

A gap analysis on SDG 17, based on the reports from the United Nations: A Disability lens

Zukiswa Nzo

Corresponding author: Zukiswa N

E-mail: znzo@fuji.waseda.jp

Waseda University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, 1-6-1, Nishi-waseda, Shinjuku - ku, Tokyo, 1608050
(+81)70-4200-4441.

Accepted: 9/4/2024

Published: 18/4/2024

Abstract: The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 17 calls for “Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising global partnerships for sustainable development” (UN, 2015). It implies that countries ensure sustainable futures for all by addressing global challenges such as inequality and disability. Every country submits progress reports to the UN following a guideline that reflects reporting on SDG 17. While acknowledging the great work done by various countries at their possible pace, there is continued identification of disability as hardly mentioned in the reports. Baron (2016) expressed caution in this regard. The same assertion was brought up in the inaugural UN flagship report on SDGs and disability, reinforcing that it is hardly part of tracking and monitoring the progress of SDGs, yet there are only less than six years to evaluate the SDG's achievement in 2030. Therefore, the current article seeks to interrogate UN reports on SDG 17 through the lens of the UNCRPD because little is known about SDG 17 and disability in the academic space. Thus contributing to the disability debate within the SDGs. The contents of SDG progress reports were reviewed following a content analysis approach. A particular focus was on the UN-generated guideline framework (system) in line with Goal (SDG) 17's custodian agencies. This implies that preconceived categories emerged from key assessment areas/ indicators, which are: (i) finance/ foreign aid, (ii) technology, (iii) capacity building and (iv) data monitoring, as vital for achieving the goal. The findings reflect an existing gap in specific reporting on progress on disability, let alone the mention of "disability". It leaves a lot of questions about whether the reporting framework has a 'blank spot' on disability inclusion or whether disability is overshadowed by other societal phenomena's progress in pursuing the SDGs. Therefore, the implication is if the status quo is maintained this raises concerns on disability matters that cut across other goals. Thus, the author recommends a review of guidelines (including awareness of the UN-SDG 17 guideline framework to be reviewed from a UNCRPD lens.) for reporting that explicitly incorporates disability for all tracking monitoring and measuring progress enshrined in SDG 17. Further propositions are pointed towards tracking and reporting done through the National Reporting by member states; Custodian Agencies; UN Reporting guidelines and Global reporting to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)..**Keywords:** Disability; Sustainable Development Goals; Goal 17

Keywords: Gap analysis, SDG 17, United Nations: Disability lens

Publish by IJAH 2024.

INTRODUCTION

Disability inclusion in itself has had challenges (Halder & Lori, 2017) and is no exception to inconsistent reporting among countries globally. Despite that, agenda 2030 of the United Nations (UN) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015 seek to guide towards a better and more sustainable future for all (United Nations, 2015). There are inherent challenges indicated in SDGs but there was a 'blank spot' in the Millennium Development Goals. Within the SDGs,

however, disability is spelt out in the goals like SDGs 10 (reduce inequalities), 8 (decent work/employment and economic growth), and 4 (quality education), among other challenging areas like the accessibility of human settlements. In all these, data collection (statistics included) on impact and monitoring play a central role in assessing the achievements of the SDGs (UNDESA, 2015). All these speak to the principles set by the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights treaty and other human rights treaties like the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UNDESA, 2018).

While other scholars have reviewed the progress of the SDGs based on country and UN reports (Halkos & Gkampoura, 2021), the study did not provide for disability-specific reporting. On the other hand, there might be studies that have focused on the progress of SDG17 (Setu et al., 2021); these were concerned with the actual measurement of progress rather than identifying gaps in who (population groups) were not included or reported on. Therefore, it remains unclear whether disability is part of the reporting set within the parameters of SDG 17. Therefore, the focus of the current article is to review the content of reports, which gives insights towards scrutinising the framework guidelines on reporting the progress of Goal 17 on disability. This can aim to facilitate, establish and maintain global partnerships as integral to creating shared understanding and novel solutions for sustainable development (Dada et al., 2023). SDG 17 has specific indicators for partnerships for a large-scale systemic output, with targets under each, and the custodian agency for those targets (Dada et al., 2023). In understanding disability inclusion within the reporting of this goal, the article adopts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) lens of disability inclusion. Goal 17 emphasises the significance of the data collection, and to attain this, member states should boost support for capacity-building in developing nations, which would notably improve access to high-quality, reliable and timely data that is also disaggregated by disability (United Nations, 2022). This lens is rarely brought up in academic debates, particularly on SDG 17 and disability, using the global view, which may provide an opportunity for sharing good practices and lessons learned in progress and the challenges of implementing SDG 17. This is significant to the core principles of the SDGs on “leaving no one behind”, given that a billion people worldwide are persons with disabilities, who are poorer and face disproportional marginalisation against non-disabled counterparts, thus exacerbating the demand for such disability-inclusive data.

