

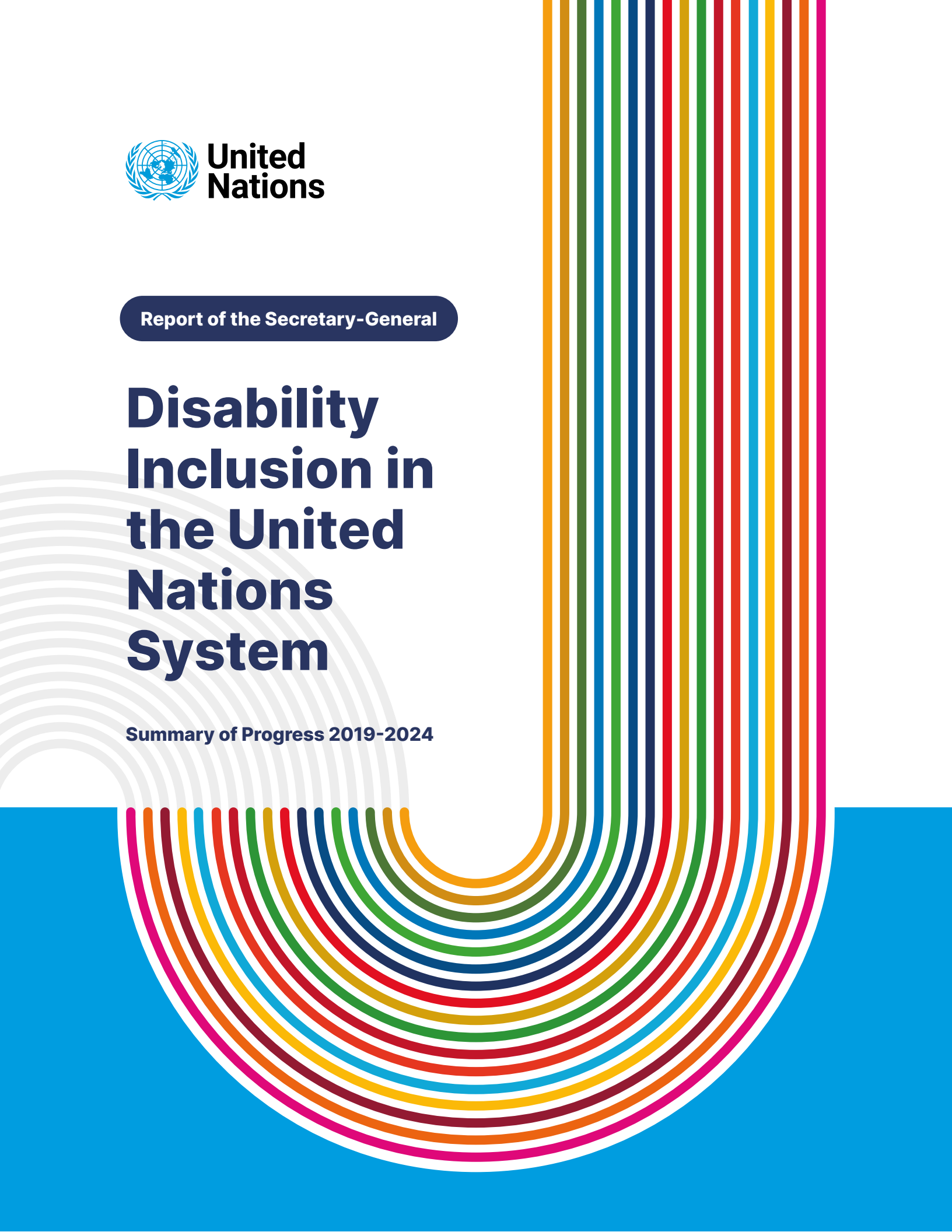


**United
Nations**

Report of the Secretary-General

Disability Inclusion in the United Nations System

Summary of Progress 2019-2024



Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [79/149](#), in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its eightieth session a progress report on steps taken by the United Nations system towards mainstreaming disability inclusion, including implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

Six years since its launch, the Strategy has contributed to increased integration of disability inclusion into strategic planning processes, enhanced leadership engagement and more inclusive programming. Challenges persist, however, chiefly in making the organizational culture more inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Drawing on annual implementation progress reports from United Nations entities and country teams under the accountability framework of the Strategy, the present report contains the results reported for 2024 and an assessment of system-wide progress, barriers and enablers with respect to disability inclusion from 2019 to 2024.

Leveraging this analysis, the report responds to the request of Member States to enhance coordination, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy. In that connection, it contains recommendations to institutionalize and adequately and sustainably resource disability inclusion across the United Nations system.

These recommendations, alongside those of the independent evaluation of the Strategy, conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office in 2025, will inform the next phase of the Strategy, with a view to further enhancing its impact.

* [A/80/150](#).

** The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

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01

Scaling up the change catalysed by the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

Anchored in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, launched in 2019 by the Secretary-General, is aimed at ensuring the full and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities across all areas of the work of the Organization. Today, disability inclusion is addressed across nearly every aspect of the Organization's operations and high-level decision-making. Leadership and accountability have improved, programming is more inclusive, and a supportive organizational culture is emerging.

Data indicate that the United Nations system is increasingly equipped to advance disability inclusion globally and is better aligned with the principles that Member States are expected to uphold. Progress in relation to the indicators on strategic planning, leadership, staff training, data and collaboration has strengthened the ability of the United Nations to support governments and respond to humanitarian crises. Persons with disabilities are playing a growing role in shaping both targeted initiatives and the integration of disability inclusion across global, regional and national frameworks and programmes.

Progress between 2019 and 2024 has led to three clear wins. First, disability inclusion is more embedded in strategic plans and in programme design, data and evaluation processes, enhancing the ability of the United Nations to work with Member States. Second, work carried out under the Strategy has resulted in the production of practical tools, such as guidelines on evaluation, procurement, consultation and accessibility, that serve to translate commitments into action and align practices across the system.

Third, internal changes have also created conditions for persons with disabilities to contribute their expertise and leadership within the United Nations.

These developments have helped to operationalize the commitment of the United Nations to leave no one behind, recognizing persons with disabilities as colleagues, leaders, change agents and co-creators of a more inclusive future. Their lived experience, innovation and leadership have enriched United Nations policies, programmes and operations, driving progress and accountability and advancing the values of the Charter of the United Nations.

While the Strategy has laid a strong foundation, challenges remain. Improvements are still required in relation to accessibility, procurement, consultation and employment practices. Disability inclusion is not yet systematically mainstreamed, and action often remains within targeted programmes. Greater alignment between global and country-level efforts is needed to better support Member States and improve outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Addressing these gaps is urgent in the context of the climate crisis, protracted conflicts, shrinking civic spaces, pushback on diversity and inclusion, and declining official development aid. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by the aforementioned issues, and the cost of inaction undermines the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The vision is that disability inclusion must become “everyone’s business”. The Strategy is critical in this endeavour as it will provide the blueprint to step up, sustain and institutionalize approaches and practices, advocacy and investment within the peace and security, humanitarian, development and human rights architecture.

Recognizing the low baseline of disability inclusion across the United Nations system that was highlighted in the 2018 institutional review commissioned by the Secretary-General, a stocktake was planned to assess progress under the Strategy and guide future actions. In this regard, alongside the independent evaluation conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office, the present report draws on entity and country team performance under the Strategy from 2019 to 2024 (see sect. VI below for the data for 2024), it contains a review of implementation to date and presents forward-looking recommendations to embed disability inclusion across the United Nations, integrate it into structures and budgets, and ensure that no person with disabilities is left behind by 2030.

The recommendations presented in the report respond to the request by Member States in General Assembly resolution [79/149](#) to “envisage the financial sustainability of the United Nations system-wide coordination and monitoring activities of the Strategy” by making proposals for a next stage that prioritizes: (a) strengthening the ability of the Secretariat to coordinate, monitor and report on implementation of the Strategy at the system-wide level; and (b) strengthening implementation of the Strategy within the Secretariat as the lead entity. The recommendations serve as an urgent call to action and a concrete road map to systematize gains and enhance support for disability inclusion at the country level.



02

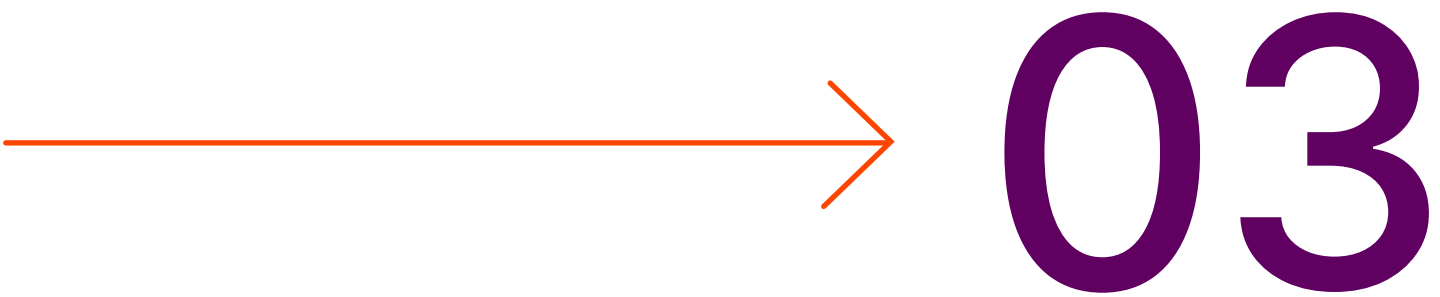
Architecture of accountability: monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

The Strategy is anchored in a system-wide policy and two accountability frameworks – one for United Nations entities and one for country teams. The frameworks contain 15 indicators (plus 1 on accessibility of conferences and events) for entities and 14 for country teams for tracking progress across four areas: leadership, inclusiveness, programming and organizational culture. Designed to be complementary and practical, the frameworks support the step-by-step integration of disability inclusion across the United Nations system.

Reporting against the entity accountability framework was launched in 2019, and country teams began systematic reporting using the accountability scorecard in 2020. For annual reporting on the Strategy, entities and country teams self-assess progress on each indicator using a four-point scale: “missing requirements”, “approaching requirements”, “meeting requirements”, “exceeding requirements” or “not applicable”. This approach enables benchmarking and the highlighting of areas for improvement.

The disability inclusion team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General reviews and validates all reports, ensuring consistency and providing recommendations. Entities and country teams that fall short are encouraged to outline corrective actions and plans for the coming year.

The present report draws on annual submissions from 2019 to 2024 and includes system-wide actions by the High-level Committee on Management, the Executive Committee and inter-agency groups.



