

## Disability inclusion guidelines



*KIOS meets with CIL Kathmandu in Nepal. Photo: Roosa Rantala*

## Disability inclusion guidelines

The UN Convention of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) assures human rights for persons with disabilities. The reason for creating CRPD was the notion that persons with disabilities are often left without their fundamental rights. In the heart of CRPD are inclusion and equality of persons with disabilities.

As a human rights foundation, KIOS is committed to CRPD. Disability inclusion is one of its mainstreaming principles. KIOS encourages its partners to include persons with disabilities in all phases of their projects.

These disability inclusion guidelines are developed to raise discussion and share practical ideas about this issue.

According to CRPD “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.”

To put it briefly: disability is a combination of the barriers of the society and impairment of a person. When a society is enabling, those barriers, that can relate to the built environment, communication methods, attitudes, social norms or institutional aspects, are removed, this enables persons with disabilities to participate on equal basis to those persons without disabilities.

In the past, disability was considered as a purely medical issue. Persons with disabilities were seen as passive objects of medical procedures and charity. In some societies, communities or professions this is still more or less the case. The problems with this approach are many: persons with disability will be isolated, left out and discriminated against. Their humanity will be ignored and their potential wasted. Human rights approach ensures that persons with disabilities can have their dignity and contribute to the society they live in.

Disability in itself does not equal being sick or suffering. Negative attitudes towards disability and persons with disability can be the biggest barrier that prevents persons with disabilities from having a good life. The good news is that attitudes can be changed.

Persons with disabilities form a big minority. Since things like malnutrition, violence, poverty and lack of healthcare cause disability, the number of persons with disabilities is higher in developing countries. Globally, disability often links with poverty. In addition to be living with a disability, a person can belong to other minorities and face multiple discrimination.

According to CRDP, equality and full inclusion of persons with disabilities must be promoted and ensured. Inclusion means full participation of all kinds of people. In an inclusive society persons with disabilities are involved in all levels of decision making starting from their own lives to the top of political hierarchy. Inclusion is a process. It is never ready.

The principle of inclusion applies to all areas of life: education, work, family, health care, communications, digital services, politics etc. Instead of building separate housing or schools for persons with disabilities, all physical and social environments must be made accessible for everyone. Persons with disabilities shall not be left behind in disasters.

KIOS encourages its partners to cooperate with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). They have the best knowledge about disability and the current disability rights situations. They have contacts to reach persons with disabilities. Also, OPDs can provide useful information about practicalities to promote inclusion. KIOS can help partners to find OPDs to work with.

In order to promote inclusion, it is essential to recognise how persons with disabilities are discriminated against, excluded and prevented from participation. The barriers can be physical, social, or in attitudes. In addition to checking physical facilities, inclusion means checking language, habits and norms. For example, recruitment policies might exclude persons with disabilities from being hired without a real reason. These barriers may vary depending on the community. Defining them will help tackle them. The best experts of the barriers and solutions are persons with disabilities.

Accessibility is an important way of promoting disability inclusion. Accessible environments and services allow persons with disabilities to participate. According to CRPD, accessibility must be understood broadly and realised in all of its forms. In addition to accessibility, sometimes services like personal assistant or interpretation may be necessary to ensure full participation of persons with disabilities.

## **Practical tips for inclusion**

In the following list there are practical tips to improve disability inclusion. It is not complete but it gives some basic ideas about things that need to be considered.

Treat persons with disabilities equally, as human beings. Talk with them, not to their caregivers or interpreters. Listen and ask for feedback. If you are meeting a person with vision impairment, always identify yourself and others who may be with you and remember to identify the person by name when conversing in a group. When you talk with a person who has speaking difficulties, do not correct mistakes or finish their speaking, allow them to

finish, and if you did not understand everything, you can repeat what you understood, and allow the person to respond. Always ask before you offer assistance, whether it is needed. Consider a person's wheelchair, crutches or cane as part of his/her personal space.

Involve persons with disabilities in all roles, also the active ones: speakers, leaders, employees etc. Pay employees with disabilities equally.

Plan. Being prepared for persons with disabilities and different kinds of needs is essential for inclusion. One of the most common reasons for lack of inclusion is that it was just not thought about in advance. Ask for ideas about disability inclusion and share yours with others.

When organising an event, consider accessibility of the venue. This also applies when choosing a new location for your organisation. It is also a good idea to renovate existing locations and older buildings.

- Barrier-free. No steps, the width of the door should be 90 cm. Thresholds max. 2 cm high.
- Space to move around
- Accessible toilet with stable handles and enough space for assistance
- If a ramp is needed it should have a maximum 5 % slope and handrails
- Clear signs help orientating
- It is a good idea to make sure elevators and other technicals work before every event
- Inclusive activities: no running contest if there are persons who can't walk. Being left out even in informal activities might cause an experience of being unwelcome.

