

An inclusive world,
starts with me,
with you,
with all of us

A world fit for every child

UNICEF DISABILITY INCLUSION POLICY AND STRATEGY 2022–2030

The DIPAS was endorsed by the Global Management Team in September 2022. It was subsequently endorsed by UNICEF Executive Director in December 2022.

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December 2022

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Copy-editing: Fabienne Stassen (EditOr Proof) and Green Ink (www.greenink.co.uk)

Layout and graphic design: Green Ink (www.greenink.co.uk)

Suggested citation: United Nations Children’s Fund, Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS) 2022–2030, UNICEF, New York, December 2022.



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The Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS) 2022–2030 was developed over a period of 2 years through consultations with UNICEF staff in more than 80 countries, organizations of persons with disabilities, implementing partners, United Nations agencies, governments and, importantly, children and youth with disabilities. The DIPAS further builds on the foundation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and will guide UNICEF’s work on programmes, operations and culture towards disability inclusion. The DIPAS was endorsed by the Global Management Team in September 2022 and subsequently endorsed by the UNICEF Executive Director in December 2022.

The DIPAS outlines UNICEF’s priorities for children with disabilities and provides strategic direction and a framework for accelerating disability-inclusive programming and operations to achieve results at scale, based on evidence, lessons learned and good practices. The DIPAS also provides UNICEF with a roadmap to strengthen cross-sectoral work for disability inclusion, as it looks towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, implementation of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to and supported the development of the Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS), which was produced under the leadership of **Rosangela Berman Bieler**. We would like to thank **Natalia Mufel**, who managed and coordinated the overall process in collaboration with the Collective Impact team of **Alana Kolundzija, Chelsea L. Ricker** and **Suzanne Petroni**. We are also grateful for the contributions of **Gopal Mitra, Alberto Vasquez Encalada, Alexander Cote** and **Jasmina Acimovic** for their valuable insights and support as members of the core team.

We recognize **Sanjay Wijesekera** for his invaluable guidance, advice and leadership as Chair of the DIPAS Steering Committee, and acknowledge **Omar Abdi** for his commitment and support for advancing disability inclusion across programmes, as well as **Hannan Sulieman** for her leadership on disability inclusion in UNICEF operations. In addition, we would like to thank the UNICEF **Culture and Diversity team** in the Office of the Executive Director for incorporating disability inclusion into their work and supporting UNICEF's implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).

We express our appreciation to **Yolanda Munoz**, from the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, for her guidance and support, and for leading, together with **Kathleen Manion** and **Emma Cohen**, the consultations with children and adolescents with disabilities. The team wishes to thank the 54 children and adolescents with disabilities from across 14 countries who contributed to inform the development of the DIPAS and consented to have their voices reflected in the strategy.

The development process involved extensive consultations across the organization, including feedback from key informant interviews. Responses from our online survey received from more than 300 **staff** from 81 headquarters, regional and country offices also informed the first draft of the strategy. Inputs from UNICEF's Global Network of Employees with Disabilities, DISABILITY CONNECT, and the Support Group for Employees with Children with

Disabilities have provided expertise and guidance to ensure an organization-wide DIPAS, comprehensive across both programmes and operations. We express our sincere gratitude to all staff for their vital input, which has greatly contributed to making this a strategy for the 'whole of UNICEF'.

We greatly appreciate the dedication and excellent contributions throughout the drafting and review process from the members of the **Technical Working Group**, comprising Disability Focal Points from all seven regions and various headquarters divisions across programmes and operations.

For their advice and guidance on strategic direction, we thank the members of the **Steering Committee**, comprising senior leaders from various regional offices and headquarters divisions. We are grateful for their championing of disability inclusion across the organization. We also wish to express our appreciation to the **Global Management Team** for their endorsement of the DIPAS and their commitment to its implementation.

To our external partners, we express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for the constructive input and feedback, both during the global, regional and national consultations to inform the drafting of the strategy, and the review process. We are especially grateful to the members of our **Strategic Advisory Group** representing United Nations agencies, Member States, organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society organizations and the private sector, among others. No one organization can do it alone, and our collaboration with all stakeholders is the key to achieving a disability-inclusive and accessible world for every child and adult with a disability.

It is impossible for us to list the name of everyone who contributed to the development of the DIPAS. We are extremely thankful to all our UNICEF colleagues and our external partners who so generously contributed their time and expertise throughout the process. We look forward to our continued collaboration to make the DIPAS vision a reality for every child and adult with a disability by 2030.

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Acronyms

AT	assistive technology	ILO	International Labour Organization
CCCs	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action	LMIC	low- and middle-income country
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
DIPAS	Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy	OPD	organization of persons with disabilities
ECD	early childhood development	SBCC	social and behaviour change communication
ECI	early childhood intervention	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
GDIP	Global Disability Inclusion Programmes	UDL	Universal Design for Learning
GDS	Global Disability Summit	UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
IDA	International Disability Alliance	UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
		WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

Executive summary

Central to UNICEF's mandate is its work to ensure that **every child** on this planet, no matter their circumstance or condition, is able to access and enjoy their basic human rights and well-being. At the global and national levels, and in close partnership with governments, civil society, other United Nations agencies and, importantly, children and their families, UNICEF has worked for decades to advance the rights and well-being of the most marginalized and excluded children, including children with disabilities.

UNICEF's work to date to ensure that children with disabilities are supported to access the quality information and services they need, while simultaneously adapting its own systems, processes and structures to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities, has yielded many positive results. Yet more must be done to achieve a truly inclusive UNICEF, and a truly inclusive world for children with disabilities. This document, the **UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS)**, is designed to accelerate progress towards these aims.

The DIPAS establishes a comprehensive framework for achieving UNICEF's ambitious vision of a more inclusive world by 2030. This vision imagines a **world in which all children, including those with disabilities, live in barrier-free and inclusive communities where persons with disabilities are embraced and supported, across the life cycle, to realize and defend their rights, and to achieve full and effective participation.**

The DIPAS describes a set of programmatic and organizational strategies, supported by meaningful partnerships and robust financial and human resources, which UNICEF must undertake to ensure that by 2030:

- Children with disabilities are empowered and recognized as their own best advocates and seen as essential to the expansion and sustainability of inclusion.
- Children with disabilities receive the support they require across the life course to live independently and be included in communities.
- Children with disabilities grow up in enabling environments with access to resources and opportunities to realize their full potential.
- Children and persons with disabilities benefit from a full range of UNICEF programmes and organizational investments that embrace inclusivity and diversity.

With the endorsement and publication of the DIPAS and its associated Accountability Framework, UNICEF commits not only to integrating accountability mechanisms into its programmatic and institutional architecture and systems, but also to welcoming its partners around the world to hold the organization accountable to the ambitious aims and the bold vision described in this document.

Consultation and partnerships

UNICEF recognizes that this vision cannot be achieved in isolation. It must be grounded in and led by transformational and strategic leadership within UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, as well as partnerships with organizations and networks of persons with disabilities and their allies in government, the donor community, the private sector and civil society, at all levels. **The DIPAS was developed with these partnerships at the very core, and through a highly consultative process over the course of 2021 and 2022. This included surveys and consultations with UNICEF staff in more than**

80 countries, as well as external experts, including organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), implementing partners, United Nations agencies, governments and, importantly, children and youth with disabilities. It was also influenced by discussions and commitments made by UNICEF and others at the Global Disability Summit held in February 2022.

This consultative process, along with additional research and inputs, led to the development of a bold vision and a clear path forward that builds on UNICEF's core mandate and significant contributions towards disability inclusion to date, as well as its unique capacity to add value to a field in which so many important stakeholders already contribute.

Twin-track approach

Achieving this ambitious vision will require all UNICEF offices, staff and partners to deepen their capacity for and increase their commitments to disability inclusion. These commitments will follow two complementary paths:

- Targeted actions and investments to advance the rights and well-being of children with disabilities, as well as the inclusion of staff with disabilities
- The integration of disability inclusion into sectoral and cross-sectoral programming and organizational systems and structures.

Strategic priorities

A set of strategic priorities, grounded in UNICEF's expertise and ability to complement and build on the work of others, will guide this work across the organization. These priorities include:

- **The prevention of stigma, discrimination, neglect and violence against children with disabilities, and the promotion of diversity and inclusion.** Here, UNICEF

will act on its unique capacity to shift social norms and effect sustainable change at scale. It will further promote the importance of understanding and addressing the needs, contributions and diversity of children with multiple forms of disability and intersecting characteristics that make them unique.

- **The improvement of disability-inclusive infrastructure, services, programmes and coordination platforms.** Children and adults with disabilities have the right to inclusive, integrated and accessible infrastructure, services, programmes and platforms that meet their needs. UNICEF will fulfil its mandate for advancing such approaches by integrating disability inclusion as both an accelerator of and a contributor to results in all programmes.
- **Access to comprehensive community care and support services, within and across sectors.** UNICEF is uniquely positioned to support partners in expanding their workforce



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capacity, and to support accessible needs assessment, effective case management and equitable services, among other community-based services. To this end, it will strengthen its investments, partnerships and technical assistance to help governments progressively realize universal access to comprehensive and gender-transformative services, enabling children with disabilities to have access to the support and care they need, within their respective family and community environments.

- **Access to assistive technology (AT) and relevant services.** UNICEF will strengthen its investments, partnerships, product availability and technical assistance to help governments progressively realize universal access to AT for persons, particularly children, with disabilities. It will increasingly support the development and greater availability of affordable, quality and appropriate products that meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities in diverse contexts.
- **Disability-inclusive action in humanitarian, emergency and fragile contexts, and across the full humanitarian, peacebuilding and development spectrum.** UNICEF will increase the integration and resourcing of emergency preparedness and response into all disability-related work, as well as the integration and resourcing of disability inclusion into all emergency preparedness and response work.
- **Full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.** UNICEF will increase its prioritization of the voices, experiences, and full and meaningful participation of children with disabilities in all sectors and settings. It will also expand its collaborative relationships with organizations and networks of persons with disabilities at the local, national and global levels.

Programmatic strategies

The path that UNICEF will take towards disability inclusion requires multiple and overlapping strategies. While significant attention and investments will be made to advance disability inclusion within and across UNICEF's programmatic work, UNICEF will simultaneously advance its efforts towards becoming a model for an inclusive organization. This requires deepened work to integrate disability inclusion into all of its operations, systems and structures.

Among the **programmatic strategies** UNICEF will undertake to implement these commitments and achieve its goals are:

Cross-sectoral coordination

UNICEF will strengthen coordination and collaboration across sectors, stakeholders and levels of government to ensure both that children with disabilities and their caregivers can access inclusive and barrier-free services and support and that UNICEF staff have the capacity they need to advance comprehensive and rights-based approaches to disability inclusion.

Data and research

UNICEF will continue to invest in systems that produce disaggregated and comparable data, collect and monitor evidence related to the participation of children with disabilities, strengthen external knowledge management and internal learning communities, and generate new knowledge on access to basic services for children with disabilities. The findings from these analyses will strengthen the capacity of UNICEF staff and partners to develop context-specific, concrete strategies and costed plans to promote and foster inclusive access to basic services for all.

Inclusive systems-strengthening

UNICEF will increasingly draw attention to the inclusion of children with disabilities in national systems, as well as in humanitarian, emergency and fragile contexts. In particular, it will encourage governments at all levels to embed accessibility and non-discrimination for children with disabilities in regulations and in practice, including by building the capacity of service providers. With a growing understanding across UNICEF, and across the world, of the importance of mental health during childhood and adolescence, as well as of the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, including for children with disabilities, UNICEF will accelerate its work and investments in these areas.

Innovation

Innovation and adaptation, whether by piloting new technologies, investing in results-oriented scalability and sustainability practices, or responding rapidly to public health or humanitarian emergencies, are essential to UNICEF's ability to meet the needs of children with disabilities everywhere. Under the DIPAS, UNICEF will undertake innovative approaches to adapt to changing understandings of disability and will expand its support for children with disabilities through investments in AT and inclusive products; disability identification, needs assessments and information systems; and responses to climate change and environmental degradation.

Advocacy, community engagement and social behaviour change

UNICEF will use its formidable global and national platforms to advocate for the establishment of disability-inclusive policy and legal frameworks, costing and budgeting to support integrated and accessible infrastructure and services for children with disabilities. It will draw attention to the costs of inaction on disability inclusion, as well as to the multiple and intersecting impacts of the exclusion

and neglect of, and discrimination against, children with disabilities, so that policymakers understand the need to act. UNICEF will combat stigma and discrimination through the use of its significant capacities in advocacy and social behaviour change communication (SBCC), including by supporting expanded community engagement and scaled-up, targeted communications campaigns.

Humanitarian action

Over the course of the DIPAS, UNICEF will further expand the capacity of its staff and partners to embed disability inclusion as a core element of humanitarian action and coordination. UNICEF will ensure that all service delivery – including in humanitarian, emergency and fragile contexts – is disability inclusive and builds strong linkages across humanitarian and development programming. A disability-inclusive risk analysis will be integrated into systems-strengthening initiatives to build resilience in fragile contexts and settings prone to disasters.

More specific commitments within these strategies, as well as additional commitments to disability inclusion within and across UNICEF's goal areas, are articulated in annexes to the DIPAS.

A whole organization approach

For UNICEF to become a model for an inclusive, diverse workplace and a global leader for disability inclusion, it must invest in organizational change. The DIPAS commits UNICEF to several organizational strategies that will enable the successful implementation of programmes, research, advocacy and communications, as well as ensure that the organization has the technical capacity, inclusive structures and sufficient human and financial resources to embed disability inclusion in all of its efforts. This includes specific and time-bound strategies focused on:

UNICEF's Management endorsed the DIPAS at a moment when the organization is readier than ever before, to address disability inclusion through its programmes, operations, cultural and behavioral practices. It was built with passion and commitment, by many hands and in consultations with numerous stakeholders, including children, families, and employees with disabilities. Its implementation starts with each one of us, with all who want to build a better world where children, youth and adults with and without disabilities feel fully respected and included.

Rosangela Berman Bieler, Global Lead on Disability,
UNICEF, October 2022

- Accessibility and reasonable accommodations
- Institutional architecture and capacity, including employment and human resources
- Information and communication technology
- Supply
- Communications and advocacy.

Additionally, several specific commitments will be pivotal in accelerating progress towards disability inclusion across the organization. As described further in the DIPAS Accountability Framework, these include, among others:

- Disability status will be considered during the recruitment and hiring process, to increase the proportion of UNICEF staff with disabilities.
- Disability inclusion will be incorporated into the mandatory training of all employees.
- All UNICEF regional offices will have a dedicated disability expert by 2030, and more Disability Focal Points will be integrated throughout the organization each year.
- At least 10 per cent of activity-level expenditures across the organization will be applied towards disability-inclusive programming by 2030.

Enablers of success

These programmatic and organizational strategies will be supported by three key enablers of success:

Partnerships

UNICEF recognizes the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships with organizations and networks of children and persons with disabilities, governments, United Nations agencies, donors, civil society and others. Even as UNICEF collaborates more deeply with these partnerships and offers them resources and support, its work will benefit from their lived experience and expertise.

Financing and resource mobilization

Adequate funding and resources must be allocated at all levels of the organization to ensure the operationalization of the DIPAS commitments. This will require not only that new resources be mobilized, but that headquarters and regional and country offices identify funding, allocate budgets and report on spending towards disability inclusion, across programmes and operations.

Leadership, accountability and coordination

Achieving this ambitious vision, where children and adults with disabilities have the support, resources and opportunities needed to operate as a transformational force for inclusion for themselves and others, will require all UNICEF offices, staff and partners to sharpen their capacity and commitment to disability inclusion. And it will require accountability at all levels to ensure success. Through the DIPAS and its associated Accountability Framework, UNICEF's leadership across the organization commits to ensuring meaningful progress, including through bold accountability standards for action.

Conclusion

Through this first-ever DIPAS, UNICEF establishes a bold vision for the world it wants to see by 2030, along with programmatic and organizational parameters to deliver on this vision, for and with children with disabilities around the world. It commits UNICEF to redoubling its efforts and rapidly expanding its work to advance the rights, respect the experiences and meet the needs of the world's many children with disabilities, all while allowing sufficient flexibility for context-driven approaches at the country and community levels.



1

Introduction



UNICEF promotes the rights and well-being of every child in everything the organization does. Together with its partners, UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to translate this commitment into action, focusing particular attention on reaching the most marginalized and excluded children, realizing that this will benefit all children, everywhere. But while great progress has been made in recent years towards a world that advances and honours the rights and well-being of all, children with disabilities are too often left behind. With this *Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS)*, UNICEF commits to changing this situation and ensuring the inclusion of children with disabilities in all its work.

Working across countries and sectors to build systems, services, societies and communities that embrace diversity and inclusion and deliver quality outcomes, UNICEF has a unique capacity to advance the rights of children with disabilities, at scale. Even as it commits to advancing this important work around the world, UNICEF will build an organizational culture and expand its institutional capacity to embrace diversity, be inclusive of persons with disabilities and deliver on results for children with disabilities.

While UNICEF has long worked to support and improve outcomes for children with disabilities, it has never before had an organization-wide strategy focused on this population. This document, the DIPAS, aims to provide a clear vision and strategic framework for UNICEF work on disability inclusion until 2030, and is accompanied by an Accountability Framework to guide the organization in measuring and reporting on progress. Through this DIPAS, UNICEF establishes programmatic and organizational parameters to deliver on this vision for and with children

with disabilities around the world. It commits to redoubling current efforts and rapidly expanding its work to advance the rights, respect the experiences and meet the needs of the world's many children with disabilities, all while allowing sufficient flexibility for context-driven approaches at the country and community levels.

The DIPAS is closely aligned with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), which establishes the highest level of commitment and a vision for the United

Nations system on disability inclusion. As such, this document focuses on the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities, including through access to public health and universal health care, not the primary prevention of impairments. It is grounded in UNICEF’s mandate under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs), the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations, and more, as described in chapter 3. It reflects and helps to operationalize UNICEF’s mission, wherein UNICEF commits to “ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children – victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation, and those with disabilities”¹

“Disability is an evolving concept ... disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Preamble, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The DIPAS further builds on the foundation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, while at the same time committing the organization to an even more progressive and cross-sectoral agenda as it looks towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It

incorporates the commitments made by UNICEF at the Global Disability Summits held in 2018 and 2022. Importantly, it has been developed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and accounts for the United Nations system’s response as it relates to disability inclusion and to a need for expanded support to parents and caregivers of children with disabilities during this uncertain time.

The DIPAS is among several core documents that aim to integrate and expand disability and inclusion throughout UNICEF. Others include a global research agenda that will progressively build a stronger evidence base for inclusive policymaking and programming, mainstream disability in all research about children, foster collaboration and the alignment of research priorities, influence research frameworks and methods, as well as mobilize funding and maximize available resources; a strategy to collect comparable and appropriately disaggregated data; and guidance for UNICEF staff on disability inclusion across goal areas and country offices.

The development of the DIPAS was highly consultative and aimed to serve as a model for an inclusive co-design process, wherein the rights and opinions of children and adults with disabilities are centred. Led by the Disability Team at UNICEF headquarters and a technical working group comprising Disability Focal Points representing all levels and sections of the organization, the development process was informed by a range of inputs. These include:

1 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘UNICEF mission statement’, UNICEF, New York, n.d., <www.unicef.org/about-us/mission-statement>, accessed 20 June 2022.

- Literature reviews that synthesized the growing evidence base on disability inclusion in programming and operations. A UNICEF report released in November 2021 on using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities was particularly helpful in understanding the current global context.²
- Extensive internal and external consultations and interviews, including with governments and key partners from other United Nations agencies and multilateral organizations, public and private donor agencies, academia, implementing partners and civil society, including networks and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- Consultations with 54 children and young people with disabilities from 14 countries, which were essential to ensure that their critical voice and perspectives were heard and included (*see Annex C*). Consultations with adolescents and young people during the development of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, were also useful in this regard.³
- Development and analysis of an online survey disseminated in four languages, which was completed by more than 300 UNICEF staff members from 81 countries across various levels of the organization.

United Nations entities should lead by example on disability inclusion.⁴ For UNICEF, disability inclusion is a core principle and a key value, essential to the achievement of its programmatic goals and its operational success.

Further, UNICEF believes that true disability inclusion means embracing disability as part of human diversity, removing all barriers to participation and engagement for persons with disabilities, within and across its programmes and operations, and supporting the diversity of the disability community in enjoying the same rights, opportunities and quality resources on an equal basis with others. To this end, the DIPAS lays out a set of programmatic *and* organizational priorities to advance disability inclusion in all of UNICEF's work.

Across the organization, UNICEF will prioritize the prevention of stigma and discrimination against children and persons with disabilities; the improvement of disability-inclusive and accessible infrastructure and digital platforms, services, workplaces and programmes; the cross-sectoral provision of community support and assistive technology (AT); integrated disability-inclusive humanitarian action; and the full realization of the right of children and adults with disabilities to meaningful participation.

UNICEF recognizes the importance of having persons with disabilities actively engaged in its work as part of a fully inclusive workforce and as a way to ensure the effectiveness and continuous improvement of its programming. As such, it will expand its utilization of policies, procedures and dedicated funding to become a more inclusive organization.

The DIPAS also describes specific priority interventions to promote disability inclusion within and across UNICEF's sectors, known as

2 United Nations Children's Fund, *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*, UNICEF, New York, November 2021, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-with-disabilities-report-2021>>, accessed 21 June 2022.

3 United Nations Children's Fund, *Engaging children and young people on UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022–2025*, UNICEF, New York, July 2021, <www.unicef.org/media/107941/file/Engaging%20children%20and%20young%20people%20on%20UNICEF's%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>, accessed 21 June 2022.

4 United Nations, *United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, Technical Notes: Entity Accountability Framework*, United Nations, New York, n.d., <www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN_Disability_Inclusion_Strategy_Entity_Technical_Notes.pdf>, accessed 22 June 2022.

goal areas. These include early childhood screening, detection and intervention; access to disability-inclusive health and nutrition services throughout the life course; disability-inclusive education and skills development; support for inclusive and effective child protection systems, including contributing to preventing family–child separation, strengthening family-based

alternative care and ending institutionalization; disability inclusion in emergency preparedness and response; disability-inclusive and accessible water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and services; disability-inclusive climate change prevention and mitigation; and disability-inclusive social protection systems, among others.

“Inclusion is not about inserting persons with disabilities into existing structures, but about transforming systems to be inclusive of everyone. Inclusive communities put into place measures to support all children at home, at school, in vocational centres, sports and cultural events and in their communities. When barriers exist, inclusive communities transform the way they are organized to meet the needs of all children.”

UNICEF, Children with Disabilities. Ending Discrimination and Promoting Participation, Development and Inclusion, Programme Guidance Note, 2007

“If everyone could express their feelings and opinions, the world would be a better place, and the policies would be adopted with the input of people who know about the subject and not by someone who does not know about a given problem. This could contribute to eliminating barriers and achieve the accessibility that we deserve, and that we try so hard to promote.”

Adolescent from Uruguay, UNICEF consultations with adolescents with disabilities, 2022

2

Global context for children with disabilities



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Findings from the largest-ever compilation of statistics on children with disabilities indicate that there are nearly 240 million children with disabilities in the world (see Figure 1).⁵

Taking into account a full range of functional difficulties, current information provides greater knowledge than ever before about not only the scale and characteristics of children with disabilities, but also about the changing nature of how people understand disability and how best to promote fully inclusive programmes, policies, systems and societies most effectively. For example, psychosocial difficulties are common among children across all age groups. It is therefore critical to include children with psychosocial disabilities in mainstreaming efforts and provide support for their parents/caregivers and teachers, as well as to ensure a rights-based and inclusive approach to the provision of mental health and psychosocial support for all children, including those with disabilities.

The new evidence also sheds light on the increased adversities that many children with disabilities face. For example, UNICEF estimates that, compared to children without disabilities, children with disabilities are:

- **16 per cent less likely to read or be read to at home**
- **20 per cent less likely to have expectations of a better life**
- **21 per cent less likely to have water and soap for hand washing in their households**
- **22 per cent less likely to have improved sanitation facilities in their households**
- **24 per cent less likely to receive early stimulation and responsive care**
- **25 per cent more likely to be emaciated**
- **25 per cent less likely to attend early childhood education**

5 Seen, Counted, Included.



FIGURE 1 Number of children aged 0–17 years with disabilities



Notes: The global estimate is based on a subset of 103 countries covering 84 per cent of the global population of children aged 0 to 17 years. Regional estimates represent data covering at least 50 per cent of the regional population of children.

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*, UNICEF, New York, November 2021, p. 18.

- **26 per cent less likely** to have improved water sources in their households
- **27 per cent more likely** to be out of upper secondary school
- **32 per cent more likely** to experience severe corporal punishment
- **33 per cent more likely** to be out of lower secondary school
- **34 per cent more likely** to be stunted
- **41 per cent more likely** to feel discriminated against
- **42 per cent less likely** to have foundational reading and numeracy skills

- **47 per cent more likely** to be out of primary school
- **49 per cent more likely** to have never attended school
- **51 per cent more likely** to feel unhappy
- **53 per cent more likely** to have symptoms of acute respiratory infection.

The United Nations has made significant progress in facilitating the identification and assessment of children with disabilities and collecting data on them, in line with the CRPD.⁶ The Child Functioning Module, launched by UNICEF and the Washington Group on

6 Early identification is the initial identification of children with disabilities, typically conducted before 8 years of age. The World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health is frequently used as guidance for this process. Identification and assessment ideally lead to the provision of multidisciplinary services.

'Children with disabilities' in the DIPAS

UNICEF follows the CRC definition of 'children' as fully inclusive of all persons under 18 years of age. The DIPAS therefore defaults to the language 'children with disabilities' as inclusive of 'children and adolescents', while recognizing that adolescents can have significantly different needs from younger children, and that UNICEF is obliged to recognize and respond to differences in needs, opportunities and risks in accordance with both the child's stage of life and their evolving capacity.

The DIPAS also recognizes that young people (separately defined by the United Nations as persons aged 15–24 years) face unique challenges and bring valuable experience and expertise for working with and for children with disabilities. For this reason, it refers to 'children and young people with disabilities' as crucial partners in the vision for a more inclusive world.

Persons of all ages with disabilities face stigma and discrimination that affect their lives and the lives of the children in their families and communities, a fact taken into consideration in both UNICEF programmatic and advocacy investments and the DIPAS priorities. UNICEF will continue to invest in inclusive social support for all children with disabilities and their families, as pledged in the DIPAS commitments. Finally, UNICEF is fully committed to becoming a model for a more inclusive workplace by providing support to persons of all ages with disabilities.

Disability Statistics in 2016, is intended to provide a population-level estimate of the number of children with functional difficulties. It covers children aged 2–17 years, and considers difficulties in various domains of functioning.⁷ Nonetheless, data are lacking about children with disabilities who are affected by humanitarian and fragile contexts.

