



Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities for Sustainable Development Position Paper for the High-Level Political Forum 10-14 July 2023

2023 HLPF Theme:

“Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”

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Introduction

In September 2023, the United Nations will host the SDG Summit. It is the most important watershed for the Sustainable Development Goals in 2023, and for the United Nations. As member states continue to recall the indivisible and interlinked nature of the goals, and their relation to human rights, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities calls attention to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ role as both a human rights and a development treaty. From clean water, to infrastructure, to sustainable cities, persons with disabilities must be included in sustainable development at every stage, in line with our human rights. This position paper outlines some of the specific practical realities for persons with disabilities on each of these goals, links them to the human rights framework, and makes practical recommendations to raise the standards of current practice.

Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation

Ensure access to water and sanitation for all

On 28 July 2010, through [Resolution 64/292](#), the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged they are essential to the realization of all human rights. However, although data are scarce, it is estimated that in some low- and middle-income countries, more than 25 percent of persons with disabilities do not have an indoor toilet in their dwelling.¹ Evidence from a limited number of developing countries indicates that more than one in

¹ OHCHR, [Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals: Clean Water and Sanitation](#), 2020

seven persons with disabilities finds the toilet at home hindering or not accessible; crowdsourced data indicates that only 69 percent of public toilets are accessible for wheelchair users.²

Barriers in accessing WASH range from environmental factors, such as uneven terrain or muddy ground, to infrastructural elements, such as lack of ramp in buildings. Hygiene information is often developed without the participation of persons with disabilities in communications on hygiene management, and does not meet the communication requirements of all persons with disabilities.³ Barriers can also have a social nature when resulting from cultural beliefs or practices, including ideas that a disability is due to a curse or is contagious, resulting in persons with disabilities being kept away from WASH facilities.⁴

Lastly, institutional barriers, such as WASH policies not duly considering the requirements of persons with disabilities and/or preventing their participation in the design, delivery and use of mainstream WASH programs, result in lack of accessible WASH facilities in public places and institutions. For persons with disabilities, inaccessible sanitation facilities can cause accidents and injuries. For women and girls with disabilities, inaccessible facilities can lead to not just greater health risks but also increases the risk of abuse and exploitation. The lack or unavailability of private and public WASH facilities affects the dignity, privacy, and confidence of persons with disabilities, rendering them more dependent on family members. These situations also severely hamper their equal participation in the society, including in education, employment, and other areas of social life, contributing to exclusion and isolation.

Covid-19 Recovery

Persons with disabilities are at increased risk of being affected by COVID-19, in terms of poor outcomes from the disease itself, reduced access to routine health care and rehabilitation, and the adverse social impacts of efforts to mitigate the pandemic.⁵ Access to WASH services and facilities is vital in stopping the transmission of COVID-19. However, persons with disabilities face multiple barriers to engaging in personal protective measures such as using handwashing stations and receiving hygiene kits due to lack of universally designed facilities, distribution methods and exacerbated threats of exploitation and abuse in local areas.⁶

During the COVID-19 pandemic, persons with disabilities were often separated from family caregivers and other support people due to social distancing, hampering their access to services. Health and hygiene promotion messages are largely not accessible for deaf, blind, and partially sighted persons and persons with intellectual disabilities resulting in lack of sufficient knowledge on how to protect themselves. Moreover, persons with disabilities often encounter stigma and discrimination at family, community and institutional (service) level, including discriminatory behavior from field staff and misconceptions.

In humanitarian settings, limited number of individualized supports provided by humanitarian actors to enable persons with disabilities to reach and use facilities results in significant exclusion from services.⁷

² UNDESA, [Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities Ensuring the availability of water and sanitation for persons with disabilities](#) (Goal 6), March 2020.