System-wide progress from 2019 to 2024

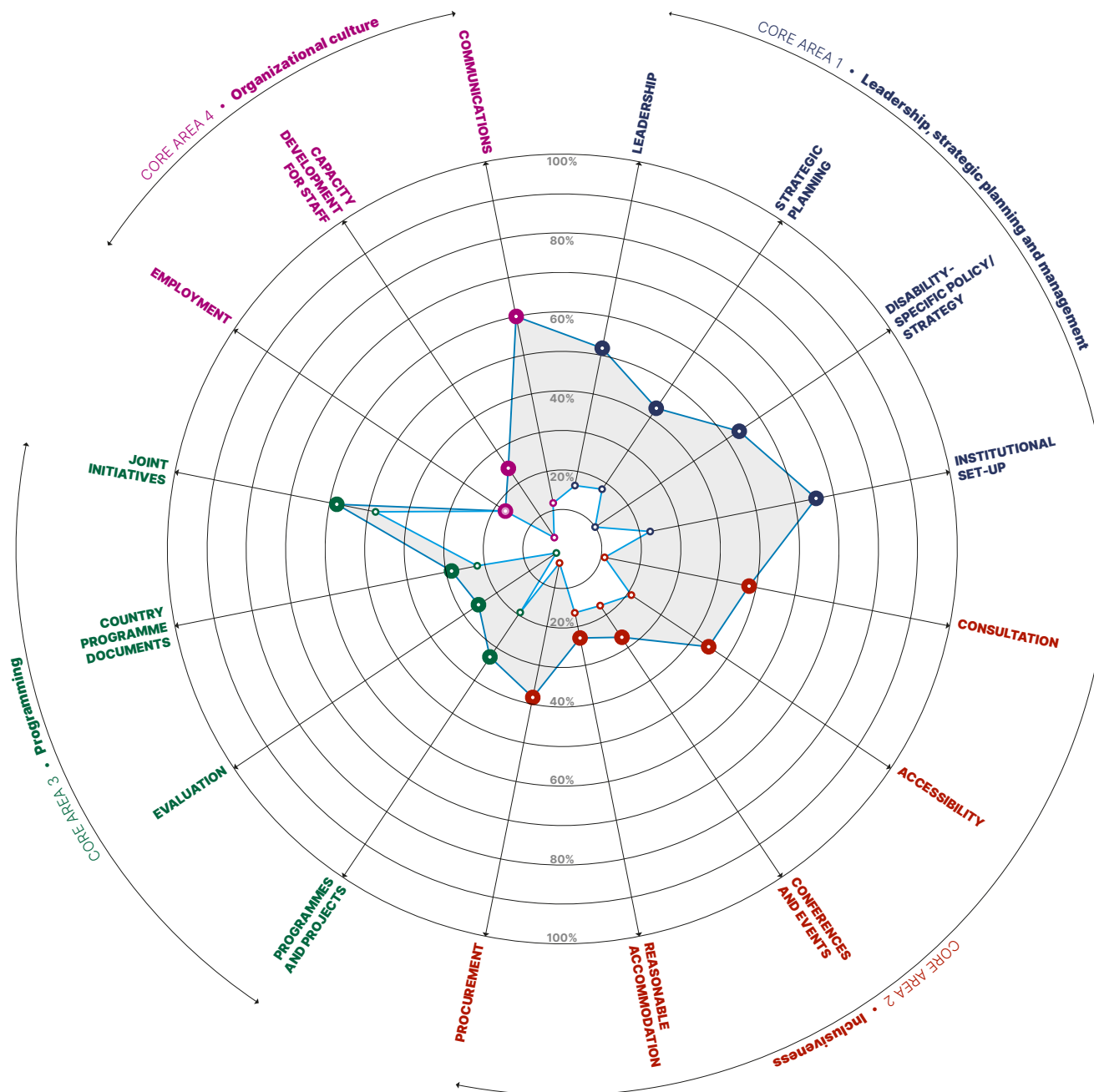
In 2024, the number of entities reporting under the entity accountability framework continued to rise, reaching 85 entities, compared with 57 in 2019. The total comprises: (a) 52 Secretariat entities, including peace and political missions and regional economic commissions; (b) 8 funds and programmes; (c) 13 specialized agencies; and (d) 12 other and related entities.¹ In addition, all 132 country teams have reported annually against the indicators since 2021.² The increase in reporting has been driven by greater awareness and senior leadership commitment; the entity and country team reports form the basis for the annual reports of the Secretary-General on disability inclusion.

¹ The reporting entities, organized into the four categories under which the analysis was carried out, are as follows: (a) Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Department of Global Communications, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Department of Operational Support, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs/Department of Peace Operations, Department of Safety and Security, Development Coordination Office, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Office of Internal Oversight Services, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, United Nations Office to the African Union, Office of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia/United Nations Support Office in Somalia, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Vienna/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and United Nations Youth Office; (b) United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteers and World Food Programme; (c) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Universal Postal Union, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, World Meteorological Organization and World Tourism Organization; and (d) International Organization for Migration, International Trade Centre, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, United Nations System Staff College and United Nations University.

² The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the entity accountability framework were launched and baseline reporting started in 2019, whereas the country team accountability scorecard was launched in 2020, 130 country teams reported in 2020 and all 132 reported from 2021 onward.

3.1 Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by United Nations entities

● Figure I. Percentage of United Nations entities meeting or exceeding requirements in 2019 and 2024, by indicator



CORE AREA 1
Leadership, strategic planning and management

● → 2024 ○ → 2019

CORE AREA 2
Inclusiveness

● → 2024 ○ → 2019

CORE AREA 3
Programming

● → 2024 ○ → 2019

CORE AREA 4
Organizational culture

● → 2024 ○ → 2019

Figure I summarizes the progress made against the entity framework and its indicators, grouped under the four core areas of the Strategy. For each indicator, it shows the percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements in 2019 and 2024, with the shaded area indicating the progress made over this period. The data show gains in relation to leadership, strategic planning and management, while more modest improvements were seen in the indicators on inclusiveness, programming and organizational culture, as reflected in smaller percentage changes from 2019 to 2024.

United Nations entities made the strongest progress in core area 1. By 2024, over 50 per cent had met or exceeded requirements on three of four leadership indicators, up from 15 per cent in 2019. The percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to leadership increased from 16 per cent in 2019 to 52 per cent in 2024, strategic planning from 18 to 43 per cent, disability-specific policy or strategy from 10 to 54 per cent, and institutional set-up from 23 to 66 per cent.

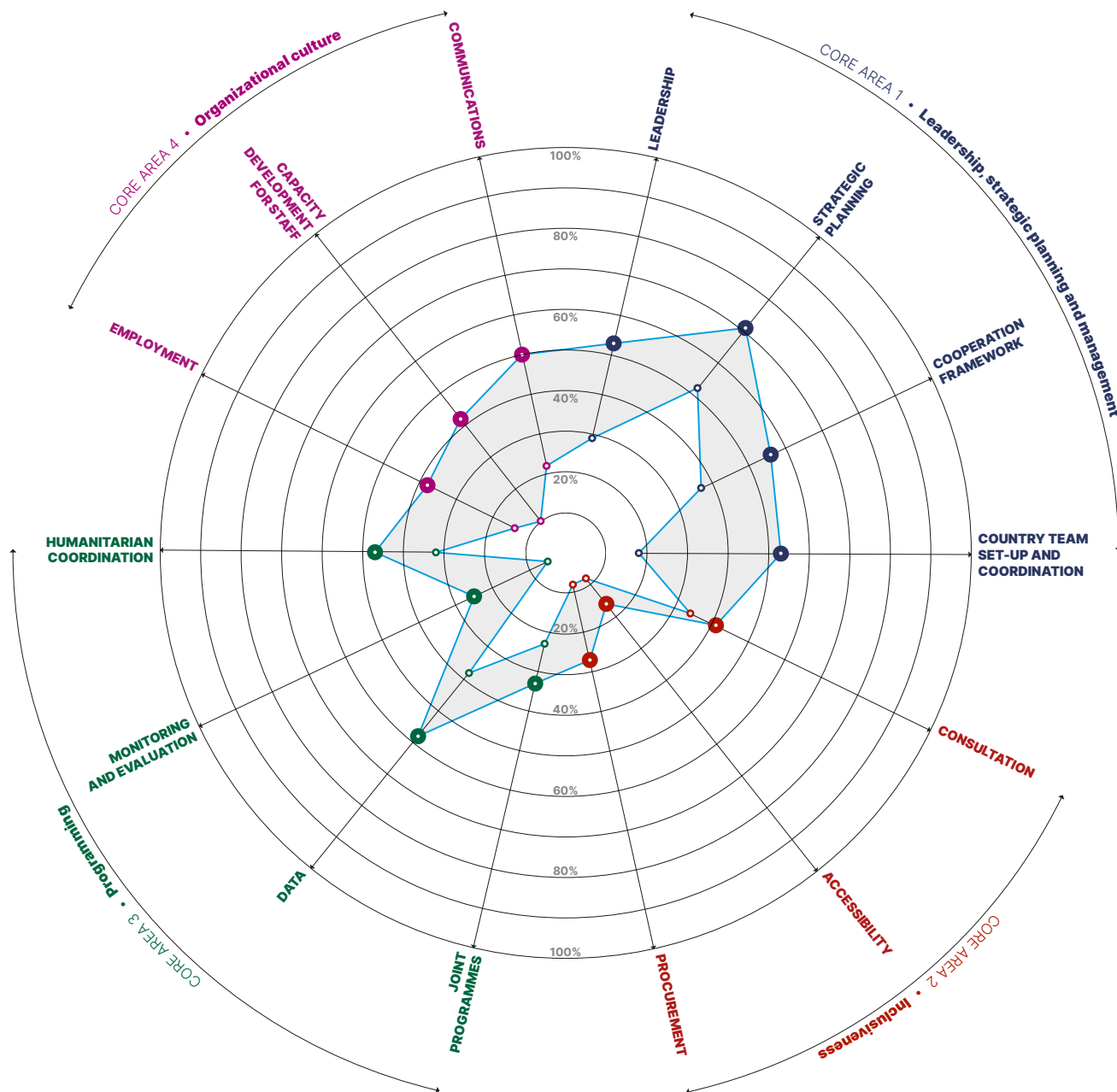
Core area 2, inclusiveness, remains the most challenging, although foundational progress has been made. The percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to consultation with persons with disabilities increased from 11 per cent in 2019 to 48 per cent in 2024, accessibility from 21 to 45 per cent, accessibility of conferences and events from 17 to 26 per cent, reasonable accommodation from 16 to 23 per cent, and procurement from 4 to 38 per cent.

In core area 3, entities made meaningful progress in integrating disability inclusion into programming, supported by new guidance and tools. The percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to mainstreaming disability inclusion in programmes and projects increased from 19 per cent in 2019 to 33 per cent in 2024, evaluation from 2 to 36 per cent, country programme documents from 22 to 27 per cent, and joint initiatives from 48 to 58 per cent.

Core area 4 reflects a shift in organizational culture. Awareness and policy frameworks have improved, and disability inclusion has become more visibly recognized as a United Nations value as a result of training and communications. However, the percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to the indicator on employment of persons with disabilities saw little change, remaining at 17 per cent. The percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements with regard to capacity development for staff increased from 4 per cent in 2019 to 25 per cent in 2024, and communications from 12 to 60 per cent.

3.2 Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy by United Nations country teams

● Figure II. Percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements in 2020 and 2024, by indicator



CORE AREA 1
Leadership, strategic planning and management

● → 2024 ○ → 2020

CORE AREA 2
Inclusiveness

● → 2024 ○ → 2020

CORE AREA 3
Programming

● → 2024 ○ → 2020

CORE AREA 4
Organizational culture

● → 2024 ○ → 2020

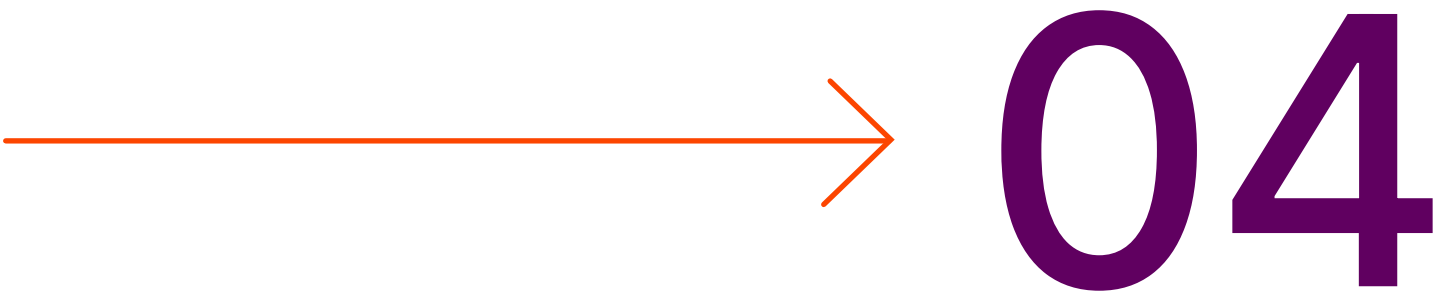
Figure II presents the performance of country teams, showing the percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements for each indicator, with shaded areas marking progress during the period between 2020 and 2024. Major gains can be seen with regard to the indicators on leadership, strategic planning, management and organizational culture, with mixed results in relation to the indicators on inclusiveness and programming.

