

The United Nations Development Programme  
Guidelines for disability representation in the media

# «DISABILITY IN THE MEDIA»





## 2023 The United Nations Development Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic

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# ACRONYMS

**CRPD**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**ICF**

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

**ICTA**

International Commission on Technology and Accessibility

**ISO**

International Organization for Standardization

**IT**

Information Technology

**SMM**

Social Media Marketing

**TEDx**

Technology, Entertainment, Design/Ideas Worth Spreading

**UN**

United Nations

**UNDP**

United Nations Development Programme

**UNICEF**

United Nations Children's Fund

**WHO**

World Health Organization





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# FOREWORDS

People with disabilities are an integral part of society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are more than one billion people with disabilities in the world, which is one eighth of the world's population. They represent diverse cultures, genders, ethnic and age groups, races, languages, and sexual orientations; they are residents of urban or rural areas; and they have different social statuses (refugees, or migrants).

They often face negative and indifferent societal attitudes, violence, discrimination based on disability, and the unavailability of social services. To ensure the full and equal enjoyment by all people with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, on December 13, 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Kyrgyzstan ratified this Convention in 2019, assuming obligations to realize the rights of people with disabilities.

Article 8 of the CRPD calls on the media to raise public awareness of disability issues, combat stereotypes, prejudice, and harmful practices towards people with disabilities, and demonstrate the benefits and their contribution to the life of the whole society, strengthening respect for the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

The results of the research conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund in the Kyrgyz Republic (UNICEF) in 2019 showed that local media portrayed disability as unhappiness, deprivation, passivity, or dependence on help from the state or other people. The study of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on negative stereotypes towards women and men with disabilities notes that the media present them as a homogeneous group of people, while the dominant image in the media is a person with psychosocial disabilities, materially unsecured, and without education.

The disability community urges the media to cooperate in representing an authentic and positive image of a person with a disability, the diversity of disability subcultures, the dignity and uniqueness of each person, and their capabilities and potential, which can contribute to the development of the whole society. That is why the idea arose to create guidelines with recommendations on disability representation in the media for activists of the movement of people with disabilities, professional journalists in Kyrgyzstan, and bloggers.

The guidelines consist of four parts. The first one reveals the concept of understanding disability and different models for considering this phenomenon, which allow society to rethink the perception of disability. The second describes the rights-based approach to disability that underlies the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (its summary is presented in these guidelines). The third part provides the main principles that are recommended to be followed when creating media materials about disability. A range of approaches to disability representation in the media recommended by disability rights activists are described in Part 4 of these guidelines.

## There are symbols (see below) in the text to make it easier to read.

Identification symbol of the types of information in the text



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts



Theoretical  
information



Practical examples of approaches  
to disability representation in the  
media



Recommendations on  
disability representation  
in the media



Useful  
resources

"Disability in the Media" guidelines have been developed in Kyrgyz, Russian, and English. An electronic version, as well as a version in an adapted format (Easy to Read), an audio format, and an electronic version in Braille, are available on the official UNDP website (UNDP: official website; URL: <https://www.undp.org/kyrgyzstan>).

# PART 1. UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts

*“People with disabilities are most often presented as a dependent, unkempt, and incapable of thinking and speaking. But **disability is a natural part of human diversity**. This is just a status that a person is “lucky” to acquire. Someone got it in the process of life, and someone was born with it. **First, I am a person, a woman, and only after that I do have disabilities.**”*



Victoria Biryukova is a human rights activist, blogger, feminist, political activist, and representative of the Public Association "Union of People with Disabilities - Equality".



*“**Society is composed of different people**. They may see, speak, hear, move, or think differently; someone is high and someone is low; there are people of different physiques—dense or thin. **It's all about balancing diversity**. Disability is part of this diversity. For me personally, disability is driving a car with hands.”*

Askar Turdugulov, blogger, member of the New Age Public Association, activist for the rights of people with disabilities.



*"Disability is the range of opportunities that a person has and the limitations that he or she has to face. Outwardly, it may seem that a person needs only a cane or a wheelchair to move around. But this is only the visible side of the problem. There are many more. People with different disabilities have different problems."*

Aiperi Aralbayeva, an activist in the movement for the rights of women and girls with disabilities, a member of the Nazik Kyz Public Association of Women with Disabilities.



*"Human disability is shaped by society. I came to this opinion after a trip to Japan. There I saw that people with disabilities like mine can work, play sports, and freely visit public places without feeling disadvantaged or deprived. Our society ignores people with disabilities. In our country, **we are invisible people.**"*

Kanat Abdyzhaparov, an IT specialist and social entrepreneur, is a representative of the youth community with disabilities.

*"Disability is an individual. Do not assume that disability is some kind of limitation or violation. One person can do things and another can't. This does not mean that a person is limited by something. **All people have their own characteristics, and this makes each person unique.***

Nazira Ilimkazieva, blogger and representative of the community of people with visual impairments



# DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

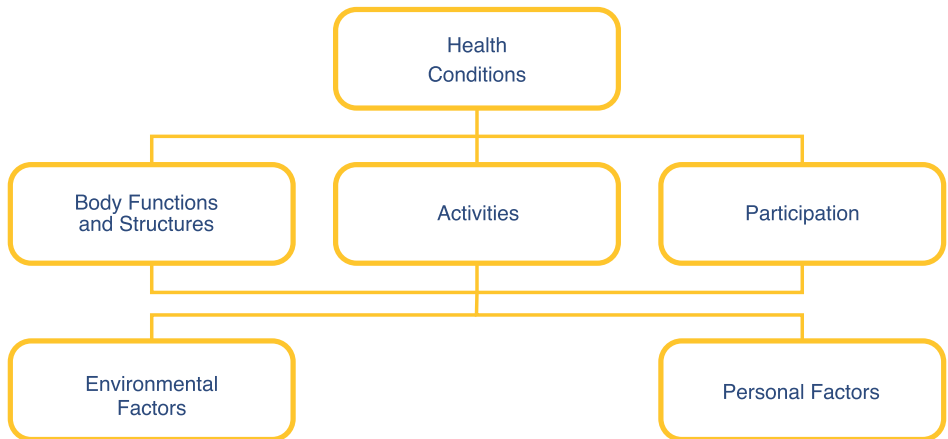


Theoretical  
information

In Kyrgyz society, the perception that disability is a problem, defect, disease, or handicap predominates. However, disability is not a characteristic of a person, but the barriers or limitations that he or she faces during his or her life.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), created by the World Health Organization in 2001, outlined what disability is and made a distinction between terms "disability" and "disease" (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, WHO, 2001



If a person has any changes in his or her health conditions (illness, injury, defect, disorder, or developmental features), they can affect his or her body functions and structures (for example, vision, hearing, speech, movement, breathing, perception, attention, thinking, or memory).

Functioning limitations affect a person's ability to perform specific tasks and activities: movement, self-care, interpersonal interaction and communication, everyday life, learning, and application of knowledge. The ability to function and the activity of a person determine his or her participation in public life: for example, schooling, working, playing sports, or participating in political life.

