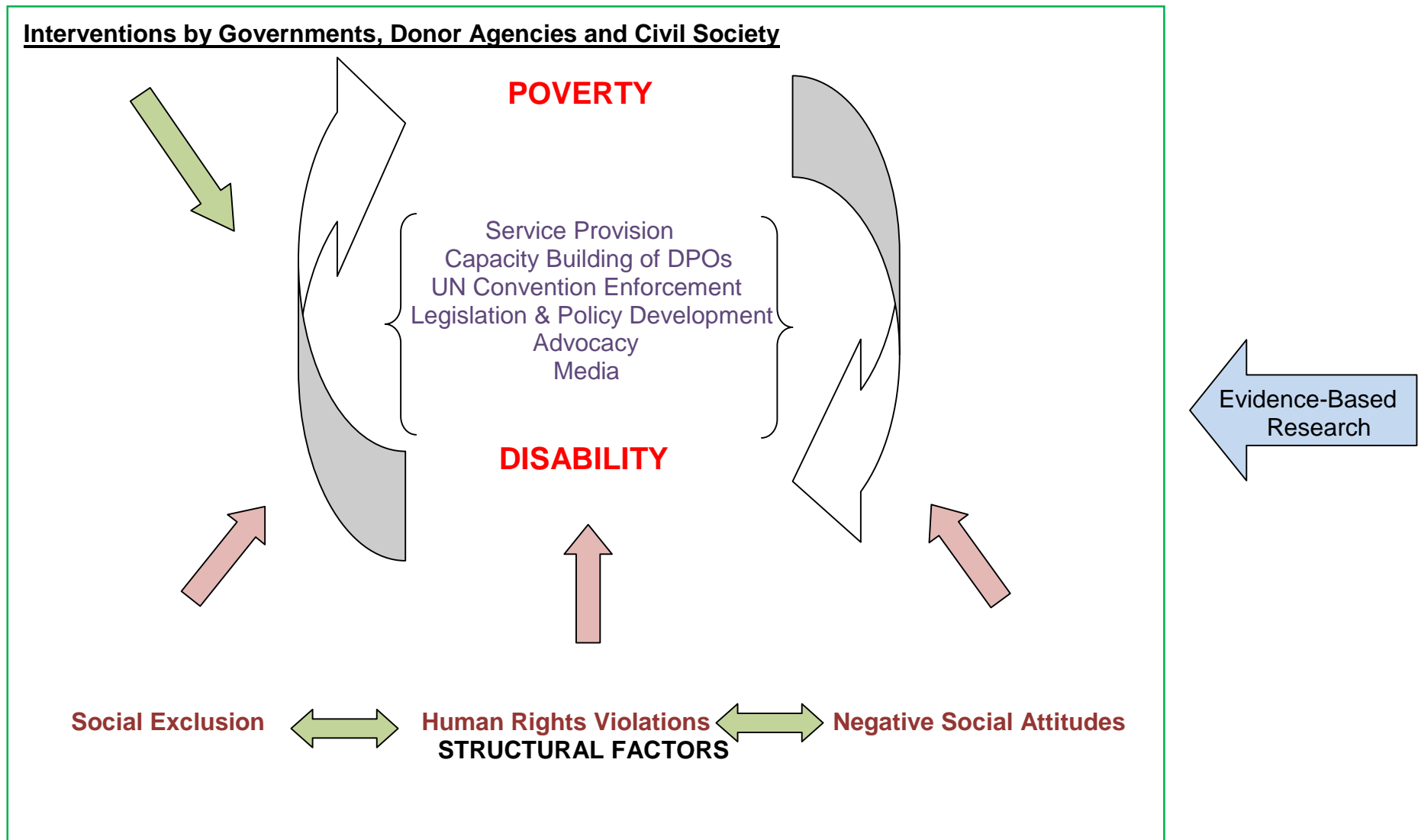
However, these surveys are the exception to the rule, which makes any comparative analysis between countries highly problematic. What is known is that people with disabilities find it extremely difficult to effectively secure credit from mainstream micro-finance institutions, (Marsland et. at. 2008), and that

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in the vast majority of developing countries, with few notable exceptions, there are no social protection programmes for people with disabilities (Mitra, 2008). Furthermore, it must be noted that there are additional economic costs associated with having a disability. Harriss-White and Erb in their social anthropological study of disability in Tamil Nadu noted that there was additional direct costs for medical treatment, indirect costs regarding the provision of care, as well as the opportunity cost of income forgone that is a direct result of having an impairment (Harriss-White and Erb, 2002).

