



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Disability and Development Report 2024

Accelerating the realization
of the Sustainable Development
Goals by, for and with persons
with disabilities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**ADVANCED UNEDITED
VERSION**



Executive summary

Six years away from the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, the *Disability and Development Report 2024* shows that persons with disabilities are being left behind. Progress for persons with disabilities on 30 per cent of targets of the SDGs is insufficient; on 14 per cent, the target has been missed or progress has stalled or gone into reverse. These include targets on access to financial resources, health care, water and ICT as well as on building resilience of persons with disabilities during disasters and other emergencies. A mere 5 indicators are on track, i.e., with progress consistent with achieving their respective targets for persons with disabilities by 2030 – these include remarkable progress in education laws on equal access, disaster early warnings in accessible formats, online services for persons with disabilities, government ministries accessible for persons with disabilities and monitoring of bilateral aid dedicated to disability inclusion.

Wide gaps persist between persons with and without disabilities, particularly on food insecurity, health, access to energy and ICT – with gaps above 10 percentage points – and on multidimensional poverty and employment – with gaps above 20 percentage points. For women with disabilities, indigenous persons with disabilities, persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities and persons with disabilities living in rural areas, the gaps are wider. Moreover, although countries have increasingly involved persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, overall, this involvement remains low.

The COVID-19 response was largely not inclusive of persons with disabilities, especially in the early stages of the pandemic, with discriminatory practices in COVID-19 treatment, lack of information in accessible formats and reduced access to COVID-19 testing (41 per cent of persons with disabilities versus 28 per cent of persons without disabilities did not have access to COVID-19 testing). Half of COVID-19 deaths occurred among persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities lost jobs and income at higher rates than others. Early in the pandemic, a third of persons with disabilities lost access to personal assistance, assistive technology or accessibility services – a trend that continued throughout the pandemic driven by inflation and disruptions in the supply chains, including a drop of 10 per cent in exports of assistive products. Persons with disabilities faced more difficulties than others accessing and affording food (52 versus 46 per cent), water delivery (31 versus 18 per cent), energy (31 versus 24 per cent), housing (28 versus 24 per cent), health care (34 versus 22 per cent), medicines (40 versus 32 per cent), masks (64 versus 50 per cent) and sanitizers (66 versus 54 per cent). One in 5 students with disabilities dropped out of school during the pandemic and 9 in 10 did not have the ICT needed to participate in remote learning. Half of workers with disabilities faced barriers working remotely, such as inaccessible online platforms. The isolation created by lockdowns increased the risk of violence, with a quarter of persons with disabilities experiencing violence at home and almost half of women with

disabilities not feeling safe at home. Lockdowns disrupted data collections creating a lack of evidence to guide pandemic responses for persons with disabilities.

Not all countries introduced measures to support persons with disabilities to face these challenges.

Whereas more than 90 per cent of countries prioritized persons with disabilities in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, only half of households with students with disabilities received financial support for the personal assistance and technology they needed for remote learning, less than half of countries targeted persons with disabilities in their COVID-19 social protection measures and only 10 per cent of countries conducted rapid emergency data collections on persons with disabilities during the pandemic.

Compared to the Disability and Development Report 2018, this time around there is much more data on persons with disabilities – data availability is at its highest level since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Despite these advancements, only 50 per cent of targets have indicators with enough data to assess progress. For 40 per cent of targets, there is only data to provide a one point in time snapshot. For 10 per cent of targets, there is not enough data for a one point in time snapshot – these include targets on extreme poverty, child mortality, health impact of pollution, early childhood development, child labour and the impact of corruption and bribery.

The way things are going, the world will not achieve the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities by 2030. Depending on the target, progress needs to accelerate to 2 to 65 times faster. Accelerations are particularly needed in making physical and virtual environments accessible for persons with disabilities, in adopting anti-discrimination legislation, in expanding social protection and in implementing measures to guarantee the safety and protection of all persons with disabilities during disasters and emergencies.

As the international community prepares for the Summit of the Future in September 2024, all need to step up to accelerate the SDGs and disability inclusion is part of the solution. The world needs to build on the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic to plan better for future crises. The *Disability and Development Report 2024* provides a snapshot of the current situation and progress made by goal/target and identifies concrete steps that global leaders and relevant stakeholders can take to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs by, for and with persons with disabilities:

Ending poverty for all persons with disabilities (Goal 1)

In almost all countries, the percentage of persons experiencing multidimensional poverty is higher for persons with disabilities than persons without disabilities -- in some countries that percentage is more than double. Reducing this percentage by half by 2030, as called for in target 1.2, will require progress at least 1.3 times faster for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities.

Persons with disabilities tend to earn lower wages, to face additional costs related to disability and to lack access to financial services. A quarter of banks worldwide, a quarter of ATMs in developed regions and half the ATMs in developing regions remain physically inaccessible for wheelchair users.