Children with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Some children are born with genetic conditions or impairments, while others acquire them in childhood. Children can be very diverse in relation to their functional difficulties, the barriers they face, the support they need, the requirements they may have for tailored interventions, and the intersecting factors that both influence their identities and interact with

different environments. Not all disabilities are 'visible', and differences in functioning can be subtle. Individual children with a similar impairment or condition will have very different experiences across different life domains, depending on whether they have access to the AT they need, the type and level of support they receive, and the inclusiveness of the family, community and society in which they live.⁸ For example, it is estimated that in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), more than 90 per cent of those who need AT do not have access to it, which potentially means a near total inability to move, access information, care for oneself or communicate with others, depending on the specific impairment. The needs and rights of children with disabilities in high-income countries are not always met

7 Loeb, Mitchell, et al., 'Measuring child functioning: the UNICEF/Washington Group Module', *Salud Pública de México*, vol. 59, no. 4, July–August 2017.

8 Seen, Counted, Included.

“Disability is seen as taboo or a curse. The key is that they are not able to be exposed to life. They are hidden. There is a stigma. This is the major challenge.”

Young person from Kenya, *UNICEF consultations with adolescents with disabilities, 2022*

“There are moments when people without disabilities will treat you equally, but there are others when they will exclude you. They are not equal.”

Adolescent from Kenya, *UNICEF consultations with adolescents with disabilities, 2022*

or respected, and persistent and structural ‘ableism’⁹ continues to amplify stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities. Indeed, in nearly all settings and contexts, children with disabilities face exclusion, stigma, bullying, discrimination, neglect, abandonment and violence on the basis of their disability and compounded by their other identities.^{10, 11, 12}

Many children with disabilities experience intersectional and overlapping discrimination, which contributes to systemic patterns of social exclusion and marginalization and often compounds their exclusion and deprivation, particularly in the case of young women with disabilities and children with disabilities who are poor, indigenous or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning and others (LGBTQI+) or who belong to ethnic minorities, migrant communities or other excluded and marginalized groups.¹³

Access to services, AT, education and other support may vary immensely among children with disabilities based on their age, ethnicity, religion, race, gender, socio-economic status, migration status and a number of other factors, while children from marginalized communities or populations may have compounded vulnerabilities based on their disabilities. UNICEF is committed to supporting all children in all settings, including children with disabilities, to the fullest realization of their human rights, free from discrimination, stigma, exclusion and violence.

In general, persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and less likely to have access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. Children with disabilities experience higher amounts of all forms of violence across diagnosis types and are more than twice as likely as their non-disabled peers to experience

9 United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Report on the impact of ableism in medical and scientific practice by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. A/HRC/43/41. <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/report-impact-ableism-medical-and-scientific-practice>>, accessed 30 January 2023.

10 World Health Organization, World Report on Disability, WHO, Geneva, 2011, <www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability>, accessed 21 June 2022.

11 Mitra, Sophie, and Jaclyn Yap, The Disability Data Report, Disability Data Initiative, Fordham Research Consortium on Disability, New York, 2021, <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3871045>, accessed 22 June 2022.

12 United Nations Children’s Fund, Research and Evidence on Children with Disabilities, UNICEF Innocent Research Centre, Florence, <www.unicef-irc.org/children-with-disabilities>, accessed 18 March 2022.

13 United Nations, Leaving no one behind: The imperative of inclusive development, United Nations, New York, 2016, <www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/full-report.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2022.

violence.¹⁴ About one third of children with disabilities are survivors of violence, and nearly 40 per cent of children with disabilities are bullied by peers.¹⁵

Among young people aged 15 years and older with disabilities, there are consistent gaps in employment rates and youth idle rates, as well as a higher percentage in informal work and meagre living conditions, and subject to domestic violence.¹⁶

The CRPD Committee has stressed the right of children with disabilities to grow up in a family and be included in the community, and has expressed concerns about placing children with disabilities in residential care, including large and small group homes.¹⁷ Yet children with disabilities continue to be far more likely than children without disabilities to be separated from their families and abandoned and/or placed in institutions.¹⁸ Worldwide, for example, children

with disabilities are estimated to be 17 times more likely to be institutionalized than other children.¹⁹ Children with disabilities who are institutionalized are more likely than children without disabilities to experience neglect, abuse and violence, including sexual violence.²⁰ The situation is particularly dire for institutionalized children with disabilities in the case of armed conflict.^{21, 22}

Health, nutrition, educational and social services for children with disabilities are often limited, underfunded and difficult to access, and children with disabilities face greater barriers than their peers in accessing adequate nutrition, equal education, child protection services and health care.²³ Most societies lack both inclusive services and specific support services, including adequate AT and accommodations for individual children with disabilities to access the services they need. Additionally, the roles and dynamics of families

14 Fang, Zuyi, et al., 'Global estimates of violence against children with disabilities: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis', *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, vol. 6, no. 5, 17 March 2022, pp. 313–323.

15 Ibid.

16 United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals*, OHCHR, Geneva, 2020, <www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/SDG-CRPD-Resource/Foundations/policy-guideline-foundations-final.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2022.

17 CRPD Committee, General Comment No. 5, on living independently and being included in the community (CRPD/C/GC/5), para. 19(c). <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no5-article-19-right-live>>, accessed 23 June 2022.

18 Larsson, Naomi, 'Out of sight: The orphanages where disabled children are abandoned', *The Guardian*, 26 September 2016, <www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/sep/26/orphanage-locked-up-disabled-children-lumos-dri-human-rights>, accessed 23 June 2022.

19 United Nations Children's Fund Europe and Central Asia, 'Children with Disabilities', UNICEF, n.d., <www.unicef.org/eca/children-disabilities>, accessed 23 June 2022.

20 Human Rights Watch, 'Children with disabilities: Deprivation of liberty in the name of care and treatment', *Protecting Children Against Torture in Detention: Global Solutions*, New York, 7 March 2017, <www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/07/children-disabilities-deprivation-liberty-name-care-and-treatment>, accessed 23 June 2022.

21 European Disability Forum, 'Protection and safety of persons with disabilities in Ukraine', 24 February 2022, <www.edf-feph.org/protection-and-safety-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-ukraine>, accessed 23 June 2022.

22 Kottasová, Ivana, and Yulia Kesaieva, 'Escaping the horror in Ukraine is not an option for many disabled children and their families', *CNN*, 12 March 2022, <www.cnn.com/2022/03/11/europe/disability-ukraine-russia-invasion-intl-cmd/index.html>, accessed 23 June 2022.

23 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Disability and Development Report 2018*, United Nations, New York, 2019, <<https://social.un.org/publications/UN-Flagship-Report-Disability-Final.pdf>>, accessed 23 June 2022.

and other caregivers of children with disabilities have been insufficiently accounted for in most policies and programmes, despite being crucial factors affecting their development.

This lack of attention and its associated risks and disadvantages for children with disabilities can be intensified by intersecting factors, such as gender (*see text box: 'Disability, sex and gender'*), endemic poverty, conflict and other humanitarian emergencies and crises, geographic and environmental barriers, and marginalization or exclusion due to age, race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity or expression, migratory status, sexual orientation or other

characteristics. Non-existent or inadequate anti-discrimination and accessibility laws and services may exacerbate these challenges.

In contexts of humanitarian emergencies, including conflict and disasters, children with disabilities are more likely than others to be excluded from services and experience discrimination and violence. A recent report by the United Nations Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict found that “barriers for children with disabilities to full participation in daily life are further intensified and compounded when infrastructure is destroyed, and services and systems are compromised

Disability, sex and gender

While each child's experience of disability is unique, biological sex differences and socially constructed gender roles can systematically influence girls' and boys' risks of impairment, functional difficulties and exclusion. Sex and gender can also play a role in determining children's access to the care and resources they need to thrive. A significant body of evidence, for example, suggests that the psychosocial difficulties experienced by girls are systematically overlooked, largely due to the fact that their experiences tend to be different from those of boys.

Boys and girls with disabilities can also face different challenges depending on how gender-based discrimination and disability intersect. Compared to boys with disabilities, girls with disabilities are less likely to receive care and food in the home, to receive health care and assistive devices, and to receive vocational training that would enable them to find employment. Inaccessible water, sanitation and hygiene facilities at school can discourage any girl from getting an education, especially during menstruation, but the difficulties are often compounded for girls with disabilities.

Additionally, while research suggests that all children with disabilities experience narrower opportunities than their peers without disabilities, family expectations for girls with disabilities are often lower than those for boys with disabilities. Girls from households that include children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than boys who also live in households with children with disabilities; they are also more likely to be out of school than girls in households without children with disabilities.

Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*, UNICEF, New York, November 2021.

and made inaccessible because of conflict".²⁴ They may be separated from support networks and face additional barriers to equally access education, services, protection and humanitarian assistance. This is compounded by the lack of access to AT, as national systems may lack capacity or be inaccessible to populations affected by humanitarian emergencies, and humanitarian response often inadequately addresses AT needs.

The exclusion and discrimination experienced by children with disabilities are deeply rooted in ableism, a value system that deems persons with disabilities to be shameful, dangerous, less worthy and, in general, of less inherent value than others. Ableism also contributes to normative erasure and to the systemic exclusion of persons with disabilities and their needs. Ableist assumptions present in all societies lead to prejudice, hostility, discrimination and exclusion. This contributes to undercounting, which has ramifications for estimating demand and unmet needs, procurement and programme planning. Additionally, countries may use different definitions of disabilities, and national data systems may not collect disaggregated data, which further compounds the undercounting of persons with disabilities, including children. Finally, ableism is a root cause of structural inequalities, such as national policies and budgets that do not prioritize and support the inclusion of children with disabilities, which can contribute to a failure to recognize the benefits of inclusion for individuals, the economy and society.

Progress has been made, but steep barriers remain

Considerable progress has been made in codifying and ensuring the rights of children

with disabilities. This progress has been supported by the inclusion of a provision relating to the rights of children with disabilities in the CRC in 1989, the adoption of the CRPD in 2006 and the launch of the UNDIS in 2019 (*see Chapter 3 for more*).

Partly as a result of these government commitments, children with disabilities have seen significant gains, primarily in accessing their right to education. In 2013, for example, 62 per cent of 102 United Nations Member States surveyed had a law or policy mentioning the right of children with disabilities to receive an education. In 2017, that figure was 88 per cent. In 2013, only 17 per cent of countries provided support for the inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools. This figure had risen to 44 per cent by 2017.²⁵

Nevertheless, continued wide disparities across all settings reflect the ubiquity of barriers preventing children with disabilities from enjoying full and equal participation in society. Progress has been slower for children with disabilities than their peers without disabilities, and, despite rapid progress in national laws and policies supporting access to inclusive education, for example, too many children with disabilities still lack equal access to education and are segregated from their peers, without the support they need to be fully included in the learning process. Further, progress on other elements of a holistic and inclusive approach to fulfilling the rights of children with disabilities has not been as rapid.

Full implementation of the CRC and the CRPD remains a challenge, particularly for countries with insufficient political will or the financial

24 United Nations, Children and armed conflict: Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, A/HRC/49/58, United Nations, New York, 4 January 2022, <www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/49/58&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC>, accessed 23 June 2022.

25 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Disability and Development Report 2018, United Nations, New York, 2019.

resources to meet their obligations. Few countries have either national laws that are fully compliant with the CRPD or mechanisms to enforce legal provisions, where they do exist.²⁶

Children with disabilities impacted by humanitarian emergencies

Over 41 million persons with disabilities were expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022.²⁷ In humanitarian emergencies, the exclusion experienced by children with disabilities is even further magnified as service systems break down and children are separated from support networks while facing specific threats. For example, in disasters, the mortality rate for persons with disabilities has been recorded as two to four times higher than that of persons without disabilities,²⁸ and persons with disabilities face multiple barriers in safe movement and are more likely to be left behind or abandoned during displacements.^{29, 30} In countries affected by humanitarian emergencies, inclusive education systems, disability support services, AT services, child protection and other services face additional pressures or break down, while children with disabilities who flee humanitarian emergencies may not have access to these services in host countries.

Further, while substantial progress has been made on disability-inclusive humanitarian action, children with disabilities are still often left behind in planning and preparedness actions. For example, needs assessments may not capture how age and disability intersect to generate heightened and specific risks for children with disabilities; humanitarian action often does not include adequate resourcing for inclusive education, AT and disability support services; mechanisms for community engagement and feedback and complaints are often not accessible or child-friendly; initiatives to promote participation by persons with disabilities in humanitarian action are often not inclusive of children or young people; and disability inclusion guidance and training for humanitarian actors often do not reflect the unique requirements and capacities of children with disabilities. As a result, children with disabilities face a significantly heightened risk of violence and abuse, lack access to basic assistance and become even further marginalized and excluded.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

A growing body of evidence indicates that children with disabilities – already one of the world’s most marginalized populations – may

26 United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals, OHCHR, Geneva, 2020.

27 Based on 15 per cent of the total number of persons expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its Global Humanitarian Overview 2022, OCHA, Geneva, 2022.

28 Fujii, Katsunori, The Great East Japan Earthquake and Disabled Persons, Disability Information Resources, Tokyo, 20 April 2012.

29 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report 2018–2019, UNHCR, Geneva, 2020, p. 18.

30 For example, in Yemen, it was found that internally displaced persons have reported leaving behind family members with disabilities due to active hostilities (Global Protection Cluster, Silver Linings: Mental health & wellbeing in the COVID era, Global Protection Update, February 2021 <www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Global-Protection-Update_04032021.pdf>).

be particularly susceptible to harm in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.^{31, 32} Many children with disabilities have heightened health vulnerabilities, leaving them more susceptible to COVID infection and more likely to experience long-term and serious complications as a result. Further, information about prevention may not be accessible to children with certain disabilities, and their needs have not always been prioritized in vaccine roll-outs or the reopening of social services.^{33, 34} This problem becomes more acute when health systems are overwhelmed, and where children with disabilities must negotiate care in triage situations.³⁵

When health decisions are made based on perceived quality of life, children and persons with disabilities may suffer due to stigma and discrimination grounded in pervasive negative biases and inaccurate assumptions about their quality of life. During the early stages of the pandemic, for example, some locations adopted crisis standards of care that explicitly and implicitly discriminated against persons with intellectual disabilities by categorically

excluding them from access to scarce medical resources.³⁶

For children with disabilities who live in group settings, such as shelters and residential care facilities, it may be more difficult to comply with preventive measures such as social distancing and mask-wearing. Such preventive measures may present additional challenges for children with disabilities. For example, a deaf adolescent who participated in consultations for the development of this document stated that the use of masks during the pandemic stripped him of the ability to read lips and interpret some sign language gestures, thus impeding his ability to communicate with friends, family and peers.

Children with disabilities may face more negative consequences than their peers from disruptions in school- and community-based services due to lockdowns and social distancing rules.³⁷ Changes to and loss of routines can have a greater impact on children with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities,³⁸ and these disruptions may also constrain the

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- 31 Shakespeare, Tom, Florence Ndagire and Queen E. Seketi, 'Triple jeopardy: Disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic', *The Lancet*, vol. 397, no. 10282, 16 March 2021, pp. 1331–1333, <[www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)00625-5/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)00625-5/fulltext)>, accessed 24 June 2022.
 - 32 Siobhan Brennan, Ciara, Disability rights during the pandemic: A global report on findings of the COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor, COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor, 2020, <www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/disability_rights_during_the_pandemic_report_web_pdf_1.pdf> accessed 24 June 2022.
 - 33 Chicoine, Brian, and George Capone, 'Regression in Adolescents and Adults with Down Syndrome', ch. 7 in *Physical Health of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 2nd edition, edited by Vee P. Prasher and Matthew P. Janicki, Springer Nature, Switzerland, 2019, pp. 121–140.
 - 34 Seen, Counted, Included.
 - 35 Kuper, Hannah, et al., 'Disability-inclusive COVID-19 response: What it is, why it is important and what we can learn from the United Kingdom's response', Wellcome open research, vol. 5, no. 79, 28 April 2020.
 - 36 Boyle, Coleen, et al., 'The public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic for people with disabilities', *Disability and Health Journal*, vol. 13, no. 3, July 2020, <www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7246015>, accessed 24 June 2022.
 - 37 United Nations Children's Fund, *Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation*, UNICEF, New York, December 2020, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-with-disabilities-ensuring-inclusion-in-covid-19-response>>, accessed 21 June 2022.
 - 38 Seen, Counted, Included.

important role that teachers, social workers and others can play in identifying children with disabilities who may experience abuse, and reporting on such abuse. As the mental health challenges associated with COVID-19 become clearer, evidence is mounting that the mental and psychological needs of children with disabilities must be prioritized in pandemic planning and response.³⁹

The COVID-19 crisis exacerbated education inequalities for learners with disabilities. Even before the pandemic, millions of learners with disabilities were receiving inferior-quality education, often separated from their peers.⁴⁰ Before the pandemic, children with disabilities already had significantly lower rates of education,⁴¹ a problem that was exacerbated by the global disruptions in education systems. To address the ongoing education crisis during the pandemic, most countries implemented remote learning strategies to take the place of in-person instruction while schools were closed. However, all modalities of remote learning contain barriers that exclude some children with disabilities, and the vast majority of parents, families and caregivers

of children with disabilities in LMICs do not have the necessary access to equipment, electricity, internet, support and AT for proper participation, even when the content is designed and distributed in an accessible manner.^{42, 43} Remote learning further shifted an immense burden of care onto already overstretched family resources, including requiring untrained parents and caregivers to also become educators while responding to changing economic and labour circumstances.⁴⁴ Family support services for caring for children with disabilities were interrupted by lockdowns and the need for social distancing measures, requiring additional time and an escalated learning curve for complex care in families.⁴⁵

At the same time, governments were slow to provide the needed services for children with disabilities during the pandemic. At least half of the countries surveyed in mid-2020 reported that governments had failed to adopt measures aimed at facilitating remote learning for children with disabilities, including, for example, instruction, and devices or materials accessible to children with disabilities, such as sign language for online learning (*see Figure 2*).

39 See, for example, Patel, Khushboo, 'Mental health implications of COVID-19 on children with disabilities', *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 54, December 2020.

40 United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 'General comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education', United Nations, New York, 25 November 2016, <<https://undocs.org/CRPD/C/GC/4>>, accessed 24 June 2022.

41 International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, *The Learning Generation*, Education Commission, 2016, <https://report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning_Generation_Full_Report.pdf>, accessed 24 June 2022.

42 Botelho, Fernando H. F., 'Childhood and Assistive Technology: Growing with opportunity, developing with technology', *Assistive Technology*, vol. 33, sup1, 24 December 2021, pp. 87–93, <www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10400435.2021.1971330>, accessed 24 June 2022.

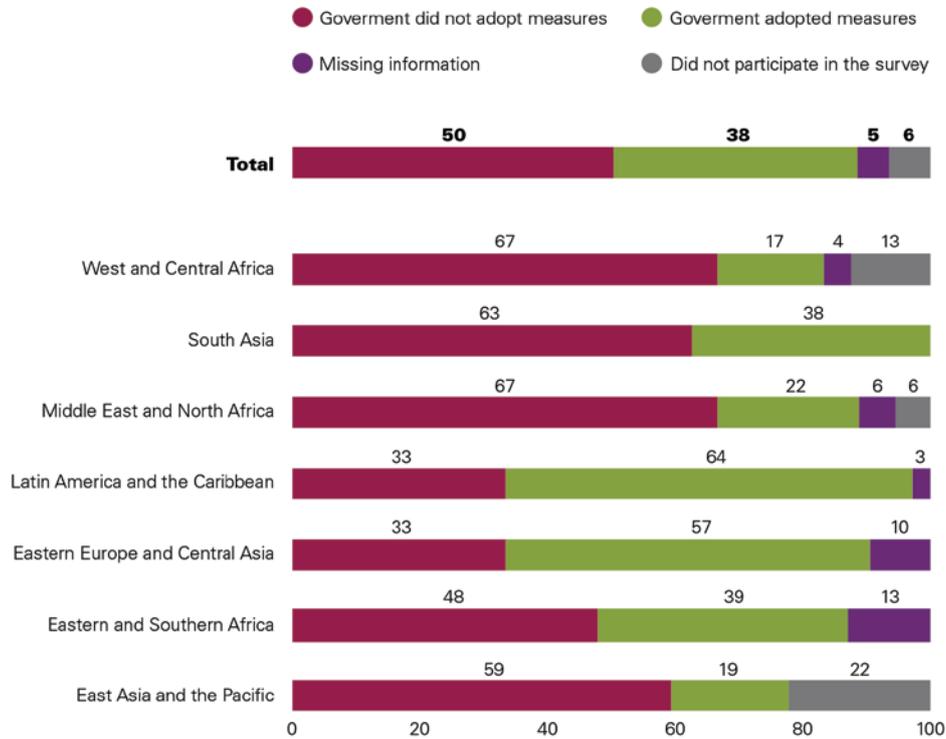
43 Botelho, Fernando H. F., 'Accessibility to digital technology: Virtual barriers, real opportunities', *Assistive Technology*, vol. 33, sup1, 24 December 2021, pp. 27–34, <www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10400435.2021.1945705>, accessed 24 June 2022.

44 Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation.

45 Nurturing Care, 'Improving early childhood development through health services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond', 2020, <https://nurturing-care.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Keymessages_factsheet_EN_aw_web.pdf>, accessed 24 June 2022.



FIGURE 2 Percentage of countries reporting new measures to facilitate learning for children with disabilities in their COVID-19 response strategies (as of 2020)



Notes: Figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100 per cent. Ten countries did not complete the survey; therefore, the number of countries where governments did not adopt measures could be higher.
Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation*, UNICEF, New York, 2020, p. 11.

Further, very few governments had engaged civil society organizations representing persons with disabilities in the consultation, design, implementation and/or monitoring of COVID-19 response plans (see Figure 3).

In the face of these challenges, it is important to note that, if the needed AT and appropriate

support are provided, distance learning can potentially have some positive effects for children with disabilities.^{46, 47} For instance, the technology required for children with disabilities to participate in remote schooling or to receive virtual health and psychosocial care and support may help them overcome digital divides. However, most children with

46 Some of the links to documents mentioned in this DIPAS are internal publications only accessible to UNICEF staff.

47 United Nations Children's Fund, All Means All – Examples of equity-focused interventions, UNICEF, New York, 2020, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <[https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/EMOPS-2019nCoV/DocumentLibrary1/Education%20Toolkit%20-%20COVID-19/Programmatic%20Response/Summary%20of%20country%20examples%20re%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20\(19%20May%202020\).pdf](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/EMOPS-2019nCoV/DocumentLibrary1/Education%20Toolkit%20-%20COVID-19/Programmatic%20Response/Summary%20of%20country%20examples%20re%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20(19%20May%202020).pdf)> [Internal document].

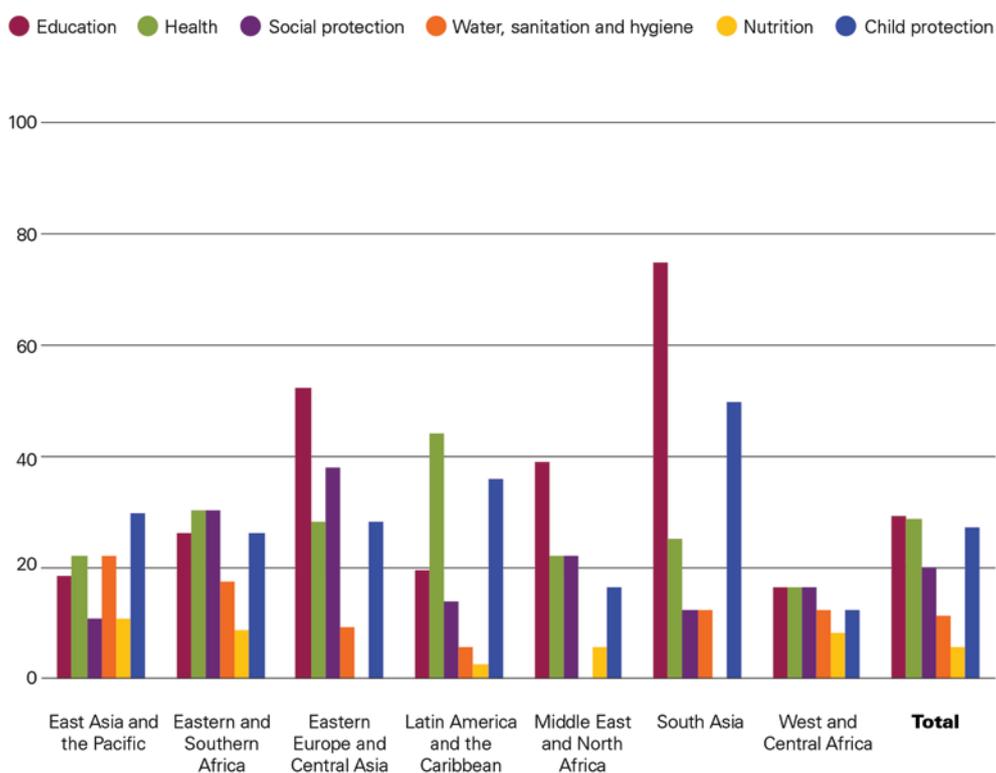
intellectual disabilities are experiencing important gaps in their opportunities to develop their full potential.

In short, if designed with the needs of all learners in mind, COVID-19 response and recovery programmes can present

opportunities to build back better and to improve the capacity of education systems to provide inclusive and accessible education, alongside other services, for children with disabilities, in both in-person and remote digital learning and care environments.



FIGURE 3 Percentage of countries reporting engagement of civil society organizations in COVID-19 plans (as of 2020)



Source: United Nations Children's Fund, *Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation*, UNICEF, New York, 2020, p. 12.

3

UNICEF's mandate on disability inclusion



UNICEF’s mandate is to protect and promote the rights of all children, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.⁴⁸ UNICEF’s mandate as it relates to children with disabilities, specifically, stems from the United Nations General Assembly, as well as a range of international conventions and frameworks. These include, among others:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The 1989 CRC was the first international treaty to specifically mention children with disabilities. Article 23 specifies that children with disabilities have the right to live in dignity, free from discrimination and as active participants in society. This includes the right to care appropriate to the rights and needs of each child, provided free of charge, with the intention of securing access to education,

training, health care and other services to promote the child’s development and social integration.

It is important to note that, at the time the CRC was signed, the medical approach to disability was prevalent. Article 23 contains language that is currently outdated, and which is significantly different from the CRPD, which promotes more of a human rights approach to disability.

“A mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community.”

[CRC, Article 23]

48 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘UNICEF mission statement’, UNICEF, New York, n.d., <www.unicef.org/about-us/mission-statement>, accessed 24 June 2022.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The CRPD was adopted in 2006 and entered into force in 2008. As of the beginning of 2022, it has been ratified by 184 countries, with 100 having ratified the Optional Protocol. The CRPD provides a comprehensive framework for international cooperation and national policymaking to build a society inclusive of persons with disabilities. Based on a model of 'inclusive equality' or 'transformative equality', which embraces substantive equality and expands its redistributive, participatory and transformative dimensions, the CRPD establishes the highest normative standard to advance equal opportunities for every child, provides a comprehensive understanding of rights and expands on previous agreements' definitions of anti-discrimination.