A steady improvement has been made in core area 1 on leadership, with disability inclusion more systematically integrated into planning and analysis. The percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements with regard to the indicator on leadership increased from 29 per cent in 2020 to 53 per cent in 2024, strategic planning from 52 to 71 per cent, cooperation frameworks from 37 to 56 per cent, and country team set-up and coordination from 18 to 53 per cent.

Modest gains were made in core area 2, inclusiveness. The percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to the indicator on consultation with persons with disabilities increased from 34 per cent in 2020 to 41 per cent in 2024, accessibility from 8 to 16 per cent, and procurement from 10 to 28 per cent, though all remain low.

Progress in core area 3, programming, remains limited. The percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to the indicator on joint programmes increased from 23 per cent in 2020 to 33 per cent in 2024, data from 38 to 58 per cent, monitoring and evaluation from 6 to 25 per cent, and humanitarian programming from 32 to 37 per cent.

Significant advances were made in core area 4, organizational culture. The percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements in relation to the indicator on employment of persons with disabilities rose from 14 per cent in 2020 to 38 per cent in 2024, staff capacity development from 10 to 43 per cent, and communications from 22 to 50 per cent.



Understanding progress and challenges: a system-wide analysis of Strategy implementation

Driving disability inclusion: leadership, strategy and institutional set-up

Core Area 1

Leadership fosters buy-in and acts as a practical driver for institutional change. The upward shift in leadership engagement and strategic commitment has laid the groundwork for sustained and system-wide change across all areas of the implementation of the Strategy. Moreover, the Secretary-General's personal commitment and directives to United Nations leaders set the tone. Where senior leaders, such as heads of entity and resident coordinators, have championed disability inclusion, it has created organizational momentum and reinforced strategic direction.

Across the United Nations, many senior leaders now promote disability inclusion through the implementation of entity-level policies reviewed at the senior level. Where management compacts have included disability-related targets, entity-level strategies have enabled promising results.

With leadership support, there has also been a steady and significant increase in the number of entities developing their own disability inclusion strategies or action plans, signalling a long-term commitment and laying the foundation for progress in other areas relating to the implementation of the Strategy. Crucially, entities are establishing a disability team or appointing advisers and putting in place the entity-wide focal point networks necessary for the comprehensive implementation of the Strategy.

In 2019, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported falling short on all of the indicators in the accountability framework for the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. To address these gaps, it adopted a road map for the period 2020–2022, endorsed by its Executive Board in November 2020, and has issued annual disability inclusion workplans since 2023. Since 2021, WFP has provided its Executive Board with yearly progress updates, and it is rolling out the Strategy to regional and country offices through a measured, step-by-step approach.

At the country level, the leadership of resident coordinators on disability inclusion has also been steadily strengthened, resulting in more systematic integration of the Strategy into planning and analysis tools, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and common country analyses. Over two thirds of resident coordinators now include disability inclusion as a recurring or standing item in country team heads of agency meetings. These provide entry points for mainstreaming and mapping disability inclusion, establishing partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities and fostering dialogues on the rights of persons with disabilities with governments. The limited availability of data on persons with disabilities is often highlighted in common country analyses: that gap often hinders the prioritization of disability inclusion in national plans. Cooperation Frameworks offer a key opportunity to address such gaps by supporting national efforts to generate and use disability data. In Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, the

Republic of Moldova, Peru, Serbia and Tajikistan, for example, resident coordinators used the Cooperation Frameworks as a strategic entry point for institutionalizing the rights of persons with disabilities, aligning the Cooperation Frameworks with both the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals to promote inclusive sustainable development.

Despite areas of progress, significant gaps remain in translating high-level commitments on disability inclusion into concrete actions, indicators and measurable results at both the entity and the country team level. While half of the entities reflect disability inclusion in the overview or preamble of their strategic plan, few have established indicators to assess progress made with regard to disability inclusion commitments or track results in order to allocate resources for specific interventions. Similarly, country teams reported that Cooperation Frameworks include references to disability only in general terms or in annexes, thereby falling short of the requirement to mainstream disability inclusion in such documents. These gaps may undermine efforts to make persons with disabilities central to country-level work while potentially limiting opportunities for collaboration.

From access to influence: strengthening inclusiveness and engagement

Core Area 2

Early in the implementation of the Strategy, key system-wide guidance and standards were developed in response to major gaps identified across the United Nations system in areas that are critical for meaningful disability inclusion, for example, with regard to consultations with persons with disabilities. Many entities lacked formal requirements for engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities, which significantly limited the scope and consistency of their participation. To address this, the United Nations issued guidelines in 2021 aimed at institutionalizing consultation practices and setting clear standards. By 2024, about half of all United Nations entities had begun to consult organizations of persons with disabilities on issues beyond disability-specific topics. The World Health Organization undertook a global mapping of such organizations to facilitate systematic engagement across its offices. Similarly, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Youth Office collaborated to consult young persons and women with disabilities during the formulation of their strategic plans, ensuring that these perspectives were reflected in core priorities. Despite these advances, most entities still engage organizations of persons with disabilities in an ad hoc manner and rarely extend consultations to broader thematic areas.

At the country level, progress on consultation has been encouraging but uneven. The narrow scope of engagement has hindered the systematic integration of disability expertise into country-level planning, coordination and programming. While some United Nations country teams conducted at least one consultation annually on the implementation of the Strategy – spanning the Cooperation Framework cycle and crisis response – many others either did not engage at all or did so only once a year. Moreover, partnerships with a variety of organizations of persons with disabilities, particularly those representing underrepresented groups, such as persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities, remained limited. As a result, consultations often lacked both breadth and depth, raising concerns about their meaningfulness and inclusivity. Without such consultations, policies and responses may not fully reflect and respond to the diverse realities, barriers and needs of persons with disabilities across contexts.

Meaningful engagement hinges also on accessibility, on which there has been uneven progress across the United Nations system. Some larger United Nations funds, programmes and specialized entities have made notable strides by establishing dedicated units with technical expertise and aligning strategies and budgets to support reasonable accommodation. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund launched an accessibility help desk in 2023 to provide country offices with technical advice and financial support for improving physical and digital accessibility. The United Nations Population Fund institutionalized accessibility by including a dedicated budget line in all capital projects. Within the Secretariat, however, financial constraints and lack of coordination have significantly limited progress, and accessibility services are not yet fully integrated into routine planning.

Even though accessibility assessments have been conducted by many United Nations entities and country teams, translating their findings into large-scale physical improvements has proved difficult. Many field offices are housed in older or temporary buildings not designed with accessibility in mind, and funding for necessary modifications is often hard to secure. This has led to long-standing delays and contributed to an inaccessible and segregated workplace environment for persons with disabilities.

Nonetheless, evidence from 2019 to 2024 shows that coordinated action has contributed to tangible improvements by institutionalizing standardized approaches that benefit the United Nations system. The High-level Committee on Management sub-working group on disability inclusion has played a pivotal role in establishing system-wide standards, including those related to reasonable accommodation. The launch of the United Nations Secretariat Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines in 2023 marked a significant step forward, accelerating progress across multiple entities. Ongoing discussions about creating a centralized advisory service and funding mechanism – offering expert guidance, case consultations and implementation tools – signal a promising path towards more consistent and effective responses. In addition, disability inclusion measures for United Nations country teams are being implemented through common services in such areas as procurement, which is offering centralized guidance and coordinated implementation.

Mainstreaming disability inclusion across programming and results

Core Area 3

Mainstreaming disability inclusion in programming, especially in planning and guidance, is gaining traction across the United Nations system. About a third of entities now integrate disability inclusion into their country programme documents, both in analysis and interventions. Notable examples include the disability inclusion marker used by the International Labour Organization to track project inclusivity, and the project review process tied to the strategic plan and safeguards system of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), which is designed to assess and improve disability inclusion. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations revised its country programming framework guidelines to align them with the relevant Cooperation Framework; and the International Fund for Agricultural Development issued a practitioner's guide in 2024 to support disability-inclusive rural development strategies.

Reflecting a twin-track approach and improved collaboration as key enablers for institutionalizing disability inclusion, by 2024, just over half of entities reported implementing targeted projects, such as those under the Global Disability Fund, and embedding disability considerations in broader thematic initiatives.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) illustrates how the accountability framework under the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy can serve to galvanize disability inclusion efforts across an organization. Even though ILO was already engaged on disability issues before the adoption of the Strategy, it proved to be catalytic, accelerating progress throughout the entity. The accountability framework provided a more structured, systematic and whole-of-organization approach, which helped to secure top-level leadership commitment. By rigorously integrating the indicators from the Strategy across its departments, ILO has set clear targets for its own Disability Inclusion Strategy for the period 2024–2027, which will guide its work at the global, regional and country levels.

The expansion of disability-inclusive programming has created new opportunities for evaluation and learning. As more programmes and joint initiatives mainstreaming disability inclusion were introduced between 2019 and 2024, so did the need to assess their impact. The 2022 United Nations Evaluation Group's system-wide guidelines spurred significant improvements in disability-inclusive evaluation. By 2024, a third of United Nations entities had integrated disability into evaluation processes, with some conducting meta-analyses every five years. These evaluations are building an evidence base that supports stronger programming and advocacy, reinforcing disability inclusion from headquarters to the field.

Country teams have made progress in integrating disability inclusion into data, monitoring and evaluation, and humanitarian programming, enhancing the visibility of persons with disabilities and specific priorities. For example, humanitarian planning increasingly includes targeted interventions, disaggregated data, and engagement of persons with disabilities in coordination mechanisms. Country teams such as Bangladesh, Madagascar and the State of Palestine have prioritized disability inclusion in flash appeals and refugee response plans, coordinating with cluster leads to address the rights of persons with disabilities. In

some cases, inclusion has been embedded in disaster management tools and post-disaster assessments. The response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic also accelerated these improvements, supported by quality assurance from the Disability Reference Group, which includes representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, non-governmental organizations, United Nations entities and academia and donors.

Despite progress described above, mainstreaming disability inclusion remains inconsistent and often unsustainable, underscoring the need to operationalize programming guidance across all levels and ensure disability inclusion is a consistent priority. About half of United Nations entities still struggle to move from guidance to practice in programming, evaluations and country documents. Many initiatives remain project-based and time-bound, with limited long-term impact unless institutionalized by governments or country teams. Humanitarian settings pose additional challenges, where high-pressure environments risk sidelining disability inclusion and it is not embedded in practices and funding.

Reliable disability-disaggregated data are essential for effective programming and accountability, however, capacity-building on collecting, disaggregating and using data on disability remains insufficient to meet inclusion goals. Many country teams began working with national authorities to improve data systems. Between 2019 and 2024, one third of country teams mapped existing disability data, and half advanced this work through partnerships with government counterparts. A quarter of country teams also trained monitoring and evaluation groups on disability-inclusive indicators and analysis. However, only 1 in 10 United Nations country teams have mainstreamed disability inclusion in most of their capacity-building efforts for national statistical offices. Strengthening these capacities is critical to generate better data, inform policymaking, and assess the impact of the implementation of the Strategy in ensuring that no one is left behind.

Building an inclusive United Nations for persons with disabilities

Core Area 4

The United Nations system has made notable progress in establishing formal policies to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in its workforce. These developments reflect a growing commitment to a more unified and inclusive approach across the United Nations system, aligning country-level practices with headquarters-level strategies. Nearly all United Nations entities now have a policy or strategy in place to attract, recruit, retain and promote staff with disabilities. In parallel, the number of country teams that include non-discriminatory statements in job vacancies has roughly tripled since 2020.

However, despite these policy advancements, significant implementation challenges persist with regard to achieving workforce inclusion, specifically in connection with the realization of equal opportunities in hiring, retention and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the United Nations. Only 2 per cent of United Nations entities have reported an actual increase in staff with disabilities. A few country teams – such as those in Albania, Armenia, Costa Rica, Ghana, India and the United Republic of Tanzania – have taken steps to assess the representation of staff and consultants with disabilities, using these data to establish baselines and identify areas where support systems are needed. However, the majority of country teams have not conducted such reviews, missing critical opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted measures, and engage in meaningful discussions around staff satisfaction and well-being.