The goal in itself further emphasises monitoring and accountability of the SDGs as vital for achieving the goal. Therefore, if disability continues to be overshadowed the underlying principle of the SDGs of “leaving no one behind”, would be compromised in academic and non-academic practices within various societies (Groce & Mont, 2017). This assertion is further confirmed by the initial 2018 UN flagship report on SDGs and disability, which further calls for concrete action to be taken to achieve the SDGs (UNDESA, 2018). As a result, there is an increased demand for data through continuous monitoring (UNDESA, 2018). Implementation of SDGs among UN member states and related agencies and partners should incorporate UNCRPD principles for

effective inclusive policy development and planning (Brolan, 2016) (UNDESA, 2018) (Modéer & Viera, 2023)

The mandate of custodian agencies is to collate monitoring guidelines and report on indicators, in support of country implementations including that of collecting data for global reporting on Sustainable Development Goals. (CEOS, 2018). Some of the targets are not reflected in this paper due to unavailable data in the reports found, therefore the following themes based on SDG 17 represent categories of the targets within this review, (i) Finance/Foreign Aid, (ii) Technology, (ii) capacity building (iii) Data monitoring and accountability (United Nations, 2015) (Dada, Wylie, Marshall, Rochus, & Bampoe, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper relies on a quantitative content analysis (Franzosi, 2008), which relies on the interpretation of the goal’s targets, based on quantifying the frequency of phrases concerning disability inclusion and the indicators identified to observe patterns and categorise the information as per categories in line with indicators (Franzosi, 2008) (Gareth, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017); (i) Finance/Foreign Aid, (ii) Technology, (ii) capacity building (iii) Data monitoring and accountability (United Nations, 2015) Dada, Wylie, Marshall, Rochus, & Bampoe (2023). Quantitative analysis relies on the following reports on SDG 17 within the UN system from 2016 to date, namely:

- a) Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals
- b) The Sustainable Development Goals Reports
- c) Voluntary National Review Synthesis Reports

Therefore, the method and material used are made up of progress reports within the United Nations System post-2015, in line with SDG 17 and its Indicators and targets. The paper sought to analyse content quantitatively based on the frequency of the use of the key word “disab*” or synonyms such as “impairment*”.

Inclusion Criteria: SDG Progress Reports

To track the implementation progress of the SDGs and their targets, Voluntary National Review (VNR) Reporting is encouraged by the United Nations to member states. VNRs also serve for facilitate experience sharing, challenges, success and lessons learned by developed and developing nations (United Nations, 2022) (UNDESA, 2023). The United Nations has developed guidelines that include tools to support VNR reporting, which call for reporting that is inclusive and participatory of all people especially focusing on the most vulnerable and those left further behind. (UNDESA, 2023). From 2016 to date, a total of 291 reports have been conducted.

Each year reports received from all countries are synthesised into one VNR report. The number of countries that have reported has increased since 2016, when 22 countries submitted the report, to 47 countries in 2019 and 2020 and 44 in 2022 (UNDESA, 2023). Another annual reporting system for tracking progress on the implementation of Agenda 2030 is through available data from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and various International agencies which culminates in a Sustainable Development Goals Reports, (UNDESA, 2023). While another report within the UN system on SDGs presented annually to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development is also a Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals report as per the General Assembly mandate, based on available data.

The cornerstone of goal (SDG)17 is to strengthen global partnerships in achieving the 2030 agenda targets (UNDESA, 2023), however, there is a common consensus within the UN system that despite advances made, more needs to improve, particularly where there has been slow progress and in particular amongst the furthest left behind and vulnerable population groups. The UN thus, encourages country driven and inclusive follow up mechanisms to be conducted regularly on progress (UNHROHC, 2022).

Inclusion Criteria: Categorising themes

Upon going through the reports, the author recognised that UN reports commonly categorise SDG 17 under five themes of which four of these themes are the ones included as follows: which are those which the UN systems progress reports have available data on, and in line with respective UNCRPD Articles. SDG Targets were then categorised in line with the goal indicators, while researchers further assigned relevant custodian agencies (As per UN, within the UN System) of that category; this allowed for further searching or probing of the contents of progress reported on disability within these custodian agencies as well.

Inclusion Criteria: Indicators and custodian agencies

After confirming the four themes above, the author linked the indicators within these categories that were analysed, including their respective custodian agencies within the UN system. The indicators and custodian agencies included in the analysis were as follows:

i) Finance/Foreign Aid

The custodian agencies for this indicator are the International Monetary Fund (IMF); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (WB) (UNECOSOC, 2018) and related targets are as follows:

Target 17.2: Implement all development assistance commitments.

Target 17.3: Mobilize financial resources for developing countries.