On the other hand, environmental and personal factors also influence the functioning, activity, and participation of a person in society. Environmental factors are the conditions in which a person is located: his or her home, place of study and work, contacts with family, acquaintances, peers, outsiders, transport, communications, and social services. Personal factors include individual characteristics such as gender, race, age, lifestyle, habits, upbringing, learning abilities, profession, and life experience. Restrictions in one area or another, combined with barriers that arise in a person's life, constitute a disability.

## IMPAIRMENT + BARRIERS = DISABILITY

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was founded on the ICF concept. It gives the following definition:

*“Disability is an evolving concept; it results from the interaction between persons with impairments (health, ability to function, activity, and participation) and attitudinal and environmental barriers (environmental and personal factors). Barriers that arise in the interaction of these factors hinder the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in society on an equal basis with others.”*

## DISABILITY MODELS

In diverse cultures and countries, social representations, ways of explaining, and ideologies are embodied in widespread beliefs, norms, and practices, which are conditionally called models of understanding disability. There are different models, but four are considered the main ones: charitable, medical, social, and cultural.

**The Charity Model** (including traditional, moral, or religious) explains disability in terms of negative stereotypes. On the one hand, disability is a "punishment for sins", and on the other hand, it is a "gift sent down from above". This model considers disability as a tragedy or misfortune; therefore, others should show pity, sympathy, and regret for a person with disabilities and provide charitable help. Such a model promotes a paternalistic (protective) attitude towards a person with disabilities and the exclusion of him or her from society.

**The Medical Model** (including administrative, and biological) represents disability as a disease, handicap, defect, or limitation: a person with disabilities is considered inferior and incapable of independent living. This model promotes the isolation of people with disabilities and placement in special institutions where they undergo "treatment", "correction" or "normalization".

**The Social Model** (including models of independent living and functioning) considers disability as a barrier created by society rather than an individual characteristic of a person. An inappropriate environment, negative stereotypes about disability in society, and communication problems limit a person's ability to live an independent and fulfilling life. According to this model, disability does not arise because of a person's impairments but because of artificial barriers created in his or her life by society or the environment.

**The Cultural Model of Disability** (including diversity and biopsychosocial models) is the diversity of different disability subcultures that are characterized by specific lifestyles. At the same time, people with the same disabilities can have completely different experiences, behaviors, ways of communicating. This model promotes the idea of abandoning stereotypical approaches to disability and accepting the value and importance of the life of every member of society, regardless of disability, ethnicity, gender, race, social status, religion, or life experience.



## Recommendations on disability representation in the media

**Recommendation 1.** When creating media materials, disability must be considered a socially constructed phenomenon, created based on human interaction. Disability is not an inconsistency with the norm but a natural part of human diversity. Disability is not a disease or health disorder; it is the barriers that society creates in a person's life.

**Recommendation 2.** Disability representation in the media should be based on social and cultural models that recognize people with disabilities as members of society with rights, opportunities, freedom of action, and their own opinions, just like other people.

**Recommendation 3.** It is recommended to avoid disability representation in the media in line with the charitable and medical models that present disability as a problem, because of which a person must overcome difficulties heroically.



Useful  
resources



# PART 2. RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts

*"Rights are pillars on which we can rely in order to demand equality from the state. Our rights are not yet fully realized, but the ratification by Kyrgyzstan of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities makes it possible to fight for our rights with its help."*

Askar Turdugulov, blogger, member of the New Age Public Association, activist for the rights of people with disabilities



*"The rights of people with disabilities are limited by society. Our lives are spent in the struggle for basic rights that other people have by default. Getting an education, choosing a profession, finding a job, making money on your own, going to the store, and buying a needed thing are common activities for others, but we have to fight to do them ourselves".*

Nazira Ilimkazieva, blogger and representative of the community of people with visual impairments



*"Our main problem is that we ourselves do not know our rights. Only a small percentage of us really know what we can claim. Furthermore, society is less conscious of the rights that the law gives us".*

Kanat Abdyzhaparov, an IT specialist and social entrepreneur, is a representative from the community of youth with disabilities in Kyrgyzstan.

*"We, the parents, have united as a community to defend the rights of children with autism spectrum disorder. With our efforts, we achieve small but important results for our children. However, these children need substantial state support and a change in society's attitude towards disability. **Disability is not a sentence. It only becomes a problem when a people with disabilities cannot realize their rights on an equal basis with other people.**"*

Zhyldyz Sadykova, head of the Public Association of Parents of Children with Autism, "Hand in Hand"



*"We are the same as everyone else; there are many issues besides disability in our lives. We want to develop, love to hang out, and contribute to the development of society. **Give us the right to share our opinion! Give us the right to feel that we are a part of society!**"*

Kydyrmambet uluu Dastan, representative from the community of youth with disabilities and member of the Youth Advisory Board of the UN Country Team in the Kyrgyz Republic



# THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Theoretical  
information

In 2002, after decades of fighting for people with disabilities rights and freedoms, the Special Committee of the UN General Assembly prepared a human rights treaty that proposed a transition from a charitable and medical model to a social and cultural one. Thus, to stop considering people with disabilities as faceless objects for whom only help, correction, and treatment are "enough". Instead, consider them to be full-fledged people with rights that are equal to those of everyone else, who can stand up for their rights, make decisions about their own lives, and participate in society. The treaty promotes **a rights-based approach**, recognizing that people with disabilities have the same rights as other members of society. After four years of discussion, in 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Today, 185 countries and the European Union have ratified the document. Kyrgyzstan did this in May 2019.

*The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.*

Each state that has ratified the Convention assumes an obligation to promote and realize the rights of people with disabilities. Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are presented in Table 2.

Table 1.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Summary of Articles

## Preamble

The Convention was developed based on the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international treaties. It promotes the recognition of the diversity of people with disabilities, their independence and autonomy, the right to make their own choices, the opportunity to contribute to society, gender equality, respect for the rights of women (and girls), children, poverty reduction, and protection of family rights.

## Article 1

### Purpose

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

## Article 2

### Definitions

The article defines the concepts of "communication" and "language", "discrimination based on disability", "reasonable accommodation" and "universal design".

## Article 3

### General Principles

The Convention is based on the following principles: respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons; non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality between men and women; respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities; and respect for their right to preserve their identities.

## Article 4

### General Obligations

States Parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination.

## Article 5

### Equality and Non-Discrimination

All persons are equal before and under the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law. States Parties undertake to eliminate discrimination based on disability and provide protection against it.

## Article 6

### Women with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple forms of discrimination. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement, and empowerment of women.

## Article 7

### Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities could realize their rights on an equal basis with other children. Their interests and freedom to express their views on matters affecting them must be a primary consideration.

## Article 8

### Awareness – Raising

Society must raise awareness about disability, combat stereotypes, prejudice, and harmful practices towards people with disabilities, and recognize their potential and contribution to its development.

## Article 9

### Accessibility

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall respond appropriately to ensure that persons with disabilities have access on an equal basis with others.



