



Strengthening the System: Foundations for a Disability Inclusive United Nations

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Acknowledgments

This study was designed to support an evidence-based approach to the preparation of a policy, action plan, and accountability framework to strengthen both system-wide accessibility and the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities across the operations of the UN System and is the result of a collaborative effort between the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The research team was led by Principal Investigator Valerie Karr, PhD, from the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts Boston and included Megan McCloskey, Anne Hayes, Callie Brusegaard, Ashley van Edema, Katherine Aronson-Ensign, Abigail Green, Jennifer Mudawar, and Elena Taborda. Additional research assistance was provided by students at the University of Washington supervised by Megan McCloskey, including Colin Newton, Zu Zinyang Tan, Shirlee Sophia Watson, Alicia Jun, Mekdes Abate, Shannon Pierson, and Anne Basamania. All figures and infographics were developed by Ashley van Edema.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	2
Acronyms.....	4
1. Introduction	7
2. Findings and Recommendations.....	8
3. Data and Analysis.....	14
3.1 Policy Development and Strategic Planning.....	14
3.1.1 System-wide mandates on disability inclusion	15
3.1.2 Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in UN Policies	16
3.1.3 Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in UN Strategic Planning	23
3.1.4 Disability Inclusion in Development Assistance Frameworks	25
3.1.5 Training on Inclusive Policies and Strategies and Commitment of Resources .	28
3.1.6 OPD Engagement in Policy and Strategy Development	30
3.2 Programme Development and Implementation.....	32
3.2.1 Disability-Inclusive Programming.....	32
3.2.2 Supporting Advocacy and Disability Awareness Programming	37
3.2.3 Building Stakeholder Capacity and Member State Engagement.....	37
3.2.4 Programmatic Accessibility.....	38
3.2.5 Programmatic Resource Allocation	39
3.2.6 Engagement of Persons with Disabilities in UN Programming	40
3.3. Inclusive Human Resources Policies and Practices.....	42
3.3.1 Human Resources Policies.....	42
3.3.2 Recruitment and Retention of Persons with Disabilities.....	47
3.3.3 Reasonable Accommodation	52
3.3.4 Training and technical capacity	53
3.3.5 Accessibility	55
3.3.6 Training and Management Support	58
Annexes:.....	60

Acronyms

CCISUA	Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System
CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
COAR	Country Office Annual Reports
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
DET	Disability Equality Training
DFID	Department of for International Development of the United Kingdom
DM	Department of Management DPKO Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRF	Disability Rights Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GrAF	Greening and Accessibility Fund
HLCM	High-Level Committee on Management
HMIC	High- and Middle-Income Country
IASG	Inter-Agency Support Group
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDA	Disability Alliance
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the ILO
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LIC	Low-Income Country
LMICs	Low-and Middle-Income Countries
MoH	Ministry of Health
MPTFs	Multi-Partner Trust Funds
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations

OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
RSS	Relief and Social Services
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nation
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAID	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTs	United Nations Country Teams
UNDAFs	United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPBSO	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
UNPRPD	United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
USICD	United States International Council on Disability
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

1. Introduction

An estimated 1 billion people—15 percent of the global population—experience disability, and 1 in 5 of these individuals experience significant disabilities.¹ As a group, persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty than their peers, to face food insecurity and poorer health outcomes, to be denied educational and employment opportunities, and to experience violence.² Persons with disabilities must contend with inaccessible physical environments and transportation, the unavailability of assistive devices and technologies, non-adapted means of communication, and limited access to services; all of which present discriminatory barriers to their social and economic inclusion, human rights enjoyment, and protection from situations of risk and humanitarian crises.³

Advancing the human rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in global development and humanitarian action are thus essential. The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) affirms the inherent dignity and worth of persons with disabilities and calls for urgent action to address the impacts of exclusion, discrimination, and segregation. The CRPD represents a comprehensive international commitment to respect the rights of persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including civil, political, social, and economic, and to their protection in situations of conflict and humanitarian crises. In order to realize the full inclusion of persons with disabilities into all international cooperation efforts, it embraces the three foundational pillars of the UN System: to advance respect for human rights, ensure peace and freedom from violence, and promote international development.⁴

Recognizing the need to combat discrimination and integrate the rights of persons with disabilities into all aspects of UN operations, the Executive Committee of the Secretary General adopted decision 2018/20 on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The decision called for a review of the Organization's operations to inform development of a system-wide policy, action plan and

¹ World Health Organisation and World Bank, World Report on Disability. (2011).

² Id. It is widely acknowledged that disability and poverty are linked, with disability increasing the risk of poverty due to reduced access to employment, lower wages, and higher costs of living, among other things.

³ Id.; see also World Bank, Disability Inclusion, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability> (last updated 28 March 2018).

⁴ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Preamble, Art. 32. (2006).

accountability framework addressing issues across various areas of the Organization's operations, including mandate, capacity, resources, systems, operational guidance and institutional-support structures.

The review was coordinated by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and conducted by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the support of the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development at the University of Massachusetts. A total of 40 UNSDG entities and a sample of 40 UNCTs were surveyed, and additional consultations were undertaken with HLCM, DM, DPKO, UN staff, including those with disabilities, and representative organizations of persons with disabilities. Detailed information on the methodology used during the study is available in Annex A.

The review provides a baseline assessment of challenges and opportunities to strengthen the UN system's capacity to promote the rights of persons with disabilities across its three pillars.⁵ It also offers recommendations on how to support system-wide actions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities throughout UN operations. Findings and recommendations are discussed in the sections below.

2. Findings and Recommendations

The Executive Committee of the Secretary-General recognized the significant scope for further action by the UN on strengthening accessibility and mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities. The findings of the review support this, showing that despite important progress that has been made, clear gaps in accessibility and *disability inclusion*⁶ remain *across all pillars of the UN work at all levels*⁷.

⁵ Research for this study was conducted among the members of the UN Sustainable Development Group and a representative group of UN Country Teams, all of which are identified in Annex A. Much of the assessment below is thus limited to UN operations to promote implementation of the CRPD and support inclusive development. Further research into inclusion within UN activities to maintain peace and security, particularly within humanitarian operations, would be important to meet the goals of the baseline assessment.

⁶ **Disability inclusion** – This addresses the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, the promotion of their rights, and the consideration of disability-related perspectives in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

⁷ **Across all pillars of the UN work at all levels** – This includes programming and institutional areas, at country, regional and global levels.

The recommendations emanating from the review seek to inform the content of the system-wide policy action plan and accountability framework particularly in the context of the UN reforms, and in support of the 2030 Agenda and its commitment to leave no one behind, with the aim to provide a foundation for lasting and transformative change on disability inclusion in the work of the UN.

MAIN FINDING

Consistent or systematic mainstreaming of accessibility and disability inclusion remains limited across all pillars of the UN work at all levels:

- Existing inclusive practices are inconsistent and episodic, showing a lack of coherent or comprehensive approaches.
- While multiple entities have relevant and specific responsibilities, no one entity has the dedicated capacity and explicit authority to actively facilitate, support and oversee progress made in the mainstreaming of accessibility and disability inclusion.
- Existing disability-specific inter-agency and interdepartmental networks and initiatives, such as the IASG-CRPD⁸, have not had the required impact on mainstreaming disability inclusion in the work of the UN.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Key challenges for system-wide mainstreaming of disability inclusion across all pillars of the UN work at all levels were identified in the following areas:

□ **Top- level Leadership**

- Top-level leadership to promote disability inclusion remains insufficient and inconsistent, despite having been identified as a key component to advance disability inclusion within the system.
- The lack of engagement and commitment by senior management results in and is reflected through the limited impact of existing efforts within entities and at inter-agency and interdepartmental networks, including the IASG-CRPD.

⁸ **The Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (IASG-CRPD)** was established in 2006 by the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB), with the objective of promoting compliance with the Principles of the Convention and increasing the scale and effectiveness of the United Nations' involvement in disability issues. It comprises members from across the UN Secretariat, Funds and Programmes, Specialized Agencies, and other entities, and engages with representative organizations of persons with disabilities as observers. The Group is served by a co-secretariat (DESA-OHCHR) and rotating chair (currently UN Women).

□ **Capacity**

- Among UN staff, there is a lack of understanding of how to mainstream disability. Similarly, there is a general lack of incentive to and knowledge on how to build capacity to include disability in their work.
- There is a lack of coherence among resources and tools to build capacity on disability inclusion, and no system for access to and dissemination of resources. Having dedicated training or staff with knowledge/expertise on disability rights were identified as important mechanisms to advance inclusion.

□ **Inclusive programs and plans**

- With a few positive exceptions, UN entities minimally address persons with disabilities in their strategic planning and organizational policies. Persons with disabilities are often implicitly referred to under the category of marginalized or vulnerable groups or left out altogether.
- Few entities have disability-specific plans or policies to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in their work.
- Guidance for preparation of UNDAFs, Common Country Analyses and Joint Programmes do not identify disability inclusion as a strategic priority or measure progress made on disability inclusion. As a result, few UNDAFs substantially integrate disability issues, and few UNCTs work on disability inclusion.

□ **Accessibility**

- Efforts to make the UN accessible at all levels are insufficient and incomplete. Focused on physical accessibility of UN premises and disability-specific events, efforts do not consistently extend to facilities, services or operations outside of headquarters or to mainstream events or programming; nor do they recognize the diverse barriers faced by persons with disabilities, including barriers to information and communication.

□ **Human Resources**

- The majority of UN entities do not have formal policies or strategies to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities in recruitment, retention and career advancement. Measures that do exist, such as the SG Bulletin, are limited in scope and are not being effectively implemented or tracked.

- Few entities have allocated resources for reasonable accommodation⁹, and there is inconsistency in how employees with disabilities are provided with these.
- Existing employment benefits in the UN system do not cover disability-related additional costs for staff with disabilities.

□ **Funding & Procurement**

- There are insufficient resources dedicated to disability inclusion in both disability-specific and mainstream activities. With only two exceptions, UN entities do not track when and how resources are allocated to disability inclusion.
- Few entities utilize procurement processes that take into account accessibility or other disability related requirements.
- Existing funding initiatives like the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), have limited resources, scope and capacity to support disability inclusion at country, regional and global levels.

□ **Participation**

- Efforts to promote the participation of persons with disabilities at all UN levels, and in particular in the development and implementation of mainstream organizational policies and strategies, are limited and inconsistent.
- Intersectionality and the diversity of persons with disabilities are hardly taken into account within mainstream or disability-specific policies.

□ **Accountability**

- There are no mechanisms to ensure accountability for the full and effective mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in efforts undertaken.
- There are no consistent or systematic tools to measure progress on disability inclusion, including data on the situation of persons with disabilities.

⁹ **Reasonable accommodation** refers to the necessary and appropriate individual modifications or adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights on an equal basis with others.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To be successful in strengthening accessibility and mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities across the UN, the **policy, action plan and accountability framework** should:
 - Cover and ensure active engagement of all levels of the UN, including across the three pillars, in institutional setup and programming, and at country, regional and global levels, in line with the enhanced structures and processes proposed in the UN reforms;
 - Have endorsement and oversight from the highest levels of the UN, in particular sustained support, commitment and ownership from the Secretary-General; and
 - Ensure the meaningful participation of representative organizations of persons with disabilities as a core criterion and benchmark for the design, implementation and monitoring of all UN work, including in its development and implementation.

- A new office should be established under the leadership of a dedicated Assistant Secretary-General with explicit authority, responsibility and expertise to actively facilitate, support and oversee the successful implementation of the system-wide policy, action plan and accountability framework.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- The **policy, action plan and accountability framework**, with recognition of their respective roles and functions, and in the context of the programmatic and operational areas outlined below, should:

Accountability

- Introduce common standards for disability-inclusive practices.
- Introduce mechanisms to enhance oversight of indicators for monitoring and evaluation with clear timelines and responsibilities for implementation.

Leadership

- Develop measures to ensure the strengthened and visible commitment of leadership to promote disability inclusion and enhance their ownership of increased efforts to promote disability inclusion. Commitment and

ownership should originate at the highest levels and be reflected throughout the hierarchy of the UN.

Capacity

- Ensure that all UN staff have the capacity to promote disability inclusion in their work to achieve the 2030 agenda and its commitment to leave no one behind, and to foster compliance with the CRPD.
- Develop an approach to capacity building that ensures quality and consistency of tools and resources across the system.
- Ensure that all UN entities have a designated disability advisor and focal points.