Target 17.5: Invest in less-developed countries.

ii) Technology

The custodian agencies for this indicator are the International Telecommunication Union (ITU); UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization-Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UI) (UNECOSOC, 2018) and related targets are as follows:

Target 17.6: Knowledge sharing and cooperation for access to science, technology and innovation.

Target 17.7: Promote sustainable technologies in developing countries.

Target 17.8: Strengthen the science, technology and innovation capacity for least-developed countries.

iii) Capacity building

The custodian agencies for this indicator are Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (UNECOSOC, 2018) and related targets are as follows:

Target 17.9: Enhanced SDG capacity in developing countries.

Target 17.15: Respect national leadership to implement policies for SDGs.

Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development.

Target 17.17: Encourage effective partnerships.

iv) Data monitoring and accountability

The custodian agencies for this indicator are Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (UNECOSOC, 2018) and related targets are as follows:

Target 17.18: Enhance availability of reliable data.

Target 17.19: Further develop measurements of progress.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Recognising that a billion people worldwide are persons with disabilities, who are disproportionately more marginalised and poorer than their non-disabled counterparts (Groce & Mont, 2017), the paper examined the contents of progress reports within the United Nations system on SDG 17, identified the frequency of inclusion of disability within SDG 17, as a means to propose, in line with implementation guidelines which are CRPD related, disability inclusive solutions and reporting within the UN system, via; National Reporting by member states; Custodian Agencies; SDG Reporting guidelines set by United Nations; Global reporting to High level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development

Table 1: Frequency of keyword "disab"**

| Frequency of Disab* within SDG 17 and SDG 17 targets – United Nations (UN) System Annual Progress Reports on SDGs | | | | | SDG Target and indicators) | | | |
|---|--|------|--------------------|--------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | | | | Finance/ foreign aid | Technology | Capacity Building | Data Monitoring & Accountability |
| No. | Custodian Agencies (UN) | | | | IMF, OECD, WB | ITU, UNESCO | OECD, UNDP | Paris 21/22/23; UNDESA,OECD |
| | UN System Report on Progress | Year | Overall Mention | SDG 17 | SDG Target 17.2 - 17.5 | SDG 17.6 - 17.8 | SDG 17.9; 17.15- 17.7 | SDG 17.18 and 17.19 |
| <u>1</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2016) | 2016 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>2</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2016) | 2016 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>3</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (United Nations, 2016) | 2016 | 23 | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| <u>4</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2017) | 2017 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>5</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2017) | 2017 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>6</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (United Nations, 2017) | 2017 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>7</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2018) | 2018 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>8</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2018) | 2018 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>9</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (United Nations, 2018) | 2018 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>10</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2019) | 2019 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>11</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2019) | 2019 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>12</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (United Nations, 2019) | 2019 | 61 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>13</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2020) | 2020 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>14</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2020) | 2020 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>15</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (United Nations, 2020) | 2020 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>16</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2021) | 2021 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>17</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2021) | 2021 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>18</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (UNDESA, 2021) | 2021 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>19</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2022) | 2022 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>20</u> | The SDG report (United Nations, 2022) | 2022 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>21</u> | VNR Synthesis Report (UNDESA, 2022) | 2022 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>22</u> | Progress towards the SDG report (UNECOSOC, 2023) | 2023 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Through probing, results showed that there are scattered information tracking and progress reporting on disability relating to the identified themes, as outlined in table 1, particularly on data monitoring, as VNR reports are structured in such a way that they have separate section for data monitoring.

Table 1 shows that in all reports reviewed within the UN system from 2015 to date, although there is some mention on disability within these progress reports, there is no specific mention within SDG 17. Please note that even though in the VNR synthesis reports, there is zero mention on disab* within respective SDG, as well as relevant targets on (i) finance/foreign aid, ii) technology, (ii) capacity building (iii) Data monitoring and accountability.

i) Finance/Foreign Aid

Information obtained from tracking and progress reporting of SDG 17, within UN system as well as related custodian agencies to this theme, such as, International Monetary Fund (IMF); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (WB) (UNECOSOC, 2018), highlighted the below-mentioned on partnerships in finance/foreign aid. According to the UNDESA Statistics Division, Foreign assistance reached a record high during the pandemic (OECD, 2022) (SDG Tracker, 2021), however donors are not yet fulfilling their pledges on target 17.9; “Enhanced SDG Capacity in developing countries’ measured against Dollar value of financial and technical assistance committed to developing countries. (United Nations, 2019) (SDG Tracker, 2021).