While Article 7 of the CRPD is specific to children with disabilities, their rights are covered in every article, with some articulating distinct actions that must be taken to ensure their right to live in dignity and with equality and respect. Article 3 positions respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with

disabilities to preserve their identities as a core principle of the CRPD, while Article 6 emphasizes the intersection with gender inequalities as a condition that adds complexity to the situation of girls with disabilities. Children are also emphasized in regard to safety and protection in humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters (Article 11); freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (Article 16); liberty of movement and nationality (Article 18); freedom of expression (Article 21); respect for home and the family (Article 23); inclusive education (Article 24); health (Article 25); and participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport (Article 30). Of special importance for both children and parents with disabilities is the right to AT (Article 4), as it enables access to all other rights for most types of disabilities.

Essential to the CRPD is the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live and be included in their community, with choices equal to others (Article 19). This and other rights oblige States to provide access to the assistive products and services needed to support children with disabilities to live with their family, if that is their choice, as well as inclusive education, age-appropriate support for community participation, and more.

Article 7 of the CRPD: Children with disabilities

1. States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.
2. In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
3. States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Developed in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly states that all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are universal and inclusive of persons with disabilities. Five of the SDGs specifically refer to persons with disabilities. They are:

- **Goal 4:** Guaranteeing equal and accessible education by building inclusive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for persons with disabilities
- **Goal 8:** Promoting inclusive economic growth and full and productive employment, allowing persons with disabilities to fully access the job market
- **Goal 10:** Emphasizing the social, economic and political inclusion of persons with disabilities
- **Goal 11:** Creating accessible cities and water resources, and affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, as well as providing universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces
- **Goal 17:** Underlining the importance of collecting data and monitoring the SDGs, with emphasis on disability-disaggregated data.

In addition to these explicit references, disability inclusion can be seen as critical to the achievement of other SDGs. Goal 3, for example, includes the promotion of mental health and well-being, which can include children with psychosocial disabilities, and Goal

16 recognizes the importance of addressing violence against children to achieve peaceful and inclusive societies.

United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

The UNDIS is a comprehensive strategy to raise standards and accelerate performance on disability inclusion in programmes and operations across the United Nations system. Launched in 2019 by the United Nations Secretary-General, the UNDIS established an action plan and an Accountability Framework for all United Nations entities to follow. The Accountability Framework covers four core areas, which guide UNICEF's work towards disability inclusion. These are: leadership, strategic planning and management; inclusiveness; programming; and organizational culture.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

While the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, does not explicitly refer to disability, the Committee responsible for its oversight has made two general recommendations of relevance.⁴⁹ General Recommendation 18 obliges State parties to explicitly reference the situation of women with disabilities, particularly their status related to employment, education and social security.⁵⁰ General Recommendation 24 further requires commentary and analysis on the health status

49 Lansdown, Gerison, Using the Human Rights Framework to Promote the Rights of Children with Disabilities: An analysis of the synergies between CRC, CRPD and CEDAW, UNICEF, New York, 2012.

50 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 'General recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 18 (tenth session, 1991): Disabled women', New York, 1991, <www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom18>, accessed 24 June 2022.

of women with disabilities.⁵¹ For UNICEF, it is particularly important to note that this recommendation pertains to women's health throughout the lifespan, and thus includes 'girls and adolescents' in the definition of 'women'.

Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

UNICEF is one of more than 250 organizations, representing States, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and global, regional and national OPDs to have signed on to the Charter to date. The Charter represents a commitment to "render humanitarian action inclusive of persons with disabilities, by lifting barriers persons with disabilities are facing in accessing relief, protection and recovery support and ensuring their participation in the development, planning and implementation [of] humanitarian programmes."⁵²

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475

In addition, UNICEF is committed to upholding United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with

Disabilities in Armed Conflict, which underlines the benefit of providing "sustainable, timely, appropriate, inclusive and accessible assistance to civilians with disabilities affected by armed conflict, including reintegration, rehabilitation and psychosocial support, to ensure that their specific needs are effectively addressed, in particular those of women and children with disabilities"⁵³

Global Disability Summit Charter for Change

The first-ever Global Disability Summit (GDS), held in 2018, brought together world leaders, government officials, civil society, the private sector, donors and OPDs to share experiences, ideas and aspirations about development and humanitarian work and making it more inclusive for persons with disabilities. UNICEF signed onto the GDS Charter for Change and announced a set of bold commitments designed to accelerate global action for the rights of children with disabilities and to build on its efforts to ensure that no child is left behind. It did the same at the quadrennial event in 2022, with 25 new commitments related to all sectors of work.

51 United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 'General recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 24 (twentieth session, 1999): Women and health', New York, 1999, <www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom24>, accessed 24 June 2022.

52 'Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action', 2016, <<https://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org>>, accessed 24 June 2022.

53 United Nations, Security Council Resolution S/RES/2475, United Nations, New York, 20 June 2019, <<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N19/186/60/PDF/N1918660.pdf?OpenElement>>, accessed 24 June 2022.

4

UNICEF's comparative advantage in disability inclusion



UNICEF cannot achieve disability inclusion on its own, but with credibility gained through 75 years of experience and achievements, a mandate to protect and promote the human rights of all children and women everywhere, and operational capacity in 190 countries and territories across the humanitarian, peacebuilding and development nexus, it is critically positioned to advance disability inclusion at scale across the globe.

UNICEF is the world's largest and leading agency working explicitly for the advancement of children's rights. With this focus, it has a unique ability to engage stakeholders, decision makers and governments in all corners of the world and to work with partners in all areas towards a common goal related to childhood and adolescence. Moreover, UNICEF has a strong mandate that covers the development–humanitarian–peace nexus with broad outreach and leadership across multiple sectors that could be effectively deployed within inclusive programmes, policy and normative work. UNICEF is a Cluster Lead Agency for WASH, Education and Nutrition, as well as leading the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, in humanitarian action, which places it in an

important position to influence coordination across these sectors.

As the largest procurer in the United Nations family, UNICEF is in a unique position to increase global access to AT and disability-inclusive products by leveraging its market position. By adding AT products to the UNICEF Supply Catalogue, UNICEF can help ensure access to appropriate and affordable products globally. Similarly, by systematically reviewing its existing product portfolio, it can work towards ensuring that relevant products used in UNICEF programming in all settings are inclusive or accessible for persons with disabilities.

Within the United Nations system, UNICEF has a uniquely cross-sectoral mandate and a proven ability to shift norms and promote inclusion for all children across contexts, sectors and political environments. Outside this system, UNICEF has the ability to procure products and services at scale, and the capacity to build on and leverage long-standing strategic partnerships with governments, international networks, donors, the private sector and civil society, including OPDs, from the grass-roots to the global level.



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Through these partnerships, UNICEF is not only able to deliver extensive services but can also influence changes that can significantly impact the lived realities of the 240 million children with disabilities around the world.

With its strong advocacy capability, extensive in-country presence and working relationships with government measurement and evaluation offices at the national and subnational levels, UNICEF is leading child disability data collection and dissemination efforts globally. This is a critical contribution not only towards the achievement of the SDGs but also towards helping countries – and programmes – promote the meaningful inclusion of children and adults with disabilities. UNICEF additionally has significant capacity and leverage to be able to drive a global research agenda that can influence evidence-based advocacy and investments in generating data and research on crucial and emerging issues related to the rights and development of children with disabilities.

Because UNICEF is focused on children, its programmes are particularly well positioned to drive changes in social norms at the stages of life when they are learned, socialized and solidified. Like the UNICEF Gender Action Plan (2022–2025) and Gender Policy (2021–2030), which call for a transformation of social norms so as to foster gender equity and equality for children, the DIPAS calls for a transformation of norms to enable equity and equality for children with disabilities. Ensuring inclusion for all children will necessitate broad if not universal changes in the norms that drive ongoing ableism and associated stigma and discrimination against children and adults with disabilities. UNICEF can build on its long history of social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), along with the requisite experience and capacity to be able to combat disability-based stigma, discrimination, neglect, abandonment and violence against children with disabilities, by using technology and other tools to shift social norms at scale.

5

UNICEF's disability inclusion policy



A key function of the DIPAS is to establish a vision of a disability-inclusive world by 2030. This chapter presents that vision, as well as a strategic framework that introduces the overarching goals, objectives and strategic priorities that will help guide UNICEF work and investments in disability-inclusive development for all children (see Figure 4). Along with the following chapter, the UNICEF Disability Inclusion Strategy, and the annexed Accountability Framework for Disability Inclusion, this Disability Inclusion Policy commits UNICEF to bold and innovative action with and for children with disabilities.

A. The disability-inclusive world UNICEF strives to achieve: A vision

UNICEF strives for a world in which:

- All nations, societies, systems, communities, families and individuals promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and actively work to ensure the inclusion, leadership and

meaningful participation of all children with disabilities in all contexts on an equal basis with others.

- The rights of children and adults with disabilities to live in supportive and inclusive families and communities are fully realized, and individuals and communities have the tools, equipment, resources and capacity to build a more inclusive world.
- Ableism and other forms of stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities have been eliminated, and children with disabilities live in a world free from barriers, stigma and discrimination of all kinds.

Vision statement

All children, including those with disabilities, live in barrier-free and inclusive communities where persons with disabilities are embraced and supported, across the life cycle, to realize and defend their rights, and to achieve full and effective participation.

- Children with disabilities, including those with multiple and complex conditions and those who have been marginalized or excluded on the basis of disability or other intersectional identities, have equitable access to services, resources, support and justice to realize their full human rights.
- Children with disabilities grow up in peaceful and just societies, free from the experience or threat of exclusion, abuse, neglect and violence or other rights violations, and are protected from all forms of violence in all settings.
- Efforts to prevent climate change and promote environmental health include considerations and inputs from persons with disabilities so that they can participate in and lead climate mitigation efforts.
- Children with disabilities are prioritized and protected in all contexts, including during humanitarian emergencies, conflict and complex crises, to ensure that they are not left behind.
- All children, including those with disabilities, are supported and encouraged to achieve their fullest potential, are protected and have access to the inclusive, quality education and information they need to understand, communicate and act on their own truths.

To this end:

WE STRIVE for a world that has eliminated and healed from the generational legacies of discrimination of all kinds, including on the basis of disability, sex, age, religion, race, ethnicity, health, economic status, occupation, class, caste, citizenship, national origin, migration status, sexual identity or orientation, gender identity or expression, urban/rural locality or other status, and in which intersecting effects of systems of exclusion on the basis of these factors no longer exist.

WE AIM to support meaningful and diverse partnerships with governments and other

entities that promote the ability of all children, including those with disabilities, to access their fundamental human rights, including their right to live in a safe, supported and supportive family environment, to learn, to be protected from violence, exclusion and neglect, to adequate health and nutrition, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, to clean water and safe accessible sanitation, to AT, to an adequate standard of living, to be included and fully and meaningfully participate in their communities, to influence and lead social changes, and to contribute to sustainable development and healthy, green and secure futures.

WE AIM to help parents, families, caregivers and communities to gain the resources they need to support children with disabilities through healthy, inclusive and gender-equitable life-course transitions, from infancy through adolescence to adulthood, and to establish positive norms and social structures based on shared values of equality, justice and human rights.

WE AIM to close divides in access to education, employment and AT, and to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, benefit from and drive innovations and new pathways to learning and interacting.

WE STRIVE for a world freed from conflict, complex crises and humanitarian emergencies, where children with disabilities are protected in all settings and where humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness efforts centre on the risks and needs of all children, including by addressing the heightened risks of children with disabilities.

WE AIM to become a disability-inclusive and fully accessible organization, where all employees are fully supported and valued, protected from discrimination and harassment, and enjoy equitable access to resources, rewards and opportunities to thrive.

WE STRIVE to create a world where children, young people and adults co-create and model new and more equitable systems of power; where all children, including those with disabilities, claim their equal right to well-being and fulfilment, and contribute to

sustainable development; and where children with disabilities are recognized and supported as leaders, innovators, change-makers and problem-solvers, thereby securing the foundations of civil and political liberties during their lives and for future generations.





B. Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion

The Strategic Framework that appears below establishes a roadmap for the DIPAS.

To achieve the vision of a disability-inclusive world, UNICEF will invest in programmatic, organizational and strategic actions that result in a generation of children, in particular

those with disabilities, having the support, resources and opportunities needed to operate as a transformational force for inclusion for themselves and others. This generation of fully supported and empowered children with disabilities has the potential to bring a new and intersectional lens to inclusion, embracing not only all forms of disability but also working towards more equitable and inclusive structures and cultures for all children.

Figure 4 outlines the Strategic Framework to achieve the vision of the DIPAS - which is for all children, including those with disabilities, to live in barrier-free and inclusive communities, where persons with disabilities are embraced and supported, across the lifecycle, to realize and defend their rights and to achieve full and effective participation. As such it outlines goals (that are fully elaborated later in this document); cross sectoral strategic priorities; programmatic and organizational strategies supported by key enablers (such as partnerships; financing and resource mobilization; and leadership, accountability and coordination), which leads to the Outcome that UNICEF models dynamic inclusivity by embracing people and cultures in all their diversity. Programme strategies include: cross-sector coordination; data; inclusive systems strengthening; innovation; advocacy, community engagement, and behaviour change; and humanitarian action. Organizational strategies include: accessibility and reasonable accommodations; ICT; institutional capacity; supply; and communications and advocacy. These goals and strategies are fully elaborated below in the document.



FIGURE 4 Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion

Vision

All children, including those with disabilities, live in barrier-free and inclusive communities where persons with disabilities are embraced and supported, across the life cycle, to realise and defend their rights, and to achieve full and effective participation.

Goals

Children with disabilities are empowered and recognized as their own best advocates and seen as essential to the scaling up and sustainability of inclusion.

Children with disabilities receive the support they require across the life course to live independently and be included in communities.

Children with disabilities grow up in enabling environments with access to resources and opportunities to realize their full potential.

Children and persons with disabilities benefit from a full range of UNICEF programmes and organizational investments that embrace inclusivity and diversity.

Cross-Sectoral Strategic Priorities

Prevention of stigma, discrimination, neglect, and violence against children with disabilities and promotion of diversity and inclusion

Disability inclusive infrastructure, services, programmes, and coordination platforms

Access to comprehensive community care and support services

Access to assistive technology and relevant services

Disability inclusive action in humanitarian, emergencies, and fragile contexts

Full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities

Strategies

Programmes

Cross-sectoral coordination

Data and research

Inclusive systems strengthening

Innovation

Advocacy, Community Engagement, and Social Behavior Change

Humanitarian Action

Organizational

Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodations

Information and Communication Technology

Institutional Architecture and Capacity

Supply

Communications and Advocacy

Enablers

Partnerships

Financing and Resource Mobilisation

Leadership, Accountability, and Coordination

Outcome

UNICEF models dynamic inclusivity by embracing people and cultures in all their diversity

Source: UNICEF



UNICEF recognizes its mandate and responsibility to work with and for children with disabilities, their families, caregivers and communities, to support successful transitions through early childhood into and through education and into independent living as adults, by creating an enabling environment where inclusivity and diversity are embraced. This vision will necessitate expanding the organization’s ability to work holistically and across sectors, taking a twin-track approach and using both disability-targeted and disability-inclusive actions to ensure that children with disabilities are met at every turn with accessible information, AT, targeted outreach and engagement, policy and community support, social protection and inclusive programming.

UNICEF cannot accomplish this vision in isolation: the work must be grounded in and led by transformational and strategic partnerships with organizations and networks of persons with disabilities and their allies in government, the donor community, the private sector and civil society at all levels. UNICEF is fully committed to ensuring that its partners have equitable access to resources and funding, to amplifying the voices of children with disabilities in all places where decisions are made, and to improving its ability to listen to and be led by partners, staff, and children and young people with disabilities.



C. Goals

With its new Strategic Framework for Disability Inclusion, UNICEF has established goals it will strive to reach on the way to achieving its longer-term vision. These are:

1. Children with disabilities are empowered and recognized as their own best advocates, and seen as essential to the expansion and sustainability of inclusion

To this end, UNICEF aims to create enabling environments for children with disabilities to participate fully in their communities and to bring their lived experiences to decision-making processes. Ensuring the right to meaningful participation and leadership requires investments in, access to and the removal of barriers to education and communication, targeted and integrated skills-building, access to AT and support services, the availability of peer groups and role models, particularly for girls with disabilities, who may face additional barriers, and prioritized partnerships with OPDs and organizations of parents, families and caregivers

of children with disabilities at all levels. UNICEF is fully committed to empowering children with disabilities throughout childhood and adolescence, including:

- Elevating and amplifying the voices and ongoing leadership of young advocates with disabilities, their networks and organizations, by establishing prioritized funding mechanisms and partnerships
- Expanding agency, by building leadership skills and capacity, as well as expanding the representation and participation of children in OPDs, including in development processes and cluster coordination, and humanitarian coordination platforms, among others
- Increasing assets through accessible digital platforms as well as economic empowerment interventions targeting adolescents and youth with disabilities directly, such as through cash plus transfer programmes, or indirectly, such as through financial literacy training, skills for employability and mentorship programmes.⁵⁴

54 United Nations Children's Fund, Technical Note on Adolescent Empowerment, UNICEF, n.d., <www.unicef.org/media/101901/file/Adolescent%20Empowerment%20Technical%20Note.pdf>, accessed 24 June 2022.

2. Children with disabilities receive the support they require across the life course to live independently and be included in communities

UNICEF embraces a full life-cycle approach to child development, and therefore recognizes the ongoing support needed by children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers to overcome barriers and ensure healthy and successful transitions throughout the life course. This includes early identification and intervention; access to appropriate AT; support to cover disability-related expenses; the provision of inclusive and accessible sexual and reproductive health services and information; the delivery of mental health and psychosocial support and services that centre on the rights and dignity of children and persons with disabilities; family-friendly policies that allow parents to have adequate time, resources and

services to care and provide for their children; and a society free from stigma and discrimination. As children with disabilities transition into and during adolescence, they may require age-appropriate support that allows them to be as autonomous as their peers without disabilities. When transitioning to adulthood, they may need support services to live independently, vocational skills and inclusive workplaces. At all ages, children and adults can benefit from the elimination of ableism and the associated stigma and discrimination within communities and social structures. This will require not only continued investments in inclusive and gender-transformative early childhood development (ECD), health, nutrition, social protection, education, WASH and child protection, but also social innovation and norm changes to develop disability-inclusive and responsive support services and systems.



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The importance of early identification and intervention

For all children to grow and reach their full potential, it is critical that they receive high-quality and nurturing services and interventions at the right time. Strengthening the health, nutrition, education, WASH and child protection sectors can help to mainstream and improve the early identification of children with disabilities. Early identification enables the timely implementation of targeted interventions that can support the unique needs of children with disabilities and remove the barriers they face in accessing services.

The period between pregnancy and 3 years of age is a critical time for a child's growth and development, and when the brain is most susceptible to environmental influences. Throughout the child's early years, there are multiple opportunities to support families and caregivers in providing a nurturing environment to promote child development; identify children at risk for delays and disabilities; and provide early interventions for those children who may require intensive support. These opportunities require skilled multidisciplinary teams of professionals providing assistance to parents, families and caregivers. In many places, however, the monitoring of child development and screening for delays and disabilities are not performed.

The adoption of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics Question Sets across all relevant data collection efforts, by UNICEF and others, will enable the generation of comparable data to support early identification and intervention. Further investments must be made, including by governments at all levels, to improve birth registration systems and early identification and data collection systems, and to ensure the collection and reporting of adequate, disaggregated data on children with disabilities.

Early identification requires investments in systems-strengthening in all sectors, to ensure that workforces in health, education and social services, including childcare, and in all settings, including crisis and humanitarian response, are equipped and supported to screen, report and respond to early signs of disability in children under 3 years of age. Early identification enables early childhood intervention (ECI), which includes a range of individualized services to improve child development and resilience, and to strengthen family competencies and parenting skills to facilitate children's development. ECI systems often involve advocacy for the educational and social inclusion of children and their families. They typically include coordinated services supported by national policy, including guidelines and procedures, regulations, and service and personnel standards, to promote the child's age-appropriate growth and development. The aim of ECI systems is to ensure that all families who have at-risk children under 5 years of age receive resources that assist them in maximizing their child's physical, language, cognitive and social/emotional development while respecting the diversity of families and communities.

Given the multidisciplinary nature of early identification and ECI services, coordination between the education, health, nutrition, WASH and child protection services sectors is essential. The engagement of the education sector is of central importance; however, greater attention to the inclusion of child protection and child health and nutrition sectors, in particular, will help ensure all children in ECI programmes can access a full range of services.

3. Children with disabilities grow up in enabling environments with access to resources and opportunities to realize their full potential

UNICEF recognizes that the ongoing stigma, discrimination and other barriers faced by persons with disabilities are fostered by systems and structures that fail them, and that it is the responsibility of governments, donors, multilateral organizations and other key stakeholders to invest in making them more inclusive. UNICEF commits to using its power as a convener with global reach, and with connections to governments, donors and private sector actors, to amplify investments in targeted interventions for children with disabilities, as well as inclusive environments where children with disabilities thrive in all contexts.

4. Children and persons with disabilities benefit from a full range of UNICEF programmes and organizational investments that embrace inclusivity and diversity

UNICEF strives for a comprehensive, holistic understanding of inclusion that encompasses and embraces the diversity of types of disabilities and the full identities of persons with disabilities, as with other members of society. This includes investing in research and data that can expand the understanding of diversity across the spectrum of disability and its impact on how children with disabilities access or experience barriers to services and support, and how communities and societies can be transformed to embrace diversity. In addition, UNICEF commits to generating and using evidence to drive programmatic and operational investments in ending discrimination based on multiple factors, including disability, to ensure the most marginalized people are included in all of its work.





D. Cross-sectoral strategic priorities

Because children with disabilities remain among the most excluded, discriminated-against and invisible members of every society, UNICEF is elevating programming on disability rights to advance disability inclusion in everything it does, including through support to the parents, families and caregivers of children with disabilities. To advance towards its goals of empowering children with disabilities to thrive and participate fully in society, and of becoming a truly disability-inclusive organization, UNICEF must invest in strategic, cross-sectoral approaches to programmes, operations, cluster coordination and cultural practices.

Through extensive consultations with disability experts, UNICEF staff, OPDs, United Nations partners, donors, academics and children with disabilities, UNICEF has identified the following cross-sectoral strategic levers for advancing its goals on disability inclusion:

- Prevention of stigma, discrimination, neglect and violence against children with disabilities, and promotion of diversity and inclusion
- Improvement of disability-inclusive infrastructure, services, programmes and coordination platforms
- Access to comprehensive community care and support services
- Access to AT and relevant services
- Disability-inclusive action in humanitarian, emergency and fragile contexts, including in programming and in UNICEF's role as a Cluster Lead Agency
- Full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

Each of these strategic priorities is discussed below.

1. Prevention of stigma, discrimination, neglect and violence against children with disabilities, and promotion of diversity and inclusion

The right to live free from stigma, discrimination, neglect and violence, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the CRC, the CRPD and other conventions, treaties and international agreements, is foundational to the ability of all children, including children with disabilities, to realize their full rights and potential.

At the same time, UNICEF recognizes that investments in and efforts towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in communities and societies are undermined by the ongoing impacts of stigma, discrimination and violence.

As such, UNICEF recognizes the vital importance of preventing, addressing and ending all forms of violence and neglect against children, including the pervasive impacts of threats of violence on children's agency, voice and participation, and commits to redoubling its efforts to protect children with disabilities from the distinct and intersecting forms of violence they face. This is of particular importance for children with disabilities from under-represented groups and facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as girls with disabilities, indigenous children with disabilities, children with deaf-blindness and children with intellectual disabilities, among others. Children with disabilities who live in poverty and in conflict contexts are disproportionately affected by distinct and intersecting forms of violence, as well as by further exclusion. As part of these efforts, UNICEF will work towards inclusive and intersectional child protection systems and approaches across programmes, cluster coordination and communications efforts.

UNICEF has decades of learning and experience in SBCC programming that target negative attitudes, beliefs and norms on the basis of age, gender, race, ethnicity, migratory status and other factors. The organization has further made significant progress in shifting public narratives related to disability and children in multiple countries and contexts.

UNICEF recognizes the crucial role of addressing stigma and discrimination, including eliminating the use of offensive terminology to refer to persons with disabilities, through inclusive programming, advocacy and norm changes.

Moving forward, UNICEF will mainstream efforts to protect children with disabilities against, and to end, stigma, discrimination, neglect and violence through increased investment and expanded SBCC messaging. To realize this, in partnership with children, OPDs, governments, United Nations sister-agencies and other stakeholders, UNICEF will publish a Global Resource Pack for Addressing Ableism, Stigma and Discrimination towards Children with Disabilities and their Families.

UNICEF further commits to eliminating stigma, discrimination and bias against persons with disabilities within its organizational systems and procedures. This includes recruiting, training and supporting qualified employees with disabilities at all levels and within all offices across the organization, and working to ensure that UNICEF programmes, advocacy, procurement, communications and other processes are inclusive and accessible.

2. Improvement of disability-inclusive infrastructure, services, programmes and coordination platforms

Children and adults with disabilities have the right to inclusive, integrated and accessible infrastructure, services, programmes and coordination platforms that meet their needs. UNICEF will play a global and regional leadership role on disability inclusion and fulfil its mandate for holistic approaches to children's rights, especially for the most marginalized, by integrating disability inclusion into sectors as both an accelerator of and contributor to results in all programmes.

Specifically, UNICEF will increase its support to governments to make health, nutrition, education, child protection, social protection and WASH policies, systems and services accessible to and inclusive of children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers, in all regions and contexts in which it works. In addition, UNICEF will leverage its unique position and technical expertise to

facilitate the necessary coordination across sectors and levels of government to enable the inclusion of children with disabilities in communities. In collaboration with other stakeholders, UNICEF will seek and support context-relevant and gender-responsive approaches to overcoming barriers to the delivery of high-quality, inclusive services and programmes for children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers in ways that meet their needs in the diverse settings in which UNICEF works, including low-, middle- and high-income countries. It will also work with governments and mobilize civil society and other partners to undertake disability-inclusive situation analyses in the preparation of country programme documents to ensure these documents reflect inclusive programming based on the country context, strengthening them to ensure proper response. In addition, UNICEF will promote the accessibility of infrastructure, transportation and services in communities, including migratory routes and other areas used by persons on the move. Building on the innovative use of technology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF will explore support for the continued and expanded use of technology to address the barriers that children with disabilities face, in all sectors and contexts in which UNICEF works, to ensure that children with disabilities do not fall further behind in their access to digital technologies and online learning and support systems.

3. Access to comprehensive community care and support services

In addition to the mainstreaming of inclusive services, the equal realization of the right of children with disabilities to live in the family and in the community requires States to ensure access to a diversity of community

and social support services, such as peer support, personal care assistance, interpreters, transport and respite services, among others. In conjunction with other forms of support, such as AT and cash benefits, such services are also essential to reduce child poverty and prevent neglect, abuse, abandonment and family–child separation, and to contribute to ending institutionalization.