In 2020, only 17 per cent of countries provided universal disability benefits. Progress since 2017 has been slow, with a mere 2 percentage points increase. Globally, in 2020, 34 per cent of persons with severe disabilities received cash benefits up from 27 per cent in 2016. At this rate, only half the persons with severe disabilities are expected to have access to these benefits by 2030.

The following actions are recommended:

- Mainstream disability inclusion in national poverty reduction strategies, programmes and actions.
- Evaluate the impact of public policies, including social protection schemes, on extra costs associated with disability and on the financial well-being of persons with disabilities.
- Develop a national disability registry of individual disability (and needs) assessment to facilitate targeting of individual social protection.
- Ensure accessibility across the social protection delivery chain.
- Develop a flexible combination of mainstream and disability specific cash transfers, concessions/ subsidies and support services.
- Involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the design and implementation of national poverty reduction strategies and social protection policies.

Ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition for all persons with disabilities (Goal 2)

In developing countries, 55 per cent of persons with disabilities experience food insecurity. In Europe, the percentage of persons with disabilities who cannot afford daily meals with protein at least every second day has decreased since 2016, but this progress is insufficient to bring this percentage to zero by 2030.

Children with disabilities are more likely than children without disabilities to be underweight and stunted, both signs of malnutrition. Among children with disabilities, 15 per cent are underweight, 27 per cent are stunted, 7 per cent are wasted and 3 per cent are overweight.

Although vital during food emergencies, two out of five food banks are not accessible for wheelchair users. More than half of restaurants worldwide, 12 per cent of supermarkets in developed countries and 38 per cent in developing countries are inaccessible for wheelchair users.

The following actions are recommended:

- Mainstream disability inclusion into food security legislation, policies and programmes, by consulting with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
- Improve coordination among various sectors (including education, social protection, agriculture, fishery, livestock and forestry) to enhance access, affordability and safety of food for persons with disabilities.
- Provide equal access to agricultural and productive resources for persons with disabilities.

- Support the use of disability-inclusive agricultural technology, assistive technology and reasonable accommodation in agricultural employment.
- Make food banks, supermarkets and restaurants accessible for persons with disabilities.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all persons with disabilities (Goal 3)

Persons with disabilities are 15 times more likely to perceive their health as bad or very bad than persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities are 7 times more likely than others to not have access to health care when they need it. In developing countries, more than half of persons with disabilities do not get health care because they cannot afford the cost; and a quarter because they do not have or cannot afford transport to health care facilities. In some developed countries, more than 10 per cent of persons with disabilities do not get health care because they cannot afford the cost, the health care is too far to travel or the waiting list is too long.

Public health interventions to promote health and well-being – like nutrition information campaigns and regular health testing and monitoring - often do not reach persons with disabilities: the gaps in coverage between persons with and without disabilities range from 5 to 45 per cent.

In various developing countries, more than 30 per cent of persons with disabilities indicate that health-care facilities are not accessible. In some countries, this percentage reaches 80 per cent. Worldwide, in 2022, 42 per cent doctors' offices, 29 per cent of pharmacies and 15 per cent of hospitals were not accessible for wheelchair users. In the past five years, progress has been insufficient. Doctors' offices would need to become accessible at a rate 3 times faster and pharmacies 7 times faster than the current rates to achieve full accessibility by 2030. Progress for hospitals' accessibility has stagnated since 2018.

By 2022, only one third of countries had incorporated disability inclusion in their national health strategies.

The following actions are recommended:

- Include health equity for persons with disabilities at the centre of every health sector action.
- Ensure the provision of integrated health services without financial hardship and close to where persons with disabilities live.
- Strengthen multisectoral collaboration to address structural, social and health system factors that contribute to health inequities for persons with disabilities.
- Include and protect persons with disabilities in health emergencies responses.
- Involve persons with disabilities, their families and representative organizations in decision making in the health sector.

Reducing maternal mortality and accessing sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights for all persons with disabilities (targets 3.1, 3.7 and 5.6)

Persons with disabilities are regularly excluded from the provision of sexual and reproductive health services. In various countries, more than 50 per cent of both women and men with disabilities do not have comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS, more than 50 per cent of women with disabilities do not have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods, do not have the births of their babies attended by skilled health personnel, do not receive a timely postnatal check, do not have autonomy in making decisions about their reproductive health – with others making decisions for them – and are not empowered to exercise their reproductive rights.

