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Evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

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Abstract

This system-wide evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS). It covered the period 2019-2025, focusing on the conceptualization and design of UNDIS, alignment with international frameworks, and its operationalization by all United Nations entities and country teams at country, regional and global levels. It was utilisation-focused, participatory, theory-based, and drew on multiple data sources including interviews with United Nations staff and external stakeholders, in-depth analysis of 15 United Nations Country Teams, 2 peace missions and 37 entities, extensive document review, and analysis of survey data. The evaluation concludes that the UNDIS has proven to be a relevant and timely instrument for advancing disability inclusion across the United Nations system, serving as a catalyst for systematic change and accelerating efforts to embrace disability inclusion. However, implementation has varied considerably across the complex United Nations landscape, and has not yet succeeded in getting sufficient traction to be fully transformative across the entire United Nations system. While the UNDIS has successfully established institutional frameworks for disability inclusion, focusing primarily on policies, processes, and compliance mechanisms, the United Nations has not achieved its ambition of becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities or effectively mainstreaming disability inclusion across development, humanitarian, and peace and security programming. The current UNDIS and its accountability framework requires substantial revision to capture the full scope and depth of the United Nations' disability inclusion efforts. The evaluation makes five strategic recommendations, including: (i) revising the UNDIS to define the vision and time-bound goals, key guiding principles, approaches and a theory of change, (ii) strengthening the means of implementation through developing system-wide, entity, and UNCT action plans, strengthening the accountability framework and establishing a sustainable institutional framework to implement in an efficient and coordinated manner, (iii) ensuring adequate, sustainable and efficient investment in UNDIS implementation, building on the twin-track approach, leveraging partnerships with a view to taking inclusion to scale, and monitoring resource allocation to disability inclusion, (iv) institutionalizing and strengthening system-wide knowledge management, learning, and capacity for promoting disability inclusion to ensure more effective and efficient implementation of the UNDIS, (v) stepping up and strengthening efforts to foster an inclusive organizational culture and accessible workplace, positioning the United Nations as an employer of choice for persons with disabilities by developing and implementing comprehensive evidence based and data driven strategies to address accessibility, reasonable accommodation and organizational culture.

Foreword



The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) conducted this evaluation five years from the launch of the first United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) to provide independent analysis on progress and results and strategic recommendations on disability inclusion until 2030 and beyond.

The evaluation is global in scope in order to fully assess the contribution of the UNDIS to advancing disability inclusion in the United Nations system by all entities and United Nations country teams (UNCTs) at all levels and in all types of contexts in which the United Nations operates. It focuses on the design of the UNDIS and its operationalization across all areas, and in particular on important effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability aspects. The evaluation does not assess UNDIS implementation and results by single entities or UNCTs, rather, it provides a comprehensive assessment, exploring the aspects of design and operationalization that have contributed to progress and results and the challenges and gaps to be addressed across the United Nations.

Findings from the evaluation highlight the relevance and catalytic nature of the UNDIS to advance and accelerate the institutionalization of disability inclusion across the United Nations system. However, the overall assessment points to slow progress and transformation across the system and challenges in institutional readiness to attain tangible and sustainable results for persons with disabilities, both within and beyond the United Nations system.

The evaluation identifies five strategic recommendations requiring action across the United Nations system to strengthen the design and implementation of the UNDIS. They should be addressed comprehensively in a system-wide manner to achieve maximum impact.

The United Nations is facing a challenging period of complex change, which makes the insights and recommendations from this evaluation even more urgent in the drive to place the United Nations on a sustainable path of transformational change for disability inclusion.

I hope that this evaluation provides independent evidence and recommendations for the United Nations system and Member States to support ongoing efforts to ensure that disability inclusion within the United Nations is truly fit for purpose.