³ OHCHR, [Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals: Clean Water and Sanitation](#), 2020

⁴ Wilbur J, [Summary report: Considering disability and aging in COVID-19 prevention programmes](#), 2020

⁵ Shakespeare T, Ndagire Fm E Seketi Q, [Triple jeopardy: disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic](#) published in The Lancet, VOLUME 397, ISSUE 10282, P1331-1333, APRIL 10, 2021

⁶ UNHCR, Protection Cluster, [Guidance note on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 WASH response, 2021](#)

⁷ UNHCR, Protection Cluster, [Guidance note on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 WASH response, 2021](#)

However, given the disruptions and changes that crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic cause to the physical and social environment, persons with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from WASH programs during emergencies.⁸

CRPD and SDGs

Article 28: Adequate standard of living and social protection

- Ensure equal access by persons with disabilities to clean water services
- Ensure access to appropriate and affordable services, devices, and other assistance for disability-related requirements

Articles 5 (Non-discrimination), 6 (Women with Disabilities), 7 (Children with Disabilities), 9 (Accessibility), 11 (Situation of risks and humanitarian emergencies), 31 (Statistics and data collection) and 32 (International Cooperation) also apply.

Implementation of the 2030 agenda

Targets:

- **6.1** By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water **for all**
- **6.2** By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene **for all** and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in **vulnerable situations**

Recommendations

- Identify the barriers to accessing WASH services for persons with disabilities through an intersectional (gender, age, disability) approach and through engaging with persons with disabilities and their families and/or personal assistants.
- Disaggregate data at least by sex, age and disability and assess how people's experiences of WASH and COVID-19 are impacted by multiple factors such as disability, gender, poverty, ethnicity, and other areas.
- Adopt a twin-track approach in WASH: mainstream disability in water and sanitation policies and programs while at the same time developing disability-specific programs
- Invest and allocate financial resources to make water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in households and in settings outside the home accessible, prioritizing schools, workplaces, health facilities and communal facilities.
- Apply the principles of universal design to ensure accessibility of WASH facilities and include in the national accessibility standards provision on WASH infrastructure in private and public settings, and the retrofitting of accessibility features to existing facilities.
- Involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in situational assessments, decision making on responses design, awareness raising and delivery of WASH services, and provide support to their capacity to engage with WASH stakeholders.
- Ensure that mainstream water and sanitation programs reach persons with disabilities by incorporating accessible technology options and support mechanisms within efforts to achieve universal household sanitation coverage.

⁸ Wilbur J, [Summary report: Considering disability and aging in COVID-19 prevention programmes](#), 2020

- Make sure that strategies are put in place to allow persons with disabilities to rely on family members or personal assistant to access WASH facilities, if desired.
- Make hygiene and other WASH information, including messages related to COVID-19, available in different formats, including in Easy to Read, plain language, Braille, high color contrast, and national sign languages.
- Pay a particular attention to underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, including women and girls, who face greater barriers to accessing WASH services, greater risks of stigma or harm, or may not receive support from other family members during COVID-19 response.
- Provide training and community awareness campaigns to address disability-related stigma and discrimination, including messages that foster a positive image, are strength based and focused on building community resilience.⁹

Goal 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure

Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation

Accessible ICT and Internet access for persons with disabilities

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the potential to be accelerators for the SDGs, particularly SDG 9. In fact, efficient and affordable ICT infrastructure and services can boost the digital economy, competitiveness, and general well-being.¹⁰ The mass adoption of connected digital technologies and applications by society (digitalization) can also play a major role in leaving no one behind.

However, persons with disabilities around the world frequently encounter lack of accessibility in built environments, transport and information and communication services, including information and communications technologies (ICTs). It is estimated that less than half the world's people use the Internet:¹¹ marginalized populations, particularly women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and those economically disadvantaged, as well as people living in low-income and developing countries, are the most excluded from access to digital technologies. Inaccessible digital technology is increasingly a barrier to the realization of rights as the world moves online. For example, an older person with a disability, who became partially sighted in older age may encounter an inaccessible website to sign a petition to their local government, impacting their right to political participation on an equal basis with others.

