



A Multistakeholder Report
for the Global Disability
Summit 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global Disability Inclusion Report

Accelerating Disability Inclusion
in a Changing and Diverse World



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



IDA
International
Disability Alliance



Executive summary



Inclusion is not merely an aspiration, but a fundamental human right. It requires ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, abilities or circumstances, are recognized, respected and afforded equitable access to resources and opportunities. Inclusive societies are better equipped to leverage the strengths and contributions of all their populations, enhancing their ability to withstand economic, environmental, social and other shocks and respond to technological shifts, climate change and other global trends. However, exclusion has significant economic consequences. For instance, underemployment of persons with disabilities costs up to 7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in low- and middle-income countries. Economic losses are even greater if considering other sources, such as the opportunity costs of unpaid care and support that is provided primarily by women and girls.

The journey towards a truly inclusive world for children and adults with disabilities – who represent more than 16 per cent of the world's population – is marked by both remarkable progress and persistent challenges. In preparation for the Global Disability Summit 2025, it is imperative to reflect on the advancements made, acknowledge the remaining gaps and chart a course for transformative action. This report, drawing from global consultations and the expertise and previous reports of various United Nations agencies, civil society, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and academia, offers a comprehensive analysis of the current landscape and proposes pathways to accelerate inclusion.

Understanding diversity and intersecting inequalities (Chapter 1)

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by nearly all United Nations Member States, has been a pivotal catalyst for change, driving national legislation and policy change globally. However, progress has been uneven, with persistent or widening gaps in critical areas such as in education, food security, health, employment and poverty reduction.

Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Their life experiences, overlapping identities and varied contexts shape the types and intensity of barriers, costs and inequalities they face. An intersectional approach is crucial to understand how factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, the type of and level of

support required, and barriers faced combine to affect inclusion. ‘One-size-fits-all’ approaches are inadequate, and creating inclusive systems and societies requires adaptations to reflect the diverse experiences of persons with disabilities across the life cycle.

Structural efforts to implement the CRPD (Chapter 2)

Over the past decade, structural efforts to implement the CRPD have been the cornerstone of progress. These efforts include developing and enforcing legislation, establishing national coordination mechanisms, improving data collection and analysis and resourcing implementation. However, significant gaps remain.

- **Legal frameworks:** While many countries have adopted or amended standalone disability laws, alignment with the CRPD remains uneven. There is selective focus on certain rights (e.g., accessibility, health, employment) with less attention to others (e.g., legal capacity). Further, provisions for accountability and enforcement are often insufficient, and wide-scale harmonization of all relevant legislation with the CRPD is lacking.
- **National coordination mechanisms:** Many countries have adopted national coordination and/or monitoring mechanisms, which can play a critical role in fostering multi-stakeholder and intersectoral implementation and accountability. However, they often have limited convening power and resources, and inconsistent participation of OPDs.
- **Data:** Many countries have made significant strides in collection of data on disability in censuses and routine surveys. Yet there is a lack of systematic analysis of existing data and disaggregation of standard policy indicators, limiting their use in informing policy design and monitoring. Few countries have collected data on barriers to inclusion and related support needs. Opportunities arise from the emergence of interconnected management information systems and disability data harmonization across sectors.
- **Public financing:** Due to insufficient data and reporting, it is challenging to adequately monitor the level of both domestic and international financing for disability inclusion. Available data show that many countries have increased disability related public expenditures, drawing from both domestic and international sources. However, funding remains largely insufficient to deliver changes at scale in most contexts and is often concentrated in a few ministries (e.g., social protection, education and health). The adoption and expansion of disability-targeted cash transfers have been a key driver of increased spending.

Challenges and opportunities of a changing world (Chapter 3)

Global trends are reshaping societies and economies worldwide. They present both challenges, and in some cases opportunities, for advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

- **Climate change** disproportionately impacts persons with disabilities due to their increased exposure and vulnerability to climate hazards. Persons with disabilities are also frequently excluded from climate action. Ensuring a just transition requires actively involving persons with disabilities in developing, implementing and monitoring climate-related policies. This approach not only mitigates the disproportionate impacts they face but also harnesses opportunities presented by inclusive green economies, shock-responsive social protection systems, and integrating universal design into climate-resilient infrastructure.

