



Submission by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Inputs requested by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

Reaching the furthest left behind: The participation of persons with disabilities in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Post-2030 discussions

20 June, 2024

Background

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) prioritizes access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the right to live free from gender-based violence (GBV) for women and girls with disabilities, in the 135 countries where we have a presence.

UNFPA, together with our partners, commit to strengthening disability inclusion within the design and implementation of SRHR-related policies and programmes. With our flagship initiative on disability inclusion, the We Decide Programme¹, supported by Spain, UNFPA builds on existing efforts at all levels to promote the human rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in both development and humanitarian contexts. This dedicated global initiative on promoting access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and prevention and response to GBV for persons with disabilities continues to be a catalyst for disability inclusion programming at UNFPA.

UNFPA has benefited from a twin-track approach to disability in its strategic planning efforts, mainstreaming disability within all results areas and focusing on specific disability-related results. Along with in-house expertise within the Technical Division, and now growing expertise at UNFPA Regional and Country levels, this has enabled the organization to also ensure more disability inclusion globally.

This UNFPA submission has been developed in response to the call for inputs issued by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to inform the upcoming report on the participation of persons with disabilities in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Post-2030 discussions to inform the Special Rapporteur's forthcoming report to the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in October 2024.

The submission received its primary input from UNFPA Country Offices in Eastern Europe and Central Asia Region, Asia Pacific Region, Arab States Region, Latin America and Caribbean region and East and Southern Africa Region. In the following pages, the submission will answer the inquiries posed by the Special Rapporteur's call for inputs. The questions have been identified in bold.

¹ UNFPA (2023). [The UNFPA We Decide Programme: A Catalyst for Disability Inclusion](#).



1. Please inform how persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are meaningfully consulted and their participation ensured during the follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the regional, national and sub-national levels.

The Council for Monitoring the Implementation of SDGs in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** oversees SDG progress, ensuring disability inclusion through reports from the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides recommendations for enhancing disability inclusion. Bosnia and Herzegovina's VNRs to the UN High-Level Political Forum include updates on SDG progress and challenges related to disability.

Serbia's sustainable development incorporates the principles of Agenda 2030. The current Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of Persons with Disabilities, valid until the end of 2024, involves persons with disabilities in development processes.

Although **Kosovo** is not a signatory of the 2030 Agenda, it has committed to implementing the SDGs. The Assembly of Kosovo established the Council for Sustainable Development to coordinate SDG processes. The UN Kosovo Team supports integrating SDGs into national documents and enhancing public consultation platforms for persons with disabilities.

In **Georgia**, the engagement of persons with disabilities in SDG planning and monitoring is facilitated by the Interagency Council for SDGs. Revised membership criteria in 2022 led to the inclusion of more persons with disabilities organizations in these groups, enhancing their involvement in SDG implementation.

In **Belarus**, the follow-up and review of SDG implementation involve government bodies, parliamentarians, UN agencies, communities, and CSOs, including organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). OPDs interact with governmental entities allowing them to contribute directly to SDG implementation and discuss issues and successes with authorities.

Uzbekistan has created a coordination council, including a Parliamentary Commission, to monitor SDG implementation that includes OPDs. The joint UNPRPD-funded UN Program supports SDG compliance with the CRPD through capacity-building, legislative changes, and inclusive service development.

In **Comoros**, there is a national mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the SDGs in the country. However, persons with disabilities are not included in this mechanism.

In **Angola**, the SDG Platform was created for the achievement of the SDGs, as well as monitoring their implementation in Angola. In this context, a series of preparatory actions have been carried out, between representatives of the Government, United Nations and Civil Society, including OPDs.

In **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, the government has constituted National Coordination Committee of relevant line ministries to monitor the implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs. The National Committee for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) is the body that advises the government on disability affairs and in collaboration with the OPDs they have identified 45 disability-specific SDG indicators for collection of data.

2. Please describe the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in gathering data and producing Voluntary National Reviews or Voluntary Local Reviews. Please share good practices in this regard.



In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Armenia** there are no dedicated platforms for persons with disabilities and OPDs to contribute to the VNR reporting process. However, they were included in civil society and government consultations.