The main barriers affecting persons with disabilities' digital access and inclusion are accessibility and affordability of technology products, as well as digital literacy.¹² Moreover, there are significant digital gaps in mobile ownership and use amongst persons with disabilities. For example, in Mexico, there is an 18 percent disability gap in mobile phone ownership, a 37 percent disability gap in smartphone ownership, a 26 percent disability gap in awareness of the relevance of mobile Internet and a 38 percent

⁹ Water for Women Fund, CBM and DFAT, '[Disability inclusion and COVID-19: Guidance for WASH delivery](#)', [Guidance Note – COVID-19](#), 2020, Melbourne, Water for Women Fund

¹⁰ ITU, [Digital Inclusion of all](#)

¹¹ STL Partners, [Understanding the unconnected](#), 2019

¹² UNHCR, [Digital access and inclusion of people with disabilities](#).

disability gap in mobile internet use.¹³ This exacerbates exclusion from society in general terms, including access to the digital labor market.

Digital technology can increase participation of persons with disabilities, opening pathways to an improved quality of life, greater social and economic inclusion, self-empowerment, and independent living, including during emergencies; digitalization can also generate evidence to empower people with disabilities, and to implement, monitor and evaluate progress towards the SDGs for persons with disabilities.

COVID-19 Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has boosted some groups' connectivity, as more people have moved online to continue working, studying, and staying in touch with friends and family.

In humanitarian contexts, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relevance of connectivity in accessing relevant information and remote assistance mechanisms by persons of concern. For instance, for refugees with disabilities, their digital inclusion represents a gateway to efficient access to vital protection services, participation in humanitarian programming, increasing livelihood opportunities and facilitates integration.¹⁴

However, as mentioned in the previous section, digital measures during COVID-19 have led to greater exclusion for people with disabilities, such as in the case of employment. In fact, many employees and students with disabilities have faced major limitations to continue work or school activity from home as they did not have the necessary equipment.¹⁵ A survey conducted by the International Disability Alliance (IDA) found that 24 percent of respondents said that their children with disabilities could not join online classes as they could not afford internet access, or because of poor connection. A further 21 percent said that the online schooling application was inaccessible.¹⁶

Digital tools can enable people with disabilities to gain direct access to employment through online recruiting platforms and can also support them in their daily tasks at the workplace. If persons with disabilities do not possess the required skills, if they find ICTs unaffordable or if digital tools are not accessible, people with disabilities will not benefit from these opportunities and are therefore at risk of being left behind.

The green transition offers an opportunity to address existing inequalities, such as the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labor market if inclusive labor practices are implemented.

CRPD and SDGs

Relevant CRPD articles:

- Article 9 (Accessibility). The right to accessibility is connected to many other rights, including the rights to employment, political participation, health, and information. In the CRPD accessibility is

¹³ ILO Global Business and Disability Network, Fundacion ONCE, [An inclusive digital economy for people with disabilities](#), 2021

¹⁴ UNHCR, [Digital access and inclusion of people with disabilities](#).

¹⁵ ILO Global Business and Disability Network, Fundacion ONCE, [An inclusive digital economy for people with disabilities](#), 2021

¹⁶ International Disability Alliance (IDA), [Survey on the Experience of Persons with Disabilities Adapting to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic](#), 2021

established as a cross-cutting factor that enables persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life.

- Article 21 on freedom to access information on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication.
- Article 27 on promoting opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Targets:

- **9.1.** Develop quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access *for all*
- **9.2** Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries

Recommendations

- Governments should encourage the private sector and policy makers to advance accessible technology, including by promoting the exchange of good practices.
- Mainstream and advocate the use of universal design to include persons with disabilities in all phases of ICT development, from policymaking to the implementation and monitoring of accessible websites.
- Universal design and relevant technical standards should be applied in the earliest stages of development.
- Establish mechanisms to evaluate accessibility of ICT systems, especially considering the rapid development of new ICT devices and program, for example, a digital social innovation platform that facilitates the collective awareness and digital inclusion of persons with disabilities in the urban & social landscape.
- Collect data disaggregated by disability and digitalization.
- Strengthen research and development on accessible technology solutions for persons with disabilities.
- Provide training for technology professions on accessible technology and take specific measures to strengthen the required skills amongst persons with disabilities.
- Lower the cost of assistive technologies and provide support to persons with disabilities to afford them.
- Ensure that the digital world promotes decent work opportunities and that talent acquisition programs target persons with disabilities.
- Foster the hiring of persons with disabilities in the digital economy, along with their reskilling and upskilling.