The following actions are recommended:

- Promote and protect the bodily autonomy of persons with disabilities.
- Develop laws and policies that guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for persons with disabilities.
- Make sexual and reproductive health services safe and affordable and their facilities, communication and information accessible.
- Train sexual and reproductive health care workers on disability inclusion.
- Educate persons with disabilities on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all persons with disabilities (Goal 4)

While 11 per cent of children with disabilities of primary school age remain out of school, this percentage increases to 32 per cent for children with disabilities of upper secondary school age. Only 30 per cent of children with disabilities achieve reading skills, compared to 37 per cent of children without disabilities; and 23 per cent achieve numeracy skills (compared to 27 per cent of children without disabilities).

A few countries have succeeded in lowering the out of school rates for children with disabilities of primary school age to very low levels, at par with the levels for children without disabilities. And 87 per cent of countries have laws or policies protecting the right of persons with disabilities to education, up from 74 per cent in 2016. At this rate, all countries are expected to have legislation or policies protecting this right by 2030.

Only 47 per cent of countries has educational materials to support learners with disabilities, up from 34 per cent in 2016; and only 38 per cent have accessible physical school environments, up from 18 per cent in 2016. Only 17 per cent of countries legally guarantee an inclusive education in which learners with and without disabilities are taught in the same classrooms.

The following actions are recommended:

- Establish inclusive education for persons with disabilities in legislation and policies.
- Expand disability-inclusion to all levels of education.
- Implement universal design principles and accessibility in schools and learning environments.
- Provide access to assistive technologies in education.

- Develop teacher capacities in inclusive education and hire teachers with disabilities.
- Foster partnerships among representative organizations of persons with disabilities, communities, parents, caregivers, youth, the education workforce and other stakeholders to advance inclusive education.
- Foster cross-sectoral approaches to education, including access to health, rehabilitation and social protection.
- Mitigate learning losses among students with disabilities caused by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls with disabilities (Goal 5)

Women and girls with disabilities face multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination and suffer sexual violence and early marriage: 8 per cent of women with disabilities feel discriminated due to their disabilities and 9 per cent due to their gender; 8 per cent of women with disabilities experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months; and 7 per cent of girls with disabilities aged 15 to 18 are or have been married.

Women with disabilities are engaged in unpaid work at levels similar to women without disabilities (10 per cent of both). Only 3 per cent of women with disabilities work as legislators, senior officials or managers, compared to 4 per cent of women without disabilities. They are severely underrepresented in national parliaments, local governments and national coordination mechanisms on disability. Only 2 countries specifically require the inclusion of women with disabilities in electoral lists or in elected local deliberative bodies.

Women with disabilities face barriers in accessing economic resources, financial services and technology. As many as 20 per cent of women with disabilities live in income poverty and wages of men with disabilities are 17 per cent higher than wages of women with disabilities. Only 15 per cent of women with disabilities compared to 20 per cent of men with disabilities conduct financial transactions with a mobile phone; only 26 per cent of women with disabilities compared to 30 per cent of men with disabilities use the Internet; 63 per cent of women with disabilities but 70 per cent of men with disabilities own a mobile phone; and 64 per cent of women with disabilities do not have access to the assistive technology they need.

Only 38 per cent of countries have a gender equality law or a disability law with specific legal protections for women with disabilities; only 27 per cent address women with disabilities in their domestic violence laws and 16 per cent in their sexual harassment laws. Only 9 per cent of countries have legal requirements for accessibility to services for women with disabilities survivors of violence; and only 14 per cent legally protect the parental rights of women with disabilities. Only 3 per cent mention women with disabilities in their laws on incentives to employment of persons with disabilities and on reasonable accommodation for workers with disabilities.

Worldwide, 27 per cent of countries have specific legal protections for women with disabilities in their disability law, up from 18 per cent in 2015. At this rate, only a third of countries is expected to have these legal protections by 2030.

The following actions are recommended:

- Develop legislation and policies that protect the rights and promote inclusion of women with disabilities.
- Prohibit forced or coerced reproductive health interventions and guarantee free and informed consent in accessing health services.
- Fund interventions, such as grants and awareness raising campaigns, to support the equality and empowerment of women with disabilities as experts and leaders.
- Build the capacity of non-governmental organizations to promote the equality and empowerment of women with disabilities.
- Increase women with disabilities' leadership and participation in decision-making in peace and humanitarian action.
- Guarantee women with disabilities' access to vote and their right to participate as candidates, electoral observers and to be elected or designated to office.
- Establish mechanisms to eliminate violence against women with disabilities and ensure that victims have access to gender and disability responsive services and support.

Ensuring the availability of water, sanitation and hygiene for persons with disabilities (Goal 6)

In many countries, persons with disabilities are less likely than persons without disabilities to live in a dwelling with a safe drinking water source, improved sanitation and a bath/shower on premises, with gaps reaching over 10 percentage points in some countries.