## Article 10

### Right to life

Person with disabilities has the inherent right to life.

## Article 11

### Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

Persons with disabilities have the right to be protected and safe in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and natural disasters.

## Article 12

### Equal recognition before the law

People with disabilities have the right to legal protection and legal capacity.

## Article 13

### Access to justice

People with disabilities have the right to access justice.

## Article 14

### Liberty and security of person

People with disabilities should be provided with the right to freedom and personal integrity.

## Article 15

### Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

## Article 16

### Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

Persons with disabilities must be protected from all forms of exploitation, violence, and abuse.

## Article 17

### Protecting the integrity of the person

Every person with disabilities has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity on an equal basis with others.

## Article 18

### Liberty of movement and nationality

Persons with disabilities have the right to freedom of movement, freedom to choose their place of residence, and nationality on an equal basis with other members of society.

## Article 19

### Living independently and being included in the community

Persons with disabilities have the right to live in their usual places of residence with equal choices, to be included and involved in the local community, and to have access to local community services.

## Article 20

### Personal mobility

Persons with disabilities should be provided with individual mobility with the greatest possible degree of independence.

## Article 21

### Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

Persons with disabilities must be guaranteed the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with other members of society.

## Article 22

### Respect for privacy

No person with disabilities, regardless of place of residence or living arrangements, shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy.

## Article 23

### Respect for home and the family

The state is obliged to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities in all matters relating to marriage, family, parenthood, and relationships.

## Article 24

### Education

Persons with disabilities have the right to education based on equal opportunity, including inclusive education.

## Article 25

### Health

Persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination based on disability.

## Article 26

### Habilitation and Rehabilitation

Persons with disabilities have the right to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental, social, and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. They need to receive assistance for habilitation and rehabilitation to do this.

## Article 27

### Work and Employment

Persons with disabilities have the right to work and employment on an equal basis with others and the opportunity of choice.

## Article 28

### Adequate standard of living and social protection

Persons with disabilities have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to continuous improvement in living conditions.

## Article 29

### Participation in political and public life

Persons with disabilities have political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others.

## Article 30

### Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

Persons with disabilities have the right to participate in cultural life, leisure and recreation activities, and sports.

## Article 31

### Statistics and data collection

States Parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention.

## Article 32

### International cooperation

States Parties recognize the importance of international cooperation and its promotion, in support of national efforts for the realization of the purpose and objectives of the present Convention.

## Article 33

### National implementation and monitoring

States Parties, in accordance with their system of organization, shall designate one or more focal points within government for matters relating to the implementation of the present Convention, and shall consider the establishment or designation of a coordination mechanism within government to facilitate related action in different sectors and at various levels.

## Article 34

### Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations is creating the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## Article 35

### Reports by States Parties

Each State Party shall submit to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a comprehensive report on the measures taken to implement its obligations under this Convention.

## Article 36

### Consideration of reports

Each report is considered by the Committee, which makes proposals and general recommendations.

## Article 37

### Cooperation between States Parties and the Committee

Each State Party cooperates with the Committee and assists its members in fulfilling their mandate.

## Article 38

### Relationship of the Committee with other bodies

The specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations have the right to be represented when considering the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. If necessary, the Committee consults with other relevant bodies.

## Article 39

### Report of the Committee

The Committee submits a report on its activities to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council every two years.

## Article 40

### Conference of States Parties

The States Parties meet regularly in conference to consider any question concerning the implementation of this Convention.

## Article 41

### Depositary

The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall be the depositary of the present Convention.

## Article 42

### Signature

The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.

## Article 43

### Consent to be bound

The present Convention shall be subject to ratification by signatory States and to formal confirmation by signatory regional integration organizations.

## Article 44

### Regional integration organizations

"Regional Integration Organization" means an organization established by the sovereign states of a particular region, whose competence is in matters regulated by this Convention.

## Article 45

### Entry into force

The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

## Article 46

### Reservations

Reservations incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.

## Article 47

### Amendments

Any state party may propose an amendment to the Convention and submit it to the UN Secretary General.

## Article 48

### Denunciation

A State Party may denounce the present Convention by written notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The denunciation shall become effective one year after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General.

## Article 49

### Accessible format

The text of the present Convention shall be made available in accessible formats.

## Article 50

### Authentic texts

The Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts of the present Convention shall be equally authentic.



## Recommendations on disability representation in the media

**Recommendation 1.** Disability representation in the media should be based on a rights-based approach and the following principles:

- respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons.
- non-discrimination.
- full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
- respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.
- equality of opportunity.
- accessibility.
- equality between men and women.
- respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities; and respect for their right to preserve their identities.

**Recommendation 2.** The media are encouraged to comply with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Kyrgyzstan in 2019.

**Recommendation 3.** The media are encouraged to raise public awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its implementation.



Useful  
resources



# PART 3. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts

*"We, people with disabilities, are often invited as "duty heroes", but we need to change this situation, giving us the opportunity and providing the conditions to create media materials ourselves and reveal our potential as directors, screenwriters, artists, musicians, stage directors, cameramen, sound engineers, and other specialists."*

Nishana Jeenalieva, documentary filmmaker.



*"In the media, persons with disabilities are presented as extraordinary and unusual people. Each material traditionally begins with the phrase "despite his or her disability, this person has achieved something." Stop giving us the characteristics of lifelong heroes! Let us try to replace "disability" in this phrase with other words. It will turn out that "despite the absence of four teeth, he was able to master computer literacy" or "despite the absence of an appendix, she was able to create her own business." **We are ordinary people, not special people. Do not make unearthly creatures out of us!**"*

Askar Turdugulov, blogger, member of the New Age Public Association, and activist for the rights of people with disabilities

*"Each person with disabilities has a unique experience. But the media, by showing the image of one person with a disability, often convinces us that this experience applies to all people with disabilities. A person with a visual impairment and a person with a musculoskeletal disorder can have completely different problems. **We are all very different. A person with one disability is not always an expert on all types of disabilities.**"*



Aiperi Aralbayeva, activist for the rights of women and girls with disabilities and member of the Nazik Kyz Public Association.



***Disability is usually covered in the social block, so people with disabilities are perceived as needing only pensions and benefits. When our children are asked to appear in a video, we are given a ready-made script, in the development of which we do not take part. When we are asked to give an interview, they rarely send us to check the material before publication. And then we read or see that the terminology used in the media is aimed at creating a feeling of pity and compassion for our children: "a child suffering from Down syndrome" or "sick", "unable to learn", "problem". **We need to change the attitude of society towards disability, starting with changing the language.*****

Aichurok Kulmirzaeva, mother of a child with Down syndrome, representative of the Santerra Public Foundation for Parents of Children with Down Syndrome.

