UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY RIGHTS

What disability means • How the CRPD changes the story • How to use your rights

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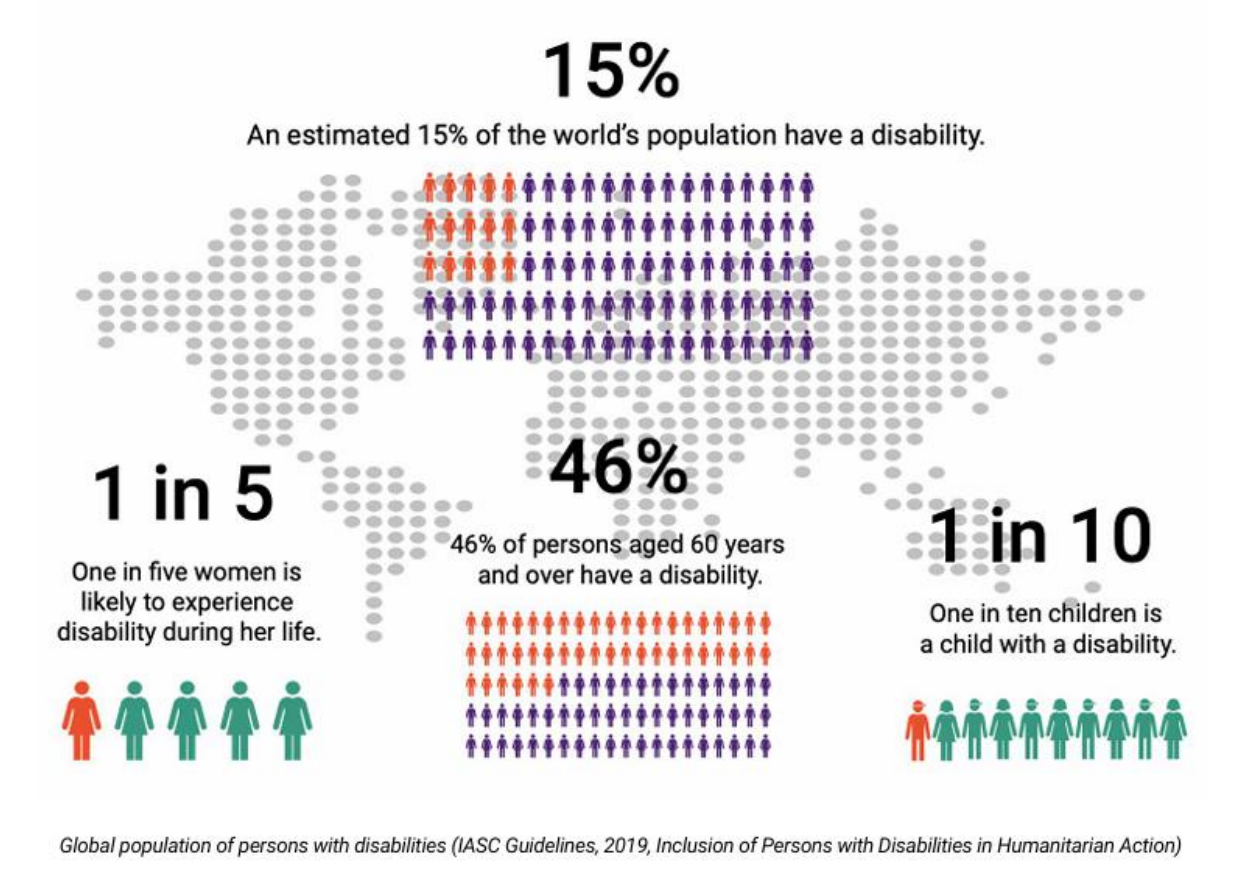
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DIGNITY
All persons with disabilities have inherent worth.

VOICE
Your experience matters.

POWER
You can help shape change.

Disability is part of human diversity



Global population of persons with disabilities (IASC Guidelines, 2019, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action)

DISABILITY IS DIVERSE

Visible or non-visible • permanent, temporary or episodic

ATTITUDES CAN DISABLE

Stigma, low expectations and speaking for people restrict opportunity.