A third of persons with disabilities in developing countries indicate that the toilets at their homes are not accessible. And, in many countries, a third or more of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, health care facilities and in public settings are not accessible for persons with disabilities. In developing countries, 42 per cent of public places to get drinking water are not accessible for wheelchair users, up from 40 per cent in 2018. In developed countries, 33 per cent of public toilets remain not accessible for wheelchair users, the same percentage as in 2018.

Lack of accessible water, sanitation and hygiene facilities impact women with disabilities, who are more likely than women without disabilities to miss school, work or social activities during their menstrual period.

The following actions are recommended:

- Mainstream disability in water, sanitation and hygiene policies and programmes.

- Involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in water, sanitation and hygiene policy and programme implementation.
- Allocate financial resources to promote disability-inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene services in households, schools and health care facilities.

Ensuring access to energy for persons with disabilities (Goal 7)

Many countries have reached close to universal access to electricity for both persons with and without disabilities. However, for countries with mid to low levels of electricity access, gaps between persons with and without disabilities remain and reach ten percentage points or more in several countries. In various countries, the percentage of households with persons with disabilities in rural areas that has access to electricity is less than half that of urban areas. And households with persons with disabilities in rural areas are twice as likely to use polluting forms of energy, like wood and coal.

Many persons with disabilities rely on electricity-run assistive technology for independent living or survival. Yet, in 2023, only 39 per cent of countries had mechanisms to assist persons with disabilities using this technology during a power cut; and only two-thirds of these mechanisms were designed in consultation with persons with disabilities.

Access to electricity is crucial in schools to allow the use of electricity-run assistive technology. Worldwide, 76 per cent of primary schools has access to electricity, up from 66 per cent in 2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 32 per cent of primary schools have electricity access, up from 30 per cent in 2015.

The following actions are recommended:

- Close the gap in energy access between persons with and without disabilities and close the rural-urban gap.
- Prioritize electricity access for persons with disabilities who require electricity-dependent assistive technology.
- Consider the energy costs that persons with disabilities face in designing social protection.
- Include special measures for persons with disabilities in energy programmes, such as social tariffs, grants and discounts.
- Promote modern and clean forms of energy in the households of persons with disabilities.
- Invest in providing access to electricity in schools.
- Promote coordination among ministries with mandates on disability, energy, assistive technology and social protection to address energy poverty among persons with disabilities.
- Include persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in governing bodies for energy access.
- Make clean energy transition and climate mitigation policies inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Promoting full and productive employment and decent work for persons with disabilities (Goal 8)

Only 27 per cent of persons with disabilities are employed, compared to 56 per cent of persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is 10 per cent, higher than the 8 per cent for persons without disabilities. Youth with disabilities are twice as likely as youth without disabilities to be neither in employment, education or training. Persons with disabilities face lower wages and overrepresentation in the informal economy and in self-employment. Globally, the percentage of persons with disabilities in employment would have to increase at least 2 percentage points per year till 2030 to close the gap between persons with and without disabilities by 2030.

Many working places are not accessible and lack reasonable accommodation measures and assistive technologies. Accessibility of employment agencies to wheelchair users reached 62 per cent in 2022, up from 56 per cent in 2018.

The following actions are recommended:

- Adopt legislation that protects persons with disabilities against discrimination on the basis of disability in all matters of employment.
- Include persons with disabilities in the green and digital economies.
- Improve the situation of persons with disabilities working in the informal economy.
- Make training, public employment services, public employment programmes, work-based training and business development services disability inclusive.

Increasing access to ICT for persons with disabilities (target 9.c)

In developing countries, Internet use is 11 percentage points lower for persons with disabilities than for persons without disabilities. To close this gap, Internet access among persons with disabilities will need to increase 1.2 percentage points every year till 2030. In Europe, despite progress since 2015, persons with disabilities are twice as likely as persons without disabilities to not be able to afford a computer; and 1 per cent of persons with disabilities cannot afford a telephone nor a television – a percentage that has remained stagnant since 2015. In least developed countries, an average of 20 per cent of persons with disabilities uses the Internet, a level too low compared to the universal access by 2020 called for in SDG target 9.c, a target that has been missed.

In developing countries, households of persons with disabilities in urban areas are twice as likely to have access to Internet as those in rural areas. In some countries, the gaps between women and men with disabilities exceed 20 percentage points for Internet use and mobile phone ownership.

A lower percentage of persons with disabilities attest to basic ICT skills, with persons with disabilities being on average 3 percentage points behind but the gap reaching more than 10 percentage points in several countries.

The vast majority, 98 per cent, of the top 1 million websites does not comply with international web content accessibility guidelines; and 63 per cent of national governmental online portals also do not comply – this lack of accessibility is particularly high in Africa, affecting 87 per cent of countries. In 2022, only 27 per cent of Internet cafes were accessible for wheelchair users, compared to 20 per cent in 2019.