***"The close environment of people with disabilities (family, relatives, and friends) plays an important role in a person's self-realization: if they support them, then the chances of realizing their capacities will increase significantly. But they may also be subject to stereotypes about disability, so it is necessary to address messages to families and relatives too. Their raising awareness will help their family members with disabilities"***



Iskender Aliyev, film director, Kzyzyk Media

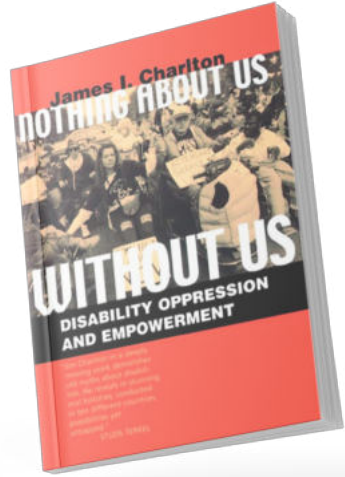
# Principle 1. Nothing About Us Without Us!



Theoretical  
information

The slogan "Nothing for about without us!" has been used for hundreds of years in diverse cultures to convey the idea that no one should determine policy in relation to any group of people alone without the full and direct participation of representatives of these groups. This applies to people isolated from political, social, and economic opportunities.

In the 1990s, writer and disability rights activist James Charlton applied the slogan to the disability rights movement by authoring a book of the same name. In the book, he explained that people with disabilities know better what is needed for them. Therefore, they must contribute to the development of legislation, policies, and accommodations that are best suited to their needs. The motto has become used by a global movement promoting the full participation of people with disabilities in the social, political, cultural, and economic life of society. This contributes to the development of a truly inclusive society and the removal of barriers that hinder the realization of the rights of people with disabilities.



The principle "Nothing for us without us!" is underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also fundamental to media coverage of this topic. This means that people with disabilities should have the right to express their opinions, participate in the creation of media materials, and have access to channels for disseminating information.

The accurate and correct presentation of people with disabilities themselves as well as their lives and experiences in media materials (books, films, comics, TV shows, podcasts) is crucial.

An authentic portrayal of disability through the prism of people with disabilities' own experience makes it possible to humanize disability, destroy stereotypes and clichés that dominate in the media, avoid one-dimensionality or one-sidedness, and problematize disability.

Therefore, the international community of people with disabilities is convinced that it is important for the creation of media materials that real people with disabilities consult, write, produce, direct, film, voice over, and play roles representing themselves. This should become a standard or norm, not a single and unique experience.

***Only an authentic representation of disability will destroy misconceptions about it.***



# Principle 2. Disability Diversity



Theoretical  
information

In today's media, the prevailing "clichéd" image of disability is the wheelchair, which often represents the inability to move independently, dependence, and inactivity of the body. In some cases, the wheelchair is depicted without a person, so the disability is depersonalized. If you look at the coverage of disability in the Kyrgyz media, you will see that any issue related to disability is accompanied by a wheelchair, in some cases even without a person (see figure).



## Wheelchair as a symbol of accessibility



In 1968, Danish design student Susanna Kefoed submitted a version of the sign for barrier-free spaces to a competition held by Rehabilitation International and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). This symbol began to spread widely in Europe. In 1994, it was approved by the UN as a key element of barrier-free design, making it an international symbol of access that can be seen in parking lots, businesses, restrooms, public transport lines, parks, and other places around the world.

In 2009, Sarah Hendren and Brian Glennie redesigned the outdated accessibility sign. Unlike the previous icon, in which a person in a wheelchair appears passive and ready to be pushed to their destination, the new one depicts a person moving forward, independently steering the wheelchair. This symbol has been supported as an international standard, the ISO 7001 image, by the International Commission on Technology and Accessibility (ICTA) and the Rehabilitation International Committee.



In 2017, the international community of people with disabilities criticized the image of a person with a wheelchair, as not all people with disabilities use wheelchairs. Such a clichéd universal symbol perpetuates stigma and forms a one-sided idea of disability in people's minds because most people with disabilities do not use a wheelchair. Disability activists argue, "We run the risk of sending the message to society that bodies are valid and valuable only if they are 'dynamic' and can reach a certain level of physical activity." Therefore, they propose to create an image that would represent the diversity of disabilities.

Researcher Jessica Pang, studying the representation of people using wheelchairs in the literature, notes that "accurate and respectful portrayal of them allows society to understand that they are the same and are able to participate in many activities available to people without disabilities, and learn to accept, respect, and value them." She warns against trying to make the wheelchair user positive only after s/he proves to society that they can achieve something (e.g., success in sports or studies, overcoming environmental barriers).

There are diverse types of disabilities, some of which do not fit into one type, and there are people who have several types of disabilities. Below are the categories, but within each of them there are different forms.

**Intellectual disability** is expressed in difficulties in communication, learning, and information processing, which affect daily life, self-care, safety, communication, and socialization. This type of disability includes Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and others.

**Psychosocial disability** encompasses a range of conditions that affect how a person feels, thinks, behaves, and interacts with others. This type includes autism spectrum disorder, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, anorexia nervosa, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and body dysmorphic disorder.

**Sensory disability** is an impairment of the sense organs. This type of disability includes visual, hearing, touch (skin sensitivity), and vestibular apparatus impairments.

**Physical disability** is a temporary or permanent limitation of a person's physical abilities and/or mobility. This type includes spinal cord injury, Spina bifida (spina bifida), cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Tourette's syndrome, and dwarfism (short stature).

**Multiple disabilities** are a combination of two or more types of disabilities. For example, a person may have both a sensory and an intellectual disability.

There are also **congenital and acquired disabilities** during life, which also affect the self-perception and self-identification of a person. Most people with disabilities have an **invisible disability** that is not visible on the outside.

People with disabilities are representatives of different groups in society and contribute to its development. It is recommended in the media to disclose their experience in different roles: for example, specialists in some specific areas, people who create families and raise children, people who find themselves with the status of migrants or refugees, people who go in for sports, creativity, or art, and also people who represent different ethnic groups, gender identification, and different age groups.



## Representation of the accessibility of the environment through social networks

Askar Turdugulov, known by his nickname Oscar Rice, is a Kyrgyz blogger and activist for the rights of people with disabilities. On social networks, he shares the problems that people with disabilities face in the fields of access to the environment and employment. At the same time, he shares with subscribers his impressions of travel and interesting events taking place in Kyrgyzstan. For disability community, he is a role model; he expands their understanding of the possibilities of an active life for a person using a wheelchair.



## The daily experience of a child with ASD through the eyes of a parent

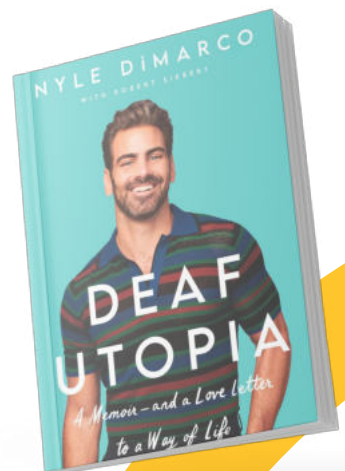


Aidai Imankulova talks in her blog about the daily life and development of her 16-year-old daughter Rabiga, who has an ASD. On her social networking pages, Aidai describes the gradual changes in her daughter's behavior and her perception of the world around her, including the development of communication skills, socialization, and adaptation. Rabiga loves to draw giraffes; her drawings have become a symbol of the dissemination of information about ASD by the "Hand in Hand" center, which the girl attended for many years. Currently, Rabiga leads an active lifestyle: she learns to play the piano, sings, swims in the pool, goes out into nature, travels all over Kyrgyzstan, draws, and learns English. Thanks to this blog, parents of children with ASD are inspired, gain motivation and confidence, and develop their parenting competencies.