Republic of Serbia presented its VNR on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in July 2019. The report was prepared through extensive consultations with CSOs. While it focused primarily on youth development, it included limited data on persons with disabilities but lacked detailed disability-disaggregated data.

In 2024, the UNFPA **Georgia** Country Office supported the capacity building of the National Network of Women with Disabilities in SDG reporting. The network developed a shadow report on SDG 5, focusing on women with disabilities, and submitted it to the coordinating NGO for shadow reporting.

In Belarus, information for the VNR is gathered through round table consultations and other discussions with OPDs. However, there is no platform for OPDs to upload data directly.

In Lao People's Democratic Republic, persons with disabilities were involved in the VNR process by attending consultations organized by the National SDG Secretariat, and by providing technical reports to the National SDG Secretariat to include texts, information/data on persons with disabilities in the VNR 3. The National Coordination Committee (NCC) for monitoring implementation of CRPD and SDGs has been constituted and OPDs have representation in this committee. OPDs were involved in collecting data for the parallel report submitted by them to the CRPD Committee in 2022. However there has been no sustained efforts by the OPD network to gather data and producing VNRs.

Nepal has taken several steps to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in gathering data and producing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Here is an overview of the mechanisms and practices in place: **1. Inclusive Consultation Processes:** The participation of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, has been a priority throughout the VNR process. Consultations were carried out with persons with disabilities in coordination with civil society groups and organizations. The VNR consultations were preceded by SDG visioning workshops in later half of 2023 in the lead up to the 2023 SDG Summit. The insights from the workshop have fed into the VNR formulation. **2. Representation in Key Networks:** The National SDG Network includes representation from organizations of persons with disabilities. Additionally, the NGO Federation, which is part of the VNR task force, ensures that OPDs are represented. This representation guarantees that the voices and concerns of persons with disabilities are included in national SDG discussions and reporting. **3. Direct Involvement in Consultations:** Representatives from OPDs were invited to various consultation sessions. These consultations were designed to gather feedback and inputs from persons with disabilities, ensuring their views were documented and considered in the VNRs.

In Comoros, persons with disabilities were invited once to a consolidation workshop of the VNRs, but there was no follow-up. The invitation was individual and there were also three organizations working with children with disabilities. There were no awareness-raising campaigns to inform persons with disabilities about these processes. There is a representative organization of OPDs (federation) in the Comoros, but it was not invited to participate in the reporting process.

3. Is the data gathered for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development being disaggregated by disability? If so, how is it accessible for persons with disabilities?

The UNFPA Country Offices in **Eastern Europe and Central Asia** report, that there remain significant limitations on disability disaggregated data, although some exceptions are in place. In **Belarus, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina**, data for the 2030 Agenda follow-up is not disaggregated by



disability. However, in **Belarus**, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the CRPD (2017-2025) improved statistical reporting about persons with disabilities, aligning with SDG evaluation needs, especially for SDG 1 and SDG 4 indicators. In the **Republic of Serbia**, reports on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are published on the Statistical Office of Serbia's website, but not in accessible formats and data disaggregated by disability is still limited. In **Georgia**, data on disability is collected only for SDG target 1.3, which aims to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable by 2030. According to the National Statistical Service in **Armenia**, disability data are available through several SDG indicators: SDG1 (social protection coverage), SDG4 (education parity), SDG8 (wage and unemployment rates), SDG10 (poverty levels), and SDG16 (positions in institutions). The October 2020 census included questions on disability and participation restrictions, but disaggregated data across sectors are not uniformly used, affecting the identification of needs. In 2020, the Office of the Ombudsperson of **Kosovo** and the Kosovo Agency of Statistics signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish institutional cooperation in official statistics, contributing to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, administrative data sources and methodologies are not standardized with the Kosovo Agency of Statistics' criteria for reliability and disaggregation. In **Moldova**, the data gathered for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is disaggregated by disability.

In Lebanon, there are no standardized mechanisms for data collection on persons with disabilities for SDGs. The OPDs are not adequately consulted by the government but submit their report as a part of the UPR every two years.

In **Ecuador** the questions recommended by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics were included in the Population and Housing Census.

In Lao People's Democratic Republic, though the government has identified 45 disability-specific indicators, no attempt has been made so far to collect data for the follow-up and review of 2030 Agenda. There is only one indicator disaggregated by disability which is employment rate. OPDs are now working to incorporate necessary elements for the upcoming population census and other related surveys.