A conceptual framework that analyses the relationship between disability and poverty, within the broader context of international development is presented in the diagram overleaf. The symbiotic relationship between disability and poverty

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR DISABILITY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



fuelled by interrelated structural factors, the most important of which are social exclusion, human rights violations and negative social attitudes. In order to break this negative cycle of poverty and disability, governments and donor agencies, in concert with civil society institutions over the past few years have increasingly discussed a range of interventions, from direct service provision, capacity building of disabled people's organisations and formulating and implementing progressive disability rights legislation.

4. Impact on Specific Policy Areas

It is anticipated that vulnerable groups traditionally at risk of higher underemployment and unemployment rates, will take the brunt of the current crisis. Studies tracking the economic impact of the financial meltdown experienced in both developed and developing countries often can only track the actual impact of the changing economic scene months or years after the actual trends begin. A growing wave of studies, conferences and reports has just begun to document the economic down turn that began in fall 2009. Unfortunately, few of these assessments have included information on people with disabilities. Furthermore, it is probable that little funding will be available to include people with disability in such work for some time to come.

Even without such data however, enough is now known about disability and poverty to make educated guess about how people with disabilities will fare in these economically unsettled times.

This section of the paper attempts to analyse the potential impact of the global economic crisis on people with disabilities in four key areas: namely employment, education, health and social protection. This analysis will primarily draw upon existing evidence regarding the political, social and economic status of people with disabilities in developing countries. However, this section will begin by analysing a more general issue of the relationship between disability and good governance frameworks, in the belief that good

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governance architecture is a prerequisite for developing genuinely inclusive social and economic policy. Also, where appropriate reference will also be made to relevant statistics from Western countries.

4.1 Disability and Good Governance

Current debates within the development studies discourse emphasise the need for good governance frameworks in order for poverty alleviation strategies to be effective. In assessing the extent of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, Handley et al have identified eight key factors that militate against good governance:-

- i. The weak separation between public and private spheres of influence;
- ii. Corruption within government;
- iii. Clientelism, nepotism, and other exchange relationships to maintain power;
- iv. Weak crosscutting horizontal integration and relationships between government ministries;
- v. the zero-sum nature of politics;
- vi. A "presidential" concentration of political power, with little regard to the principles of the rule of law;
- vii. The virtual absence of issue-based politics and political parties; and
- viii. Vested patron-client relationships at all levels of government (Handley et al 2009: 6-7).

Countries that have these characteristics tend to be economically poor and the weak trading economies. Furthermore, in such countries there is often discrimination of poor, minority groups, invariably based on religion and ethnicity. Discrimination with the regard to disability would also be commonplace. These countries also have weak civil society institutions that are unable to hold their elected governments to account. Within local communities, and especially in rural areas, the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of politics by definition disenfranchises and excludes poor and marginalised groups from participating in society. Also, in countries where civil

society institutions are weak, it is extremely difficult to formulate and implement social and economic policies based on human rights principles, even where governments had signed international human rights treaties. The denial of human rights has a direct negative impact on multidirectional poverty, for this precludes poor and marginalised groups from exercising their rights to education, employment, access to health services and so forth (Sen, 1999; Handley et al, 2009: 9). This commonplace scenario fundamentally challenges the principles on which participatory approaches to development are founded, which have been subject to sustained critique within the development studies literature (Cleaver, 2004; Cooke and Kothari, 2004).