ATTITUDES CAN ENABLE

Respect, listening and confidence in capability open participation.

A barrier may be a staircase, a rule, inaccessible information or an assumption.

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Disability inclusion in SIDS

SMALL SYSTEMS

Few specialized providers can leave major gaps when one service is unavailable.

TRANSPORT & GEOGRAPHY

Inter-island travel and limited accessible transport multiply barriers.

DATA & CAPACITY

Small datasets and competing public-service demands can slow planning.

COST & PROCUREMENT

Assistive technology and specialist support almost always needs to be imported and expensive.

INFORMAL NETWORKS

Relationships may unlock solutions, but can make people reluctant to challenge exclusion.

RESILIENCE

Emergencies expose inaccessible warnings, shelters and recovery systems.

Small scale can also be an advantage: decision-makers are closer and practical solutions can spread quickly.

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The CRPD is not about “special rights”

SAME RIGHTS

Persons with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.



REMOVE BARRIERS

The Convention explains what must change so those rights can be enjoyed equally.

Dignity • autonomy • non-discrimination • accessibility • participation

Three concepts change the story

01

PARADIGM SHIFT

From objects of care to subjects with rights.

02

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

From a person-only problem to interaction with barriers.

03

FULL INCLUSION

From presence to equal and effective participation.

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Paradigm shift

Persons with disabilities are not viewed as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection.

SUBJECTS WITH RIGHTS

Claim rights
Make choices
Direct their own lives
Participate in decisions that affect them

"Nothing about us without us."

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Definition of disability

NOT FIXED

Disability is an evolving concept rather than a fixed condition.

NOT ONLY IN THE BODY

Disability is not a circumstance that lives only in the physical body.

CREATED IN INTERACTION

A complex interaction between the person and the society in which the person lives.

The definition changes where we look for the solution.

There is no single way to be human

Human diversity includes different ways of:

MOVING

Walking, wheeling and navigating

SEEING

Different visual experiences

HEARING

Different ways of receiving sound

THINKING

Different cognitive experiences

COMMUNICATING

Speech, sign, writing and technology

PARTICIPATING

Different supports and approaches

Difference is ordinary. Exclusion is not inevitable.

Full inclusion and participation

Disability can be minimized, or effectively nullified, when broader society makes changes, adaptations and interventions.

ACCESSIBILITY

Design environments and information for access.

ACCOMMODATION

Respond to an individual barrier.

PARTICIPATION

Include persons with disabilities in decisions.

Inclusion is not fitting into an unchanged system. Inclusion changes the system.

What is disability?

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

Change attitudes and approach first!



CLEARING A PATH FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CLEARS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE

The question is not:

“How can the person overcome the barrier?”

Ask instead:

“What can we change so everyone can participate?”

ACCESSIBILITY OPENS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE

People bring different experiences and circumstances

BODY & SENSES

Mobility, vision, hearing and health-related experiences

LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

Age, education, income and access to support

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Family networks, community ties and isolation

These factors differ from person to person. They do not determine anyone's worth or rights.

The environment can create or remove barriers

PHYSICAL & INFORMATION

Buildings, transport, signs, forms and digital information

LAW & POLICY

Rules, enforcement and whether rights are protected

ATTITUDES & CULTURE

Assumptions, stigma, respect and openness to change

SERVICES & SUPPORT

Inclusive education, health care, assistive technology and community services

Changing the environment changes opportunities for participation.

Disability emerges through interaction with barriers

PERSONAL FACTORS

Individual experiences and support needs

+

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Attitudes, systems, services and accessibility