## Representation of Deaf culture in literature

In 2022, Harper Collins Publishers published Niall DiMarco's autobiography, *Deaf Utopia: A Memoir—a Love Letter to a Way of Life*. The author is an actor, producer, disability rights activist, model, two-time reality TV winner, and cultural icon of the international deaf community. In the book, he talks about his life, including being born into a deaf family in Queens (New York, USA), developing and studying at school, and then growing up and building a multi-vector career.



# Principle 3. Authentic Portrayal of People with Disabilities

In the modern world, for people, the media is a window to the world, providing access to a wide range of life situations that go beyond the experiences that people have in their daily lives. Therefore, the way people with disabilities are portrayed in the media has an enormous impact on shaping society's perceptions of disability, especially for those who do not have personal contact with people with disabilities.

Most people with disabilities live full, active, and normal lives. They are not objects of pity or heroes who overcome adversity; they are the same members of society as all other people. Therefore, they need to be presented as ordinary people with their own needs, interests, opportunities, and abilities, including disabilities, and not demonized or victimized in the eyes of society. People with disabilities are urged to show them as "normal people in a normal situation", not to build an offended, angry, aggressive, or compassionate image of a person dependent on help. When creating media materials, it is necessary to give people the opportunity to express themselves while creating comfortable and natural conditions, not an artificially created image.



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts

## People with disabilities are not a source of inspiration porn.

Australian comedian and human rights activist Stella Young, in one of her TEDx talks, criticized the image of persons with disabilities, which is often used in the media to inspire other people. When a person with disabilities is compared to other people, emphasizing his or her achievements, which are the satisfaction of basic needs (getting an education, employment, self-care, etc.), and seeing this as a heroic overcoming of barriers, in fact, In the minds of people, the idea of disability is formed as something



exceptional. Using the image of people with disabilities as a role model (look, he/she could, and why are you worse?) she calls "an inspirational porn." Whereas people with disabilities are people like everyone else, they face difficulties and can have achievements like other people. "I really want to live in a world where disability is not the exception, but the norm. I want to live in a world where we do not have such low expectations of disabled people that we are congratulated for getting out of bed and remembering our own names in the morning. I want to live in a world where we value genuine achievement for disabled people."

# Principle 4. Elimination of Negative Stereotypes and Attitudes Toward Disability



Theoretical  
information

**American researcher Paul Longmore, having studied disability representation in the media, identified three of the most widespread images:**

- Marginalization of disability: disability is shown as a punishment, burden, or helplessness,
- Adaptation of people with disabilities: a complex process of adaptation to life in a society, isolation, social hierarchy,
- Disability as a dysfunction: limitation of life activity, opportunities, and abilities.

**British researcher Colin Barnes expanded this list and presented eleven images of disability in the media, most of them are also negative:**

- The Disabled Person as Pitiabale and Pathetic
- The Disabled Person as an Object of Violence
- The Disabled Person as Sinister and Evil
- The Disabled Person as Atmosphere or Curio
- The Disabled Person as Super Cripple
- The Disabled Person as an Object of Ridicule
- The Disabled Person as Their Own Worst and Only Enemy
- The Disabled Person as Burden
- The Disabled Person as Sexually Abnormal
- The Disabled Person as Incapable of Participating Fully in Community Life
- The Disabled Person as Normal.

**The consequences of the reproduction of negative stereotypes and attitudes towards disability in the media are manifested in the fact that in society there are:**

- fear, shame, or embarrassment when interacting with people with disabilities,
- unwillingness to interact with people with disabilities,
- manifestation of excessive guardianship (hyper-custody), which does not allow a person with a disability to function independently, make their own decisions, and actively participate in society,
- isolation of people with disabilities in special institutions: specialized kindergartens and schools, neuropsychiatric boarding schools, stationary centers, or social villages,
- parents doubt their competence and ability to care for and develop a child with disabilities,
- siblings and other close relatives are embarrassed by the presence of a sibling with a disability, trying to hide them from others,
- people with disabilities do not have confidence in their capabilities and abilities, which is reflected in low self-esteem,
- officials do not perceive people with disabilities as full-fledged members of society, do not involve them in decision-making, and show only a charitable approach towards this group of people,
- society ignores the real needs of people with disabilities and creates barriers to the realization of their rights.

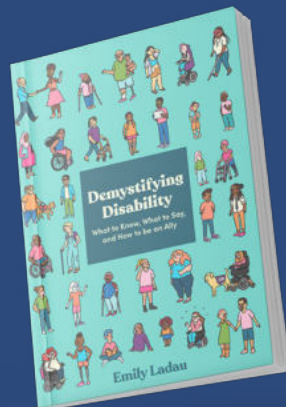


Emily Ladau, author of “Disability Demystification, and disability rights activist, identifies six strategies for media manipulation of disability.

### Life’s Moments

In the media, personal life's moments, when a person with disabilities overcomes the obstacles created by society, tend to go viral, "melting people's hearts" and guaranteeing millions of views: for example, a paralyzed person gets out of a wheelchair to join his first wedding dance, or a man with Down syndrome with tears in his or her eyes receives a diploma of education. Emily Ladau believes that such situations contribute to the formation of ableism (discrimination based on the superiority of people without disabilities over people with disabilities) because these achievements should become the norm and not

something rare and outstanding. All people with disabilities should have the right to start a family and receive an education.



### Great Expectations

When portraying people with disabilities, the media often shows two different extremes: an inferior person or a superhuman. On the one hand, they talk about "a person who overcame difficulties and climbed the mountain despite his or her disability", and on the other hand, they talk about "a person who took the last place in the competition but inspires everyone." In both situations, the achievements of people with disabilities are discussed, but there is no recognition that they, like all people, have different and not "superhuman" abilities.

### Not Your Good Deed

The media also often portrays people with disabilities as poor people in need of help. Videos that touch the audience and cause tears are popular on the Internet: a young woman, an employee of a restaurant, feeds a stranger who has a tremor (uncontrollable trembling of the upper limbs), or a guy helps a blind person cross the street. At the same time, it is not known whether a person with a disability applied for help and gave permission to shoot. The prevailing belief among people is that helping a person with disabilities is a moment worthy of publication in the media, with an emphasis on glorifying the "kindness" of a person who does not have a disability. Although, according to Emily Ladau, this is, in fact, no longer kindness.

### The “Tragedy” of Physical Disability

It is incredibly common for the media to portray disability as an unthinkable tragedy—one of the worst fates to befall not only the disabled person but also the nondisabled people in their life. In films and television shows, the “tragedy” of disability serves as a plot point in the development of a nondisabled character. The story is supposed to warm hearts, but they cultivate negative stereotypes about disability, where the life of a person with disabilities is full of suffering and pain.