In Comoros and Angola, the data is not disaggregated by disability and there is no evidence of this data in the Voluntary National Reports.

4. Please provide information on whether capacity-building programmes are in place, including specific funding, to allow persons with disabilities to meaningfully engage and participate in the process of follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the regional, national and sub-national level.

The National Programme on Inclusion in **Moldova** includes a dedicated chapter on capacity-building programmes, which provides for specific funding to enable persons with disabilities to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes and the development of legislative and normative frameworks. Various UNFPA Country Offices, including **North Macedonia, Serbia, Georgia and Kosovo** support capacity-building programs, primarily for women and girls with disabilities, to advocate for their rights and engage in the follow-up and review of the Agenda 2030. Over the past two years, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in **Armenia** led capacity-building efforts for national stakeholders on disability inclusion, including on inclusive Programming, data collection; and gender equality and disability.

In **Nepal**, the UNCT is committed to ensuring that OPDs are equipped with knowledge, information and skills to participate in this process. UNCT's GESI-LNOB Group routinely engaged with OPDs to discuss issues related to SDG review process. UN agencies have been working with OPDs to provide thematic



analysis and capacity development support. This collaboration focuses on enhancing the ability of OPDs to effectively participate in the review and follow-up of the SDG agenda.

In **Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon** and **Comoros** there are no capacity-building programmes in place by the government. UN agencies and NGOs have raised awareness of the OPDs on the Agenda 2030 and provided technical support in identifying disability-specific indicators. However, due to budget constraints, these activities are not sustainable.

In **Ecuador**, the Initial Phase of the UNPRPD Fund has contributed to the capacity building of persons with disabilities on appropriating the CRPD.

5. Please describe the barriers experienced in participating in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the international, regional, national and/or sub-national levels. Please share any good practices in participating in these processes and advocating for the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities face significant barriers to participating in international and regional discussions about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all countries that responded to this call for inputs. The policy-level barriers are not so pronounced (**Asia Pacific**), but rather barriers tend to be more systemic. These barriers include limited financial resources, lack of capacity-building and awareness about available platforms, inaccessible information and communication channels. Another barrier (**Belarus**) was the deterioration of the local socio-political country context that limited the number of OPDs and focus on the issues of the current challenges and needs. Language barriers hinder effective communication and engagement. This is particularly true in countries where English is not a primary or national language, and this language barrier marginalizes individuals from less privileged backgrounds. Lack of diverse representation is also a barrier. At the national level, OPDs mention their tendency to always resort to the same representatives to speak publicly, who tend to be few and from a more stable or privileged background (**Jordan**). In particular, the young women with disabilities chosen to present are found to be always the same few ones, failing to show true representation of the group. Furthermore, intersectional discrimination was identified as a barrier meaning discrimination based on various grounds, including ethnicity, gender, age, disability, political beliefs, language, health status, workplace discrimination, professional practice, and others. Lack of data is also one significant barrier. Monitoring is mainly based on routine and at times outdated statistical data, which are rarely disaggregated by disability. For example, the last census in **South Sudan** was undertaken 16 years ago and there is a need for updated information considering the civil wars and catastrophic events that have happened since. Opportunities for broader societal discussions about the progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda are limited. Consequently, the unique perspectives and experiences of persons with disabilities may not be adequately represented in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the international, regional, national and/or sub-national levels.

A recent research carried out by the Youth2030 Disability Task Team “[Believe in Better: Shaping the future through the meaningful engagement of young persons with disabilities](#)” provides an overview of statistics on young persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24, identifies the main barriers for their participation in decision-making spaces, and highlights the efforts and challenges of the UN system in promoting their rights. The targeted recommendations pave the way for UN and government entities alike to work together with young persons with disabilities and bolster their meaningful engagement in decision-making processes at all levels—with social accountability at the heart of these efforts.

