



United Nations Partnership to Promote  
the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

ILO | OHCHR | UNDESA | UNDP | UNICEF | WHO

# TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE FUTURE FOR ALL

**Voices of persons with disabilities on the  
post-2015 development framework**







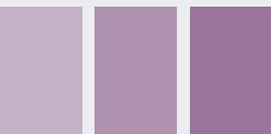
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ON THE  
POST-2015  
DEVELOPMENT  
FRAMEWORK

United Nations  
New York, 2013



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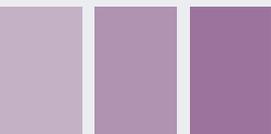
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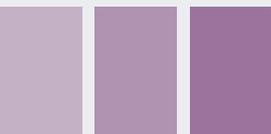
*Rodenson kicks around a soccer ball with friends, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Photo: Allison Shelley for CBM.*



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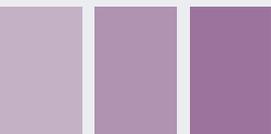


# ACRONYMS

<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CEB</b>	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
<b>IASG</b>	Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (of the United Nations)
<b>IDA</b>	International Disability Alliance
<b>IDDC</b>	International Disability and Development Consortium
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>HLMDD</b>	High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development
<b>HLP</b>	High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>UNDESA</b>	Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations
<b>UNDG</b>	United Nations Development Group
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNPRPD</b>	United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



*Just as I am.* Photo: Carolyn Sherer, 2002.



# INTRODUCTION

“

Persons with disabilities have a significant positive impact on society, and their contributions can be even greater if we remove barriers to their participation. With more than one billion persons with disabilities in our world today, this is more important than ever.

”

—United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, message on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2012

Approximately one in seven of the world’s population—over one billion people—are persons with disabilities.

While data on disability remain a challenge, there is compelling evidence of the barriers that persons with disabilities face in achieving economic and social inclusion.<sup>1</sup>

Universally experienced across the globe, barriers come in many forms, ranging from physical (e.g., the constraints arising from features of the built environment) to attitudinal (e.g., the preconceived notions and stereotypes that drive discrimination).

Depending on social, economic, cultural and political circumstances, as well as a range of individual attributes, the level of exclusion experienced by different persons with disabilities may vary. However, the overwhelming majority of persons with disabilities experience discrimination in one form or another (see box 1).

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1. World Health Organization and the World Bank, *World report on disability* (Geneva and Washington, D.C., 2011).

### Box 1: Key statistics on disability

The evidence provided by the *World report on disability* 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 forms of disadvantage. Disability has been found to disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, with a higher disability prevalence observed in lower income countries, people from the poorest wealth quintile, women, children and older people. For instance, the prevalence of impairment among people aged 60 years and above is 43.4 per cent in lower income countries compared to 29.5 per cent in higher income countries.

Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school, which in turn decreases their chances of developing skills for future employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the gap in primary school attendance rates between disabled and non-disabled children has been documented to be as high as 60 per cent in some countries.<sup>3</sup> This pattern of non-attendance is more pronounced in poorer countries.

Persons with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and earn less even when they are employed. Evidence indicates that microfinance institutions are often unwilling to lend to persons with disabilities whom they do not consider creditworthy, thus depriving them of the financial resources they need to obtain an independent and sustainable source of livelihood.<sup>4</sup>

Persons with disabilities may have extra costs resulting from disability—such as costs associated with medical care or assistive devices, or the need for personal support and assistance—and thus often require more resources to achieve the same outcomes as non-disabled people.

In 2000, Heads of State and Government gathered at the United Nations Headquarters for the Millennium Summit to discuss the path towards a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. The Summit resulted in the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Millennium Declaration, which recognizes the collective responsibility of States to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity for all of the world's people—especially the most vulnerable. Considered a “road map for development”, the Millennium Declaration embodies the international community's commitment to ensure that every person's right to development is realized.

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2. See D. Filmer, “Disability, poverty and schooling in developing countries: Results from 14 household surveys”, *The World Bank Economic Review* (2008), 22:141-163, as well as T. Burchardt, *The education and employment of disabled young people: frustrated ambition* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2005).

3. See *World report on disability*, op. cit., table 7.1.

4. See R. Mersland, N. F. Bwire and G. Mukasa, “Access to Mainstream Microfinance Services for Persons with Disabilities: Lessons Learned from Uganda”, *Disability Studies Quarterly* (2009), 29(1).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed in 2001 as a mechanism to operationalize the Millennium Declaration helped frame international cooperation policy throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. Although not legally binding, the MDGs have significantly influenced national and international development efforts and greatly contributed to substantial progress in several areas of human well-being. However, the global framework for human development outlined by the MDGs failed to explicitly address the multiple and varying barriers faced by the one billion persons with disabilities and did not, as a result, fully realize its potential to advance the rights of persons with disabilities around the world.

As the 2015 deadline for the realization of the MDGs approaches, the global community is discussing a new development framework that will build on the progress catalysed by the Millennium Declaration.

The voices of persons with disabilities have remained largely on the margins of the global development debate. However, if development is the process of enlarging people's choices in order to create the conditions for shared prosperity, then it cannot overlook persons with disabilities. Today there is a new opportunity to ensure that the opinions of persons with disabilities on the future of development cooperation are heard. This opportunity cannot be missed if the world is to move forward in the realization of a truly inclusive society in which every individual has a fair chance to live a good and fulfilling life.

The present publication documents the voices of persons with disabilities on what a disability-inclusive post-2015 framework should look like, and contains practical suggestions on how to achieve this objective. The key messages presented in this report are gathered from data taken from the online consultation, "A disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond", that took place between March and April 2013, and also a series of follow-up interviews with disability advocates in July 2013 which explored issues raised in the online consultation in more depth.

Section 1 describes some of the ways in which disability has been included in the development agenda so far. Highlighting progress in advancing law and policies at the government level, it also identifies the gaps in the current development framework.

Section 2 offers a snapshot of some of the consultation processes that have taken place in relation to the post-2015 development agenda and highlights the junctures at which persons with disabilities and their organizations have been able to contribute their views.

Section 3 presents the constraints that, in the opinion of the international disability community, have been limiting successful development outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Based on the views described in section 3, section 4 articulates a number of key messages on how to make development efforts more disability-sensitive and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Section 5 provides a short summary of the previous sections and looks at the way forward.

**Box 2: Key messages of persons with disabilities on the post-2015 development framework**

- A new approach is needed—an approach that recognizes human rights, not charity, as the basis for the inclusion of girls and boys, women and men with disabilities
- Disability is an expression of human diversity. Combating stereotypes and prejudices towards persons with disabilities is a key step towards building an inclusive and sustainable society for all
- Disability-disaggregation of data and the generation of reliable information on persons with disabilities are critical elements of a disability-inclusive development agenda
- Accessibility of the physical environment, transportation, information and communication infrastructure is indispensable to the sustainable inclusion of persons with disabilities and a fundamental prerequisite for disability-inclusive development
- “Nothing about us without us” is as valid as ever. The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be ensured in the formulation and implementation of development policy at all levels
- Disability is a cross-cutting issue, relevant to all domains of human life. A disability-inclusive perspective must therefore be applied to all areas of development. An inclusive society is a better society for all
- The political leadership of Governments is indispensable to the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, but must be accompanied by mechanisms to facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement and strong channels of accountability

# 1 DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT —THE JOURNEY SO FAR

“

Persons with disabilities have to be taken into account as subjects of development, not just an object of development.