In 2020, 69 per cent of countries had a regulatory framework on accessibility of ICT. Europe is the region where these regulations are more common (85 per cent of countries) and Africa the least (45 per cent of countries).

The following actions are recommended:

- Develop and strengthen implementation of ICT accessibility policies and regulations.
- Make disability inclusion a core feature of digital development investments and programs.
- Build capacity on ICT accessibility and universal design, including on ICT easy-to-understand formats.
- Involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in ICT development.
- Provide affordable Internet access for persons with disabilities.
- Promote digital skills training for persons with disabilities.

Reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion through community support systems (target 10.2)

Community services are beginning to develop in various countries to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities, but gaps remain: 43 per cent of persons with disabilities indicate that joining community activities is problematic, with 22 per cent of persons with disabilities needing more personal assistance than they receive and 44 per cent of persons with disabilities without any personal assistance needing this assistance.

Persons with disabilities who need support to make their own decisions seldom receive this support and someone else is designated to make decisions for them. Only 34 per cent of persons with disabilities say that they make decisions about day-to-day life, where and with whom to live and how to spend money.

The lack of community support systems has pushed persons with disabilities to be placed in institutions, in contravention to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The following actions are recommended:

- Adopt legislation and policies to facilitate access to care and support systems for persons with disabilities.
- Invest in community support and care systems.
- Invest in programmes to assist families of persons with disabilities.
- Build capacity on community inclusion.
- Invest in inclusive infrastructure and services.

- Replace segregated institutions with community-based support.
- Make the care agenda inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices concerning persons with disabilities (targets 10.3 and 16.b)

One in ten persons with disabilities feels discriminated on the basis of disability. To combat this, countries have been adopting legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in various areas, including in job hiring (79 per cent of countries) and in education (54 per cent of countries). But progress has been too slow to ensure that persons with disabilities in all countries will be legally protected against discrimination by 2030. For direct discrimination in the workplace, progress should be twice as fast. Efforts to expand these legal protections are particularly needed in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa.

The following actions are recommended:

- Review laws and policies to abolish discriminatory provisions against persons with disabilities.
- Combat negative stereotypes against persons with disabilities through public campaigns.
- Develop mechanisms for reporting and addressing discrimination.

Making cities and human settlements inclusive and sustainable for persons with disabilities (Goal 11)

In developing countries, 33 per cent of persons with disabilities indicate their dwelling is not accessible. In Europe, 5 per cent of persons with disabilities live in severely deprived housing, i.e., overcrowded housing with a leaking roof, no bath and shower, or too dark; and 10 per cent of persons with disabilities have heavy housing costs, spending more than 40 per cent of their disposable income to pay these costs. In North America, only 1 per cent of rented dwellings meets the standards of universal design.

Moreover, 43 per cent of persons with disabilities in developing countries consider that transportation is not accessible. Worldwide, only about 70 per cent of transit stations, transit platforms and bus stations are accessible to wheelchair users.

A third of persons with disabilities report that recreational facilities are not accessible; and 28 per cent report that they need but do not encounter modifications to make it easier to participate in the community. Globally, in 2022, 81 per cent of car parking lots, 73 per cent of libraries, 72 per cent of commercial buildings, 57 per cent of buildings, 52 per cent of playgrounds and 51 per cent of museums were accessible to wheelchair users.

In developing countries, accessibility of transportation has been decreasing since 2018. In developed countries, accessibility of transit platforms has been deteriorating; accessibility of transit and bus stations for wheelchair users has however been increasing and is expected, at the current rate, to reach 79 per cent of transit stations and 91 per cent of bus stations by 2030.

In Europe, since 2015, the percentages of persons with disabilities in severely deprived housing and facing housing costs overburden have decreased. At the current rate, these percentages are expected to reach 2 and 9 per cent by 2030.

On public spaces, at the current rate, 85 per cent of car parking lots, 76 per cent of libraries, 75 per cent of commercial buildings, 60 per cent of buildings, 55 per cent of playgrounds and only 55 per cent of museums are expected to be accessible to wheelchair users by 2030.

The following actions are recommended:

- Ensure inclusion and equal participation of persons with disabilities in their communities.
- Build capacity in accessibility and disability-inclusion among architects, engineers, urban planners and managers.
- Adopt commitments to inclusion, universal design and accessibility in public spaces, roads, pedestrian environments and transportation.
- Establish participatory and accessible mechanisms for inclusive budgeting, planning, designing and implementation of urban strategies and policies.