A major barrier to monitoring progress is the lack of reliable data on staff with disabilities across the United Nations system. Only a few funds, programmes and specialized agencies are able to track this information accurately. This is largely due to the low number of individuals willing to self-identify as persons with disabilities, which points to the need for a more supportive and inclusive organizational culture. Currently, only 17 per cent of United Nations entities report that staff with disabilities experience levels of satisfaction and well-being comparable to their peers. This gap highlights the need to foster an environment where staff feel supported and confident to voluntarily disclose their disability status, free from stigma or discrimination.

Cultural and attitudinal barriers remain a persistent obstacle to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the United Nations workplace. United Nations entities attribute low disclosure rates and satisfaction levels to ongoing concerns about privacy and stigma, which are often reinforced by limited direct interaction with persons with disabilities or knowledge of antidiscrimination policies. Resources that have been developed are yet to be effectively utilized. These conditions allow unconscious biases to persist and hinder progress towards a more inclusive culture. Addressing these challenges requires further sustained investment in training and learning opportunities, particularly those developed and delivered in partnership with persons with disabilities. Such initiatives are essential not only for raising awareness but also for shifting organizational culture. As highlighted in entity reports, these efforts must be prioritized as strategic enablers. They hold the potential to foster a more inclusive workplace and enhance the capacity of the United Nations system to provide effective technical and policy support to governments in advancing disability inclusion.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the report shows that, in the first six years of the implementation of the Strategy, it has helped to mainstream disability inclusion across United Nations operations, equipped staff with practical tools to turn commitments into action and strengthened the credibility of the Organization in the eyes of persons with disabilities, as well as enhancing their role in leading it. The analysis indicates that, when leadership, resources and collaboration are aligned, the United Nations system has delivered tangible improvements in terms of disability inclusion, driving progress by leading by example through internal change and strengthening its capacity to support national efforts.

However, as shown in the present report, progress remains uneven across the system. Where the enabling factors were missing, progress stalled and inclusion risked becoming reduced to isolated or short-lived initiatives rather than system-wide transformation. This lesson, which is corroborated by the findings and conclusions of the independent evaluation, suggests that, in order to move beyond pockets of success, it is necessary to implement standards, practices and approaches more systematically across the United Nations system and the core areas of the Strategy. This will ensure that results accrued over the past years are sustained, scaled up and reinforced. In order to address these challenges and drive systemic progress on disability inclusion, the recommendations below outline priority actions to be taken across the United Nations system, including options for institutionalization and an integrated way of monitoring implementation.

1

Recommendation 1:

The United Nations Secretariat should scale up disability inclusion efforts through sustained investment in accessibility and through the integration of accessibility into planning, budgeting and operational systems and processes

Accessibility is a fundamental prerequisite for persons with disabilities to engage with the United Nations, whether as staff, partners, members of affected populations or other types of stakeholders. In accordance with article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, accessibility must be understood comprehensively, to cover physical spaces, digital platforms, information, communications and technology. Evidence from the implementation of the Strategy shows that progress in this area has been markedly uneven across entities and country teams. For Secretariat entities, improved efforts will also entail the scaling up of common approaches that can create economies of scale and impact, particularly to the benefit of smaller entities that lack resources. In this regard, action should be taken to:

- Strengthen accountability and follow-up mechanisms for consistent implementation of accessibility measures, through assessment prioritization, budgeting and monitoring;
- Expand the use of common services, under the business operations strategy 2.0, to provide shared accessibility solutions, including in the areas of procurement, facilities management and information and communications technology (ICT) systems, and establish key performance indicators that measure progress on accessibility;
- Seek to establish partnerships with host Governments in order to improve the accessibility of shared buildings, which can also raise the awareness of government counterparts with regard to accessibility, thereby reinforcing the normative leadership role of the Organization.

2

Recommendation 2:

The inclusion of persons with disabilities should be a systematic and standard feature in all United Nations consultation and coordination mechanisms

Consultation is a key tenet of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. It empowers persons with disabilities and improves the effectiveness of development and humanitarian action. Building on the foundational efforts already made under the Strategy, the United Nations must promote the systematic, meaningful participation of organizations of persons with disabilities at all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and coordination within United Nations entities and in country-level work, including in emergencies, and not only in connection with disability-related issues. Diversity and representation must also be prioritized by ensuring that consultations meaningfully include women and girls with disabilities, persons who live in rural areas and other underrepresented groups, such as persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities.

To achieve this, action should be taken to:

- Promote the participation of, and consultation with, organizations of persons with disabilities, including through partnerships, as part of existing coordination and inter-agency structures and mechanisms, including in humanitarian action, using Planning and programming processes, such as common country analyses, humanitarian resource plans and humanitarian cluster strategies as entry points;
- Ensure that there is effective planning and budgeting to make meetings and events accessible, including by providing reasonable accommodation for participation, and by tracking requests, satisfaction and diversity of engagement;
- Enhance mandatory training and learning opportunities that build the capacities of United Nations staff to engage with persons with disabilities while strengthening the readiness of organizations of persons with disabilities to effectively engage with United Nations system entities.

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Recommendation 3:

The United Nations Secretariat and all its entities should embed disability inclusion across all stages of the Secretariat employment cycle, from recruitment and onboarding to retention, advancement and separation

Promoting the employment of persons with disabilities at the United Nations is critical to fostering a truly inclusive environment and culture. Working alongside colleagues with disabilities builds awareness, enhances understanding of disability inclusion and changes attitudes. Although the Strategy has resulted in some progress in relation to hiring, employment of persons with disabilities remains the area in which progress has been slowest.

The United Nations must embrace a more holistic model to become an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. Efforts should encompass all stages of the employment cycle: from recruitment, retention and advancement to workplace accessibility, reasonable accommodation and well-being. These systematic efforts will lay the foundations for employees with disabilities to meaningfully contribute to the work of United Nations Secretariat entities, including at the country level. In this connection, action should be taken to:

- Ensure that reasonable accommodation is properly resourced, including through flexible, responsive centralized funds;
- Systematically conduct recurring, standardized staff surveys and establish feedback mechanisms to assess the experiences, satisfaction and well-being of employees with disabilities, and use the results to support continuous improvement;
- Increase the recruitment of persons with disabilities through targeted outreach, dedicated recruitment programmes and inclusive selection processes, with a view to expanding representation at all levels;
- Make disability inclusion an explicit, formal component of performance appraisals for heads of entity, resident coordinators and other senior staff, including demonstrated leadership and results in advancing disability inclusion, with regular review and feedback for continuous improvement.

Recommendation 4:

The Secretariat should build strong knowledge management and enhance staff learning in order to make disability inclusion the norm across the Organization.

Better awareness, understanding and practical know-how among staff at all levels, especially managers and decision-makers, are key to translating commitments under the Strategy into meaningful action in every area, including programming, partnerships, employment practices and organizational change. When learning is widespread, targeted and embedded in everyday work, the responsibility for disability inclusion is shifted away from a few focal points and shared across the system. It also creates an environment in which staff with disabilities can thrive. Investing in knowledge and staff learning, particularly by collaborating with organizations of persons with disabilities, can both contribute to more systematic implementation of the Strategy and trigger long-term institutional change. In this connection, actions should be taken to:

- Develop and roll out tailored mandatory learning programmes for senior leaders, including heads of entity, in order to deepen their understanding of disability inclusion and equip them to champion the Strategy across their areas of responsibility;
- Develop a core package of tools, resources and good practices for implementing the Strategy, that are drawn from across the United Nations system and aligned with common standards and United Nations 2.0 fundamentals, and ensure that these are effectively disseminated and used across entities and country teams;
- Strengthen peer learning and establish and coordinate system-wide communities of practice to promote common approaches and solutions to key challenges, including those related to accessibility, reasonable accommodation and inclusive procurement;
- Provide tailored training for staff members involved in operations, such as facilities management, ICT, procurement, events management, security and human resources, in order to ensure that they have the practical skills and knowledge to put in place accessibility measures and deliver reasonable accommodation effectively.

Recommendation 5:

The United Nations system should prioritize the collection and analysis of high-quality data on persons with disabilities in order to build robust evidence that can inform internal decision-making, as well as strengthening national capacities with regard to data collection for effective, evidence-based policymaking at the national level

The systematic collection of data on persons with disabilities is critical to understanding whether the United Nations and its Member States are advancing in the realization of the commitments enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Such data are essential for measuring inequalities, monitoring inclusion and ensuring that policies, programmes and services are responsive to the rights and priorities of persons with disabilities. At the same time, effective promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities through policies and programming is dependent upon the Organization learning from implementation, including by identifying good and bad practices and the most effective approaches. Although critical initiatives for identifying such practices and approaches have been spearheaded under the Strategy, that is not enough: there is an urgent need to focus on them in the lead-up to 2030 to both accelerate progress and ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind. In that regard, action should be taken to:

- Identify, disseminate and utilize disability data to enhance the effectiveness of approaches to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in programme planning and implementation;
- Strengthen the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the monitoring and evaluation of United Nations programmes, including by building the capacity of staff and groups responsible for monitoring and evaluation;
- Invest in capacity-building for national statistical offices to support the integration of disability into broader data collection and analysis and strengthen the evidence base for effective policymaking.

Recommendation 6:

The Secretariat should set up a monitoring and coordination mechanism, supported by a permanent secretariat and with consistent, sustainable and predictable resources, to ensure system-wide coherence with respect to disability inclusion, in particular with regard to the implementation of and reporting on the Strategy

Institutionalizing disability inclusion is essential in order to move from uneven progress across the Organization to system-wide sustained progress and coherence. Strengthened Secretariat infrastructure is required to support coordination, monitoring and reporting at the system level, ensure sustainable and predictable financing and reinforce accountability. In this connection, action should be taken and tools should be developed to:

- Elaborate a plan to accelerate the implementation of the Strategy, which should include a United Nations advisory group and an adequately resourced secretariat to monitor and coordinate system-wide implementation of the Strategy and provide technical support and capacity-building;

- Empower the Strategy coordination team to convene and support disability inclusion focal points and inter-agency groups by ensuring active senior leadership engagement, responsibility-sharing and adequate resource allocation, in order to strengthen ownership of disability inclusion across the United Nations system;
- Further strengthen accountability for disability inclusion across the United Nations system, including by implementing the relevant recommendations contained in the present report and ensuring annual reporting by all system entities on the implementation of, and progress under, the Strategy.

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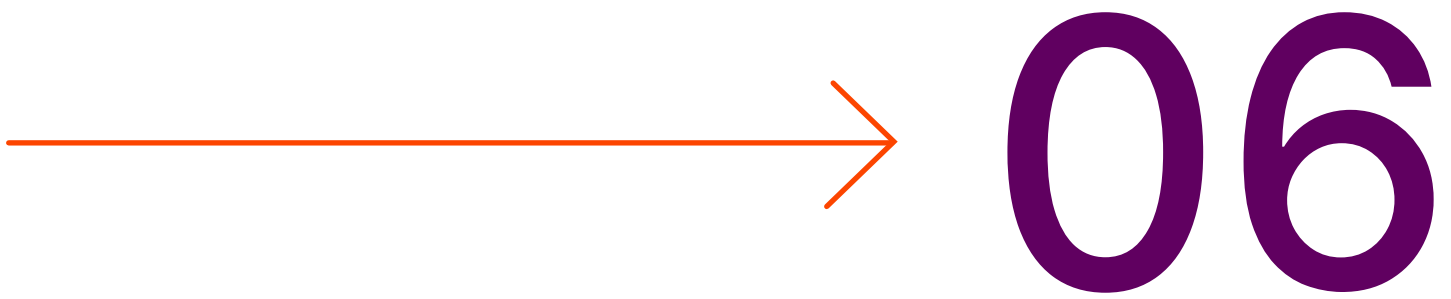
Recommendation 7:

Where appropriate, efficiency gains resulting from the UN80 Initiative should contribute to the implementation of the Strategy and to further investment in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities at the global, regional and country levels, across all United Nations activities in the areas of peace and security, humanitarian action, sustainable development and human rights

The Strategy has further positioned the United Nations as a reliable partner in support of Member States' efforts to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Through their work under the Strategy, United Nations system entities have built internal capacity and demonstrated leadership commitment, enabling them to advocate and embed disability inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities into executive boards, national strategic plans, Cooperation Frameworks and national dialogues.