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)’s SDG 17 in numbers reporting shows a “total ODA for capacity-building and national planning stood at \$33.5 billion in 2017, however, the main sectors assisted were public administration, energy, and finance, which received a total of \$13.0 billion” (United Nations, 2019). “Net ODA flows by member countries of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reached \$161 billion in 2020, an increase of 7 per cent in real terms from 2019, driven by members’ support of an inclusive global recovery in light of the pandemic and an increase in bilateral sovereign lending by some loan-giving members” (United Nations, 2021) (United Nations, 2022) . Since tracking disability specific and inclusive funding poses a challenge to showing accurate measurements of percentages of the total funds allocated, although available, data shows that disability related funding is significantly underfunded (Walton, 2020). While a review of development assistance by the OECD suggests that based on available data, less than 0,2 per cent was

allocated to disability related and inclusive programs since 2014. (United Nations, 2020).

To echo the Special Rapporteur's recommendations on disability inclusive international corporation, “Unless international aid to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities I increased, the international pledge to leave. No one behind, in particular in a post-covid 19 scenario, is at risk.” Therefore it is imperative to ensure that persons with disabilities are included as agents of aid. (United Nations, 2020)

While on the other hand, lessons can be learned from donors that have reported progressive increases in their development assistance, such as Finland which contributes a minimum of 2% of its fund towards disability inclusion; While Japan through the Nippon Foundation committed to 1,5% . Other lessons could be obtained from the Development Assistance Committee’s voluntary policy marker that aims to track disability inclusive financing.

i) Technology

Information obtained from tracking and progress reporting of SDG 17, within UN system as well as related custodian agencies to this theme, such as, International Telecommunication Union (ITU); UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization-Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UI) (UNECOSOC, 2018), highlighted the below-mentioned on partnerships in technology.

Within technology, goal (SDG) 17.6 calls for “knowledge sharing and cooperation for science, technology, and innovation, measured against fixed internet broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed”, while goal (SDG) 17.8 calls for “strengthening the science, technology and innovation capacity for least developed countries measured against the proportion of individuals using internet” (United Nations, 2015)..

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which is the custodian agency of targets on technology within SDG17, “COVID-19 is the first pandemic in human history where information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as social media have been used on a on an enormous scale, accentuating the significance of ICTs to societies and economies around the world”. ITU also stressed that the impact of the pandemic triggered the world to reconsider the global norms of conducting business, placing connectivity as the centre (United Nations, 2022). This thus places more importance in ensuring that persons with impairments are not left behind in ICT (United Nations, 2021). Voluntary national reviews shows that more than half (53,6%) of the global population was online by the end of 2019 (United Nations, 2021). Fixed broadband subscriptions ranged from 33.6 for developed nations to 11.2 in developing nations, while even lesser in the least developed, due to lack of infrastructure and

high costs. This digital divide is said to have cost people in developing countries greatly from socio-economic including the health perspective during the pandemic (United Nations, 2021).

Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) calls for “Provision of information to ensure access to information of persons with disabilities.” (United Nations, 2006). Although it is commendable to see the rise in the number of global populations, which is online, as the basic principles of the SDGs in ensuring no one is left behind, tracing the population-by-population group by disaggregating the data will make it easier to be able to notice those left behind and who’s not. This will in turn provide an opportunity to understand the reasons why certain populations are left behind and take appropriate measures in improving ICT access as also highlighted by the UNCRPD’s reporting guidelines.

In response to the call for inclusion, The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) as the specialised custodian agency of SDG related targets of the United Nations for information and communication technologies (International Telecommunication Union, 2022), has adopted the concept of “leaving no one behind” into its mandate and adapted this in its Strategy of ITU as “leaving no one offline” forming part of their inclusion goal (United Nations, 2022).

The ITU should be acknowledged for having helped countries in their development of strategies, regulations and policies that are innovative, to leverage ICT in development work that supports the SDGs, as progress achieved (United Nations, 2022). However, in ensuring that the challenges and needs of persons with disabilities are addressed, when assisting with the development of these strategies including the review thereof, ITU should encourage nations to ensure as diverse participation as possible in the processes, whereby organisations representing persons with disabilities are also included to contribute towards the strategies and ensure that their members interests are not left behind.

Further progress is noted where the ITU provides disseminates large publications through its online access policy at no cost, especially targeting developing countries with financial and technical constraints, this includes a mapping mechanism developed by the United

Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) that also analyses and coordinates the implementation of the WSIS action in line with SDGs to strengthen ICT impact System exercise (International Telecommunication Union, 2022).

However, looking at a screenshot of the website on figure 1, at a glance, the free online publication above seems to not be accessible to persons with disabilities who may experience information and communication barriers, even though Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has shown a rapid increase in being used communication (Mason & Bhati, 2021). Furthermore, using the accessibility checker against Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), 2023); (Accessibility Checker, 2024). It is thus fitting to recommend inclusion of a diverse group of persons with disabilities when testing the publications before launching, let alone running the website and contents through accessibility checkers and tending to accessibility issues that may arise. ITU may also consider strong ties with organisations such as the International Disability Alliance, World Blind Union to support in advising on ICT accessibility to persons for example with visual impairments and others. These organisations and individuals could further form part of the exempted entities or members of ITU-T (“A study group of ITU’s Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) assembles experts from around the world to develop international standards known as ITU-T recommendations which act as defining elements in the global infrastructure of ICT”) (International Telecommunication Union, 2022), and be involved where they can give first-hand advise on accessibility through their affiliates and other resources at their disposal. Furthermore, noting that the 2021 SDG report noted that notwithstanding the big connectivity need during the covid-19 pandemic, almost half of the world’s population still find themselves offline online in south and central Asia as well as Sub-Saharan Africa being the least to have connectivity; ensure that composition of such advisory representative organisations ensures needs related proportions, such as maximum participation from the Sub Saharan Africa, which are lagging and are able to provide advise related to accessibility of ICT based on country-context.

