

Civil Society CRPD Forum
Monday 10 June 2024 | UN Headquarters, New York
Civil Society Messaging

On 10 June 2024, the [Civil Society Coordination Mechanism](#), which is facilitated by the [International Disability Alliance](#) hosted a People's Assembly, taking the form of a Townhall meeting. Three sessions were held mirroring the three themes of the 17th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD. In total, 70 organisations of persons with disabilities and non-governmental organisations took the floor to present on their initiatives, projects and concerns, and shared experiences on the implementation of the CRPD. Civil Society shared their examples of what is working and what is not working in the implementation of the CRPD and the gaps that still exist.

On Sub theme 1: International cooperation to promote technology innovations and transfer for an inclusive future, civil society has these key messages:

1. We underscore the need for international collaboration as critical in gathering momentum to accelerate improvements in accessibility. By fostering partnerships and exchanging information, we can learn from one another and grow together. Leveraging artificial intelligence and digital accessibility can significantly enhance the lives of people with disabilities.
2. Representatives during our Forum emphasized the persistent gaps in technology accessibility, especially for deaf and blind communities. There is a need for inclusive design processes and affordability to ensure no one is left behind. The human factor and the inclusion of older persons with disabilities are critical in this effort.
3. Regional organizations discussed the slow progress in accessibility of technology innovations, particularly in Africa and Asia, stressing that societal barriers, rather than personal impairments, are the primary obstacles. Effective use of technology requires robust advocacy and legislative support.
4. Technology offers vast potential for empowering people with disabilities, but significant gaps remain in accessibility, affordability, and inclusive design. Our advocacy efforts will focus on integrating cultural, social, and personal support, ensuring global representation, and driving technological advancements for a more inclusive society.
5. Our advocacy will prioritize comprehensive support, cultural inclusion, and continuous improvement in accessibility to enhance independence and participation for all persons with disabilities.

Sub theme 2: Persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, civil society has these key messages:

1. We know that people with disabilities face heightened risks and barriers during humanitarian crises, such as lack of accessible information, inadequate disaster preparedness, and exclusion from relief efforts.
2. As a community, in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, we find ourselves in improvised support roles, and organizations of persons with disabilities find themselves having

to act as service providers. We require comprehensive resource allocation to manage these roles, and we need to ensure that humanitarian programs are inclusively designed from the outset.

3. Our advocacy efforts emphasize the urgent need for inclusive practices, active participation of persons with disabilities in planning and response, and a human-rights-based approach to ensure safety and dignity in emergencies.
4. We call for accessible humanitarian responses, providing immediate, fully accessible communication and interpretation services during crises. We call for inclusive preparedness, implementation of comprehensive disaster preparedness and response plans that consider the full diversity of disabilities, ensuring no one is left behind.
5. We call for robust and disaggregated data. It is crucial to identify the gaps, shaping interventions and directing resources effectively.
6. As a disability community, we commit to advocate, and lobby for inclusive planning, response and operations. We call for humanitarian actors to incorporate disability inclusion in their standard operating procedures.

On Sub theme 3: Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities to decent work and sustainable livelihood, civil society has these key messages:

1. The right to access livelihoods and employments still remains critical. All stakeholders shared a lived experience of exclusion regardless of different backgrounds.
2. The broader contextual realities from the discussion are around the need to abolish modern slavery. The rhythm of ableist capitalism is not decent work and should be acknowledged as such. Disability is not homogenous, and some disability groups are particularly discriminated against. We need to shift away from charity models towards more sustainable approaches is needed.
3. Without legal capacity, there can be no access to any rights, and we call legal recognition of our identity as persons with disabilities and for the removal of discriminatory laws and policies.
4. States Parties need to lead by example. It is not enough to just have inclusive policies in places but they need to make that shift in the mentality and narrative around having persons with disabilities within the staff and work force.
5. State Parties should ensure strong inclusive social protections systems. We demand real work for real pay with benefits and protection, on an equal basis with others; in line with the CRPD
6. We call for equal access to lifelong learning and all levels of education.
7. State parties need to ensure that there are robust and strong social support systems around persons with disabilities, and that work is done with families, communities, schools, employers to raise awareness around our rights.
8. Disability employment should be made more visible.
9. Inclusion is an act of justice and a right, not charity. The right to livelihood and employment along with making a contribution to the society, is imperative to realize the right to live independently in the community, being included, having our decision, rights, will and preferences respected and upheld.