Child Development, Disability and The Sustainable Development Goals

Bolajoko O. Olusanya MBBS, FMCPaed, FRCPCH, PhD
Executive Director, Centre for Healthy Start Initiative, Lagos, Nigeria
Collaborator, Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Project
Coordinator, Global Research on Developmental Disabilities Collaborators (GRDDC)
Long Walk to Freedom?

• “It is when we all share the conviction that ‘all who live, must live to thrive’ can we really resolve today’s moral dilemma and have a clearer picture of the state of the world’s children beyond the survival agenda.” Olusanya 2005, Archives of Disease in Childhood.

• “..., the downward trend in child mortality in low-income countries presents a heightened awareness in addressing the quality of life for the survivors, especially those at risk of long-term developmental disadvantage. Current ECD approaches need to be adapted to recognize interventions that are time bound for optimal outcomes.” Olusanya 2011, Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

Main Objective

The Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) recently launched by WHO/UNICEF/World Bank conceptually addresses early childhood development for all children from pregnancy to age 3 years, particularly those at-risk of sub-optimal development due to stunting and extreme poverty.

This presentation will primarily focus on:

Early childhood development for children under 5 years with developmental disabilities within the context of the sustainable development goals.
Context

Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promise to leave no child behind including children with disabilities and those in vulnerable circumstances.

SDG 1 (for poverty reduction), SDG 2 (for food security and improved nutrition) & SDG 3 (for ensuring healthy lives and well being) adequately address the risks of sub-optimal development due to stunting and poverty.

SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- SDG 4.2.1 mandates “access to quality early childhood development” and the monitoring of children under five years who are “developmentally on track” in health, learning and psychosocial well-being.”
Children with Developmental Disabilities

• Who are these children?
• How many are they?
• Where are they located?
• What services do they require to prepare them for inclusive learning and education?
Children with Developmental Disabilities: Who?

Typically include children with:
- sensory impairments (hearing and vision loss)
- epilepsy or seizures
- cerebral palsy
- attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- intellectual disability
- specific learning disorders
- ‘other’ developmental disabilities
Children with Disabilities. How Many & Where?

- Limited data exists for children with developmental disabilities particularly in the LMICs
  - Available epidemiological data are commonly produced by special interest groups with risk of bias
- About 53 million children are estimated to have any of the six developmental disabilities globally in 2016.
Intellectual Disability
Epilepsy
Hearing Loss
Vision Loss
ADHD
ASD

Source: GBD Study 2016
Disability Prevalence from Age 1 to 19 years

Prevalence 2016

ISSOP Conference Bonn 2018
Mortality and disability in children <5 years between 1990 and 2016

Unintended but inevitable consequences of mortality-driven MDGs.
Early Detection towards Preparatory Services for Inclusive Education

Newborns
Neonatal Screening Programmes for birth defects and congenital disorders including sensory impairments
- Hospital & Community-based
- Targeted or Universal coverage

Services should be culturally-sensitive and ensure active parental participation at every stage

Infants
Developmental Screening and Monitoring of milestones at 9-12 months

Children 1-4y
Developmental Screening and Monitoring of milestones at 18-24 & 36-48 months
Multi-disciplinary and Family-oriented Preparatory Services towards Inclusive Education

- Paediatrician
- Early Interventionist
- Special Needs Teacher
- Physiotherapist
- Social Services
- Speech & Language Pathologist
- Psychiatrist/Psychologist
- Audiologist/ENT

SSOP Conference Bonn 2018
Way Forward...

• Urgent need for a more unified and inclusive coalition of stakeholders and child advocacy groups
• Need for relevant and effective global programmes to facilitate capacity building in high burden but resource-limited countries
• Need for quantifiable targets for reducing the population of children with developmental disabilities globally.
• Investment in population-based data for developmental disabilities
• Need for more transparent and representative engagement between ECD policymakers and relevant stakeholders in child disability
“Just because we cannot see clearly the end of the road, that is no reason for not embarking on an essential journey”. JFK
Acknowledgements

• The data that formed the basis of this presentation was provided by the Institute of Health Metrics & Evaluation (IHME) Seattle, WA, USA.

• Professor Adrian Davis OBE, Visiting Professor, Population Health, London School of Economics, UK, served as technical advisor.

• Global Research on Developmental Disabilities Collaborators (GRDDC) analysed the data.