- **Technological advances** are offering potential solutions to overcome barriers to information, communication and participation. The digital economy is creating job opportunities, online platforms can facilitate entrepreneurship, and mainstream products are increasingly embedding accessibility features. However, there are valid concerns about the digital divide exacerbating existing inequalities; technology replacing critical human interaction; automation and other disruptions disproportionately affecting persons with disabilities' employment; and issues of bias, accessibility, privacy and safety, particularly with the expansion of AI. Co-design of products, systems and services with persons with disabilities can mitigate these risks and create better outputs for all users.
- **Urbanization** contributes to the concentration of needed services and socioeconomic opportunities in urban areas, widening gaps with rural areas. Within urban areas, persons with disabilities continue to face exclusion due to inaccessibility of transportation, housing, digital infrastructure and public spaces. They also encounter additional challenges, such as heightened accessibility difficulties in informal settlements, elevated risk of homelessness, and managing higher living costs, weakened community support, social isolation and health risks associated with cities. Addressing these issues requires systematically integrating universal design in urban development, promoting inclusive community engagement, expanding inclusive services and developing care and support systems.
- **Migration and displacement** can present distinct experiences for persons with disabilities. They may have additional push and pull factors such as seeking better access to services or to escape disability-based discrimination and persecution. Persons with disabilities can face heightened risks during journeys and significant barriers to integration due to inaccessible services, negative social attitudes, discriminatory migration laws and inaccessible application processes, including refugee status determinations. Change is needed towards accessible migration procedures, targeted support during journeys, inclusive community services, improved social attitudes and protection of legal rights for migrants and displaced persons with disabilities.
- The evolving **care and support economy** challenges a status quo of inadequate support to persons with disabilities and stark gender inequalities in provision of unpaid work. Ageing populations, rising labour participation of women and lack of inclusive environments are increasing the demand for care and support. At the same time, women, care workers and persons with disabilities are advocating for systems promoting equal opportunities, dignity, autonomy, choice and decent work for all. Developing inclusive, age-sensitive and gender-responsive care and support policies and systems will require rights-based frameworks, adequate investment in community-based services and commitment to de-institutionalization. Equal participation of OPDs and persons with disabilities (particularly women with disabilities and persons with high support needs), alongside women's groups and other persons providing and requiring care and support, is essential to effective reforms.
- **Humanitarian crises and emergencies** disproportionately impact persons with disabilities. They are at heightened risk of death, violence, abuse and negative effects on their health, livelihoods, education and participation. These gaps are in danger of widening, as shortfalls in humanitarian financing may lead to de-prioritization of support to persons with disabilities. Inclusive humanitarian actions and emergency responses are therefore critical, and may include accessible early-warning systems, preparedness planning and comprehensive vulnerability, needs and risk assessments. Recovery and reconstruction should also promote accessibility and inclusion. OPDs must play critical roles across these actions, through participation in all decision-making, coordination, implementation and monitoring processes.

Pathways to accelerating inclusion (Chapter 4)

Many countries face persistent challenges to ensuring the rights of all persons with disabilities as guaranteed by the CRPD, including inadequate resources, inconsistent political commitment and insufficient coordination. These challenges are more pronounced in lower-income and fragile contexts, including humanitarian settings, although high-income countries also fall short of CRPD commitments. Fragmented approaches to inclusion in turn hinder systemic impact.

The capacity of education, health, employment and social protection and other sectors to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities depends in part on the underlying strength of these systems. Yet 15 years of global efforts to implement the CRPD have shown that pathways to accelerate inclusion exist in all contexts, whatever the level of maturity and resources of those systems.

Embedding disability inclusion at the outset and throughout the development of national systems is central to achieving change at scale, rather than considering it an add-on that can be addressed when more resources are available. Practical steps can be taken in all sectors, including creating laws and regulations to guarantee equitable access, enhancing data collection to monitor inclusion and identify specific support needs, training front-line staff and other key actors, and systematic engagement with persons with disabilities and OPDs to design and implement inclusive policies, programmes and environments.