However, in most countries, there is a dearth of publicly funded community support and care services, leaving families as sole care providers and contributing to a cycle of poverty and social exclusion of families of persons with disabilities.⁵⁵ In many settings, the additional care and support often required by children with disabilities is provided by women and girls in the household, which can significantly affect their education, economic empowerment and community engagement opportunities. The lack of systemic support, policies and concrete plans of action for social inclusion leads families, caregivers and communities in many areas to resort to institutional care.

UNICEF acknowledges both the significant gaps that exist in all settings and the ongoing challenge to develop services capable of addressing the diversity of specific needs of children with disabilities and their families in ways that consider both the evolving capacities and autonomy of children, as well as the gendered implications of caregiving. UNICEF recognizes the unique needs of parents and families of children with disabilities, and the role of social and community support programmes to better resource caregivers to meet those needs and move towards the realization of the right to grow up in a family and to live and be included in the community.

55 United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 'General comment on Article 19: Living independently and being included in community', United Nations, Geneva, 29 August 2017, <www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/CRPD.C.18.R.1-ENG.docx>, accessed 24 June 2022.

The CRC, the CRPD and the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children all highlight the right of every child, including those with disabilities, to live in a supportive, protective and caring environment that promotes his/her full potential. They also emphasize that if alternative care is necessary, family-based care within the community should be prioritized. UNICEF recognizes that children with disabilities are often over-represented in alternative care, especially in institutional care, due to factors such as stigma, discrimination and lack of community-based services. Accordingly, UNICEF promotes care reform at the national and regional levels that aims to prevent the separation of children from families, prioritize family-based alternative care options in the community and end the institutionalization of children. UNICEF also works to strengthen child welfare and protection systems and services, including by ensuring adequate financial and human resources.

In addition to research and service transformation reforms in high-income countries, there is a need for greater multi-stakeholder dialogues, evidence generation and innovative practices to collectively define standards for publicly funded community support and care services adapted to the fiscal and institutional constraints and the socio-cultural specificities of LMICs and humanitarian contexts.

The development of community support and care services and systems is an integral part of UNICEF's ECD programme guidance, education strategy, child protection strategy and social protection programme framework, and all sectors have a significant contribution to make in addressing these challenges. Combining its cross-sectoral expertise and extensive field presence, UNICEF has a unique ability to work with central and local governments, the United Nations system, donors, OPDs and other partners to support policies and expand investments in the needed capacity

development of health and social service workforces, accessible needs assessments and effective case management, innovative and equitable services, and partnerships with civil society that make the most of public and community resources. To this end, it will strengthen its investments, partnerships and technical support to governments to progressively realize universal access to comprehensive and gender-transformative services, enabling children with disabilities to access the support and care they need, within their family and community environment.

4. Access to assistive technology and related services

UNICEF understands that AT and personal support services, such as rehabilitation, peer support, personal care assistance, interpreters and respite services, play a critical role in the realization of daily living activities, education, community participation and, often, the survival of children with disabilities. It also acknowledges the significant gaps that exist in access to these products and services in most LMICs. Currently 2.5 billion people need AT, but in some LMICs as little as 3 per cent of those needs are being met.



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Mental health and psychosocial support

UNICEF has increasingly advanced its leadership and understanding of priorities in relation to the mental health and psychosocial well-being of all children and their caregivers, in both development and humanitarian contexts. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, integrates mental health as a holistic issue relevant to every sector, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of children’s mental health and mental well-being. From a disability perspective, a key priority is to incorporate a disability-inclusive, human rights-based and person-centred approach to mental health and psychosocial well-being, in line with the CRPD, across UNICEF’s work. Cross-sectoral collaboration will be required to improve access to quality mental health and psychosocial support services; address the determinants of mental health and psychosocial well-being and the development of all children and their caregivers; reduce reliance on institutions and advance care reform efforts; and promote the meaningful engagement of persons with psychosocial disabilities as partners for strengthened child and caregiver mental health and psychosocial support and development services.

To address these challenges, UNICEF will mobilize its cross-sectoral experience and expertise and increase its partnership with other agencies, central and local governments, OPDs and non-governmental organizations to develop innovative and gender-transformative approaches and services that support children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers in ways that promote inclusion and empowerment throughout the life course.

For many children, ensuring inclusion starts with AT, since without wheelchairs, prosthetics, hearing aids, white canes, screen-reading software and spectacles, among other physical and digital assistive products, they cannot communicate with their family and peers, attend school or leave the home, often leaving them excluded, forgotten or ignored. In humanitarian contexts, a lack of access to AT can hinder access to basic, life-saving assistance.

In many countries, the lack of access to AT is the result of unavailable, low-quality, high-cost or non-existent infrastructure to support its use. Together with partners, UNICEF will expand its work to address these barriers. UNICEF recognizes that assistive products can be complex and often individualized, and the need for context-appropriate products is

critical. Access to rehabilitation services is a key aspect of AT, as numerous products require personalized assessment, fitting and training that is usually delivered by rehabilitation professionals. Education and guidance are frequently necessary for the child to become accustomed to using AT, such as to learn to use a wheelchair or a communication table, as well as for family members or caregivers who support the use and maintenance of the product.

Cross-sectoral interventions and strategies are critical for achieving universal access to AT for children with disabilities. While AT production is often regulated under the health sector, the identification and assessment of needs for AT can take place across the life course and in different sectors, such as health, nutrition, education, transition to employment

Assistive technology is a necessity, not an option

“A child who needs a wheelchair and lacks one will have to crawl on the floor. One who needs eyeglasses or a white cane will fall downstairs without it. Ones requiring hearing aids will be misdiagnosed and ignored by all. These are not luxury devices; they are essential for both survival and participation.”

Fernando Botelho, Programme Specialist,
Assistive Technology, UNICEF



or social protection, in both development and humanitarian contexts. Similarly, the coverage of costs for AT may combine contributions from universal health coverage, social protection and education schemes and programmes. Referral systems and cross-sectoral linkages are therefore critical to improving access to AT.

To address these challenges, UNICEF will strengthen its investments, partnerships, product availability and technical support to governments across sectors to progressively realize universal access to AT for persons with disabilities. UNICEF will work to foster greater understanding, both internally and externally, including at the country level, of the diversity and complexity of AT. Globally, it will increase its support for the development and greater availability of affordable, quality and appropriate AT for the diversity of children with disabilities in varied contexts, while working with governments to strengthen national systems for AT provision and maintenance.

5. Disability-inclusive action in humanitarian, emergency and fragile contexts, including in programming and in UNICEF's role as a Cluster Lead Agency

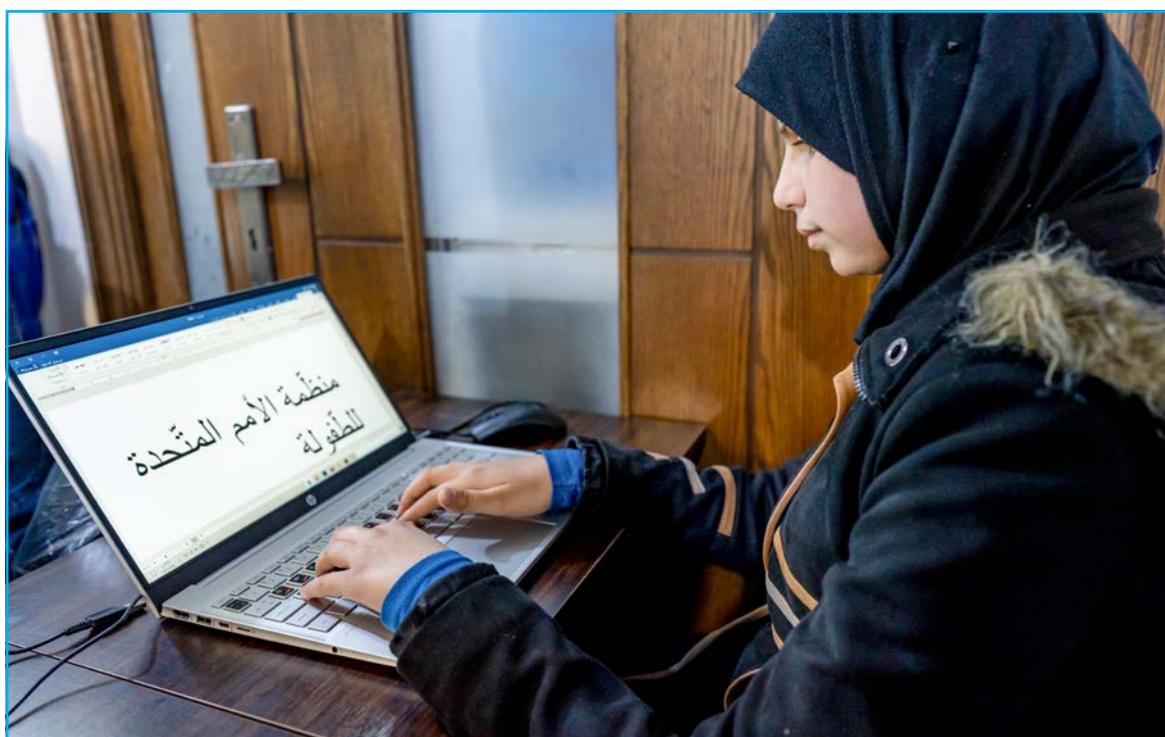
As a leading actor in humanitarian response worldwide, UNICEF prioritizes the protection of all children, including children with disabilities, in these settings. The CCCs commit the organization to inclusive needs assessment, planning and monitoring; inclusive and safe access to information and services; and participation by children with disabilities in emergency preparedness and response.

As UNICEF works to better understand the challenges and barriers faced by children with disabilities in humanitarian contexts, it will generate evidence on the impact of humanitarian emergencies on children with disabilities and their access to assistance, and subsequently tailor its response for more inclusive and accessible emergency preparedness and response. UNICEF will ensure that persons with disabilities

are adequately included in emergency preparedness and response plans and UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeals, and in the work of UNICEF-led Clusters/Areas of Responsibility, including humanitarian coordination processes such as the development of Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Response Plans. It will further ensure that mechanisms for accountability to affected populations are fully inclusive of persons with disabilities.

To enable the strengthening of disability inclusion in humanitarian response, UNICEF will apply a dual approach: increasing the integration of emergency preparedness and response into all disability-related work while increasing the integration of disability inclusion into all emergency preparedness and response, including in UNICEF's Emergency Procedures. This will involve producing and rolling out a guidance package and toolkits on including children with disabilities in humanitarian action based on the CCC cross-

cutting disability commitments; building the capacity of all Disability Focal Points on emergency preparedness and response; systematically integrating disability inclusion capacity into the UNICEF humanitarian learning framework; building the capacity of all emergency staff on disability inclusion; and maintaining dedicated staff for disability-inclusive humanitarian response at headquarters and at regional and country offices. Building on existing good practices, UNICEF will systematize the collection and use of data on children with disabilities in the assessment, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian action and emergency preparedness, including through the disaggregation of data by disability. UNICEF will also ensure that the resourcing of all disability-related initiatives will include a substantial component for humanitarian contexts, while the resourcing of emergency preparedness and response will include a dedicated component for disability inclusion and children with disabilities on the move.



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Children with disabilities on the move

The limited availability of data disaggregated by disability and migratory status makes it difficult to characterize the situation of migrant and displaced children with disabilities. Whether they and their families move to pursue educational or economic opportunities or better access to health services, or are displaced by conflict or natural disasters, children with disabilities on the move often face higher risks of violence, exploitation and abuse, and specific barriers to accessing services, including education, health, AT, and social and child protection. Accessing services and protection can be particularly challenging for children with disabilities who are in transit, as services along migratory routes may not be available, specialized or targeted towards children with disabilities, or as service providers across borders lack coordination to provide a continuum of care. Disabilities of children on the move, especially invisible disabilities, may never be identified due to a lack of vulnerability screening, assessment and proper case management services available for children on the move in transit or destination countries. This gap can be particularly critical for unaccompanied and separated children who travel without adult caregivers and lack documentation.

Children with disabilities on the move are not one homogenous group; the needs of children with physical disabilities are very different from those of children with communication or psychosocial disabilities, for example. They face additional protection risks or discrimination because of their gender and ethnicity, whether they are unaccompanied or travelling with family members. Additional risks occur as a result of their migratory status, with undocumented families particularly at risk of exclusion. While UNICEF works with partners to design national policies and programmes that are inclusive of children on the move and promote the inclusion of children with disabilities, it is important to pay particular attention to children with complex needs and multiple vulnerabilities, and ensure their priorities are reflected in all relevant sectoral policies.

UNICEF's work for and with children with disabilities on the move requires cross-sectoral collaboration to address the barriers and protection risks specific to the migration or displacement experience. To ensure children with disabilities on the move can access the services and protection they need, data disaggregated by disability and migratory status are needed to identify specific barriers and protection risks; address legal, administrative and practical barriers by advocating with governments to ensure that migratory status is never a barrier for children with disabilities to access basic services; reflect the needs and barriers children with disabilities on the move encounter in government budgets; facilitate access to screening and services by providing targeted assistance to access service points; strengthen the capacity of service providers to reach and assist children with disabilities on the move; ensure information is provided in a format that is accessible to children with disabilities on the move and their families; and create opportunities for feedback and the meaningful engagement of children with disabilities in all decisions that affect them.

6. Full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities

UNICEF has long emphasized the right of all children to meaningful participation and leadership and to have their voice heard, and has increasingly supported the engagement of children with disabilities in decision-making about the issues that affect their lives.

However, the practice of consulting with and involving children with disabilities, their parents, families and caregivers in decision-making processes has been limited at the community level and is rarely seen in national-level policymaking and civic engagement.

UNICEF is committed to expanding children with disabilities' access to local, national and global accountability platforms and mechanisms, and to co-creating new platforms to elevate and amplify the voices of children with disabilities where they do not currently exist. UNICEF believes that children with disabilities, their families, their organizations and their networks are the best advocates for their rights, needs and interests, and that their voices must be amplified in all places where decisions about their welfare and development are made.

To help achieve its goals, UNICEF will increase its prioritization of the voices, experiences and full and meaningful participation of children and youth with disabilities in all sectors and settings, including cluster coordination platforms. It will invest in accessible processes for the participation of children and youth with disabilities and their organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of all UNICEF programmes, while increasing efforts to amplify and elevate the leadership, participation and empowerment of children and youth with disabilities in their own communities and societies. In line with this, and to strengthen the localization of humanitarian action, UNICEF will ensure that national and local OPD leadership and engagement, as well as networks of

youth with disabilities, are considered in all initiatives.

In collaboration with other stakeholders, UNICEF will also develop and invest in innovative, scalable, gender-transformative and disability-inclusive approaches and services to enable governments and communities, as well as parents, families and caregivers, to support the empowerment, full participation and inclusion of children and youth with disabilities. Ending the exclusion and isolation of persons with disabilities will require increased resources, focus and coordination between the social protection services, child protection services, health, nutrition, WASH and education sectors, among others, as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships to build integrated cross-sectoral community support systems.

Following the CRPD recommendations, UNICEF will further expand its collaboration, consultation and partnerships with OPDs at the community, national, regional and global levels to ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities is integrated throughout its work. OPDs are in the best position to work with UNICEF to identify children and youth with disabilities in their communities and recommend the most appropriate approaches to address their rights and needs. OPDs must be recognized and valued for their first-hand knowledge of disability inclusion and participation, and should be fully engaged in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes and policies related to disability inclusion.

UNICEF will diversify partnerships to include organizations focused on parents and caregivers who help fulfil the needs of children with disabilities. It will also invest and engage in building the capacity of OPDs to diversify and develop their partnerships to ensure the full diversity of children with disabilities is included. UNICEF will engage in proactive discussions with OPDs to explore

potential alternative partnership models that would advance collaboration and meaningful engagement as per the principles of the CRPD.

UNICEF will progressively increase its work at all levels with OPDs and disability networks, and strengthen their capacities to be more strategic, access funding for organizational development and accelerate effective change at scale, while also engaging them in the advocacy and programmatic agenda on disability inclusion. At the same time, regular engagement and consultations with OPDs can help improve country offices' understanding of the unique challenges experienced by children with disabilities, therefore building their technical capacity for disability inclusion. This collaboration will support UNICEF's goals

of increased localization and context-specific programming.

UNICEF strives to lead by example, and it recognizes that being a leading disability-inclusive organization requires accountability. To this end, and as discussed below, UNICEF will hold itself accountable for the faithful stewardship of resources dedicated to disability inclusion, and for the cultural transformation needed to embed inclusion fully into its institutional structures and practices. UNICEF commits to ever greater recruitment and participation of staff with disabilities and partners working with and within the organization, to model inclusion in its leadership and coordination within the United Nations system and with other partners.



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6

UNICEF's disability inclusion strategy



To achieve its disability-inclusive commitments and fulfil its mandate, UNICEF will strive for bold, transformative change; expand and strengthen disability inclusion throughout its programming, spanning the full life course; confront intersecting inequalities and injustices that further challenge children with disabilities; develop context-relevant innovative, inclusive and integrated approaches to cross-sectoral service provision and coordination; and expand and deepen its disability-inclusive work and operations, including by supporting the empowerment and participation of children with disabilities.

This chapter focuses on the core programmatic (see Figure 5) and organizational (see Figure 6) strategies that UNICEF will undertake to implement these commitments and achieve its goals.

A. Programmatic approaches

1. Cross-sectoral coordination

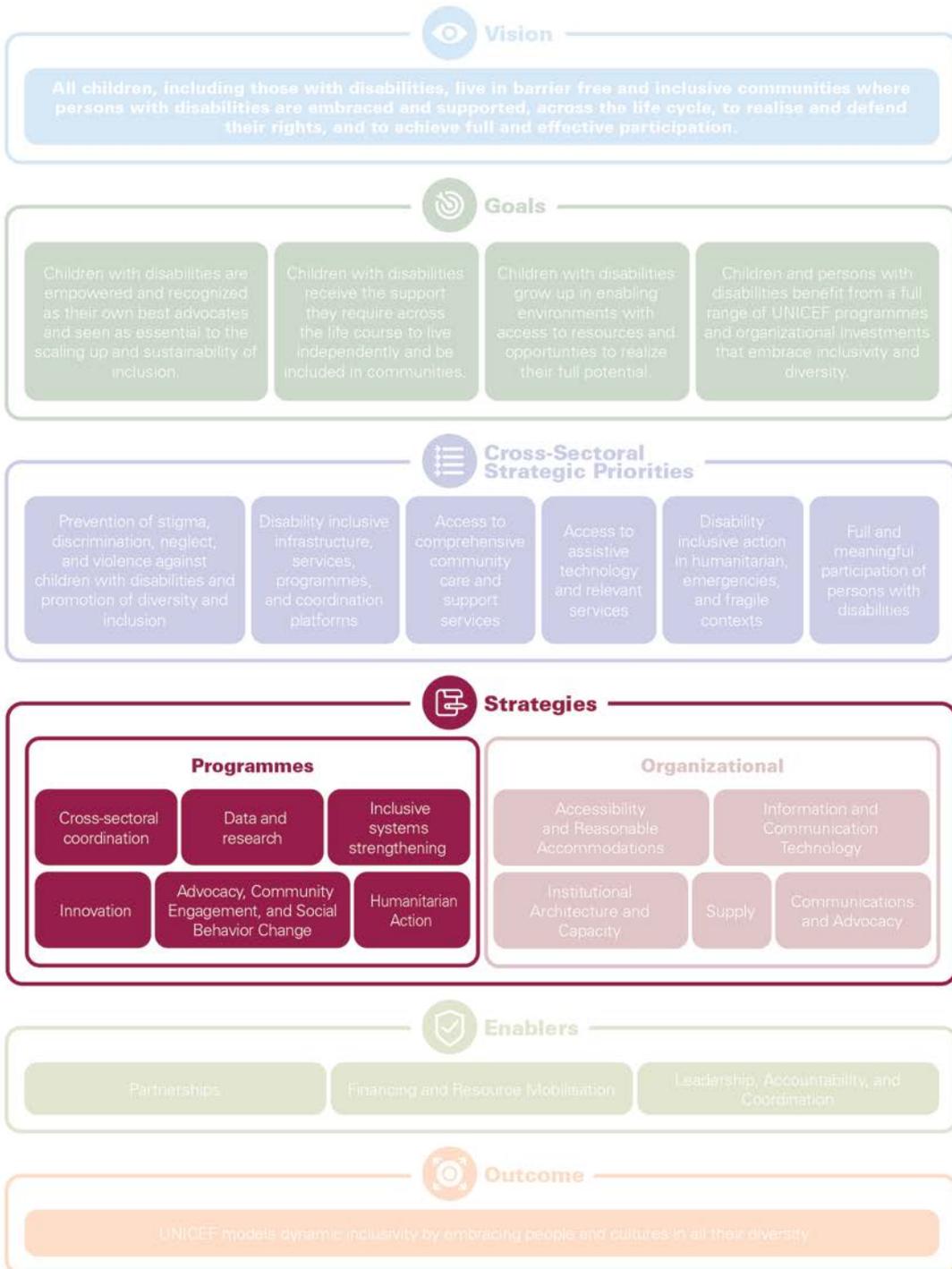
Achieving the vision and goals described above requires coordinated efforts across sectors, stakeholders and levels of government to ensure that children with disabilities and

their caregivers can access inclusive and barrier-free services and support. These include, among others, primary health care, nutrition, ECD, education and child protection services, and accessible WASH facilities and services, alongside targeted measures that include the provision of AT and the promotion of accessibility, to facilitate the ability of children with disabilities to access services and opportunities and participate in their societies on a full and equal basis with others. Such coordination is particularly important in responses in crisis, post-conflict and fragile settings, and will become increasingly important as UNICEF looks to mitigate the harmful effects of environmental degradation and climate change on children with disabilities, and invest in the building of safer and more sustainable environments for the whole population.

With decades of experience collaborating with diverse national-level ministries, local governments, service providers, civil society actors, the private sector and OPDs, as well as children and their parents, families and caregivers in most of the 190 countries and territories where UNICEF is present, the organization is in a unique position to facilitate such coordination. As relevant and appropriate



FIGURE 5 DIPAS Strategic Framework programmatic approaches



Source: UNICEF

to achieve its goals related to disability inclusion, UNICEF will foster such coordination by supporting:

- Strengthened capacity among government ministries, such as health, social development and education, and youth affairs, to coordinate interventions so that children with disabilities and developmental delays thrive
- Local, national and regional coordination mechanisms to improve cross-border coordination and collaboration, particularly in contexts of migration and displacement, to ensure continued access to services and protection
- The increased collection, analysis, dissemination and use of data, disaggregated by disability, sex and age, and the strengthening of cross-sectoral data harmonization and exchange for evidence-based policymaking.

Additional support from UNICEF in the following areas, among others, will also be necessary for effective cross-sectoral collaboration:

- Analysis of national budgets and public financial management systems from a disability-inclusive perspective, to optimize the efficiency and equity of mobilization and the use of resources for inclusion
- Monitoring and evaluation, building on tailored indicators measuring access to AT, access to quality services, and the inclusion and well-being of children with disabilities
- Development of individual needs assessments supported by disability management information systems that enable case management and referral as well as inform policy planning and service development
- Reporting to treaty bodies, in particular the CRC, the CRPD, the Universal Periodic Review and the SDG Voluntary National Reviews (including States, OPDs and

UNICEF reports), and the implementation of concluding observations

- Capacity development, including specific competencies, such as disability equality training for policymakers and service providers to ensure inclusive policies are translated into practice.

In addition to these externally focused activities, UNICEF will strengthen coordination and collaboration between and across UNICEF sectors. Resources will be allocated to all sectors, such as education, health, nutrition, WASH, child protection and social protection, and training will be provided to build staff knowledge of key concepts in disability inclusion and to raise awareness of the need for comprehensive, rights-based approaches, rather than relying merely on medical approaches. UNICEF will work across sectors on joint disability inclusion initiatives at the global, regional and country office levels, enhancing collaboration, knowledge management, learning and exchange throughout the organization.

In particular, cross-sectoral collaboration will be promoted through a Global Disability Inclusion Programmes (GDIP) group and a UNICEF/UNDIS Operations Working Group comprising UNICEF staff representatives from diverse sectors, offices and divisions, as well as a high-level Disability Inclusion Steering Committee, which will both expand the knowledge base and ensure that adequate commitments on disability inclusion are made and implemented across all sectors and throughout the organization (*see Chapter 6: 'A whole organization approach'*). Disability-inclusive cross-sectoral programming will be enhanced by a series of technical guidance tools and meetings at the regional level. Regular programme briefings will also help to advance knowledge and develop strategic disability-inclusive indicators at the country level, which will enhance reporting and accountability.

The importance of cross-sectoral approaches

The example of a disability-inclusive school

What would a truly disability-inclusive school look like? It would include accessible facilities, appropriate equipment, inclusive curricula and trained staff to ensure accessibility, safe and stigma-free environments and learning for all children, including as they grow through adolescence. It would have wheelchair ramps and accessible desks, computers equipped with screen-readers, sign language interpretation, toilets that children with physical disabilities can use without difficulty, nutritious meals, and robust referral mechanisms connecting schools to health and social protection services, and it would provide buses that can transport children with disabilities to and from school safely.

To achieve this ideal will require collaboration and contribution across UNICEF sectors and partners. The education sector must be involved to provide the necessary training, curricula and learning infrastructure. WASH expertise must be employed in supporting the physical infrastructure. ECD and health expertise can contribute to school-based early identification and support for children with disabilities, while nutrition expertise can help ensure access to healthy foods. The child protection sector can advocate for the meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities in their communities, help families and communities support children with disabilities, and work to prevent forced marriage and other forms of violence against children with disabilities. The social protection sector must be involved to help all children, no matter their socio-economic, migration or other status, benefit equally from an inclusive education. Procurement experts can support the purchase of AT and other assistance needed by children with disabilities. Social and behaviour change interventions can encourage norm changes within schools, while communications expertise can help disseminate successful models. And all must work together to achieve success.

2. Data and research

Despite significant advances in the availability and quality of data over the last decade, persons with disabilities still tend to be under-identified, under-represented and even excluded altogether from official statistics, including administrative and programmatic data. This challenge becomes even more significant when considering children with disabilities, as parents, families and caregivers sensitive to the stigma associated with disability may hide these children from view and under-report their existence. Further, data collection tools developed to collect disability data have often been inadequate to capture needed information regarding children.

Thanks to investments in the development of the Module on Child Functioning and its inclusion in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) programme, by the end of 2021, UNICEF had supported more than 50 countries to produce comparable estimates on children and adults with disabilities, with at least 20 additional countries planning to release data sets in the next few years. UNICEF's *Seen, Counted, Included* report based on those surveys is the most comprehensive account of the global situation of children with disabilities in LMICs to date.

