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Disability Inclusion in International Cooperation – The way forward

Call for Action





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Context

Official statistics estimate that over a billion people in the world have a disability. Persons with disabilities are estimated to represent 15% of the world population, with 80% of them living in low- and middle-income countries. Lower-income countries have a higher prevalence of disability than higher-income countries. Disability is more common among women, older people, children, and adults who live in poverty. Disability and poverty fuel each other in a vicious circle that must be broken **to ensure that no one is left behind.**

The European Union (EU) and every Member State of the Union are parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Article 4 requires State Parties **‘to adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the CRPD’**, across all their policies and programmes, including their external action. CRPD Article 32 on international cooperation, calls for **States parties to undertake appropriate and effective measures to make international development programmes inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.**

The [European Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#) provides a framework for CRPD implementation by the EU and its Member States. The **EU and its Member States have the responsibility to ensure** that all their policies and programmes related to **external action and international cooperation are disability-inclusive and in line with the CRPD**, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Call for Action

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and the European Disability Forum (EDF), with the support of the EU-funded initiative Bridging the Gap call on the European Union, all EU Member States and their respective development agencies to implement and promote international development policies and programmes inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities that meet the following requirements:





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- 1. Implement and promote policies and programmes** which are human rights-based, **inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities**, and in line with their obligations under international law including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the disability-related commitments acquired within the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.
- 2. Put in place concrete disability-inclusive strategies and action plans to move from inclusive policy to inclusive action.** Strengthen disability-inclusive development by assigning responsibility to the decision-making level and embark on comprehensive evaluations of the responsiveness of development cooperation to disabilities at country, sector, and agency level. All existing policies, frameworks, and action plans (including but not limited to gender equality, rights of the child, rights of migrants, internally displaced and refugees, etc.) should be revised to reflect disability inclusion.
- 3. Demonstrate leadership to promote the rights of persons with disabilities** by considering active engagement in the **Global Action on Disability (GLAD Network)** to promote disability-inclusive donor policies and practices **as well as in the Global Disability Summit**.
- 4. Ensure that across all sectors, all external investments and donor-funded actions for international development uphold the principles of accessibility, dignity, and the inclusion of the most marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities, in the community.** No funds should be invested externally in creating or exacerbating barriers or segregation or institutionalisation for persons with disabilities.
- 5. Ensure meaningful engagement of OPDs / DPOs, including marginalised and underrepresented groups, explicitly mentioning OPDs / DPOs engagement with development practitioners, including EU delegations, EU Member States agencies, disability coordinators and focal points at EU and country level.** Enable OPDs / DPOs to access funding, provide technical capacity building and training, specific financial support to allow OPDs / DPOs to sustainably build their governance structures, democratic representativeness, and human resources. Within donor countries, revise the performance of international development cooperation in close consultation with organisations of persons with disabilities, elevating the compliance with CRPD article 32 to an issue of domestic scrutiny, including civil society, academia, and parliament.



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- 6. Provide regular training and capacity building for development practitioners' staff**, including EU delegations and field staff, EU Member States agencies in partner countries, disability coordinators and focal points on the implementation of the CRPD and disability-inclusive programming.
- 7. Improve disability mainstreaming in all key policy and guidance. Provide clear guidance and training on disability mainstreaming across all sectors.** Revise all policies, guidelines, and key documents to include a disability perspective, inclusive data collection, development of inclusive indicators and monitoring tools. Strategically define a roll-out of disability mainstreaming from the core sectors of education, health, and social protection, towards all sectors including economic development and infrastructure
- 8. Apply a twin-track approach to disability-inclusion in development which consists of (a) mainstreaming the rights of all persons with disabilities in all programmes, and (b) develop initiatives specific for/by persons with disabilities.** Support twin-track approaches by providing resources while also supporting strategies which address the specific barriers faced by persons with disabilities. Beyond mainstreaming and specific support, include CRPD compliance systematically in the political dialogue.
- 9. Conduct the systematic collection of disaggregated and globally comparable data and use the data for evidence-based policy making and inclusive programming.** Data should be disaggregated by at least gender, age, and disability and aligned with the domestic SDG reporting on the respective targets. As a minimum standard and recognising the existing capacities of national statistical systems, we recommend using and promoting the Washington Group Questions for data disaggregation for disability.
- 10. At country level, coordinate analytical work, intervention strategies, and consultation spaces within EU actors as well as other multilateral and bilateral development partners**, respecting each country's policy space and leadership to democratically define National Disability Strategies, in line with aid effectiveness principles as defined in the procedural commitments of SDG17.
- 11. Implement the OECD DAC disability policy marker to track development finance in support of persons with disabilities.** Provide concrete and clear



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guidance to all relevant EU and Member States Directorates and services, including EU Delegations EU Member States agencies in partner countries, with training on how to systematically apply the OECD DAC disability marker across all relevant sectors and programmes. Report on an annual basis towards the domestic audience of OPDs and parliament in donor countries.

- 12. Very specifically, in response to COVID-19, promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the global discussions relating to the access to COVID-19 vaccination and more globally to the COVID-19 response and recovery plans.**

