

Handout for "Obstacles on the Yellow Brick Road to a Community Home"...Presentation @

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IDD Worldwide Statistics:

5 December 2006, Rome – "The majority of the world's 650 million disabled people live in developing countries, 80 percent of them in rural areas, often in a state of dire poverty," FAO expert Libor Stloukal told a meeting held today at FAO headquarters to mark the International Day of Disabled Persons. Dec 5, 2006

One billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher for developing countries; One-fifth of the estimated global total, or between 110 million. Having a disability places you in the world's largest minority group. Currently around 10% of the world's population, or roughly 650 million people, live with a disability. In most of the OECD countries, females have higher rates of disability than males.

As the population ages this figure is expected to increase. Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the UN Development Program (UNDP). The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged. Statistics show a steady increase in these numbers. The reasons include:

Emergence of new diseases and other causes of impairment, such as HIV/AIDS, stress and alcohol and drug abuse;

Increasing life span and numbers of elderly persons, many of whom have impairments;

Projected increases in the number of disabled children over the next 30 years, particularly in the developing countries, due to malnutrition, diseases, child labor and other causes;

Armed conflict and violence. For every child killed in warfare, three are injured and acquire a permanent form of disability. In some countries, up to a quarter of disabilities result from injuries and violence, says WHO.

In countries with life expectancies over 70 years of age, people spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5 per cent of their life span, living with disabilities.

The two-way link between poverty and disability creates a vicious circle. Poor people are more at risk of acquiring a disability because of lack of access to good nutrition, health care, sanitation, as well as safe living and working conditions. Once this occurs, people face barriers to the education, employment, and public services that can help them escape poverty.

Dr. Amartya Sen pointed out in his keynote address at the World Bank's conference on disability, the poverty line for disabled people should take into account the extra expenses they incur in exercising what purchasing power they do have. A study in the United Kingdom found that the poverty rate for

disabled people was 23.1 percent compared to 17.9 percent for non-disabled people, but when extra expenses associated with being disabled were considered, the poverty rate for people with disabilities shot up to 47.4 percent.

Disability rates in the population are higher among groups with lower educational level in the countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). On average, 19 per cent of less educated people have disabilities, compared to 11 per cent among the better educated.