”

— Interview participant from Indonesia

## 1.1. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Adopted in 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is based on the recognition that persons with disabilities should be viewed as rights holders, entitled to the full array of human rights on an equal basis with others, instead of objects of charity. Building on previous United Nations initiatives,<sup>5</sup> the CRPD was constructed as a human rights instrument with an explicit social development dimension and is based on the “social model” approach to disability (box 3).

### Box 3: *How the CRPD explains disability*

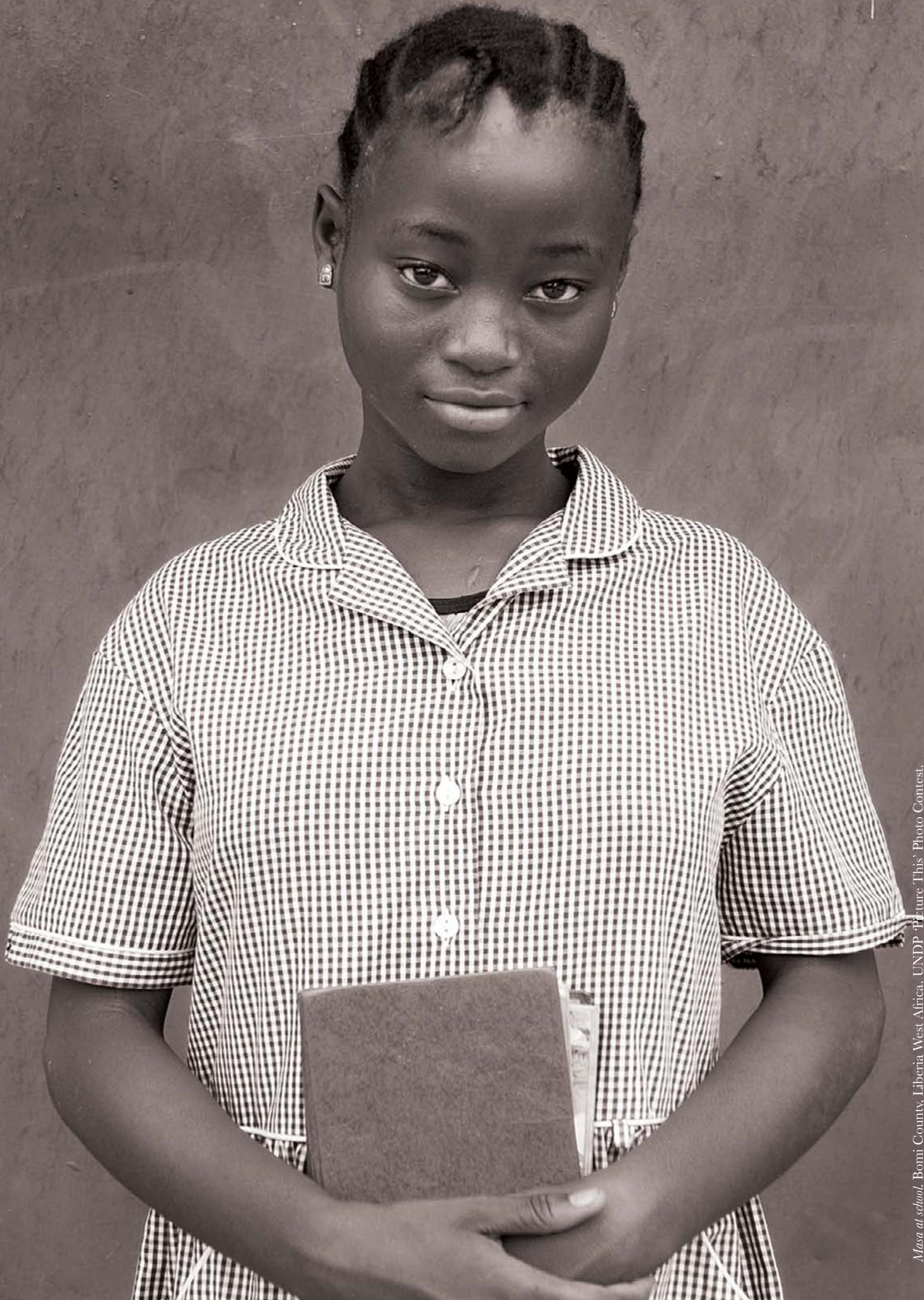
The CRPD is based on a social and human rights model of disability—an important paradigm shift away from what is often referred to as the “medical model”. While the medical model tends to view disability as a “problem” that belongs to the individual, the social model focuses on the elimination of social barriers, which prevent persons with disabilities from enjoying their human rights on an equal basis with others. By focusing on the elimination of barriers, as opposed to treating persons with disabilities as problems to be fixed, the social model empowers persons with disabilities to participate in all dimensions of life as active, contributing members of society.

## 1.2. The CRPD and international cooperation

### 1.2.1. CRPD articles and their links to mainstream development goals

In addition to being a disability-specific human rights instrument, the CRPD offers a new way to reinterpret other global development instruments to make sure that the rights of persons with disabilities are realized. In fact, development-focused measures that are, simultaneously, inclusive of persons with disabilities and reflective of general development themes represent a key component of the CRPD. Box 4 provides examples of CRPD articles which are directly relevant to the three dimensions of sustainable development—social development, economic development and environmental sustainability.

5. See the report of the Secretary-General, “The way forward: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond”, June 2013 (A/68/95).



*Masa at school, Bomni County, Liberia West Africa. UNDP Picture This' Photo Contest.*

**Box 4: Disability and the three dimensions of sustainable development, selected CRPD articles**

<b>Social development</b>	Living independently and being included in the community (article 19), education (article 24), health (article 25), habilitation and rehabilitation (article 26), adequate standard of living (article 28), participation in political and public life (article 29), participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (article 30)
<b>Economic development</b>	Education, including vocational training (article 24), habilitation and rehabilitation (article 26), work and employment (article 27), personal mobility (article 20)
<b>Environmental sustainability</b>	Accessibility (article 9), situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (article 11)

The connection of the CRPD and its articles to the mainstream development narrative provides a strong foundation for the explicit recognition of disability as a cross-cutting issue relevant across all development areas. The CRPD also provides important guidance on the use of a rights perspective in sensitive policy areas such as preventable impairments. For example, it ensures that persons with disabilities have access to health services and public health campaigns, which are necessary to ensure that a person with a disability does not acquire a secondary impairment.

**1.2.2. Specific article on international cooperation: article 32**

Article 32 of the CRPD recognizes international cooperation as necessary to the realization of CRPD provisions and requires international cooperation to respect the underlying principles of the Convention (see box 5). As such, it is the first instance of a stand-alone article explicitly featuring international cooperation in an international human rights instrument.