Figure 1: Screenshot of International Telecommunication Union WSIS-SDG Matrix webpage



Source: International Telecommunication Union

On the other hand, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) supports member states in creating the enabling environment for comprehensive Science Technology and Innovation (STI) Systems, including human and institutional capacity development for promotion of youth employability, entrepreneurship and economic development, (UNESCO, 2022). UNESCO is said to foster access to STI, while further building an enabling environment in supporting access to information (UNESCO, 2022). Therefore, in ensuring human capacity development as well as enhancing economic development, it would be sustainable if the most vulnerable and disadvantaged population is accommodated, therefore UNESCO and ITU may demonstrate inclusion of such population groups through a deliberate attempt to include young people with disabilities within the supply chain as service providers where necessary services are required to carry out these activities. Organisations such as these, which are key to implementation of this goal could ensure that the proportions are distributed as per need, thereby allowing self – representation, empowerment and that local people in the developing countries that they are supporting, take

the lead, especially since coincidentally 80% of the global population with disabilities are living in developing countries (United Nations, 2022). In these countries, life expectancy is also recorded as “over 70 years, individuals spend on average about 8 years, or 11.5 per cent of their life span, with disabilities”. Subsequent reporting should be in accessible formats and provide data that is disaggregated to reflect these proportions (United Nations, 2022).

ii) **Capacity-building**

Information obtained from tracking and progress reporting of SDG 17, within UN system as well as related custodian agencies to this category, such as, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (UNECOSOC, 2018), highlighted the below-mentioned on partnerships in technology.

Similarly to (iii) above on finance/ foreign aid, UNDESA noted lagging on delivering on their commitments (OECD, 2022) (SDG Tracker, 2021), including on SDG 17.15 “Respect National leadership to implement policies for sustainable development goals’

measured against the extent of use of country-owned results framework and planning tools by providers of development cooperation” (United Nations, 2019) (SDG Tracker, 2021).

Article 32 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities calls for “measures towards programmes and projects to specifically target persons with disabilities and the percentage of the total budget allocated to them and for Affirmative-action measures taken towards the inclusion of the most marginalized groups among persons with disability reporting to enhance and measure capacity-building support to developing countries” (United Nations, 2006). These should include least developed and developing countries to improve their access to timely and reliable high-quality data disaggregated by disability and other traits which are relevant nationally.

Therefore, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the custodian agency for this SDG 17 target, should ensure that reporting is in such a way that it accounts for and reflects the proportions of all affected populations including persons with disabilities by region that is most affected by the need for such capacity building. This may include the proportion that was spent on local persons with disabilities particularly as contributors in carrying out respective activities and not only as beneficiaries of the activities i.e., capacity building. A study on a program of statistics training conducted in 15 countries, by Global Network of Institutes for Statistical Training (GIST), suggests that countries which identified training needs by themselves and offered training opportunities for their staff, yielded effective capacity-building since priorities were set by domestic needs, instead of those that are externally driven (United Nations, 2021) (Stibbe, Prescott, TPI, & UNDESA, 2020).

On the positive side, recognising the importance of self-representation and consultations with persons with disabilities and related organisations, there is little documented information on how this should take place in international corporation, though this paper does not aim to propose this method of consulting, however there are improvements that can be noted and learned from countries such as Nordic, that have adopted strong participatory models. (United Nations, 2020). Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark for example channel disability related funding to low and middle income countries through national organisations of persons with disabilities in those respective countries (United Nations, 2020).

iii) **Data Monitoring and Accountability**

Information obtained from tracking of progress reporting of SDG 17, within UN system as well as related custodian agencies to this category, such as, Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP (UNECOSOC, 2018), highlighted the below-mentioned on partnerships in technology.

Accurate gathering and recording of disability data is important as issues pertaining to persons with disabilities are cross-cutting through several sectors. (World Health Organization, 2011), while the ratification by over 160 countries of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) coupled with the call of the SDG to “leave no one behind” (Groce & Mont, 2017).

