

# Engage the disabled in development: ex-banker



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Persons with disabilities are not to be pitied but they are to be engaged because everyone of them has something to contribute to the development of the society, former World Bank president James Wolfensohn told a seminar yesterday.

He was making extended video remarks during a seminar on 'Breaking the poverty cycle: promoting inclusion for people with disability' at the fourth International Annual Forum of Shafallah Centre, which concludes today.

While paying tribute to HH Sheikha Mozah Nasser al-Misnad, Cherie Blair and Shafallah Centre chairman Hassan Ali bin Ali, Wolfensohn said the centre was setting good standards for others to emulate.

He said the issue of disability has been a subject for concern for a long time now recalling that while he was at the WB, he was able to address the question of why between 5 and 10% of the world population is suffering one way or the other from a disability.

"During my days in office, I was also able to address the issue of persons with disabilities from the developing world where the ratio of disabled to able-bodied is about one in five - six and why there was a relationship between physical capacity and ability to make a living," he said.

The veteran banker pointed out that poverty gave him the key to people with disabilities, however noting that not all persons affected with disabilities are poor.

"There are large number of people who present a compelling challenge of creating the main tool that will allow the disabled to fully participate in the society and also allow them to contribute in a way they should," he said, adding that it is essential to provide physical needs of disabled through available resources.

While other speakers - Gustavo Demarco and Daniel Mont - both of the World Bank, emphasised that the vicious cycle of poverty has rendered many people disabled, Rosangela Berman Bieler, of Inter-American Institute on Disability and Inclusive Development, stressed the need to remove barriers and create access for the disabled.

"Removal of barriers as well as creation of access will definitely reduce their disabilities to zero," Bieler said.

Demarco called for concerted efforts to ensure inclusive policy and programmes that can help build the capacity of the disabled so that they can be empowered.

Participants at another session on 'international programmes for improving employment of people with disabilities' also shared experiences and showcases many ways through which the disabled under their programmes have been made employable and subsequently got employed through capacity building and collaborations with potential employers and recruiting agencies.