

Youth with disabilities: From holding rights to exercising them

Call for action

Preamble

We the undersigned, actors in the field of human rights, development and humanitarian action by, with and for youth with disabilities,¹ welcome the extensive consultations and discussions held at the Global Disability Summit and the Global Disability **Youth** Summit.²

We affirm our commitments to ensure the participation of youth with disabilities at the global, regional and national levels, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We support the efforts of youth with disabilities, who have brought together their creativity, dynamism, versatility, and resilience, gathering in various online and in-person fora to shape their priorities in the follow-up to the first Global Disability Summit in 2018 and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognize that youth with disabilities and their representative organizations bring critical experiences – from the local to the global levels, and across multiple areas and languages - and can play a prominent role in the disability rights arena and the larger youth movement.

Action 1 - Increase decent work and easing employment opportunities

Action 2 - Make technology and assistive devices accessible, gender- and age-sensitive

Action 3 - Facilitate awareness-raising on disability rights, inclusion and human rights-based approaches to youth with disabilities

Action 4 - Ensure access to information, communications and services for all

Action 5 - Access the right to recreation and support sustainable friendships

Action 6 - Address the effects of climate change

Action 7 - Make humanitarian action inclusive

Action 8 - Ensure quality, inclusive education for everyone

Action 9 - Include all youth with disabilities, of all genders, through an intersectional approach

Action 10 - Promote independent living and inclusion of all in communities

Action 11 - Promote disaggregated data on youth with disabilities

Action 12 - Engage youth with disabilities in decision-making processes

Action 13 - Enhance participation in political and public life

Action 14 - Ensure representation in United Nations monitoring mechanisms

Action 15 - Ensure equal access to social protection

Action 16 - Ensure equal access to healthcare

Action 1 – Increase decent work and easing employment opportunities

We commit to easing the entry to the labour market by opening up routes to paid internships and economic empowerment, and supporting policies to promote skills acquisition, lifelong learning, and labour market participation, including social protection programmes that support employment.

We will work together to create avenues that provide decent work and professional development opportunities; offer vocational rehabilitation and skills training; recruit youth with all types of impairment, including the most underrepresented groups; and organize inclusive, universally designed, accessible workplaces and reasonable accommodation.

Action 2 – Make technology and assistive devices accessible, gender- and age-sensitive

We commit to striving to revolutionize the design, availability and affordability of appropriate assistive technology, including digital technologies, and to promote the adoption of universally designed products, services and environments that are gender- and age-sensitive.

We commit to ensuring the participation of youth with disabilities in all stages of this process, including design, production, testing and making sure they reach all youth with disabilities that require them to actively contribute to all parts of society.

We actively support policies and actions which help to overcome the digital divide.

Action 3 – Facilitate awareness-raising on disability rights, inclusion and human rights-based approaches to youth with disabilities

We commit to working to eradicate the attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers facing youth with disabilities, and enabling the full participation and inclusion in society of all youth with disabilities, across intersectional identities.

We thereby reaffirm the legal capacity of all youth with disabilities, and recognize them as active contributors and agents of change in the implementation of human rights, development and humanitarian action.

We commit to working together with youth with disabilities and their representative organizations to combat stigma, discrimination and ableism, through advocacy and sustainable behavior change strategies at every level of society, from families and organizations to government authorities.

Action 4 – Ensure access to information, communications and services for all

We recognize the right of youth with disabilities to access and enjoy gender- and age-appropriate information, communications and services on an equal basis with others.

We commit to working closely with youth with disabilities and their representative organizations across all stages of the policy process, from design to implementation and monitoring, to ensure that local and national policies recognize their rights to access and enjoy all gender- and age-appropriate information, communications and related services.

Action 5 – Access the right to recreation and support sustainable friendships

We recognize that youth with disabilities, like all youth, have innate talents to be nurtured.

We recognize that the barriers preventing youth with disabilities from accessing community supports to develop these talents - particularly the barriers to participation in cultural life,

recreation, leisure and sport – often exclude youth with disabilities from the very activities where friendships are often formed.

Therefore, we commit to supporting stakeholders in creating a culture of inclusion by encouraging and providing platforms, skills and services enabling youth with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities.

Action 6 – Address the effects of climate change

We recognize that climate change disproportionately affects youth with disabilities, and we acknowledge their eagerness to actively participate in the sustainable and inclusive development.

We commit to working with partners to provide accessible information and communications on how to strengthen environmental management and training of service providers, including in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. We will reach out to youth with disabilities and their representative organizations to encourage their active leadership and participation.

Action 7 – Make humanitarian action inclusive

We acknowledge that youth with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups within any crisis-affected community, yet are often excluded from humanitarian assistance.

We commit to working with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and other partners to improve understanding of the challenges youth with disabilities face during humanitarian crises.

We commit to advocating for inclusive humanitarian programmes and ensuring that humanitarian labor markets at the headquarter, regional offices and at country level are inclusive to youth with disabilities.

Action 8 – Ensure quality, inclusive education for everyone

We recognize that youth with disabilities have the right and freedom to access education on an equal basis with other learners, in accordance with their choice and with access to reasonable accommodations and any other supports they require to fully and effectively participate.

We commit to taking steps to include all learners with disabilities in the design and promotion of inclusive educational systems.

We commit to increasing scholarships for students with disabilities and taking active steps to disseminate them, including through accessible communication and formats.