INTERACTION SHAPES PARTICIPATION

Four approaches to disability

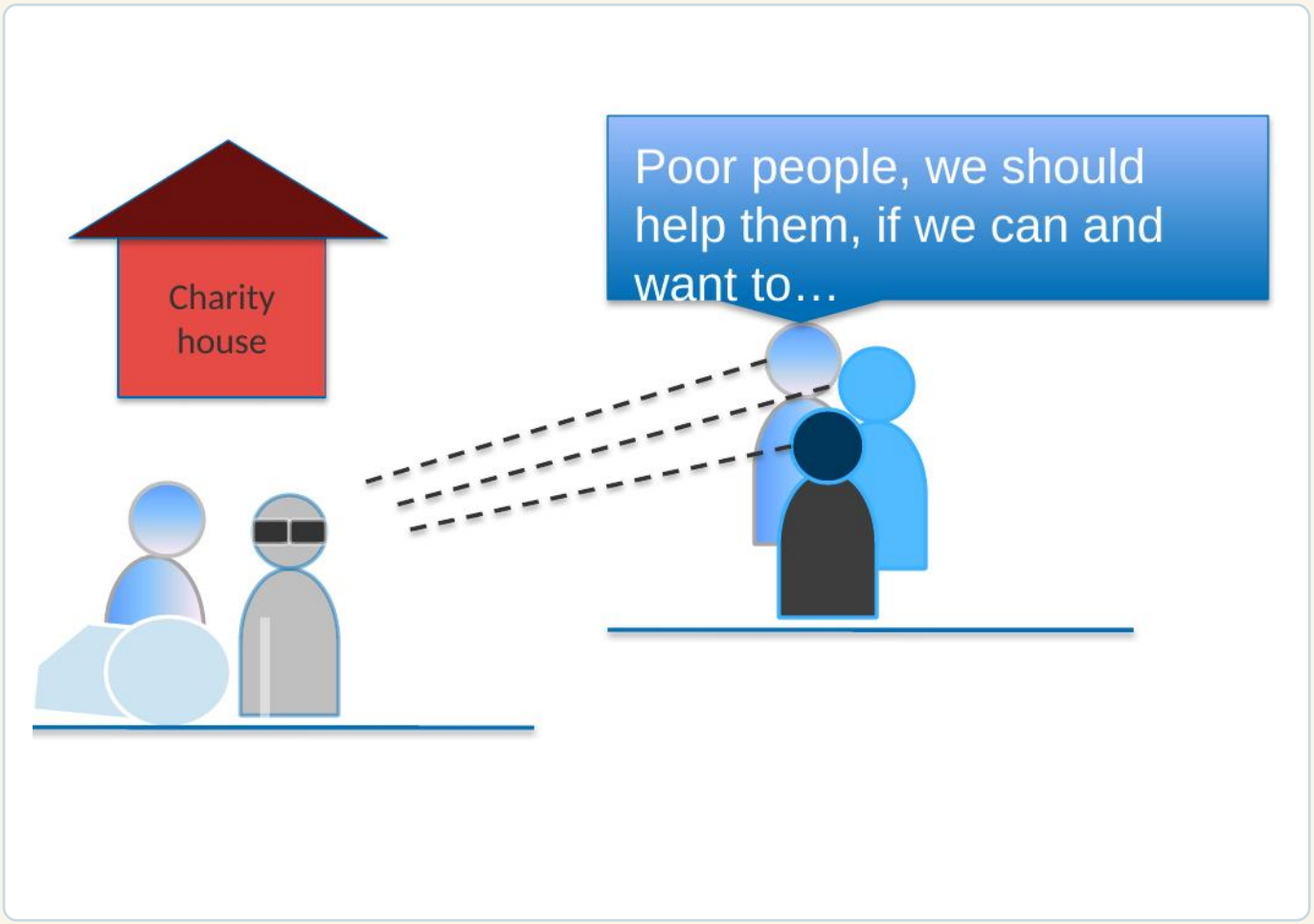
CHARITY Help when others choose

MEDICAL Fix or rehabilitate the person

SOCIAL Remove barriers