The pattern of sustained and systemic social exclusion described above, perpetuated by inadequate governance frameworks, is replicated in the disability sector. Analogous research investigating the current status of disability policy in seven countries, undertaken by the Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre between 2007 and 2009, has categorically shown that one of the principal impediments to the effective social inclusion of people with disabilities is concerned with inadequate governance regimes. This is manifested by a lack of understanding of the principles of the rule of law, accountable and transparent public management systems, the paucity of robust statistical data with regard to disability, and scant appreciation of the principles of human rights as a basis for social and economic policy

4.2 Employment

As already stated, poverty and disability are highly correlated, with each being a cause and consequence of each other (Elwan, 1999; Thomas, 2005). People with disabilities, in both western and low-income countries, routinely experience underemployment and unemployment rates significantly higher than the rest of the population can be assumed to be particular risk. *For example, the 2007 UK's Labour Force Survey estimated that there were 1.2 million people with disabilities who are able to work. However, it will also mean that only 50% of people with disabilities were actually employed,*

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compared with 80% of their non-disabled counterparts. It was also found that employment rates significantly varied according to category and severity of impairment, with only 23% of those with learning difficulties are employed. The Labour Force Survey showed that due to a lack of access to education 24% of people with disabilities had no formal qualifications whatsoever, compared with 9% of people without disabilities (National Statistics Office, 2007). These statistics categorically demonstrated that people with disabilities encounter significant levels of social exclusion and even discrimination, primarily driven by a lack of educational opportunity.

This scenario can only be compounded in low-income countries, where the vast majority of children with disabilities fail to complete primary education and where unemployment rates are in excess of 90%. In 2000, the World Bank estimated that the annual loss to global GDP of people with disabilities not working who were in a position to do so, was between \$1.37 trillion and \$1,94 trillion (Zadek and Scott-Parker, 2001). Moreover, people with disabilities in low-income countries invariably face deeply entrenched negative social attitudes, with further exasperates their inability to gain sustainable long-term employment. Many people with disability who are employed often are under-employed - working part-time or working only when there is a good deal of work available. This means that they are usually the last hired/ first fired. Furthermore, while employment or self-employment is difficult for all people with disabilities, women with disabilities are at increased disadvantage. Even in the best of times, they are less likely to bring in a living wage than are men with disabilities - and both are underemployed compared to non-disabled peers.

The lack of employment is due to a series of other factors. Among there are:-

- Stigma – there are high levels of stigma in many cultures attached to people with disabilities, which makes people reluctant to hire someone with a disability and makes many families reluctant to allow their family

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member to appear in public as they fear this family member will be ridiculed, abused or will simply stigmatize the rest of the family. (i.e.: if I allow my brother to work in the market place everyone will know we have a person with intellectual disabilities in our family, people will think we are cursed and no one will be willing to marry my daughters when they grow up). This has been well documented in the literature (for example, Coleridge, 1993: Coleridge, 2000: Instad and Reynolds Whyte, 1995),

- On a slightly more charitable note - and charity itself is not the same thing as the right to work - in some cultures, the belief is that the extended family should take care of people with disabilities, and if they are sent out to work - even if they are anxious to work - the rest of the community will think poorly of the disabled person's family, as it shows they are not fulfilling their obligation to take care of this person.

Additionally and importantly, in many cases, when people with disabilities are able to bring income into their households, they are not the ones permitted to decide where these wages go. Often someone else in the household is given their wages directly or the person with a disability is expected to hand over their wages immediately after being paid. The person with disability lacks the right to decide what happens to the funds. This practice can only be anticipated to increase during times when household and family budgets are constrained. In cases where there is disagreement about how and where the money earned will be spent, the legitimate right of people with disabilities to decision making may be pushed aside.