Efforts to maximize inclusion will be most successful with cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination. For instance, ensuring children with disabilities receive a quality, inclusive education depends not only on education sector policies and programmes but on a wide range of actions by other sectors and actors (e.g., timely early intervention and other health-care services to enhance functioning and well-being, appropriate assistive technology to support learning and mobility, accessible transport to and from school and stigma reduction in communities). This implies coordinated investment in a set of enablers that contribute to inclusion efforts in all sectors, such as:

- **Improving the accessibility** of infrastructure, systems, products and services for persons with diverse access needs through creating, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards and action plans.
- **Combatting stigma and discrimination** around disability, including through anti-discrimination laws and policies, awareness raising and opportunities for positive interactions between persons with and without disabilities.
- **Building care and support systems** that enable independent living and autonomy of persons with disabilities, while redistributing and valuing unpaid care and support provided predominantly by women and girls and progressing de-institutionalization.
- **Increasing access to affordable and quality assistive technology** by strengthening supply chains, cross-sector coordination and workforce capacity.
- **Enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs in decision-making**, including through removal of barriers to political participation, ensuring accessible and inclusive feedback mechanisms to inform policies and programmes, and sustainable financing for OPDs.

Financing acceleration of inclusion (Chapter 5)

Adequate and sustainable financing is essential to translate policy commitments into action. Yet, disability-related public spending remains marginal in many low- and middle-income countries. Further, the lack of systematic consideration of accessibility and inclusion requirements in national development plans, financing strategies and public finance management leads to inefficiencies and may create or perpetuate barriers rather than removing them.

Analysis of public expenditures in selected low- and middle-income countries shows that basic disability related interventions in health, education and social protection are typically achieved with public spending of around 0.1 per cent of GDP, while more comprehensive social protection measures require investments closer to 0.5 per cent of GDP. In many low- and middle-income countries, significant increases in disability related public spending will be required to reach these levels.

Adequate financing requires more consistent investment by all ministries to ensure equitable access of persons with disabilities to their services and programmes. It also necessitates strengthening cross-sector coordination and resource pooling to address key cross-cutting enablers. Similarly, earmarked transfers to local authorities are essential to equip them with the necessary resources to meet their growing responsibilities in promoting disability inclusion.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) and philanthropy are important funding streams to setting up required support systems and catalysing scale up in low- and middle-income countries. However, a commitment to systematic disability inclusion across all relevant ODA funded programmes, and better reporting and use of these resources, is required to adequately support domestic financing efforts. As many low- and middle-income countries face significant debt burdens, innovative instruments such as debt-for-development swaps present an opportunity to ease debt pressures while creating fiscal space to support financing of disability inclusion efforts at scale.

To optimize the use of existing resources for inclusion, data and evidence to inform and monitor national and local budgets, and engagement of persons with disabilities in budget discussions, are critical. Meanwhile, public procurement is a key yet underutilized opportunity to ensure that commissioned goods, services and infrastructure are accessible, while also promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and incentivizing innovation. While some settings may have limited room for efficiency gains due to low levels of spending overall, CRPD-compliant budgeting can contribute to progressively reallocating funds from segregated services, such as institutional care, to community-based and inclusive ones.

Overall recommendations to accelerate inclusion of persons with disabilities in a diverse and changing world

While governments are responsible for protecting and ensuring the realization of all rights for all persons with disabilities, achieving inclusion requires a whole-of-society approach, involving the private sector, communities, families, OPDs, civil society and development agencies, among others. Even where government resources are more limited, authorities can prioritize core programmes supporting persons with disabilities and their families and initiate removal of barriers across sectors. They can facilitate mobilization of all stakeholders by providing quality data; removing administrative obstacles and reducing costs of interventions; incentivizing positive actions and coordinating contributions of public entities, civil society and the private sector; and fostering meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

Recognizing the diversity of contexts, resources and constraints, these recommendations are for governments, OPDs, development agencies and other stakeholders to accelerate inclusion in a diverse and changing world.

