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# Social protection in Africa: a new path towards inclusion of persons with disabilities

Call for Action

## Call for Action: Equal Access to Social Protection programmes

**Social protection** refers “to the set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups. Social protection can be provided in cash or in-kind, through social insurance, tax-funded social benefits, social assistance services, public works programs among other schemes.” (UNPRPD, 2021).

Evidence clearly indicates that persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poor households, have limited access to employment opportunities, and have lower education enrolment and attendance rates. They also face significant disability related costs as they try to overcome the multiple barriers hindering their participation.

The CRPD highlights obligations of States parties to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to mainstream social protection programmes, access to required disability related services and devices as well as coverage of disability related costs.

Sub-Saharan Africa only 7% of person with significant disabilities access related disability benefits. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the limitation of existing social protection systems.

In reaction, organisations of persons with disabilities, gathered in Niamey by the African disability forum in November 2020, reviewed the state of play and social protection response to COVID 19 and have agreed on key demands summarised here.

The African Disability Forum, with the support of the International Disability Alliance the EU-funded initiative bridging the gap II (BtG-II), the UNPRPD-ILO-UNICEF inclusive social protection project, calls on all African nations, technical and financial partners, and development agencies to:

- Recognize the impact of structural marginalization and inequalities and its consequences in terms of disability related costs for persons with disabilities and their families across the lifespan.
- Promote inclusive social protection schemes in line with Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities towards enabling inclusion and full and effective participation.
- Ensure responsiveness of these schemes to the diversity of the disability movement including women and children with disabilities, older people with disabilities and persons with disabilities with high support requirements and in humanitarian emergencies.

To that end, these stakeholders are called upon to consider disability inclusive social protection schemes that:

- **Meet the requirements of the diversity of persons with disabilities across the life cycle**
  - Progressively develop inclusive social protection systems which provide country-specific combination of universal cash transfers, meaningful concessions and community support services which support the coverage of disability related costs and maximize full and effective participation.
- **Aims at empowering persons with disabilities and their access to income through employment or entrepreneurship**
  - Adopting measures including incentives for employment and livelihood of persons with disabilities, support schemes for persons with disabilities who start up in private sector, as well as ensuring support and coverage of disability related costs, including for those working or seeking work, especially in the informal sector.
- **Takes into account the health requirements of persons with disabilities**
  - Adopting universal health coverage policies, along with inclusive healthcare systems and additional specific schemes to cover the total costs of health care including rehabilitation services and assistive devices.
- **Supports access to early childhood development and education**
  - Facilitate access to a combination of schemes to support early detection, intervention, education and coverage of disability related costs geared towards community based and inclusive services, for children with disabilities, learners with disabilities and their families.
- **Supports access to support services**
  - Ensure access to support services across the life cycle and especially during crisis situations, which are disability responsive, and gender and age sensitive.
- **Respectful of the specificities of the African context**
  - Respecting and leveraging existing community-based mechanisms specific to the African context, as a complement to national social protection schemes and systems.
- **An identification of beneficiaries based on human rights instead of the medical approach**
  - Development of a disability assessment system that is available, reliable and accessible for all, focused on functional difficulties and support requirements for participation, linked to a national registry to inform policy planning, budgeting, case management, and increased responsiveness in case of shocks and crisis.



In order to achieve such inclusive system, States and other stakeholders are invited to:

1. Act to the maximum of the resources at its disposal, by providing budget lines to support the costs linked to disability, both in national and municipal budgets, including funding from international cooperation;
2. Consulted closely and actively involve people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection schemes.