Building resilience of persons with disabilities and reducing their exposure and impact from climate-related hazards, other shocks and disasters (targets 1.5, 11.5 and 11.b and Goal 13)

Persons with disabilities continue to be disproportionately negatively impacted during and in the aftermath of disasters, at times suffering mortality rates twice as high as persons without disabilities. Worldwide, 84 per cent of persons with disabilities have no preparedness plan for disasters; 39 per cent have a lot of difficulty or cannot evacuate during a sudden disaster; 28 per cent need but have no one to assist them to evacuate; 11 per cent indicate that information on disaster management or risk reduction is not accessible; more than 80 per cent are not aware of national and local disaster risk reduction plans; and 86 per cent are not involved in decision-making processes on community disaster management and risk reduction. In situations of conflict and forced displacement, more than 30 per cent of persons with disabilities find essential services unaffordable or lack accessible transport or physical access to the services.

From 2013 to 2023, many aspects of disaster preparedness deteriorated: the percentage of persons with disabilities with no preparedness plan for disasters increased 12 percentage points; the percentage of persons with disabilities who need but have no one to assist them to evacuate increased 15 percentage points; and the percentage of persons with disabilities who are not aware of national and local disaster risk reduction plans increased 3 percentage points. Other aspects showed little progress or were stagnant: the percentage of persons with disabilities who are not involved in decision-making processes on community disaster management and risk reduction stayed the same in 2013 and 2023; and the

percentage of persons with disabilities who would have a lot of difficulty or not be able to evacuate during a sudden disaster only decreased 2 percentage points.

Accessible formats are increasingly available for laws/policies on climate change adaptation (78 per cent of countries), on disaster risk reduction (96 per cent of countries), on safe evacuation from public buildings (75 per cent of countries); on safe evacuation from private premisses (86 per cent of countries), for information on prevention, preparation and recovery from disasters (96 per cent of countries) and early warnings (100 per cent of countries). Most information is only released in accessible doc/pdf, with Braille, easy-to-understand and ePub less commonly used. More than 60 per cent of countries consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in developing disability-inclusive laws, policies and measures related to climate change, disasters and evacuation.

The following actions are recommended:

- Involve persons with disabilities in decision-making processes on disaster response and humanitarian action.
- Develop laws, policies, standards, checklists and indicators for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness, planning and response and in climate change adaptation.
- Ensure that emergency information, commodities, infrastructure and services are inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Mobilize resources for disability-inclusive emergency preparedness and response.
- Raise awareness among persons with disabilities of disaster management plans.
- Build capacity among humanitarian actors on disability inclusion.
- Maintain a register of persons with disabilities that maps the needs of persons with disabilities during and after disasters.
- Make post crisis recovery efforts inclusive of persons with disabilities.
- Ensure protection mechanisms in emergency and post crisis contexts to respond to the risk for persons with disabilities to violence, abuse and exploitation.
- Ensure accountability for acts or omissions leading to discrimination or exclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian actions and disaster response.

Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns, conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources, protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems (Goals 12, 14 and 15)

Persons with disabilities face barriers in acting as agents of change to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. Worldwide, only 59 per cent of recycling premises are accessible for wheelchair users, slightly down from 60 per cent in 2018; and only 67 per cent of shops selling organic/sustainable products are accessible for wheelchair users, up from 60 per cent in 2018.

Persons with disabilities face barriers in environmental activism. In 2021, no references to persons with disabilities were found in academic literature covering youth environmental activism and in social media from youth environmental activism groups. When involved, persons with disabilities are often engaged as environmental learners and given few opportunities to act as environmental advocates or educators.

The following actions are recommended:

- Involve persons with disabilities in environmental discussion and decision-making.
- Make recycling facilities and premisses for sustainable products and services accessible to persons with disabilities.

Reducing all forms of violence against persons with disabilities and ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children with disabilities (targets 16.1 and 16.2)

In some countries, more than 1 in 6 persons with disabilities are beaten or scolded because of their disabilities; more than 1 in 3 women with disabilities suffer sexual violence; more than 1 in 12 men with disabilities suffer sexual violence; more than 1 in 2 children with disabilities suffer severe punishment from their caregivers.

Worldwide, 1 in every 3 children with disabilities suffer neglect, sexual, physical or emotional violence – they are twice as likely to encounter such violence as children without disabilities. One of the most common forms of violence is in-person bullying by peers, affecting 37 per cent of children with disabilities. Children with psychosocial disabilities suffer the highest prevalence of sexual violence (18 per cent) and maltreatment by adults (36 per cent). Children with multiple disabilities suffer the highest prevalence of in-person and online bullying (47 per cent).

Persons with disabilities are also victims of human trafficking for forced begging, sexual exploitation, forced labour, organ removal, forced participation in armed conflict and theft of their disability benefits.

Countries have taken measures to facilitate the reporting and legal prosecution of violence against persons with disabilities and created accessible services supporting victims of violence. In 2023, 58 per cent of countries had emergency numbers accessible to persons with disabilities; 59 per cent had accessible shelters; and 74 per cent provided mental health and psychological support services to victims with disabilities.