Andrea Cook
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Abbreviations

AF	Accountability framework
AGD	Age, gender and diversity
AI	Artificial intelligence
ASG	Assistant Secretary General
CART	Communication Access Real-time Translation
CBM	Christadelphian Bible Mission
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CEB	Chief Executives Board
CF	Cooperation Framework
CIP	Center for Inclusive Policy
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DI	Disability inclusion
DIPAS	Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (UNICEF)
DTN	Digital and Technology Network
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GDF	Global Disability Fund (formerly PRPD)
HLCM	High-Level Committee on Management
HLCP	High-Level Committee on Programmes
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IASG-CRPD	Inter-Agency Support Group on the CRPD
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDA	International Disability Alliance
IDDC	International Disability and Development Consortium
IT	Information technology
LDC	Least developed country
LNOB	Leave no one behind
NA	Not Applicable
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OPD	Organization of persons with disabilities
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PRPD	Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SG	Secretary-General
SWEO	System-Wide Evaluation Office
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDIS	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Abbreviations (Entities)

DGACM	Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
DGC	Department of Global Communications
DMSPC	United Nations Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance
DOS	Department of Operational Support
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OICT	Office of Information and Communications Technology
OSASG-Cyprus	Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
OSRSG-CAAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
OSRSG-SVC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
UN CTED	Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
UN DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UN ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UN Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN OCT	United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
UN OSE-GL	United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes
UN Women	United Nations Programme for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
UNOAU	United Nations Office to the African Union
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOOSA	United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNDSS	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
UNSCOL	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNSOM	UN Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNSOS	United Nations Support Office in Somalia
UNU	United Nations University
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UNVMC	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia
UNYO	United Nations Youth Office
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

Executive Summary



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Introduction

This independent evaluation of the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) between June 2024 and July 2025, has the dual purpose of accountability and learning.

As the first system-wide mechanism aimed at providing the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations, the UNDIS envisioned an external assessment after five years of implementation to evaluate progress and results achieved.

Context

Persons with disabilities represent an estimated 16 per cent of the world's population, or approximately 1.3 billion people, with nearly 80 per cent of persons with disabilities living in low-income and middle-income countries. Persons with disabilities face physical, communication and attitudinal barriers that lead to discrimination and restrict their participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The UNDIS was launched in 2019 by the Secretary-General as the vision and foundation for transformative and sustainable progress on disability inclusion for the entire United Nations system. It aims to systematically embed the rights of persons with disabilities into the work of the United Nations system, both externally, through disability inclusive programming and support to Member States in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), their achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and internally through improved inclusion, accessibility and culture, to make the United Nations fit for purpose and an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. The UNDIS contains a policy setting out the areas and functions on which the United Nations will focus and an accountability framework as a tool for monitoring and tracking progress on the implementation of the strategy.

The UNDIS is implemented across the United Nations system by United Nations entities[1] and by United Nations country teams (UNCTs). A Disability Inclusion Team was established in 2019 in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) to support the coordinated implementation of the UNDIS across the United Nations system.

Evaluation features

Objectives: The evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the UNDIS to advance disability inclusion and facilitates learning by capturing good practices and lessons for consideration by United Nations entities and United Nations country teams.

Scope: The evaluation is system-wide and global in scope and covers implementation of the UNDIS by all United Nations system entities and United Nations country teams at headquarters, regional and country levels in the period 2019 to April 2025. However, it does not assess UNDIS implementation and results by single entities or United Nations country teams. It focuses on the conceptualization and design of the UNDIS, its alignment with international frameworks such as the CRPD and its operationalization. The evaluation answered the following evaluation questions (Table 1).

1. For UNDIS reporting, the definition of entities is those bodies, offices or departments within the United Nations system which are able to implement the UNDIS. This includes all Secretariat departments, and stand-alone offices or missions that are not within the operations or programme of another entity, all funds and programmes and specialized agencies.