Action 9 – Include all youth with disabilities, of all genders, through an intersectional approach

We recognize that many youth with disabilities experience intersectional discrimination, which creates systemic patterns of social exclusion and vulnerability and often compounds their exclusion and deprivation, particularly in the case of young women with disabilities and youth with disabilities that are poor, indigenous, LGBTQI+ or belong to ethnic minorities, migrant communities or other marginalized groups.

We commit to advocating for an intersectional approach to the rights of youth with disabilities, and to inclusion and equality as an underlying principle of our work.

Action 10 – Promote independent living and inclusion of all in communities

We acknowledge the need to ensure access to community-based, disability-responsive and gender- and age-sensitive support services across the life cycle, particularly during crises.³



We recognize that institutionalization has a major and often irreversible negative impact on the life of youth with disabilities, and that risks of abandonment are strongly linked to lack of access to support - including early interventions, education and employment - within the community.⁴

We commit to taking the necessary steps to promote and advocate for independent living and inclusion of youth with disabilities in their communities, with their active participation. This includes the development of and support to deinstitutionalization strategies and plans.

Action 11 – Promote disaggregated data on youth with disabilities

We recognize the importance of tracking inclusion and active participation of youth with disabilities in all sustainable development initiatives, particularly those related to education and employment. We understand the importance of separating youth with disabilities from young adolescents and children with disabilities in all programmes, strategies, projects and activities, to account for the range of age-related experiences.

We commit to disaggregating and analyzing our data by age, gender, type of impairment, type of support services and other criteria, depending on the context, to better identify and eliminate barriers to participation.

Action 12 – Engage youth with disabilities in decision-making processes

We commit to ensuring the meaningful involvement of youth with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in all processes involving youth and all processes related to disability.

We commit to identifying and removing potential barriers to the participation of youth with disabilities, and ensuring their rights and development.

We recognize that persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group, and commit to supporting organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and of youth people to incorporate the concerns and opinions of youth with disabilities in all programs, strategies, agendas and activities when investing time and resources in OPD development.

Action 13 – Enhance participation in political and public life

We commit to take significant steps to enhance the participation of youth with disabilities in political and public life at the local, national, regional and global levels, recognizing the preconditions for their effective participation, addressing prevailing stereotypes and prejudices.

Action 14 – Ensure representation in United Nations monitoring mechanisms

We recognize the necessity to increase the participation of youth with disabilities in United Nations monitoring mechanisms, supporting them to be nominated by their Governments, elected to the relevant positions and supported in the fulfillment of its mandates.

We commit to advocating for the representation of youth with disabilities on the CRPD Committee, other treaty bodies and special procedures.

Action 15 – Ensure equal access to social protection

We recognize and are concerned with the lack of quality, adequate and inclusive social protection programmes for persons with disabilities, particularly youth.⁵

We commit to advocating for equal access to social protection schemes and programmes that are inclusive of and accessible to youth with disabilities and their families, aimed at greater social participation and inclusion of youth with disabilities.

Action 16 – Ensure equal access to healthcare

We recognize the disparities in accessing health care, including mental health, and the barriers facing youth with disabilities, including insufficient availability, accessibility and affordability of the full range of quality health care services, as well as attitudinal barriers and stigma against them.

We recognize the lack of community-based mental health care services that are responsive to youth with disabilities, and the barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services and information.

We commit to the removal of all barriers to accessibility in health care facilities - including physical, communication, financial and attitudinal barriers - and to the improvement of health care coverage and affordability for youth with disabilities.

We commit to the mainstreaming of mental health requirements into all health care services and programs, including primary and specialist services, with an emphasis on training to ensure respect for the autonomy of all persons with disabilities and the recognition of their legal capacity.

We, the signatories, commit our organizations to implementing this **Call for action** by 2030, and will ensure that it is communicated effectively to our staff and partners, including youth.

We commit to reporting on our progress annually.

We, youth with disabilities and our representative organizations, commit to advocating for the implementation of this Call for action and to holding its signatories to account.

We actively seek those who are not signatories to this Call to sign up and integrate our priorities into the disability rights and mainstream human rights movements, as well as in development and humanitarian action.

To sign or endorse this **Call for action** please email summit@ida-secretariat.org with the full name of your organization.

14th February 2022

Footnotes

¹ 'Youth with disabilities' refers to older adolescents and young adults aged 18–35 years, as defined in the African Youth Charter,

² The Global Disability Summit 2022 was co-hosted by the Government of Norway, the Government of Ghana, the International Disability Alliance, and the Atlas Alliance. The Global Disability Youth Summit was co-hosted by the International Disability Alliance (IDA); the Atlas Alliance, which commissioned Youth Mental Health Norway (YMHN); and UNICEF, with support from the Government of Norway,

³ The provision of support services requires an intersectional approach, understanding that all facets of the identities of persons with disabilities need to be considered holistically, including age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and origin. This was highlighted in the African Disability Forum (ADF) Call for Action on Equal Access to Social Protection Programs, <https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/Call-for-Action-Social-Protection-in-Africa.pdf>,

⁴ As observed by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, support for persons with disabilities encompasses a wide range of formal and informal interventions, including personal assistance and intermediaries, mobility aids, and assistive devices and technologies. See www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDisabilities/Pages/Provisionofsupporttopersonswithdisabilities.aspx,

⁵ Only 28.8 per cent of persons with disabilities with high support requirements worldwide receive a disability benefit, and there are regional discrepancies in coverage, ranging from almost universal in Eastern Europe to 9.4 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 7 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.