Accessibility

- Develop a strategic approach to accessibility and universal design to ensure that all efforts of the UN are accessible to persons with disabilities, addressing barriers in the built environment, information, communications, technology, services, procurement, and conferences and meetings.

Human Resources

- Review current human resources policies and practices to eliminate discrimination and barriers at all stages of employment and ensure consistent provision of reasonable accommodation.
- Conduct proactive outreach to candidates with disabilities.

Funding, Budgeting and Procurement

- Commit sufficient resources to support disability inclusion in a meaningful manner, accompanied by disability markers to track when and how resources are allocated to disability inclusion.
- Call for the creation of reasonable accommodation reserves/funds across the UN system.
- Develop and implement common standards and procedures for disability-inclusive procurement.

Inclusive Programming and Planning

- Promote disability-inclusive Results-Based Management at all levels. Entities should commit to measurable outcomes with respect to the inclusion of persons with disabilities to be able to assess progress both in mainstream and disability-specific efforts.
- Recognize inclusion of persons with disabilities within UNDAFs and Common Country Analyses as a strategic priority.

- Designate a Disability Officer in DOCO to support the work of Resident Coordinators to mainstream disability inclusion.

3. Data and Analysis

Respecting the rights of persons with disabilities and demonstrating commitment to their inclusion is important, not only for the direct impact on the UN System and those it serves, but also because of the respective roles of UN entities as trusted conveners, technical advisors, knowledge brokers, and employers. UN entities are in a position to leverage these roles to further the mandate of the CRPD and ensure persons with disabilities are able to enjoy the rights and freedoms to which they are entitled. For any organisational system to function effectively, it needs to promote accountability for decisions made and actions taken; ensure that staff and stakeholders have the skills and knowledge they need; facilitate communication, cooperation, and shared purposes across its members; and allocate the resources necessary to accomplish its objectives.

The following sections analyse how consistently the UN system, including the Secretariat, agencies, funds, programmes, and UNCTs, reflect these principles from common-system approaches to entity-specific policymaking and programme development and operations in the field.

3.1 Policy Development and Strategic Planning¹⁰

Policies help determine entity-wide goals and set forth an external and formal commitment to different issues related to development. Strategies complement these policies by specifying how these goals will be achieved. Both are critical tools and can be fundamental drivers of change. Inclusion in policy and strategic planning is a critical aspect of ensuring persons with disabilities are not left behind in the realization of human rights and the global agenda. Persons with disabilities should/must be included in policies in two ways: disability-specific policies and/or inclusion of disability in general policies and planning.

¹⁰ The policies discussed in this section relate to entity operations with respect to human rights and development. Human resources policies and policies related to employment of persons with disabilities are discussed in section 3.4 below.

This section provides findings related to disability-specific policies and strategies as well as findings related to inclusion of persons with disabilities within UN entities' general policies and strategies.¹¹

3.1.1 System-wide mandates on disability inclusion

There is currently no mechanism in place to effectively coordinate system-wide policies and approaches to inclusion of persons with disabilities in UN operations and activities. The Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (IASG-CRPD) was established in 2006 by the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) with the objective of promoting compliance with the CRPD and increasing the scale and effectiveness of the United Nations' involvement in disability issues. One of its principal functions is to "advise and assist in the mainstreaming of the general principles of the Convention" in the work of the UN.¹² Yet an unclear leadership and staffing structure, limited mandate, and lack of a clear accountability mechanism have curbed the potential effectiveness of the group. There has been little engagement by the UN's senior management in its work, and overburdened staff and frequent turnover leave the group with reduced ability to promote or follow through on long-term structural change. In part as a consequence, the IASG's outputs, including guidance on integrating disability inclusion within UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), have not been widely disseminated or taken up.

Likewise, the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), which plays an important role in coordinating efforts to improve the coherence and efficiency of UN operations, reported that its networks are not currently promoting common approaches to address the rights of persons with disabilities. Neither the Finance and Budget Network nor the Procurement Network have promoted any policies to track resources allocated to disability inclusion or have promoted participation of persons with disabilities in procurement activities. There are also no inter-agency task groups working to promote consistent policies or practices with respect to accessibility of information and communication technologies

¹¹ The research team did not independently evaluate the content of the policies and strategic plans reported by survey respondents, nor was the research team able to assess or evaluate how such policies were implemented in the field under the conditions of the present study. Further research is necessary to determine whether the policies reported achieve intended or inclusive outcomes.

¹² Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Terms of Reference, 21 December 2007.

(ICT).¹³ Rather, organizations are urged to adapt individual policies and guidelines to conform with external standards. The only exception within the HLCM's networks is the Human Resources Network, which in the past has coordinated a policy statement applicable to all entities within the UN system on employment of persons with disabilities, discussed further below (see section 3.3.1). The lack of coordination has enabled a patchwork of policy and strategic planning tools among UN entities, with limited coherence or effectiveness.

3.1.2 Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in UN Policies

Most UN entities fail to adequately address disability issues and the rights of persons with disabilities in their general policies. With few exceptions, persons with disabilities are either not mentioned or tangentially referenced. Few entities have disability-specific policies that work to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in their operations. When policies do exist, they often do not address diversity within the disability population.

Challenges of Language & Policy

UN entities tend to use different terminologies to represent policy. In some entities, policies can be referred to as frameworks, guidance notes, and conclusions. Due to this inconsistency in terminology, it can be challenging to ascertain which documents serve as internal policies and which documents serve more as planning or general guidance documents.

Although all UN entities have policies that govern and set goals for their internal and external functioning, persons with disabilities are often not explicitly mentioned within these policies, and when mentioned, the extent to which they are meaningfully included varies significantly. When there is no specific reference to disability issues in policies and strategies, there is often a ripple effect such that persons with disabilities may be subsequently denied equitable access to UN programmes as both participants and beneficiaries.

For example, key policy documents such as World Food Programme (WFP's) *Humanitarian Protection Policy* and United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP's) *Guideline on Developing National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters* contain no mention of persons with disabilities even though substantial evidence suggests

¹³ Although the HLCM does have an ICT network, accessibility and inclusion are not part of its agenda.

that persons with disabilities have unique needs for humanitarian protection and may face significant barriers to accessing information or public spaces.¹⁴ These failures to recognize the particular challenges faced by persons with disabilities represent missed opportunities to ensure meaningful inclusion and advance respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities also are often overlooked in supporting policy guidance and policy briefs. For example, in policy briefs issued by UN entities that address a range of issues, gender or vulnerabilities associated with youth or HIV/AIDS status may be highlighted as a crosscutting theme but substantive reference to the needs of persons with disabilities is missed. This is the case even where there is substantial evidence that needs of persons with disabilities are not being met.¹⁵

This represents a missed opportunity to highlight the needs of persons with disabilities in sector-specific guidance and related documents. For example, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has developed several policies, and guidelines, yet none call for specific attention to the rights or vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities in conflict areas.¹⁶ The United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines, considered the entity's capstone policy doctrine, does not mention persons with disabilities, although it does call for attention to the risks attributable to other factors, such as gender, age, and displacement.¹⁷ The DPKO's Planning Toolkit mentions the rights of persons with disabilities and the CRPD only in the context of exterminating the

¹⁴ Women's Refugee Commission. (2008). *Disabilities Among Refugees and Conflict-Affected Population*. Retrieved from <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/resources/document/609-disabilities-among-refugeesand-conflict-affected-populations>.

¹⁵ See, e.g., United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2018). Website. Retrieved from <https://www.unocha.org/about-us/publications>. UN Women, Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2012/7/handbook-for-national-action-plans-on-violence-against-women>.

¹⁶ Persons with disabilities are included within the definition of "vulnerable groups" within at least one policy: see United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. (2017). *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*. Retrieved from <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/protection-of-civilians-mandate>

¹⁷ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. (2008). *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Capstone_Doctrine_ENG.pdf

threat of landmines and supporting ex-combatants with disabilities and offers no guidelines for inclusion of persons with disabilities in peace initiatives.¹⁸

Where persons with disabilities are mentioned within policies, it is often as one among a number of vulnerable groups, without any specificity or guidance calling for particular interventions.¹⁹ In other policies, particular subgroups of persons with disabilities, such as ex-combatants, are singled out, leaving out all others.²⁰ Policies that lack specificity, are too broad, or single out only the needs of specific sub-groups of persons with disabilities can hide essential differences in relevant factors that policies should be designed to identify and address, effectively reinforcing marginalization by not recognizing the diverse community of persons with disabilities.

UN entities such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WFP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are notable for including disability as a crosscutting issue within multiple key policy documents. For example, the *WFP's Protection Guidance Manual: Emergencies and Transition Unit (OSZPH) Programme and Policy* document references persons with disabilities throughout the document while also highlighting the unique needs of persons with disabilities by ensuring that food-distribution points are accessible.²¹ By having disability integrated throughout while also addressing specific barriers, these documents could serve as a model for other entities' policies. Other entities stated while their general policies are not inclusive of persons with disabilities, the rights of persons with disabilities are addressed in the entity's specific policy or guidance related to disability-inclusive development.

¹⁸ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. (n.d.). *Planning Toolkit*. Retrieved from https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping/en/Planning%20Toolkit_Web%20Version.pdf

¹⁹ International Organisation for Migration. (2016). *Guidance Note on how to mainstream protection across IOM crisis response (or the Migration Crisis Operational Framework sectors of assistance)*. Retrieved from https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DOE/humanitarian_emergencies/mainstream/IN-232-How-to-mainstream-protection-in-IOM-crisis-response.pdf;

²⁰ International Organisation for Migration. (2016). *Guidance Note on how to mainstream protection across IOM crisis response (or the Migration Crisis Operational Framework sectors of assistance)*. Retrieved from https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DOE/humanitarian_emergencies/mainstream/IN-232-How-to-mainstream-protection-in-IOM-crisis-response.pdf;

²¹ World Food Programme. (2016). *Protection Guidance Manual: Emergencies and Transitions Unit (OSZPH) Programme and Policy*. Retrieved from <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-000009705/download/>

Moving Beyond Vulnerability Towards Inclusion

In assessment responses and in the research team's independent review of policies and strategic plans, many entities' policies and/or strategic plans mentioned persons with disabilities only within a definition or list of vulnerable groups or as beneficiaries of general policies relating to diversity, non-discrimination, and/or equality. Simply including persons with disabilities among a list of potential target populations or programme beneficiaries is very unlikely to have a meaningful impact on how policies work in practice or on the outcomes these plans are nominally intended to achieve. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) makes this point effectively:

Experience shows that whenever the specific exclusion mechanisms and specific needs of persons with disabilities are not explicitly identified, the related strategies and programmes also miss their specific target. A category like “vulnerable groups”, though useful at certain levels of analysis, becomes an obstacle when it hides essential differences in poverty determinants of various vulnerable sub-groups and in strategies to apply.¹

It is important not to assume that merely addressing diversity and equality or providing the catch-all phrase of “vulnerable groups” will create opportunities to address barriers and promote inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Most commonly referenced among respondents was the inclusion of persons with disabilities in policies related to discrete issues. For example, UNRWA has an inclusive education policy, and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has a policy that mandates the provision of accessible technology services. UNHCR has developed a *Conclusion on Refugees with Disabilities and Other Persons with Disabilities Protected and Assisted by UNHCR, No. 110(LXI) -2010 Executive Committee 61st Session*, contained in the United Nations General Assembly document A/AC.96/1095. This Conclusion commits the agency to protect and assist persons with disabilities against all forms of discrimination and recognizes refugees with disabilities may have barriers hindering their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis as others.²² Disability is also

²² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2010). *Conclusion on refugees with disabilities and other persons protected and assisted by UNHCR No. 110 (LXI)-2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/exconc/4cbeb1a99/conclusion-refugees-disabilities-other-persons-disabilities-protected-assisted.html>

highlighted in the UNHCR's *Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity*.²³ While such inclusion is valuable, if it is not comprehensive, consistent, and systematic across issue areas, it risks leaving persons with disabilities out of UN operations.