- Ensure that strategies, regulations and initiatives, including COVID-19 recovery plans, related to the digital world are inclusive of persons with disabilities, such as those related to remote working to online platforms and to digital skills.

Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities

Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

The growth, ageing and rapid urbanisation of the world has major implications for cities, particularly in developing countries where persons with disabilities are at higher risk of poverty and exclusion.¹⁷

Little progress has been made towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11 and its targets on access to housing, transport and public spaces, protection from natural disasters and participation in urban planning and management.¹⁸ Persons with disabilities, including women, those unhoused or residing in institutions, continue to face significant barriers to access adequate housing in line with their rights to an adequate standard of living, reasonable accommodation, living independently and being included in the community.¹⁹ Inaccessibility of transport and public spaces continue to pose significant barriers in their everyday lives and in situation of emergencies.²⁰

Opportunities and initiatives to transform cities exist but they rarely include persons with disabilities or consider their most essential right to accessibility. The ongoing digital urban transformation shows that most of today's Smart Cities are not fully accessible. The result is a growing digital divide for persons with disabilities and older persons globally.²¹ Similarly, disability-inclusion, accessibility and universal design are often ignored in Build Back Better strategies or climate adaptation policies,²² resulting in the building of new inaccessible infrastructure leading to further discrimination and deeper inequalities.

Solutions and actions to advance inclusive and accessible cities exist.²³ Commitments and steps have been taken by local and regional governments globally to ensure an inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable future for all persons with disabilities.²⁴ As we accelerate our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it is critical to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, recognizing it is the key to sustainable urbanization, to the realization of the CRPD and the localization

¹⁷ UN-Habitat (2022). "World Cities Report: Envisaging the future of Cities", available at <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>

¹⁸ United Nations (2022). "The Sustainable Development Goals Report", available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>; UNDESA (2018). "Disability and Development Report Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities", Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN, New York.

¹⁹ A/HRC/43/43 (2019): "Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Housing - Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing", available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4343-guidelines-implementation-right-adequate-housing-report-special>

²⁰ 2020 UNESCAP Report on Safe and Inclusive Transport and Mobility, WBU and City Space Architecture (2022). "The Journal of Public Space, Special Issue on Universally Accessible Public Spaces for All"

²¹ Smart Cities for All initiative (2016-2017). Global Survey. Available at <https://smartcities4all.org/#our-data>

²² McGill Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism and the International Disability Alliance, [Disability Rights in National Climate Policies](#), November 2022

²³ United Cities and Local Government (2019). "Policy Paper on Inclusive and Accessible Cities", available at https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/inclusive_accessible_cities_policypaper.pdf

²⁴ United Cities and Local Governments (2022). "Pact for the Future of Humanity, the Daejeon Political Declaration", available at https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe_future.pdf

global agendas, including the SDGs and SDG11 targets, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.²⁵

Disability-inclusive resilience, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate change

Persons with disabilities are among the most affected by climate change and natural disasters. During disasters, persons with disabilities are often left behind and are more likely to die.²⁶ Impacts of climate change threatens their lives, their homes, their health, their food security, their access to water, sanitation, and livelihoods. Intersectionality with other identities such as gender or age may worsen the effect of climate change on persons with disabilities.²⁷ Key climate change issues as impacting persons with disabilities are:²⁸

- Decreasing food security and resulting malnutrition
- Decreasing access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)
- Increasing emergencies due to extreme weather events
- Reducing access to infrastructure, shelter and basic services
- Increasing displacement / migration OR necessary migration not possible due to disability due to barriers, e.g., inaccessible transport and shelter, security especially for women and girls with disabilities
- Increasing human security and protection issues (including due to conflicts resulting from climate change)

Under international human rights law, governments have clear obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of their efforts to respond to climate change.²⁹ The preamble to the Paris Agreement recognizes that “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights,” including the rights of persons with disabilities. However, a minority of State Parties to the Paris Agreement include persons with disabilities in their climate adaptation policies.³⁰ In cases where disability has been included, it is largely to indicate the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to climate change impacts or to signal the need for their inclusion, without providing concrete measures to protect their rights or enhance their resilience and adaptive capacity.³¹

