



UNITED NATIONS
MALDIVES



DISABILITY INCLUSION STRATEGY

2020 - 2024



FOREWORD

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious and universal commitment by all UN Member States, to work in partnership for a world where no one is left behind. This ambition for 2030 can only be achieved with the full and meaningful participation of everyone.

COVID-19 has highlighted disparities, and clearly demonstrated the need for more robust and inclusive national systems, in societies across the world. As we build back better, this presents a rare opportunity for ensuring that we include and hear all voices when we develop new policies and plan services to ensure meaningful inclusion of all vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities in our societies.

Disability inclusion can only become sustainable when organizations with the potential to positively influence these policies and services also walk the talk. The United Nations holds core to its charter the values of equality and equity, and advocates to Governments and partners for implementing these principles through relevant mechanisms, strategies and policies on the ground. It is in this spirit that the UN family has anchored disability inclusion at all levels of our work in the Maldives.

Guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the Disability Inclusion Strategy of the UN Maldives details measures and indicators to ensure that policies, programmes and operations of UN entities supporting the Maldives are inclusive. This will be facilitated by learning and improving our practices, and by proactive partnering with Organizations of Person with Disabilities (OPDs), and persons with disabilities to take into account and benefit from their contributions.

The Disability Inclusion Strategy is the UN Maldives collective commitment and singular ambition to lead by example to bring transformative and systematic change within our work to ensure no one is left behind.



Ms. Catherine Haswell
United Nations Resident Coordinator



SITUATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE MALDIVES

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over 15% percent of the world population lives with some form of a disability, out of which between 2-4% people experience significant difficulties in functioning. The first ever disability screening in the Maldives was undertaken in 1981 which found that there were 1,390 **(1)** persons with disabilities, comprising 0.9 percent of the population, however the actual number may have been much higher. In a more recent study **(2)** conducted by the International Centre for Evidence in Disability (2016), the prevalence rate for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Maldives was estimated at 6.8% of the population. This study further found that PWDs in the Maldives are at risk of being left behind from progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) domains, including in combatting income poverty, food insecurity and exclusion from health, education, work and social participation, and vulnerability to violence. Inclusion is the core of all fundamental rights which addresses empowerment and participation of PWD's in all aspects of development.

Similar to many places across the globe, the stigma of disability leads to PWDs being marginalized and excluded from mainstream society. Given the geographic characteristics of the Maldives and limitation in accessible transport options, PWDs are confined to the small islands where they are born, without access to proper health care, education, social services or opportunities for growth.

An Inclusive Education Policy formulated in 2013, together with the Quality Indicators for Child-friendly “Baraabar” Schools developed with support from UNICEF, Maldives had made vast improvements in major urban areas toward the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the general education classroom. However past generations of children with disabilities who now are in working age group have lived without formal education, and some children with disabilities currently living in remote islands do not have access to quality and appropriate education. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in the Maldives also highlight that family caregivers of PWDs, particularly adult PWDs, are neglected in the development of policies and communication.

Maldives is party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The legal framework in the Maldives has been developed to create opportunities for PWDs in accessing their rights and receiving services. The Constitution provides every Maldivian citizen equal access and provision of their rights without discrimination due to their differences. The Employment Act, Sexual Offences Act, and the Penal Code include provisions for PWDs.

Above all, the most important legally binding document that addresses the rights of PWDs is the “Disability Act”.

Enacted in 2010, the Disability Act articulates the rights of PWDs in education, health, employment, transportation, legal and social protection, among other rights and provision of services, with corresponding penalties for violations of their rights.

Yet, OPDs in the country highlights that the country has lagged behind in the implementation of these legislation, and much work is still needed to enforce its operationalization.



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(1) Baseline Assessment on Activities Addressing Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <http://www.hrcm.org.mv/publications/otherreports/DisabilityReport13April2010.pdf>

(2) <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/5/2066/html>

UNITED NATIONS DISABILITY INCLUSION STRATEGY (UNDIS)

The Secretary-General launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) **(3)** in June 2019 as part of his commitment to make the United Nations an inclusive organization for all. The strategy provides the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights, and development. It provides a framework for enabling the UN system to support the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international human rights instruments, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Agenda for Humanity and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The UNDIS establishes a vision and commitment for the UN system for including persons with disabilities into the development agenda, with benchmarks to assess progress and accelerate change on disability inclusion.

