

Technology, digitalization and ICTs for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities

International telecommunication Union (ITU) Report to CosP CRPD

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ITU-D Focal Point in ICT Accessibility

The [ITU](#) is committed to connecting the world - ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, gender, ability, location, or financial means have available, accessible and affordable access to information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Inclusiveness is one of ITU's 5 strategic goals, established by Member States last November at their Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2018. Additionally, target 2.9 of this goal explicitly calls for **“enabling accessible environments for all people, including for persons with disabilities in ALL countries by 2023”**.

To achieve this goal the ITU provides advice and support to Member States in order to create an enabling and inclusive environment, develop their ICT accessibility policies and strategies, and ensure that these strategies include access to digital information products and services for Persons with Disabilities (PwD).

Overall, the ITU raises awareness and builds capacity, develops and makes resources and guidelines available for our members, shares best practices and provides in-country assistance for the implementation of ICT accessibility policies, strategies and programmes.

- **Awareness was raised among over 3'000 ITU Members and stakeholders in ICT Accessibility, through thematic, regional and global events, including:** at UN level with WHO (Safe Listening), ILO (Making Digital Skills inclusive of youth with disabilities), DESA, UNESCO (Mobile learning week – “ Accessible ICT and AI as learning drivers for PwD”); during ITU regional events “Accessible Americas V: ICTs for ALL” held in Jamaica in November; and the “1st Accessible Europe “ held in Austria in December. Additionally, during both **WSIS Forums in 2018 and 2019**.
- In 2018, ITU provided advice to Sudan to formulate a national ICT Accessibility Policy, and currently to Iraq. Guidelines for related ICT accessibility strategy implementation were also provided in May 2019 to Guyana.
- Through our ITU Academy, a set of three (3) free [self-paced online certificate training courses entitled “ICT Accessibility: the key to inclusive communication”](#) that provide our members a general understanding of ICT accessibility policies, regulations, technology trends, and public procurement rules was developed in 2018 and launched in August. Over 250 certifications have been extended until today.
- Face-to face **executive trainings were also delivered in September 2018 to ITU members** during the work of [ITU Rapporteurs Group Question 7/1 – “Access to telecommunication/ICT services by](#)

[persons with disabilities and with specific needs](#)” and in “**Fundamentals of ICT accessibility**” during our regional event Accessible [Americas](#) – ICT for All in Jamaica developing global and regional expertise in the subject. (90 people were successfully trained and obtained ITU certifications)

- In support to the Arab States Regional Initiative, a **train-the-trainers course on “Accessible Digital Content and Remediation for the stakeholders delivering digital financial services”** was delivered to over 40 persons in October 2018 in Cairo, Egypt.
- Last September, in collaboration with WHO, ITU issued the standard “**ITU-T H.870 guidelines for safe listening devices**” that outlines the key features and requirements that personal audio systems must have in order to facilitate safe listening practices among users. On February 14th, **WHO and ITU also launched the Safe Listening toolkit** to provide practical guidance to our Member States, industry partners and civil society groups in the use and implementation of this global standard. [A video tutorial](#) on the subject was also made available.
- **The ITU also developed a Programme in web accessibility, “Internet for @ll”** (available in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic) to support Member States in acquiring the necessary know-how to develop their websites in line with the international web accessibility standards **and empower the countries with the necessary expertise to ensure that all citizens, including PwD, can access public digital information, products and services.** The programme consisted of a political buy-in and 2 train-the-trainer courses in the design and development of accessible websites, and the development and remediation of accessible digital content. Moreover, the related ICT accessibility curricula is enhanced at the end of the programme to a National Tech University, ensuring the creation of national capacities in web accessibility, while providing a 360 educational model that includes the automatic creation of a fund that allows the training of its end-users (PwD) on how to navigate and better use the websites made accessible for them. In 2019 ITU implemented this program **in Guyana** in May and we hope that the private sector will also follow this example.
- **In response to the same concern on “accessible digital content”, the ITU also developed** fifteen (15) [video tutorials on how to develop and remediate accessible digital documents](#) (e.g., Word, Pdf, Excel, PP, etc.) available in Spanish, English, and French.
- The ITU also guided and supported the efforts of its Member States in approving specifications for audio-based network navigation systems for persons with vision impairment and its conformance testing (*Recommendation ITU-T F.921 and Technical Paper ITU-T HSTP-CONF-F921*). ITU has also made available, through the ITU Academy platform, an associated online training course for implementors.