With a stronger foundation in place, the United Nations is well positioned to support Member States in driving political momentum, by aligning efforts through existing initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Pact for the Future and the UN80 Initiative, in order to scale up disability inclusion. Mainstreaming disability inclusion offers a cost-efficient solution to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities at a time of global challenges to financing for sustainable development. This includes supporting data systems and capacity-building for stakeholders in order to embed inclusion across national policies and sectors. In this connection, action should be taken to:

- Leverage senior leadership, including heads of entity and resident coordinators, and country team members to maintain regular, structured dialogue with governments on disability inclusion and the human rights of persons with disabilities and to embed those topics across policy, planning and delivery;
- Invest in technical expertise on disability inclusion in order to scale up and mainstream disability inclusion in programmes;
- Identify entry points for integrating disability inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities into results frameworks, indicators and budgets, in line with efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

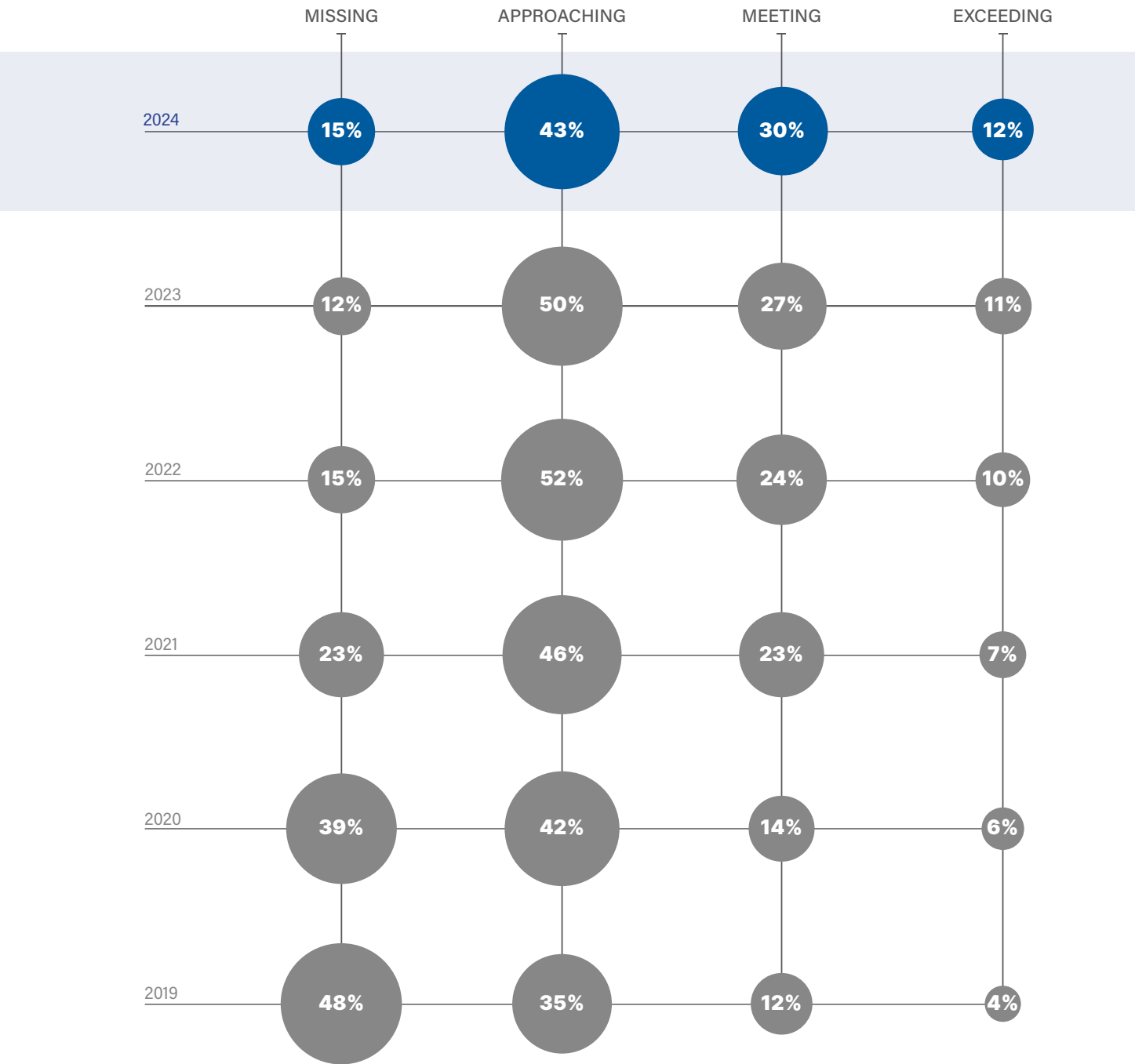


Reporting in 2024 by United Nations entities and country teams

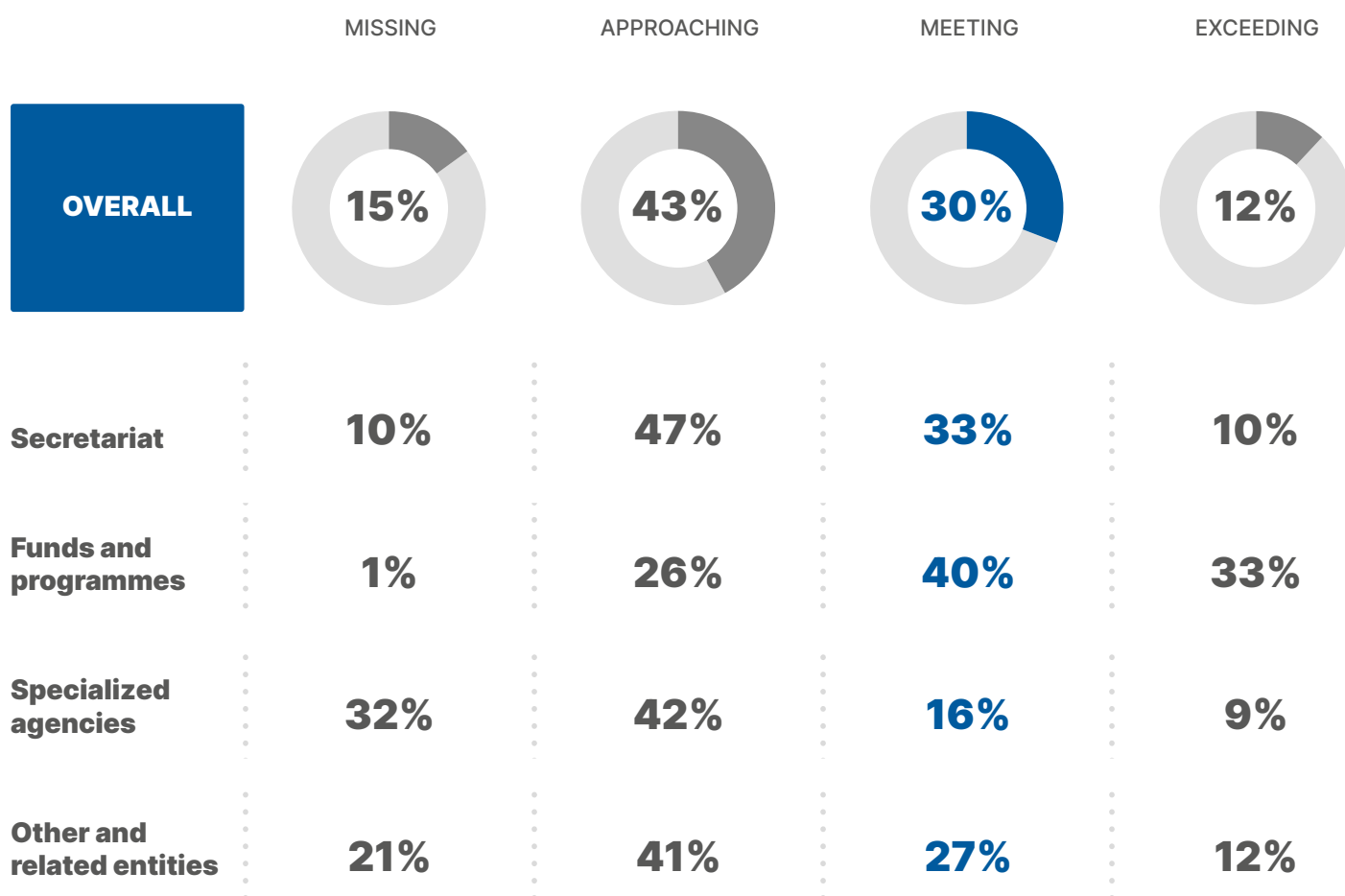
6.1 Implementation by United Nations entities of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy in 2024

In 2024, 85 United Nations entities reported on their performance under the Strategy. They continued to make steady progress, meeting or exceeding requirements on 42 per cent of indicators – up from 38 per cent in 2023 and just 16 per cent in 2019, which reflects continued growth in ambition and implementation. While the proportion of entities that received a rating of “missing requirements” for some indicators increased slightly to 15 per cent – due in part to new entities beginning their implementation of the Strategy – this remains a significant drop from 48 per cent in 2019, showing that action is increasingly being taken on disability inclusion across the United Nations system.