The UNDIS is based on three over-arching approaches to achieve disability inclusion.

They are:

1. **Twin-Track Approach:**

First track – as a cross cutting issue, mainstreaming disability inclusion across all areas of UNs work. Second track – targeted programming on Disability inclusion

2. **Intersectionality:**

Taking into consideration factors such as gender, age and location which inform an individual's experience and have an impact on people's with disabilities

3. **Coordination:**

Undertaking a coherent and coordinated system wide approach that builds on each UN agencies work to achieve inclusion

(3) United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (Annex 1)

The UN DIS has **Four Core Areas of Responsibility:**

LEADERSHIP, STRATEGIC PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

- Senior leadership champions disability inclusion;
- Strategic planning that takes into account people with disabilities;
- Development of disability-specific policies or strategies;
- Establishment of teams or individuals with knowledge and expertise on disability inclusion.

INCLUSIVENESS

- Closely consulting and actively involving persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all works done by UN;
- Ensuring full accessibility for all—to UN buildings & facilities, workspaces, information & communications, conferences and events—with specific measures, equipment & services to achieve it.

PROGRAMMING

- Supporting disability-inclusive programming through practical guidance;
- Developing joint initiatives to leverage system wide strengths and accelerate progress;
- Undertaking evaluations to review progress made in this area.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- Evolving the UN's internal systems in order to attract, recruit, retain & promote persons with disabilities in the UN workforce;
- Building the capacities of UN staff to understand disability inclusion;
- Developing UN communications to promote the rights of people with disabilities and raise awareness on disability inclusion.

LOCALIZING THE UN DISABILITY INCLUSION TO THE MALDIVES

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in the Maldives undertook the task to contextualize the UNDIS to the Maldives to ensure country level implementation and reporting on the Strategy and to mainstream the UNCT accountability scorecard **(4)** on disability inclusion into the UN's work in the country. Led by the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), series of meeting with OPDs active in the country were held to identify the key challenges and bottlenecks for PWDs in the country and to find ways to improve disability inclusion by the UN in the Maldives. Furthermore using the UNCT accountability scorecard on disability inclusion, a review of the UN's operations in the country was conducted to develop a baseline for disability inclusion in the UNCT.

The Global UN Disability Inclusion Strategy provides overarching guidance for this local strategy to ensure transformative progress for disability inclusion in the work of UN in the Maldives. This local strategy acts as an implementation tool with actions to achieve the Global UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

OPDs in the Maldives have welcomed signs of increasing engagement by UN entities with the organizations and PWDs on issues related to disability. They also highlighted improved efforts by UN entities to ensure inclusive communication in their public campaigns and messaging. However, the OPDs noted that there was limited-to-no engagement with the organizations or PWDs unless disability is explicitly mentioned in a project or programme. The OPDs consulted for the strategy development noted that voices and perspective of PWDs should be included in overall UN programme design and implementation. Furthermore OPDs noted the need to ensure programmes on disability inclusion are not gender blind, and that disaggregated data is included on this area.

The review of UN entities found that while a number of ad hoc initiatives have been undertaken to improve disability inclusion in the country, a strategic level effort to ensure disability inclusion at the UNCT level has not been undertaken. The baseline for UN Maldives under the UNCT accountability scorecard on disability inclusion is therefore below the requirement in majority of the areas.

ACHIEVING DISABILITY INCLUSION IN UN MALDIVES

In order to achieve disability inclusion in the work of UN in the Maldives, the UNCT will take targeted actions to achieve the requirements of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, and increase ambition to exceed expectations in some areas of the strategy.

The UN Maldives Disability Inclusion Strategy will be implemented for 4 years (2021 – 2024) following the same timeline of the global strategy and will be reviewed after 2 years, and regularly updated. The UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion will be used each year to measure the progress of implementation of the strategy and identify key areas for dedicated attention. The targeted actions to achieve disability inclusion in the UN Maldives are linked to the UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion and its indicators (provided below).

An advisory committee consisting of OPDs, PWDs and technical experts on Disability Inclusion will be formed to provide technical inputs to UN programmes. The Committee will meet annually during the first quarter of each year to consult with the UNCT on the implementation of Disability Inclusion Strategy and contribute to the joint annual work planning process.