Table 1: Evaluation questions

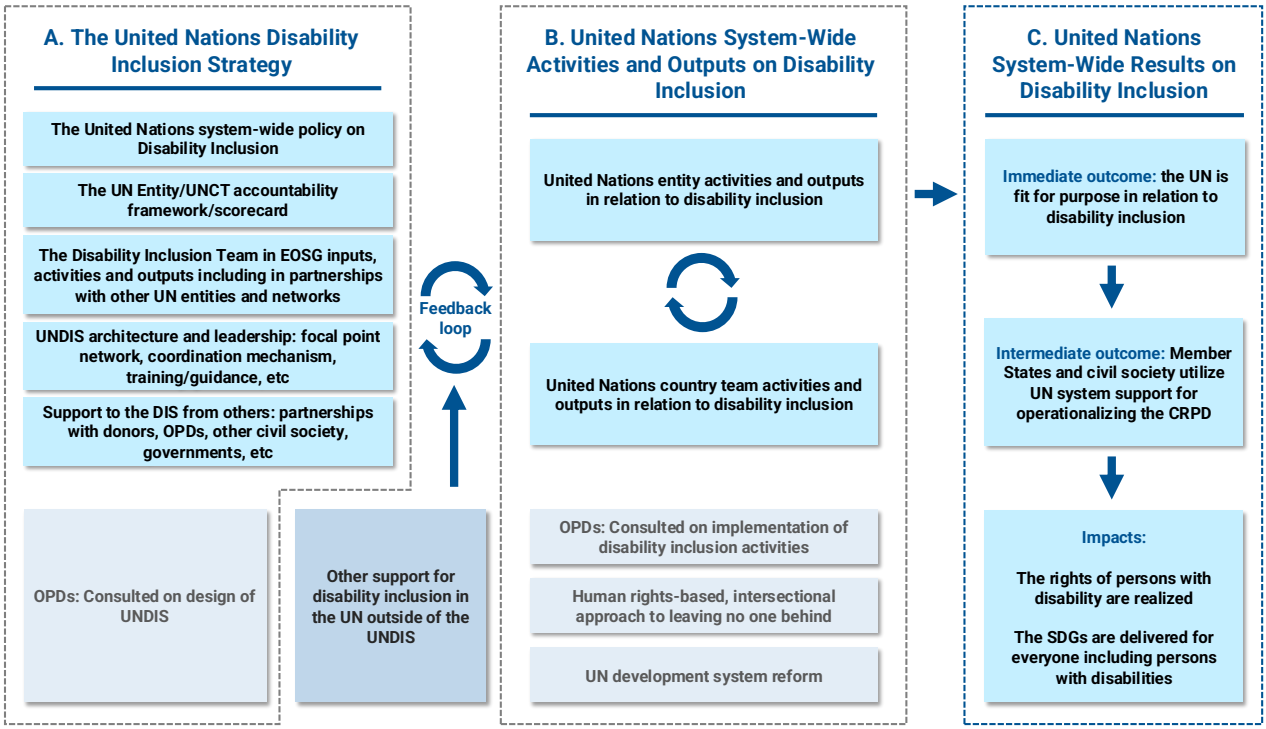
EQ Focus	Evaluation Questions
EQ1: Relevance of the UNDIS to the CRPD and SDGs	Was the UNDIS design relevant and fit for purpose in creating an institutional framework for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
EQ2: Effectiveness of the UNDIS in terms of its contribution to greater disability inclusion	To what extent has UNDIS contributed to progress and change on disability inclusion in the United Nations system?
EQ3: Efficiency of the implementation of the UNDIS	Has the UNDIS been operationalized in an efficient manner?
EQ4: Sustainability of the results	To what extent are results and effects of UNDIS implementation sustainable?

Overall approach: The evaluation was utilization-focused and conducted in ways that help to inform decisions and improve performance. The evaluation integrated human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind. It was conducted in a participatory manner, involving stakeholders in the evaluation process at different stages, including preparatory, inception, data collection, reporting and dissemination phases. The evaluation consulted employees and persons with disabilities at global, regional and country levels to ensure that their inputs and perspectives were incorporated at relevant stages of the evaluation process.