● Figure III. Overall rating comparison for United Nations entities, 2019–2024

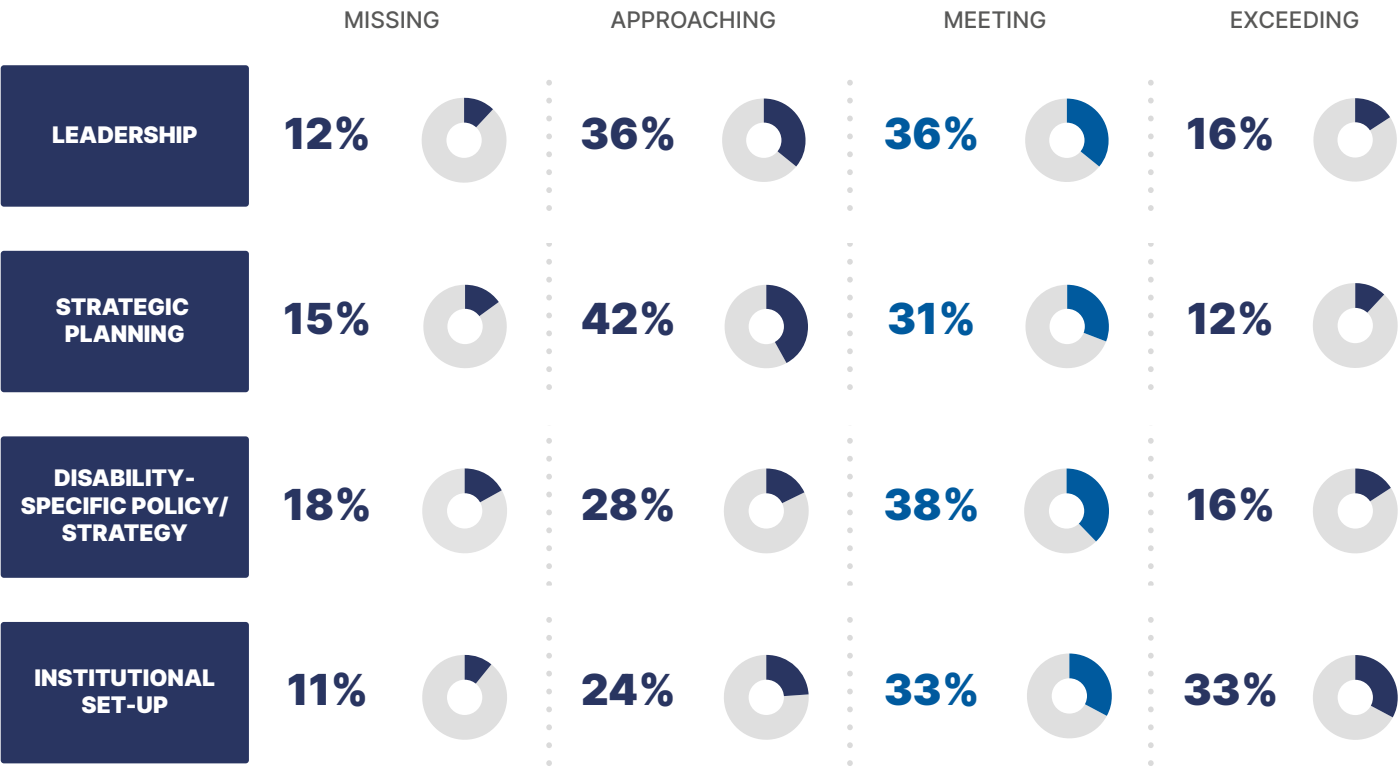


● Figure IV. Ratings for the United Nations system, by entity type, 2024



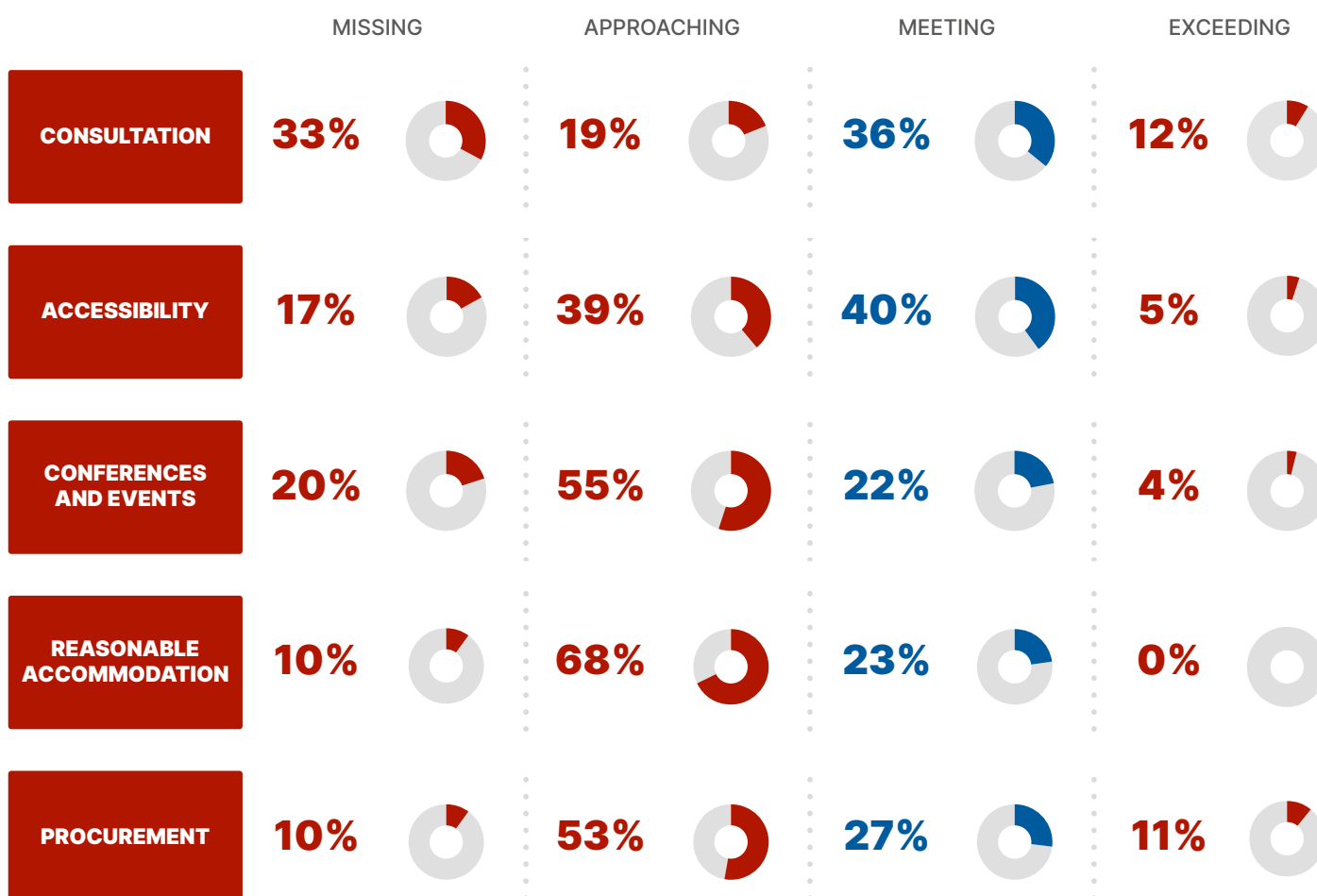
Overall, funds and programmes continued to show the highest levels of implementation, meeting or exceeding requirements on 73 per cent of indicators, a slight rise from 2023. The Secretariat and other and related entities demonstrated similar slow year-on-year progress towards meeting or exceeding requirements. Notably, nine entities – 11 per cent of those that submitted reports in 2024 – are either new or returning after a long gap, reflecting early-stage implementation and growing system-wide commitment to disability inclusion.

● Figure V. Ratings for United Nations entities in core area 1, by performance indicator, 2024



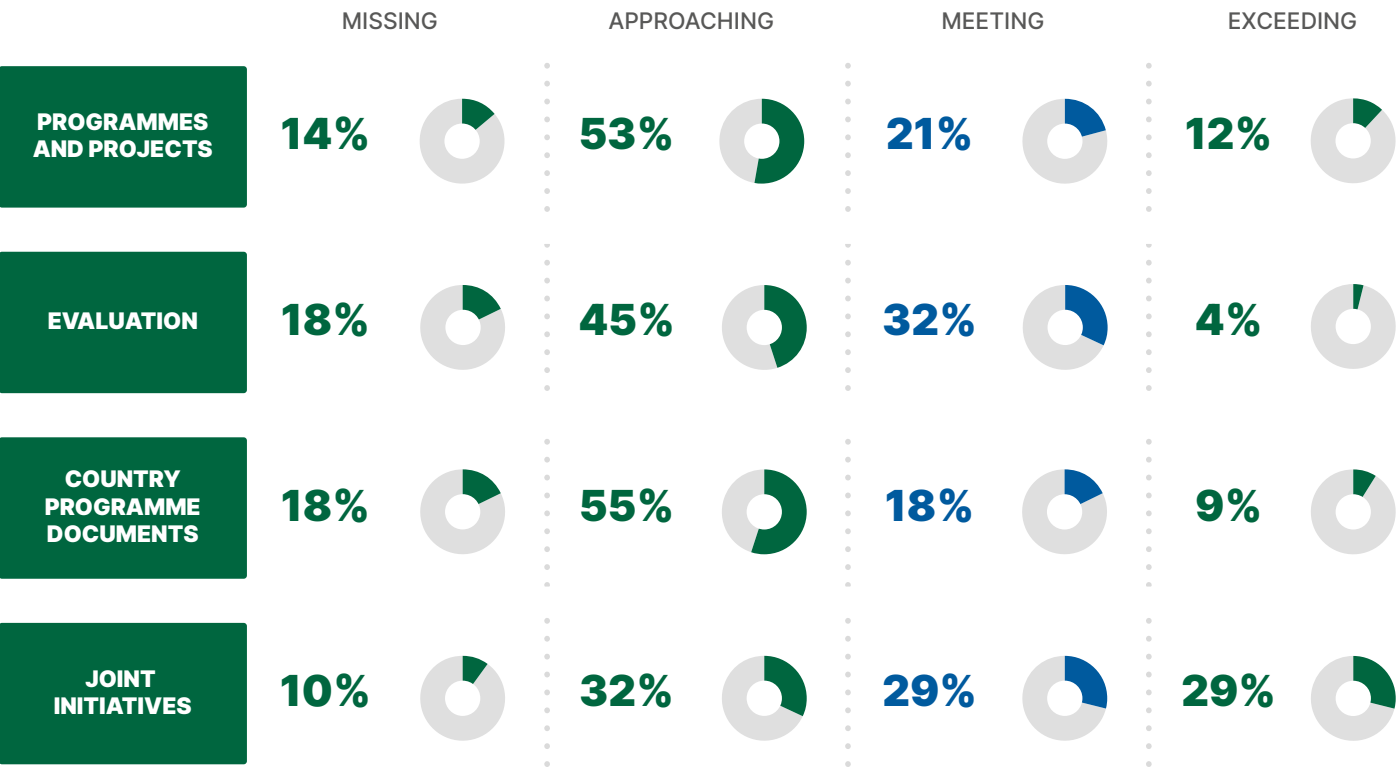
In core area 1, there has been a clear upward trend in the number of entities progressing from meeting to exceeding requirements, and for three indicators, an increase in those meeting requirements. This indicates that leadership continues to champion disability inclusion and is driving measures to strengthen institutional accountability in that regard. Most significantly, entities are increasingly investing in building dedicated disability inclusion capacity and activating focal point networks, as shown by the fact that 66 per cent of entities met or exceeded requirements in relation to the indicator on institutional set-up, compared with 51 per cent in 2023.

● Figure VI. Ratings for United Nations entities in core area 2, by performance indicator, 2024



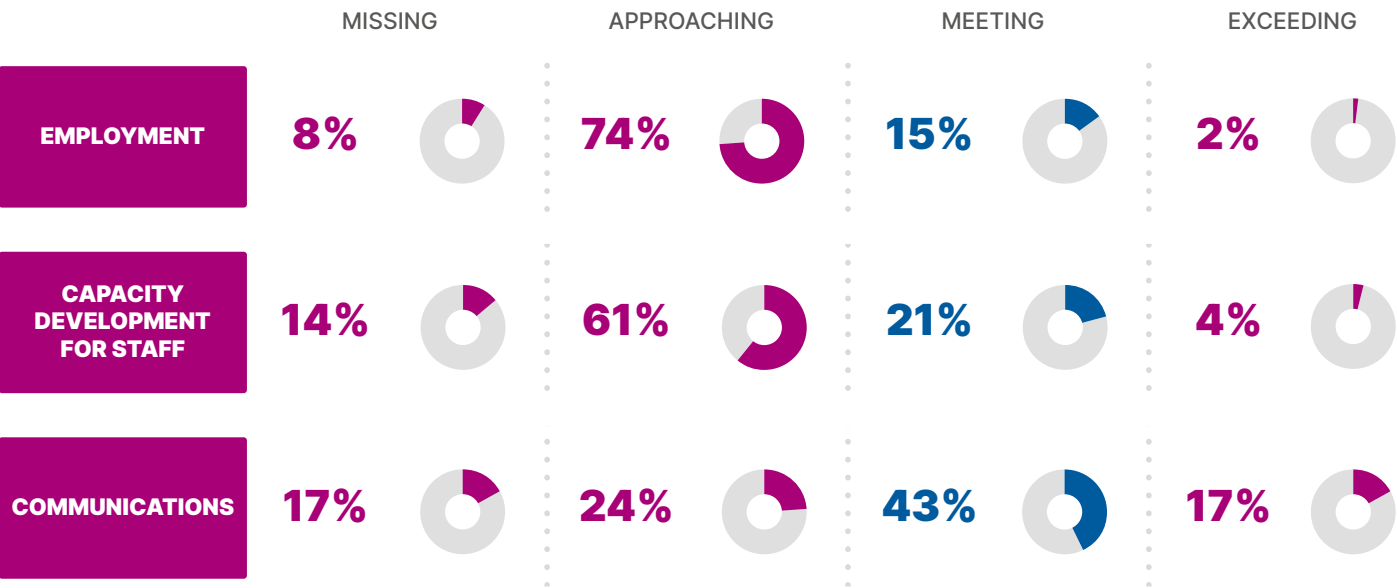
Consultations with organizations of persons with disabilities and accessibility are foundational to meaningful advancement in disability inclusion. Historically, implementation has been slow, however, a positive shift was seen in 2024. Entities are increasingly consulting organizations of persons with disabilities on both disability-specific and broader issues, as shown by 48 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding requirements, compared with 37 per cent in 2023. Reasonable accommodation measures are being institutionalized, as 48 per cent of entities now have guidance and funding mechanisms in place, compared with 28 per cent in 2023.