Few UN entities call for the consistent and systematic collection of data on the situation of persons with disabilities or the progress of inclusion in policy documents, even though most are familiar with the Washington Group questions. Despite the mandate of the CRPD to ensure the collection of appropriate statistical and other data to inform the development and implementation of necessary policies and to ensure equality of opportunities, just over half of UN entities (52%) indicated that they collect any data related to persons with disabilities, and few do so in a comprehensive or systematic manner or require the collection of data as policy. Among those that do, a few notable examples can serve as models for other entities and UNCTs. For example, UNHCR updated their *Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD)* to include disaggregated data collection by diversity factors, including persons with disabilities. UNHCR noted that this policy goes beyond the entity's priorities and identifies UNHCR's role in advocating with governments and partners to take an AGD-sensitive approach in the protection of refugees. UNHCR mentioned this includes collecting data, the providing training and guidance, and partnering with different actors including persons of concern that are relevant to refugee protection.

In 2014, the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on Disability Data and Statistics recommended the use of the Washington Group Short Set of questions, described in more detail below, for monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs also include a number of indicators so that persons with disabilities are taken into account when collecting data on access to health services, social protections, and a host of other categories.²⁴

²³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/women/5aa13c0c7/policy-age-gender-diversity-accountability-2018.html>

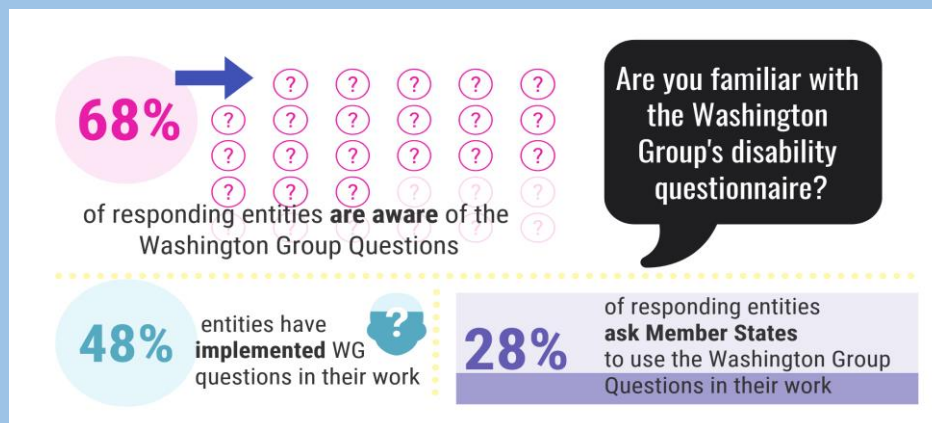
²⁴ UN has also partnered with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) to develop a set of disability indicators to measure progress toward the SDGs: https://www.iddcconsortium.net/sites/default/files/resources-tools/files/disability_indicators_advocacy_toolkit.pdf

Among those entities that reported collecting disability-related data or adopting targets or indicators that can be disaggregated by disability, including UN Women, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), UNHCR, and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), most are also recommending the Washington Group questions

Collecting Data on Disability Inclusion: The Washington Group Questions

The collection of data on the situation of persons with disabilities is notoriously difficult in part because of differences in how disability is defined and understood. To improve consistency, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) developed a short set of questions designed to identify persons with disabilities in national censuses or surveys. At the Global Disability Summit in July 2018, 12 UN entities committed to promoting the use of WG questions in their operations, with the World Bank in particular committing to using the questions in all Bank-supported censuses by 2020.¹ But the findings of this study suggest that too few UN entities currently use or promote the use of the questions, and close to 1 in 3 are not familiar with WG at all.

Figure 1. Washington Group



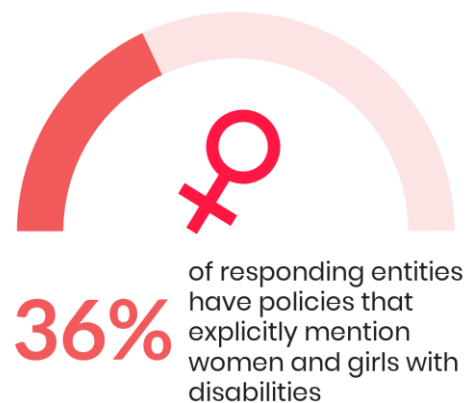
be used at the country level. Even where entities do not collect disability-disaggregated data themselves, such as ILO and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (UNESCAP), some nevertheless promote the use of the Washington Group questions among Member States.

Few UN entities take into account the diversity of persons with disabilities within general or disability-specific policies. For inclusion of persons with disabilities to be effective in policies, both within entities and in the field, those policies must take into account the diversity among persons with disabilities. Social factors such as age, race, language, religion, political opinion, national ethnic, indigenous or social origin, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity, among others, can have a profound impact on how and when persons with disabilities may experience discrimination and may affect their ability to participate in and benefit from development policies and plans. Likewise, wheelchair users are likely to face barriers to inclusion that are different from those faced by persons with intellectual or other non-apparent disabilities. Policies that fail to recognize the cumulative or distinctive disadvantages persons with disabilities may face are unlikely to accomplish the 2030 Agenda's commitments to "reach the furthest behind first".

As one way of assessing how consistently entities and UNCTs recognized diversity among persons with disabilities, the assessment asked participants to describe efforts to advance the rights of girls and women with disabilities. Responses indicated that inclusion of girls and women with disabilities within policies varies significantly by entity. Although many entities have gender policies, women and girls with disabilities are often left out or minimally referenced in these key documents. For example, the *WFP Gender Policy 2015-2020* minimally references disability as part of recognizing gender and the intersectionality of other social dimensions.²⁵ In addition, few respondents reported having policies that mandate actions particularly for girls and women with disabilities. Of reporting entities, barely more than 1 in 3 (36%) indicated that they have policies that address girls and women with disabilities. Figure 1 shows a full breakdown of how girls and women with disabilities are addressed in policies and strategies. This shows a clear need for UN entities to improve how they address the intersectionality between gender and disability, by ensuring that disability inclusion and access are effectively integrated into different UN entities' gender policies, plans, and programmes.

²⁵ World Food Programme. (2015). *WFP Gender Policy 2015-2020*. Retrieved from https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp276754.pdf?_ga=2.101014982.659366979.1536679577-394160677.1536679577

Figure 2. Inclusion of girls and women with disabilities in UN entity policies and strategies



3.1.3 Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in UN Strategic Planning

With the exception of a few positive examples, many UN entities minimally address persons with disabilities in their strategic planning. Persons with disabilities are typically identified as members of a vulnerable group, but strategies do not include clear goals, objectives, or accountability metrics for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The *United Nations Strategic Planning Guide for Managers* states that “strategic planning is a process of looking into the future and identifying trends and issues against which to align organisational priorities” and is “about achieving a goal in the most effective and efficient manner possible”.²⁶ Because of the importance placed on strategic planning, it is not surprising that virtually all UN entities have public strategic documents; many of which also include the rights of persons with disabilities.

Although persons with disabilities are often referenced within strategic plans, it is typically as one among several vulnerable groups. For example, the WFP references persons with disabilities throughout their *2017-2021 Strategic Plan* but almost always within a list of many marginalized groups. There are no specific goals or targets included to measure progress on disability inclusion.

²⁶ United Nations. (n.d.). *Strategic Planning: Guide for Managers*. Retrieved from https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/4.5.1.6_Strategic%20Planning%20Guide_0.pdf

In some cases, they are not mentioned at all. For example, the *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021* does not mention persons with disabilities. This omission is especially relevant because refugees and displaced persons with disabilities experience increased vulnerability and require specialized services.²⁷

When persons with disabilities are not explicitly mentioned within strategic plans, they are often excluded in reviews and evaluations of projected outcomes. Conversely, when persons with disabilities are included in plans, subsequent reports and evaluations can capture valuable information on how to address possible barriers and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities. A 2017 evaluation of United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) strategic plan identified where programmes took disability inclusion into account and called out areas that needed to be strengthened in future.²⁸

There are also positive examples of inclusion of persons with disabilities in strategic plans that can serve as models for other entities. Recent organisational strategic planning frameworks for the ILO, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women, UNDP, and UNICEF all include the importance of addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. For example, *UNICEF's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan* has a specific goal (5) dedicated to disabilities and stipulates that "girls and boys with disabilities [will be] reached by accessible and inclusive programmes and services to participate in society".²⁹ Strong references to disability are also integrated throughout the document.

Several UN entities have disability-specific strategies and plans. Disability-specific strategies are important as they confront and address possible challenges and barriers related to inclusion and drive entities' focus, programming, and accountability related to disability-specific actions. ILO represents one of the first entities to undertake this initiative with a *Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2017*. The strategy establishes overarching principles and goals while the action plan provides targets, indicators, and indicative activities. UN Women is also finalizing its *Strategy for the Empowerment of Women and Girls with*

²⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/5894558d4.pdf>

²⁸ United Nations Development Programme. (2017). *Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan and Global and Regional Programmes*. Retrieved from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/sgrp.shtml>

²⁹ United Nations Children's Fund. (2018). *UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_Strategic_Plan_2018-2021.pdf

Disabilities: Toward Full and Effective Participation and Gender Equality 2018-2021. Notably, the new strategy has been informed by consultations with 300 individuals and organizations including organizations of persons with disabilities.

As an accountability measure, it is also important that strategies include concrete targets and indicators to monitor how the strategy is being implemented. While most of the disability-specific strategies include some level of detail, broader strategic planning documents that address disability as a crosscutting theme tend to not adequately monitor issues related to disability. For example, the *OHCHR Management Plan of 2018-2021* includes persons with disabilities along with gender and youth as a spotlight within the strategy but stops short of including targets related to these issues.³⁰

3.1.4 Disability Inclusion in Development Assistance Frameworks

Few UNDAFs substantially integrate disability issues.³¹ Most only mention persons with disabilities as one among a list of vulnerable groups. For UN Country Teams, the UNDAF offers an opportunity to harmonize different UN entities' efforts to promote disability inclusion within a country context and provides a powerful lever to encourage national efforts to promote and advance the rights of persons with disabilities.

The UN Development Group's 2017 Guidance on UNDAFs defines "vulnerable groups" to include persons with disabilities and sets targeting of these groups as one of the parameters of quality in joint programming.³² However, there is no particularized guidance on how to integrate persons with disabilities into strategic planning at the country-level, nor is there a clear mandate or substantial resource allocation to do so.³³ Although the United Nations

³⁰ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner. (2018). *OHCHR Management Plan 2018-2021*. Retrieved from https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRReport2018_2021/OHCHRManagementPlan2018-2021.pdf

³¹ The research team reviewed a sample of UNDAFs limited to the current UNDAFs for each of the 40 UNCTs surveyed during this study.

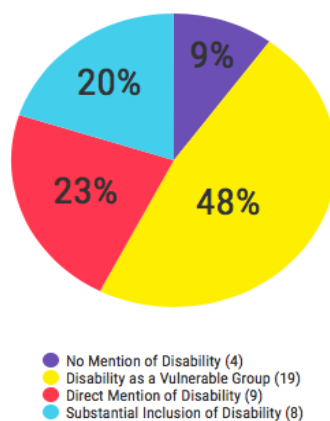
³² United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office. (2017). *United Nations Development Assistance Framework Guidance*. Retrieved from <https://undg.org/document/2017-undaf-guidance/>.

³³ In 2011, the UN IASG-CRPD developed a Guidance Note for United Nations Country Teams and Implementation Partners on how to include the rights of persons with disabilities in UN programming at the country level. This document suggests entry points regarding how UNCTs can include persons with disabilities in Common Country Analyses and resulting UNDAFs, and

Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Guidance sets how effectively the UNDAF captures and measures the situation of vulnerable groups as a critical measure of its quality, it misses the opportunity to distinguish the importance of disability inclusion. By comparison, the Guidance mandates the inclusion of special measures to address gender inequalities and empower women within UNDAF strategic priorities. The same prioritization of actions to promote disability-inclusion steps could go a long way toward facilitating the active participation of persons with disabilities within UN development planning and programming. Even acknowledging UNDAFs are nationally-owned plans intended to address national priorities, the data collected suggest that leadership within UNCTs can have an impact on whether and how effectively persons with disabilities are integrated into field operations, particularly where dedicated funding is available.