### Stigmatizing Mental Illness

As with physical and intellectual disabilities, media portrayals of mental illness are often problematic and woefully mishandled. People who have them are called "mentally ill", "crazy" or "insane". People form the idea that people with psychosocial disorders are capable of violence towards others. Studies have shown that people with such disorders are more likely to be victims of violence than to commit crimes.

### Freaks and Other “Abnormalities”

The media also spreads the image of a person with disabilities as strange and funny, with an unusual appearance, which is presented to the audience as a kind of entertainment, while in fact such an image stigmatizes people with disabilities, creating preconditions for bullying, insults, and cruelty towards them.

# Principle 5. Using Disability-Inclusive Language

Language has great power. Words used to highlight disability issues shape society's perceptions of disability, reinforce negative stereotypes and attitudes, and even constitute discrimination if offensive.

The language used in defining disability should be based on the principle of "person first, disability second." For example, a person with disabilities, a child with cerebral palsy or Down syndrome, a woman with amputated limbs, or a man using a wheelchair. It is not recommended to use negative labels, such as "decapeshnik", "down", "amputee" or "amputee", "opornik", "mentally retarded", "special children," and others. Negative labels reflect the disdainful attitude of society towards diverse groups of people.

A common phenomenon in the language in relation to disability are euphemisms—words that mitigate disability. Examples of euphemisms are words such as "alternatively gifted", "sunny children", "butterfly children", "angel people", "fragile people" and "children with special needs". They are not recommended because they create a misconception in society about disability, detract from reality, and stigmatize people with disabilities. Euphemisms used in relation to disability are recognized as positive discrimination against people with disabilities, as they demonstrate an ableist (protective, condescending, and insulting) attitude towards people with disabilities.

Individuals may not want the public to know about their disability. Therefore, it is important to ask for permission or advice on how to present a person in the media space: include the statement that the person has a disability, name a particular disability, or make no mention of a disability at all.

To use the correct language, it is recommended to get consultations from disability organizations. They, directly influenced by the language, can give constructive advice and recommendations on the correct selection of terms and expressions that reflect disability and related issues.



## Recommendations on disability representation in the media

**Recommendation 1.** Follow the "Nothing for us without us!" principle when creating media materials, allowing people with disabilities to express their opinions, views, or ideas regarding their own experience.

**Recommendation 2.** It is recommended to be interested in the opinions of people with disabilities directly and not through personal assistants, specialists, parents, or accompanying persons. If assistance with communication is required, it is necessary to find an opportunity to select aids (for example, use sign language interpreters, use communication devices or alternative methods of communication).

**Recommendation 3.** When creating media materials, it is important to consider whether the person himself or herself wants his or her disability to be mentioned or described. A prerequisite is obtaining permission to publish information received about a person. There are cases when the opinions of people with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities and their family members are not considered. These people have the legal capacity to make decisions, so it is important to consider what kind of support they need to make such a decision.

**Recommendation 4.** It is important to avoid or eliminate negative stereotypes, attitudes, myths, outdated ideas, and clichéd images about disability.

**Recommendation 5.** Disability representation in the media should consider disability diversity and the participation and involvement of people with disabilities in different areas of life.

**Recommendation 6.** Disability representation in the media should be based on the description of an authentic and authentic experience of disability.

**Recommendation 7.** When creating media on disability issues, it is important to consider language that respects the dignity of people with disabilities. When describing disability, it is recommended to rely on the principle "first the person, then the disability", avoid negative terms and euphemisms, consider the opinions of the people with disabilities themselves, and consult with organizations representing their interests.



Useful  
Resources





# PART 4. APPROACHES TO DISABILITY REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

## Self-Representation of the Disability Experience



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts

*"If the disability community wants a world that's accessible to us, then we must make ideas and experiences of disability accessible to the world. How can we expect understanding and acceptance of disability if we aren't willing to share our insights and our stories? I recognize this isn't always a popular line of thought among many disabled people. Educating others about the nuances of your daily life is a heck of a lot of work, and it can take*



*an emotional toll—especially when there's pushback, or the people who need to learn just won't listen. It makes sense not to want to live our lives moving from one teachable moment to the next. We'd prefer to just live our lives, period. However, the reality is that we're not quite there yet. Whether I'm out and about in the world at large or just aimlessly scrolling through social media, I'm on high alert for ableism, stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination toward disabled people—and there is a lot of it to be found. So, for now, I believe that offering honest and sincere guidance and conversation remains a key part of the path forward for the disability community. That's how progress has been made by the powerhouse disability activists who have come before me. It's how we will continue forward.*

Emily Ladau, author of "Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally" (2021), disability rights activist.

*"Stories of people with disabilities are underrepresented in the mainstream media. It is important for us to create, distribute, and use representation in the media ourselves because it allows us to present an enormous range of people with different disabilities: people with disabilities themselves to share experiences with each other, explore stigmatization, and shape stories on their own terms".*

Alice Wong is a disability rights activist, founder of the Disability Visibility Project, and author of "Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the 21st Century" (2020) and Year of the Tiger: An Activist's Life (2022).



Theoretical  
Information

The movie "CODA: A Child of Deaf Parents", which was directed and written by Sian Heder, was released in 2021. The film's co-star, Troy Kotsur, won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in 2022, becoming the second deaf actor to win an Academy Award. This film also won an Oscar for Best Film of 2022. The uniqueness of the movie is that deaf actors and their children, who played themselves, were invited to play the roles of the main characters. The film received positive feedback from the international disability community for its authentic portrayal of the culture of the deaf, where deafness is not a tragedy or a problem but a circumstance. Deaf characters lead a normal life, starting a family, having a job, driving a car and a fishing boat on their own, and leading an active sexual life (usually in films, people with disabilities are presented as asexual). The sign language in the film is not used as an alternative but is the leading language, forcing the viewer to peer into the gestures and facial expressions of the characters, and it turns out to be understandable even without titles. The success of this film lies in the fact that it involves people who themselves have disabilities; they faithfully portray the lifestyle of this group of people.

American actor, screenwriter, and playwright Ryan J. Haddad, who has disability, notes that the transmission of own life experience in the media is superior to any study or attempt to reproduce this experience by people who do not have a disability.

Self-representation of disability destroys negative stereotypes and myths formed towards disability, conveys the authentic experience of disability, and allows people with disabilities to express their opinion. Through self-representation, disability is reflected as part of the human experience. In an ideal media space (literature, cinema, social networks, and information resources), the presentation of disability by people with disabilities should become the rule, not the exception. Disability self-representation can be presented in personal blogs, thematic podcasts, opinion columns, biographical literature, photography projects, or social stories.