4.3 Education

It is a generally acknowledged axiom that access to education is crucial to the sustained social inclusion of poor and marginalised groups in developing countries. Educational deficits compound marginalisation, due to the fact that the benefits of education provide a fulcrum for sustained inclusion, because it

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acts as a catalyst to providing long-term employment. These principles have been enshrined in existing human rights treaties, including the 1962 UN Convention against Discrimination Education and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, educational issues are addressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - namely in article 7 (Children with Disabilities); Article 24 (Education) and Article 32 (International Cooperation). While in Western countries the vast majority of children with disabilities will indeed complete primary and secondary education, this is far from the case in developing countries. UNESCO estimates that 98% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not complete primary education, this being particularly the case for girls (UNESCO, 2007). This precarious educational deficit for children with disabilities was explicitly addressed at the 1994 the UNESCO sponsored conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain. This important conference promoted the principles of inclusive education, in the belief that children with disabilities, irrespective of the societies in which they live, would receive benefit from a higher standard of education if they attended mainstream schools, rather than being educated within a segregated "special" environment.

Within developing countries, there are many systemic factors that militate against children with disabilities being included in mainstream education. Systemic negative social attitudes are a primary reason perpetuating such exclusion. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that, in many developing countries, parents with children with disabilities invariably feel shame and embarrassment. This is compounded by the fact that many teachers in primary schools, particularly those in rural areas, do not appreciate the significance and importance of educating children with disabilities, compounded by the belief that educating such children is a waste of resources..

The ongoing debates regarding the efficacy of inclusive education cannot be separated from the broader discourse regarding whether the education target of achieving universal primary education by 2015, as stipulated in the Millennium Development Goals, can be achieved. This is related to the

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Education for All agenda, that has been subject to high profile discussion among development practitioners. Keith Lewin, as President of the British Association of International and Comparative Education, is sceptical regarding whether the Education for All can be achieved, and questions to what extent it champions diversity (Lewin, 2007). It is clear from the available data that achieving universal primary education, as well as making significant progress in secondary school enrolment rates, is an uphill battle, with few education practitioners believing that the MDG education target will met. For an example, UNESCO in its EFA Global Monitoring Reports estimate that in sub Sahara Africa, there are 108 million children of primary school age, of whom only 98 million are enrolled. At secondary school level, there are an estimated 92 million children, of whom only 25 million are actually intending school. A similar pattern can be found in South India. The primary reason reduction in the retention rates between primary and secondary schools can be attributed to poverty. Again, within the sub Sahara Africa, it has been estimated that children from the richest 20% of households have an 11-fold greater chance of completing Grade 9 than the poorest 20% of households. Moreover, there is a global gender disparity school retention rates, with boys being statistically more likely to complete primary education than are girls. Lewin, commenting upon the extremely high correlation that exist between poverty and school enrolment states:-

Countries with the lowest enrolment rates are characteristically poorer, with typically more than one half of all households existing on less than US\$1 per day and as many as 80% on less than US\$2 a day ... Most Sub-Saharan African countries retain fee-paying secondary schooling in which participation is heavily influenced by household income (Lewin, 2007:579-580).

Given this rather bleak scenario, it is extremely difficult to foresee how the educational status of children with disabilities will significantly improve, at least in the short to medium-term. This is compounded by the fact that the UK's Department of International Development is increasingly giving

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emphasis to providing direct budget support to recipient governments in order for them to provide public services, particularly in the fields of education and health and has piloted this approach in a number of countries. This has been at the expense of providing funding for civil society, including disabled people's organisations. While acknowledging that this approach has not been adopted by many other bilateral and multilateral agencies, if the economic crisis continues to deteriorate, at least in countries where DFID provides the largest proportion of overseas development assistance, the improvements that have been gained in the provision of public services may be reversed.

4.4 Health

Another important area where people with disabilities will be disproportionately affected, particularly those living in developing countries, is in regards the provision of health and other care services. While it is acknowledged that disability is not primarily concerned nor constructed in terms of a physical and/or intellectual abnormality of the body, it nevertheless remains the case that health service provision is essential to improving the social and economic status of people with disability. As with education, the provision of health services can indeed act as a powerful catalyst in enabling people with disabilities to live independently, and take an active role in participating in the local communities in which they live. DFID, in its issues paper, *Disability, Poverty and Development*, estimates that up to 50% of all impairments in developing countries are preventable (DFID, 2000). With increased emphasis on global health there has been a growing momentum to mainstream the provision of health services for people with disabilities into the public health systems.