In the absence of a specific mandate, some but far from all UNCTs have integrated disability issues and rights into their respective UNDAFs. The UNDAF 2017-2021 in Albania adopts a target for disability inclusion (Output 2.3 on social inclusion and protection) and integrates disability in the work of the local UN entities, including UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, and UNFPA. All of which have activities related to the rights of persons with disabilities. Other examples of UNCTs that promote of the rights of persons with disabilities in the UNDAF include Cambodia, Ecuador, India, Paraguay, and Sri Lanka. Figure 3 categorizes the inclusion of persons with disabilities within UNDAFs.

Figure 3. Disability inclusion within UNDAFs



includes a checklist for disability inclusion within UNDAF strategic planning. However, the dissemination of the document was limited, and it is unclear how many staff are aware of the document and use it regularly as a tool for planning or strategic development.



Embracing Diversity

Catalina Devandas Aguilar
UN Special Rapporteur on the rights
of persons with disabilities

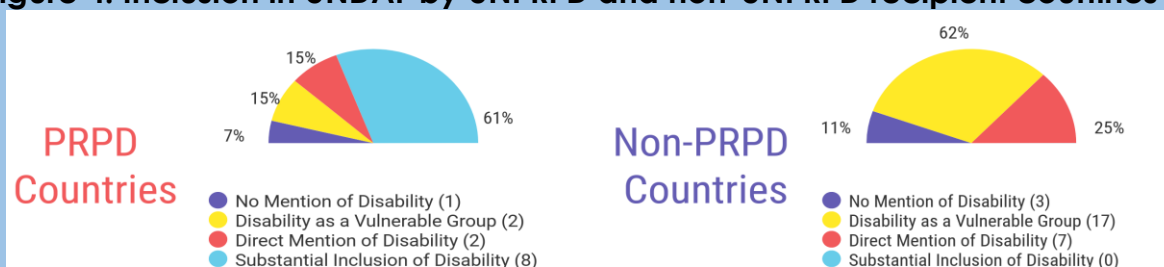
Link Between UNPRPD Funding and UNDAFs

An interesting finding of the study is the potential link between UNPRPD funding and the extent to which disability is mentioned within the UNDAF. The UNPRPD is a collaborative effort, bringing together UN entities, governments, organizations of persons with disabilities, and the broader civil society to advance the rights of persons with disabilities around the world. Since its operationalization in 2012, UNPRPD has supported over 35 country level joint UN programmes across regions and mobilized commitments with a total combined budget of over \$25.7 million USD to the UNPRPD Trust Fund for the implementation of the CRPD.

Funding from the UNPRPD is typically provided directly to UNCTs that have developed disability proposals jointly with two or more local UN entities. UNDP's 2016 Evaluation on Disability Inclusive Development found the UNPRPD model is a viable and innovative instrument to promote multi-sectoral interventions to support the CRPD, and programme results from the first funding round of UNPRPD suggest programmes have achieved more "outcome-level objectives" than anticipated.

Data collected in this study indicates UNCTs that have received funding from UNPRPD are much more likely to have UNDAFs that substantially integrate persons with disabilities. In a few cases, such as Cambodia and South Africa, the UNCTs received UNPRPD funding after publishing their disability-inclusive UNDAF, which suggests there was an existing interest in disability issues. However, in most cases where the UNDAF was widely inclusive, the respective UNCTs developed their UNDAFs after receiving UNPRDP funding, suggesting that dedicated funding for inclusion promotes inclusive outcomes. Figure 3 shows the comparison on disability inclusion in UNDAFs within PRPD recipient and non-recipient countries. Given the potential significance of the correlation, additional research on the impact of UNPRPD support would be valuable.

Figure 4. Inclusion in UNDAF by UNPRPD and non-UNPRPD recipient countries



3.1.5 Training on Inclusive Policies and Strategies and Commitment of Resources

Many UN staff, with and without disabilities, appear unfamiliar with applicable disability-specific policies as well as disability-inclusive elements in broader policies and strategic plans. This highlights the need to ensure broad dissemination of policies and adopt strategies to build internal capacity and promote accountability.

The data reveals limited efforts to foster staff understanding of disability inclusion, including how and where disability-inclusion is integrated or prioritized within policies and strategies, if at all. In a few cases, UN entities reported having policies they deemed inclusive of persons with disabilities, but spot checks revealed many of those policies made no mention of disability. This finding is concerning as it suggests that UN staff may not understand what inclusion is or requires. This lack of clarity regarding policies' content suggests the need for a more robust internal audit that independently assesses how and whether disability issues are recognized within key documents.

It may also suggest a lack of consistency in how policies are disseminated and how staff are trained on their content. The assessment asked entities whether they trained their staff on how to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in their day-to-day work. Just over half said yes (two additional respondents noted training programmes were being developed). This means close to half of respondents provide no staff training on disability inclusion at all, suggesting that even where inclusive policies may exist, efforts to promote them internally remain limited.

This negatively impacts an entity's ability to produce the desired goals and changes addressed in the policies. One of the key findings of the 2016 *Evaluation of Disability-Inclusive Development at the UNDP* is illustrative:

The guidance note on programming issued in 2012 represents a positive initial step highlighting the relevance of disability inclusion for UNDP and its strategic objectives. Unfortunately, its dissemination was not given much prominence, and there has been limited application of this guidance in programming on the ground.ⁱⁱⁱ

Simply having a policy document or a strategy on disability is not sufficient, and there is a need for widespread dissemination coupled with training for staff to fully understand the content and goals of the policy.

Strategic plans should also include costed activities to ensure there are funds available to implement the suggested activities. Unfortunately, most of the UN entities' policies and/or strategies do not include the important component of supporting financial resources.

Figure 5. Disability-specific funds



For policies and strategies to be effective, there must be clear accountability measures; the policies must be widely disseminated and thus be accessible; they must be coupled with the appropriate capacity to implement the policy and strategy goals; and they must be provided the appropriate financial resources for implementation.

3.1.6 OPD Engagement in Policy and Strategy Development

The engagement by UN entities of persons with disabilities and/or their representative organizations in development of UN policies and strategies is fairly limited, suggesting a need to expand opportunities at local, regional, and international levels. Although there are examples where UN entities have consulted with OPDs on disability-specific programming and broader framework development, such as inclusion of disability issues within the SDGs, consistent engagement has yet to be universally achieved.

The CRPD recognizes persons with disabilities must be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes that affect them.³⁴ Within UN operations, many entities, including UNAIDS, UNHCR, UN-Habitat,

³⁴ Preamble, Art. 4.

UNDP, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, OHCHR, UN Women, and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), say that they do consult with OPDs when they are developing policies or strategic plans. However, it was not clear from responses whether such consultations were limited to disability-specific initiatives or also included discussions of general strategies or programmes.

In a survey of members of OPDs,³⁵ 41 responded that they had consulted with UN entities at some point, working most often with UNICEF, UNDP, and WHO. But 64 indicated they had never worked with the UN, and the vast majority responded that no UN entity had ever reached out to discuss new policies or changes to existing ones. Among those who had worked with the UN, reflections on their experiences were fairly evenly split between the positive and negative, with the most significant concerns being a failure of communication, lack of accommodations, limited financial resources, and an overall perception of unsustainability. These concerns were repeated by this study's focus group participants who reported that persons with disabilities, and particularly their families had few opportunities to engage and consult with UN entities and Country Teams.

The degree of transparency related to the engagement of persons with disabilities within UN operations is currently being explored by the International Disability Alliance's (IDA) *Pilot Global Survey on OPD Participation in Development Programmes and Policies* and is likely to produce additional data that will be relevant to this study.

Few UN entities make their policies or strategies publicly available, limiting the ability of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to monitor and evaluate the progress of inclusion. Transparency is a core component of ensuring accountability. However, fewer than half of the entities reported that their policies are publicly available. Without information about the policies guiding UN operations and activities, it is far too challenging for persons with disabilities to monitor and evaluate progress and to identify areas of opportunity. A recent study by the United States International Council on Disability (USICD) found that members of OPDs remain largely unaware of both bilateral and multilateral policies that support the rights of persons with

³⁵ The survey (prepared in English and Spanish only) was sent to persons with disabilities who work with or represent OPDs at the international, national, and local level. Multiple representatives of the same OPDs were included in the distribution list, making it difficult to assess the breadth of experiences represented.

disabilities and this lack of awareness impedes their ability to effectively monitor policy compliance and implementation.³⁶

The next section of the report addresses how policies and strategies are being implemented in practice and highlights challenges, opportunities, and good practices related to programme development and implementation.

3.2 Programme Development and Implementation

Article 32 of the CPRD requires that all international cooperation programmes and activities be fully inclusive of persons with disabilities. For this goal to be achieved, persons with disabilities must be meaningfully included through all stages of the project cycle: planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating. As with policies and strategic plans, without the adequate commitment of resources, attention to accessibility, and efforts to promote accountability for measurable outcomes, even nominally-inclusive programmes are unlikely to produce meaningful change.

This section assesses inclusivity and accessibility of current UN programmes and advocacy efforts, including the consistency to which technical guidance is available to ensure quality programming.

3.2.1 Disability-Inclusive Programming

Although several UN entities and UNCTs support both disability-specific and disability-inclusive programmes, disability-inclusive programming does not appear to be consistent, coordinated, or monitored across entities or field operations. As with policies and strategic plans, equality in programming requires both integrating persons with disabilities into broader programming on an equal basis with their peers, while also recognizing particular programmes may be needed to address specific issues of concern to persons with disabilities. Ranging across all sectors, more UN entities reported having disability-specific programmes than programmes that are inclusive of persons with disabilities. Disability-specific programmes include political rights for women with disabilities; education, health insurance, and sports for children with disabilities;

³⁶ Shettle, A., Hayes, A. M., & Hodge, I. (2018). *Stakeholders' Understanding and the Implementation of CRPD Article 32*. Retrieved from <http://uscd.org/doc/Stakeholders%27%20Understanding%20and%20Monitoring%20of%20the%20Implementation%20of%20CRPD%20Article%2032.pdf>

humanitarian assistance for refugees who have a person with a disability in their family; and access to assistive technologies, cash transfers, disaster reduction, and preparedness for all persons with disabilities. Figure 6 shows the differences in how UN entities and UNCTs engage in disability-related programmes.

Figure 6. Type of disability programming reported by UN entities and UNCTs



Despite the variance among responses, there were some promising examples of inclusive programming. For example, UN Women described a multi-pronged approach that includes mainstreaming gender, age, and disability perspectives and supporting initiatives for women and girls with disabilities. UNDP provides targeted assistance for disability inclusion in 50 projects implemented across 29 countries with a combined budget of \$75 million USD.

Of the 22 entities that responded to the institutional assessment, 79% reported encountering barriers when trying to include persons with disabilities in broader programmes. The two most significant barriers are a lack of knowledge regarding how to make programming inclusive and a gap in financial resources to support accommodations for programme participants with disabilities (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Barriers to inclusion in UN entity projects



Many UNCTs reported both broader inclusive programmes and disability-specific programmes in their field operations.³⁷ For example, UNCT Cambodia reported that UNICEF has included disability in its programmes and provided examples of inclusive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programmes. UNCT Sri Lanka reports UNFPA is implementing the Women and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding programme, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), and that specific provisions have been made to enable young people with disabilities, especially young women leaders who are deaf/hard of hearing, to participate.

Nearly all UNCT respondents reported having at least one disability-specific programme.³⁸ UNCT Jordan, which has both a disability focal point and a disability working group, offers multiple disability-specific programmes; a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programme that supports “Inclusive Jordan” as a large portal where people can find out if touristic sites, restaurants, and other places are accessible for persons with disabilities; and offers a WFP General Food Assistance programme for Syrian refugees that prioritizes assistance to participants with a disabled family member.³⁹

Nevertheless, consistent inclusion of disability issues within UN support programmes at the country level is lacking. UNCT Cuba, for example,

³⁷ It is unclear from the country-level responses if UNCTs responded on their activities or a combination of their work and the work of entities at country level.

³⁸ The only exception was the UNCT in the United Arab Emirates.

³⁹ The International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Food Project (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and UN Women each have specific disability-centric programmes.

acknowledged that the majority of UN entities in Cuba do not have disability-specific programmes.

Few entities monitor programmes for their inclusiveness or evaluate their impact or outcomes with respect to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. When asked if entities evaluate the impact and outcomes of including persons with disabilities in programmes, fewer than half said yes. Among UNCTs, the practice of monitoring is even less widespread (see Figure 8 below). Systematic monitoring may be an effective mechanism to ensure inclusion. For example, each country in which UNICEF has an office publishes a Country Office Annual Report (COAR) describing what their accomplishments were for the year. Of country offices included as part of a 2017 analysis, 89% included specific references to children with disabilities, which is the highest total to date and due to a focus on disability inclusion.

