



World Institute on Disability

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Chapeau

Looking to the future, we must commit to replacing the call to “build back better” with a commitment to build FORWARD better. Building forward better includes an unwavering commitment to universal design standards and accessibility, prioritizing the inclusion of over 1.3 billion persons with disabilities in all aspects of daily life. Justice for all will only be possible when we eradicate ableism and eliminate the barriers to inclusion.

Building forward better means ending the cycle of repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results. This is true in all aspects of our global path forward, and especially as we collectively address the impact of our changing climate and other shocks disproportionately impacting the persons repeatedly left behind, especially in crises, conflict, and disasters.

The frequency, intensity, duration, and impact of disasters have been increasing at alarming rates. If current global trends continue, the number of disasters per year may increase from around 400 in 2015 to 560 per year by 2030. Climate change is a major contributor, however, for the world’s 1.3 billion persons with disabilities, the disproportionate impact of all disasters results in up to four times as many injuries and deaths as for persons who don’t have disabilities.

Persons with disabilities comprise 16 percent of the world’s population, with 80 percent of persons with disabilities living in the Global South. Women, children, and men with disabilities are frequently those most impacted by natural hazards, climate-induced disasters, and global health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ableism, inaccessibility, and exclusion are risk multipliers that cut across identity characteristics and social determinants such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status amplifying pre-existing social inequalities and power imbalances.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

Sustainable development must prioritize financing that requires equity, accessibility, and inclusion. Building forward better requires standardizing universal design and accessibility as imperatives for both forward financing and reimbursement, without exception.

Persons with disabilities must be included and their voices and perspectives prioritized throughout all aspects of development. All costs associated with accessibility and inclusion must be included in all budgets and never considered something extra or unnecessary.

Chapter II. International peace and security

Priorities for achieving international peace and security must center on the persons most impacted, leaving no one behind. This must explicitly include the world's 1.3 billion persons with disabilities. Notably, all indications are that this number will surely rise in the future.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation, and digital cooperation

Science, technology, innovation, and digital cooperation must explicitly commit to equity, accessibility, and inclusion of the 16% of the global population, persons with disabilities of all ages. This must also include investments in skill acquisition and leadership of persons with disabilities throughout all professions contributing to the future of science, technology and innovation, and digital cooperation

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Youth with disabilities and future generations of persons with disabilities must be explicitly included as crucial contributors throughout all endeavors, without exception. Accessibility and inclusion must be assured in all aspects of daily life, without exception. Barriers must be eliminated and rights enforced without exception.

Chapter V. Transforming Global Governance

Successful governance at every level must prioritize the leadership, accessibility, and inclusion of persons with disabilities, without exception. Just as other marginalized groups must serve in key roles, justice for all can only be achieved when the persons most affected are also the persons closest to the power, without exception.