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CORE AREA 1: LEADERSHIP, STRATEGIC PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Indicator No	Targeted Actions	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Responsible
CORE AREA 1: LEADERSHIP, STRATEGIC PLANNING & MANAGEMENT						
1.1 LEADERSHIP Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2022)	1.1.1 UN Joint Communication Strategy includes measures for UNCT to collectively advocate for Disability Inclusion	X	X	X	X	UNCG
	1.1.2 An agenda item on update on UNDIS implementation, and update on Situation of Persons with Disability in the country included in UNCT meeting once a year	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	1.1.3 Disability inclusion in both programming and operations is reflected in the RC/UNCT joint work plan and performance appraisal system		X	X	X	UNCT
1.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING Baseline: Meets Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2021)	1.2.1 Include Analysis of Situation of Person with Disabilities in the Common Country Analysis (CCA)	X				UNRCO
	1.2.2 Includes analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities in the majority of its thematic areas in the CCA	X				
	1.2.3 Periodic update of the CCA includes data and analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities	X				UNRCO
1.3 UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Meets Requirement (2021)	1.3.1 UNCT's explicitly commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities in the Cooperation Framework	X				UNCT
	1.3.2 Disability inclusion is visibly mainstreamed in at least one of the Cooperation Framework outcome areas and its joint workplans	X	X			UNRCO
	1.3.3 Cooperation Framework outcome indicators are disaggregated by disability, sex and age to the extent possible	X				UNRCO
1.4 SET-UP AND COORDINATION Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2023)	1.4.1 An advisory committee for UNCT on Disability Inclusion is formed which includes, OPDs, PWDs, and technical persons in the field	X				UNRCO
	1.4.2 Meetings held with the advisory committee in relation to the formulation and review of Common Country Analysis, Cooperation Framework, Joint workplans and evaluations of UN's work	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	1.4.3 Organizations of persons with disabilities are part of an existing UN coordination mechanism (such as the Joint National/UN Steering Committee)		X			UNCT

CORE AREA 2: INCLUSIVENESS

Indicator No	Targeted Actions	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Responsible
CORE AREA 2: INCLUSIVENESS						
2.1 CONSULTATION WITH ORGANIZATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES Baseline: Missing (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2023)	2.1.1 The UNCT convenes at least an annual consultation with OPDs on UNDIS implementation	X	X	X	X	UNCT
	2.1.2 OPDs participate in key consultations throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, including on the CCA, Cooperation Framework and evaluations	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	2.1.3 OPDs are consulted in the emergency risk and needs assessments, preparedness and response planning processes	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	2.1.4 UNCT has a formal partnership with OPDs in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework		X			UNCT
2.2 ACCESSIBILITY Baseline: Missing (2020) Target: Meets Requirement (2021)	2.2.1 OMT conducts a baseline accessibility assessment of UN entities premises and services (ICT, communication, transportation, emergency procedures)	X				OMT
	2.2.2 Mechanism developed across UN entities to ensure proper record keeping of reasonable accommodation requests and their provision	X		X		OMT
	2.2.3 An accessibility plan for UN premises and services is adopted within the Cooperation Framework cycle	X				OMT
2.3 INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2024)	2.3.1 A review of UN entities procurement guidelines and practices undertaken to ensure they consider accessibility in the procurement of external venues, goods and services	X				OMT
	2.3.2 Accessibility is included as a criteria in the periodic review of UN authorized external venues, including accommodations	X	X	X	X	OMT
	2.3.3. OMT establishes and meets a target for accessibility as a mandatory criterion in the procurement of venues, goods and services					OMT