However, significant gaps still exist in the availability and use of quality data and analyses

for policy planning, programmatic design, and monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF will therefore continue to invest in systems that produce disaggregated and comparable data as a first step towards facilitating the development of inclusive policies and strategies, including the design and implementation of early identification and intervention measures, among others. This will involve working to progressively systematize the collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data in all areas of work and all countries by 2030, alongside continued investment in the Module on Child Functioning as part of the MICS. UNICEF will also continue to support and advocate for:

- The disaggregation of statistical, administrative and programmatic data on children with disabilities for policy and programme planning, costing, monitoring, evaluation and reporting, as well as the requirement that all data collection and analyses funded by UNICEF be disability inclusive
- Harmonization in how data on children with disabilities are collected
- Data collection on the needs and barriers faced by children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers
- An expanded evidence base on the impacts of diverse programmes, practices and services on the inclusion and well-being of children with disabilities, and strengthening of the collection and use of data on children with disabilities in humanitarian contexts, including in needs assessment and monitoring
- A systematic analysis of research, legislation and programming on disability inclusion, particularly for children.

UNICEF recognizes the importance of documenting and applying lessons learned and of capturing best practices as well as practices that may be ineffective or harmful in advancing the rights and inclusion of children

with disabilities. It will therefore expand its work in this area, strengthening knowledge management strategies and increasing its dissemination of evidence. It will continue to foster a learning community within the organization, particularly among Disability Focal Points, to promote peer learning and knowledge-sharing.

Data and research can also be used to expand accountability for action on disability inclusion. To this end, UNICEF will prioritize the expansion of operational evidence on disability inclusion and will develop a tool to enhance disability-inclusive monitoring at the programme level, enabling country offices to improve their use of targets, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on efforts to promote disability inclusion.

The DIPAS commits UNICEF to advancing the meaningful engagement and participation of children with disabilities, although an understanding of their current situation is limited; in other words, no baseline of data against which to assess progress exists. To address this issue, UNICEF will advance the collection and monitoring of quantitative and qualitative data related to the participation of children with disabilities at all levels.

Finally, with an increasing number of countries collecting data through the MICS and other surveys, the existing data gaps related to children with disabilities are expected to narrow. UNICEF can seize this opportunity to generate new knowledge on their access to basic services, including health, nutrition, education, child protection and WASH in development and humanitarian settings. It can then build on the findings from these analyses to strengthen the capacity of UNICEF staff and partners to translate this evidence into context-specific, concrete strategies and costed plans to promote and foster inclusive access to basic services for all.

Two UNICEF-led efforts will serve as examples of this type of work:

- **Global Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities.** The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, calls for the establishment of a centre of excellence to accelerate progress in closing the disability data gap. The global Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities will support the development of methodologies, data collection and analyses, and the use of data and research in policymaking, decision-making and advocacy. It will prioritize collaboration with statisticians and researchers with disabilities, particularly in LMICs.
- **Global research agenda and platform for children with disabilities.** Central to the vision of the platform is the participation of youth and children with disabilities and of researchers in the Global South. UNICEF's aim is to guide investments in effective interventions that support the inclusion and rights of children with disabilities in LMICs in both development and humanitarian settings. UNICEF is leading an evidence gap map and a global participatory consultation process to inform the prioritization of the research agenda.

3. Inclusive systems-strengthening

Over the last decade, governments, OPDs, civil society and development agencies have gained significant experience and knowledge about the implementation of the CRPD. In certain sectors, such as education, a multitude of pilot programmes have emerged, and numerous concrete steps have been taken to develop and implement disability-inclusive policies at the national level. However, in many contexts, the challenges to expand these programmes and to make systems more inclusive in terms of policy planning, budgeting, monitoring and delivery have been great.

UNICEF will increasingly draw attention to the inclusion of children with disabilities in national systems, as well as in response to humanitarian, emergency and fragile contexts. Specifically, UNICEF will support and advocate for:

- Disability inclusion in all relevant national strategies, action plans and cluster coordination platforms
- The removal of physical, informational and attitudinal barriers and the provision of targeted disability interventions across sectors to ensure quality, inclusive service delivery and appropriate AT delivery
- Increased funding and resources dedicated to the inclusion and accessibility of services, the provision of AT and the elimination of stigma and discrimination
- Functioning referral mechanisms, including systematized follow-up and support, between disability-inclusive services and programmes in education, WASH, health, and social and child protection, among others
- Inclusive management information systems, with expanded benchmarking to include more specific data collection and greater analysis of disability inclusion in such sectors as education, social protection, health, nutrition, WASH and child protection, among others
- The promotion of and technical support for national systems of inclusive education, health (including mental health), AT, support services, social policy, child protection and more, to be increasingly accessible to children with disabilities on the move
- Capacity development in disability inclusion for UNICEF staff involved in management, cluster coordination and the delivery of services (as an example, UNICEF has developed training materials on disability inclusion for front-line workers that can be tailored to diverse regions and sectors, thus contributing to expanding capacity across sectors).

With a growing understanding throughout UNICEF, and around the world, of the importance of mental health during childhood and adolescence, UNICEF will accelerate its work and investments in this area. (See, for example, the text box: 'Mental health and psychosocial support', see p. 48.) Further, as UNICEF increasingly recognizes the risks that climate change and environmental degradation pose to all, including children with disabilities, it will escalate its attention in this area as well.

Building on its own experience, UNICEF will support key government ministries in embedding accessibility and non-discrimination for children with disabilities in regulations and in practice, including mechanisms to ensure the progressive accessibility of infrastructure, facilities and services, as well as the provision of AT, reasonable accommodation and individual support.

Many countries have experienced an increasing devolution of responsibilities for service provision from the national to the subnational level. UNICEF will thus support governments at all levels in building the skills and capacity of service providers so they can implement and expand the effects of inclusive national policies.

While specific efforts will facilitate cross-sectoral coordination, UNICEF will also bolster readiness for this coordination within sectors, including by supporting Disability Focal Points across government ministries, promoting and facilitating practical cooperation and joint delivery between sectors, and facilitating the harmonization of disability data.

Finally, even as this work will advance disability-inclusive objectives within and across sectors, each UNICEF sector and goal must identify the specific actions it will take to ensure the

success of the DIPAS. Annex A outlines how the goal areas will draw attention to disability inclusion within UNICEF's work, in alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.⁵⁶

4. Innovation

At UNICEF, innovation takes many forms, from testing and piloting new technologies and approaches, and investing in cost-effective and results-oriented scalability and sustainability practices, to using advocacy and communications to drive policy and social change that tackles seemingly intractable problems. As seen as a result of increasing climate insecurity with more frequent environmental and humanitarian crises, as well as in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, innovation is crucial to UNICEF's ability to adapt and respond to a changing world.

UNICEF has led innovative efforts on universal design, including for learning materials (see, for example, 'Accessible Digital Textbooks for All')⁵⁷ and for disability-inclusive and accessible WASH facilities. It will build on these early successes to expand its innovative support to different sectors in the diversity of contexts in which it works. UNICEF is also committed to taking innovative approaches to adapt to changing understandings of disability, including by raising support for the following areas, each of which is discussed below:

- AT and inclusive products
- Disability identification, needs assessments and information systems
- Attention to children with disabilities in response to climate change and environmental degradation.

Finally, in reaching children with disabilities in all contexts with innovative and accessible technologies, social and community support,

56 This annex will be updated in line with each subsequent strategic plan.

57 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Accessible Digital Textbooks for All', UNICEF, New York, n.d., <www.accessibletextbooksforall.org>, accessed 27 June 2022.



<www.accessibletextbooksforall.org>

mental health and psychosocial support services, health care, education, water and sanitation facilities, and more, UNICEF recognizes the need to consistently invest in and test potentially game-changing partnerships and approaches in all areas of the organization, including in unprecedented efforts to eliminate stigma, bias and ableism in its own and in partner workplaces. UNICEF will promote inclusion as an ongoing process requiring periodic renewal and innovation in response to social and technological change, rather than as a static state where success is declared and efforts come to an end.

AT and inclusive products

UNICEF will leverage its size and technical expertise for market-shaping, encouraging markets to better serve children. It will use its procurement capability to create demand for products, such as versions of existing AT devices that are more appropriate for development and humanitarian contexts, and to standardize technical criteria; encourage start-ups and established actors to innovate to meet universal design criteria in new products; and organize and centralize the commercial distribution of products.

UNICEF understands inclusive products and services to be those that can be used by and serve both persons with and without disabilities, ranging from a clock with both Braille and ink numbers to classes that follow inclusive education principles. UNICEF will strive to ensure that both start-ups and established suppliers follow universal design principles. Its innovation and market-shaping have already demonstrated success with both inclusive products and services. For example, the accessible latrine add-on is an inclusive product that was designed by the Innovation Team in UNICEF's Supply Division. Successfully developed and tested, it is now being used in humanitarian settings around the world. On the services side, the Accessible Digital Textbooks for All initiative demonstrates how UNICEF's expertise with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has enabled the development of, capacity-building for and expansion of the design and production of digital books, which are usable by children both with and without disabilities. UDL is an approach to teaching that aims to meet the needs of every student in a classroom by offering different ways of learning through diverse actions, multiple means of representation and various methods

of engagement (technological and pedagogical) with students.⁵⁸

UNICEF's technical know-how and ability to scale enables it to incentivize, support and test products, solutions and service where complexity and/or low profitability may otherwise prohibit the private sector from making needed initial investments. Examples include new voice speech synthesizer in languages that are essential for augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), or screen-reading software for children with communication or visual disabilities.

UNICEF's promotion of the more inclusive and effective use of open standards has led to the development and dissemination of open-source solutions such as Cboard, an AAC web application, and the aforementioned latrine add-on. Many more opportunities exist to shape markets related to digital AT and inclusive products by using open standards and interoperability requirements to ensure competitive markets.

As schools and social services become more reliant on remote learning and virtual access in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in advances in and access to AT at the family and community levels will continue to be vital to ensure that children with disabilities are not further divided from their peer groups. Children with disabilities frequently have greater health care needs, are dependent to a greater extent on community-based services, and rely more heavily on access to the internet, technological resources and special curricula than their peers without disabilities. When these services are

interrupted, social exclusion and inequalities are magnified as children with disabilities face major disruptions to the care and support they rely on for their daily well-being.⁵⁹

In over half of the countries surveyed by UNICEF early in the COVID-19 pandemic, governments failed to adopt measures to ensure the accessibility of remote learning for children with disabilities, such as sign language interpretation for online or video learning. This underscores the ongoing need to ensure that the needs of children with disabilities are prioritized during emergency planning and response. The increasingly digitized world offers many opportunities to expand innovations for accessibility, including new software and platforms specifically designed for children and persons with disabilities. Ensuring that these innovations reach all children with disabilities and prioritizing those who are most marginalized and hardest to reach will also require specific attention and investment to overcome the increasing digital divides facing children with disabilities based on their geographic, migratory or socio-economic status, gender, language or other factors.

UNICEF will build on its early successes to expand its support for AT and inclusive products in various sectors in the diversity of contexts in which it works, ensuring that inclusion is understood in society as an ongoing process requiring periodic renewal due to social and technological change.

Disability identification, needs assessments and information systems

In addition to population-level data and statistical evidence, a critical step in providing

58 International Disability Alliance, 'Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and its Role in Ensuring Access to Inclusive Education for All: A Technical Paper by IDA', IDA, 2021, <www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/universal-design-learning-udl-and-its-role-ensuring-access-inclusive-education-all-technical>, accessed 27 June 2022.

59 Children with disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation.

the specific assistance that children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers need is capturing individual-level data on children and improving the assessment of their functional difficulties, barriers and support needs. Such assessments take different forms and may be carried out by different sectors. For example, health care systems are often involved in early identification for early intervention⁶⁰ and rehabilitation, ECD and education sectors can assess learners' support needs and have a critical identification and referral role, and child protection and social protection systems may require disability assessments to provide benefits and support to children with disabilities and their caregivers.

In some contexts, disability and needs assessments are lacking across sectors, while in others, multiple uncoordinated assessments can impose heavy burdens on children and their parents, families and caregivers. Yet the identification of children with disabilities as early as possible and the assessment of their and their families' support needs are critical for case management. They provide more specific data for policy planning, costing and monitoring to progressively provide children with disabilities and their families with a continuum of services across health, rehabilitation, inclusive education, social protection and social care systems, contributing to their equal inclusion and participation.

Many LMICs and countries impacted by humanitarian emergencies struggle to design and implement disability identification and assessment mechanisms across the life

course that are easily accessible and user-friendly, comprehensive and reliable. Moreover, supporting data harmonization and exchange across sectors is needed. Throughout the world, UNICEF has been assisting countries with their reform efforts, building on progress in digitization and information systems. Examples include, for instance, increasing birth registration, early identification and intervention, and the use of social protection information systems, such as the UNICEF-supported Primero child protection information system, and disability registries.

UNICEF will step up cross-sectoral cooperation and partnership with other development agencies to advance approaches and instruments that countries can adapt to their own context and institutional capacities.

Attention to children with disabilities in response to climate change and environmental degradation

Children with disabilities are at greater risk than their peers without disabilities of negative consequences related to poor air quality, water pollution, drought, flooding, rising temperatures and other impacts of a changing climate and increasing environmental degradation. Children with disabilities are more at risk in sudden-onset disasters due to barriers to accessing preparedness and mitigation measures, as well as response. They are also disproportionately affected by slow-onset disasters and resulting food insecurity, poor nutrition, increasing disease outbreaks, erosion of livelihoods and displacement due to entrenched marginalization. The effects of climate change have multiple consequences for the rights of

60 Early intervention for children with disabilities is broadly defined as a systemic approach to ensuring the optimal development of young children and supporting and enhancing their functionality. High-quality intervention services, provided as early as possible, can change a child's developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families and communities. As family members are usually children's first teachers and caregivers, early intervention services have increasingly been offered at home, targeting families as well as children with disabilities. Successful inclusive education for children with disabilities depends on the establishment and delivery of effective early intervention and ECD services.

children with disabilities, by disrupting access to services, exposing children with disabilities to increasing conflict and displacement, and increasing poverty. However, while increased attention has been paid to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction since the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015, children with disabilities are still largely excluded from the broader climate change agenda and have received limited attention in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for example.

Children and youth around the world have played critical leadership roles in advocacy for action to reduce carbon emissions and achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, which includes persons with disabilities in its preamble. Children and youth with disabilities have identified disability-inclusive climate change action as a priority, calling for their active participation in sustainable development and their engagement in environmental management and services, including in humanitarian and emergent climate crisis contexts.⁶¹ However, the role of children and youth with disabilities as agents of social change remains underappreciated and under-resourced. It is critical to not only include them in ongoing dialogue on climate action, but also to adopt approaches that consider them both as individuals who have specific vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change and as agents of social change.

Leveraging its dual humanitarian and development mandate, UNICEF will work to ensure a disability-inclusive and rights-based approach to climate change. This will include strengthening the evidence base on protecting children with disabilities from the impacts of

climate change and environmental degradation, such as by improving the accessibility of WASH services and facilities. At the core of these efforts will be a commitment to ensure that children with disabilities are able to participate meaningfully in climate action as agents of change. UNICEF will also support evidence generation on the impact of climate change on children and youth with disabilities, and build the understanding of how climate action can be made inclusive.

5. Advocacy, community engagement and social behaviour change

“The only thing I request is to put an end to inequalities, and to consider people with disabilities as full human beings. I demand that we be treated in a humane way, with dignity and respect.”

Young person from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF consultations with adolescents with disabilities, 2022

Sustained global, regional and national advocacy, including cluster coordination platform advocacy initiatives, will be needed to promote inclusion and create demand for inclusive programming and services. Considering the diversity of political constraints that countries in different contexts are facing, stakeholders will need to be mobilized via advocacy efforts to commit to the greater allocation of resources in most countries and to capacity development. Such advocacy should be driven by persons with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers, supported by

61 Global Disability Summit, et al., Youth with Disabilities: From holding rights to exercising them – Call for action, GDS, 14 February 2022, <http://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/rails/active_storage/blobs/redirect/eyJfcmFpbHMiOnsibWVzc2FnZSI6IkJBaHBBbEFDIiwiaXhwLjpuZVwxsLjJwdXliOiJibG9iX2IklIn19-c6dd0a369851fafcfe32139683e85f25abe259b/Call%20for%20Action_GDS%20Youth%202022.pdf>, accessed 29 June 2022.

champions within civil society, government and international organizations.

UNICEF is committed to providing a platform to children with disabilities, their families, caregivers, organizations and networks, amplifying their voices and holding the organization accountable for its commitments and mandate to ensure the full realization of the human rights of all children. UNICEF will thus leverage its power and positioning within global spaces, including within intergovernmental processes and with treaty bodies, to expand the participation of persons, including children, with disabilities. It will use its resources to provide accessibility products and services, AT and expertise in building organizational inclusion to ensure that persons with disabilities can actively participate, and it will work with partners to establish standard accessibility and inclusion practices to systematize inclusion as part of global and regional advocacy and accountability.

In addition, UNICEF will strengthen its support to and collaboration with OPDs and children, parents, families and caregivers, as well as networks of youth with disabilities, to promote their participation and engagement with local, national, regional and global advocacy. The use of new tools, such as U-Report, a social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF to improve citizen engagement, inform leaders and foster positive change, will contribute to amplifying their voices. Even so, as U-Report may not reach the most marginalized individuals, UNICEF will seek to identify and employ innovative approaches to ensure meaningful participation for all.

UNICEF will leverage the data and research it generates to disseminate best practices in establishing disability-inclusive policy and legal frameworks, costing and national budgeting to enhance the rapid expansion of integrated and accessible infrastructure and services

for children with disabilities in all contexts. Furthermore, UNICEF will generate policy briefs drawing from concrete data to highlight the cost of inaction and the effects of exclusion, neglect and discrimination on children, households, communities and national economies, and disseminate findings in compelling and targeted ways so that policymakers and others understand the need to act.

Stigma and discrimination drive the marginalization of children with disabilities. UNICEF has prioritized combating these pernicious forces by using its significant capacities in SBCC, shifting norms and engaging affected communities to effect change. UNICEF will also encourage more bottom-up community engagement to increase the collaboration with and support for grass-roots, local and national organizations to design and implement inclusive programmes to strengthen social mobilization. UNICEF has significant capacity in communications, with over 800 specialists across 127 countries. Its brand is recognized globally, and its communications reach millions, giving it enormous leverage to engage broad audiences with messages on disability inclusion. Over the course of the DIPAS, UNICEF will increase its communications and SBCC efforts, building on tested and validated methodologies and tools to foster positive social change. It will further coordinate and sponsor global and national communication campaigns that include training and sensitizing decision makers, including government officials. The campaigns will create demand for the inclusion of children with disabilities, reflect intersectionality, include clear messages on rights-based approaches to disability, and increase the visibility and active participation of persons with disabilities.

6. Humanitarian action

More than 19 million of the roughly 191 million children UNICEF reached through humanitarian action in 2021 were estimated to be children

with disabilities.⁶² UNICEF and implementing partners will continue protecting the rights and meeting the needs of children with disabilities and their caregivers in humanitarian contexts.

UNICEF will systematically include children with disabilities in its humanitarian responses. Wherever it supports direct service delivery, including in emergency and fragile contexts, UNICEF will strive to ensure that those services are inclusive for children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers, including by ensuring the accessibility of all interventions and providing specific targeted support (including AT) where required to enable equal access. This will require building the capacity of UNICEF and partners to embed disability inclusion as core to humanitarian programming, in line with the CCCs, and to integrate disability inclusion into UNICEF guidance, standards, procedures and other processes for humanitarian action at the headquarters and programme levels. This will also require dedicated resourcing, both in

terms of allocating a portion of emergency appeals and budgets to disability inclusion and a portion of budgets for disability inclusion to emergency preparedness and response. Resourcing also relates to staff. UNICEF will commit to building dedicated expertise on disability inclusion as a core part of the emergency preparedness and response teams at headquarters and at regional and country offices. At the same time, all Disability Focal Points and dedicated staff for disability inclusion will be engaged in emergency preparedness and response as part of their terms of reference.

As a Cluster Lead Agency for WASH, Education and Nutrition, and as a lead for the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, UNICEF will ensure that disability inclusion is a core component of humanitarian coordination throughout the humanitarian programme cycle. Further, preparedness actions are an important entry-point for building an inclusive response to emergencies; accordingly, UNICEF will ensure



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62 Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation.

that all emergency preparedness actions reflect an explicit disability inclusion component.

UNICEF is committed to enhancing the participation of, and promoting partnerships with, children and adults with disabilities and their representative organizations in humanitarian response. UNICEF will thus pay specific attention to ensuring that mechanisms for accountability to affected populations are inclusive of children with disabilities, which will require dedicated activities and resourcing to ensure that community engagement and

feedback, as well as complaint mechanisms, are accessible and child-friendly. In line with a localization approach, UNICEF will step up support to OPDs to participate in humanitarian action and will build the capacity of its offices to engage with OPDs with the goal of expanding these partnerships.

In addition, UNICEF will continue to test innovative approaches to inclusive service delivery across sectors in fragile contexts and in countries affected by humanitarian emergencies.

Children with disabilities and the humanitarian–peacebuilding–development nexus

The UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) include a commitment to foster coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development programming. Much of the work that UNICEF has committed to undertaking to promote the rights of children with disabilities is situated at the nexus of humanitarian, peacebuilding and development action and therefore strengthens a nexus approach. For example, UNICEF engagement with OPDs, including youth-led networks, fosters local capacities, which contributes to social cohesion and peace and strengthens preparedness for inclusive humanitarian response in fragile contexts. Further, UNICEF’s work on inclusive systems-strengthening (including for inclusive education, social protection, support services and AT) is essential for enhancing the readiness and resilience of national systems to protect the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable in times of crisis. Many of the CCC benchmarks for linking humanitarian, development and peace efforts highlight equitable and inclusive service delivery, thus emphasizing how more inclusive programming contributes directly to development outcomes, builds resilience for crises and promotes socially cohesive societies.

In line with a nexus approach and its revised Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development Programming, UNICEF will ensure that all actions to promote the rights of children with disabilities will be implemented with strong linkages across humanitarian and development programming. This will include ensuring that inclusive systems-strengthening contributes to building resilience in fragile contexts and disaster-prone settings; prioritizing the capacity-building of OPDs in fragile and conflict-affected situations; conducting disability-inclusive risk analysis at appropriate moments in the programme cycle; and expanding the knowledge base on how programming for children with disabilities can most effectively contribute to strengthening coherence between humanitarian development and peace programming.



every

Abilities EXPO

“The DIPAS provides a comprehensive roadmap for UNICEF to contribute to sustainable development by accelerating the inclusion of children with disabilities, who are often left behind. The DIPAS also pushes us to go further - by considering inclusion and intersectional identities more systematically not only in our programmes but also in our organizational approaches, it compels us to apply the same principles of diversity, equity, non-discrimination and inclusion internally in all aspects of our organizational functioning and culture. As a human rights-based organization, UNICEF must lead by example, including employees, children and adolescents with disabilities and supporting their meaningful engagement in all areas of our work.”

Geetanjali Narayan, Principal Advisor, Organizational Culture, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Office of the Executive Director, UNICEF

B. A whole organization approach

Enhanced leadership, capacity and motivation, as well as accountability and resource mobilization, are required for UNICEF to become a model for a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace by 2030 and a leader for change globally. Despite progress made towards more accessible and supportive workplaces, in too many places, additional culture change, particularly among managers, and further accessibility measures are needed to create a truly inclusive organizational environment. The UNICEF DIPAS is aligned with and supports the UNDIS Accountability Framework, which establishes clear benchmarks for increased leadership and the recruitment, retention and satisfaction of staff with disabilities, as well as investments in staff capacity and the elimination of ableism and bias within the organizational culture.

UNICEF is ultimately accountable to the children and adults with disabilities who are its beneficiaries, partners and employees, and must strive to guarantee that commitments made as part of this DIPAS are realized not only within its programmatic results but also as part of a transformation of its

institutional culture. **Investing in existing and new organizational strategies is vital to promote disability inclusion not only for the successful implementation of disability-oriented programmes, research, advocacy and communications, but also to ensure that UNICEF becomes a truly disability-inclusive organization in everything it does.**

1. Accessibility and reasonable accommodation

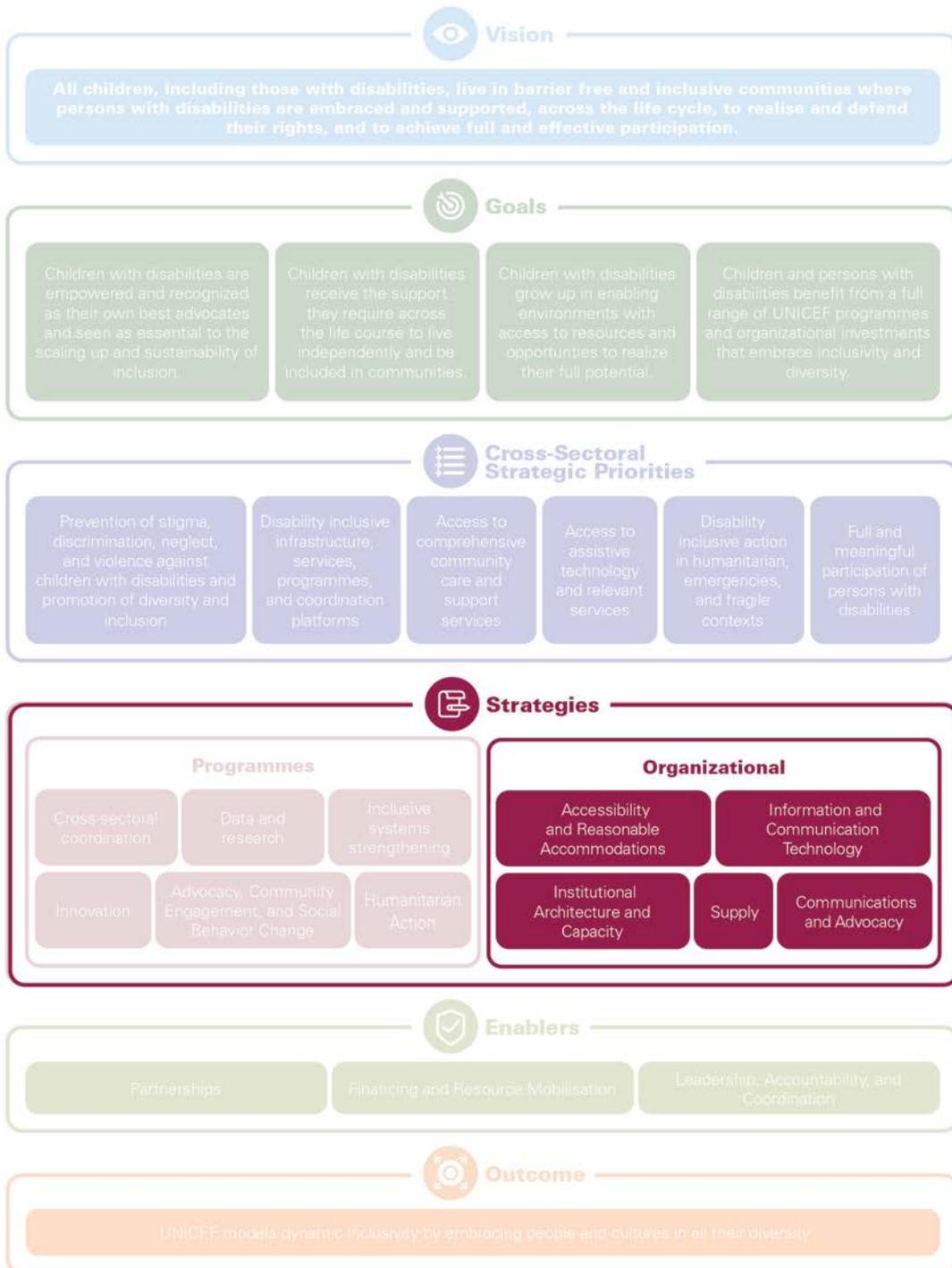
A key component of making UNICEF more disability inclusive is ensuring that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis to others, to its physical and digital environments, such as UNICEF facilities, information and communications, technologies, events and other services, such as accessible transportation.