Good practices that were mentioned include UNFPA's platform for collaboration with non-traditional stakeholders in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. This is a positive example of how to engage youth, both with and without disabilities, in mapping their needs regarding SRHR and social protection. Also, the social dialogues organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. An example is



the "Culture of Accessibility - For Building a Culture of Human Rights, Together Towards Achievement of SDGs for Persons with Disabilities," held in December 2023 in the **Republic of Serbia**. Moreover, in **Angola** UNFPA is carrying out a public consultation in 5 provinces in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Action and OPDs and an Integrated Action Plan will be designed to respond to the main challenges facing persons with disabilities in accessing essential health services and promoting women with disabilities SRHR. APRCEM (Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism) can be mentioned as a good practice, as persons with disabilities are meaningfully included in this mechanism. Asia Pacific Regional Office has benefitted from this regional engagement mechanism, as the Civil Society Forum established during the 7th APPC was drawn from this established and functioning APRCEM.

6. Please share any experience or barriers encountered related to the participation or involvement in the annual High Level Political Forums, and in particular the SDG Summit of 2023 and the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

The participation of persons with disabilities in high-level political forums is highly dependent on the work done by countries to identify and support persons with disabilities. Often the regional representation of persons with disabilities is limited to persons with 'less severe' disabilities, and persons with severe disabilities, who have most accommodation needs, have not had the chance to participate. Several countries who provided inputs to this call mentioned that they had no information about the participation of persons with disabilities in HLPF, SDG Summit 2023 including **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Comoro and Ecuador**.

7. Describe whether you are currently aware and engaging in the process leading to the Summit of the Future 2024 and its outcome documents and the Social Summit in 2025. Please identify your thematic priorities, if any, when engaging in these processes.

In the **Republic of Serbia** actions are taken on the engagement of persons with disabilities in the processes leading to the Summit for the Future 2024. Thematic priorities related to persons with disabilities encompass well-being, social equality, human capital, rule of law, human rights, and gender equality, covering SRHR, prevention of GBV, empowerment, active participation, reasonable accommodation, and improved social protection. UNFPA **Belarus** Country Office is involved in these processes as part of the UNCT under the auspices of Resident Coordinator's Office and ensures the representation and promotion of LNOB approach, gender equality and GBV-prevention issues, as well as other priorities, which are directly related to the UNFPA mandate.

Various UNFPA country offices that submitted inputs recognize the importance of global platforms like the Summit for the Future. However, they have not submitted information about engagement as the processes appear ambiguous and method of engagement is unknown. In **Comoros** the thematic priorities are collection and availability of data disaggregated by disability (through the Washington Group Questionnaires on Disability Statistics), empowerment of persons with disabilities, and awareness of the CRPD. Although **Angola** is participating in different global platforms, it recognizes that the participation of persons with disabilities needs to be improved.

At the **UNFPA Asia Pacific Regional Office** the entry point for the Summit of the Future has been through 7th APPC, the 11th APFSD, and 4th SIDS. For all these conferences we reached out to persons with disabilities through civil society mechanisms and encouraged them to participate. APRO also works closely with UNESCAP which has created an inclusive and supportive environment for persons with disabilities.

8. In light of the global crises facing the world, including armed conflicts, natural disasters, and health crises, and the financial implications of these crises, do you find that this has impacted programmes to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in your country? How have your efforts to advocate



for the implementation of the sustainable development goals for people with disabilities been affected?

All the countries that provided inputs mentioned that the implementation of the SDGs has been significantly impacted by global and regional crises, leading to financial constraints and reduced funding for SDG-related programs, particularly those focused on persons with disabilities. This has resulted in limited resources, competing priorities, and increased vulnerability. However, despite these challenges, UNFPA has managed to secure funding for several initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and their participation (**Lebanon, Jordan, Ecuador, South Sudan, Comoros, Angola, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Moldova**).

Throughout 2023, the emergence of four major regional crises – the war in Gaza, the earthquakes in Türkiye and Morocco, and the conflict in Sudan – coupled with the intensification of the war in Ukraine, led to exceptional funding reductions for the humanitarian refugee crisis in countries like **Jordan**.

During these difficult circumstances, advocacy efforts in establishing a normative framework that advances the rights of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability inclusion in all policy documents have been key in countries such as the **Republic of Serbia**. Collaborative efforts of UN agencies and joint programs (UNPRPD) have proven effective (**Belarus**). In some cases (e.g., **Angola**) an advantage of this delicate environment was taken to call attention to the left behind populations, including persons with disabilities.