● Figure VII. Ratings for United Nations entities in core area 3, by performance indicator, 2024



Mixed results were seen in terms of the progress made in mainstreaming disability inclusion in programming. Entities are progressively moving towards more disability inclusive programming by developing guidance and establishing mainstreaming targets: in 2024, 31 per cent of entities met or exceeded requirements, compared with 24 per cent in 2023. In addition, entities continued to strengthen mainstreaming disability inclusion into their evaluation processes, further enhancing accountability and providing an opportunity to integrate lessons learned into future programming.

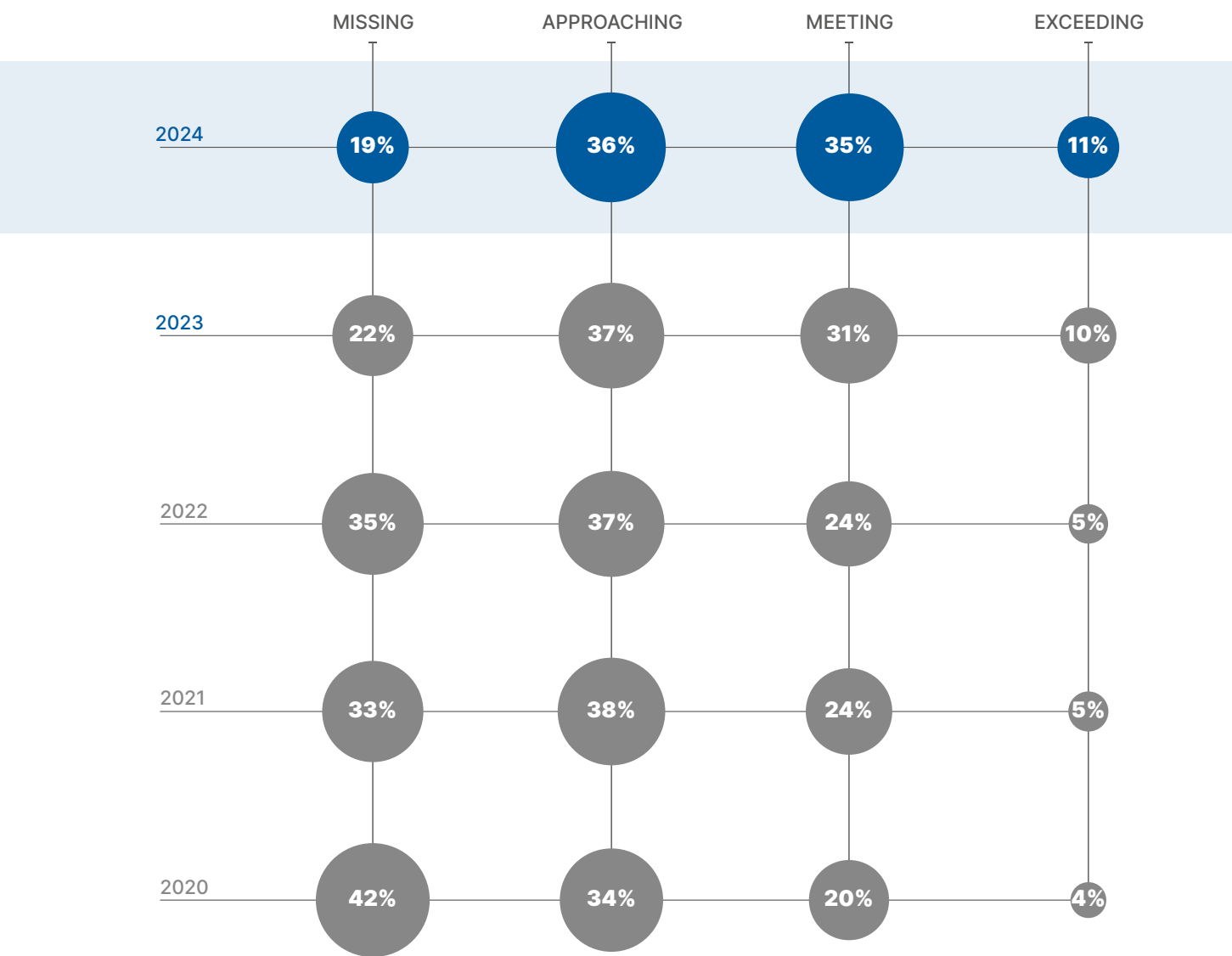
● Figure VIII. Ratings for United Nations entities in core area 4, by performance indicator, 2024



Slight progress can be seen in core area 4 as the share of entities exceeding requirements has increased for all three indicators. The communications indicator remained the strongest performing in this area, while progress in relation to meeting the requirements under the employment indicator remained slow. In addition, efforts to build the knowledge and capacities of staff in relation to disability inclusion also remained limited.

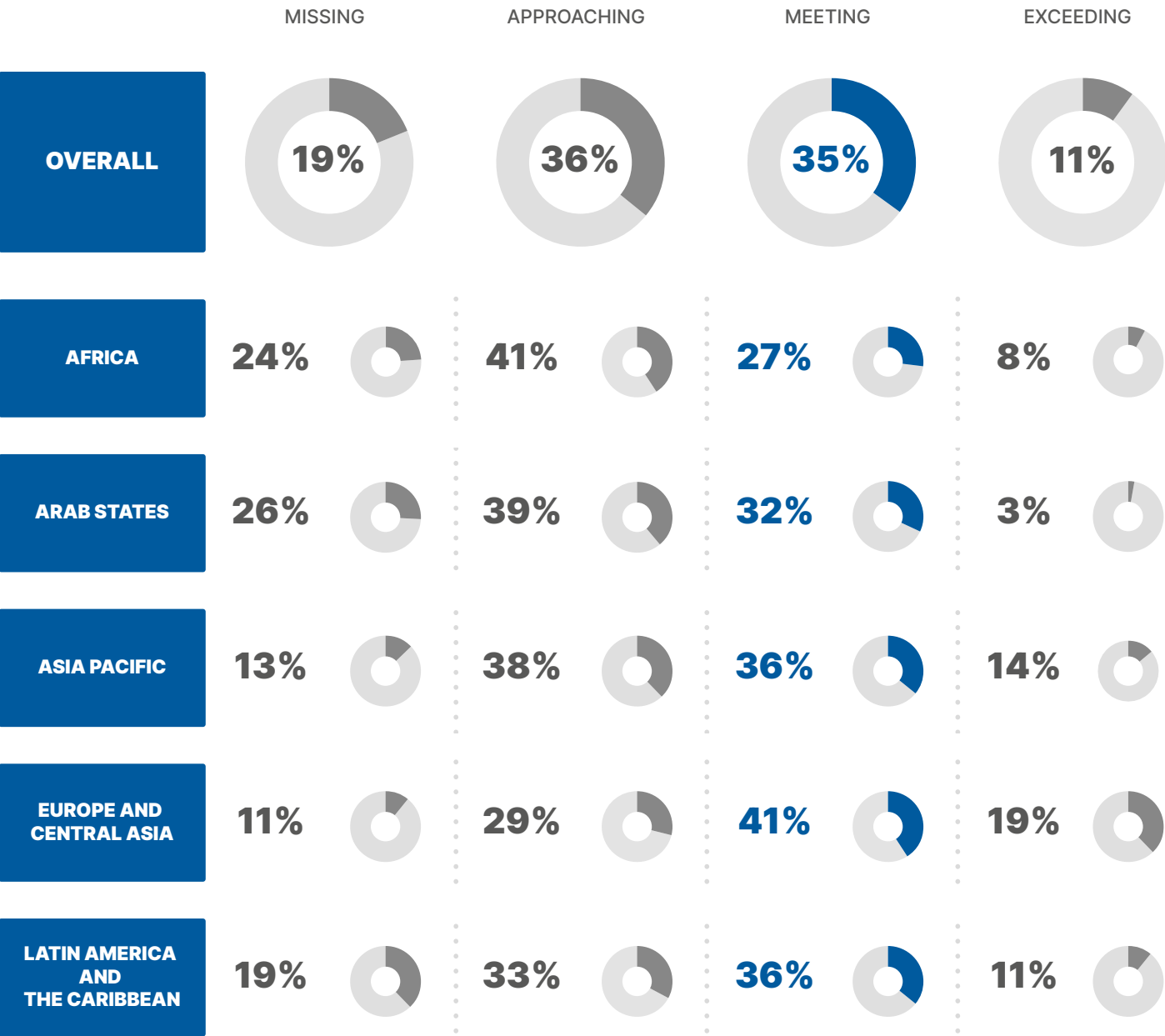
6.2 Implementation by country teams of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy in 2024

● Figure IX. Overall rating comparison for United Nations country teams, 2020–2024



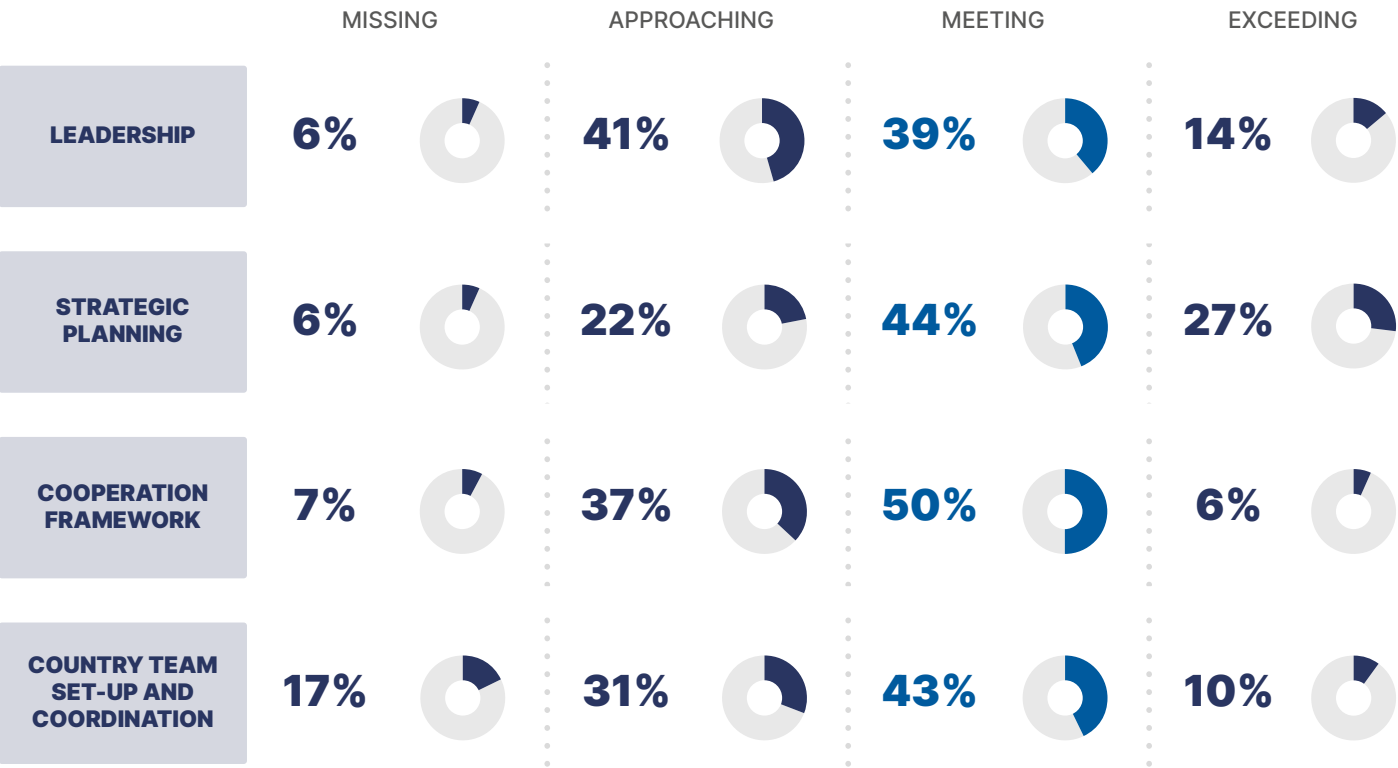
Country teams have made steady and sustained progress in the implementation of the Strategy. In 2024, all 132 country teams reported against the accountability scorecard for the fifth consecutive year. Country teams met or exceeded requirements for 46 per cent of indicators – up from 41 per cent in 2023, and a significant increase from just 24 per cent in 2020. The share of country teams exceeding requirements rose to 11 per cent, almost tripling from 4 per cent in 2020, highlighting growing engagement and strengthened institutionalization of disability inclusion across country teams.