The UNDESA Statistics division noted in 2021 that although foreign aid reached a record high, donors still don't meet their obligations in line with SDG 17.18 which aims to: “Enhance availability of reliable data which is measured against statistical capacity indicator for sustainable development goal monitoring; and measured against the number of countries that have national statistical legislation that complies with the fundamental principles of official statistics and lastly thirdly numbers of countries with a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation, by source funding.” (United Nations, 2015).

In 2017, financial donor support for statistics areas increased from that which was received in 2016, which attributed for 0.34 % of total Official Development Assistance (ODA). “In 2019, 132 countries reported having national statistical legislation which was compliant with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, showing an improvement from 111 countries in 2018” (UNECOSOC, 2020), showing an improvement. Although Sub-Saharan Africa recorded “the second highest number of countries (36) implementing national statistical plans, they had the lowest percentage of fully funded plans, with only 25 per cent of plans fully funded compared with 95 per cent in Northern America and Europe” (World Bank, 2022). These countries with the least funding are also interestingly where the largest global population of persons with disabilities resides (World Bank, 2022). Added to this, a recent survey statistics offices in low-income countries faced delays in budget disbursement in 2021, where many relied on external. It also note that this is expected to be the case or worsen in the next three years specifically in housing, population and agricultural censuses (United Nations, 2021) (United Nations, 2022).

Article 31 of the UNCRPD calls for accountability that including steps taken in ensuring meaningful and full participation of organisations representing persons with disabilities from development, measurement, and monitoring process of process of data collection and research. UNDESA Statistics and member countries should ensure the inclusion of participants with disabilities from the planning to the data collection and dissemination through ensuring reasonable accommodation needs are budgeted for and implemented in the process. This should be done with organisations of persons with disabilities and persons with disabilities for self-representation. If

reasonable accommodation measures are not taken into consideration, there are high chances of not having reliable data on disabled people for all SDGs as they may not be able to participate not only as contributors but also as participants making it difficult to include them in the planning, thereby continuously leaving persons with disabilities behind. VNR (2021;2022) reports suggests that while the value of disaggregated data as a basis for policies that are efficient is highlighted by the majority of the Voluntary National Review Reports (VNR), actual collection of such data on SDG 7 varies greatly. However, countries such as Norway were recorded as those that have managed to provide such disaggregated data according to disability categories, rather than other for countries who showed disaggregated data, it was often by gender or age, and in other instances a few select indicators but not disability (United Nations, 2021).

Article 31 of the UNCRPD calls for data collection in accordance with the human rights-based model of disability focusing on the disabling barriers experienced by persons living with an impairment, by way of example, in line with the scope defined by The Washington Group on Statistics or the World Health Organization. This had been reiterated during 4th meeting of SDGs indicators Inter-agency and Expert Group in November 2016, where there was a consensus and strong support of using the Washington Group on Disability statistics' short set of questions (WGSS) as an ideal method for SDGs and disability. This consensus was reached by members of civil society, independent experts, and leading UN agencies, which was later reiterated in Cape Town at the UN World Data Forum (Groce & Mont, 2017).

The convention further calls for member countries to take steps in ensuring the dissemination of statistics and data in formats accessible to persons with disabilities. The fundamental principles of disability inclusion are centred around self-representation and consultation with persons with disabilities in finding solutions on their challenges, therefore custodians of this goal should ensure full participation of persons with disabilities to ensure that data collection is inclusive, as the reporting based on VNR's still shows that for the countries that did provide some level of disaggregation, it was most often conducted by gender, region, age, and in most cases only for a select number of indicators. This shows that there is still a population that is left behind in data and research and thus in the planning on ways of responding to the needs of this population group. The 2021 and 2022 VNR reports also presents learning opportunities from countries such as Norway on methods and processes used by them in ensuring that data according to disability categories, including lessons learned. However self-representation remains important to ensure that member countries and respective organises of persons with disabilities are at the centre as they are better suited to give their country context in the solutions.

CONCLUSION

This review followed caution that was emphasised by authors like Baron (2016) as quoted below, on the significance of monitoring the progress of Sustainable Development Goals, as also asserted by UN flagship report on SDGs and Disability and others (Brolan, 2016) (UNDESA, 2018) (Mod er & Viera, 2023); "Clearly, persons with disabilities and their advocates have much to monitor in the unfolding post-2015 SDG landscape. If such persons and advocates are dissatisfied that UN Member States (and their partner's) burgeoning implementation of the post-2015 SDGs lacks adequate focus on persons with disabilities, then further action must be taken. If this is the case (and I think it likely), then it is recommended that persons with disabilities, disability advocates and their supporters together press individual countries, SDG regional monitoring bodies, the recently devised High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, as well as the UN General Assembly for a new goal and/or cluster of new disability-inclusive targets to be inserted into the SDG list. This new goal and/or cluster of targets (or indicators) must be explicitly linked to Article 32 of the CRPD, as well as the CRPD's broader content."