Monitoring Disability-Inclusion in Programming: UNICEF

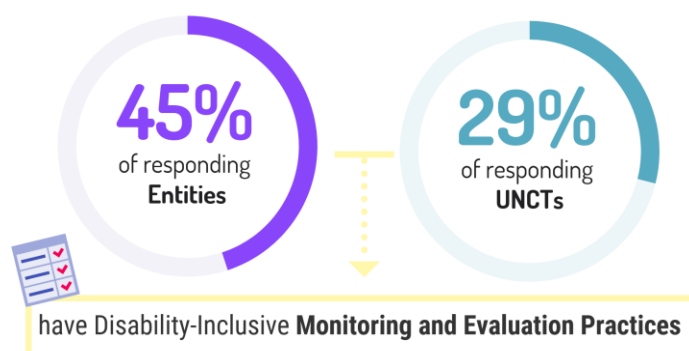
To assess if broader programmes are inclusive of persons with disabilities, an effective monitoring system is needed to gauge inclusion efforts and participation in programming. To ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all programming, UNICEF created a disability tag. UNICEF's Disability Tag rates how an activity is expected to contribute towards disability-inclusive results. The Disability Tag is a mandatory rating for all activities and rates every activity within three categories (a "3" rating specifically targets/focuses on children with disabilities, a "2" rating is used when children with disabilities and/or accessibility is included but the activity is not specifically targeting this, a 1 rating when there is minimal mention of disability and a "0" rating is used when the activity does not target or focus on children with disabilities or accessibility).

Where entities report engaging in some monitoring efforts, this inclusion appears to be conducted on an ad-hoc and case-by-case basis rather than being systematic or universal. For example, UNDP, UN Habitat, and UNRWA all state they monitor and evaluate on a case-by-case basis which can include questionnaires and evaluations, reports based on Terms of References, and informal feedback.

Entities that are not systematically collecting programme data noted it was because some programmes did not need this data collected, thus they only collect disability data when necessary. Likewise, the OHCHR reports that it does not specifically address disability indicators but rather has broader

accountability measures, like human rights indicators, that ensure the variables selected during data collection take into account the human-rights risks of marginalized groups. However, including persons with disabilities solely as part of the larger category of the vulnerable or marginalized often leads to only general reference to inclusion without the specifics needed to meaningfully gauge inclusion or obtain lessons learned.

Figure 8. Disability-inclusive monitoring and evaluation practices



Not only are entities not consistently monitoring their own programming, they are not seeking independent evaluations of disability inclusion within their operations or activities. Other than UNDP, no other UN entity has conducted an independent evaluation of disability inclusion in its programming.

Very few entities discussed how their programming addresses diversity within the disability population. It also is unclear if existing disability-specific programmes recognize the diversity among persons with disabilities including especially those with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities who are often marginalized even within disability programmes. Many programmes discussed by both entities and UNCTs simply refer to the inclusion of persons with disabilities under the same umbrella without distinction. Only one entity and one UNCT reported that it focuses on mental health conditions and supports for persons with psychosocial disabilities. UNHCR, in collaboration with WHO, has a training programme that aims to enable general health care workers to better assist people with psychosocial, neurological, and substance-use conditions in humanitarian settings.

Even more concerning is that not all UN-supported programmes are aligned with the CRPD and may inadvertently strengthen segregation. For example, the *UNDP Evaluation of Disability-Inclusive Development* found at least one country

promoted sheltered workshops or segregated work environments.⁴⁰ No UN resources should be employed to create or maintain barriers or harmful practices impacting persons with disabilities. The paucity of inclusive programmes and absence of alignment demonstrates the need for additional training, guidance, and oversight of programmes to ensure technical quality.

3.2.2 Supporting Advocacy and Disability Awareness Programming

While many UN entities and UNCTs reported engaging in some advocacy to address disability stigma and discrimination, most of the examples given were limited in time and scope. Advocacy was often reported only in support of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and did not include broader efforts to meaningfully and effectively address attitudinal barriers that limit the participation and empowerment of persons with disabilities in social and economic life.

Addressing and reducing attitudinal barriers is a critical element of inclusive programmes. Many UN entities, however, did not identify ways in which they consistently address stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities within programming. Of the 22 UNCT respondents to the institutional assessment, the majority (61%) reported that they implemented a disability advocacy campaign within the last year; however, most solely participate in international days related to persons with disabilities. This reflects a limited level of engagement in advocacy issues which needs to be expanded upon greatly to reduce broader stigmas and discriminatory views. Furthermore, this also represents a missed opportunity to utilize the UN's convening power to address issues of discrimination and inequality.

3.2.3 Building Stakeholder Capacity and Member State Engagement

UN entities have been taking positive steps, especially at the country level, toward engaging Member States and building capacity to promote the CRPD and the rights of persons with disabilities within national policies. Although the type of programmes can vary significantly by sector, across all sectors there has been positive work related to technical guidance and Member State

⁴⁰ United Nations Development Programme. (2016). *Evaluation of Disability-Inclusive Development at UNDP*. Retrieved from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/disability.shtml>

engagement to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Seventy-five percent of UNCTs who responded to the survey stated they provide technical guidance to Member States as they seek to implement the CRPD. These efforts include supporting Member States to develop and adopt disability-related national policies as well as additional training and advocacy on the importance of inclusion. In Paraguay, for example, OHCHR provided technical cooperation to the National Commission on the Rights of People with Disabilities (in Spanish, CONADIS) to draft the first public policy on the rights of persons with disabilities, the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2015-2030, based on the CRPD. In Vietnam, UNICEF implemented training for government officials on the laws protecting persons with disabilities and training for OPDs on social audit tools for independent monitoring of the implementation of policies for children with disabilities. From the training, a five-year advocacy roadmap on the rights of children with disabilities was developed, drawing on the new knowledge and skills about social audit tools as well as the initial findings and consultations from an on-going legal-gap analysis on the Law on Persons with Disabilities.

3.2.4 Programmatic Accessibility

For programmes to be inclusive of persons with disabilities, they must be designed and implemented in a way that appropriately and adequately addresses accessibility. This includes ensuring physical and communication access as well as providing additional accommodations to promote equitable participation. Unfortunately, physical and communication barriers continue to exist within UN-supported programmes that impede the equitable participation of persons with disabilities. The majority of entities and UNCTs which responded to the survey do not have systematic policies or practices in place for including persons with disabilities in events and programmes. When accessibility provisions are provided, they tend to focus on the needs of persons with physical disabilities or sensory disabilities with little evidence demonstrating support for the access needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

More than half of UNCTs (57%) reported they seek out physically-accessible locations for events because many UN premises are not fully physically accessible. It is unclear if these efforts are made for disability-specific events or if this is a practice used regardless of the topic or purpose of the meeting. Many UNCTs reported that due to country-level infrastructure their physical premises are not fully accessible; however, many identified improvements that could be made or are currently in the process of being made.

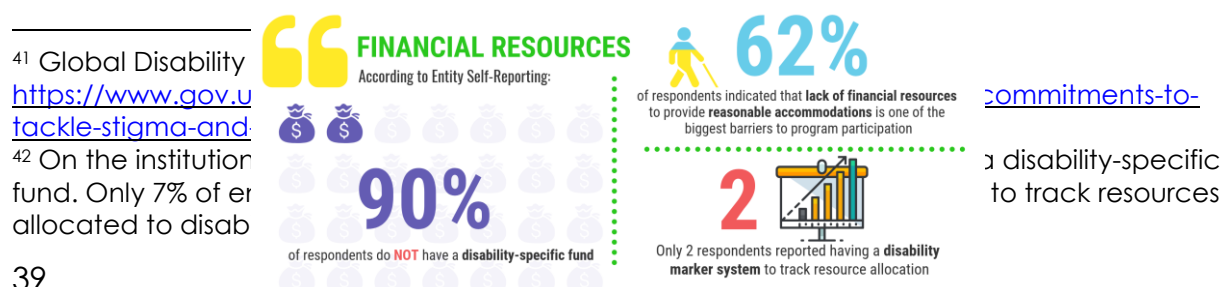
Some entities and UNCTs provide reasonable accommodations for programmes on an as-needed basis. UNESCAP, for example, reported they verify, in advance, physical and informational needs of participants and the accessibility of meeting and conference venues. Other examples of reasonable accommodations provided included personal assistants, sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, and accessible documents. However, many UN entities and UNCTs continue to hold events that are not accessible to persons with disabilities.

Entities and UNCTs reported most information and assistance is provided in accessible formats upon request. For example, many entities reported providing information in either braille or electronic format. Only a few entities, such as the OHCHR, prepare disability-specific reports in easy-read formats, providing accommodations for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This, however, is not a generalized practice in other reports, nor is it mainstreamed beyond events and information specific to the rights of persons with disabilities.

3.2.5 Programmatic Resource Allocation

At the Global Disability Summit in July 2018, governments and international donors made 170 new commitments to promote disability inclusion, including a commitment to use disability inclusion markers to ensure existing resources are allocated to inclusive development and programming.⁴¹ UN entities are not currently following this practice. There is little evidence that financial resources are systematically allocated to disability-inclusion, or that UN entities make regular efforts to ensure available funds are spent in an inclusive manner.⁴² Few entities reported consistently dedicating resources to inclusion or using mechanisms to track how and when resources are allocated to support disability inclusion. While some entities—such as ILO and UNICEF—have specific budgets for disability-related programmes, their practice appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

Figure 9. Financial Resources



Many entities report not having any budget available either for disability-specific programmes or additional expenses to ensure accessibility. Others report having limited funding available on an ad-hoc basis only for events and meetings and only when the meeting is related to a disability-specific topic. OHCHR, for example, budgets in advance for communication accessibility for disability-specific meetings, and ITU has established ad-hoc funding of \$50,000 USD to cover associated costs related to accessibility. UNICEF has a Greening and Accessibility Fund (GrAF) that is meant to improve accessibility of UNICEF premises, providing all staff, including those with disabilities, with workforce-related accommodations. UNICEF Country Offices apply for funding on a competitive basis. The GrAF will provide up to \$50,000 USD per project proposal when financing or co-financing a project. Since January 2016, 26 UNICEF offices have received funding.

Resource allocation within UNCTs follows the same funding trends. Only 10% of UNCTs state they have specific funds available to support disability-inclusive development. In most cases this translated only to physical accessibility for conferences and meetings with assistance being provided in an ad-hoc manner. UNCT Cambodia will cover costs where possible, but as there are no guidelines and dedicated budget for hosting inclusive events, accessibility is provided inconsistently.

It is unclear how funding for disability-specific or disability-inclusive programmes is being allocated across UNCTs. One frequently reported funding source for programming is the UNPRPD. Of the 21 country responses, 71% are aware of the UNPRPD, and 52% have applied for UNPRPD funding. PRPD project budgets are distributed amongst several entities and range from \$350,000-400,000 USD.

Only 14% of UNCTs have a disability marker related to resource allocation compared to 7% of UN entities with such a marker. This lack of financial tracking limits the UN's capacity to effectively monitor how and whether resources are being allocated, and assess if funding is aligned with policies, strategies, and commitments.

3.2.6 Engagement of Persons with Disabilities in UN Programming

Many UN entities report consulting with persons with disabilities or their representative organizations, but most consultations appear to be limited to discrete activities specific to persons with disabilities. There is little evidence of

systematic efforts to substantively include persons with disabilities and/or their representative organizations in consultations across entities and issue areas. For engagement to be meaningful, participation must go beyond mere consultation and instead be transformative where individuals are part of the decision-making process.⁴³ In general, UNCTs reported consulting with OPDs in the field at higher rates than UN entities (see Figure 10). But neither the UNCTs nor responding entities provided details on how they engage OPDs to ensure inclusivity of persons with disabilities in programming, and how and when persons with disabilities are engaged in more than just consultations.