Article 32 covers a range of measures that span from ensuring that international development programmes are inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, to requiring that all development interventions in the context of disability have a capacity development focus. Furthermore, article 32 emphasizes the exchange of information, experiences and training programmes, highlights the need for cooperation in research and stresses the use of accessible and assistive technologies.

### **Box 5: CRPD article 32—international cooperation**

1. 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, and will undertake appropriate and effective measures in this regard, between and among States and, as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society, in particular organizations of persons with disabilities. Such measures could include, inter alia:

a) Ensuring that international cooperation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities;

b) Facilitating and supporting capacity-building, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices;

c) Facilitating cooperation in research and access to scientific and technical knowledge;

d) Providing, as appropriate, technical and economic assistance, including by facilitating access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technologies, and through the transfer of technologies.

2. The provisions of this article are without prejudice to the obligations of each State Party to fulfil its obligations under the present Convention.

Many of the activities outlined under subparagraphs 1(b)-(d) in article 32 are expected to be achieved through government collaboration with a range of actors, including organizations representing persons with disabilities, intergovernmental organizations and other international development actors. This notion is also reflected in the United Nations “no gap policy”, a concept which recognizes that no entity can achieve the goal of equality for persons with disabilities on its own and calls for an interconnected network of actors to cooperate in the pursuit of this objective.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.3. Progress on including disability in development**

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, development actors have made progress on a range of measures to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the development agenda.

The CRPD in particular has been a very powerful catalyst for progress towards the realization of disability rights. Many States parties to the CRPD have made significant strides in improving

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6. See the note by the Secretariat to the Commission for Social Development at its forty-sixth session (6-15 February 2008), submitted under item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda, “Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: emerging issues: ‘Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda’”. Available from [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=708](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=708).

laws and policies and have adopted a variety of programmes, strategies and action plans that promote the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society and development. Other Member States which have not yet ratified the CRPD nonetheless took a series of actions in the spirit of the Convention, often as part of a process towards ratification.<sup>7</sup>

Various Governments have also made progress in furthering disability-inclusion as part of their development cooperation strategies. A review by the World Bank in 2010 found a number of encouraging trends in the development cooperation policies adopted by Governments and other development actors, such as the adoption of the twin-track approach to including persons with disabilities in development.<sup>8</sup>

#### **BOX 6: *Twin-track approach***

A twin-track approach is an approach to the promotion of human rights that combines mainstreaming and targeted interventions. In the twin-track approach, two courses of action are pursued simultaneously: 1) measures are adopted to make general-public services, processes and institutions more accessible to a discriminated group; and, at the same time, 2) steps are taken that are specifically aimed at empowering that group.

Significant progress has also been made on the adoption of disability-inclusive development strategies at the regional level. A series of “decades” on the rights of persons with disabilities in the Asia/Pacific, Latin American, African and Arab regions, together with the European Disability Strategy, have greatly contributed to advancing disability as a development issue. These efforts have been successful in framing disability in a human rights perspective and promoting the mainstreaming of disability in all international cooperation and development processes.

Efforts to mainstream disability have also intensified in the United Nations system. In addition to the work carried out by individual organizations to promote disability rights in their specific area of competence, action has been taken to enhance inter-agency collaboration and system-wide coherence. The United Nations Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) for the CRPD was established in 2006 as a coordination mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations

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7. Updates on Member States’ progress can be found in States’ reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available from [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/Session10.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/Session10.aspx), as well as a variety of other reports, for example, the report of the Secretary-General on “Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond”, July 2012 (A/67/211).

8. See J. Lord and others, *Disability and International Cooperation and Development: A Review of Policies and Practices*, World Bank, Social Protection Discussion Paper, No. 1003, May 2010.

System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).<sup>9</sup> In 2011, the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) was launched as a platform to promote United Nations joint programming on disability at the country, regional and global levels.<sup>10</sup>

### **Box 7: The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) is a unique collaborative effort that brings together United Nations entities, Governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and broader civil society to advance disability rights around the world. The UNPRPD supports the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by facilitating coalition-building and capacity development at country, regional and global levels. In doing so, it leverages the comparative advantage of multiple stakeholders to contribute to the realization of a “society for all” in the twenty-first century.

The United Nations entities participating in the UNPRPD are the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (UNDESA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The UNDP Poverty Group serves as the Technical Secretariat for the Partnership. The UNPRPD works closely with multiple civil society organizations, including the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC).

Established in 2011, the UNPRPD is currently supporting 13 projects benefiting a total of 16 countries. These projects—ranging from inclusive education to work and livelihoods, from promoting the rights of persons with intellectual and mental disabilities to developing national capacity for data collection—have significantly contributed to strengthening collaboration among Governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and the United Nations system in the promotion of disability rights.

## **1.4. Lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals**

Despite the progress highlighted above, there have undoubtedly been many shortcomings in the process of integrating disability in development.

One of the significant lessons learned from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is that disability is unlikely to be fully taken into account in development efforts

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9. Detailed information on the work carried out by individual United Nations entities is provided under the IASG page of the United Nations Enable website, available from [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=45&pid=323](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=45&pid=323).

10. Detailed information on the UNPRPD is provided under the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, available from <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/RPD00>.



*Easy Access. Photo: Arthur Calasans. WHO Photo Contest 'Images of Health and Disability', 2003.*

unless it is explicitly articulated, formally recognized and proactively monitored as a relevant area of intervention. In fact, the assumption that disability can be included implicitly (as opposed to explicitly) in development frameworks resulted in the absence of persons with disabilities not only from the general formulation of the MDGs but also from the efforts aimed towards their realization.<sup>11</sup>

The United Nations report *Disability and the Millennium Goals: A Review of the MDG Process and Strategies for Inclusion of Disability Issues in Millennium Development Goal Efforts* (2011) notes that the failure to explicitly articulate the disability dimension of development resulted in a missed opportunity to include persons with disabilities in programmes to implement the MDGs, campaigns to build awareness of the Goals and efforts to promote civil society participation in MDG-related efforts.<sup>12</sup>

Failure to explicitly draw the link between disability and the MDGs also resulted in the lack of disability-related statistics in the monitoring of MDG progress. A research exercise carried out on 80 MDG country reports for the 2009 Secretary-General's Report on realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities, found that disability was specifically addressed in only half of the country reports, with the majority of references to disability within the context of MDG 1 (Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and MDG 2 (Achieve universal primary education).<sup>13</sup>

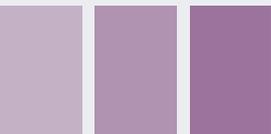
Inclusion in development, the MDG experience shows, does not happen automatically. It requires a conscious and proactive effort to reach out to those who have been left behind. It requires also—and perhaps more importantly—the meaningful participation of those to be “included” in the early stages of key goal-setting processes. In this light, the following section will discuss how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have been involved so far in discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.

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11. See, for instance, N. Groce and J. Trani, “Millennium Development Goals and Persons with Disabilities”, *The Lancet* (2009), 374(9704): 1800-1801.

12. *Disability and the Millennium Development Goals: A Review of the MDG Process and Strategies for Inclusion of Disability Issues in the Millennium Development Goal Efforts, 2011* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.IV.10).