While thereafter limited information was known about the progress of Goal 17 particularly in relation to disability, the paper aimed at making a gap analysis on SDG 17 reporting, based on UN progress report contents, using UNCRPD lens to. Thereby bringing novelty in the academic debates in the sense that the paper provides an insights on the 'blinds and blanks' that nurtures opportunity and proposition for guidelines to be explicit on incorporating disability reporting within SDG 17; examples of documented progress though sporadic, can provide insights into what counties can report on disability and progress on SDG 17's targets. This paper aims to guide and incorporate disability considerations into the implementation of SDG 17. In summation, having reviewed recent progress reporting of Goal (SDG) 17, which has been recorded and reported by various reports including, OECD, the United Nations, as well as through voluntary national reviews and leading United Nations Agency directly responsible for responding, the author also reviewed recent commentaries based on recent progress of SDG's focusing on disability and Goal 17, though some progress has been recorded, it is apparent that according to commitments made on agenda 2030, the UNCRPD can be used in conjunction with other guidelines to provide for solutions in reporting on disability, thus implementation of the goal itself.

The findings reflects that existing reporting is not specific on progress on disability, posing a challenge in understanding the progress in that regard, Therefore, the implications of an unknown situation of a particular population group within the SDG affect evaluation which could inform intervention mechanisms for improvement, aimed at ensuring Goal 17 is realised. Thus the author

recommends a review of guidelines (including awareness thereafter) for reporting to explicitly incorporate disability for all tracking monitoring and measuring progress of SDG 17. The author also notes that unlike other SDGs which have in themselves been explicit on disability as opposed to the Millennium Development Goals, SDG 17 is not explicit on disability.

This paper also gives various SDG 17 indicator specific recommendations for improvement per target, however, it is important to note the limitations, that these recommendations are based on data that was available to use as a baseline of the progress reported and noted in the content of the reports reviewed. This is key because in these various progress reports, not all data from all countries was available, for example some countries did not provide voluntary reporting and even those that did, did not report on all the indicators on Goal 17, hence the focus on the above indicators as main categories.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Accessibility Checker. (2024). Accessibility Checker. Retrieved from <https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/>

Brolan, C. E. (2016). A word of caution: Human rights, disability, and implementation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals. *Laws*, 5(2), 22.

CEOS. (2018). The Importance and Challenge of the SDGs. Retrieved from The Earth Observation Handbook : https://eohandbook.com/sdg/part1_2.html#:~:text=These%20Custodian%20Agencies%20have%20the,for%20the%20global%20reporting%20mechanism

Dada, S., Wylie, K., Marshall, J., Rochus, D., & Bampoe, J. O. (2023). The importance of SDG 17 and equitable partnerships in maximising participation of persons with communication disabilities and their families. *International Journal of Speech-language pathology*, 183-187.

Franzosi, R. (2008). Content analysis: Objective, systematic, and quantitative description of content. *Content analysis*, 1(1).

United Nations. (2022). Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from <http://sdgs.un.org:https://sdgs.un.org/un-system-sdg-implementation/international-telecommunication-union-itu-24522>

United Nations. (2006). Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Social Inclusion. Retrieved from <https://un.org>:

Gareth, T., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. Sage.

Groce, N. E., & Mont, D. (2017). Counting disability: emerging consensus on the Washington Group questionnaire. *The Lancet Global Health*, 5(7), e649-e650.

Groce, N., & Mont, D. (2017, July). Counting disability: emerging consensus on the Washington Group questionnaire. *The Lancet Global Health*, 5(7), E649-E650.

Halder, S., & Lori, C. A. (2017). *Inclusion, Disability and Culture*. Springer.

Halkos, G., & Gkampoura, E.-C. (2021). Where do we stand on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals? An overview on progress. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 70, 94-122.

Mason, A., & Bhati, S. (2021). Disabilities and the digital divide: assessing web accessibility, readability, and mobility of popular health websites. *Journal of health communication*, 26(10), 667-674.

Mod er, U., & Viera, J. (2023). Re-thinking disability inclusion for the SDGs.

OECD. (2022). COVID-19 assistance to developing countries lifts foreign aid in 2021 - OECD. Retrieved from <https://oecd.org:https://www.oecd.org/dac/covid-19-assistance-to-developing-countries-lifts-foreign-aid-in-2021-oecd.htm>

United Nations. (2015). Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org:https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

United Nations. (2021). High Level Political Forum on sustainable Development. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org:https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>

<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

International Telecommunication Union. (2022). About International Telecommunication Union. Retrieved from <https://itu.int:https://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/default.aspx>

International Telecommunication Union. (2022). WSIS SDG Matrix. Retrieved from <https://itu.int:https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/sdg/>

International Telecommunication Union. (2022). ITU: Committed to connecting the world. Retrieved from <https://itu.int:https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-T/about/Pages/default.aspx>

SDG Tracker. (2021). Sustainable Development Goals / Partnership for sustainable development. Retrieved from <https://sdg-tracker.org:https://sdg-tracker.org/global-partnerships#targets>

Setu, P., Pachauri, S., & Rao, N. (2021). Application of an alternative framework for measuring progress towards SDG. *Environmental Research Letters*, 16(8), 084048.

