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Human Rights-Based Social Work Education

Disability Justice Through Social and Solidarity Economies: A Global Human Rights-Based Social Work Approach

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Overview

In this presentation, the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) will be introduced as a global human rights-based social work approach that has a transformative impact on people with disabilities' economic autonomy. Worker-controlled cooperatives will be highlighted to demonstrate SSEs create dignified, sustainable work for people with disabilities.

Learning Objectives

- 1) Participants will examine the SSE as a rights-based social work approach that advances disability justice and economic inclusion globally.
- 2) Participants will analyze the structural barriers that exclude disabled workers from traditional labor markets and how SSEs challenge these inequalities.
- 3) Participants will explore the role of SSEs as key allies in advancing the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of poverty eradication and promoting a sustainable, equitable economic future.



What is the Social and Solidarity Economy?

- Collective ownership and governance over economic activities that prioritize social and environmental objectives to serve collective interests
- Based on principles of solidarity and mutuality, equity, democratic self-governance, autonomy and independence, the use of surpluses/profits to expand the organization and improve its services to its members and society
- Emphasis--care for people and the planet over profit
- Forms: cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, social enterprises, self-help groups (Oliveira, 2024)

The Social and Solidarity Economy: A Global Rights-Based Approach

Social Work Rights-based Approach

Individual, family, community, and workers as rights-holders rather than as passive recipients of charity and services (Mapp, 2019)

Capacity building, strengths perspective and interdisciplinary activism used by social workers to realize human rights (McPherson, 2018)

HR themes of participation, empowerment, accountability, non-discrimination and equality

International Covenant on Social, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

Protections for basic conditions for survival and the ability to live a dignified life including the rights to;

Self-determination to pursue economic, social and cultural development

Decent work, fair wages and equal pay

An adequate standard of living including food, clothing, housing, safe drinking water and sanitation

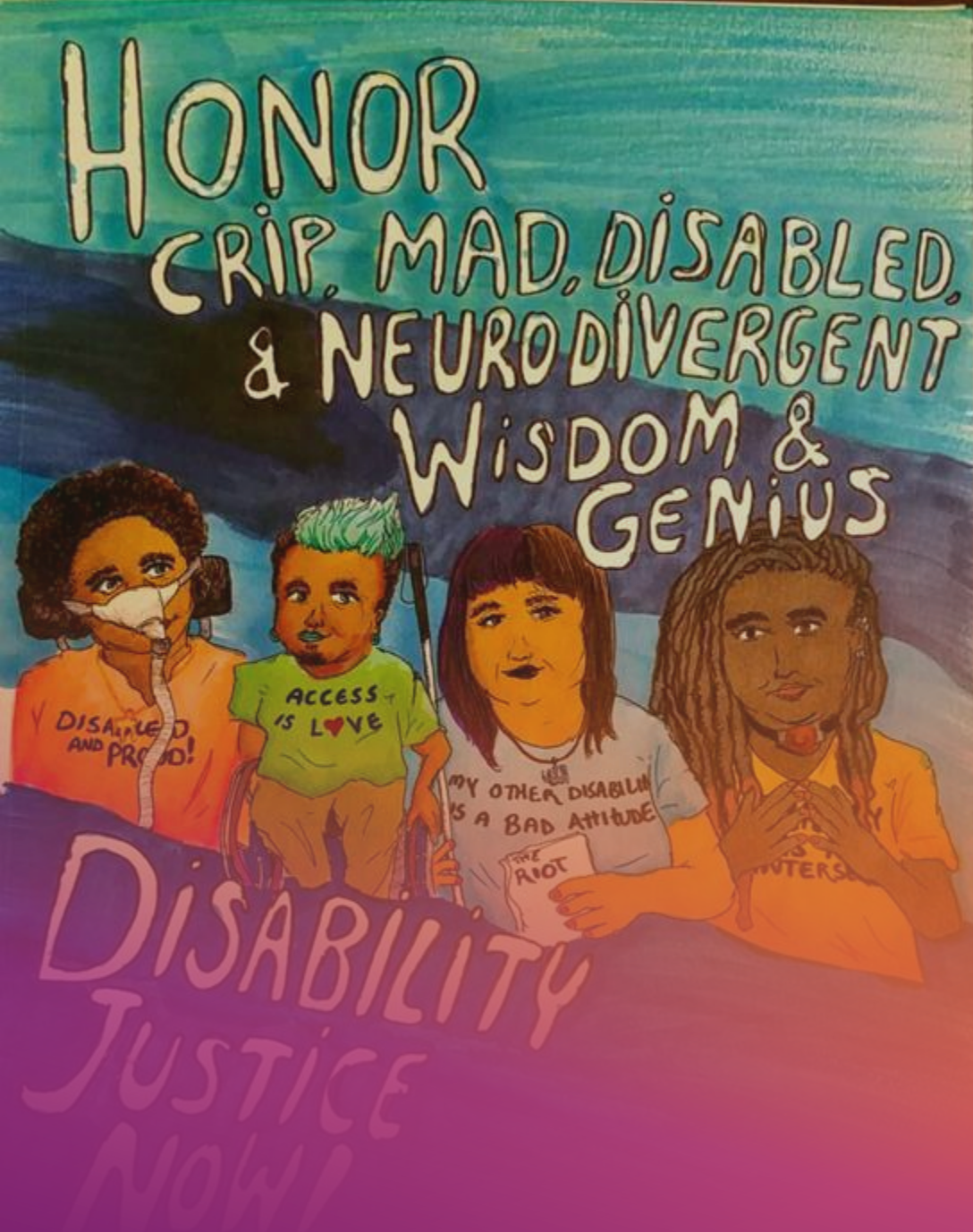
The highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008), Article 27- Work and Employment