CORE AREA 3: PROGRAMMING

Indicator No	Targeted Actions	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Responsible
CORE AREA 3: PROGRAMMING						
3.1 JOINT PROGRAMMES Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2024)	3.1.1 UNRCO to ensure that disability inclusion is mainstreamed in majority of new joint programmes/projects developed	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	3.1.2 UNRCO to identify and propose practical measures on disability inclusion that could be integrated into some existing joint programmes/projects	X	X			UNRCO
	3.1.3 A joint programme on disability inclusion is developed and implemented under the Cooperation Framework cycle			X		UNRCO
	Monitoring and reporting of disability-inclusive joint programmes/projects include results and/or impact for persons with disabilities		X			UNRCO
3.2 DATA Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2023)	3.2.1 Report on data and data gaps on persons with disabilities in national statistical sources mapped and recommendation developed	X				UNRCO
	3.2.2 A UNCT Partnership with National Bureau of Statistic Developed to work with data on Persons with Disability	X	X			UNRCO
	3.2.3 UNCT ensures that majority of capacity building initiatives for national statistical offices take into account disability		X			UNRCO
3.3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Meets Requirement (2023)	3.3.1 Specific section included in the Cooperation Framework annual report to assesses progress against specific disability-inclusion results		X			UNRCO
	3.3.2 At least one training on data/indicators to measure disability inclusion conducted to M&E focal points of UN entities during the Cooperation Framework cycle			X		UNRCO
3.4 HUMANITARIAN Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Meets Requirement (2022)	3.4.1 UNCT ensures that the emergency preparedness and response plan explicitly mentions how the response will address the specific risks faced by persons with disabilities and disaggregate data by disability to the extent possible		X			UNRCO

CORE AREA 4: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Indicator No	Targeted Actions	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Responsible
CORE AREA 4: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE						
4.1 EMPLOYMENT Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2023)	4.1.1 A review of the non-discrimination employment statement of the UN entities is conducted to ensure they explicitly refers to persons with disabilities	X				OMT, UNCG
	4.1.2 UN entities vacancy announcements reviewed to ensure they explicitly encourage persons with disabilities to apply	X				OMT, UNCG
	4.1.3 Targeted measures identified by UNCT that can ensure vacancy announcements reach persons with disabilities	X				OMT
	4.1.4 A review of the disability status of UN employees and consultants undertaken at least once in the Cooperation Framework cycle			X		OMT
4.2 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR UN STAFF Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2024)	4.2.1 A review of UN entities Training and learning resources undertaken to ensure that learning on disability inclusion are available to UNCT staff (self-learning online, or workshop)	X				UNRCO
	4.2.2 One inter-agency training on disability inclusion is conducted annually in collaboration with OPDs	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	4.2.3 Sign Language training conducted to UN staff together with relevant OPDs	X	X			UNRCO
	4.2.4 Training and Refreshers conducted to UN staff annually on measures to ensure publicly available materials accessible	X	X	X	X	UNRCO
	4.2.5. A majority of UNCT staff, including a majority of senior staff, participates in training on disability inclusion within the Cooperation Framework cycle		X	X	X	UNRCO
4.3 COMMUNICATION Baseline: Approaches Requirement (2020) Target: Exceeds Requirement (2024)	4.3.1 Ensure that majority of mainstream UN communications reflect persons with disabilities	X	X	X	X	UNCG
	4.3.2 UN Communication Group's annual workplan integrates human rights of persons with disabilities into UNCT advocacy and communications	X	X	X	X	UNCG
	4.3.3 A communications campaign on disability inclusion is undertaken at least once in the Cooperation Framework cycle			X		UNCG
	4.3.4 A guidance note with minimum standards developed to ensure all UNCTs communication and public message are Disability Inclusive		X			UNCG

OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION OF UN MALDIVES DISABILITY INCLUSION STRATEGY

The overall coordination of the UN Maldives Disability Inclusion Strategy resides with the UN Resident Coordinator in the Maldives.

UN entities and the respective inter-agency groups who are working in the Maldives are encouraged to actively report on the development made at agency level on Disability Inclusion. The UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion will be used each year to measure the progress of implementation of the strategy and identify key areas for dedicated attention. UN Disability Focal Point will ensure that results related to Disability Inclusion are captured.

[Annex 1: UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#)

[Annex 2: UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion](#)

Annex 3:

Consultation meetings using a focused set of questions framed around the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and the UNCT accountability scorecard on Disability Inclusion was held with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and relevant government agencies were held in the development of the strategy.

List of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities that were consulted

1. Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC)
2. Beautiful Eyes Downs Syndrome Association
3. Blind and Visually Impaired Society of Maldives (BVISM)
4. CARE Society
5. Maldives Association of Persons with Disabilities (MAPD)
6. Maldives Autism Association
7. Maldives Deaf Association