Stibbe, D., Prescott, D., TPI, & UNDESA. (2020). *The SDG Partnership Guidebook: A practical guide to building high impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals*. UNDESA, Division for Sustainable Development. United Nations and The Partnering Initiative.

UNDESA. (2023). *Handbook for the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews*. United Nations.

UNDESA. (2015). *Social Inclusion*. Retrieved from www.desa.un.org:https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/news/the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability

UNDESA. (2018). *Disability and Development: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability>

UNDESA. (2023). *Publications*. Retrieved from www.un.org:https://desapublications.un.org/publications/category/Sustainable%20Development/sdgs/SDG%2010%20Reduced%20Inequalities

UNDESA. (2023). *Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from sdg.un.org:https://sdgs.un.org/events/review-sdgs-implementation-sdg-17-strengthening-means-implementation-and-revitalize-global

UNECOSOC. (2018). *Understanding the system of custodian agencies for Sustainable Development Indicators*. Geneva: United Nations.

UNHROHC. (2022). *Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org:https://www.ohchr.org/en/sdgs/voluntary-national-reviews>

UNESCO. (2022). *Strengthening STI Systems for Sustainable Development in Africa*. Retrieved from <https://unesco.org:https://www.unesco.org/en/recommendation-science/sti-africa>

UNECOSOC. (2016). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2017). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2018). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2019). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2020). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2021). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2022). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNECOSOC. (2023). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals*. United Nations.

UNDESA. (2021). *2021 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*. United Nations.

UNDESA. (2022). *2022 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report*. United Nations.

United Nations. (2022). *Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org:https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>

United Nations. (2019). *Report of the Secretary-General on SDG Progress 2019 : Special Edition*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations. (2022). *Department of Economic and Social Affairs : Statistics Division*. Retrieved from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/goal-17/>

United Nations. (2021). *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*. United Nations.

World Health Organization. (2011). *World report on disability*. World Health Organization.

United Nations. (2022). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division. United Nations.

United Nations. (2022). [sustainabledevelopment.un.org](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/). Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

United Nations. (2020). Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms: Rights of persons with disabilities . United Nations.

United Nations. (2016). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [hlpf.un.org](https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs): https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs

United Nations. (2017). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [hlpf.un.org](https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs): https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs

United Nations. (2018). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [hlpf.un.org](https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs): https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs

United Nations. (2019). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [hlpf.un.org](https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs): https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs

United Nations. (2020). High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Retrieved from [hlpf.un.org](https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs): https://hlpf.un.org/tools?search=voluntary%20national%20review%20synthesis&f%5B0%5D=tool-geographical%3AGlobal&f%5B1%5D=tool_area_taxonomy_term_name%3ATools%20for%20assessing%20the%20status%20of%20progress%20on%20the%20SDGs

United Nations. (2018). The Sustainable development goals report 2018. United Nations.

United Nations. (2017). The Sustainable development goals report 2017. United Nations.

United Nations. (2019). The Sustainable development goals report 2019. United Nations.

United Nations. (2020). The Sustainable development goals report 2020. United Nations.

United Nations. (2021). The Sustainable development goals report 2021. United Nations.

United Nations. (2022). The Sustainable development goals report 2022. United Nations.

United Nations. (2015). Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

United Nations. (2021). High Level Political Forum. Retrieved from 2021 Voluntary National Review Synthesis Report: <https://hlpf.un.org/vnrs>

United Nations. (2022). Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability>

United Nations. (2006). United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. United Nations. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>

United Nations. (2016). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016. United Nations.

Walton, D. (2020). Disability-inclusive ODA: Aid data on donors, channels, recipients factsheet. Development Initiatives.

World Bank. (2022). Challenges Facing Persons with Disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa – in 5 charts. Retrieved from <https://worldbank.org>: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/brief/challenges-facing-people-with-disabilities-in-sub-saharan-africa-in-5-charts>

World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). (2023, September 21). Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. Retrieved from [www.w3.org](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#:~:text=Web%20Content%20Accessibility%20Guidelines%20(WCAG)%202.1%20defines%20how%20to%20make,%2C%20learning%2C%20and%20neurological%20disabilities): [https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#:~:text=Web%20Content%20Accessibility%20Guidelines%20\(WCAG\)%202.1%20defines%20how%20to%20make,%2C%20learning%2C%20and%20neurological%20disabilities](https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/#:~:text=Web%20Content%20Accessibility%20Guidelines%20(WCAG)%202.1%20defines%20how%20to%20make,%2C%20learning%2C%20and%20neurological%20disabilities)