The UNCRPD provides a framework for the participation of persons with disabilities and their OPDs so as to guide preparedness, response and recovery efforts during climate events and other natural disasters. However, gaps remain when it comes to fully realizing the participation of persons with disabilities in

²⁵ United Nations (2016). “The New Urban Agenda”, available at <https://unhabitat.org/about-us/new-urban-agenda>

²⁶ UNDRR webpage on Disability-Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction, available at <https://www.undrr.org/disability-inclusion-disaster-risk-reduction>

²⁷ Additional details from the HLPF 2016 paper “Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders,” (p. 56-57, paras 260-264)

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2016/2&Lang=E

²⁸ OHCHR, [Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change](#), 2020

²⁹ UN, [Participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience against natural disasters](#), CRPD/CSP/2022/4

³⁰ McGill Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism and the International Disability Alliance, [Disability Rights in National Climate Policies](#), November 2022

³¹ Ibidem

climate action, DRR and resilience against natural disasters. It is still commonly believed that generic planning in that regard will meet the needs of all people, including persons with disabilities.³²

Barriers to personal mobility of persons with disabilities

More than half of all persons with disabilities live in towns and cities. However, cities rarely address mobility requirements of persons with disabilities resulting in architectural or physical barriers that hinder their access to services or employment, preventing them from enjoying their rights on an equal basis with others. Inaccessible design and construction of indoor and outdoor facilities can prevent persons with disabilities from going to school and to the hospital, shopping, gaining access to police services and finding or keeping a job. Footpaths, parks, sidewalks, and public transportation may also be inaccessible, preventing persons with disabilities from enjoying the most basic elements of participation in public and social life.

COVID-19 Recovery

Persons with disabilities are often among those most adversely affected in any given emergency and among those least able to access emergency support. During the last four years, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed pre-existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion and has combined its effect to those of climate change, disproportionately affecting already marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities. In particular, intersecting factors related to gender, age, ethnicity, geography, migration, religion and sex can put persons with disabilities at even higher risk.

Ninety percent of all reported COVID-19 cases have so far occurred in urban areas.³³ Barriers to information and communications technologies and cultural attitudes, such as negative stereotyping and stigma, have contributed to the exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities in urban communities.³⁴

Both sudden onset natural disasters and slow onset events, such as rising temperatures and sea levels, flooding and landslides, biodiversity loss, and increasingly frequent extreme weather events can seriously affect access to food and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, healthcare services and medicines, education and training, adequate housing and decent work for persons with disabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased complexities with regard to the participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, DRR and resilience against natural disasters. However, the pandemic provides the opportunity to rethink how climate action, DRR and resilience can be inclusive of persons with disabilities. The best way to address the needs of persons with disabilities, significantly reduce their vulnerability and increase the effectiveness of government response and recovery efforts, is to include persons with disabilities, including underrepresented groups, in all

³² UN, [Participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience against natural disasters](#), CRPD/CSP/2022/4

³³ United Nations (2020), "Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World" https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid_urban_world_july_2020.pdf

³⁴ International Disability Alliance (2021). "Survey on the Experience of Persons with Disabilities Adapting to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic", available at <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/ida-survey-experiences-persons-disabilities-adapting-covid-19-global-pandemic>; World Blind Union (2020). "Covid-19 report 'Amplifying voices: our lives, our say'", available at <https://worldblindunion.org/covid-19-amplifying-voices-our-lives-our-say/>

planning and programming phases. To ensure effective participation, persons with disabilities require the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable resources to operationalize commitments for inclusive disaster preparedness and response, including by fostering close cooperation between States and OPDs.³⁵

CRPD and SDGs

- Articles 11 (Situation of risks and humanitarian emergencies), 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, access to information) and 25 (Health) call for the inclusion, protection and safety of persons with disabilities, as well as having access to information and services during in emergency situations.
- Article 28 on the right of persons to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family, including adequate housing.
- Article 20 sets forth the obligation to take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities, and a corresponding obligation to promote and ensure availability and access to mobility aids, devices, and assistive technologies.