13. Report of the Secretary-General, “Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities through the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning disabled persons and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, July 2009 (A/64/180).



## 2 INCLUDING THE VOICE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

in discussions for a new development agenda

“

Persons with disabilities were absent from the Millennium Declaration, and remained absent throughout the MDG processes. This cannot happen again. Now is the time to recognize the shortcomings of the MDGs, and ensure a positive shift towards mainstreaming disabilities in the new global partnership, beginning in 2015.

”

—Yannis Vardakastanis, Chair, International Disability Alliance

### **2.1. Principle of consulting with persons with disabilities: “Nothing about us without us”**

The principle of meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations envisaged by the CRPD is designed to empower persons with disabilities by including them in political and social decision-making on issues that affect their lives. Inspired by the motto of the international disability community, “nothing about us without us”, this principle was essential to the process that led to the development of the CRPD and is integral to its very essence.

The requirement of “full and effective participation and inclusion in society” is enshrined in article 3 of the CRPD. More specifically, article 4.3 requires that States parties closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development of policies to implement the CRPD, as well as other decision-making processes that concern them. Article 33.3 calls for civil society’s active role in monitoring implementation of the CRPD. Article 32 stipulates that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations be involved in relevant aspects of international cooperation.

## **2.2. Involvement of persons with disabilities in the global conversation on the future of development cooperation**

While the focus of the international community continues to be on tackling the unfinished business of the MDGs, a debate has also begun on what the international development agenda should look like after 2015.

In 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed a High-level Panel of Eminent Persons to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015. In 2013, an Open Working Group was given the task of preparing a proposal for sustainable development goals pursuant to the recommendations formulated in the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Multiple consultations and working group meetings took place throughout 2012 and 2013 to discuss the future of global development.

At the same time, acknowledging the need to step up efforts to include persons with disabilities in mainstream development, the United Nations General Assembly resolved to convene a High-level Meeting on disability and development (HLMDD) in September 2013 under the theme “The way forward: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond”.

The following sections provide examples of how organizations of persons with disabilities have seized some of these opportunities to engage in the conversation on the future of development cooperation.

### **2.2.1. UNDG-facilitated consultations on the post-2015 development framework**

In 2012, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) launched a set of eleven thematic consultations and national consultations in almost 100 countries. Jointly organized by various United Nations entities and with support from civil society organizations and other stakeholders, the consultations helped guide thinking on how to include emerging and pressing issues in the post-2015 development agenda.

The themes covered by the eleven thematic consultations were: (1) conflict and fragility; (2) education; (3) environmental sustainability; (4) governance; (5) growth and employment; (6) health; (7) hunger, food and nutrition security; (8) inequalities; (9) population dynamics; (10) energy; and (11) water.

Disability was addressed most specifically by the consultation on inequalities, which highlighted the risk of discrimination facing persons with disabilities,<sup>14</sup> and how this discrimination translates into higher unemployment,<sup>15</sup> lower access to legal protection and limited involvement in decision-making.<sup>16</sup>

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14. *Synthesis Report on the Global Thematic Consultation on Addressing Inequalities*, March 2013, pp. 13 and 17, available from <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/299198>.

15. *Ibid* p. 22.

16. *Ibid* p. 24, 39- 41.

However, disability was also mentioned in the outcome documents of other thematic consultations.

The outcome document of the thematic consultation on “Health” identifies persons with disabilities as a key population to consider for the post-2015 agenda. The vulnerability of persons with disabilities to HIV and to natural disasters and conflict are also referenced in the document. Furthermore, the outcome document of the thematic consultation on health recognizes persons with disabilities as a group facing significant human rights violations and frequent discrimination.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, disability is mentioned throughout discussions regarding health inequalities and the need for disaggregated indicators in the new development framework.

The outcome documents of the thematic consultations on “Education” and “Employment” recognize the marginalization of persons with disabilities and the disadvantage they experience in accessing education opportunities and labour markets. The outcome document of the thematic consultation on “Governance” acknowledges that persons with disabilities lack power and voice as a group.<sup>18</sup> The outcome documents of the thematic consultations on “Food security and nutrition”, “Population dynamics,” and “Water” also briefly reference disability.

In addition, a review of the available online data and country consultation reports indicates that many national consultations either made particular efforts to include persons with disabilities in the consultation process, or referenced disability in their outcome report.<sup>19</sup> As highlighted in the UNDG report, “The Global Conversation Begins”, persons with disabilities and their organizations used the opportunity to raise issues such as social protection and education, as well as the fact that aspirations of achieving universal coverage for critical services cannot be achieved unless disability is specifically taken into account.<sup>20</sup> As noted by a participant from Kenya during one of the national consultations:

“

Reports indicate that there is up to 95 percent enrolment in schools. Has anyone identified whether those missing are the children with disabilities?

”

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17. *Health in the Post-2015 Agenda: Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Health*, April 2013, available from [http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/health-in-the-post-2015-agenda\\_LR.pdf](http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/health-in-the-post-2015-agenda_LR.pdf).

18. *Global Thematic Consultation on Governance and the Post-2015 Development Framework*, July 2013, available from <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/governance/finalreport>.

19. Detailed information on country reports is available from [www.worldwewant2015.org](http://www.worldwewant2015.org).

20. See United Nations Development Group, *The Global Conversation Begins: Emerging Views For A New Development Agenda*, 2013, available from <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/841global-conversation-begins-web.pdf>.

### 2.2.2. High-level Panel and the voice of persons with disabilities

Three consultations were held between 2012 and 2013 by the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in London; Bali, Indonesia; and Monrovia. Members of the international disability community attended each of the three meetings and contributed the perspective of persons with disabilities as an input to the Panel's final report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economics through Sustainable Development*.

Under the theme 'Leave no one behind', the Panel's report calls for the removal of the barriers that prevent marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, from accessing opportunities and enjoying their rights on an equal basis with others. The report also emphasizes the importance of disability-disaggregated data: "data—it is said—must enable us to reach the neediest, and find out whether they are receiving essential services. This means that data gathered will need to be disaggregated by gender, geography, income, disability, and other categories, to make sure that no group is being left behind." Other recommendations include the need to recognize disability as a cross-cutting issue with a direct bearing on multiple sectors of development.

#### **Box 8: Persons with disabilities have their voices heard**

Disability leaders and activists met in Bali, Indonesia, on 25 March 2013 as part of a civil society outreach forum. Twelve organizations of persons with disabilities from Indonesia and five international non-governmental organizations advocated for the inclusion of persons with disabilities as a main target group of a post-2015 framework. Their call for inclusion reflected the key messages of a position paper of the International Disability and Development Coalition and the International Disability Alliance. The rights of persons with disabilities were explicitly recognized as a priority area in the official Civil Society Communiqué issued after the Global Civil Society Forum on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

### 2.2.3. Consultations for the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development (HLMDD)

As part of the preparation for the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development, a series of regional meetings were held during the course of 2013 to discuss ways to make development efforts more inclusive of persons with disabilities. In addition, an online consultation for a "Disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond" was organized by UNDESA and UNICEF in March 2013, with support from the UNPRPD Fund. The format of the online consultation, based on ten questions previously developed to guide the preparatory work of the HLMDD, encouraged participation and stimulated discussion from

a wide range of stakeholders. A synthesis document<sup>21</sup> of the consultation reported that 1,087 contributions were received from 88 countries and from a total of 395 individual participants. Contributors came from a variety of backgrounds, including non-governmental organizations, academia, Governments, United Nations entities and individuals.