However attention to expansion of services and programmes to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities, where this has occurred at all, is quite new, and often linked to the Convention. It should be anticipated that current programs will be reduced or eliminated in light of the current economic downturn, and programs and services that have yet to make it off the drawing board, will simply be put on hold or cancelled.

Stigma and lack of understanding about disability among many health planners and practitioners means that many still assume, incorrectly that health initiatives for persons with disabilities are expensive, difficult to implement and outside the realm of basic health expertise. While such assumptions are increasingly known to be incorrect, it can be anticipated that they will continue to influence decisions currently being made about expenditures on health during this economic downturn.

4.5 Social Protection

Social protection programmes, including cash transfers are increasingly perceived as an effective and efficient mechanism by which to address chronic poverty in developing countries and have become central within current development studies discourse (Gentilini, 2009; Scott, 2008; Devereux, S and Sabates-Wheeler, R. 2007). Such programmes are particularly important when external shocks occur, (such as the current economic crisis), for they provide modalities by which to mitigate the most extreme facets of insecurity and vulnerability that characterise the livelihoods of the chronically poor. Several developing countries have now instituted social protection programmes specifically for people with disabilities, in the acknowledgement that they constitute one of the most marginalised, and poorest groups in any society. Specifically hypothecated social protection programmes have been implemented in Brazil, Chile, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Bangladesh, India and Nepal (Gooding and Marriot, 2009). In addition, a number of countries have attempted to include people with disabilities in their mainstream cash transfer programmes, but again due to the paucity of reliable statistical data, there is little evidence to determine whether this approach has been effective. For the hypothecated programmes, the vast majority target working age adults, although some programmes do include children (Gooding and Marriot, 2009: 689).

Notwithstanding that specifically hypothecated and mainstream social protection programmes exist there are nevertheless significant barriers

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preclude people with disabilities accessing these schemes. These include insufficient financial resources to meet the existing need; a limited awareness of the existence of such programmes; and inefficient administrative procedures for claiming such allowances. This is further compounded by an undue emphasis of assessments for eligibility based on medical criteria, invariably linked to whether a person with a disability is able to work or not (Mitra, 2005). For example, in India in order to qualify for a disability grant, a person with a disability must be deemed at least 40% "normal". This once again reinforces a medical understanding of disability issues, which accentuates a pejorative and deficit portrayal of people with disabilities.

Sophie Mitra identifies three -term benefits for providing social safety nets, which is incorporated into more generic social protection programmes, for people with disabilities (Mitra, 2005:13-14). Firstly, they provide a crucial role in alleviating poverty, thereby breaking the native disability/poverty nexus described above. Secondly, such initiatives are able to play to more long-term development function, through providing insurance against "risky behaviours", which in turn will lead to reducing income inequalities and promoting economic growth. Thirdly, the provision of social safety nets can provide an important catalyst to the perversion of impairment. Cash and food transfers improve the nutritional intake of the currently poor, thereby reducing the likelihood of malnutrition. Furthermore, recent evidence derived from the "economics of nutrition" literature strongly suggests the enhancing the nutritional intake of children, will in the long-term, increase a person's economic productivity in adult life, for enhancements to nutrition is positively correlated with cognitive development, school attendance and physical productivity (Hoddinott, 2008; Behrman et al, 2004).

Notwithstanding the obvious advantages that accrue from social protection initiatives in developing countries, this strategy is not without its critics. These may indeed become more vociferous during times of economic downturn, as they fundamentally challenged the ideological foundations of the role of the state, particularly in relation to what extent the public sector should provide services, vis-a-vis the private and voluntary sectors (Easterly, 2006). If there

is a continued decline in the global economic economy, with more people losing their jobs in both Western and developing countries, then this will inevitably increase the number of unemployed, which in turn will place greater stress on the social protection programmes. In order to economise on public expenditure, governments may be tempted to reconfigure the eligibility criteria for social protection. This may adversely affect the livelihoods of poor and marginalised groups, including people with disabilities.