HUMAN RIGHTS **Guarantee rights, equality and accountability**

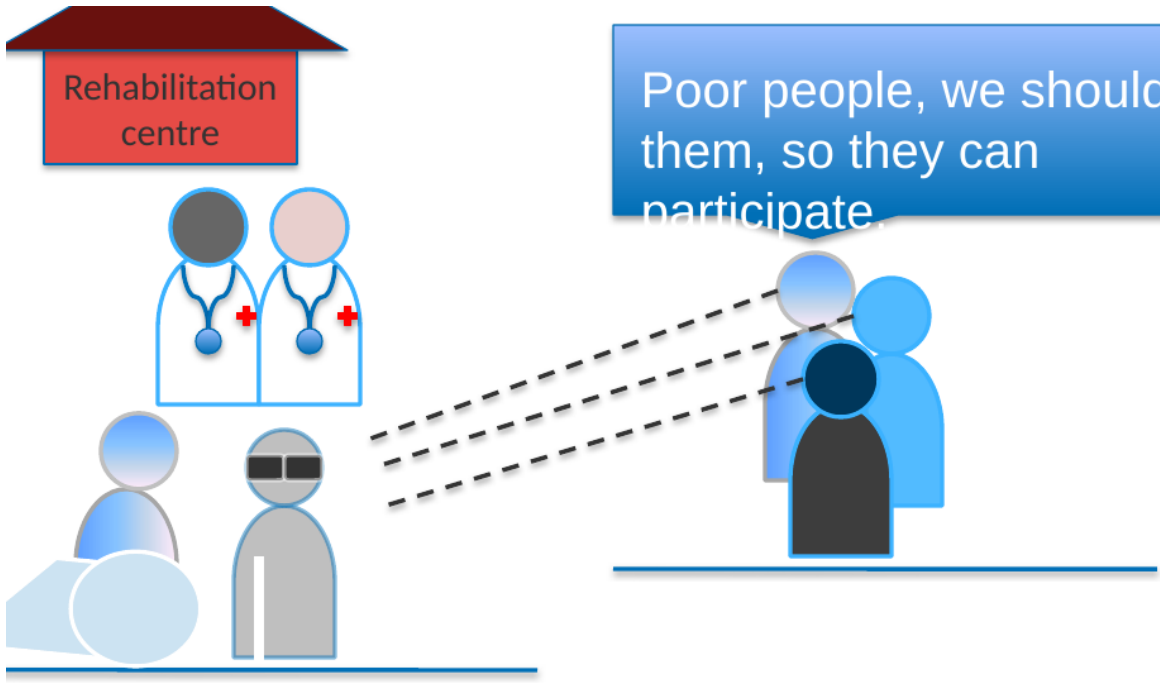
Charity approach



Help depends on the choice of the giver, not on an enforceable right.