The online consultation provided persons with disabilities from different parts of the world the opportunity to offer their ideas on what the future of development should look like. It also raised several challenges and ideas on how to overcome them. These aspirations, obstacles and possible solutions are discussed in sections 3 and 4 of the present publication.

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21. See the report of the online consultation for a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond, available from [http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/hlmdd/hlmdd\\_report\\_online\\_consultations.doc](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/hlmdd/hlmdd_report_online_consultations.doc).



Kiss. Photo: Sujjan, WHO Photo Contest.

# 3 KEY CHALLENGES TO DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

“

Persons with disabilities have been left out of so much, for so long, that now the world must make an earnest endeavour to ensure that they're included in all aspects of development.

”

—Interview participant from India

This section presents the main challenges to disability-inclusive development as identified by persons with disabilities during the online consultations discussed in section 2, in addition to interviews with sixteen disability advocates conducted in July 2013.

Analysis of the key themes arising from the online contributions and interview participants from July revealed broad consensus on six issues: (1) negative attitudes towards and perceptions of persons with disabilities and need for a human rights-based approach; (2) lack of disaggregated data; (3) absence of universal guidelines on disability-inclusive development; (4) absence of the voice of persons with disabilities in decision-making; (5) lack of recognition of disability as a cross-cutting issue; and (6) need for political leadership.

## 3.1. Negative attitudes towards and perceptions of persons with disabilities

The importance of combating prejudices related to persons with disabilities and the need to promote awareness of their capabilities and contributions are clearly highlighted in article 8 of the CRPD. However, participants described negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities, including stereotyping, assumptions and societal perceptions, as a key challenge to inclusive development.

### 3.1.1. Prevalence of the charitable approach to disability and the need for a human rights-based approach

The persistence of the charitable approach to disability, which views persons with disabilities as helpless victims needing care and protection, was raised numerous times in the online consultation as well as in the interviews. One interview participant from South Africa commented:

“

There is still a view in society, as well as among persons with disabilities themselves, that considers persons with disabilities as objects of charity and nothing more. This view has, in turn, a direct impact on the productivity of persons with disabilities.

”

The human rights-based approach, unlike the charitable approach, recognizes that human beings are right-holders, and the State, which is the primary duty-bearer under international law, has an obligation to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. Human rights principles—such as universality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability—must be adhered to and technical cooperation programmes implemented to support the capacity of national partners (duty-bearers) in meeting their international human rights obligations and to assist community members (rights-holders) in claiming their rights.<sup>23</sup>

A human-rights perspective is critical to true empowerment. However, the majority of participants indicated that, despite the ratification of the CRPD and its human rights-based approach, the charity approach to disability remains prevalent. A participant from Palestine for instance commented:

“

International development actors and governments most of the time are considering disability as charity rather than human rights issues.

”

Along similar lines, a participant from Turkey stressed how the prevalence of this view delays a process of true empowerment:

“

Persons with disabilities are still regarded as individuals who are in need of protection and assistance. This mentality is a major obstacle to strengthening and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

”

Participants also noted that a charity-based messaging of disability is perpetuated by a multiplicity of actors, including organizations that use imagery of persons with disabilities as helpless or dependent in order to garner public support. A number of participants indicated that capacity-building and leadership training for persons with disabilities played an important

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23. For further information, see the UN Practitioner’s Portal on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Programming, available from [www.hrbaportal.org](http://www.hrbaportal.org).

role in challenging the charity perception, because it raised the expectations that persons with disabilities have about their own potential. A participant from Nepal commented:

“

Leadership is not a natural thing, but is an outcome of environments. Living and struggling with the negative social environments makes it difficult to say we will be the leaders tomorrow or the day after. But if we remove the barriers that prevent our equal participation in economic and political life, we can imagine being real leaders.

”

### **3.1.2. Assumptions that persons with disabilities are all the same**

A number of participants highlighted the common assumption that all persons with disabilities are the same, with similar needs and desires. Participants explained that this grossly inaccurate perception is a major challenge to the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in development policies and programmes.

First, participants indicated that lack of awareness about the diversity of impairments results in a limited understanding of the different reasonable accommodation measures that are needed to address them. A participant from Nepal commented:

“

Within disability there are serious but invisible disabilities, such as psychosocial disability and intellectual disability. In the MDG's all disabilities were excluded. I'm scared that invisible disabilities will be excluded in the post 2015 agenda.

”

Second, participants stressed that the assumption that all persons with disabilities are the same fails to capture incidences of discrimination occurring at the intersection of a number of identities. The disability population represents the diversity that is found throughout all of

the world's people. Persons with disabilities are men and women, young and old, rich and poor. They have different sexual orientations, as well as different religious, political and ethnic backgrounds.

However, because of the assumption that persons with disabilities are homogeneous, issues relating to disability and gender, age or ethnicity often receive less attention in disability policy. As a result, persons with disabilities often remain invisible in policies which target gender, ethnicity and ageing. Similarly, a clear understanding of the challenges faced by children and adults with disabilities is often lacking.

A number of participants highlighted that the failure to understand and respond to the diversity of disability resulted in discrimination against persons with disabilities on a number of multiple grounds. As remarked by a participant from India:

“

We need to recognize how the different types of inequalities intersect, such as those related to disability and poverty. Or those arising from being a child, a woman. Or from ethnicity, geographical location, age, sexuality. All these attributes add on more layers to the barriers and make them even more of a challenge to overcome. Persons with disabilities are human beings with multiple identities.

”

Participants also stressed that truly empowering persons with disabilities requires addressing discriminations that arise from the interaction of multiple identities. With respect to the experience of women and children with disabilities, a participant from Kenya commented:

“

The challenges I face as a young woman with a disability are very different from the challenges faced by a man with a disability. When designing development programmes, issues for women and children with disabilities must be included.

”

### 3.2. Lack of disaggregated data

Article 31 of the CRPD calls on States parties and other stakeholders to take action to collect appropriate information on disability, including statistical and research data. Despite this, the absence of disaggregated data on disability was mentioned as a major challenge by a number of participants in the online consultations.

Contributors stressed that the absence of reliable information remains a significant bottleneck in the design, development and implementation of policies and programmes that are inclusive of persons with disabilities. One participant from Palestine commented:

“

The lack of reliable statistical data on persons with disabilities—data that are genuinely reflective of their status and needs—still hinders the development and implementation of policies and programmes, as necessary evidence to motivate and guide such policies continues to be unavailable.

”

Participants considered the absence of data on disability not only a hindrance to the adoption and implementation of measures that are specific to persons with disabilities, but also to the development of systems to monitor mainstream development programmes and the extent to which they include persons with disabilities. A participant from a United Kingdom-based organization working in Africa commented:

“

The current system allows countries to demonstrate ‘success’ based on total numbers without ever including those who are the most difficult to reach, children with disabilities.