Implementation of the 2030 agenda

Targets

- **11.2** By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, *persons with disabilities* and older persons
- **11.3** By 2030, enhance *inclusive* and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- **11.5** By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
- **11.7** By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

Key Recommendations for Cities

- Engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design, implementation and monitoring urban programmes, policies and plans including DRR and climate action planning. Processes and consultations should be accessible to persons with disabilities with adequate support available where necessary (reasonable accommodation).
- Support the development of disaggregated data on persons with disabilities to enable progress on SDG 11. It is critical to strengthen data collection efforts and initiatives at local levels to address barriers and formulate effective urban development policies.

³⁵ Ibidem.

- Remove barriers and obstacles as per obligations set out in CRPD article 9 on Accessibility. Government and municipalities should map out the issues due to poor urban planning, and what inclusive and accessible solutions could look like in each context and sector like housing, shelter, transportation, green public spaces, and other community services and facilities.
- Mainstream accessibility and disability-inclusion into new or existing cities' budgets, policies and plans including those directed towards reconstruction and climate mitigation and adaptation (climate funds).
- Adopt and monitor accessibility policies and standards with effective compliance and feedback mechanisms in place to ensure that accessibility provisions and investments have positive impacts, support independent living and do no harm.
- Promote, develop and deploy resourced capacity development initiatives supporting authorities at all levels, organisations of persons with disabilities, in shaping inclusive governance, dialogues, and partnerships informing urban and territorial development.
- Ensure national urban policies, programmes and plans align with the CRPD and have disability inclusive safeguarding measures in place that are supported by accessible accountability mechanisms.
- Enhance coordination between agencies, ministries, departments responsible for urban development at national, regional and local levels including private sector – as coordination is key to deliver inclusive and sustainable urban development strategies, policies and practices.

Key Climate Recommendations

- Climate resilience programmes and disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and policies should make disability a core, cross-cutting theme and must be included in the implementation of the SDGs and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 so that they are both implemented in line with CRPD Articles 11, 21 and 25.
- Persons with disabilities must be systematically and meaningfully included across all aspects of the disaster-management cycle and provision made for cross-learning between the disability community, including OPDs, NGOs, and the humanitarian community, to ensure maximum benefit from all resources/knowledge.
- States should ensure that disability issues and needs form part of the training required for certification as a first responder or disaster relief professional.
- Ensure physical and informational infrastructure that incorporates universal design principles to improve the chances of safety and survival of all of society, including persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction planning, including migrants and refugees with disabilities.
- Ensure proper assessment of people affected by disasters with the aim to identify persons with disabilities, including those with less visible forms of disability, such as persons with psychosocial disabilities and persons with intellectual disabilities and provide them with adequate support.
- Climate funds are being created to assist in mitigation, adaptation and building resilience in the poorest and most affected countries. Strong advocacy by and with persons with disabilities is needed to ensure disability inclusion is a key criterion in all climate funds.

- In the reconstruction phase following severe weather and other emergencies it is essential that universal accessibility standards are applied. This is important for all public buildings and spaces, water and sanitation points and for the homes where persons with disabilities live.
- Measure the number of deaths, missing persons and persons affected by disasters among persons with disabilities.
- Monitor the number of least-developed countries and Small Island Developing States receiving special support that are focusing on persons with disabilities

Personal Mobility Recommendations:

- Eliminate all barriers in the way of persons with disabilities acquiring affordable and quality mobility aids and assistive devices, assistive technologies, and services, including accessible transportation and infrastructure, to aid their personal mobility, and provide necessary information and training on their usage and maintenance.
- Embed universal design standards across all domains including public transport, buildings and facilities, new and existing housing, public spaces, services, construction, information, communication, and digital access, as well as to the natural environment, including green spaces open to the public, in all rural and urban areas.
- Adopt and implement an accessibility strategy underpinned by the principle of universal design to eliminate existing access barriers, in close consultation with and active involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities, including underrepresented groups, such as persons of small stature.