UNICEF, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), ILO, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCAP, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCAP), UNHCR, UNRWA, UNAIDS, UN Women, and WHO all report regular consultations with OPDs related to programme design and implementation, as well as including OPDs in conferences and workshops and other programme-related activities. For example, UNHCR works to achieve meaningful participation of persons with disabilities through their Participatory Assessment, which considers the knowledge, skills, and experience of persons within the communities involved. This process provides an opportunity for persons with disabilities to contribute to planning and programming in UNHCR. IOM has also identified best practices on how to include persons with disabilities in programming, setting country-specific criteria to assess and prioritize people with high vulnerabilities including people with disabilities throughout all migration health programmes.

However, meaningful engagement of OPDs has yet to be achieved across the UN System. Many entities—such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UNPBSO), UNECLAC, and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)—report that they do not engage with OPDs. UNPBSO stated their lack of engagement was due to their role in providing funding only, but upon a webpage review, researchers found they do engage in gender-equality programmes and could tailor their work for disability inclusion as well.

Notably, among the OPDs surveyed for this study, few reported working with UN entities on country-level projects, and 3 out of 4 said they had never been contacted by a UN entity to discuss UN policies.

⁴³ Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking "Participation": models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal*. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsn010 pg. 272.

Figure 10. Engagement with OPDs



While many UNCTs report that they partner with OPDs or disability-related NGOs, many efforts at participation appear to be substantively limited and inconsistent. In a few cases where UNCTs reported they engaged with OPDs, this engagement appears to be limited to persons with disabilities participating as beneficiaries—rather than partners—in trainings or awareness-raising campaigns. When trainings take place on disability-related topics at the country level, fewer than half (48%) of UNCTs asked persons with disabilities to provide a lived experience and personal knowledge related to disability.

Additional guidance on how to meaningfully engage OPDs in a manner that is both transparent and empowering is needed.

3.3. Inclusive Human Resources Policies and Practices

Human resources policies that promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the terms of employment are an important mechanism for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. But, as noted above, to achieve substantive equality within the UN workforce, policymakers, senior staff, and managers must also take into account the different needs of persons with disabilities.⁴⁴

This section will assess human resource policies and practices among UN entities relating to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of UN staff with disabilities.

3.3.1 Human Resources Policies

⁴⁴ CEB at 35.

There are no system-wide policies currently in place to ensure equal opportunities for UN employees with disabilities. In 2009, the Human Resources Network of the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM), which brings together directors of human resources departments across 30 UN and related entities, and the Chief Executives Board for Coordination Working Group on Disability coordinated a Policy Statement on Disability that called on each UN agency to “develop and integrate a policy on the employment of persons with disabilities into its human resources management strategy, with links to staff welfare and safe and healthy workplace initiatives, and in collaboration with staff with disabilities and staff representatives”.⁴⁵

The Policy Statement included a list of key features each policy should include, such as a clear prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities, protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, and measures to ensure reasonable accommodation and eliminate barriers to the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities, among others. But in its responses submitted to the research team for this study, the HLCM did not identify specific measures it or its Working Group on employment of persons with disabilities had taken to ensure the recommendations in the Policy Statement had been followed or to evaluate their effectiveness since the Policy Statement’s adoption. Indeed, the HLCM noted it is unclear how its recommendations, with regard to reasonable accommodations in particular, were being implemented within agencies and in the field. Data gathered during this study suggest this represents a missed opportunity and further monitoring of policy implementation and accountability for inclusive practices is called for.

In the institutional assessment, researchers asked whether UN entities have and promote policies that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in all aspects of employment, including the provision of reasonable accommodations, and sought to determine whether existing policies include guidance for tracking accountability in their implementation.⁴⁶ The majority of UN entities reported they do not have disability-specific Human Resources policies, but some noted disability is included within broader diversity and inclusion frameworks.

⁴⁵ HLCM/HR Network Policy Statement on Disability, November 2009.

⁴⁶ For purposes of this study, human resources policies were divided into two categories: disability-specific policy, policies that exclusively target the needs of employees with disabilities; or disability inclusive policy, general policy that extends to all employees but include explicit mention of employees with disabilities.

Among those who did point to disability-specific policy, several within the Secretariat cited the 2014 Secretary-General's bulletin (SBG) titled *Employment and accessibility for staff members with disabilities in the United Nations Secretariat* ([ST/SGB/2014/3, 2014](#)). The bulletin calls for measures to increase employment of staff members with disabilities; improve accessibility for employees with disabilities; raise awareness with regard to the needs and treatment of employees with disabilities; and promote monitoring, coordination, and consultation. While the SGB is a positive step, it lacks practical guidance for implementation and measurable targets and objectives that promote accountability. Few entities within the Secretariat reported taking specific or additional measures to advance its implementation. Just 2 (UNODC and UNESCAP) of the 11⁴⁷ respondents referenced the bulletin when asked about disability-specific human resources policy, and only one, OHCHR,⁴⁸ has a policy supplementing the bulletin.

Additionally, for the two entities that reference the bulletin as policy, as well as for those entities outside of the Secretariat using the bulletin as guidance, it is important to address areas that would benefit from clarification and/or expansion. These include: shifting focus from non-discrimination to substantive equality and meaningful inclusion; expanding on the processes for implementing the provision of reasonable accommodations; establishing measurable goals and timelines for improving accessibility; including timelines for periodic reviews and participatory requirements for inclusion of employees with disabilities in awareness raising; formalizing the processes for monitoring and consultation; and ensuring there are protocols around reviewing and amending the bulletin.

Outside of the Secretariat, entities have developed more comprehensive policies that model good practices for building disability-inclusive workplaces. Figure 11 shows the number of UN entities which reported having disability-specific, human resource-related policies as well as policies addressing accessibility. These policies range from reasonable accommodations to anti-discrimination practices to accessibility. For example, the ILO and the WHO have comprehensive policies related to the employment of persons with disabilities that include specific guidance on recruitment, provision of accommodations, and training.⁴⁹ Additionally, both include specific statements pertaining to monitoring implementation, with WHO committing to a periodic

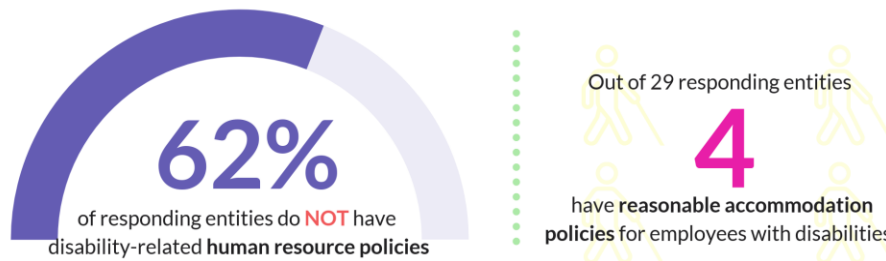
⁴⁷ UNDESA did not complete the employment section (questions 31-38) of the Institutional Assessment.

⁴⁸ UNISDR and ECA noted they have a draft policy in progress.

⁴⁹ ILO (2005) HRD Circular No. 655; WHO(2010) Disability Policy

review of the policy and ILO demonstrating good practices in measurable accountability by setting a timeframe for evaluation of efficacy every five years.

Figure 11. UN entities reporting having human resource and accessibility policies that address employees with disabilities





Global Staff Survey on Disability Awareness

It is also important to recognize the distinction between the existence of policy and the effective and consistent implementation of policy. Between April and May of 2018, the Coordinating Committee of the International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA) conducted a Global Staff Survey on Disability Awareness within the UN Common System with the aim of measuring staff awareness of disability. Data was collected from 3,228 respondents across 100 UN entities, including the Secretariat. The survey revealed:

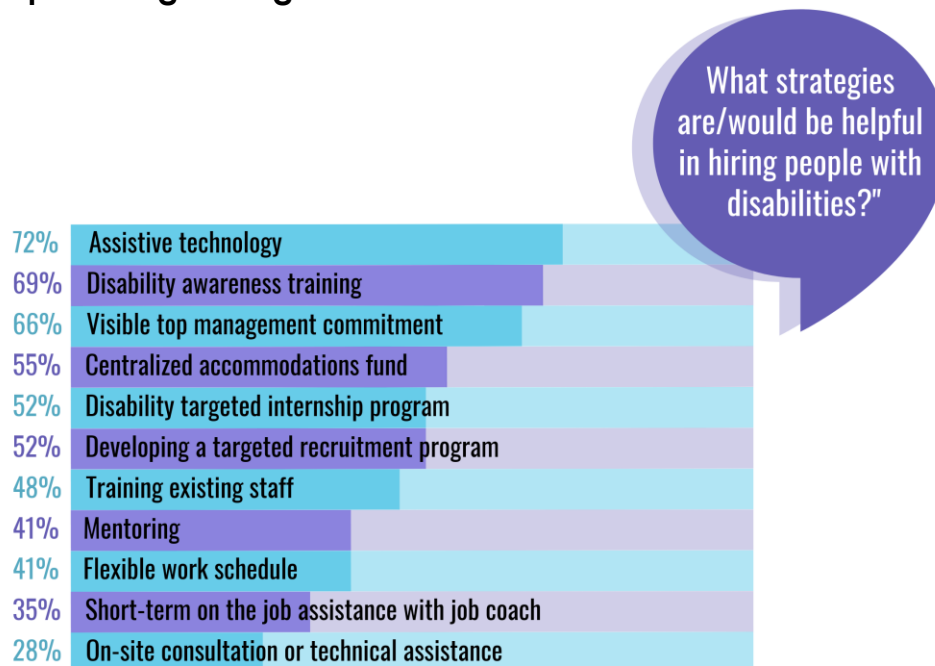
- 60.2% of respondents were not aware of the Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2014/3) entitled *Employment and accessibility for staff members with disabilities in the UN Secretariat*.
- Just 238 (7.4%) of respondents self-identified as having a disability. A number of factors make it difficult to infer whether this is a representative sample¹ of the total 44,000 UN employees; however, with global disability prevalence estimated between 10-15% (WHO, 2011) and global unemployment rates between 80-90% in developing countries and 50-70% in industrialized countries, a 7.4% rate of employment of persons with disabilities suggests the need for targeted outreach to encourage more applicants with disabilities.
- Of those employees who identified as having a disability, more than half (53.5%) believed reasonable accommodations were not provided to them by their respective employers, and those who had obtained accommodations indicated provisions were made only after difficulty in obtaining services and supports. A substantial percentage indicated they did not request accommodations due to fear of stigma.
- 76.9% of respondents believe that people with disabilities experience prejudice in the workplace, and close to half (45%) indicated they feel concerned they may "say the wrong thing" when talking to a colleague with a disability.

3.3.2 Recruitment and Retention of Persons with Disabilities

The majority of UN entities do not have formal policies for the targeted recruitment or retention of employees with disabilities. Just 3 of the 29 UN entities which responded to the institutional assessment have formal policies for the targeted recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities. A few pointed to Secretariat policies on nondiscrimination as constraints on their ability to prioritize persons with disabilities in recruitment or make adjustments to their assessment methods which might make the recruitment process more accessible.

Two-thirds of respondents identified top-level leadership and guidance on recruitment as a critical step to boost recruitment efforts. Indeed, although entities proposed a range of actions to support expanded recruitment of staff with disabilities, there was notable convergence on the three most important: 1) greater access to assistive technology (recommended by 72%), 2) a top management commitment to the recruitment of persons with disabilities (66%), and 3) disability awareness training for recruiters and senior staff (69%).

Figure 12. Helpful hiring strategies



Such a top-level approach to recruitment has been adopted by UNICEF. UNICEF’s Executive Directive requires all vacancy announcements include a positive reference on the organization’s policy for the employment of persons



with disabilities. The UNICEF careers page explicitly includes persons with disabilities in its diversity and inclusion statement and in a sample of descriptions of current vacancies. UNICEF also provides potential applicants with a thorough overview of employment core competencies, including a sub-section on functional competencies, thereby promoting transparency and enabling job-seekers with disabilities to determine whether his/her/their disability would require reasonable accommodations and/or prohibit them from performing the duties.

UNICEF's policy also touches on supplementary recruitment and hiring strategies, including targeted advertising and outreach to disability networks and organizations, and includes a commitment that the Division of Human Resources will ensure applicants have the opportunity to request reasonable accommodations for both interviews and assessments.