Recommendation 1: Harmonize national legal, policy and regulatory frameworks with the CRPD, including in response to evolving global and local trends.

■ Governments:

- Review and align national laws, policies and regulations with CRPD standards, ensuring comprehensive rights protection with a focus on monitoring and enforcement and in close consultation with OPDs.
- Integrate CRPD principles into laws and policies adopted or reformed in response to evolving global and local trends (e.g., technology regulation, climate change policies, migration laws).

■ Organizations of Persons with Disabilities:

- Advocate for legal harmonization across sectors and ensure disability rights remain a priority on the legislative agenda. Actively engage in policy dialogues, consultations and ongoing legislative processes to influence reforms that reflect the diverse experiences and needs of persons with disabilities.

■ Development agencies, civil society and other actors:

- Provide technical assistance, capacity building and policy support to help governments align national frameworks with international disability rights standards. Facilitate knowledge exchange, best practices and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Recommendation 2: Enhance generation and use of data and evidence to inform disability-inclusive policies and practices at scale across sectors.

■ Governments:

- Invest in high-quality data systems and activities (e.g., censuses, surveys, research, administrative data) that embed disability-related questions in a harmonized manner. Conduct disability-specific surveys or integrate disability-focused modules into data collection to identify barriers and support needs.

- Routinely analyse and publish data on disability, including disaggregation of standard indicators by disability and, where possible, by other characteristics (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status). Use this data to inform policies and programmes.
- Shape and commission policy-relevant research agendas, fostering collaboration between governments, OPDs, research institutions, civil society and other stakeholders.

■ **Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and other civil society actors:**

- Advocate for stronger data collection and analysis that reflects the realities, priorities and concerns of persons with disabilities.
- Promote and contribute to citizen-generated data to complement official statistics, including documenting grassroots innovations, success stories and lessons learned for effective disability-inclusive practices.

■ **Academia and research institutions:**

- Conduct high-quality research on the lived experiences of persons with disabilities and assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of policies and programmes on their inclusion. Include a focus on diversity of experiences amongst persons with disabilities and the impact of global trends. Work collaboratively with governments, OPDs and other stakeholders to ensure research is policy-relevant and inclusive.

■ **Development agencies:**

- Provide financial and technical support for disability data collection efforts, including upgrading data systems, financing new research and strengthening the analysis of existing datasets.
- Systematically integrate disability into programme data collection, including in baseline assessments, monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that disability inclusion is embedded in all development initiatives.

Recommendation 3: Mainstream inclusion and accessibility comprehensively across all policies, systems and services, including in actions to respond to global trends.

■ **Governments:**

- In consultation with OPDs, systematically integrate accessibility and inclusion measures across all national and local policies and programmes, considering the diversity of persons with disabilities and diverse requirements for inclusion. Consistently monitor efforts towards inclusion across sectors and promote cross-sectoral coordination.
- Ensure dedicated funding for mainstreaming inclusion, including budgets for accessibility measures, reasonable accommodations and workforce capacity-building.

■ **Organizations of Persons with Disabilities:**

- Collaborate with governments, other advocacy groups, service providers, the private sector and other stakeholders to identify priorities and best practices for mainstreaming inclusion. Actively contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of inclusive policies, services and programmes to ensure they reflect the diverse lived experiences and requirements for inclusion of all persons with disabilities.

■ **Employers and providers of goods and services:**

- Identify and address barriers that prevent equitable access for persons with disabilities (e.g., creating accessible products, infrastructure, services and workspaces; removal of physical and informational barriers; provision of reasonable accommodations).
- Develop innovative solutions that can promote accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

■ **Development agencies and other actors:**

- Provide financial and technical support to governments, OPDs and service providers to mainstream inclusion and accessibility. Ensure that all programmes, projects and internal operations uphold accessibility and disability inclusion standards and meaningfully engage with OPDs, including in humanitarian intervention, reconstruction and recovery. Promote knowledge-sharing and capacity-building initiatives to drive systemic change.

Recommendation 4: Identify and address individual disability-related support needs.