Goal 17: Partnerships for the goals

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development

Global efforts for partnerships involve recognizing and ensuring mechanisms for the sustainable development of everyone. For example, persons with disabilities have been disproportionately affected in natural disasters and humanitarian crises, but they are often unaccounted for in data collection and policy implementation for their protection. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing shortcomings, and assessments from available data show the need for more robust cooperation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in data collection and monitoring.³⁶

Persons with disabilities also continue to face challenges in meaningful participation in inclusive development and humanitarian interventions. While evidence shows that persons with disabilities are being increasingly consulted on a range of issues, the preconditions necessary for meaningful consultation are still not being provided. In addition, there is continued lack of investment in

³⁶ Tessa Hillgrove, Jen Blyth, Felix Kiefel-Johnson, and Wesley Pryor. "A Synthesis of Findings from 'Rapid Assessments' of Disability and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Response and Disability-Inclusive Data Collection." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 18, no. 18 (2021): 9701–.

strengthening the capacities of organizations of persons with disabilities to be equipped to respond to increasing demands for technical inputs to inclusive development and humanitarian programs.³⁷

"Barriers to accessing the mainstream response efforts need to be addressed as a matter of urgency, including specific barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities and other underrepresented groups.³⁸ A keyway to increase the inclusion and accessibility of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts is to intentionally engage people with disabilities and their representative organizations in needs assessment, planning, implementation, and ongoing monitoring."³⁹

Target 18 of goal 17 is to encourage the enhancement of capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase the availability of high-quality, timely significantly, and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in the national context."⁴⁰ The strengthening of partnerships should include persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in new investments that provide training and capacity to contribute to empowerment and development.⁴¹

There is a lack of disability data to monitor the progress of the SDGs for persons with disabilities in which out of 10 SDG indicators that require data disaggregation by disability status, data are available for **only 2** of them, which was emphasized in the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022.⁴² To address this gap, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be included in the data value chain. This is essential since persons with disabilities and their representative organizations understand their communities and experiences better than anyone.

An intersectional approach must be employed to collect, analyze, and disseminate reliable inclusive data, including citizen-generated data and to recognize and use data from organizations of persons with disabilities. Citizen-generated data produced by OPDs, both qualitative and quantitative, can fill data gaps and complement official statistics, particularly in the monitoring of the SDGs and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This use of qualitative data is especially important in emergency situations, so to gather data urgently to effectively address dire situations.

³⁷ International Disability Alliance (IDA), [Not just ticking the disability box? Meaningful OPD participation and the risk of tokenism](#), 2021

³⁸ IDA understands the term "under-represented groups" to be those among persons with disabilities who enjoy less visibility in decision making processes. The disability movement, like other social movements, is not homogenous. There are some groups that have traditionally been less included in participatory processes, or harder to reach, or face higher barriers to participation such as: persons who are deafblind, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons with autism or deaf people. It can also include those who may be less engaged in decision making such as women, children, older people and indigenous persons, as well as people from diverse faith, ethnicity, caste, class, sexual orientation or gender identity minorities. This understanding may differ in different countries, culture and contexts.

³⁹ Tessa Hillgrove, Jen Blyth, Felix Kiefel-Johnson, and Wesley Pryor. "A Synthesis of Findings from 'Rapid Assessments' of Disability and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Implications for Response and Disability-Inclusive Data Collection." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 18, no. 18 (2021): 9701

⁴⁰ OHCHR. Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals FOUNDATIONS. 2020 <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/SDG-CRPD-Resource/policy-guideline-foundations.pdf>

⁴¹ UNGA. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar. 20 July 2020. <https://undocs.org/en/A/75/186>

⁴²The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/>

Data collaborations are key. It is essential to form multi-stakeholder partnerships in inclusive data processes, specifically bringing together statisticians, policymakers, OPDs, NGOs, and academia to exchange information, learn from one another, and create evidence-based policies to create sustainable change. In particular, OPDs should be included in data production from the start to contribute to data gaps and to establish more co-creation and co-ownership of data production between OPDs and National Statistical Offices.

