

**We Matter.  
We Belong.  
We Decide.**

UNFPA Disability  
Inclusion Strategy

2022-2025





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# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AAP</b>	Accountability to Affected Populations
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>HNO</b>	Humanitarian Needs Overview
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>LNOB</b>	Leaving no one behind
<b>OPD</b>	Organization of persons with disabilities
<b>RFB</b>	Reaching the furthest behind
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Teams
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDIS</b>	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNPRPD</b>	United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>UNSMS</b>	UN Security Management System



# Introduction



**We Matter.** UNFPA works to ensure persons with disabilities are leading efforts to make the world more inclusive and are championing equal rights and a life free from violence. The UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy puts persons with disabilities at the very centre of everything UNFPA does. Disability inclusion means making the work of UNFPA stronger by ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all. Focusing on the rights of persons with disabilities supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the principle of “leaving no one behind” (LNOB) and “reaching the furthest behind” (RFB), this strategy aligns with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) as well as the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. Disability inclusion matters because it contributes to all UNFPA transformative results.



**We Belong.** Disability inclusion is not a separate agenda to UNFPA. It is about accelerating organizational change that welcomes human diversity and ensures equality and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities. Disability inclusion promotes a sense of belonging. This can be achieved by guaranteeing accessibility, reasonable accommodation and social inclusion in meetings and events. Sense of belonging is reinforced through respectful communication. Persons with disabilities belong on an equal basis in UNFPA, also as part of the workforce, and where programmes are designed and implemented, where decisions are made and where wisdom and expertise is shared.



**We Decide.** Persons with disabilities have a right to make their own choices about their bodies, health and lives. Exercising the right to bodily autonomy is a matter of justice. Everything UNFPA does rests on the commitments to SRHR for all, which is embodied in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Programme of Action. These commitments are crucial for persons with disabilities, and enhance their decision-making power.

## What is the UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy?

This corporate strategy outlines a “whole of institution approach” focused on accelerating implementation of the four pillars of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). The content is aligned with the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and with the UNFPA LNOB/RFB Operational Plan, which further details specific measures for promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Focused programmatic guidance in this area is provided by existing and/or other forthcoming tools and resources. UNDIS reporting by UNFPA from 2019 and 2020 was used as a baseline for action. The strategy was developed by the UNFPA-UNDIS Task Force, chaired by Office of the Executive Director and coordinated by the Technical Division. It was co-authored by the Technical Divisions’ Gender and Human Rights Branch in close collaboration with the Division of Human Resources. The strategy was also reviewed and vetted by external stakeholders including organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).

The work of UNFPA aims to further strengthen the capacity for quality population data collection, analysis and utilization in policymaking and programming around population issues, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health, including population data in humanitarian settings. Mapping vulnerabilities through increased disability-related data is integral to the UNFPA mandate and fulfilling the three transformative results through leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first. In the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, almost all of the outcome indicators are disaggregated by sex and by one or more of the UNFPA “furthest behind” factors and characteristics: (a) gender; (b) age; (c)



culture, ethnicity, race, language and religion; (d) disability; (e) location; (f) migration, asylum, refuge and displacement status; (g) key populations; (h) socioeconomic status and related factors; and (i) other factors such as HIV and AIDS.

UNFPA takes a human rights-based approach to disability. This strategy draws from sound evidence on human rights-based comprehensive strategies on disability inclusion anchored in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and UNDIS. UNDIS provides the foundation for system-wide sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion. Following the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework and its four strategic focus areas and 15 operational areas, this strategy builds on the UNFPA performance in the UNDIS reporting. The aim is to accelerate meeting the requirements for those strategic focus areas that have remained weakest: Inclusiveness and Organizational Culture. Moreover, UNFPA strives for excellence in the requirements under the Leadership and Programming pillars, many of which UNFPA has already met or exceeded.

The strategy is informed by consultations with implementing partners, representative OPDs, United Nations Member States, affected populations and other stakeholders who have collaborated with UNFPA in its disability inclusion work during recent years. UNFPA recognizes that participation is an important human rights-based principle, and a central tenet of the CRPD, which recognizes the full enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities.



# 1



Abstract background with yellow and orange and two circles: a small brown circle to the top left and a larger purple circle in the middle. A young person (female) of African descent cheering with right arm up in the air and left arm by her side wearing a white or light-colored dress.



# 1. Rationale for action

Nearly one billion people – or 15 per cent of the world's population – experience some form of disability during their lifetime; in developing countries, this number rises to 20 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The CRPD states that persons with disabilities “include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.<sup>2</sup> Despite all the progress made, prejudice and systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities continues, and they often face extreme violations of their rights.

Social and gender norms, misconceptions and negative attitudes around disability are some of the leading causes for marginalization of persons with disabilities. The concept of desexualization of persons with disabilities has contributed to their lack of access to sexual and reproductive services. Moreover, persons with disabilities are up to three times more likely to experience physical, sexual and emotional violence. In addition, unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV and AIDS are major threats to their personal development, health and life quality. Legislation, policies and programmes do not adequately address their social inclusion as it relates to employment and livelihood opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

Data collection on disability is difficult when many youth and persons with disabilities are socially and culturally stigmatized. Similarly, there is no unique definition of disability, and it often varies from one country to another. In other words, disabilities are situational and contextual. Persons with disabilities are often not always included and/or identified in official national statistics, and they are often excluded from national and international development efforts, policies and programmes, unless specifically targeted.

The term “intersecting discrimination” is often used to describe the situation of persons with disabilities due to the exclusion that many persons with disabilities encounter in relation to their gender, age, social and economic status, and their disability. Thus, disability may look different and produce unique forms of disadvantage and privilege when intersecting with various identities.

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1 World Health Organization and World Bank (2011). World Report on disability. Retrieved from: [www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/)

2 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (2006). Available from: [www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf)

3 A more detailed description of the status of youth and women with disabilities can be found in the UNFPA study “Young Persons with Disabilities: Global Study on Ending Gender-based Violence and Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights” launched in September 2018. This study provides an analysis on the situation of young persons with disabilities concerning discrimination and gender-based violence, including the impact on their sexual and reproductive health and rights. It also provides an assessment of legal, policy and programming developments and specific good practices in service delivery as well as best-standard prevention and protection measures.

Abstract background of yellow with orange, purple and white coloured shapes in a pie chart form. Young person (female) with long black hair is holding a young girl in her arms and reading a book to the young girl. The woman is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and the young girl has black vest on and is wearing her hair pinned back and a white bracelet on her right arm.

# 2



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