4.6 *Provision of Financial Resources Available for Disability Services*

Many people with disabilities worldwide require and receive assistance or support in order to actively participate in contemporary society. Medical, rehabilitation, alternative/accessible transportation, education, an home attendant care service, which are provided by a plethora of service providers, working in the public, voluntary and private sectors..

The current economic crisis will inevitably have an impact on the level of resources, particularly those provided by the public sector. In addition, resources available to the voluntary sector for disability service provision is likely to come under increasing threat, as the private sector's corporate social responsibility budgets are cut, in the wake of plummeting quarterly and annual profits. Indeed, many traditional "charities" in the UK, the US and elsewhere those working in the disability sector have witnessed significant reductions in the amount of charitable giving, with some charities having to close down.

While the cutting back of government services is of concern to all citizens, historically, people with disabilities have taken the brunt of such cuts. And often their interests are put in direct competition with those of other vulnerable groups - for example orphans, refugees and internally displaced persons. As the economy continues to deteriorate, it is likely that there will be increased competition between different groups that constitute the poor and most marginalised within society, especially for those living in developing countries. Furthermore, if the crisis does indeed continue, politicians and senior officials

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working in government ministries, as well as bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, will have to make hard decisions regarding how to best utilise the significant but nevertheless finite human and financial resources in the most effective way. Historically, people with disabilities have been considered a low priority when such important decisions are made.

An additional concern is that if there are cut backs in home services, people with disabilities who need such support in order to live independently in the community, are more likely to be forced to return to segregated institutions. This is in direct opposition to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. While it is clear to those of us who have worked in the field that institutions are in fact, more expensive - (not to mention the human rights aspects of this) - in hard times, it is to be anticipated that politicians and stressed family members may see this as a viable alternative. This is simply unacceptable on any number of levels.

Compounding this, those institutions that remain will also be limiting the services they provide as their budgets are cut. A basic tenet of organizational theory holds that an organization's most fundamental objective is to remain in existence, so if budgets are cut in response to the economic downturn, the first line of defense for stressed institutions, (clinics, children's' homes etc), will be to cut down or discontinue outreach services, clinics and other community based programs. In many cases, such services will be seen as relatively new – established in response to demands of the local Disability community or in the case of children, parent groups. It can be anticipated that directors and policy making institutions will justify cutting back on outreach services by reasoning that they need to keep the core programs and staff of the institution in place.

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to chronicle the potential impact, from the best available evidence to date, of the ongoing global economic crisis on people

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with disabilities in developing countries. It has also been argued that people with disabilities constitute one of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups within society, and that there is a mutually self-reinforcing relationship that exists between disability and poverty, with each being a cause and consequence of each other. Furthermore, acknowledging that it is virtually impossible to extrapolate the impact of the economic crisis from other global trends, it is nevertheless the case that the continuance of the crisis it will only exacerbate existing deeply entrenched structural forces that perpetuate the poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation of people with disabilities, especially in developing countries. The full extent, nature and trajectory of the global economic crisis has yet to be determined, but most analysts would concur that it will have a significant detrimental impact on the political economy in such countries and that these will be felt most acutely by the poorest and most marginalised groups. The majority of economic analysts predict that the global recession will continue to the end of 2010, but it is far too premature to determine whether this will be the case. What is clear is that the longer the global economic crisis continues, the more systemic and entrenched will be these consequences. The World Bank predicts that slower rates of economic growth directly attributed to the economic crisis, will result in an additional 46 million people living on less than \$1.25 day and an additional 53 million living on less than \$2 per day (Blomquist et al 2009). This is in addition to the 130-155 million people that were plummeted into chronic poverty as a result of the escalation of food and fuel prices during 2008 (Harper et al 2009:1).