The right to work on an equal basis with others

The right to the opportunity to gain a living work by freely chosen or accepted in a labour market that is open, inclusive, and accessible to persons with disabilities

State parties must: promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business



Disability Justice Defined

<https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/>

Sins Invalid: 10 Principles of Disability Justice

- Intersectionality
- Leadership of those most impacted
- Anti-capitalist politic
- Commitment to cross-movement organizing
- Recognizing wholeness
- Sustainability
- Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
- Interdependence
- Collective access
- Collective liberation

Structural Barriers for Disabled Workers to Access Decent Work: Ableism

- Disabled women providing under-paid and unpaid care work in the informal economy
- Higher rates of poverty and unemployment than non-disabled (World Bank, 2025)
- When employed, more likely to be in informal, vulnerable lower paying jobs, especially women (World Bank, n.d.)
- Employment and wage disparities between people with and without disabilities (ILO, 2024)
- Stigma and discrimination
 - Exclusion from education and employment (WHO, 2023)
- Insufficient access to support such as assistive technology, reasonable accommodation and personal assistance (Global Disability Inclusion Report, 2025)
- Inaccessible environments and communication
- Non-inclusive health, education, transport and other systems (World Bank, 2025)
- Lack of national accessibility standards and action plans to actualize the CRPD (Global Disability Inclusion Report, 2025)

Disabled Women in the Care Economy (United Nations DESA, 2018)



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Realizing the SDGs by, for, and with Persons with Disabilities

- in seven out of eight developing countries, women with disabilities are more likely to be engaged in **unpaid work** than women without disabilities
- On average, among these eight countries, 10 per cent of women with disabilities versus 9 per cent of women without disabilities are engaged in unpaid work
- percentages of women with disabilities in unpaid work vary from 2 per cent in Jamaica to 32 per cent in Viet Nam
- Because women with disabilities have more difficulty finding paid employment in formal or informal sectors than those without disabilities, they may be left with unpaid work as their only option, especially within the household.”

SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES



VOLUNTARY
OPEN
MEMBERSHIP



DEMOCRATIC
MEMBER CONTROL

COOPERATION



AMONG COOPERATIVES

AUTONOMY & INDEPENDENCE

MEMBER




ECONOMIC
PARTICIPATION



CONCERN
FOR THE
COMMUNITY

EDUCATION



TRAINING AND
INFORMATION

Models of SSE By and For Persons with Disabilities

- Voiceout Deaf farming collective, South Africa <https://newsroom.ap.org/editorial-photos-videos/detail?itemid=8a7e8c12c25d49ed909aef158c8cdabb&mediatype=video>
 - Deaf workers build skills in agriculture and find sustainable work
- Signalise, UK, <https://signalise.coop/about> - multi-stakeholder co-operative in which our communities – deaf people and interpreters – are our members



Caring Hands Cooperative (CHC)

A cooperative owned and operated by d/hh caregivers, providing high-quality, linguistically accessible care to d/hh clients.

Built on the principles of **inclusion, economic justice, and sustainability.**

- How it works:
 - Recruits and trains d/hh caregivers
 - Provides accessible home care
 - Operates worker cooperative model



- Gibson & Weber, n.d.

Solidarity Economy x Disability Justice

- **Anti-capitalism**
- **Interdependence**
- **Value/worth is not determined by money**
- **Collective liberation**



The Role of SSEs as Allies in Advancing the Sustainable Development

Global Affirmation and Recognition of SSE as a tool for achievement and localization of the SDGs--

- poverty eradication, decent work and promotion of international labor standards, economic inclusion, reducing inequalities, empowerment of women, youth, persons with disabilities while building community and social cohesion and sustainable development (UNGA, 2023)
- Ongoing spotlight via ILO
- 2024: Africa Union Adopts 10yr SSE strategy
- 2025: UNGA Year of Cooperatives
- 2025: Compromiso de Sevilla UN Financing for Development
 - 4th multilateral conference to increase funding for, and decrease barriers to, sustainable development
- 2025: Second World Summit for Social Development
 - In draft Doha declaration

Promoting Sustainable, Equitable Futures for Disabled Workers Via Global Human Rights Based Social Work

- Embracing sovereignty by and for disabled workers
- Rethinking charity and aid
- Dismantling Ableism By fostering conditions for sovereignty
- Sovereignty= resiliency
 - Economic shocks
 - Climate shocks
 - Conflict and war



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CSWE Code

Global Human Rights and Disability Justice
(CE Code:Justice)