Make information accessible. This means giving information in several forms: easy-to-read, videos, braille etc. Make captions to the videos you publish. Provide sign language interpretation when needed.

Make online resources accessible. Avoid using PDFs and flash since the screen readers that visually impaired persons use don't recognise them. Describe images. Use clear contrasts in colours. Make navigation easy, using images in addition to text might be a good idea.

## **Disability inclusive Project Management - questions to ask at your organization**

**For comprehensive matrix, see for example Disability Partnership Finland tool: [PDF of the disability partnership matrix tool](#)**

## Planning

- In the project planning stage, **ask yourself, who are the persons with disabilities** that could fall under the realm of the project? How could they be reached to be included in the participatory project planning meetings? Are there NGOs working with the rights of persons with disabilities that you could approach in the first stage?
- How can project services and activities be made accessible for everybody? **What are the different kinds of barriers that need to be removed?**
- How can persons with disabilities participate in the project on an equal basis to those persons without disabilities? Can specific project activities be added to ensure this?
- What disability-specific outcomes and targets could be added?
- Do some of the persons with disability face discrimination on multiple basis (e.g. sex, race, caste, religion, sexual orientation etc.)?

## Data

- **Will the information on whether participating rights holders include persons with disabilities be collected?**
- When data is collected from right holders, are the data collecting methods inclusive of persons with disabilities?

## Capacity

- **Do all the project staff and other personnel have sufficient knowledge for adapting a disability inclusive approach?** If not, how could you build the capacity?

## Budget

- **Have you allocated specific resources** to enable participation of persons with disabilities in the project?

## Inclusive project Implementation

- Do the project implementation arrangements follow equal opportunities principles?
- **What kind of outreach strategy is needed to be disability inclusive?**
- Are project structures and committees inclusive? If not, what barriers would need to be removed?

## Inclusive project Reporting and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the project should be inclusive and monitor changes towards greater equality.

- How has the project so far contributed to a reduction of inequalities?
- How has this project included persons with disabilities and how have their rights or role as right holders been strengthened?
- **Has disaggregated data been gathered (women/men/other/persons with disabilities)? What is the percentage of persons with disabilities of the total number of beneficiaries?**
- What kind of actions will be adopted, if found that the project impacts negatively on the persons with disabilities?

## Evaluation

- Are the evaluation teams inclusive? What barriers would need to be removed or adjustments made to enable persons with disabilities be part of evaluation teams?
- Did the evaluation team reach persons with disabilities (both those who participated in the project and those who did not but would have been suitable beneficiaries and right holders)? What barriers would need to be removed or adjustments made to ensure accessibility?
- Was the project inclusive and how did it contribute to equality, in particular of persons with disabilities?
- **Compare project outcomes and impact for persons with disabilities to persons without disabilities!**
- Harvest learnings for future: How can disability inclusion be enhanced in future?

## Inclusive Organizations

- Does your organization have a disability inclusion policy?
- **What barriers do you have that hinder the recruitment of persons with disabilities?**
- What reasonable adjustments can we make immediately and in longer term to remove such barriers?
- Are the recruitment announcements accessible to everyone?
- Set diversity goals and targets and track progress!

## Language matters!

These are instructions for using a non-discriminatory language when talking about persons with disabilities, with the understanding that persons with disabilities always reserve their right to identify themselves and their organisations.

Say: A person with a disability

Plural: Persons with disabilities, acronym PWD or PWDs

Do not say: Handicapped The disabled Backward people

Say: a person without a disability/a person without disability

Do not say: Normal people

Say: a person with a physical or sensory or intellectual or mental or psychosocial disability

Do not say: Physically challenged or the physically disabled or cripple or mentally retarded or mentally handicapped or mentally challenged or mentally deficient

Say: a person who uses a wheelchair

Do not say: Confined to a wheelchair

Say: a person who is deafblind, person with low vision, person who is blind

Do not say: the blind or person with problems with sight

Say: a person who is hard of hearing, a deaf person or deaf people

Do not say: the deaf or the hard of hearing

Say: a person with a speech disability, a person with speech disability

Do not say: dumb or dumb person/people, mute or speech-impaired person, problems with talking or the speech impaired

Say: a person with a mental health problem

Do not say: Insane or mentally sick or mad person or mentally ill person

Say: a person with a disabling illness

Do not say: the sick

Say: a person living with HIV

Do not say: AIDS-infected

[Read more about disability inclusion on UNRWA's disability guidelines PDF.](#)