”

Lastly, a number of participants indicated that the lack of data leads to the lack of visibility. For instance, one participant remarked that in four years of World Water Development Reports, access to water on the part of persons with disabilities was never discussed (disability is only referenced in the context of the Disability-Adjusted Life Years), despite substantial qualitative evidence that this is an important issue in many communities.



*Trimah texting her friends. Indonesia. Photo: CBM.*

### 3.3. No universal guidelines on disability-inclusive development

Participants also raised concerns about the lack of implementation of existing guidelines for disability-inclusive development, the absence of enforceable universal accessibility guidelines, and limited awareness, among development actors, of how certain development practices can negatively impact persons with disabilities and widen the inequality gap.

Despite the fact that many international agencies and civil society organizations have published guidelines for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their programmes, the issue of limited implementation concerned a number of contributors. A participant commented:

“

Even where there are good guidelines ... there are no formal mechanisms to ensure they are implemented and they are consequently not well known or applied.

”

Regarding accessibility, a number of contributors stated that the lack of universal standards led to the construction of new buildings funded by development cooperation (e.g., schools, health clinics) that are inaccessible to persons with disabilities. Regarding services such as education, a participant from Latin America commented:

“

Universal design and accessibility of the built environment are not being adequately addressed in the education sector. Capacity needs to be built on how to improve access for persons with disabilities.

”

Lastly, a number of participants reiterated that building an inclusive society is not only beneficial to persons with disabilities but to everyone in society. One contributor from Malta commented:

“

Considering that persons are living longer ... it makes sense to create a world that is already inclusive and accessible to a wide variety of people.

”

### 3.4. Absence of the voices of persons with disabilities in the decision-making process

As discussed in section 2, ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making is one of the key principles of the CRPD. However, the majority of contributors regarded with great concern the lack of voices from persons with disabilities in the processes that determine how society is governed.

The issue of accountability of government to persons with disabilities was also raised by a number of contributors. In particular, participants highlighted their concern that Governments are not being held accountable when they fail to implement their commitments under the CRPD. One participant remarked, for instance:

“

In areas where persons with disabilities are invisible, being poor, un-empowered and un-influential, there is a natural tendency for government to simply ignore laws, international treaties and other opportunities to address their rights and interests.

”

Compounding the issue of non-implementation, a significant number of contributors addressed the challenges that organizations of persons with disabilities face in securing the resources necessary to ensure that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard both at the community and at the policy levels. A contributor from the United Kingdom commented:

“

There is an urgent need for funding to support the true mission of disabled people’s organizations, which is to empower persons with disabilities and to serve as a representative voice in the dialogue for inclusive policy development and implementation.

”

A participant from India further commented that despite obligations in the CRPD to include persons with disabilities in policy matters, persons with disabilities were for the most part left out:

---

“

The lack of participation of persons with disabilities in policy level discussions is a serious concern.

”

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Lastly, some online participants indicated that persons with disabilities are often not asked for feedback on the programmes and services that are meant to address their needs. One participant commented:

---

“

Programmes do not ask persons with disabilities their feedback; there is no mechanism to incorporate changes persons with disabilities may want.

”

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### **3.5. Lack of recognition of disability as a cross-cutting issue**

Another challenge to inclusive development that was raised by a significant number of contributors is the failure of disability to go beyond what is still often seen as a separate domain and become integrated into mainstream programmes. A key reason for this failure was identified by participants in the lack of recognition of disability as a cross-cutting issue that is relevant to all sectors of development. One participant commented:

---

“

The lack of recognition of disability as a cross-cutting issue resulted in a tendency to place disability-related programmes within a Ministry of Social Affairs rather than having it cut across a variety of policy areas.

”

---

The implications of the CRPD for different spheres of life are underacknowledged. As a result, as one participant noted:

“

Guidelines and measures for inclusion are rarely translated into action in other Ministries, such as transport and housing.

”

Lastly, regarding development cooperation, a number of contributors stressed that the tendency to view disability as a specialist and discrete issue has resulted in the implementation of a few small-scale development projects specifically targeting persons with disabilities, while keeping large-scale infrastructure projects and sector-wide programmes largely inaccessible.

### 3.6. Need for political leadership

One of the recurring themes raised by participants was the need for Governments that have ratified the CRPD to provide political leadership to implement its provisions so that persons with disabilities can fulfil their potential. One participant stated, for instance:

“

We need strong leadership, a framework that will guide progress and scrutinise progress—inspiring words are good, actions are much better.

”

The invisibility of disability in government forums and mainstream policy, particularly in terms of economic development and poverty reduction, was also raised as a challenge. A participant commented:

“

Economists have not been able to see disability as an important aspect of poverty reduction, and have also been slow to consider disability in economic development.

”



*Livelihood for persons with disabilities, Manila, Philippines. Photo: CBM.*

The need for education on and awareness-raising of the CRPD was mentioned as a key component of the process of generating political leadership. One participant commented:

“

We have several laws and regulations on persons with disabilities, but our rights are still not protected and fulfilled because of attitudes and government understanding of disability issues. They still need to be educated.

”

# 4 KEY STEPS TOWARDS A DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

“

It can be a good strategy but if it is not implemented, if it's not seeing the light of day, if it's not affecting the quality of life of persons with disabilities, it's not really a good strategy.

”

—Interview participant from Fiji

The participants that engaged with the consultation processes documented in this publication had one clear message to send to Governments: the new framework to reduce global poverty and inequality must include persons with disabilities. The majority of participants emphasized that inclusion does not happen on its own: it needs to be supported by proactive measures specifically aimed at fulfilling, promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

This section documents the viewpoints and recommendations expressed by a broad range of persons with disabilities regarding critical steps to be taken in order to accelerate progress towards a disability-inclusive society. Each subsection is summarized by an overarching key message. Examples of existing good practices are also included.

## 4.1. A new attitude towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities

### Key message 1

*A new approach is needed—an approach that recognizes human rights, not charity, as the basis for the inclusion of girls and boys, women and men with disabilities.*

### Key message 2

*Disability is an expression of human diversity. Combating stereotypes and prejudices towards persons with disabilities is a key step towards building an inclusive and sustainable society for all.*

The majority of participants who contributed to the online consultations argued that the CRPD had enormous potential to act as an enabler for a society that respects the rights of persons with disabilities. The need to align the new development framework with the provisions contained in the CRPD was therefore emphasized. As noted by a contributor from the United Kingdom:

“

Inclusive development is not possible without the full legal protection of people with disabilities.

”

At a minimum, participants noted, the new development framework should uphold the CRPD principles of non-discrimination and equality for persons with disabilities throughout all of its components. For instance, a participant from Guatemala commented:

“

The CRPD sets out our rights, other mainstream policies must look to it for guidance.

”

And the same message was conveyed by a participant from Kenya:

“

The CRPD must not be left on the shelf; it must be implemented as part of the post-2015 vision.

”

A number of contributors also stressed that funding given under the remit of international cooperation must adhere to the vision articulated in the CRPD. One contributor commented, for instance, that:

“

Development cooperation must not build new institutions for giving funding to sustain existing ones.