The following actions are recommended:

- Provide training on combating violence against persons with disabilities, among families and parent groups, the justice system, teachers and educational staff, service providers, policymakers and legislators.
- Offer trainings for persons with disabilities on their rights and on skills to keep safe and to present themselves at police stations and courts.

- Establish accessible mechanisms to report violence.
- Make shelters and services for victims of violence accessible.
- Design and implement policies and programmes to address violence against persons with disabilities.
- Promote multi-country collaboration to end trafficking of persons with disabilities.

Ensuring equal access to justice for all persons with disabilities (target 16.3)

Persons with disabilities face obstacles accessing justice. Guardianship laws remain in place in many countries, depriving persons with disabilities of their legal capacity. The justice system often lacks accessibility features and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. In developing countries, a third of persons with disabilities indicate that courts and police stations are not accessible. In some countries, more than two thirds of persons with disabilities do not have access to legal services when they need them. Many officials throughout the justice system have no training on disability inclusion.

Progress has been made in recent years, with more countries having moved away from guardianship laws to supported decision-making systems. There has been slow progress in improving the percentage of courts and police stations accessible to wheelchair users, from 54 per cent in 2018 to 59 per cent in 2022.

The following actions are recommended:

- Promote supported decision-making and abolish laws and policies that impose substituted decision-making in legal proceedings against the will of persons with disabilities.
- Empower persons with disabilities to exercise their legal rights and access justice.
- Make the justice system disability-inclusive.
- Train justice officials on disability inclusion.

Developing inclusive institutions, ensuring inclusive decision-making and reducing the exposure of persons with disabilities to bribery and corruption (targets 16.5, 16.6 and 16.7)

National public spending on social programmes for persons with disabilities is on average 1 per cent of GDP, a level that has remained stagnant since 2017. A majority of countries, 77 per cent, offers online government services for persons with disabilities, up from 27 per cent of countries in 2014 - this progress is on track to reach all countries by 2030.

In various countries, more than 10 per cent of persons with disabilities experience discrimination in public services. Persons with disabilities tend to be underrepresented among public service personnel, with representation lower than half their share in the national population in several countries. In some countries, employed persons without disabilities are twice as likely as persons with disabilities to work as legislators, senior officials or managers. About 30 per cent of persons with disabilities find voting not accessible.

In 2022, only 66 per cent of town halls, 63 per cent of governmental ministries, and 48 per cent of non-governmental organizations were accessible for wheelchair users. Progress since 2018 has been insufficient. To achieve full accessibility by 2030, progress should be 4 times faster for town halls and 19 times faster for non-governmental organizations. Significant progress has been made since 2018 in the accessibility of governmental ministries (from 42 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent in 2022) and these premises are on track to achieve full accessibility for wheelchair users by 2030.

Limited data suggests that persons with disabilities are slightly less likely to pay or be asked to pay a bribe when interacting with government officials. During disasters, conflicts and other emergencies, persons with disabilities encounter bribery when attempting to access services.

The following actions are recommended:

- Eliminate legislation that violates the right of persons with disabilities to vote and to participate in political and public life.
- Ensure that public institutions and public services are accessible.
- Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in national public service.
- Support persons with disabilities who stand for political office.
- Make the voting process accessible.
- Strengthen the skills of persons with disabilities to defend their political rights.
- Prevent and respond to impacts of electoral violence against persons with disabilities.
- Ensure the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development and implementation of anti-corruption programmes.
- Keep adequate levels of public spending for disability inclusion.

Providing legal identity to all children with disabilities, including birth registration (target 16.9)

In some countries, registration is lower for children with disabilities than for children without disabilities. And in several countries, more than 50 per cent of children with disabilities remain unregistered. These countries will have to increase the birth registration rate for children with disabilities by 7 or more percentage points every year till 2030 to ensure that all children with disabilities are registered by 2030.

The following actions are recommended:

- Conduct studies to identify barriers to register children with disabilities and target efforts to address those barriers.
- Provide online, SMS and mobile birth registration, especially in remote areas and during crises and emergencies.
- Provide disability training for officers responsible for the birth registration process.

Ensuring public access to information for persons with disabilities (target 16.10)

National laws on access to public information do not always address the needs of persons with disabilities: only 6 per cent of countries mention accessible formats in these laws and only 1 per cent of countries explicitly refer to accessible formats for information online. One barrier to a wider use of sign language in the provision of public information is the lower number of countries, 3 per cent, that recognize at least one sign language as official language.

To achieve target 16.10 by, for and with persons with disabilities, the following actions are recommended:

- Adopt or revise laws on access to information to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities.
- Train staff involved in access to public information on disability inclusion.
- Allocate resources to ensure accessibility of public information.