EMPOWERMENT SHIFT
From gratitude to entitlement

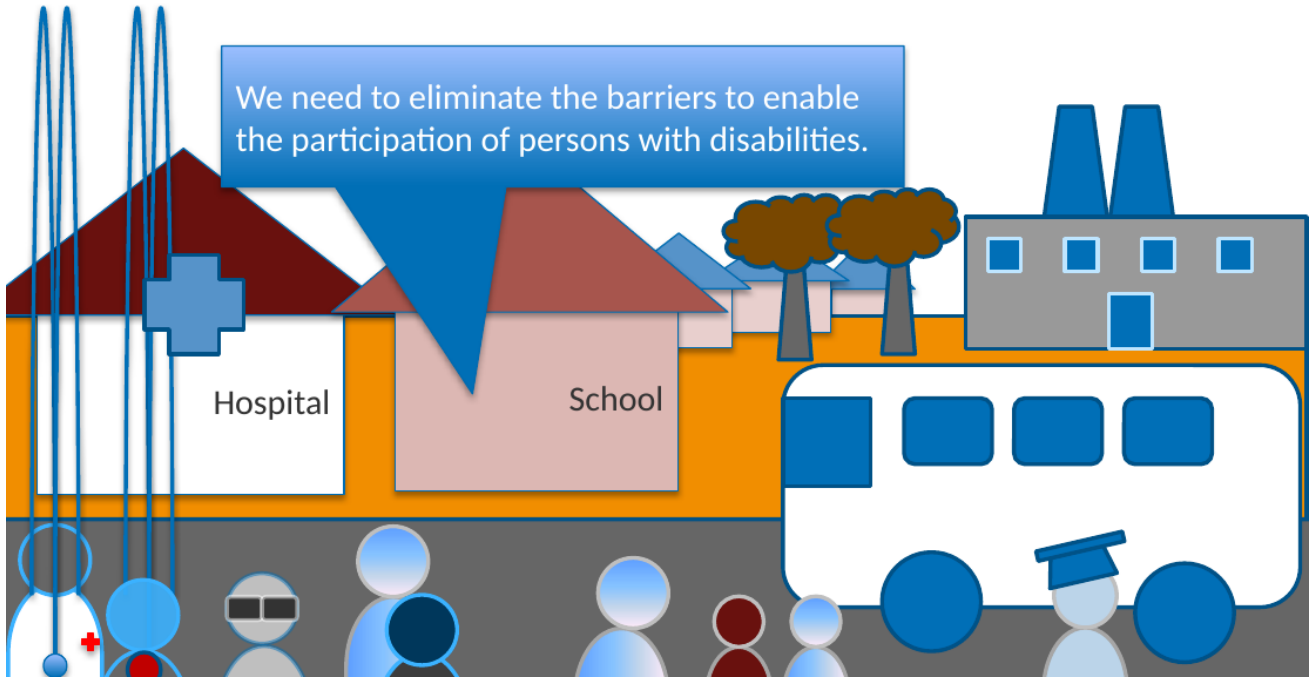
Medical approach



Health care can support people. It should not become a condition for dignity or participation.

EMPOWERMENT SHIFT
From being “fixed” to choosing support

Social approach



When environments and systems change, participation changes.

EMPOWERMENT SHIFT
The environment is changeable

The social approach in practice

BUILDINGS

Step-free routes • accessible toilets

INFORMATION

Braille • Easy Read • captions

SYSTEMS

Flexible methods • accessible procedures

ATTITUDES

Respect capability and choice

The environment is designed by people. It can be redesigned.

Human rights approach



Persons with disabilities are rights-holders, decision-makers and leaders.

POWER SHIFT
Nothing about us without us

From approach to action

RECOGNIZE	REMOVE	RESPOND	REPRESENT	REVIEW
A person has a right, not a need for kindness.	Change the barrier, not the person.	Provide accessibility and accommodation.	Persons with disabilities shape decisions.	Did participation actually improve?

The goal is equal participation in practice.

The CRPD: a practical overview

PURPOSE

Full and equal enjoyment of all human rights

PRINCIPLES

Dignity • autonomy • equality • participation • accessibility

RIGHTS

Civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights

OBLIGATIONS

Respect • protect • fulfil • consult • monitor

The Convention must be read as a whole. Rights are universal, indivisible and interconnected.

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How to read the CRPD

FOUNDATION

Articles 1–4 explain the purpose, key terms, principles and State obligations.

CROSS-CUTTING DUTIES

Articles 5–9 require equality, inclusion, awareness and accessibility across all rights.

SUBSTANTIVE RIGHTS

Articles 10–30 explain how human rights apply in daily life.

IMPLEMENTATION

Articles 31–40 address data, cooperation, national implementation and international monitoring.

The articles work together. Accessibility, non-discrimination and participation are not isolated topics.

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Articles 1–4: the foundation

ARTICLE 1 • PURPOSE

Promote equal enjoyment of human rights and respect for dignity.

ARTICLE 2 • DEFINITIONS

Key terms include discrimination, reasonable accommodation and accessible communication.

ARTICLE 3 • PRINCIPLES

Dignity, choice, equality, accessibility and participation guide every right.

ARTICLE 4 • GENERAL OBLIGATIONS

Governments must act, remove barriers and consult persons with disabilities and OPDs.

Articles 5–9: equality and access

ARTICLE 5 • EQUALITY

Equal protection, non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation.

ARTICLE 6 • WOMEN

Address discrimination affecting women and girls with disabilities.

ARTICLE 7 • CHILDREN

Children have equal rights and must be heard in decisions affecting them.

ARTICLE 8 • AWARENESS

Challenge stereotypes and recognize capabilities and contributions.

ARTICLE 9 • ACCESSIBILITY

Remove barriers to buildings, transport, information and services.