”

Participants suggested a number of potential actions that could enhance the alignment between the CRPD and the new development framework. These included increasing awareness about the CRPD among Governments and policymakers and sensitizing agencies responsible for implementing development programmes on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are not all the same. For this reason, it was remarked by participants, inclusion requires a process of systematically assessing the different implications for women, men, boys and girls with varying disabilities, of any planned action, including legislation, policies, budgets and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is critical that disability is understood in all its complexity.

Finally, participants stressed the importance of monitoring the commitments on the rights of persons with disabilities given by Governments. While much of the monitoring discussed by

participants was specific to disability rights under the CRPD, they also highlighted how the implementation of the commitments that will be made as part of the new development agenda should be monitored to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

*Good practice example 1: **Monitoring government commitments in Togo***

Togo's signing of the CRPD in 2008 (followed by ratification in 2011) was used by the Togolese Federation of Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FETAPH) as an opportunity to be involved in the development of the first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2009-2012 and ensure that it was sensitive to the circumstances and aspirations of persons with disabilities. Further to the adoption of the PRSP document, the project "Strengthening the rights of persons with disabilities through the PRSP implementation" was launched with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The close involvement of FETAPH in PRSP implementation has enabled persons with disabilities in Togo to hold their Government accountable for the commitments they made to include persons with disabilities in national plans and actions.

## 4.2. Data: a key factor in measuring success

### Key message 3

*Disability-disaggregation of data and the generation of reliable information on persons with disabilities are critical elements of a disability-inclusive development agenda.*

The lack of data on the socio-economic conditions of persons with disabilities was a central issue throughout the online consultations. Insufficient information, it clearly emerged from discussions, remains a major obstacle to planning and implementing inclusive development measures. The urgent need to strengthen statistical capacity to produce reliable and comparable data on disability was therefore highlighted as a critical step towards a development agenda that is truly inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Participants observed that the availability of information could be significantly improved through mechanisms to disaggregate data on the basis of disability. A participant from Bangladesh commented:

“

Disability-disaggregated data will show the status of inclusiveness in development: it will allow us to measure the treasure.

”

Indicators or markers on the inclusion of disability in development programmes and policies were also called for. A participant from France remarked:

---

“

One element that is missing for most of the donor agencies is a mechanism to track what is being spent on disability. They are able to tell us how much is spent on disability-focused programmes, but when we talk about mainstreaming disability throughout, we have no idea.

”

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### 4.3. Accessibility: a key requirement for inclusive development

#### Key message 4

*Accessibility of the physical environment, transportation, information and communication infrastructure is indispensable to the sustainable inclusion of persons with disabilities and a fundamental prerequisite for disability-inclusive development.*

The need for equal access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication infrastructure featured significantly in both the consultations and interviews conducted for this publication. The majority of participants stressed that accessibility in both urban and rural settings was a prerequisite for persons with disabilities to gain access to education, employment and other services of critical importance. For instance, a participant from Bangladesh commented:

---

“

Accessibility should be a development goal because that is where we get stuck.

”

---

A participant from India further stressed the important role of accessibility in creating the sustainable conditions for persons with disabilities to live an independent life:

---

“

Unless our public spaces are accessible, neither education nor employment is possible. If a person with a disability cannot even step out of his or her home, cannot get into a bus or a train, how will he or she be able to go to college or university? Will the college or university be accessible? If persons with disabilities obtain educational qualifications will their future workplace be accessible?

”

---

Participants also emphasized that in cases of severe weather events and political instability, when accessing emergency services can represent the difference between life and death, persons with disabilities are often faced with severe obstacles to accessibility.

Under CRPD article 9, States parties are required to take measures to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate in all aspects of life. This requirement is applicable to domestic policy as well as action taken overseas as part of international development programmes (also covered by article 32). In compliance with their obligations to the CRPD, a number of donor Governments have started to take steps to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities in development programmes.

#### *Good practice example 2: AusAID's Accessibility Design Guide*

AusAID's "Accessibility Design Guide: Universal design principles for Australia's aid program" (2013) provides guidance on enabling persons with disability to participate equally in social and economic life through the design and implementation of development activities. The guide is a rich resource of ideas that development practitioners can consider when applying universal design, and is based on the reality that the barriers persons with disability face vary between developing countries and between locations in-country. The guide supports Australia's disability-inclusive development strategy, *Development for All: Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014*, and Australia's obligations under a range of United Nations agreements, including, importantly, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>23</sup>

As discussed in section 3, lack of access and the absence of enforceable universal standards on accessibility remain a major obstacle to participation for persons with disabilities. Participants emphasized that in order to realize the ideal of a society that is accessible for all, the future development framework will need to be compliant with article 9 of the CRPD and in line with the principles of universal design.

## **4.4. Participation: nothing about us without us**

### **Key message 5**

***"Nothing about us without us" is as valid as ever. The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be ensured in the formulation and implementation of development policy at all levels.***

A large number of participants underscored the importance of the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all areas of decision-making that affect their lives as a key dimension of a truly inclusive society. In particular, they stressed the importance of including persons with disabilities and their organizations in national and international consultations on development, as well as in the planning and implementation of

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23. See "Accessibility Design Guide: Universal design principles for Australia's Aid Program", available from <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/Pages/accessibility-design-guide.aspx>.



*Huseni and friends in the classroom. Moshi, Tanzania. Photo: CBMI.*

policies both at the micro level (e.g., in deciding how specific services are delivered in a given community) and at the macro level (e.g., by participating in government elections).

Participation in all aspects of life is the condition for persons with disabilities to actively contribute to the social, political and economic development of their country. This theme—which is central to the CRPD vision—was frequently raised during the consultations and interviews. A participant from Togo commented:

“

Persons with disabilities have a lot of potential and can contribute to the development of their different nations, so it is not good to leave persons with disabilities out from the process of development.

”

The need to establish enforcement mechanisms to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities—including minimum norms and standards, as well as measurable indicators—was also emphasized. Recalling the message of African-American civil rights activist Philip Randolph, a contributor noted:

“

A community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess.

”

For many persons with disabilities, the first step to participating in their community is their initial contact with their local organization of persons with disabilities. However, these organizations often struggle to survive owing to a number of factors, including lack of capacity and financial resources. Participants in the consultations highlighted the pressing need for support and capacity-building for organizations of persons with disabilities (locally and nationally) to enable their effective participation in consultations as well as the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. One participant remarked, for instance:

“

All development actors must develop systematic methods of including appropriate dedicated spending to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development actions.

”

### Good practice example 3: **Supporting organizations of persons with disabilities**

The main objective of the Disability Rights Fund (DRF) is to build the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities to be full and equal participants in advancing disability for the world's one billion persons with disabilities. Supported by a unique mix of government and private funders, the Fund has granted 10 million United States dollars to date to support the work of organizations of persons with disabilities around the world.<sup>24</sup>

## 4.5. A whole-of-government approach: disability as a cross-cutting policy issue

### Key message 6

*Disability is a cross-cutting issue, relevant to all domains of human life. A disability-inclusive perspective must therefore be applied to all areas of development. An inclusive society is a better society for all.*

Another key theme that emerged from the consultations was the need for disability to be recognized as a cross-cutting issue in the new development framework, relevant to all development themes and not just areas traditionally associated with disability, such as social protection.