Physical and digital accessibility

To provide an **accessible physical environment for persons with disabilities**, UNICEF has established three levels of accessibility that identify the key elements needed at each level. UNICEF has developed the ‘Toolkit on Accessibility: Tools to apply universal design across premises and programmes and promote access for all’



FIGURE 6 DIPAS Strategic Framework organizational approaches



Source: UNICEF

to strengthen its work to ensure accessible workplaces for everyone. This [Accessibility Toolkit](#) and the 'UNICEF Procedure on Eco-Efficiency and Inclusive Access in UNICEF Premises and Operations'⁶³ are available to all UNICEF offices, and will be part of the mandatory training for all operational staff, including at the management level.⁶⁴ Operations staff in all offices are able to apply for funds to reach maximum accessibility.⁶⁵

UNICEF will promote and progressively provide accessibility in all of its information and communication technology, including in teleconferencing software and the use of both software and hardware across the organization, its website, digital platforms, social media channels and mobile applications.

UNICEF is committed to progressively meeting standards of physical and digital accessibility in all workplaces, achieving the highest level by 2030. Towards this goal, the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, the Information and Communication Technology Division, Culture and Diversity team and the Programme Group Leadership Team will establish a global Accessibility Help Desk in 2023.

Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodation forms part of the rights of all employees with disabilities, ensuring they function at their maximum capacity. 'Reasonable accommodation' means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy or exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis to others. It provides resources for personal assistance, AT and flexible work arrangements in the workplace, among others.

To support disability-inclusive employment, a [Reasonable Accommodation Fund](#) was established in 2011 to provide specific accommodations needed by individual employees with disabilities.⁶⁶ Job candidates and employees (staff and non-staff) can apply to the Fund directly and confidentially. It covers screen-readers, sign language interpretation and many other accommodations. As the number of employees with disabilities increases in the organization, UNICEF is expected to commit to increasing the level of resources available in the Fund. The availability of reasonable accommodations through the Fund must be upheld and promoted by all

63 United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF Procedure on Eco-Efficiency and Inclusive Access in UNICEF Premises and Operations', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DFAM-EEIU/DL1/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2DFAM%2DEEIU%2FDL1%2F2020%20UNICEF%20Procedure%20on%20Eco%2DEfficiency%20and%20Inclusive%20Access%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2DFAM%2DEEIU%2FDL1>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

64 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Accessibility Toolkit and Inclusive Premises Policy', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://accessibilitytoolkit.unicef.org/>>.

65 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Greening and Accessibility Fund (GrAF)', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <[https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DFAM-EEIU/SitePages/Greening-%26-Accessibility-Funds-\(GrAF\).aspx](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DFAM-EEIU/SitePages/Greening-%26-Accessibility-Funds-(GrAF).aspx)>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

66 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Guide on Reasonable Accommodation Requests', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/:r/sites/DHR-GEW/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%2F7B6B72DA08-9561-44DC-A743-FDF063D0DD14%2D&file=Guide%20on%20Reasonable%20Accommodation%20Requests%20FINAL.docx&action=edit&mobileredirect=true&wdOrigin=TEAMS-ELECTRON.p2p_ns.undefined>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

UNICEF managers and human resources practitioners globally, to ensure employees with disabilities are aware of its existence and can request it, if and when needed.

Events

To make meetings and events more inclusive, UNICEF has developed guidelines for both in-person and virtual meetings. For in-person events, UNICEF has developed an easy-to-use ‘[Checklist to Plan Inclusive Conferences and Events](#)’.⁶⁷ It provides a useful overview of ways to ensure accessibility, including regarding venue selection, planning and preregistration, and assistance for those who may need extra help during events. For example, staff should be available to remove chairs for wheelchair users, guide those with visual difficulties or seat persons who are deaf or hard of hearing near the interpreter/captioner.

2. Institutional architecture and capacity Employment and human resource capacity

Developing staff capacity and competence with regard to disability inclusion is essential to successfully mainstream a disability perspective into policies, programmes and operations. To this end, UNICEF will develop a capacity-building strategy and training activities tailored to staff and partners at all levels and in all contexts. Capacity gaps will be addressed comprehensively and systematically, including through awareness-raising campaigns and values-based and competency training, with a strong focus on rights-based approaches.

By 2025, 75 per cent of UNICEF staff will have undergone training on disability inclusion. The capacity-building strategy will be designed to increase awareness and technical competencies on disability inclusion

of staff throughout UNICEF, including senior managers. Disability inclusion is mainstreamed within broader learning around culture change and diversity, equity and inclusion. Disability inclusion will be embedded into the ongoing training of leadership and management staff at headquarters and at regional and country offices, and in sectoral capacity gap assessments and capacity-building plans. All training and learning courses will be disability inclusive and accessible.

“Investing in workforce diversity that includes people with disabilities truly embodies the ‘Nothing Without Us’ ethos. This form of meaningful representation has the power to transform UNICEF’s organizational culture – and most importantly our results for children!”

**Zoë Elizabeth Hua Eng Gan,
Co-Chair, UNICEF Global Network of
Employees with Disabilities (Disability
Connect),
June 2022**

UNICEF has introduced several initiatives to promote disability-inclusive employment and to increase the representation of employees with disabilities in the UNICEF workforce at all levels and across sectors and offices. This includes the ‘[Procedure on Disability-inclusive HR Management](#)’, which highlights new provisions on attraction, recruitment, retention and career development of employees with

67 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Toolkit on Accessibility: Organization of accessible events’, UNICEF, New York, February 2022, <<https://accessibilitytoolkit.unicef.org/reports/section-f-organization-accessible-events>>, accessed 27 June 2022.

disabilities.⁶⁸ Disability is now part of the recruitment process and should be part of the diversity dimensions looked at to increase office diversity, while acknowledging that more work is needed to build a culture in which job candidates and employees feel safe to disclose their disabilities. Following the example of two UNICEF regions, all regions will establish targets whereby UNICEF will progressively increase the number of employees with disabilities by at least 2 per cent across all offices by 2025, with the aim of reaching 7 per cent global representation by 2030. Further efforts will be needed to ensure UNICEF has a reliable and confidential platform to collect personally identifiable workforce data on disabilities. Following a staff survey focused on disability inclusion, the '[Inclusive Employment Guide](#)' was launched in 2021 to help personnel understand disability and its intersections, such as with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion and migratory status.⁶⁹ As part of the architecture to endorse inclusive employment, UNICEF also established a Reasonable Accommodation Fund and Guide, as described above.

Inclusive disability architecture

In line with UNICEF's disability inclusive human resource management policy, the organization will further strengthen its institutional architecture, including actively shifting its culture and human resource practices to foster greater disability inclusion. The Culture and Diversity team in the Office of the Executive Director supports a more inclusive, respectful, diverse and inclusive culture in every UNICEF office. This will entail considering the staffing

and human resource policies covering the entire employment process, from hiring, staff development, transitions and promotions, to more deliberately recruiting persons with disabilities and providing reasonable accommodation for them, as well as reviewing and revising competency frameworks. It could also involve performance planning markers related to disability inclusion. The organization is also committed to hosting United Nations Volunteers with disabilities.

Although UNICEF has Disability Focal Points and staff tasked with disability inclusion, as well as Disability Specialists in a limited number of headquarters, regional and country offices, disability inclusion is often not considered a core part of their job functions, and may not be reflected in their job descriptions, responsibilities and evaluations. The Disability Team in the Programme Group Leadership Team at headquarters coordinates the Global Disability Network, including Focal Points and Specialists. This network will be strengthened and expanded to ensure disability inclusion is the responsibility of everyone in the organization. The Culture and Diversity team under the Management Deputy Director will coordinate the Global Disability-Inclusive Operations Network.

UNICEF headquarters and regional and country offices are encouraged to establish cross-sectoral task forces on disability inclusion, to bring Focal Points together with other technical specialists across sectors to promote disability-inclusive programming, share information and ensure alignment between strategies, goals, sectors and levels.

68 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Procedure on Disability-inclusive HR Management', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/portals/RF/Regulatory_Framework_Library/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fportals%2FRF%2FRRegulatory_Framework_Library%2FUNICEF_Procedure_on_Disability_Inclusive_HR_management.pdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fportals%2FRF%2FRRegulatory_Framework_Library>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

69 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Inclusive Employment Guide', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/OED-CultureChange/SitePages/Inclusive-Employment-Guide.aspx>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

By 2025, all UNICEF regional offices will have at least one dedicated full-time Disability Specialist for programmes and operations, providing technical assistance and supporting cross-sectoral interventions, staff development and Disability Focal Point coordination. UNICEF will further aim for country offices with annual budgets of at least US\$20 million to establish dedicated full-time capacity for disability inclusion, as well as a budgeting benchmark for funds allocated to specific work on disability inclusion.

UNICEF continues to ensure that employees with disabilities are not left behind. It has two robust employee resource groups recognized by the Office of the Executive Director that provide confidential peer support, engage in collective internal advocacy and act in an advisory capacity to spearhead employee-led disability-inclusive organizational change. The [Global Network of Employees with Disabilities](#) (also known as [Disability Connect](#))⁷⁰ and the [Support Group for Employees with Children with Disabilities](#)⁷¹ should be regularly consulted and included in all organizational change initiatives.

Finally, to ensure that disability inclusion can be expanded rapidly and technical support is available as needed across the organization, UNICEF will develop and maintain a consultant roster and long-term agreements with external experts, including from organizations and networks of persons with disabilities, to provide

capacity at the humanitarian–peacebuilding–development nexus (including surge), and in specific thematic areas and operations.

3. Information and communication technology

UNICEF promotes progressive and improved accessibility in all of its information and communication technology, including in teleconferencing software and the use of both software and hardware across the organization. To facilitate a positive experience for everyone who visits its website, social media channels and mobile applications, UNICEF follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 to ensure that all of its digital platforms are accessible to persons with disabilities.^{72, 73} Advances in communications and technology platforms have made it easier than ever to promote accessibility, not only in public communications but also in the standard platforms and ways of working within UNICEF as an institution.

UNICEF commits to providing accessibility guidance and resources for all staff using standard computing programmes and platforms, including word processing, presentation and virtual meeting software, as a part of core employee competency. Additionally, UNICEF will set up an Accessibility Help Desk in collaboration with the Global Shared Services Centre to help generate awareness and provide technical support. The Help Desk will

70 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Global Network of Employees with Disabilities’ (Disability Connect), UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/OED-CultureChange/SitePages/UNICEF_employees_with_disabilities.aspx>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

71 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Support Group for Employees with Children with Disabilities’, UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/OED-CultureChange/SitePages/Join-the-Yammer-group-for-parents-of-children-with-disabilities-to-speak-with-peers-about-your-experiences-and.aspx>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

72 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Accessibility Standards for UNICEF Websites’, UNICEF, New York, August 2017, <www.unicef.org/bulgaria/media/8511/file>, accessed 28 June 2022.

73 United Nations Children’s Fund, ‘Procedures for Establishing and Managing UNICEF’s Public-Facing Websites, Social Media Channels and Mobile Applications’, UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/DOC/digitalabs/SitePages/Procedures.aspx>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

consist of two branches focusing on digital and physical accessibility. It will proactively audit and test accessibility compliance and respond to requests for support. The organization will further adopt digital accessibility as a core requirement in its purchase of hardware, software and related services, and will train information technology staff to increase the accessibility of legacy systems and ensure that any new software is built accessible.

The UNICEF Information and Communication Technology Division strives to ensure that all hardware and software solutions developed or procured by UNICEF meet accessibility standards. To that end, the Division commits to: (1) continuing to support the development of digital solutions for children with disabilities, and promoting the expansion of these solutions globally, together with its partners in the Programme Group and Office of Innovation, as digital public goods; (2) providing technical guidance to country offices to evaluate AT products and services, in collaboration with the Supply Division; (3) promoting the implementation of web content accessibility guidelines WCAG 2.1 (United States) or EN 301 549 (European Union), with an emphasis on global field solutions, such as the Learning Passport and Primero; (4) increasing awareness of digital accessibility across UNICEF; and (5) continuing to engage with technology suppliers and partners, large and small, and advocating for the improvement of accessibility features and the implementation of standards that support inclusivity in digital contexts and mitigate the digital divide.

4. Supply

UNICEF has always been one of the largest procurers of goods and services in the United Nations system. In 2021, UNICEF procured

more than US\$7.2 billion worth of goods and services from a broad range of categories, such as vaccines and pharmaceuticals, office equipment, and construction and engineering services. This significant spending profile and UNICEF's experience with influencing and shaping markets and innovating product design and delivery provides the organization with a unique opportunity, as well as a responsibility, to take disabilities into consideration in its procurement and supply processes.

UNICEF has already acted to leverage its existing budget to provide products and tools that are disability inclusive, making the procurement process itself more inclusive. When the UNDIS was established in 2019, UNICEF led an inter-agency task force that has since developed 'Guidelines on the Implementation of UNDIS Indicator 8 (Procurement)'⁷⁴ and has engaged in their implementation both at headquarters and at the country office level. Going forward, UNICEF will focus on three areas of work:

- **Procuring inclusive and accessible goods and services:** UNICEF strives to procure inclusive and accessible goods and services, especially those that are relevant for persons with disabilities. Ideally, UNICEF procures universally designed products or services. Considering that a significant portion of its procurement spend is controlled at headquarters, UNICEF will review relevant long-term agreements at headquarters and at the regional and country levels to ensure that the terms of reference include a request for products to be accessible.
- **Making the procurement process accessible:** UNICEF is committed to progressively advancing its operations

74 United Nations, High-Level Committee on Management, Guidelines on the Implementation of UNDIS Indicator 8 (Procurement), HLCM Procurement Network Working Group on Sustainable Procurement, Copenhagen, 2020, <www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/01/2020_un_disability_inclusion_strategy_guidelines_indicator_8.pdf>, accessed 28 June 2022.

towards a disability-inclusive approach, which includes making its procurement process accessible, to enable persons with disabilities to compete on an equal basis for UNICEF's business. This area of work will require continued system adaptations and attention to, as well as resources for, key information technology systems and platforms, such as the United Nations Global Marketplace, VISION and UNICEF's e-tendering platform. Additionally, an accessible procurement process also relies on ensuring the hiring managers are empowered and understand how they can accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities. UNICEF will develop and roll out targeted training to support this effort.

- **Promoting purchasing from disability-inclusive suppliers:** When engaging with suppliers and institutional contractors, companies should be attentive to the situation of persons with disabilities – for instance, by having an inclusion policy for hiring and accommodating them – and should require their own suppliers to have disability-inclusive practices. UNICEF will continue to identify suppliers that have disability-inclusive policies, and will advocate for doing more business with providers that are focused on disability inclusion.

Leveraging UNICEF's procurement capacity to increase its provision of adequate AT for children and adults with disabilities presents a good opportunity to address the significant need for AT globally and engage with the business sector. UNICEF has a twofold approach to leveraging inclusive procurement

to increase access to high-quality, affordable AT. The first prong involves developing an enabling ecosystem by building political will, advocating for and informing policy reform, mobilizing investment, and strengthening cross-sectoral systems and service delivery at the global, regional and country levels. The second prong involves shaping markets by addressing supply barriers in LMICs and working with private suppliers on inclusive quality procurement.

5. Communications and advocacy

UNICEF has invested significantly in disability-inclusive communications and advocacy, both internally and externally. Disability-inclusive communications and advocacy are designed to reflect the diversity of the beneficiaries of UNICEF's programmes and to expand the reach of a broad audience within the disability community. Disability advocates have recognized UNICEF's efforts to ensure that children with disabilities are portrayed in digital and visual materials and communications as a crucial contribution to reducing stigma and bias. These efforts should be continued and increased so that the diversity of children and adults with disabilities (such as parents and grandparents) is represented in UNICEF communications. In 2021, UNICEF launched the 'Procedure on Disability-Inclusive Communication and Advocacy', outlining a range of communication methods that benefit, reach and engage persons with disabilities and the general public.⁷⁵ The procedure was developed through an extensive consultative process involving more than 20 UNICEF country offices. It offers explicit guidance for the development of messages that avoid

75 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Procedure on Disability-Inclusive Communication and Advocacy', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/portals/RF/Regulatory%20Framework%20Library/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fportals%2FRF%2FRegulatory%20Framework%20Library%2F113939%5FDisability%2DInclusive%20Communication%20and%20Advocacy%20Procedure%5FFinal%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fportals%2FRF%2FRegulatory%20Framework%20Library>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

stigmatizing people and discriminatory concepts and language.

The DIPAS recognizes that partnerships with organizations and networks of children and persons with disabilities can be mutually beneficial and offer long-term assistance in advancing the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities. UNICEF will increase its focus on these networks and strengthen their capacity, engaging them in the organization's advocacy and programmatic agenda on disability inclusion while learning from their lived experience and expertise. Partnerships with OPDs will be particularly helpful to advance disability inclusion in all countries and territories where UNICEF works. For example, the UNICEF–International Disability Alliance (IDA) Global Network of Adolescents and Youth with Disabilities, which boosts youth participation and capacity-building, generates more and better opportunities for participation and engagement with UNICEF programmes at the country level. Simultaneously, SBCC resources and strategies may count on IDA and its local members to play a critical role to address disability stigma and discrimination in the communities in which they live.

UNICEF will foster opportunities for children and youth with disabilities to engage in

intergenerational and intersectoral dialogue to co-create approaches that influence and redefine social norms about disability – for example, to enrol and keep children with disabilities in school, and to facilitate the participation of young people with disabilities in youth caucuses. In collaboration with partners, country offices may fund OPDs' meaningful participation in inter-agency working groups and relevant fora, engage them as programme implementation partners, expand their knowledge of children's rights, and use other relevant mechanisms to enable deeper and more systematic collaboration with them globally and locally.

Over the course of implementation of the DIPAS, UNICEF will continue to advocate for the expansion of disability-inclusive and accessible communications throughout its materials and campaigns. Statements and communications by senior UNICEF management will be delivered according to accessibility standards. Public information on disability inclusion relevant to UNICEF's mission will also be disseminated within the organization. Internal communications will help to circulate information about the DIPAS to enhance its implementation at the country office level and to foster a more welcoming culture of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the organization.





C. Enablers

1. Partnerships

As already mentioned, UNICEF cannot achieve the ambitious goals of the DIPAS on its own; partnerships with internal and external stakeholders are essential to its success. UNICEF has historically partnered with diverse stakeholders, such as national governments, local and global civil society organizations, private foundations, businesses and other multilateral agencies, to promote the rights of every child.

UNICEF recognizes its critical leadership role in shaping the global disability human rights and development agendas, especially for children, and in advocating for and ensuring that spaces, discussions and platforms for participation and decision-making are inclusive and accessible for disability advocates, OPDs and children with disabilities to meaningfully participate in and influence issues related to their rights. To this end, in all settings where it works, UNICEF will bolster its existing partnerships and create new ones to promote disability inclusion with governments, disability networks, OPDs, children with disabilities

and their family members and caregivers, researchers, private sector representatives, civil society organizations and other actors. The organization will engage in joint initiatives on disability inclusion with other United Nations entities and partners at the global, regional and country levels, as appropriate, and will actively participate in relevant inter-agency networks and initiatives not specifically related to disability, such as United Nations human resources or procurement networks, with the aim of influencing their focus and supporting their capacity for disability inclusion.

In addition to strengthening the capacity of OPDs and collaborating with them, UNICEF recognizes that engaging with the private sector can be pivotal in delivering on the DIPAS. This includes, but goes well beyond, the funding of initiatives. The potential role of business in advocacy, spreading awareness, instigating joint campaigns, employing persons with disabilities, building skills and offering apprenticeship opportunities, designing innovative solutions and technology, shaping workplace practices and employability, providing AT and products, and ensuring interoperability between competing products, adherence to open standards,

adoption of universal design principles and development of AT products and services can have wide-ranging effects that allow UNICEF to achieve its results more effectively and efficiently. The role of the business sector in creating disability-inclusive physical and digital infrastructure is yet another area for collaboration and partnership. Efforts will be made to explore all these potential partnerships with the business sector.

UNICEF will also continue to collaborate with the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network, a coordination body comprising disability donors, OPDs, service providers, academics and United Nations agencies, which was established to set joint agendas and strategies on disability-inclusive development and endorse their implementation.

Finally, UNICEF will strengthen its partnerships with governments to promote disability inclusion across sectors, encourage the integration of disability-inclusive policies and programmes into their work, and hold them accountable, including by supporting the development of and reporting on indicators to assess progress towards disability inclusion.

2. Financing and resource mobilization

To ensure UNICEF can operationalize the commitments put forth in the DIPAS, adequate funding and resources must be allocated to disability inclusion throughout the organization. This includes resources for programmes and operations at headquarters, as well as at regional and country offices. To ensure sustainable funding to implement the DIPAS, the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, disability-inclusive indicators, and commitments made at the (see Annex D), all levels of the

organization will establish internal processes to identify funding and allocate budgets for disability inclusion across programmes and operations.

UNICEF has established the 'Disability Tag' as part of its Programme Information Database, using it initially in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.⁷⁶ This cost-tracking tag is used to capture organizational spending on disability-inclusive programmes at the activity level. Costs tracked using the Disability Tag for 2021, for example, show US\$245.1 million in expenditures for disability inclusion, representing 3.89 per cent of UNICEF's total disbursements of US\$6.3 billion in 2021. UNICEF has earmarked at least 10 per cent organizational expenditure for disability inclusion by 2030.

UNICEF will work with country and regional offices to ensure that *all* countries and programmes in development and humanitarian contexts attain a certain standard of inclusion by 2030. To achieve this aim, UNICEF will invest more heavily in disability inclusion at all levels of the organization: in headquarters, regional and country office main programmatic and operational documents, such as office management plans, regional office management plans, country programme documents, as well as regular resource mobilization undertaken by the Public Partnerships and Private Fundraising and Partnerships divisions. UNICEF is committed to meeting its 2030 target of allocating at least 10 per cent of its organizational expenditure to progressively advance disability inclusion.

Over the course of the DIPAS, UNICEF will provide assistance on the use of the Disability

76 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Disability Tag', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/portals/RF/Tools/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fportals%2FRF%2FTools%2F117359%5FANNEX%20TO%20PIDB%20CODING%20PROCEDURE%202022%2D2025%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fportals%2FRF%2FTools>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

Tag and will verify that disbursements related to services and programmes for children with disabilities are tagged and tracked accurately throughout the organization and align with budget projections.

At a minimum, UNICEF will uphold the existing allocation of institutional resources for both the global Reasonable Accommodation Fund for employees with disabilities⁷⁷ and the [Greening and Accessibility Fund](#) to ensure accessibility of UNICEF premises.⁷⁸ As demand increases, budgets should be increased proportionally for both funds. As mentioned above, UNICEF will also establish a physical and digital global Accessibility Help Desk to facilitate accessibility across the organization, including for construction, events, publications, inclusive communication, and consultations with children with disabilities and their representative organizations, in both development and humanitarian contexts. It will seek funding for disability inclusion from traditional and non-traditional donors, and increasingly from individual donors and other private sector sources. To mobilize adequate, timely and predictable funding for disability-targeted and inclusive activities, UNICEF will ensure that disability inclusion is considered in all funding partnership negotiations, including with both the public and private sectors. It will incorporate dedicated resources and funding requirements for disability inclusion in humanitarian flash appeals, other humanitarian funding mechanisms and donor proposals, including funding mobilized from the public and private sectors and internal funding mechanisms (e.g.,

the Emergency Programme Fund and Thematic Funding) that could be used for rapid response and to expand inclusive programmes.

UNICEF will explore and evaluate innovative financing methods for activities related to disability inclusion, and will identify potential new partners and creative financing mechanisms that can enable greater volumes of funding for programmes and services for children with disabilities.

As a participating agency in the [United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UNPRPD), UNICEF will support UNPRPD grant mobilization and implementation at the country level to accelerate the implementation of the CRPD and disability-inclusive SDGs for all persons with disabilities, including with the IDA and the International Disability and Development Consortium.⁷⁹

The [Joint SDG Fund](#) is a potential source of funding for UNICEF offices to advance the aims of the DIPAS, as it provides strategic investments to scale innovative approaches to integrated policy solutions, and to leverage financing for social protection, with attention to the most vulnerable populations.⁸⁰

UNICEF will advocate for and support governments in ensuring that public finance systems are disability inclusive and that national budgets and strategies are designed in consultation with OPDs. It will further encourage governments to allocate dedicated

77 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Global Disability Accommodation Fund', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-GEW/SitePages/Reasonable-Accommodation.aspx>>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

78 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Greening and Accessibility Fund (GrAF)', UNICEF, New York, SharePoint link accessible to UNICEF employees: <[https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DFAM-EEIU/SitePages/Greening-%26-Accessibility-Funds-\(GrAF\).aspx](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DFAM-EEIU/SitePages/Greening-%26-Accessibility-Funds-(GrAF).aspx)>, accessed 27 June 2022 [Internal document].

79 United Nations, 'Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', <www.unprpd.org>, accessed 27 June 2022.

80 United Nations, 'Joint SDG Fund', <www.jointsdgfund.org/who-we-are>, accessed 27 June 2022.

funds for disability-inclusive programming and for specific programming for children with disabilities.

3. Leadership, accountability and coordination

Disability inclusion is the role of everyone at UNICEF, its implementing partners and the OPDs with which it works, but UNICEF can only achieve its disability-inclusive vision with the commitment of all levels of the organization, particularly senior management. Therefore, leaders throughout the organization will be responsible for guaranteeing progress towards the strategies laid out in the DIPAS to ensure that staff members, including the leaders themselves, are accountable for their performance on disability inclusion. This will necessitate bold accountability standards for action at multiple levels, including organizational benchmarks for resourcing and strategic planning, and programmatic and cluster coordination performance reviews and evaluations. Country programme documents may be assessed to determine adherence to the principles and priorities laid out in the DIPAS.