Without equality and accessibility, the remaining rights cannot be exercised effectively.

EMBEDDED VIDEO

Article 6: women and girls with disabilities



Article 7: children with disabilities



EQUAL RIGHTS

Children with disabilities hold the same rights as other children.

BEST INTERESTS

A primary consideration in decisions affecting the child.

VOICE

Views must be heard with age- and disability-appropriate support.

Articles 10–17: life, liberty and integrity

10 • LIFE

Equal right to life.

11 • RISK & EMERGENCIES

Safety and inclusion in disasters and emergencies.

12 • EQUAL RECOGNITION

Equal legal capacity and support to make decisions.

13 • JUSTICE

Accessible courts and fair procedures.

14 • LIBERTY

Disability alone cannot justify detention.

15 • FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

Freedom from torture and non-consensual experimentation.

16 • FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

Protection from violence, exploitation and abuse.

17 • PERSONAL INTEGRITY

Respect for physical and mental integrity.

Articles 18–23: autonomy and community

18 • MOVEMENT & NATIONALITY

Freedom of movement, nationality and identity.

19 • COMMUNITY LIVING

Choice of where and with whom to live, with community support.

20 • PERSONAL MOBILITY

Accessible mobility and assistive devices.

21 • EXPRESSION & INFORMATION

Accessible information and communication in preferred formats.

22 • PRIVACY

Privacy of personal and health information.

23 • HOME & FAMILY

Equal rights to family life, relationships and parenting.

Articles 24–26: services that enable participation

ARTICLE 24 • EDUCATION

Inclusive education, accessible teaching and individual support.

ARTICLE 25 • HEALTH

Equal access to quality health care and informed consent.

ARTICLE 26 • HABILITATION & REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation and support that enable independence and participation.

Articles 27–30: livelihood and participation

ARTICLE 27 • WORK

Fair access to jobs, recruitment and advancement, with reasonable accommodation.

ARTICLE 28 • STANDARD OF LIVING

Adequate living conditions and access to social protection.

ARTICLE 29 • POLITICAL & PUBLIC LIFE

Accessible voting and equal participation in public decisions.

ARTICLE 30 • CULTURE, RECREATION & SPORT

Equal access to culture, recreation and sport.

Articles 31–33: making implementation possible

ARTICLE 31 • DATA

Use disability data to identify gaps and improve services, protecting privacy.

ARTICLE 32 • INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Make development cooperation inclusive and accessible.

ARTICLE 33 • NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

Government coordination, independent monitoring and meaningful OPD participation.

Articles 34–40: international monitoring

34 • COMMITTEE

Independent experts monitor implementation of the Convention.

35 • REPORTS

Governments report on progress and challenges.

36 • REVIEW

The Committee reviews reports and recommends improvements.

37–38 • COOPERATION

States and UN bodies cooperate with the Committee.

39 • COMMITTEE REPORT

The Committee reports on its work.

40 • CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES

States meet to discuss progress on implementation.

Some articles must be read across every right

ARTICLE 5

Is there discrimination? Is accommodation needed?

ARTICLE 6

How are women and girls with disabilities affected differently?

ARTICLE 7

Are children heard and supported to participate?

ARTICLE 8

Are stereotypes and harmful assumptions shaping the outcome?

ARTICLE 9

Is the environment, information or service accessible?

ARTICLE 12

Is the person recognized as the decision-maker, with support if wanted?

ARTICLE 19

Does the person have real choice and community-based support?

ARTICLE 21

Can the person receive information and communicate in a preferred form?

Eight principles guide every right

- Dignity & autonomy
- Non-discrimination
- Full participation
- Respect for difference
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality of women and men
- Children's evolving capacities

What rights look like in daily life

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Accessible information, buildings and communication

EDUCATION

Inclusive learning, support and accommodation

COMMUNITY LIFE

Choice, mobility and participation in community decisions

WORK & LIVELIHOOD

Fair recruitment, accommodation and equal opportunity

SAFETY & DIGNITY

Freedom from violence, neglect, exploitation and degrading treatment

VOICE

Express preferences and take part in decisions that affect you