A mixed methods approach was utilized, integrating different evaluation methods and drawing on, and integrating, qualitative and quantitative data to strengthen the reliability of data and the validity of the findings and recommendations, in order to capture a wider range of perspectives and to broaden and deepen the comprehension of effects of the implementation of disability inclusion in the United Nations system.

Methodological approach: The evaluation utilized a theory-based approach complemented by contribution analysis to assess the contribution of UNDIS to progress and the achievement of results. A reconstructed Theory of Change was utilized to assess the contribution of the UNDIS to progress and achievement of results, particularly changes in UNCT and entity outputs as reported under the UNDIS accountability framework (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Theory of Change



Source: Designed by evaluation team.

A modified "most significant change" approach was utilized by capturing stories of stakeholders, primarily persons with disabilities, to identify examples of most significant changes and higher-level results in disability inclusion. Other methods included: (a) content analysis of qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative data from scorecards and surveys; and (b) comparative analysis to identify good practices, similarities and differences from the comparative studies undertaken.

Data sources: Data collection and analysis were undertaken within nine blocks of evidence set out in Table 2. Primary and secondary data were gathered and analysed across different stakeholder groups at country, regional and global levels of the United Nations development system.

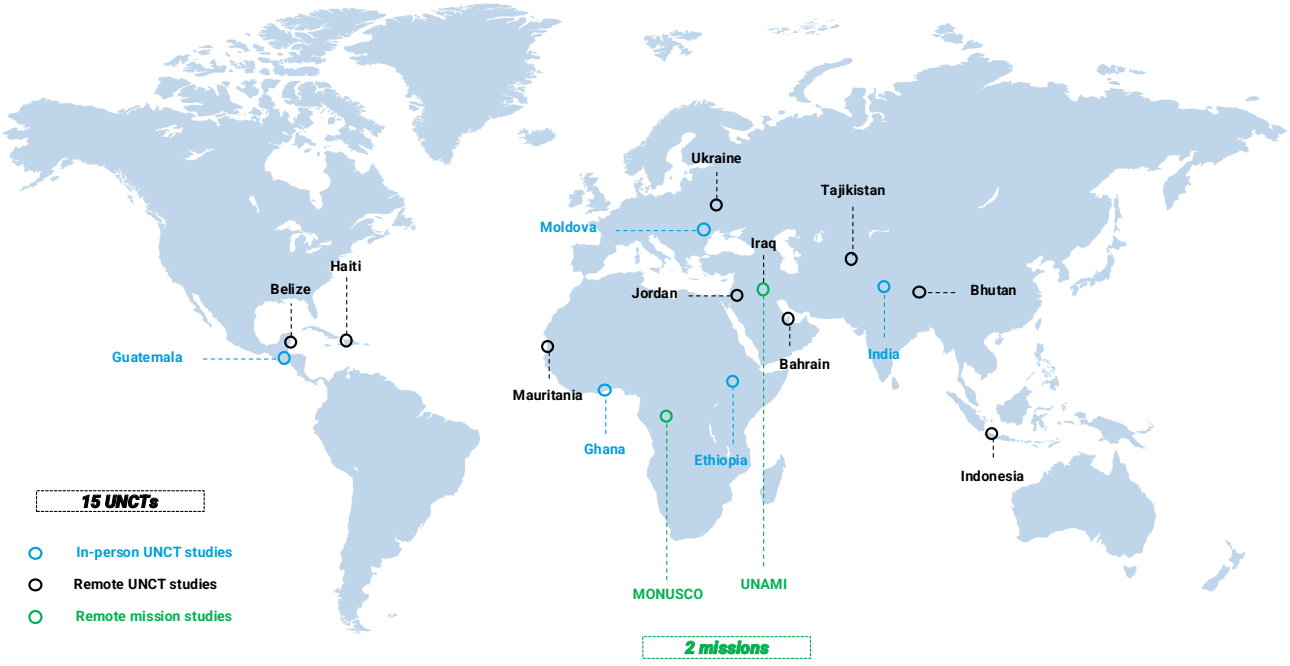
Table 2: Blocks of evidence

Evidence blocks	Evidence
Block 1: Analysis of UNDIS entity accountability framework and UNCT scorecard data	Analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the accountability framework for United Nations entities and UNCTs from 2019-2024
Block 2: UNCT studies	Interviews conducted in 15 countries (5 in-person, 10 remote)
Block 3: United Nations entity studies	Interviews conducted in major United Nations locations; remote studies undertaken included peacekeeping missions (total: 37 entities)
Block 4: Comparative studies and analysis	Three comparative studies conducted: (a) United Nations system-wide strategies on other areas such as gender and youth, (b) United Nations entities' disability inclusion strategies, and (c) non-United Nations disability inclusion strategies

Evidence blocks	Evidence
Block 5: Surveys	Surveys to United Nations employees with disabilities (583 responses) and members of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) (242 responses) examining current situation and changes since 2019[2]
Block 6: Organizational analysis	Analysis of data on UNDIS architecture, including coordination and mainstreaming mechanisms
Block 7: Review of evaluation evidence	Analysis of 20 United Nations evaluation reports with disability inclusion as a central focus and a further 209 United Nations evaluation reports identified to have included coverage on disability inclusion
