

## HANDOUT 2.3. DISABILITY AND IMPAIRMENT

Disability – the interaction between an impairment and barriers which can cause delays.

### **Types of Impairments**

#### » **Physical impairment:**

- Temporary or permanent limitations that inhibit the physical function of one or more limbs of a person, including complete inability to use or function.
- Examples:
  - Injuries to muscles or bones that severely limit functioning.
  - Amputations.
  - Spinal cord injuries.
  - Cerebral Palsy (group of disorders that affect a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture)

#### » **Sensorial impairment:**

- Conditions that affect the ability to process information through the senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell)
- Examples:
  - Blindness and low vision.
  - Deafness.
  - Sensory Processing Disorder (affects how your brain processes stimuli, often resulting in over sensitivity what is seen, heard, touched, smelt, tasted, etc.)

#### » **Psychosocial impairments:**

- Mental health impairments that can be chronic or episodic that make it difficult to carry out day-to-day tasks, causing significant impairments to daily life.
- Many of these conditions are well hidden while others may present more directly as abnormal behavior or functioning.
- Examples:
  - Depression (persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in activities).
  - Generalized Anxiety Disorder (persistent feeling of anxiety or dread).
  - Bi-polar Disorder (unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy, activity levels, and concentration)
  - Schizophrenia (abnormal interpretation of reality which may result in hallucinations, delusions, and extremely disordered thinking and behavior)
  - Catatonia (disrupts a person's awareness of the world around them, resulting in little or no reaction to surroundings or behaviors that are unusual, unexpected, or unsafe to themselves or others)

» **Intellectual and developmental impairments:**

- Chronic conditions that impair learning, language, and behavioral development.
- These usually occur before adulthood and limit a person's ability to learn at an expected or typical level or function in daily life.
- Examples:
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder (caused by differences in the brain resulting in challenges with social communication/interaction, restricted or repetitive behaviors/interests, different ways of learning, moving, and paying attention).
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (cause unknown but results in difficulty paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors, overly active)

**Impairments themselves are not the driver of disability. The interaction between barriers, societal norms, and maladaptive environments and the impairment of the person creates the disability.**