Leadership at the senior-most levels will enable the integration of disability inclusion into strategic planning, policy and programming, advocacy, corporate communications and budget allocation, and the establishment of personnel structures and processes to promote and facilitate disability inclusion. Specifically, progress towards the implementation of the key actions outlined in the DIPAS will be tracked and reviewed by the GDIP group in accordance with the annexed Accountability Framework for Disability Inclusion, which commits to being open to revising or adapting the DIPAS based on implementation experience. The GDIP group will report on annual progress against the commitments in the DIPAS to UNICEF's leadership in the Global Management Team. To demonstrate transparency and meaningful engagement

with persons with disabilities, among others, UNICEF will communicate and report on this progress, both internally and externally, and will update the UNICEF Executive Board periodically on DIPAS results across the organization.

Implementation of the DIPAS at country and regional office levels must be adapted and contextualized to the needs and realities on the ground. UNICEF regional offices each cover diverse countries, including those of different income levels and differing capacities to advance disability inclusion. Not only must UNICEF adapt its technical support and resources to reflect these realities, it must also share resources and learning between countries and regions. Within regions, the broad diversity in national experience and expertise on disability inclusion can be better amplified through cross-regional partnerships and regional learning and technical support. For example, countries that have worked to expand the inclusion of children and persons with disabilities in their preparedness planning and humanitarian and emergency response systems can work with other countries in their region to provide technical support and resources to ensure that children with disabilities and their caregivers have inclusive and safe access to humanitarian action. Countries with advanced technical infrastructure and investments can assist others in their region by sharing innovations in AT as well as in both physical and digital accessibility strategies. Expanding opportunities within regions to share learning, resources and capacity between countries will allow UNICEF to accelerate progress for children with disabilities in all contexts and settings, to best meet its commitments and mandate under the CRC and the CRPD, and within the SDGs and the CCCs, among others.

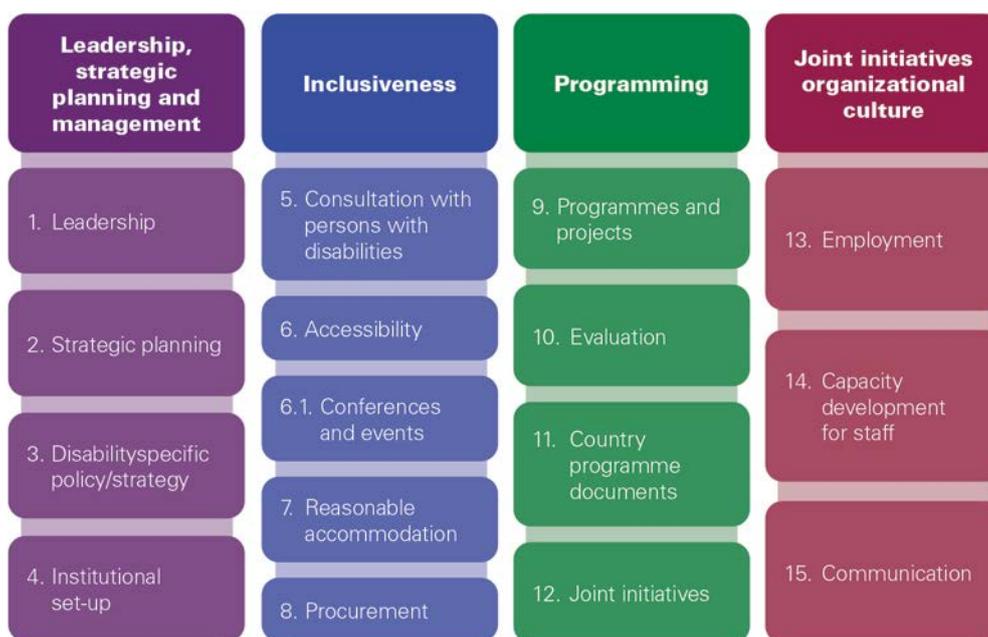
In addition, UNICEF is committed to meeting, exceeding and reporting on progress

towards the 15 performance indicators established under the UNDIS Accountability Framework (see Figure 7) by 2030. The UNDIS Accountability Framework, which serves as a guide for UNICEF and other United Nations entities to implement and report on UNDIS,

also guides the results and Accountability Framework of the UNICEF DIPAS. By meeting and exceeding these commitments, UNICEF aspires to continue to be a model for rapidly advancing progress towards a disability-inclusive world.



FIGURE 7 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy Accountability Framework indicators



Source: United Nations, 'United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy', United Nations, New York, 2019, p. 12.

7

Accountability and coordination framework



To support the implementation of the DIPAS across the organization, an upcoming guidance will provide recommendations and clear direction for headquarters divisions and regional and country offices to achieve the organizational vision of a more inclusive world by 2030, in which all children, including those with disabilities, live in barrier-free and inclusive communities.

Furthermore, the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, continues the organization-wide effort to promote and protect the rights of children with disabilities across all programmes, as mandated by the CRC and the CRPD, guiding UNICEF’s normative framework and supporting the SDGs’ Leave No One Behind agenda and national development plans. It considers disability inclusion as part of the principles of equity, inclusion and leaving no one behind, and disability-inclusive programming is specifically referred to as a cross-cutting priority.

The **34 indicators in the Strategic Plan Results Framework** represent the organization’s ambition to embed disability inclusion in everything it does. In addition, the UNICEF CCCs incorporate the indicators specific to disability inclusion in emergency response.

UNICEF’s accountability to the UNDIS and the 25 organizational commitments made at the Global Disability Summit are also a critical part of the DIPAS Accountability Framework.

Specifically, to ensure that existing structures are strengthened across the organization, at all levels, accountability is required at the highest levels.

Accountabilities

1. By 2025, UNICEF will increase its organizational budget expenditure by at least 2 per cent, to progressively accelerate disability inclusion across its programmes and operations, in both development and humanitarian action, committing to a target of 10 per cent of total expenditure by 2030.
2. By 2025, UNICEF will progressively increase the number of employees with disabilities by at least 2 per cent across all offices, with the aim of reaching 7 per cent representation by 2030.
3. By 2025, all UNICEF regional offices will have at least one dedicated full-time Disability Specialist for programmes and operations, to coordinate and support disability inclusion in the region.

4. By 2025, 75 per cent of UNICEF staff will have undergone training on disability inclusion.
5. UNICEF will generate evidence from data insights and research through dedicated capacity (i.e. the Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities) to guide programme design and investments.
6. Disability inclusion, specifically of children with disabilities, will be systematically mainstreamed into media communications and advocacy.
7. By December 2023, regional and headquarters Divisional Directors will have developed divisional/regional action plans on the DIPAS.

Coordination mechanisms

1. For coordination, monitoring and reporting of the DIPAS component on disability-inclusive programmes, the Global Lead on Disability under the supervision of PG Director will establish and coordinate a **Global Disability Inclusion Programmes**

- (GDIP) Technical Working Group, including Disability Specialists from PG Thematic Areas, Data & Research, EMOPS, GCA, Supply Division, Innovations, the Culture and Diversity team and regional offices.
2. For coordination, monitoring and reporting of the DIPAS component on organizational approaches as well as on the implementation of the UNDIS, the Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture in the Office of the Executive Director with support from the Global Lead on Disability (PGLT), and under the supervision of the Deputy Executive Director of Management, will be responsible for establishing and coordinating a **UNICEF–UNDIS Operations Working Group**, to include GCA, DHR, ICTD, GSSC, DFAM, Supply Division, Evaluation Office and the Disability Team (PGLT). This group will bring together the different divisions from across the three organizational areas of management: partnerships, field results and innovation.



8

Conclusion



This first-ever UNICEF DIPAS is driven by the core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – leaving no child behind. It recommitments the organization to ensuring that UNICEF programmes, policies and procedures are fully disability inclusive and accessible, gender-responsive, equitable and developmentally appropriate for each child.

The GDIP group will assess progress in achieving the expected outcomes in programme implementation, while the UNICEF–UNDIS Operations Working Group will oversee progress across the organizational areas. UNICEF will mobilize resources, support initiatives and galvanize actions with and from governments, partners, disability networks and, importantly, children with disabilities themselves, to ensure that no child is left behind while building back better in a post-pandemic world.

While each UNICEF regional and/or country office may have its own context-specific strategies and action plans, and associated guidance for their full implementation, there are certain non-negotiable principles by which all UNICEF actors, across sectors and

programmes, must abide. At a minimum, UNICEF will ensure:

- No harm is done to persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and policies. Further, UNICEF is committed to embracing the principle of ‘do no harm’ that recognizes the inherent harm committed by programmes and policies that exclude, discriminate against, undermine or neglect children with disabilities, leaving them further behind their peers.
- OPDs must be fully engaged in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes and policies related to disability inclusion, and partnerships with OPDs should recognize the value of their contributions to the capacity and technical knowledge of UNICEF programmes and policies to reach children with disabilities at all levels.
- The organization commits in all areas to creating opportunities and platforms for children with disabilities to express their own needs and priorities to hold decision makers and institutions, starting with UNICEF, accountable.

- Data collection, research, programme analysis and evaluation will be disaggregated by disability, where relevant, and UNICEF will increasingly invest in the generation of new data, research and evidence to identify needs and establish best practices to reach children with disabilities.
- All elements of programme design, across all sectors, will take disability inclusion into consideration to ensure that progressive steps are systematized throughout the organization, and funding for disability inclusion in UNICEF programmes and operations will be integrated into its resource development and planning.
- All the organization's workplaces, whether physical or virtual, will model disability inclusion through the promotion of basic inclusion competency standards among all staff, a zero-tolerance policy for stigma, discrimination or harassment against staff with disabilities, and funding to provide reasonable accommodation and support to staff with disabilities.



Annexes



Annex A: Disability inclusion across UNICEF goal areas

This annex presents UNICEF sector priorities as they align with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. They will be updated in line with the development of future strategic plans and global commitments.

Health and nutrition

1. Support at least 15 countries in strengthening disability-inclusive primary health care and health and nutrition systems by 2026 [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
 - Health and health care are critical concerns for persons with disabilities; while persons with disabilities can require specialized medical care directly related to specific impairments and underlying health conditions, they also require the same general health care services as the wider population. Disability inclusion in health ensures that persons with disabilities can take full and equal advantage of the same health services as persons without disabilities, benefiting from the same health promotion, prevention and treatment services (e.g., immunization, family planning and nutrition services).
2. Assist partner governments in recognizing the legal right of all persons with disabilities to the highest attainable standard of health, including protecting persons with disabilities from discrimination in the provision of health insurance and the recognition of legal capacity [Advocacy]
 - The right to health itself means States parties must generate conditions in

which everyone can be as healthy as possible; it is not a right to be healthy. Central to the right to health is timely, acceptable and affordable health care of appropriate quality; services should be provided on an individual (person-centred) basis with regard to the range of support services required (including nursing, personal assistance and respite).

- 3.** Develop technical capacity across UNICEF regional and country offices, as well as implementing partners (governments and non-governmental organizations) on inclusive health, based on a practice guide designed to drive improvements in availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability and quality throughout UNICEF's health programmes [Service delivery]
 - ▣ The practice guide is intended to strengthen knowledge, attitudes and skills related to disability inclusion, including by providing entry-points for addressing barriers that children and youth with different disabilities (and their families) experience when interacting with the health system, examples of how disability inclusion can be applied in health care settings, and links to additional resources and materials.
- 4.** Support the design and implementation of demand-generation approaches with children with disabilities and their parents, families and caregivers, including the development of tools and resources that educate citizens about the right of all persons with disabilities to the highest attainable standard of health and nutrition [Advocacy, community engagement and social behaviour change]
 - ▣ By strengthening demand among persons with disabilities and amplifying

their 'voice', greater pressure will be placed on governments and health service providers to make health services more inclusive, actively addressing barriers that affect access to health.

- 5.** Ensure that existing work to assist governments in developing and implementing health sector plans and budgets includes a focus on disability inclusion, and subsequently provide practical assistance to make health facilities accessible, including WASH; supply AT devices; and build health professionals' skills and knowledge of disability inclusion [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
 - ▣ Those involved in designing and delivering health services are often in the best position to facilitate and support practical changes to service delivery. Health managers and policymakers may not have direct contact with children and youth with disabilities (and their families, parents and/or caregivers), but they are responsible for ensuring that health service sites and existing services are constructed or organized in a way that is inclusive of children and youth with disabilities.
- 6.** Encourage partner governments to collect data on children with disabilities, using both health administration systems and the UNICEF/Washington Group Child Functioning Module to collect and analyse data on health inequities, coverage, affordability and the quality of health care [Data and research]
 - ▣ Consistent and comparable national-level data will help build an evidence base of 'what works' related to inclusive health, and strengthen efforts to plan and mobilize resources in support of inclusive health systems.

7. Contribute to UNICEF’s forthcoming research agenda on disability, coordinated by the UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, to ensure it expands the evidence base on inclusive health [Data and research]
 - ❑ Evidence is lacking on how to improve access to health care services for persons with disabilities. Rigorous studies are needed to understand which policies and programmes are most effective.
8. Strengthen the articulation of inclusive ECD in national policies and strategic plans by promoting early interventions, stimulation and responsive care [Cross-sectoral coordination]
9. Ensure the continuation of disability-inclusive health and nutrition services across the humanitarian–peacebuilding–development nexus by supporting disability-inclusive emergency preparedness, disaster and risk reduction, and humanitarian action [Cross-sectoral coordination]
10. Revise the ‘Early Childhood Development Kit for Emergencies’ to be inclusive and accessible in public health crises, such as COVID-19 [Service delivery]

Education

1. Collaborate with relevant ministries, including ministries of health, to develop universal school-based developmental monitoring and screening programmes and referral pathways for identification and family- and child-centred support and intervention [Cross-sectoral coordination]
2. Develop teacher education (in-service and pre-service) that allows teachers to reflect on their biases and prejudice, and strengthen teacher capacity in inclusive pedagogy, including to work in multidisciplinary teams on Individual Education Plans, identify and remove barriers, assess learning, and adapt teaching and learning in line with the UDL principles [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
3. Strengthen multiple, flexible pathways to education for learners with disabilities who are out of school, to enable them to matriculate and transition to further education, training or employment [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
4. Adopt UDL principles in:
 - ❑ The development of curricula that are inclusive of persons with disabilities through respectful representations and that promote competencies and skills in addition to academic performance [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
 - ❑ The development of accessible and inclusive learning materials and resources, and formal and informal learning assessments [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
5. Strengthen whole-school inclusion efforts, including accessible transportation, school buildings and grounds with special provisioning for toilets with ramps, drinking water and hand hygiene accessibility, and menstrual-health-and-hygiene-compliant facilities, administrator capacity, school-based sports and community programming [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
6. Strengthen tailored quality services for children with developmental delays and disabilities to address development and learning loss arising from the COVID-19 pandemic [Inclusive systems-strengthening]

- 7.** Establish policies and capacity to systematically provide reasonable accommodations and individual support, including AT, for learners with disabilities [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
- 8.** Ensure robust referral mechanisms, including systematized follow-up and support, between education programmes and health, nutrition, WASH, and social and child protection services [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
- 9.** Strengthen the capacity of ministries of education to apply inclusive education sector analysis and planning to make national education systems barrier-free, equitable and inclusive of learners with disabilities [Inclusive systems-strengthening]
- 10.** Ensure accurate and stigma-free data collection on children with disabilities in education management information systems to understand prevalence, barriers to accessing WASH and other services and facilities, accommodations, etc. [Data and research]
- 11.** Engage in advocacy with ministries of education to advance legislation and policies to shift from segregated to inclusive education in line with the CRPD across all levels of education, from early childhood education onwards [Advocacy]
- 12.** Advocate with ministries of education to ensure budgeting and planning are inclusive [Advocacy]
- 13.** Invest in norm change programmes to eliminate stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities and promote diversity in education [Advocacy, community engagement and social behaviour change]

Child protection

- 1.** Strengthen inclusive child protection systems, including justice systems, to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices; this approach prioritizes strengthening the social service workforce to become more inclusive and better equipped to protect children with disabilities from violence, abuse and exploitation [Inclusive systems-strengthening; Service delivery]
 - ▣ An inclusive systems-strengthening approach will ensure that all children, including children with disabilities, are protected in a holistic manner fully consistent with their rights by enhancing the enabling environment, capacities of institutions and service delivery systems to achieve this.
- 2.** Strengthen programme monitoring, data disaggregation and the production of disability-inclusive child protection evidence, including by integrating the use of the Child Functioning Module into programme monitoring and evaluation [Data and research]
 - ▣ Robust data collection and monitoring systems are essential elements and key outcomes of strong child protection systems.
- 3.** Strengthen child protection systems and capacities throughout the humanitarian, peacebuilding and development nexus to ensure that they are functional and able to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices in humanitarian and other emergencies; this includes investing in inclusive protection and disability-specific violence prevention in crisis settings [Inclusive systems-strengthening; Service delivery]

WASH, climate, energy, environment and disaster risk reduction

- 1.** Support governments and partners in strengthening the inclusion and accessibility of WASH services and infrastructure for persons with disabilities in both development and humanitarian contexts [Service delivery]
 - ❑ Persons with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing WASH, yet they have the same rights as any other person, including to WASH. SDG 6, which promotes access to water and sanitation for all, requires that persons with disabilities access WASH to ensure that no one is left behind. To achieve SDG 6, WASH programmes need to be disability inclusive and accessible. UNICEF is working with governments and partners to strengthen the accessibility of WASH infrastructure in households, communities, schools, health care facilities and child protection units, and is supporting the participation and empowerment of persons with disabilities in WASH activities and decision-making.
 - ❑ In humanitarian settings, special attention should be paid to increased WASH needs for trauma survivors and those with conflict- or crisis-induced disabilities or disability-causing injuries.
- 2.** Strengthen country-level WASH monitoring systems and UNICEF WASH programme monitoring to collect and report disability-disaggregated data [Data and research]
 - ❑ The barriers that persons with disabilities face often remain unidentified, and the impact of WASH programmes on persons with disabilities is not measured, as WASH monitoring processes are not designed to collect disability data. If persons with disabilities remain

invisible in WASH data, they are more likely to be overlooked in WASH policies and programmes. UNICEF is working to improve the collection and usage of disability data within WASH programmes, with particular attention to the need to identify relationships between disabilities and increased or disability-specific WASH needs that can be better addressed in programming. Having developed technical guidance, UNICEF's 'Make It Count: Guidance on disability-inclusive WASH programme data collection, monitoring and reporting' will be rolled out in country and regional offices to strengthen both WASH programme monitoring and country-level WASH monitoring systems.

- 3.** Expand the evidence base on disability-inclusive and accessible WASH [Data and research]
 - ❑ UNICEF has identified key emerging areas of research and gaps in evidence in disability-inclusive WASH programmes. One of these emerging areas is disability-inclusive and climate-resilient WASH. Persons with disabilities frequently face disadvantages and are disproportionately affected by climatic changes. Yet the resources, information and services needed to help build resilience are often not accessible, and persons with disabilities are under-represented at all levels of WASH and climate change programming and service provision. Further evidence is required to understand the barriers and enablers for persons with disabilities to access climate-resilient WASH.
- 4.** Strengthen systems to enable policy environments to promote disability-inclusive WASH programming approaches [Inclusive systems-strengthening]

- Government systems are often weak and unable to identify and meet the WASH needs of persons with disabilities. In addition, the policy environment is often not conducive to promoting equitable and inclusive WASH services. UNICEF will work with other partners to strengthen equity and inclusion principles in WASH policies, strategies, plans and guidelines to facilitate the promotion of disability-inclusive WASH programming approaches.
 - UNICEF is promoting Citywide Inclusive Sanitation as an approach to boost safe, equitable and sustainable access to inclusive, safely managed sanitation services in urban areas. While the approach upholds the human right of all to sanitation in urban areas, the tendency is for persons with disabilities to be left behind in terms of their access to sanitation services. To further strengthen the equity and inclusion principles of this approach, UNICEF will support the mainstreaming of disability in all components of the approach.
- 5. Raise awareness of the right to WASH of persons with disabilities, and build capacities on disability-inclusive and accessible WASH within UNICEF and the sector [Advocacy]
 - UNICEF needs to increase programmes that target and reach persons with disabilities to ensure that no one is left behind, as mandated in the SDGs and the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. To expand disability-inclusive WASH programmes, systematic capacity-building is required of UNICEF WASH staff. UNICEF has developed a disability-inclusive and accessible WASH capacity-building plan and strategy. Its objective is for UNICEF to have the required attitudes, knowledge, skills and expertise to plan, design, implement, monitor, evaluate and report on disability-inclusive and accessible WASH programmes in development and humanitarian contexts. With enhanced capacity, UNICEF can support advocacy and create awareness of disability and accessible WASH for the sector.
- 6. Strengthen learning across countries, regions and within the sector on disability-inclusive and accessible WASH by documenting and disseminating experiences [Data and research]
 - UNICEF has strong examples of disability-inclusive and accessible WASH programmes, and 50 countries reported disability-disaggregated WASH data in 2020. Very few of these programmes and approaches, however, have been documented or shared to provide lessons, particularly in relation to participatory approaches working with OPDs and persons with disabilities in communities. UNICEF will continue to document and disseminate both the challenges and best practices of disability-inclusive and accessible WASH programming, via case studies, video documentation and learning events.
- 7. Support the piloting and expansion of disability-inclusive menstrual-health-and-hygiene-compliant approaches and programmes [Cross-sectoral coordination]
 - Women and girls globally face stigma, ignorance and exclusion because of menstruation. Girls and women with disabilities face a double stigma due to both social norms about gender and menstruation and their disability. UNICEF has developed a framework to foster disability-inclusive menstrual health and hygiene, with practical entry-points for meeting the needs of menstruators with disabilities.

UNICEF will pilot approaches based on the framework and increase the number of programmes to support girls with disabilities to manage their menstruation safely and with dignity.

8. Strengthen intersectional and multisectoral programming on climate change and disability-inclusive climate action that guides children with disabilities, as both agents of change and beneficiaries, towards sustainable and equitable solutions

- Children with disabilities are particularly at risk of harm from natural disasters related to climate change, exacerbating existing inequalities, affecting multiple rights and access to services, and further exposing them to armed conflict and forced displacement. This yields higher rates of morbidity and mortality, higher rates of abuse, neglect and abandonment, and less access to emergency support. UNICEF will create opportunities for children with disabilities to actively participate in climate justice networks and processes, so their rights and aspirations are systematically included in climate change strategies and plans. Additionally, UNICEF will consider the specific risks and support requirements of children with disabilities in all adaptation and climate resilience efforts, including the accessibility of all information, communication and education related to climate change.

Social protection (policy and humanitarian action)

1. Support stakeholders in their efforts to gain a greater understanding of the diversity and impact of disability-related costs and to develop cross-sectoral approaches to cover them:

- With the World Bank, IDA and other partners, develop a methodology to assess the costs of disability for children with disabilities and their families in different contexts, and develop guidance to factor disability-related costs into child poverty measurement (with the education sector).
 - Assist countries in collecting data on the disability-related costs of children with disabilities and their families.
 - Assess the impact of disability-related costs on child poverty measurement.
 - Work on typical context-relevant scenarios to generate cross-sectoral approaches to cover disability-related costs (with education, ECD, health and child protection systems).
- 2.** Support the development of more accessible, comprehensive and reliable disability assessment and identification for case management and policy planning and greater responsiveness to covariate shocks:
- In cooperation with other agencies and OPDs, develop guidance centred on evidence-based tools and approaches that could support the development of CRPD-compliant disability identification, needs assessment and determination mechanisms throughout the life course, including for early childhood.
 - Support at least 20 countries in developing and strengthening accessible, comprehensive and reliable disability identification and needs assessment mechanisms for children and youth with disabilities, including in early childhood, across sectors, to inform eligibility, case management and policy planning (with health, ECD, education and child protection systems).
 - Support the development of disability registries and inclusive social protection management information systems.

- Build further consensus globally on disability assessment and determination, including with the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and IDA, among others, in consultation with the CRPD Committee.
- 3.** Promote progressive, universal disability-inclusive cash transfers, including child benefits, family benefits, disability allowances and caregiver benefits for children and adults with disabilities and their families:
 - Evaluate and document country approaches to disability-related cash transfer design, coverage and adequacy, as well as the cost and impact of universal child disability benefits, to identify context-relevant expansion scenarios.
 - Support countries in developing inclusive mainstream and disability-specific cash transfer programmes in terms of both design and delivery mechanisms.
 - Support inclusive humanitarian cash transfers for children and adults with disabilities and their families.
- 4.** Encourage the development of disability-inclusive and gender-responsive community support and care services in a diversity of contexts:
 - Document country approaches, non-governmental organization programmes and lessons learned related to community care and support; design, service delivery mechanisms and financing; and the role of central and local governments and civil society.
 - Support innovative programmes for community and family-based care and assistance that promote the agency of children and adults with disabilities while fostering gender equality.
- 5.** Promote adequate resourcing for inclusive social protection:
 - Support governments in assessing the financing implications of these approaches and the investment case linked to inclusion, and assist in identifying the critical financing options at hand.
 - In consultation with other United Nations agencies and OPDs, develop a methodology to support a CRPD-compliant analysis of public budgets and public financial management systems, and carry out such an analysis across regions.
 - Generate evidence and develop guidance for costing the resources required and financing the options to enhance the rapid expansion of integrated community support systems for children and youth with disabilities in diverse contexts.
- 6.** Develop capacity for inclusive social protection:
 - Jointly with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other agencies, develop technical guidance in support of inclusive social protection systems.
 - Encourage the development of regionally relevant guidance and training.
 - Provide national-level support and guidance for country offices to expand work on disability-inclusive social protection systems.
 - Provide opportunities for staff capacity development through training courses, including those developed in partnership with the ILO and the World Bank.

Annex B:

Disability-related indicators in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025⁸⁴

IMPACT indicators	Baseline	Goals target (2030)	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
Goal Area 3: Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.				
20. Rate of children in residential care	123 per 100 000 children	0	Age, disability , sex	UNICEF database

OUTCOME indicators	Baseline	Milestones (2025)	Goals target (2030)	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
Goal Area 3: Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.					
3.1. Percentage of girls and boys aged 15 to 17 years who have ever experienced any sexual violence and sought help from a professional (<i>UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women, WHO</i>)	Female: 4% Male: N/A	Female: 5% Male: N/A	Female: 6% Male: N/A	Disability , humanitarian contexts, sex	UNICEF database
3.6. Percentage of children in family-based care of the total number of children in all forms of formal alternative care (<i>IOM, UNHCR</i>)	27%	30%	33%	Age, disability , sex, migration status, humanitarian contexts	Country offices
Goal Area 4: Every child, including adolescents, has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies, and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment.					
4.4. Proportion of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years who have menstruated in the last 12 months who did not participate in work, school or other social activities during their last period (<i>UNHCR, WHO, UNFPA, UN-Women</i>)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Age, disability , geography (urban/rural)	WHO/ UNICEF JMP global database

84 United Nations Children’s Fund, Update of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, UNICEF, New York, 14–17 June 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/10696/file/2022-11-Update_IRRF_of_Strategic_Plan_2022-2025-EN-2022.04.25.pdf>, accessed 27 June 2022.

OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
Goal Area 1: Every child, including adolescents, survives and thrives, with access to nutritious diets, quality primary health care, nurturing practices and essential supplies.							
1.4.5. Availability of comparable data on non-communicable diseases, disability, injuries, mental health and children's environmental health (<i>WHO</i>)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD		UNICEF Global Monitoring
1.4.6. Number of children with disabilities reached by assistive technology and inclusive products through UNICEF supported programmes	134 000	159 500	170 500	181 500	192 500	Geography	UNICEF Supply Division
Goal Area 2: Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future							
2.1.1. Percentage of countries with inclusive and gender equitable system for access to learning opportunities (<i>GPE, UNESCO, World Bank</i>)	46%	49%	55%	59%	65%	Humanitarian contexts, by dimension ⁸⁵	Country offices
2.1.4. Number of out-of-school children and adolescents who accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>ECW, GPE, UNESCO, World Bank</i>)	48.6 million	64.5 million	80.7 million	97.3 million	114.1 million (cumulative)	Disability, geography, humanitarian contexts, level of education, sex	Country offices
2.2.7. Number of children provided with individual learning materials through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>GPE, UNESCO, World Bank</i>)	42.1 million	57.0 million	68.8 million	80.6 million	91.4 million (cumulative)	Disability, geography, humanitarian contexts, sex	Country offices
2.2.8. Number of children who accessed education through digital platforms through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNESCO, World Bank</i>)	63.1 million	84.4 million	105.7 million	127.1 million	148.6 million (cumulative)	Disability, geography, sex	Country offices

85 Dimensions include inclusive education for children with disabilities, a gender-responsive education system for access, early childhood education and children on the move.

OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
Goal Area 3: Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.							
3.1.3. Number of children who have experienced violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services through UNICEF supported programmes (<i>IOM, UNHCR, UNODC, WHO</i>)	4.4 million	4.9 million	5.4 million	5.9 million	6.6 million	Age, migration status, disability , humanitarian contexts, intervention type, sex	Country offices
3.1.6. Percentage of UNICEF-targeted girls and boys in areas affected by landmines and other explosive weapons provided with relevant prevention and/or survivor-assistance interventions (<i>IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, DPO, UNHCR, United Nations Mine Action Service, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs</i>)	86%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	Age, disability , humanitarian contexts, intervention type, sex	Country offices
3.1.7. Percentage of UNICEF-targeted women, girls and boys in humanitarian contexts provided with risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions to address gender-based violence through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women, UNHCR, WHO</i>)	103%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	Age, disability , intervention type, sex	Country offices
3.2.6. Percentage of UNICEF-targeted unaccompanied and separated girls and boys in humanitarian contexts who were provided with alternative care and/or reunified (<i>IOM, UNDP, UNHCR</i>)	123%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	Age, migration status, disability , sex, recruitment status / children associated with armed groups and forces	Country offices

OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
3.2.7. Number of UNICEF-targeted children, adolescents, parents and caregivers provided with community-based mental health and psychosocial support services (<i>UNESCO, WHO</i>)	12.0 million	12.6 million	13.3 million	13.9 million	14.5 million	Age, disability , humanitarian contexts, intervention type, migration status, sex	Country offices
3.2.8. Percentage of UNICEF-targeted girls and boys in humanitarian contexts who have received individual case management (<i>IOM, UNDP, UNHCR</i>)	79%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	≥80%	Age, disability , migration status, sex	Country offices
3.3.1. Number of girls and women who receive prevention and protection services on female genital mutilation through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNFPA, UN-Women</i>)	159 000	184 000	209 000	234 000	259 000	Age, disability , humanitarian contexts, intervention type	Country offices
3.3.3. Number of adolescent girls receiving prevention and care interventions to address child marriage through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNFPA, UN-Women</i>)	7.6 million	9.3 million	11.5 million	14.1 million	17.4 million	Age, disability , humanitarian contexts, intervention type	Country offices
Goal Area 4: Every child, including adolescents, has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies, and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment.							
4.1.1. Number of people reached with at least basic sanitation services through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNHCR, WHO, World Bank</i>)	0	7.5 million	20.0 million	35.0 million	50 million (cumulative)	Disability , geography (region, urban / rural), service type (with climate-resilient sanitation services), sex	Country offices

OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
4.1.2. Number of people reached with at least basic water that is safe and available when needed, through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNHCR, WHO, World Bank</i>)	0	7.5 million	20.0 million	35.0 million	50 million (cumulative)	Disability , geography (region, urban/rural), service type/level (with climate-resilient sanitation services, previous and new service level), sex, humanitarian contexts	Country offices
4.1.3. Number of people reached with at least basic hygiene services through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNHCR, WHO, World Bank</i>)	0	7.5 million	20.0 million	35.0 million	50 million (cumulative)	Disability , geography (region, urban/rural), humanitarian contexts, sex	Country offices
4.1.6. Number of women and adolescent girls reached whose menstrual health and hygiene needs are addressed through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>UNHCR, UNFPA, UN-Women</i>)	0	6.0 million	16.0 million	28.0 million	40 million (cumulative)	Disability , geography (region), humanitarian contexts	Country offices
4.1.7. Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate drinking water services, through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>IOM, UNHCR</i>)	33.3 million	35.0 million	35.0 million	35.0 million	35.0 million	Disability , geography (region, urban/rural), sex	Country offices
4.1.8. Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate sanitation services, through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>IOM, UNHCR</i>)	8.4 million	10.0 million	12.0 million	15.0 million	15.0 million	Disability , geography (region, urban/rural), sex	Country offices

OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Disaggregation categories	Means of verification
Goal Area 5: Every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free from poverty.							
5.2.3. Number of countries with disability-inclusive social protection programmes with UNICEF support (<i>ILO, UNDP, World Bank, WFP</i>)	55	59	66	71	78	Geography	Country offices
5.2.5. Number of households reached by cash transfers through UNICEF-supported programmes (<i>ILO, UNDP, World Bank, WFP</i>)	168.8 million	172.0 million	175.0 million	178.0 million	181.0 million	Age, disability , migration status	Country offices

Change strategies							
OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Means of verification	
H2. Community engagement, social and behaviour change							
H2.4. Percentage of country offices that meet organizational benchmarks for reducing stigmatization and discrimination towards children, families and communities marginalized due to disabilities, socio-cultural background or migration status	16%	20%	25%	30%	35%	Country offices	
H2.6. Number of countries with at-scale capacity-development programmes for front-line workers that focus on: (a) gender equality (b) disability inclusion	(a) 50 (b) 45	(a) 60 (b) 50	(a) 66 (b) 55	(a) 72 (b) 60	(a) 80 (b) 65	Country offices	
H8. Risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming							
H8.5. Percentage of countries providing disability-inclusive humanitarian programmes and services	55%	60%	65%	70%	75%	Country offices	

OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Means of verification
H9. Systems-strengthening to leave no one behind						
H9.7. Number of countries supported by UNICEF with improved systems for the provision of assistive technology for children with disabilities	19	20	23	26	30	Country offices
H9.10. Percentage of the relevant indicators from the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy accountability framework where UNICEF has met or exceeded the standard (QCPR)	75%	81%	88%	94%	100%	Headquarters

Enablers						
OUTPUT indicators	Baseline	2022 milestone	2023 milestone	2024 milestone	2025 target	Means of verification
E2. Agile and responsive business model						
E2.5. Percentage of offices that are disability inclusive and accessible	50%	63%	75%	88%	100%	Headquarters
E3. Decentralized and empowered internal governance and oversight						
E3.6. Percentage of country offices applying: (a) disability-inclusive and (b) environmental and social standards in UNICEF programmes in line with UNICEF/United Nations standards (QCPR)	(a) 48% (b) 26%	(a) 50% (b) 30%	(a) 55% (b) 42%	(a) 60% (b) 54%	(a) 65% (b) 65%	Country offices
E4. Dynamic and inclusive people and culture						
E4.5. Leadership training: percentage of Global Management Team, representatives and deputy representatives (programme and operations) trained on gender equality, anti-racism and disability inclusion as well as on forms of discrimination, including biases and microaggressions	14%	40%	60%	75%	95%	Headquarters

Annex C:

Recommendations from consultations with children and youth with disabilities

An important part of the development of this document was a series of consultations with young people with disabilities aged 14–25 years. In total, 54 individuals from 14 countries either participated in interviews or focus group discussions or provided individual submissions, including nine short videos and six written submissions. Participants represented a range of ages and genders and provided perspectives of persons with different disabilities, including visual impairment, physical disabilities, health-related issues, hearing loss or deafness, albinism and intellectual disabilities.

Participants shared a range of ideas and recommendations for UNICEF to better support children with disabilities. They included:

- **Implement dedicated and systematic consultations with children and young people with disabilities to reframe and assess UNICEF priorities:**
 - Participants asked for mechanisms to allow them to share their ideas and perspectives. This has the most impact when attention is paid to making processes accessible, creative and participatory, and when participants can see that their ideas are fully considered and, where applicable, are acted on.
 - For consultations to be effective at providing meaningful insight into the priorities of UNICEF and the DIPAS, they need to be regularly scheduled – for instance, once a year in each region – in a low-pressure atmosphere. Holding regular consultations will also allow the input to address global and local demands as they emerge, since they are constantly and rapidly changing.
 - Holding an annual regional consultation requires multiple actors to organize the
- logistics together and to identify the local, national and regional actors to ensure a diversity of participants.
- **Foster and train young leaders and advocates to promote the advancement of the rights of children and adolescents with disabilities:**
 - The participants underlined the benefits of having leaders and advocates of children and adolescents with disabilities who highlight their unique contributions. The training must be delivered in an unpatronizing way and framed to amplify the voices of these young people.
 - Those who have already received this training or who see themselves as advocates should be encouraged to take part in these consultations.
 - The consultation showed the significant existing potential of young adults with disabilities to become advocates for the rights of children with disabilities.
- **Focus on education:**
 - Although UNICEF already focuses on children’s education in many contexts, the participants nonetheless emphasized the importance of advocating for education for children and adolescents with disabilities. In particular, they called for education to be meaningful, participatory, inclusive and accessible. They also articulated the need for schools to promote equal opportunities to develop their strengths.
 - Participants highlighted the lack of reasonable accommodations in the classroom. This calls for UNICEF to focus more attention on addressing this omission.
 - Participants advocated for UNICEF or other organizations to create educational experiences that support communication,

build relationships and bridge divides between persons with a variety of abilities and disabilities. As an example of an easy way to do this, participants suggested teaching sign language and Braille in schools.

■ **Lead approaches to ensure basic needs are met, and foster anti-discrimination practices:**

- Participants called attention to a number of barriers and challenges facing children and adolescents with disabilities in different contexts. These include a failure to meet their basic needs and ensure their rights are realized, but also discrimination, exclusion and stigma. While this presents a significant and intersectoral challenge that UNICEF is already tackling, the DIPAS allows UNICEF to continue its work to push for the realization of children's rights and foster anti-discriminatory practices, with a particular focus on the needs of children and adolescents with disabilities.

■ **Raise awareness of the needs, experiences and gifts of the many children and adolescents with disabilities around the world:**

- There is great diversity in the needs and experiences of children and adolescents with disabilities in different contexts and countries around the world. By supporting efforts to raise awareness of the particular and collective needs of young people with disabilities, their experiences and gifts, UNICEF could go a long way to redressing some of the barriers and discrimination they face.
- With partners, UNICEF also has the potential to challenge the social norms that stigmatize children with disabilities through systematic inclusion in all their initiatives.

■ **Support independent living and the autonomy of children and adolescents with disabilities:**

- In line with previous initiatives and the concerns expressed by the participants, the promotion of independent living must remain a priority for UNICEF, which must amplify its efforts to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to develop their full potential.
- To bring this to fruition, participants recommended that UNICEF and its partners work with their families and communities to promote autonomy and create optimum conditions to be part of the community.

Annex D:

UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action⁸⁶

Strategic result: Children and adolescents with disabilities and their caregivers have inclusive and safe access to humanitarian services and programmes

Commitments	Benchmarks
1. Inclusive needs assessments, planning and monitoring: The needs of children with disabilities and their caregivers are identified and reflected in planning and monitoring	<p>Identification of risks and barriers faced by children with disabilities is included in needs assessments and analysis, and incorporated in humanitarian programme planning and monitoring</p> <p>See 2.3.1 Needs assessments, planning, monitoring and evaluation (CCCs, p.37)</p>
2. Inclusive and safe access to information and services: Children with disabilities and their caregivers have safe access to humanitarian programmes	<p>Physical accessibility for children with disabilities is included in the planning and design of humanitarian services and facilities</p> <p>Accessibility of communication and information for children with disabilities is incorporated in the planning and design of humanitarian programmes</p>
3. Participation: Children with disabilities participate in the design of programmes and in the decisions that affect their lives	<p>Community-based mechanisms/platforms exist for the systematic engagement of children with disabilities</p> <p>See 2.2.7 Community engagement for behaviour and social change (CCCs, p.37)</p>

86 United Nations Children's Fund, Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF, New York, October 2020, <[https://www.unicef.org/media/84086/file/Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/84086/file/Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20(English).pdf)>, accessed 27 June 2022.

Annex E:

UNICEF commitments made at the Global Disability Summit, February 2022⁸⁷

At the second Global Disability Summit, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell's remarks included a pledge "to do more, because children with disabilities need – and have a right to – more".

Overarching commitments

- 1.** UNICEF is committed to become a fully inclusive organization through progressive implementation of UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) in its programmes, operations and culture; and commits to support inter-agency collaboration for disability inclusion UNICEF is committed to work with partner governments and organizations of persons with disabilities, civil society, the UN system, the World Bank and all donors to remove barriers, and to promote inclusive, gender responsive, system-wide and multi-sectoral approaches that enable the full inclusion and meaningful participation of children, adolescent and youth with disabilities and their families in their community and promote the realization of all their rights across regions, humanitarian and development contexts.
- 2.** UNICEF commits to reduce ableism, stigma, discrimination, and other forms of violence against children with disabilities and support their social inclusion:
 - a.** Support the implementation of global resource pack on effective social and behaviour change measurable

approaches to address ableism, stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities

- b.** Support national and sub national stakeholders to develop and implement integrated, evidence-based, multi-level and cross-sectoral strategies to address negative attitudes, beliefs, norms, stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities at individual, family, community and system level
- c.** Support effective measurement of strategies aimed at addressing negative attitudes, beliefs, norms, stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities.

(Key: Reduce discrimination and stigmatization by promoting attitudinal change in communities and across all development cooperation, and addressing intersectionalities)

- 3.** UNICEF commits to generate new evidence through research, evaluation and data for better policies and increased investment for inclusion of children with disabilities:
 - a.** Develop inclusive data collection tools that address the critical issues affecting children with disabilities
 - b.** Provide financial and technical support to at least 40 countries for the collection of statistical data on children with disabilities across several

87 Global Disability Summit, 'Commitments', <<https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/commitments>>, accessed 27 June 2022.

- indicators of child-wellbeing, including through the UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
- c.** Support strengthening of administrative systems to generate data on children with disabilities, by providing financial and technical support for the integration of relevant questions into Education, Child Protection and Social Protection Management Information Systems (MIS), as well as advocate for inclusive Health MIS
 - d.** Support capacity development of national statistical offices, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders in analysis, interpretation, dissemination and use of data on children with disabilities
 - e.** Advocate for the systematic disaggregation and reporting of data on core indicators of child wellbeing, including child-related SDG indicators
 - f.** Support new and innovative projects to foster the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of data on children with disabilities through the Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities, by providing funding, coordination, quality oversight and technical assistance
 - g.** Through a joint effort between UNICEF Office of Research at Innocenti and Programme Group, establish in consultation with the disability research community, OPDs and other development partners, a Global Research Agenda for children with disabilities to generate, communicate and use new research and evidence to guide investment in effective interventions to support the inclusion and rights of children with disabilities
 - h.** Progressively mainstream disability and strengthen OPD participation in research undertaken by the organization in both development and humanitarian settings.
- (Key: Disaggregate data by disability, gender and age in data collection and statistics)*
- 4.** UNICEF commits to:
 - a.** Develop, in consultation with other United Nations agencies and OPDs a methodology to support CRPD-compliant analysis of public budget and public financial management system
 - b.** Further strengthen tracking and publish UNICEF expenditure and efforts for inclusion.

(Key: Commit to tracking expenditure and efforts for inclusion in national accounting and development cooperation)
 - 5.** UNICEF commits to:
 - a.** Together with IDA, strengthen capacity of regional, national and local OPDs, parents' organizations and children and youth with disabilities to effectively engage in Early Childhood Development, Education, Health, Nutrition child protection, social protection, humanitarian programs and reforms
 - b.** Promote meaningful participation of OPDs, parents' organizations and children and youth with disabilities to effectively engage in UNICEF-supported early childhood development, education, nutrition, health, WASH, child protection, social protection and humanitarian programmes and policy reforms, among others.

(Key: Increase consultation and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national policies and systems, and in international cooperation)
 - 6.** UNICEF will work, in partnership with the WHO (and other global, regional, and national actors), to increase the availability

of and access to appropriate assistive technology. This includes working for in-country systems-strengthening to ensure better service provisioning and affordability of AT as well as global advocacy and awareness-raising.

(Key: Support, develop and implement programmes on assistive technology)

7. UNICEF will:

- a.** Generate evidence, provide technical assistance to countries and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue to promote and develop cross-sectoral policies and strategies for the full inclusion and equal participation of children with disabilities, with particular attention to gender equality and intersectional discrimination
- b.** Commit to incorporate a disability-inclusive, human rights-based and person-centred approach to mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, in line with the CRPD, across UNICEF's work in development and humanitarian contexts, fostering multisectoral collaboration to improve access to quality mental health and psychosocial support services; address determinants of mental health and psychosocial well-being and development of children, adolescents and their caregivers; advance de-institutionalization and care reform efforts; and promote meaningful engagement of persons with psychosocial disabilities as partners for strengthened child, adolescent, and caregiver mental health and psychosocial support services, including peer to peer counselling
- c.** Strengthen articulation of inclusive Early childhood development in national policies and strategic plans through promotion of early interventions, stimulation and responsive care across sectors including nutrition

- d.** Support governments and partners to strengthen the inclusion and accessibility of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and infrastructure for persons with disabilities, including in humanitarian contexts.

(Key: Develop cross-sectoral policies and design action plans in partnership with the full range of stakeholders and communities to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of all children and adults with disabilities, with a special focus on gender equality)

8. UNICEF will:

- a.** Support 20 countries to develop and strengthen accessible, comprehensive, and reliable disability identification and needs assessment mechanisms for children and youth with disabilities, including in early childhood, across sectors to inform eligibility, case management and policy planning.
- b.** Develop in cooperation with other agencies and OPDs, guidance based on evidence-based tools and approaches that could support development of CRPD-compliant disability identification, needs assessment and determination mechanisms across the life course, including for early childhood.

(Key: Invest in accessible and disability-inclusive needs assessment, information management systems, and outreach mechanisms that facilitate coordinated support for community inclusion)

9. UNICEF commits to support inclusive and effective child protection systems across humanitarian and development contexts that can prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children with disabilities including prevention of family-child separation, strengthening family-based alternative care in the

community and contribute to ending institutionalization.

(Key: Pursue a progressive shift from segregated institutions towards harmonized and community-based support)

- 10.** UNICEF will invest in capacity development for front-line workers (Including in emergencies) across sectors to support inclusion of children with disabilities and their families including health, nutrition and child protection among others.

(Key: Mobilize resources to ensure that public services are inclusive by actively working towards with the aim of removing physical, institutional, and attitudinal barriers)

- 11.** UNICEF commits to work in close cooperation with OHCHR, IDA, IDDC, the UNRPDP and others to strengthen the knowledge base on achieving community-based support in different contexts.

(Key: Support multi-stakeholder coordination and efforts to strengthen the knowledge base on achieving community-based support in different contexts)

- 12.** UNICEF will:

- a.** Support countries enacting and implementing inclusive family friendly policies, child protection and social protection systems, access to AT and psychosocial support that effectively contribute to full inclusion and meaningful participation of children and youth with disabilities and their families in their communities.
- b.** Generate evidence and develop guidance for costing resources required and financing options to support rapid scale-up of integrated community support systems for children and youth with disabilities in diverse contexts.

(Key: Invest in transforming, developing or scaling up person-centric and gender-responsive community support and care systems that foster choice and autonomy for the diversity of persons with disabilities across the life cycle)

Meaningful engagement of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)

- 13.** UNICEF commits to:

- a.** Support, in cooperation with IDA, the development of youth with disability networks to engage in the disability inclusion movement and in the mainstream youth movement
- b.** Contribute to create enabling environment for dialogue between authorities and OPDs, parents' organizations and youth with disability networks.

(Key: Other)

Inclusive Education

- 14.** UNICEF commits to continue to strengthen knowledge and capacity on disability-inclusive education sector analysis and planning from early childhood education onwards through the development and provision of courses, guidance, and technical support to countries. This includes capacity-building on inclusive education sector analysis and planning to Ministries of Education and support for operationalization of inclusive education sector analysis methodological guidelines.

(Key: Strengthen education systems so that they are inclusive of all)

- 15.** UNICEF commits to increase information and knowledge on inclusive education for systems-strengthening through policymaking and targeted interventions:
- a.** Continue to strengthen evidence and knowledge on barriers to educational

- access and participation, including on learning outcomes, for learners with disabilities
- b.** Continue to advance capacity and knowledge in Universal Design for Learning-based pedagogy, including in digital learning, for teachers and other education stakeholders. This will be done through advancing teacher capacity on inclusive education, strengthening the knowledge landscape on inclusive and accessible digital learning, enhancing accessibility across UNICEF's digital learning initiatives, and promoting the development and availability of accessible learning materials and assessment.
 - c.** Strengthen multiple, flexible pathways to learning and accreditation, and training, that are inclusive of children and adolescents with disabilities who are out of school to enhance and support their transition to further education, training, or employment.

(Key: Other)

Inclusive health

- 16.** UNICEF commits to:
 - a.** Support 15 countries in strengthening disability-inclusive primary health care and health systems by 2026
 - b.** Produce a Practice Guide to drive improvements in availability, accessibility, acceptability, affordability, and quality across UNICEF's health programmes and subsequently provide ongoing technical support to ensure the Guide delivers positive change
 - c.** Support partner governments to integrate persons with disabilities into SRHR/HIV/SGBV programs ensuring equitable access to quality services that are responsive to the intersectional vulnerabilities of mothers, adolescents and children with disabilities that are living with HIV.

(Key: Strengthen inclusive health systems that provide access to general health care and specialized services and programmes related to disability specific health requirements)

- 17.** UNICEF commits to support partner governments to recognize by law the right of all persons with disabilities to the highest attainable standard of health, including protecting persons with disabilities from discrimination access to health services, including where available, insurance and the recognition of legal capacity.

(Key: Review legal frameworks to promote inclusive health systems)

Inclusive livelihoods and social protection

- 18.** UNICEF commits to support inclusive and universal social protection in support of inclusion of children with disabilities and their families across contexts:
 - a.** Increase the number (*TBC*) of country offices working on social protection support disability-inclusive social protection programs and systems by 2026
 - b.** Provide yearly opportunity for staff capacity development through training courses developed in partnership with ILO as well as with the World Bank
 - c.** Develop jointly with ILO and other agencies technical guidance in support of inclusive social protection systems.

(Key: Other)
- 19.** UNICEF commits to promote progressive universal disability-inclusive support including child benefit, family benefit, disability allowance and caregiver benefits for children and adults with disabilities and their families.

(Key: Increase coverage of social protection for persons with disabilities,

advancing the realization of universal social protection)

- 20.** UNICEF will develop, with the World Bank and IDA, a methodology to assess costs of disability for children with disabilities and their families in different contexts and develop guidance in factoring disability related costs in child poverty measurement.
(Key: Improve the adequacy and accessibility of social protection schemes for persons with disabilities)

- 21.** UNICEF commits to make disability inclusion an integral part of shock-responsive social protection systems, for more inclusive emergency preparedness, response and recovery.
(Key: Make disability inclusion an integral part of shock-responsive social protection systems, for more inclusive emergency preparedness, response, and recovery)

Situations of conflict and crisis, including a focus on climate change

- 22.** UNICEF commits to strengthen inclusive needs assessment, planning and monitoring; and deliver inclusive and safe access to information and services-by building capacity of UNICEF staff and partners, including by producing a toolkit on disability-inclusive humanitarian action and through training of emergency staff and disability inclusion focal points.
(Key: Make humanitarian action inclusive of persons with disabilities throughout the humanitarian programme cycle)

- 23.** UNICEF commits to lead inter-agency coordination on strengthening disability-inclusive humanitarian action, including the Disability Reference Group and efforts to improve disability inclusion in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs).
(Key: Strengthen capacity on a rights-based approach to disability-inclusive humanitarian action including in situations of armed conflict)

- 24.** UNICEF commits to strengthen participation by persons with disabilities-with a focus during this next 4 years on strengthening capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) on humanitarian action and building links between OPDs and UNICEF staff and partners engaged in emergency preparedness and response.
(Key: Build strong partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs))

- 25.** UNICEF commits to;
- a.** Strengthen evidence on the impact of climate change (including disasters) on children and young persons with disabilities and on effective approaches for inclusive climate change response
 - b.** Support engagement of children and young people in climate action, through facilitating their access to educational systems and material on sustainability and climate change (including disaster risk reduction), opportunities for participation in sustainability activities and engagement in policy dialogue.
(Key: Include persons with disabilities in climate action)

Annex F:

Full list of people consulted during the development of the DIPAS

Technical Working Group

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Strategic Advisory Group

Special thanks to June Kunugi and Carla Haddad Mardini for co-chairing this group of external stakeholders, and to the following participants: Isabelle De Muysers, Paul Fife, Veronica Forcignano, Penny Innes, Andrea Cole, Sarah Lister, Gopal Mitra, Maria Soledad Cisternas, Vladimir Cuk and Elizabeth Lockwood.

Key informant interviews

Ola Abualghaib, Carlos Javier Aguilar, Henriette Ahrens, Julie Bara, Philippe Cori, Alexandre Cote, Helene Cron, Vidhya Ganesh, Mark Hereward, Zeinab Hijazi, Priscilla Idele, Penny Innes, Ratna Jhaveri, Kristel Juriloo, Afshan Khan, Mathias Kristoffersen Egeland, Ani Kulkarni, Khaled Mahmud, Asma Maladwala, Lyndsay Rae McLaurin, Riikka Mikkola, Gopal Mitra, Sreerupa Mitra, Mina Mojtahedi, Yetneberesh Nigussie Molla, Kelly Ann Naylor, Samuel Kweku Ocran, Hanne Pedersen, Vincent Petit, James Powell, Meritxell Relano, Lucy Richardson, Lauren Rumble, Lieve Sabbe, Nora Shabani, Aferdita Spahiu, Hannan Sulieman, Wongani Grace Taulo, Sally Vet, Sanjay Wijesekera, Cornelius Williams and Natalia Winder-Rossi



DISABILITY INCLUSION STARTS WITH YOU, WITH ME, WITH ALL OF US

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