Participants highlighted a number of mechanisms that could enable Governments to improve inclusion of disability across all sectors of their work. These include “diversity budgeting”, which would ensure that budgets are accessible for and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

The need for government to implement a twin-track approach to including disability in line with the CRPD was also highlighted as an important strategy. Providing disability-specific services wherever necessary is critically important. However, it is equally important to promote the integration of a disability perspective into mainstream programmes and policies such as those related to education, employment, and health and social matters. An interview participant from Indonesia commented on how access to education enabled her to gain employment and respect in her community:

“

Before I was educated, I didn't have a good career and wasn't respected as a woman with disability. Now I am respected because I have an education. Education is the most important way to change the quality of life for persons with disabilities around the world.

”

24. See Disability Rights Fund, available from <http://www.disabilityrightsfund.org/impact>.

#### **Good practice example 4: Including persons with disabilities in training and employment**

The Bangladesh National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) states that skills training in Bangladesh is essential for continued economic growth and for the improvement of the standard of living of workers, particularly women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities. Through this strategy, the Government recognizes that mainstreaming these groups into training and employment opportunities strengthens Bangladesh's workforce and reduces poverty amongst the most vulnerable people by increasing access to decent work. The NSDP makes two key provisions regarding persons with disabilities. First, it stipulates that a strategy be developed to increase participation of persons with disabilities in skills training. Second, it sets an overall target of 5 per cent of enrolments for persons with disabilities across all skills development programmes. In order to implement the provisions of the NSDP, government bodies, along with the International Labour Organization, formed a Working Group on Disability Inclusion in Skills Development. The Working Group consists of 30 representatives from 13 key government ministries and agencies, employers and workers organizations and organizations working with disabilities. A key feature of the Working Group is the participation of persons with disabilities themselves.<sup>25</sup>

### **4.6. Political commitment to promoting and respecting the human rights of persons with disabilities**

#### **Key message 7**

*The political leadership of Governments is indispensable to the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, but must be accompanied by mechanisms to facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement and strong channels of accountability.*

A number of participants highlighted the central role of government in ensuring the implementation of the CRPD and raised the issue of political leadership as being crucial for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. An online contributor from India commented:

“

Government is the main stakeholder to foster and safeguard the human rights and inclusion of the person with disabilities.

”

The allocation of adequate resources towards the goal of realizing the rights of persons with disabilities was often singled out as a key dimension of political leadership. An interview participant from Bangladesh commented:

25. See [http://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Eventsandmeetings/WCMS\\_211210/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Eventsandmeetings/WCMS_211210/lang-en/index.htm).

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“

Most governments need to talk about the real issue, which is resource allocation. This needs to be clearly highlighted and stated—how the government are going to finance these actions—because that's where most countries get stuck.

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Another participant further reiterated this view:

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“

There has to be a clear allocation on disability across the sectors. My belief is that without that, nothing will happen.

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While leadership for the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities must come first and foremost from Governments, the “no gap” approach, which promotes collaboration among a range of stakeholders, is an important element of achieving inclusive development. Moreover, the CRPD clearly highlights the need for a range of actors to ensure its implementation.

Over recent years, organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations have made enormous progress in their capacity to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and hold Governments to account on their commitments. Participants in the consultation emphasized that this work needs to be further expanded. An interview participant commented:

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“

We need a pool of organizations of persons with disabilities who have direct connection with people in the grassroots. When it comes to the implementation of the CRPD, we should be sitting at every level of implementation and monitoring it.

”

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# 5 TOWARDS 2015 AND BEYOND

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The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls upon the international community to underline that the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda are aligned to the implementation of the social and human rights models of disability, as enshrined in the Convention, and that they should be focused on achieving the full enjoyment of human rights by all persons with disabilities throughout the world, who represent 15% of the world population.

”

—Statement of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on including the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda on disability and development

As stated at the outset of the present publication, there are an estimated one billion persons with disabilities. Many of them face significant challenges in creating a safe, secure and sustainable life for themselves and their families. The framework that will be guiding development cooperation after 2015 must explicitly address these challenges if persons with disabilities are to benefit equitably from development, and indeed if the goals themselves are to be achieved.

This publication describes some of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the words of persons with disabilities themselves as they have been documented during a series of online consultations and interviews. The publication also identifies and describes instances of progress and articulates some key messages that persons with disabilities believe Governments and other stakeholders should consider as they deliberate on the new framework for development.

As stated in *Realizing the Future We Want for All*, Report to the Secretary-General by the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda:

“

Transformative change will require recognizing and tackling both manifested gaps and their structural causes, including discrimination and exclusion, widely faced by women and girls, persons with disabilities, older people and members of indigenous and minority groups. National, local and regional strategies will need to be based on evidence and understanding of the structural and intersecting nature of inequalities, and shaped and monitored with the full involvement of those excluded.<sup>26</sup>

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The rights of persons with disabilities have featured in many of the documents that are expected to underpin the global discussions for a new vision of development. For instance, the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development addresses disability in general terms as a driver of discrimination (but also more specifically in relation to livelihoods and education), acknowledges the need to involve persons with disabilities and addresses the issue of accessible built environments.<sup>27</sup>

However, the momentum needs to be maintained and the conversation needs to be sustained. As remarked by a participant from Bangladesh:

“

Persons with disabilities should not be excluded in the post-2015 agenda framework. Their needs and rights should be clearly acknowledged like others. ‘Leave no one behind’ means that to end poverty, not to reduce but to end poverty, persons with disabilities should be included.

”

It is also important to emphasize that the process of making development inclusive does not conclude with the integration of a disability perspective into the post-2015 development framework. The engagement of persons with disabilities will be indispensable to ensuring that the commitments are translated into action. As observed by an interview participant from Nepal:

“

The big message is that the consultation doesn't stop once the goals are there and the agenda is set. We then need national action plans and here organizations of persons with disabilities and civil society must come in. We need to be consulted in terms of action plans.

”

The ideal of society for all cannot be realized unless concrete measures are taken to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others. This is necessary

26. See *Realizing the Future We Want for All*, Report to the Secretary-General by the United Nations System Task Team on the post 2015 United Nations Development Agenda, June 2012.

27. The Outcome Document is available from [www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20\\_outcome\\_document\\_complete.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/rio20_outcome_document_complete.pdf).

not only to uphold the dignity of persons with disabilities, but that of everyone. In the words of Chaeli Mycroft, a 17 year-old disability activist from South Africa and winner of the 2011 International Children's Peace Prize:

“

Hope is what keeps us going, it's what keeps us striving for the lives we deserve. I have hope for myself, but I also have hope for all other children with disabilities. I hope that my actions as an ability activist will leave the world more accepting and more accommodating for all people and not just persons with disabilities, because we are all different and we all have the need to be accepted regardless of having a disability or not.

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*Presenting to the class, Syria. Photo: UNDP*





United Nations Partnership to Promote  
the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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The United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) is a unique collaborative effort that brings together United Nations entities, Governments, organizations of persons with disabilities and broader civil society to advance disability rights around the world.