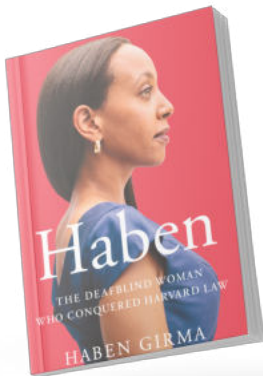
## "Mother's Hands", a short documentary film Dir. Nishana Jeenalieva, 2017

The Kyrgyz documentary filmmaker Nishana Zheenalieva, in her author's work "Mother's Hands," showed the importance of hands in various areas of human activity: playing musical instruments, performing a surgical operation, sewing clothes, and cooking. At the end of the film, Nishana demonstrates her own hands, with the help of which she edits the film. Nishana has a feature:



hypoplasia of the lower and upper limbs. In the film, the director emphasizes not the difference but the ability to function like everyone else, do what you love, and raise your son. Nishana Jeenalieva, in her works, tries to present a positive experience of disability; she encourages women with disabilities to realize their potential in all areas, including art, sports, music, and business.

## Girma Haben's autobiography "Haben: The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law", Twelve, 2019



Girma Haben is a well-known human rights activist, lawyer, speaker, and author of the autobiographical book "Haben: The Deaf-Blind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law." In her memoir, the first Harvard Law graduate with both hearing and visual impairment talks about her family's experience of emigrating from Eritrea to the United States, getting an education, the difficulties of creating an accessible environment for deaf-blind children, employment opportunities, and building a successful career. She shares her worldview and perception of the environment with readers,

and at the end of the book, she gives recommendations on how best to interact with blind and deaf people.

# Disability Visualization



Voices of people with disabilities  
and media experts



*"It is high time to put an end to the invisible experience of disability. News outlets, Hollywood, and leading social media platforms need to work towards true inclusion. The Roadmap for Inclusion is about changing the media image of disability."*

Judith Heumann is a disability rights activist and international leader in the disability rights movement.



Theoretical  
information

Visualization means presenting meaning or content in a non-verbal way (via videos, photographs, drawings, maps, infographics, tables, or animations). Visualization of media content enhances the coverage of disability in modern media, allowing people to perceive the content and draw their own conclusions. The depiction of disability through visual narratives concretizes the experience of disability, gives a certain emotional tone to the message, draws attention to complex issues, and creates a need for additional information. The correct visual representation of people with disabilities in the media is a powerful tool for promoting an inclusive culture. Through visualization, people learn about different disability subcultures, lifestyles, or assistive technologies used. When covering disability in the media through visualization, it is proposed to consider the diversity of disability, a reliable image of a person with a disability, the environment, and an inclusive culture.

## Disability diversity

It is recommended to represent people with different disabilities in materials using visualization. The dominant group represented in the media at present are wheelchair users. Less attention in visual narratives in the media is paid to people with psychosocial, intellectual, and sensory disabilities; even less: mental disorders, deafblindness, and multiple disabilities.

## An authentic image of persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities should be presented not as objects of mercy and charity but as ordinary members of society, engaged in daily activities in all areas of life: study, work or employment, sports, culture, family, friends, hobbies, and entertainment. At the same time, attention should not be focused on a person's disability, unless it is the main topic of the content of the media material.

## Environment and context

While employing a solution-oriented strategy, it is crucial to pay attention to how accessible the environment is. Publications about the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities will be more effective if they focus on the persons and their functioning with them and not just the assistive devices themselves.

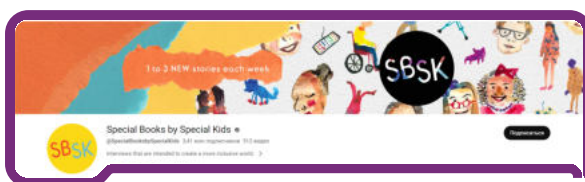
## Inclusive culture

People with disabilities should be presented as part of society, participating in public events, making decisions that are significant for society, having their own opinions, and being included in common actions or events. It is important that the media promote an active image of people with disabilities who have the same abilities and opportunities as other people.



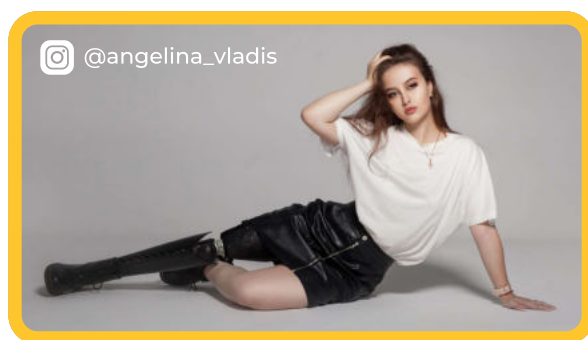
## YouTube channel "Special Books for Special Kids"

In 2016, in the United States, special schoolteacher Chris Almer created the YouTube channel "Special Books for Special Kids", where children with various disabilities share their experiences. Each story is a kind of book about the life of a person with a certain disability. The channel's videos have gone viral, with over two billion views and reaching over 130 different countries. The Special Books for Special Kids project has now been transformed into a multimedia platform, the main goal of which is to recognize the diversity of human conditions as the norm and treat them respectfully, attentively, and positively, with a willingness to cooperate.



## Angelina Garanina: representation of assistive technologies

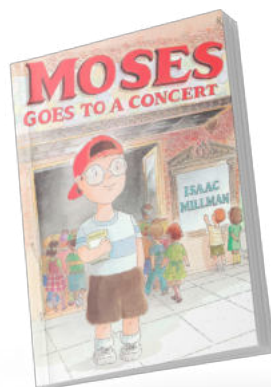
Kyrgyzstani Angelina Garanina, who has a biomechanical prosthesis for her right leg, is a professional model. On her Instagram page, Angelina talks in detail about



the experience of using the prosthesis in everyday life, caring for it, and changing and adapting to the installation of a new prosthesis and auxiliary mechanisms. Her experience attracts subscribers who have never met people using prostheses in their lives.

## Picture book with sign language

In 2002, Square Fish published Isaac Millman's picture book "Moses Goes to Concert", which featured illustrations, text, and picture-based sign language. The book tells the story of a deaf boy named Moses and his school friends. They are going to a concert together. And so that they could feel the music, their teacher, Mr. Samuels, invited the famous percussionist Evelyn Glennie, who helped the children feel the sounds of music through vibration. Thus, readers get acquainted with the phenomenon of sign language and understand how deaf people and people with hearing impairments perceive music and the world around them.





*"I really think that this lie that we've been sold about disability is the greatest injustice. It makes life hard for us. And that quote, "The only disability in life is a bad attitude," the reason that that's bullshit is because it's just not true, because of the social model of disability. No amount of smiling at a flight of stairs has ever made it turn into a ramp. Never. Smiling at a television screen isn't going to make closed captions appear for people who are deaf. No amount of standing in the middle of a bookshop and radiating a positive attitude is going to turn all those books into braille. It's just not going to happen.*



Stella Young is an Australian comedian and human rights activist.



Media are an integral part of our daily lives. Media resources inform, educate, and entertain society. It is also the main way we communicate with each other. Therefore, media materials should be accessible to people with various disabilities, including the deaf and hard of hearing, the blind and visually impaired, and people with psychosocial, physical, intellectual, and multiple disabilities. Media access means that all people with disabilities can freely use websites, online information, digital communications, television, radio, film, and print media.