■ **Governments:**

- Develop accessible and reliable systems to identify persons with disabilities of all ages and assess their support needs. Facilitate access to existing schemes and services through case management, supported by interoperable disability management information systems across health, education, social protection and other sectors.
- Progressively expand, in partnerships with OPDs, civil society and the private sector, comprehensive packages of support (e.g., cash transfers, concessions, assistive technology, care and support services, inclusive education) and accelerate efforts to achieve deinstitutionalization of children and adults with disabilities. Coverage must be equitable amongst persons with disabilities across the country.

■ **Organizations of Persons with Disabilities:**

- Co-design and monitor systems to assess individual support needs and development of corresponding services to ensure that they align with rights-based approaches.
- Pilot innovative service models and proof-of-concept initiatives to showcase the types of services required for effective disability inclusion.

■ **NGOs and private sector:**

- With OPDs and local governments, test and pilot innovative services and products, including assistive technology and support services that address the diverse support needs of persons with disabilities. Contribute to scale up services across the country in partnership with national governments.

■ **Development agencies:**

- Support the piloting and scaling of innovative, context-relevant and quality services, products and systems, including disability management information systems, care and support services, assistive and digital technology. Strengthen case management systems to streamline service delivery and inform policy and planning.

Recommendation 5: Scale up financing for disability inclusion.

■ Governments:

- Track disability-related public expenditures, assess financing gaps and develop costed action plans with the meaningful participation of OPDs to inform national and local budgets, development plans and financing strategies with the aim to increase and optimize public spending to scale up inclusion across sectors.
- Strengthen coordination between sectors and between national and local governments to optimize resource allocation and prevent service fragmentation.
- Consider strategies such as time-bound budget earmarking across ministries to ensure all sectors contribute to inclusion, as well as targeted financing mechanisms, such as disability funds, with clear objectives and dedicated resources.
- Adopt public procurement regulations that ensure accessibility and inclusiveness of infrastructure, goods and services purchased with public funds and that promote innovation and employment of persons with disabilities.
- Facilitate and co-finance contributions of civil society for expansion of service delivery. Enable and leverage private sector investment and innovative financing models.
- Systematically consider disability inclusion in negotiation with development agencies to expand resources for disability inclusion across sectors. Involve OPDs in internationally funded programmes.

■ Organizations of Persons with Disabilities:

- Advocate for increased and equitable financing for disability inclusion that is responsive to the requirements of all children and adults with disabilities. Actively participate in national, local and programme-specific budget processes.
- Strengthen partnerships with development agencies, civil society and the private sector to drive investment in disability-inclusive services and solutions.

■ Development agencies:

- Expand disability-inclusive financing through mainstreaming across existing investments and supporting new targeted programmes. Align funding with national financing strategies to maximize impact and engage OPDs to identify priorities for investment.
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms on disability-inclusive financing to improve transparency and accountability. Facilitate cross-sectoral coordination and knowledge sharing to promote best practices and drive sustainable financing models.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in their diversity.

■ Governments:

- Appoint and empower disability focal points in all ministries and local authorities to promote inclusion. Establish or expand cross-sectoral disability coordination mechanisms with mandatory participation from key ministries, local governments and OPDs. Ensure sustainable funding to support coordination structures and cross-sectoral initiatives.

- Support capacity development and operation of OPDs so they can effectively represent the diversity of persons with disabilities and their families in reforms across sectors.
- Encourage joint planning, implementation and monitoring of disability-inclusive policies across sectors, ensuring clear accountability frameworks to uphold commitments.

■ **Organizations of Persons with Disabilities:**

- Advocate for representation in coordination mechanisms and engage proactively in policy dialogues to ensure local and national governments, as well as development agencies and other actors, are accountable for their disability inclusion commitments.
- Ensure intersectional representation by amplifying the voices of women, children and marginalized persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

■ **Development agencies:**

- Fund and provide technical assistance for national coordination and OPD participation.
- Demonstrate effective practice for meaningful dialogue and collaboration among governments, OPDs, civil society, the private sector and development partners across funded programmes.

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