Introduction

Challenges and opportunities of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Disability—the global picture

According to the World Report on Disability, it is estimated that more than a billion people, or about 15% of the world’s population, live with some form of disability. Evidence shows that compared to non-disabled people, persons with disabilities experience less legal protection, higher rates of poverty, lower educational achievements, poorer health outcomes and less political and cultural participation, amongst other things. Disability has been found to affect vulnerable populations in a disproportionate way, with a higher disability prevalence observed in lower income countries, people from the poorest wealth quintile, women, children and older people.

Acknowledging the widespread discrimination, exclusion and marginalization that persons with disabilities face globally, in 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD—which embodies a paradigm shift towards a human rights-based approach to disability—is very comprehensive in scope, covering at the same time civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. As such, it represents a remarkably innovative human rights treaty and a development instrument with great potential to generate break-throughs for persons with disabilities. At the present, however, few countries have the level of capacity needed to ensure its full implementation. Against this background—and building on the Convention’s explicit recognition of the importance of international cooperation—six United Nations entities (ILO, OHCHR, UNDESA, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO) have decided to join hands in the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD). The UNPRPD is a unique collaborative effort that brings together the UN system, governments, Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs), and the broader civil society to advance disability rights around the world. In doing so, it contributes to realize the CRPD’s vision of a “society for all” in the twenty-first century.

Thinking, photo by Arkadiusz Dziczek
Overall objectives of the UNPRPD

Developing capacity for sustainable social transformation

The goal of the UNPRPD is to develop the capacities of national stakeholders, particularly governments and organizations of persons with disabilities, for the effective implementation of the CRPD, including through promoting disability-inclusive internationally agreed development goals.

In order to achieve this goal, the UNPRPD focuses on the following enabling factors:

- Enabling legislation and policy frameworks
- Empowering cultural norms
- Capable and inclusive institutions
- Access to services (mainstream and targeted)
- Access to justice
- Application of accessibility standards to products, environments and processes
- Access to rehabilitation and habilitation including assistive technologies
- Adequate data and evidence

Defining Features of the UNPRPD Approach

A “ONE-UN” APPROACH TO DISABILITY
The UNPRPD responds to the complexity of disability by integrating the different competencies of various UN agencies into a common programmatic platform.

FOCUS ON PARTNERSHIP-BUILDING
The UNPRPD leverages the unique position of the UN at country level to facilitate partnerships between governments, DPOs and broader civil society.

FOCUS ON JOINT KNOWLEDGE CREATION
The UNPRPD works to generate cutting-edge knowledge on good practices and ways to mainstream disability in the UN system operational activities.

CATALYTIC APPROACH
The UNPRPD utilizes its Fund strategically to develop the capacities of partner countries to mobilize national and international resources for the promotion of disability rights.

The UNPRPD Fund

The UNPRPD operates through the UNPRPD Fund, a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) established by the Participating UN Organizations to generate and manage resources in support of the Partnership’s work. A MPTF is a multi-donor, multi-agency funding mechanism used to support joint UN action in a specific geographic or thematic area. Over the years MPTFs have proved to be a very successful way to promote UN system-wide coherence and aid effectiveness as well as exceptional levels of accountability and transparency.

For more information: mptf.undp.org
Governance of the UNPRPD

Promoting inclusion through participation

The governance of the UNPRPD is based on two mechanisms. The Policy Board, established as a high-level body, meets once a year to set the strategic direction of the Partnership and address the implications of major policy issues for its operations. The Management Committee, established as a working-level, standing committee of the Policy Board, reviews proposals submitted to the UNPRPD Fund and makes fund allocation decisions within the parameters set by the Board. The Board and the Management Committee are supported in their work by a Technical Secretariat, currently hosted by the UNDP Poverty Practice. In addition to supporting the Policy Board and Management Committee governance functions, the Technical Secretariat facilitates coordination among Participating UN Organizations and undertakes external relations work on behalf of the partnership members.

The UNPRPD Policy Board and its Management Committee are based on four key constituencies—UN, CRPD States Parties, donors, persons with disabilities and broader civil society. Each Board member is expected to act also as representative of its constituency peers. In addition, the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons Disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the UN Commission on Social Development are invited to advise the Board, together with two other appointed eminent persons, distinguished for their work in promoting disability rights. The criteria regulating selection and rotation of Members are laid out in the UNPRPD’s Strategic and Operational Framework. The UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office serves as Administrative Agent of the UNPRPD Fund and is an ex officio member of the Board and the Management Committee.

Centrality of persons with disabilities

The UNPRPD strongly believes that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations should be actively involved in all relevant decision-making processes, including those directly concerning them. The International Disability Alliance—the global network of organizations of persons with disabilities—will participate in all levels of the UNPRPD governance structure contributing to ensure that the views of persons with disabilities from around the world are adequately taken into account.
Proposals for funding are submitted to the UNPRPD Fund by one or more of the Participating UN Organizations. However, the Fund will only consider project ideas that can effectively demonstrate a significant level of engagement on the part of relevant government sectors, persons with disabilities and the broader civil society. Disbursed funds are programmed by the receiving organization in the most aid-effective way given the specific circumstances of the proposed initiative—including national execution and NGO execution, if and when appropriate. The Fund focuses on country level activities, although a certain amount of support is provided to global and regional activities as well. Once a call for proposals is issued, proposals undergo a rigorous, multi-stage process of assessment. The standard steps for the assessment of proposals are detailed in the UNPRPD Strategic and Operational Framework. These steps, however, can be tailor-made to individual calls for proposals by the Management Committee, depending on specific needs and circumstances and taking into account four key process requirements: (1) ensuring quality; (2) reducing transaction costs; (3) reducing overhead costs; (4) eliminating conflict of interest.

### Standard steps for proposal submission and consideration

To be adapted by Management Committee depending on needs

1. **Call for proposals issued**
2. **Concept notes development**
3. **Technical Secretariat initial review**
4. **External experts review**
5. **Management Committee review and decision**

First assessment:

- **Technical Secretariat initial feedback**
- **Management Committee review and extension**
- **Sign off by the Chair of the Policy Board**

Second assessment:

- **Project proposal development**
- **Second assessment**

*Joy in the Pool, photo by Kiron*
The photos of this brochure are awarded photographs from the WHO photo contest “Images of health and disability” – www.who.int/classifications/icf

Front page: Love, photo by Abdullah; Chilling Out, photo by Veerecke; Life, photo by Stokolosa.