The availability of media resources is ensured through a multimodal approach. It consists of providing information in different modalities—the main channels of information perception by a person: auditory, visual, kinesthetic, or verbal. This means that for people with hearing impairments, it is necessary to use translation into or from sign language or subtitles. For visually impaired people, audio description, audible commentary, Braille, and transcripts are used. For people with intellectual disabilities, media materials are provided in a simple format, like easy-to-read, social stories, or picture cards. For people with different disabilities, various technologies are used to help ensure media accessibility.

## Examples of Accessibility Strategies for Media Resources

**Audio Description.** Audio commentary uses a secondary audio track synchronized with the media to provide an audio representation of the visual narrative of the program's non-verbal elements, including the setting, costumes, and body language. The description is added during pauses in the dialogue and allows people to form a mental picture of what is happening in the program.

**Subtitles.** Closed captioning (CC) is a text-based version of spoken media dialogue that the viewer can turn on and off. Open captioning (OC) is a text-based version of spoken dialogue in the media that is always visible and cannot be turned off. Live captioning is a text version of spoken media dialogue transcribed in real time during a live broadcast. Regular subtitles are the translation of information into another language, such as in foreign films.

**Transcription.** A transcription is a verbatim textual representation of a given media production. All relevant parts of the original media must be transmitted through transcription, including dialogue, sound effects, and music.

**Sign language.** The use of translation from or into sign language of information in the media, with the help of which deaf people and people with hearing impairments communicate.



Practical examples of approaches to disability representation in the media

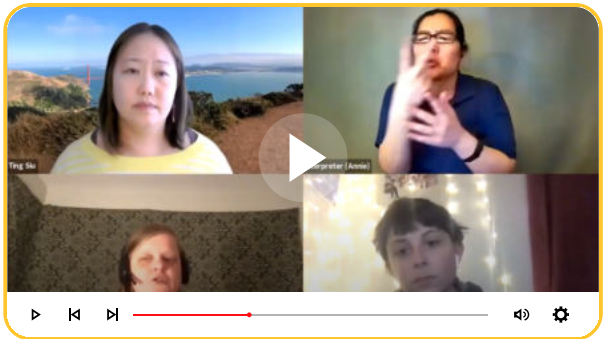
## Vogue fashion magazine in accessible formats



In May 2023, the British fashion magazine Vogue launched the magazine in Braille and in audio format for the first time in its 107-year history to expand access for people with visual ad hearing impairments. A magazine called Rethinking Fashion is dedicated to the justice, accessibility, and dignity of people with disabilities. Readers can get the magazine in audio format free of charge. Those wishing to receive a paper copy printed in Braille could inform the editors about this, and the journal was sent to the specified address. It could also be printed in Braille by yourself using special equipment.

# Accessibility provision for the online session of the symposium

In 2021, San Francisco State University and the Paul C. Longmore Institute for People with Disabilities (USA) hosted a symposium on adapting comics for blind and visually impaired people. The symposium was organized online. During each session, different methods were used to ensure the accessibility of information, among them: audio description or audio commentary with accent music; subtitles, including open and closed captions; video transcription; sign language; and each participant verbally describing his or her appearance.



## Adapted version of the publication

The United Nations has developed guidelines for disability-inclusive communications (2023). The original version is accompanied by a document in an easy-to-read format. It is a method of presenting written information in a more understandable format, adapted for people with reading difficulties.

In the image, on the left is the original text, and on the right is the adapted version.

**Models of disability: charity, medical and social**

The experience of persons with disabilities in society has been explained using different models of disability, which illustrate why societies have given certain roles to persons with disabilities at a given time and in a given context.

**BOX 2. THREE MODELS OF DISABILITY**

- **The charity model of disability** considers persons with disabilities as passive objects of kind (charitable) acts or welfare recipients only, rather than as empowered individuals with equal rights. Under this model, disability is an individual's problem and persons with disabilities are not considered capable of providing for themselves or success of their impairments; rather, they are considered as a burden on society, which bestows its benevolence on them. Persons with disabilities, under this perspective, are considered the objects of pity, dependent on the goodwill of others, and are thereby disadvantaged and not in control of their own lives, participating little or not at all in society. The effect of this model is that society's responses are limited to care and assistance, with individuals being reduced to recipients of charity and welfare only, instead of the guaranteeing them the enjoyment of their rights.<sup>7</sup>
- **The medical model of disability** considers persons with disabilities as objects of treatment, as patients to be cured, and disability as a medical problem that needs to be solved or an illness that needs to be treated. Under this model, disability resides in the individual and doctors know best how to correct and manage any impairment, regardless of the context, will and preferences of the individual. Persons with disabilities, under this model, are considered as deviating from the physical and mental norms and their behaviors and attitudes are pathologized. The effect of this model is that society's response seeks to normalize and diminish impairments as a means to establishing participation, instead of removing barriers.<sup>8</sup>
- **The social model frames disability** as the consequence of the interaction of the individual with an environment that does not accommodate that individual's differences. This lack of accommodation impedes the individual's participation in society. Inequality is not due to the impairment, but to the inability of society to eliminate barriers challenging persons with disabilities. The model puts the person at the centre, not his/her impairment, recognizing the values and rights of persons with disabilities as part of society. This paradigm views disability as a "relational" of society but an element of its diversity. Disability is a social construct—the result of the interaction in society between personal factors and environmental factors. Disability is not an individual problem but the outcome of a wrong organization of society.<sup>9</sup>

7. UNCRPD, Awareness-raising under article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011).  
8. UNCRPD.  
9. UNCRPD, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Training Guide (2016).

7. INEQUALITY-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

Pictured: Models of Disability - charitable, medicalistic.

**Ways of thinking about disability**

People think about disability in different ways.

**Charity**  
Charity is when you give people help or money when they are in need. Some people think that people with disabilities should be given charity instead of equal rights.

**Medical**  
Some people think that people with disabilities have something wrong with them. They send people to hospitals to try to cure them.

**Social**  
Other people think that the way we do things for people with disabilities is not right. Society needs to change so people with disabilities can join in like everyone else.

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Pictured: ways to understand disability charity, medical and social





## Recommendations on disability representation in the media

**Recommendation 1.** Self-representation of the disability experience in the media should become a widespread practice, as this strategy allows the public to get to know the authentic experience of disability and increase their awareness of it, increases the confidence of people with disabilities themselves, and promotes an inclusive culture.

**Recommendation 2.** Particular attention should be paid to the visualization of disability as an opportunity to concretize the experience of disability, to give a certain emotional connotation to the message, to draw attention to complex issues, and to create a need for additional information in the audience. When representing disability in the media through visualization, it is proposed to consider disability diversity, an authentic portrayal of people with disabilities, the environment, and an inclusive culture.

**Recommendation 3.** To provide access to the media for people with disabilities, it is proposed to implement a multimodal approach, including the use of technologies that adapt information in accordance with the needs of people with different disabilities.



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