UNDP is another example of an entity that blends policy and practice by coupling its disability-inclusive diversity strategy with internships and volunteer programs that target individuals with disabilities. In the coming months, as part of the UNDP-United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities, a number of offices will be joined by diverse groups of UN volunteers with disabilities. This new programme is part of a larger, coordinated effort to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and to build a talent pipeline of highly qualified professionals who can contribute to the attainment of the SDGs at national and global levels. Additionally, UNDP models targeted outreach via collaborative relationships with Gallaudet University and the Duskin Ainowa Foundation.

Non-inclusive recruitment practices have the potential to discourage qualified applicants with disabilities. Twenty-four percent of UN entities identified "lack of qualified applicants" as a barrier to hiring persons with disabilities. However, the prevalence of non-inclusive practices in recruitment suggests qualified applicants with disabilities may be discouraged from applying for open posts within the UN. For example, although the UN Careers website cites diversity as "one of the defining features of the United Nations",⁵⁰ there is no mention of equal opportunity employment, nor are there disclaimers regarding non-discrimination that are commonly found on job postings and announcements. A comparative review of a sample of individual entity career pages found that while many mirrored the main UN Careers site and failed to include non-

⁵⁰ UN Careers (2018) Retrieved from: <https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=WWLF>

discrimination language, some like UNHCR and UN Women (2018), incorporated disability into broader diversity and inclusion statements.

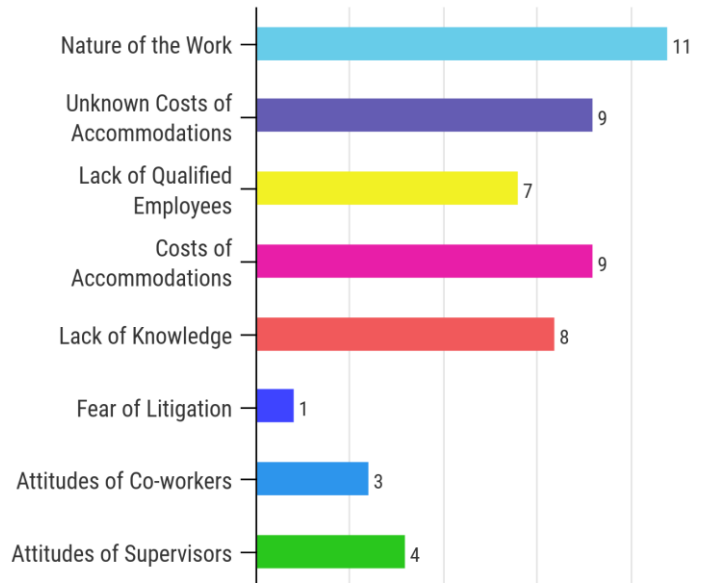
In addition, appointment with the United Nations is conditional on successful completion of a medical examination and medical clearance from the United Nations Medical Director or designated medical officer. The exam is intended to confirm that “candidates are physically and mentally fit to perform the functions for which they have been selected”.⁵¹ Because the exam is conditional upon any appointment with the UN, it creates the potential for a blanket exclusion of persons with disabilities who may be highly qualified for employment in most, if not all, positions or who may be entitled to accommodations to fulfill their duties.

Data from both the institutional assessments and the Staff Union Survey revealed stigma and negative perceptions of persons with disabilities may also play a role in the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities. In comparing the data from the Staff Union Survey to that from the Institutional Assessment, there is a clear division of responses between employees who participated in the staff survey and entity representatives completing the Institutional Assessment. For example, when asked about barriers to hiring people with disabilities, respondents were asked to indicate whether attitudes of co-workers and/or supervisors were a barrier to employing persons with disabilities. Of the 29 responding entities, 10% reported co-worker attitudes were a factor, and 13% identified the attitudes of supervisors as impacting recruitment and retention. This is radically different from the Staff Union responses where 76% of participants believe employees with disabilities face prejudice in the workplace.

The UNCTs who participated in the survey reported similar challenges in hiring persons with disabilities but at different rates. Figure 12 illustrates the differences between responses by entities at headquarters and UNCTs. In both cases, a lack of knowledge relating to disability, concerns over unknown costs of accommodation, and the (mis)perception that persons with disabilities are not qualified candidates present significant barriers to recruitment.

⁵¹ United Nations Medical Clearance for Employment.

Figure 12. UN entity challenges in hiring persons with disabilities



There is no system-wide policy to provide benefits to employees with disabilities, including those who are required to incur additional costs for travel, assistive equipment or technology, accessible housing, or personal assistants. The absence of such a policy is notable as the UN does provide benefits to cover tuition expenses for children of UN staff, moving costs for those required to move for their job, and a maternity benefit for mothers of newborns. Close to two-thirds of respondents identified assistive technology as the most important mechanism for improving retention and advancement rates of persons with disabilities.

Given the international nature of much of the UN's work, it is also notable that few entities have policies in place to ensure nondiscrimination against employees with disabilities in the course of field work, particularly with respect to transportation, accessibility of office facilities, especially toilets, accommodation, and security, among others. OHCHR is one of the only entities to have included a policy to facilitate field mission travel for staff with disabilities in its response to the institutional assessment. The policy recognizes the importance of international travel for all staff, including staff with disabilities, and calls for a series of actions to ensure staff with disabilities have accessible facilities and transportation, are accounted for in all security and evacuation plans, and can exercise flexible working hours as necessary. The policy further requires administrators to calculate the Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA), taking into account whatever additional costs staff with disabilities incur to meet

support requirements. To the extent field work is an essential part of many UN staff positions, working with employees with disabilities to reduce or eliminate barriers to their participation in field missions is likely to have a significant impact on their ability to succeed and advance in their work.

Almost no UN entities track progress on recruitment or retention of employees with disabilities or disaggregate what data is available on employees with disabilities by gender or disability. Even those entities which do have policies or disability-inclusive diversity statements do not have mechanisms in place to collect, track, and report data on the recruitment or retention of employees with disabilities. When asked whether they track the number of employees with disabilities, only three entities (UNHCR, UNDP, and UNPBSO) responded yes, and just two of these (UNHCR and UNDP) indicated this data is disaggregated by gender and type of impairment. The remaining respondents cited a number of barriers to tracking and reporting this information, including absence of a system, compliance with Secretariat-wide HR policy that does not require data collection, the need to respect employee privacy, and reluctance of employees to self-identify as having a disability.

With support from the Human Resources Network and representatives of the staff federations including CCISUA, and in response to the global survey of staff referenced above, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) has developed a diversity policy that adopts a broad definition of diversity to include disability and seeks to secure a UN workforce that “is diverse from a variety of perspectives, including...with regard to persons with disabilities”.⁵²

The proposed policy is notable for its inclusion of indicators to track the percentage of persons with disabilities who are recruited into the UN workforce and the reduction of barriers to career development for staff with disabilities. However, individual entities will still be responsible for tracking and reporting data. This requires a system-wide shift toward inclusive workplaces where disability is regarded not as an exclusively medical issue, but as just one part of an employee’s identity. Leadership must also have the tools, resources, and supportive attitudes necessary to promote disclosure and to then provide employees with disabilities with the necessary accommodations.

⁵² International Civil Service Commission, Framework for human resources management update on diversity and gender. (14 May 2018).

3.3.3 Reasonable Accommodation

A small minority of entities have formal policies on reasonable accommodation, and there is little consistency in how employees with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations across the UN system. The lack of consistency combined with a lack of accountability often results in persons with disabilities not being provided the supports they need to be successful within the workplace.

Only 4 of 29 entities have adopted a formal policy on reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, although just under half (48.3%) reported they do provide accommodations to their staff. In many cases, reasonable accommodations are provided on an ad-hoc basis. For example, ECLAC, which does not have a reasonable accommodation policy, has provided accommodations, including special access and parking spaces, larger screens for an employee with diminished eyesight, a change of carpets for a staff member with crutches, hand supports upon medical request, among others. The absence of a policy, however, makes it difficult to ensure that accommodations are provided fairly and consistently throughout different departments and offices.

Equally as concerning, most of the entities and Country Teams indicated that reasonable accommodations are provided to employees with disabilities only to the extent available funding allows. Given the fixed budget and limited resources of each entity, relying on “available funding” is not a sustainable practice for promoting disability-inclusive workplaces. The actual and perceived cost of providing reasonable accommodations was among the top barriers identified by respondents (31%) to recruiting and retaining staff with disabilities. This may be attributed in part to the fact that the majority of entities 27/29 do not have a specific budget allocated to providing necessary accommodations.

In order for reasonable accommodations to be provided with consistency and transparency, policies must take into account the related costs. For example, ILO has both a policy and a reasonable accommodation reserve fund that was established in 2010-2011. The reserve sets aside resources for reasonable accommodations deemed necessary to enable a person with disabilities to enter into, and remain, in employment within the entity. In another example, UNICEF’s policy is backed by a \$50,000 USD fund sourced from the institutional budget.

By comparison, the Secretary General's bulletin on employing persons with disabilities calls on entities to take “appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination on disability” but notes that “such measures must be taken within existing resources or with any additional resources approved for this purpose by the General Assembly”.⁵³ A lack of communal resources, coupled with conflicting or absent information on the costs associated with providing reasonable accommodations, combine to make it more difficult for individual offices to implement the SGB's mandate. This is reflected in the Staff Union Survey, where employees with disabilities reported they have not been provided with the necessary reasonable accommodations to perform their duties on par with colleagues without disabilities.

It should also be noted that while it's true the costs associated with providing reasonable accommodations may at times require entities to re-allocate funding for large-scale projects related to physical accessibility and/or assistive technology, these are often one-time costs. For example, installing ramps or handrails comes at a cost, but with regular maintenance, should not require continuous investment; the same can be said for upgrading software and/or shared technology. In contrast, data from the Staff Union Survey suggests that the vast majority of accommodations requested but not provided can be made with minimal or no fiscal impact. This includes shifting policies to allow for service animals, preferential parking or seating, and flexible work arrangements or telecommuting.

3.3.4 Training and technical capacity

There is inconsistent use of mechanisms to ensure UN entities and UNCTs have the guidance, training, and support they need for UN activities to be made fully inclusive. The institutional assessment asked a series of questions relating to technical capacity as one way to assess internal expertise on the CRPD, inclusive development, and issues relating to disability and to better understand UN staff capacity, roles, and responsibilities. The presence of disability focal points or working groups is one indicator used to measure technical capacity. Of the 29 entities that responded to the institutional assessment, just over half, 51% reported they have a disability focal point and/or working group which is responsible for leading or managing disability-related programming or policy development. Some of those entities that did not have a focal point or working group did report having one or more staff members or teams that support

⁵³ [ST/SGB/2014/3, 2014](#), pg. 1

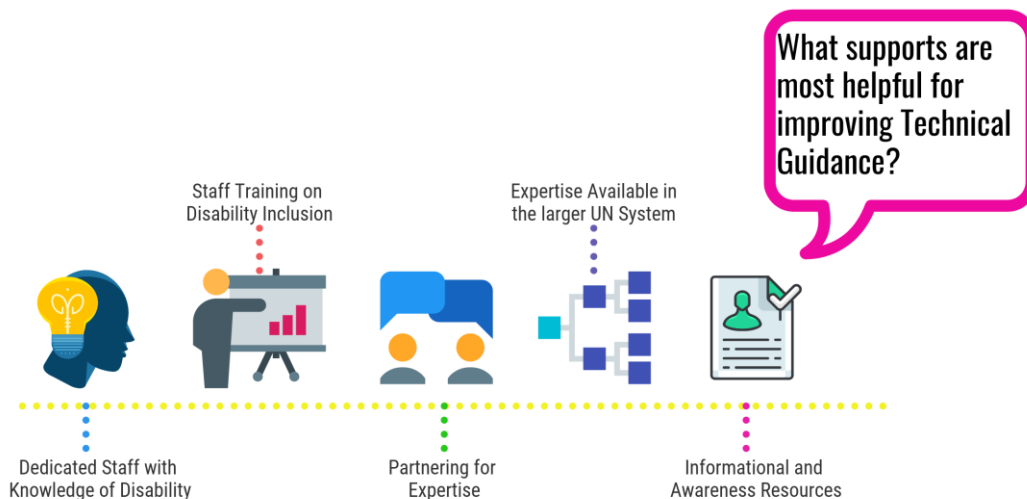
disability inclusion among their other responsibilities, but who would not be considered a “lead”.