The push given by the COVID-19 pandemic to digitalization can be a way to enhance participation of persons with disabilities - provided it is inclusive and accessible – and for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Data generated through social accountability approaches can help unmask inequalities by focusing on the ways that services are performing for specific groups of users.⁴³ Digitalization for disability and development can generate evidence to empower people with disabilities, and to implement, monitor and evaluate progress towards the SDGs for persons with disabilities.⁴⁴

The emergence of new forms of gathering information, particularly large scale digital information - like social media, crowdsourced information, apps - has the potential to provide new insights and a better understanding of the situation of persons with disabilities. For instance, crowdsourced information gathered through apps can provide insights into economic, attitudinal, or environmental barriers experienced by persons with disabilities, helping to identify places, areas, transportation, and applications accessible or inaccessible to persons with disabilities.

International cooperation and collaboration are the driving factors to recovering from the pandemic and upholding the principles of leave no one behind.⁴⁵ Often governments commit to multi-stakeholder partnerships directed at persons with disabilities, rather than working with persons with disabilities as partners. This perpetuates charity-based models and perpetuates the exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities.⁴⁶ To ensure persons with disabilities enjoy their rights and benefits of development, the cycle of exclusion must change. The international and national communities need to move forward with actions to align objectives with the CRPD to fully include persons with disabilities and their representative OPDs in partnerships for sustainable development.

CRPD and SDGs

Relevant CRPD articles:

- Article 31 Statistics and data collection:⁴⁷ collection of high quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by disability
- Article 9 (Accessibility)

⁴³ World Vision, [Putting People at the Centre of the Data Revolution: The Case for Citizen Generated Data for SDG Accountability](#), 2019

⁴⁴ COPS Side event, [How can digital information contribute to achieving the SDGs for persons with disabilities?](#)

⁴⁵ United Nation General Assembly 76th Session statement by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, 2021. Available at https://estatemnts.unmeetings.org/estatemnts/10.0010/20210914/JhWVRhjcU38c/8q4nSd573T86_en.pdf

⁴⁶ Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities Submission for HLPF 2021, available at [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/29185Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/29185Stakeholder%20Group%20of%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities.pdf)

⁴⁷ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106 Available at UNDESA, CRPD Article 31 – Statistics and data collection | United Nations Enable <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-31-statistics-and-data-collection.html>

- Article 32 (International Cooperation), especially regarding partnerships with OPDS and facilitating access to technology transfer.

Recommendations

- Integrate disability inclusion into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all mainstream policies and programs on international cooperation and complement them with disability-specific policies and programs⁴⁸
- Ensure a human rights-based approach to persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of all efforts and refrain from funding or implementing projects that are contrary to the rights of persons with disabilities⁴⁹
- Closely consult and actively involve persons with disabilities and their organizations in all efforts, including by establishing formal consultative mechanisms that are accessible and inclusive, in decision-making processes related to international cooperation⁵⁰
- Support Organizations of Persons with Disabilities to access funding and opportunities to develop their organizations, and invest in and learn from OPDs' technical capacities.
- Promote, develop, and strengthen the capacity and competence of international cooperation agencies and multilateral financial organizations on rights-based disability inclusion⁵¹
- Invest in data collection for inclusive development in all sectors to assess the impacts of progress and address barriers, and data disaggregated by disability, gender, age and other relevant characteristics to adequately assess the impact of programs and projects on persons with disabilities⁵²
- Adopt and systematically use the OECD DAC disability marker in all official development assistance to measure and monitor financing for disability inclusion⁵³
- Support research and access to scientific and technical knowledge on disability inclusion and facilitate access to and sharing of accessible assistive technologies⁵⁴
- Proactively embrace citizen-generated data and social accountability approaches, by institutionalizing social accountability into planning and budget processes and by recognizing its contribution to citizen empowerment.⁵⁵
- Use internationally comparable data tools, such as the Washington Group short set of questions and the Washington Group and UNICEF Child Functioning Module for surveys and censuses to disaggregate data by disability status that can be used to monitor the SDGs and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

⁴⁸ UNGA. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar*. 20 July 2020. <https://undocs.org/en/A/75/186>

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ *ibid*

⁵¹ *ibid*

⁵² *ibid*

⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁴ *ibid*

⁵⁵ World Vision, [Putting People at the Centre of the Data Revolution: The Case for Citizen Generated Data for SDG Accountability](#), 2019