# Youth with Disabilities Lead: Linking the Summit for Democracy and the Global Disability Summit

**Date & time:** Thursday 17 February, 2022, 11:30 am – 12:45 pm EST/5:30 pm – 6:45 pm CET

**ISL, ASL, and English captioning will be available during this event.**

## **Session Description:** As part of the 2022 Global Disability Summit, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) will co-host a discussion with young leaders with disabilities from around the world about inclusive democracy. Young people make up almost half the world’s population and are critical decision-makers and positive change agents in communities around the world, but often face significant barriers to their participation in public life. Young people with disabilities face additional legal, physical, attitudinal and information barriers to meaningful political inclusion. Supporting the political engagement of youth with disabilities is particularly important in the current context as [research from the London School of Economics and Political Science](https://www.lse.ac.uk/research/research-for-the-world/politics/the-political-scar-of-epidemics-why-covid-19-is-eroding-young-peoples-trust-in-their-leaders-and-political-institutions?fbclid=IwAR0mMcF55QG9IJZCfn9ZAEkNOu1mtGbQhSEBcNeKNGNTJMSrph0rnPGMNDI) has shown that young people who experience epidemics in their youth display less confidence in political leaders, governments and elections. The democracy and human rights community needs to develop new methods to engage/re-engage young people with disabilities in democratic processes both during and after the pandemic. This session will explore forthcoming updates to the USAID disability and youth policies and ways the 2022 Disability Inclusive Democracy Year of Action stemming from the Summit for Democracy can be leveraged to enhance political access of young people with disabilities. There will be two talk-show style panels. The first will be a moderated discussion between Katherine Guernsey, USAID Agency Disability Coordinator and Mike McCabe, USAID Agency Youth Coordinator. The second will be a moderated discussion featuring young leaders with disabilities from around the world. Participants will come away from this session with:

* Updates on USAID’s forthcoming disability and youth policies
* Information on the Summit for Democracy’s 2022 Disability-Inclusive Democracy Year of Action and how they can engage at the national and international levels
* Recommendations from young people with disabilities on good practices for inclusive democracy
* Information on USAID and IFES’ GDS 2022 commitments

Emcee: Iryna Tekuchova, Fight for Right (Ukraine)

Panel 1:

Katherine Guernsey, USAID Agency Disability Coordinator

Mike McCabe, USAID Agency Youth Coordinator

Moderated by: Virginia Atkinson, IFES Senior Global Inclusion Advisor

Panel 2:

Geeni Gunasekera, Engaging a New Generation for Accessible Governance and Elections (ENGAGE) alumna, Disability Inclusive Elections Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka)

Reuben Mpatiany, Narok Albinism Association (Kenya)

Moderated by: Neetha Tangirala, USAID Senior Advisor for Youth, Civic Education and Activism

Register here: <https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_sZQd9gocS76Ip7QRO_3lSw>