Where entities did have a disability focal point, responses provided varying amounts of information regarding the scope and extent of their respective responsibilities and authority. In at least one case, the Department of Management within the UN Secretariat, a disability focal point had been appointed, but there was no formal mandate for action, limiting this person’s effectiveness.

Having dedicated staff with particularized knowledge relating to disability inclusion and/or available expertise were both cited by respondents as important mechanisms to improve their ability to support greater inclusion.

Of the 29 UN entities and 22 UNCTs who responded to the survey, 55% and 38% respectively stated they received training related to disability within the last twelve months. Figure 12 shows a few of the topics covered during these trainings. UN staff report that additional technical guidance, training, and tools would be helpful to better promote disability-inclusive development across sectors. Figure 12 shows the types of additional support requested by UN staff.

Figure 13. Supports reported to be the most helpful for improving technical guidance



As Figure 13 illustrates, many respondents cited staff training on disability inclusion as a valuable means to improve technical capacity.

The UNRWA offers a disability training based on the Disability Inclusion Guidelines,⁵⁴ which were developed as a means to fight stigma and discrimination related to persons with disabilities among UNRWA staff. Similarly, ILO provides the Disability Equality Training, which seeks to raise awareness on disability rights among staff from different departments. The DET has now been made a preliminary requirement of PRPD-funded programmes, so many of the ILO's disability-specific projects have included a DET for the different project partners and other relevant stakeholders (i.e., social partners and media). The Disability Equality Training–Training of Facilitators has now been included in the annual training offer from International Training Centre of the ILO.

Figure 14. Sample of disability-related training topics covered for UN staff



3.3.5 Accessibility

Although concerted efforts have been made to reduce environmental and communication barriers to inclusion at the headquarters level, at the country level there have been minimal efforts made to promote and ensure accessibility. Accessibility is the foundation of inclusion for employees with disabilities within the UN system; this includes physical access to buildings, meetings, and country offices as well as access to information via accessible communications. Data on accessibility was collected via multiple sources, including institutional assessment responses and supporting artifacts from UN

⁵⁴ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. (2017). *Disability Inclusion Guidelines*. Retrieved from https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/disability_inclusion_guidelines.pdf

entities and UNCTs; employee perspectives from the Global Staff Union Survey; communications with the Department of Management (DM) and its Office of Human Resources Management; and publically available web content and reporting.

At the headquarters level, the UN has made a concerted effort towards improving accessibility. The Department of Management, which serves as the operations arm of the UN Secretariat and is responsible for managing headquarters' facilities, reports that in addition to the 2013 substantial completion of the Capital Master Plan (CMP), which aligned the physical space of headquarters with local accessibility codes. The DM is currently improving wheelchair accessibility in the General Assembly Hall, with an estimated completion date of September 2018. The DM also noted that as part of the UN's continuous improvement approach, a comprehensive accessibility review of headquarters is underway and initial findings are scheduled to be available for review in quarter four of 2018. The benefits of improved accessibility extend beyond employees with disabilities. Visitors to UN Headquarters, including aging populations, families with children in strollers, and others with health issues and limited mobility also benefit from a more physically accessible, inclusive UN.

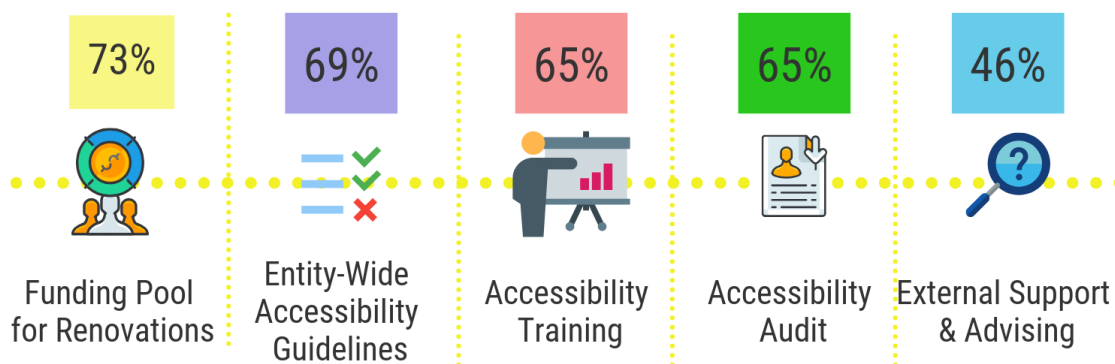
The Department of Management also reports efforts to improve access to information, including ensuring that DM administrative and other official documents are presented in multiple accessible formats that can be easily read by assistive technology devices and programs, including screen readers and braille devices. Additionally, the DM highlighted continuous collaboration with the UN Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) aimed at implementing best practices in the production and formatting of documents to ensure optimal accessibility. Department of Management efforts also extend to website and application accessibility. In 2017, the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) established a contract with a commercial vendor specializing in aligning websites and applications with web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG). These services have been used to support the completion of a number of priority projects, including adding accessibility features to the UN Careers Portal and the Inspira (job) application process. Additional modifications have been made to improve the accessibility of the online Assessment and Examination platform used to evaluate applicants.

The Department of Management's progress within the areas of accessibility is promising; however, employee feedback obtained via the Global Staff Survey suggests a lack of consistency and continuity in implementing measures to

improve accessibility across entity offices. Several questions elicited a number of responses from both employees with disabilities and employees without disabilities that point to the lack of accessibility and/or reasonable accommodations as a barrier for employees with disabilities. Specific comments include references to inaccessible facilities, including restrooms, hallways, and personal workspaces. It should be noted that Global Staff Survey data is not disaggregated by employee location, thus it is unclear whether employee respondents are located in facilities managed by the Department of Management. However, data from the Institutional Assessments clearly indicates ongoing accessibility issues in nearly half of responding UNCT offices.

When asked, “What tools or resources would be most helpful in improving accessibility within the entity?”, 73% of entities indicated that a funding pool for renovations would be most helpful, followed by entity-wide accessibility guidelines (69%), accessibility training (65%), an accessibility audit (65%), and outside advisement for improvements (46%). Figure 15 illustrates the types of resources requested by UN entities.

Figure 15. Requested resources for improving accessibility within the UN entity



While a few UNCTs provided examples of progress towards accessibility (China and Vietnam), and others report ongoing efforts to ensure future buildings and office spaces are accessible (South Africa and Senegal), a number of UNCTs identified persistent issues related to physical access. Of the 22 UNCTs that responded to the assessment, 10 identified accessibility challenges faced by employees with disabilities. Issues vary based on geographical location and are agency-specific; however, examples include lack of accessible restrooms (UN House, Botswana), and lack of consistency across agencies with regard to accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, elevators, and signage (Cambodia and Cote D'Ivoire).

Interestingly, when asked whether “UN offices are accessible to persons with disabilities”, two Institutional Assessment respondents noted a lack of formal system-wide policy within their responses. This is an important data point as it mirrors findings related to the importance of policy as a tool to ensure consistent, equitable implementation of inclusive safeguards for employees with disabilities.

3.3.6 Training and Management Support

Although the majority of UN entities report providing employee training related to disabilities, there continues to be a general lack of disability awareness amongst UN staff which impacts employment practices. System-wide knowledge of disability is critical to ensuring that current and prospective employees have access to the same level of opportunity as their colleagues without disabilities. Just over half of responding entities (55.2%) reported they provide training to employees on how to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in their everyday work.

Methods and curricula vary and include web-based/e-trainings, new-hire trainings, and self-paced modular learning that focuses on developing a general understanding of disability (i.e. disability awareness, disability etiquette and skill building, and commitment to promoting dignity and inclusion for persons with disabilities), as well as targeted trainings related to interviewing and hiring without bias. WHO also provides a number of tangible resources and checklists that can be used by individuals across entities. Unfortunately, while there are solid examples of disability-related training good practices (WHO, ILO, and UNDP), 31% of entities indicated a lack of knowledge is a contributing factor in hiring employees with disabilities. Throughout the data, training is repeatedly mentioned as an unmet need. For example, 68% of entities identified disability awareness training as a strategy for improving hiring. Additionally, 48% of entities said that disability training would improve retention and advancement.

Leadership is critical to ensuring successful inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace, and data from both the Employee Staff Union Survey and the Institutional Assessment point to the need for increased understanding and accountability from managers, supervisors, and those in decision-making roles. In response to Institutional Assessment questions related to improving the hiring of persons with disabilities, 65% cited a need for commitment from management, while more than half of Staff Union Survey respondents (51%)

identified supervisors, managers, and leadership as the individuals whose attitudes towards, and understanding of, people with disabilities needs to change. The same source includes troubling narratives from employees with disabilities related to stigma and attitudinal barriers, lack of opportunities for advancement, and failure to provide reasonable accommodations. For example, one respondent expressed concerns that the needs related to an acquired disability were not being met, by stating, “My supervisors don’t take my disability into account, and I am expected to perform exactly as before”. According to the summary of findings, this is not an isolated incident and this response “demonstrates a sense of indifference towards disability on the part of management, particularly unseen disabilities (as reported by 27% of respondents with disabilities) or sensory disabilities (reported by 6.25%)”.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Staff Union Survey, 2018, pg. 3.

Annexes

- A. Methodology
- B. Findings Index

Annex A: Methodology

Data was collected both at headquarters and country-level using a multi-method approach which included a preliminary desk review, written questionnaires or institutional assessments, key informant interviews, consultations with organizations representing persons with disabilities, and analysis of data gathered by reliable third-party sources.

Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), Department of Management (DM), Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), Inter-Agency Support Group on Disability (IASG), UN Staff Union, as well as UN DESA. In addition, written questionnaires were completed by the HLCM, the DM, and the DPKO. Additional written materials were provided by the UNPRPD and the UN Staff Union.

Institutional assessments were sent to the 40 members of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and a sample of 40 UN Country Teams (UNCTs). The assessments were completed and returned by twenty-nine members of the UNSDG and twenty-two UNCTs. It is important to note that the countries were not a random sampling, although efforts were made to ensure geographic and income representation, yet a sampling of countries who were known to have worked on disability issues in the field.

Exhibit 1. List of UNSDG Respondents

Respondents from Members of the UNSDG	
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
ILO	International Labor Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNOCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPBSO	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

Exhibit 2. Country Offices Surveyed and Responded

Country Offices Surveyed	
Afghanistan	Kazakhstan
Albania*	Kenya*
Algeria	Libya
Bangladesh	Madagascar*
Bolivia	Moldova
Bosnia	Nepal*
Botswana*	Nigeria
Brazil	Palestine
Cambodia*	Papua New Guinea*
China*	Paraguay*
Cote d'Ivoire*	Senegal*
Cuba*	Serbia*
Ecuador*	Somalia
Ethiopia	South Africa*
Fiji	Sri Lanka*
Guatemala	Sudan
Haiti	Thailand*
India*	UAE*
Jamaica	Ukraine*
Jordan*	Vietnam*

* country responded to assessment

Exhibit 3. Assessments Received by Region

Region	# of Countries	Representation in Sample
Latin America	3	14%
Africa	6	27%
Middle East and Northern Africa	2	9%
Eastern Europe	3	14%
Asia/Pacific	8	36%

Exhibit 4. Assessments Received by Income Level

Income Level	# of Countries	Representation in Sample
Low-Income Country (LIC)	3	14%
Low-and Middle-Income Country	10	45%
High- and Middle-Income Country	9	41%

The areas of study focused on leadership, policy and planning, programming, technical capacity, capacity building, data disaggregation, financial resource allocation, employment, accessibility, and institutional culture within the UN System. It is important to note that an examination of the role and efforts of Member States in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities was outside the scope of this study and should be included in future studies.

In addition, the data collected was of self-report. Future work should include triangulation of data points through community-based reporting and impact studies.

Annex B. Findings Index

Supporting data for the report findings can be found within the following sections of this report:

- Top- level Leadership** (see pgs. 25, 45-46, 49, 56-57)
- Capacity** (see pgs. 27-28, 35-36, 51-53, 44, 56-57)
- Inclusive programs and plans** (see pgs. 14-26)
- Accessibility** (see pgs. 42-44, 48-51, 53-56)
- Human Resources** (see pgs. 15, 41-52)
- Funding & Procurement** (see pgs. 14, 27-29, 31, 37-39)
- Participation** (21-22, 28-31, 36, 39-40)
- Accountability** (pgs. 19-20, 26, 29-30, 32-35, 38-39, 41-43)