Currently, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are honouring their commitments to the level of overseas development assistance determined before the onset of the crisis. However, if this crisis continues to deepen, resulting in increased numbers of people who are unemployed in Western countries, then these commitments may well come under threat. Already, the Irish Government had reduced its aid budget (Irish Aid, 2009). However, it must be stated that the majority of G8 members do not honour their commitments to designating 0.7% of GDP to overseas aid in the first place, and in the current economic climate, this is likely to continue. In the

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eventuality of the total amount of overseas development aid being cut 18 months - 2 years, this would have significant detrimental consequences for many developing countries, again having the most serious impact on the world's "bottom billion". In the most extreme instances, overseas development assistance constitutes as much as 20% of GDP (Maxwell, 2006). Even if levels of overseas development assistance continued at current levels, due to dramatic fluctuations in and devaluations of exchange rates, (particularly for the Euro, Stirling and the US dollar), developing countries can be expected to experience a deterioration in the purchasing power of incoming international aid, remittances and exports (Harper et al 2009: 5-6). The continuing crisis will also challenge the precepts of donor coordination that underpins the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Given the fact that some bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are increasingly providing direct budget support to recipient governments, decreasing levels of aid may result, at a national level, in public services, particularly in the fields of education and health been significantly cut. As has been argued above, the provision of adequate levels of education and health services for people with disabilities are critical in the furtherance of their sustained social inclusion and their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights. Furthermore, at a micro level, reductions in overseas development assistance will put an intolerable strain on the livelihoods of families with a disabled family member, particularly women who provide the vast majority of physical and emotional support. This trend towards an increased emphasis towards direct budget support has significant implications for civil society institutions, including disabled peoples organisations in developing countries. If donor agencies move to a position, as is currently being advocated by DFID, whereby they only provide development assistance directly to recipient governments, then this has the potential to undermine the development of robust civil society institutions, democracy, and the rule of law. The principles that underpin direct budget support are designed to enhance the democratic credentials and the effectiveness of service delivery in the public sector, but do little to directly build the capacity of civil society institutions to hold their respective governments to account.

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Without a strong civil society, it is very difficult for citizens to hold their respective governments to account for human rights commitments, (including disability rights), that they have made. Furthermore, civil society has the potential to play a critical role in ensuring that governments implement effective social and economic policies. In short, in the absence of a vibrant civil society, past experience for many countries would suggest that the principles of democratic governance are seriously under threat, which significantly compromises the ability of the voices of those who are most marginalised, socially excluded and discriminated from being heard within the political sphere. However, it must be re-emphasised that the effects of the economic crisis cannot be extrapolated from broader developments on global politics, including reform of the United Nations, what will happen after 2015 to the MDGs, the long-term implications for the change in direction of foreign policy at national levels, for example in the work of the Obama Administration, and the prospect on the change in government in the UK during the next 12 to 18 months.

Neil McCulloch and Andy Sumner, from the Institute of Development Studies, in their assessment of the financial crisis on the long-term impact on the international development paradigm, believe that some positive outcomes may occur. This is in agreement with the analysis of Paola Subacchi who states that "[W]e now live in a multipolar world in which new players are interacting more substantially with the old ones. Economic power has become more diffuse, distributed among a variety of global actors, including those state and non-state actors" (Subacchi, 2008: 485). But there needs to be more than just institutional reform in order to make a tangible and sustainable reduction in levels of global poverty. McCulloch and Sumner advocate that there needs to be a substantial increase in social protection initiatives in developing countries, to ensure that the poorest are protected from future economic shocks as is currently being experienced. Such a trend would make a significant improvement to the social and economic livelihoods of people with disabilities in the south.

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We call upon those studying the effects of the economic crisis to give particular attention to people with disabilities and disabled populations. While specific studies on this group are important, it is also imperative that those planning broader population studies – and studies of specific subgroups within the population – (for example, women, members of ethnic and minority communities) – *also* include a disability component in their work.

Disability is a cross-cutting issue and effects all groups within the population – thus it deserves attention from those who seek to understand the impact of this global crisis on all members of the community. Attention to persons with disabilities by policy makers and researchers in light of the current economic downturn will also be beneficial in policy and programming undertaken in anticipation of or in response to the next global economic downturn that occurs.

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