● Figure X. Ratings for United Nations country teams, by region, 2024



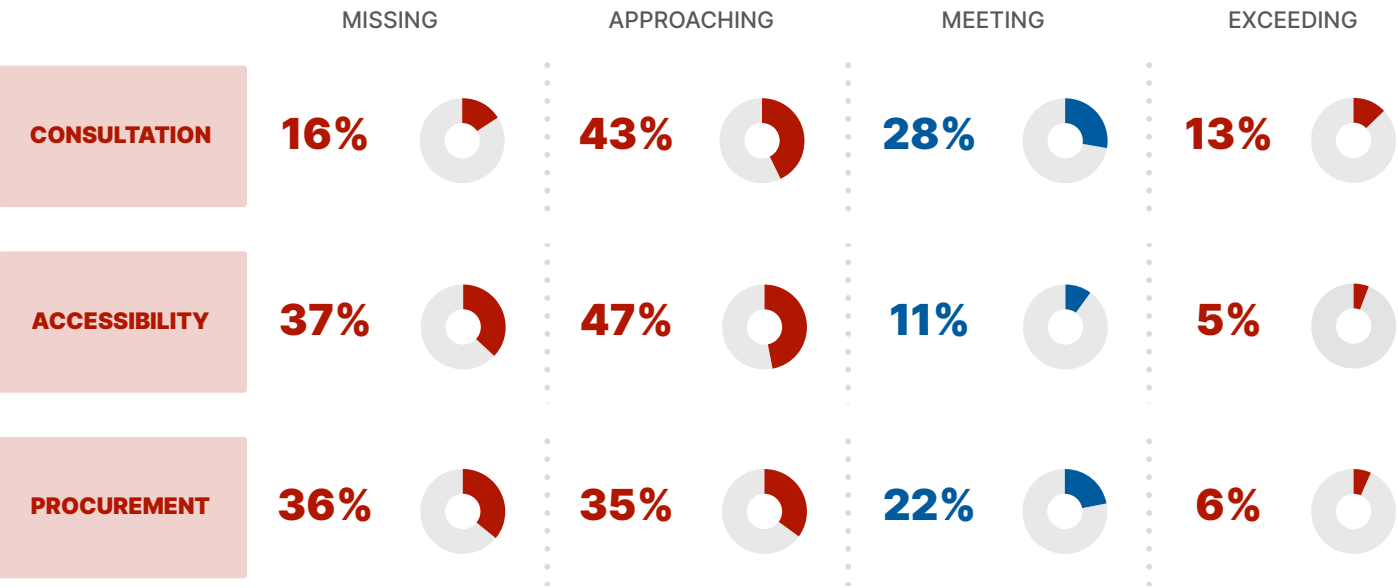
In 2024, all regions continued to build on the progress made in previous years. Europe and Central Asia remained the strongest performers, with 60 per cent of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements. Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean sustained positive trends, while the Africa region showed steady gains, and the Arab States made incremental progress. Notably, the application of the rating “missing requirements” declined in most regions, reflecting stronger engagement and commitment to implementation.

● Figure XI. Ratings for United Nations country teams in core area 1, by performance indicator, 2024



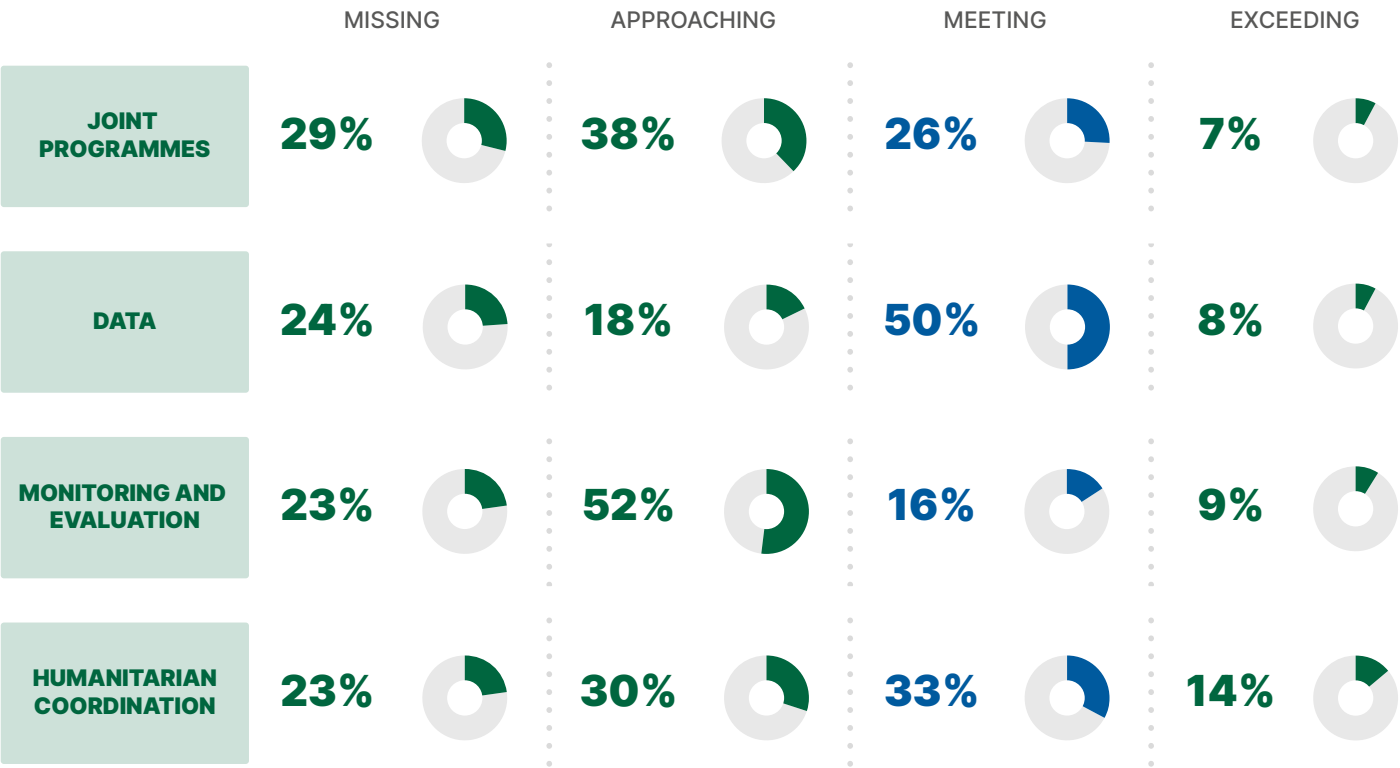
Country teams have demonstrated notable progress in relation to the indicators on leadership and coordination. The percentage of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements relating to the indicator on leadership increased to 53 per cent in 2024, up from 48 per cent in 2023, indicating that resident coordinators are more consistently advocating disability inclusion, including through substantive discussions in country team meetings. This improvement may have also supported the strengthening of disability inclusion coordination mechanisms, with 43 per cent of country teams reporting that these mechanisms contributed substantively to key strategic planning compared with 35 per cent in 2023.

● Figure XII. Ratings for United Nations country teams in core area 2, by performance indicator, 2024



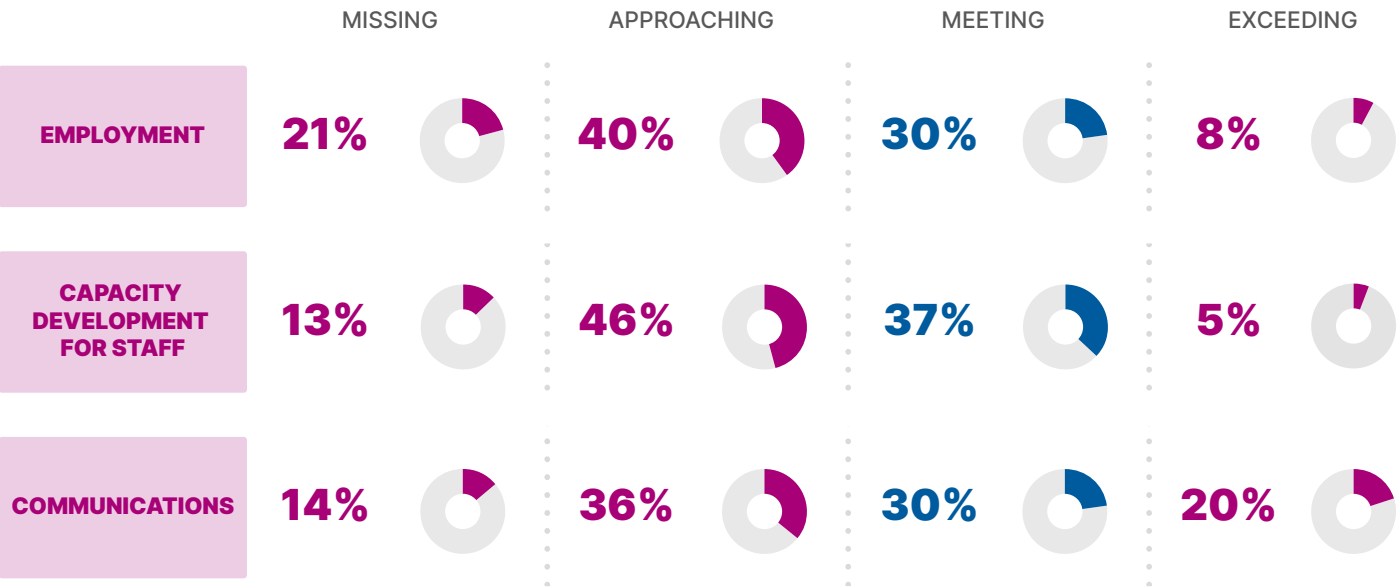
Progress continued to be slow on consultation and accessibility, nonetheless, trends across multiple indicators suggest a broader shift towards more systematic consultation and partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities. Some 41 per cent of country teams reported that they had consulted organizations of persons with disabilities on key strategic processes, such as the preparation of Cooperation Frameworks, the key instrument for planning and implementation of United Nations development activities at the country level – up from 37 per cent in 2023. While procurement has historically been a challenging area, meaningful progress was observed in 2024, with 28 per cent of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements – up from 22 per cent in 2023. This improvement suggests increased integration of accessibility criteria into annual workplan reviews and accessibility targets applied in the centralized coordination of operations.

● Figure XIII. Ratings for United Nations country teams in core area 3, by performance indicator, 2024



Performance in core area 3 remained stable, with a slight improvement in joint programming and the establishment of mechanisms to embed disability inclusion within both new and existing joint programmes. There has been a slight decline in the number of country teams meeting requirements on humanitarian action. Slow progress has also been made with regard to engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, with 14 per cent of country teams exceeding requirements for disability-inclusive humanitarian action, an increase from 11 per cent in 2023.

● Figure XIV. Ratings for United Nations country teams in core area 4, by performance indicator, 2024



A slow but meaningful transformation in organizational culture is occurring. Some 78 per cent of country teams reported having an employment non-discrimination statement in place. In addition, 38 per cent – up from 33 per cent in 2023 – actively encouraged applications from persons with disabilities, often through targeted outreach via networks of organizations of persons with disabilities. Country teams continued to invest more in capacity-building, with 37 per cent organizing training in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities, an increase from 29 per cent the previous year.