Block 8: Key documents review	Desk review of key documents related to the UNDIS (including relevant documents from outside the United Nations). This included a detailed review of relevant documentation gathered from 15 UNCTs, 2 missions and 32 entities
Block 9: Other data	Other quantitative data analysed for evidence triangulation

Country-level data collection focused on 15 countries, balancing typologies and regional representation: five were conducted in person (Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, India and Moldova) and 10 remotely (Bahrain, Belize, Bhutan, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Tajikistan, and Ukraine), see Figure 2. In addition, the evaluation also covered remotely the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a special political mission, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), a peacekeeping mission. The evaluation team met with stakeholders from 37 entities. In-person visits were made to Geneva, Nairobi and New York with other entities covered remotely.

Figure 2: Map of UNCT and mission studies



Source: Designed by evaluation team.

Triangulation and validation: The evidence from data collection was triangulated across different data sources and data collection methods to formulate findings. The evaluation included internal validation of evidence where the evidence was assessed and triangulated to formulate findings under each evaluation question. External validation included debriefing sessions with United Nations system stakeholders, validation

2. A total of 781 valid respondents completed the survey. Several respondents completed both surveys in their separate capacities as former United Nations employees with disabilities and as members of OPDs, resulting in a total of 825 valid responses.

workshops with the evaluation management, reference and advisory groups, and a recommendations workshop with the Evaluation Reference Group.

Evaluation findings

The design of the UNDIS and its relevance

The evaluation finds that the UNDIS is relevant to, and well aligned with, the goals of the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with regards to persons with disabilities. The UNDIS adequately translates these goals into a framework that sets a path for the United Nations to advance the goals, with a stronger focus on its internal transformation as a foundation. The UNDIS adopted a twin-track approach to disability inclusion, combining mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to disability and disability-targeted measures, with more emphasis on the mainstreaming track to advance disability inclusion at scale throughout the system. The UNDIS is missing certain key elements that are present in other strategies, such as: a clear vision and goals; principles; a theory of change; institutional arrangements for system-wide coordination; and an implementation timeline. The UNDIS aligns with other United Nations frameworks but does not explain connections with these frameworks in detail.