Mobilizing official development assistance for disability inclusion (target 17.2)

Bilateral aid in support of disability inclusion surpassed 15 billion of US dollars in 2021, corresponding to 17 per cent of total bilateral aid. Only a small portion of disability-inclusion aid, 3 per cent, includes disability inclusion as the main objective of the activity; for the other 97 per cent, disability inclusion is a secondary objective of the activity. The sectors receiving most disability-inclusion aid are transport and health.

The following actions are recommended:

- Encourage donors to incorporate disability-inclusion in their aid, including for climate action and for combating intersectional discrimination.
- Encourage sectors other than disability inclusion to participate in the coordination of disability-inclusion aid.
- Raise awareness on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities among the private sector involved in aid.
- Involve representative organizations of persons with disabilities in all stages of implementation of international cooperation activities.

Enhancing the use of enabling technology: assistive technology (target 17.8)

In countries with low levels of the human development index, only 11 per cent of the persons who need assistive products can get them; in countries with medium levels of the human development index, only 33 per cent. The most frequent barrier is cost, with this barrier being experienced by 31 per cent of those who do not have the assistive products they need. Although 90 per cent of countries have a financing mechanism to fully or partially cover the users' costs of assistive technology, in practice, the cost of assistive technology is often covered out-of-pocket or by families or friends.

Over the past few years, promising steps have been taken to improve access to assistive technology. More than 80 per cent of countries have laws and regulations to support access to assistive technology. Adequate services, human resources and education on assistive technology has progressed more slowly, with less than 50 per cent of countries providing these. At least seven countries have developed national lists of priority assistive products to facilitate acquisition of essential products.

The transfer of assistive technology from developed to developing countries can boost access to this technology worldwide. Innovations are concentrated on a few countries, with more than 80 per cent of patents of assistive technology filed in China, Japan and the United States. Bilateral aid dedicated to providing access to assistive technology is small, corresponding to only 0.1 per cent of all bilateral aid dedicated to disability-inclusion.

The following actions are recommended:

- Improve access to safe, effective and affordable assistive technology.
- Involve users of assistive products, their families and representative organizations of persons with disabilities in policy development and programme planning.
- Include assistive technology in emergency and humanitarian responses.
- Provide technical and financial assistance through international cooperation.
- Encourage local production of assistive products.

International trade as a mean of improving access to assistive technology and empowering persons with disabilities (targets 17.10 to 17.12)

Trade can serve as an incentive to promote laws and practices to ensure the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society. Among preferential trade agreements negotiated in 2010-2020, 27 per cent included such clauses, up from 0 per cent before 1970.

Trade can also play a major role in the availability and affordability of assistive technology. International trade of assistive products is concentrated in developed countries, who account for 74 per cent of the value of exports of assistive technology. Imports are similarly concentrated: developed countries account for 82 per cent of the value of imported assistive technology. These shares have remained stagnant since 2014. Europe, Northern America and Oceania import more than 50 US dollars of assistive products per capita, while Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa import less than 10 US dollars of assistive products per capita.

Many assistive products have tariffs imposed at the border. Worldwide, the average applied tariff is 5 per cent for wheelchairs, orthotics, prosthetics and hearing aids; 5-10 per cent for glasses and spectacles. Behind these average values, lies a wide range of tariffs applied, sometimes at high as 35 per cent.

About 20 per cent of countries and territories are part of trade agreements with preferential tariffs on assistive products and about 80 per cent of the tariff values set in these agreements are set to 0 per cent.

About 20 per cent of least developed countries have preferential trade agreements resulting in tariffs of 0 per cent.

The following actions are recommended:

- Ensure that international trade agreements do not perpetuate inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities.
- Reduce barriers to international trade of assistive technology.
- Keep commitments on exports of assistive technology during emergencies and crises.
- Promote trade of assistive technology among developing countries.

Increasing the availability of data disaggregated by disability (target 17.18)

An increasing number of countries collect data on persons with disabilities and use internationally comparable methods to do so. Since 2015, the Washington Group questions have been used in 18 out of 21 countries that collected disability data in censuses and in many national surveys. The Model Disability Surveys have been conducted in 14 countries. But capacity to use these methods is particularly lacking in least developed countries.

The availability of data disaggregated by disability in the UN SDG Indicators Database has increased since 2018, but slowly. At the current rate, less than half of the SDG indicators explicitly requiring disability disaggregation are expected to have data by 2030.

The following actions are recommended:

- Integrate and harmonize disability data collections in national information systems.
- Use internationally comparable methods to collect data on persons with disabilities.
- Establish regular and standardized data collections along time.
- Involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in data production.
- Build capacity of developing countries, particularly least developed countries.
- Create a global, online and accessible repository of data on persons with disabilities.
- Increase data disaggregated by disability in the UN SDG indicator database.
- Release data in accessible formats for persons with disabilities.



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

social.desa.un.org/issues/disability