The accountability framework provides a useful guide for taking action and implementing the UNDIS, mainly by including process-oriented indicators and emphasizing policy adoption and institutional readiness on disability inclusion. However, it does not capture the full scope of the United Nations disability inclusion support, particularly in the areas of programming for persons with disabilities, the culture shift, data on disability, intersectionality and resource allocation. Furthermore, the framework does not clearly define accountability lines and mechanisms enough to be an effective accountability tool. Monitoring of implementation is based on voluntary self-reporting of progress, which affects reliability of data. A number of entities (18 per cent) have not yet implemented nor reported on the UNDIS.

The UNDIS is inherently flexible as a common framework for the whole United Nations system and includes adaptive aspects that led to meaningful implementation across diverse entities and mandates. However, it could benefit from more detailed guidance on differentiated approaches reflecting the diversity of mandates, operating environments and institutional structures.

The design process of the UNDIS included consultation with persons with disabilities and the UNDIS document itself entails numerous references to active engagement with persons with disabilities. However, the absence of an external accountability mechanism for engagement with OPDs on overall UNDIS implementation undermines the commitment to ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

The effectiveness of the UNDIS

In terms of progress towards change on disability inclusion, the evaluation finds that there has been some overall improvement on reasonable accommodation, accessibility and policies over time, for both UNCTs and United Nations entities, but performance varies substantially across entities and United Nations country teams and across indicators. While some entities have made significant efforts, progress overall has been fragmented and slow, particularly in Secretariat entities, and implementation lacks coherence across the United Nations system. For entities, the largest improvement in performance was related to institutional set up, while progress on leadership, strategic planning and disability policy and strategy has not been as strong. There has been less progress in the areas of inclusiveness, in particular on accessibility, reasonable accommodation, procurement and on organizational culture, including employment and capacity development. Challenges to UNDIS implementation that are repeatedly cited include: financial constraints and lack of capacity, lack of authority or mandate and lack of guidance. At the UNCT level, progress has been

varied. The largest improvements in performance were related to institutional set up and coordination, capacity development for staff, communication and leadership, while progress on accessibility and accommodation, consultation with persons with disabilities, and joint programmes has been slower.

The evaluation also finds progress has been made in creating the conditions for more inclusive operations. However, there are persisting challenges and negative experiences of employees with disabilities (as well as employees with dependents with disabilities) and efforts to challenge negative attitudes have not yet fully transformed the organizational culture. Within the United Nations system, persons with disabilities who require additional support face significant barriers in applying for positions, performing their daily job and progressing with the United Nations as an employee.

Specific mechanisms for consultation with employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities have been established, mostly by larger entities and they often have an ad hoc consultative function or are narrowly focused on employment issues. Employee resource groups can play a positive role in fostering a more inclusive workplace culture. However, their impact is limited by insufficient resources, which restricts their capacity to provide broader support. The evaluation found limited evidence of the contribution of staff unions to advancing the rights of employees with disabilities.

The UNDIS has supported more systematic United Nations approaches to disability inclusion in programming but has not fully implemented the twin-track approach. Its indicators focus more on mainstreaming than on capturing the full scope of targeted disability inclusion work. The UNDIS has led to an increase in explicit references to persons with disabilities in United Nations system programming, and there is evidence from United Nations funds and programmes on how this has started to translate into more inclusive and accessible interventions. However, at the country level, integrating disability inclusion into workplans and implementation is not strategic or intentional across entities. There is limited evidence of the range of programmes that support inclusion of persons with disabilities, the numbers of persons with disabilities targeted, prioritized and reached by United Nations programmes and the financial resources allocated to disability inclusion.

In terms of implementation of intersectionality and equity approaches in programming, the evaluation found limited evidence of United Nations efforts to reach the most marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, with gaps in disaggregated data, insufficient resources, limited conceptual understanding of intersectionality and tension between universal and targeted approaches.

There has been progress in consulting with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. However, this engagement is uneven and a significant gap remains in terms of systematic and meaningful consultation, with barriers including the need for a systematic approach, the need to better understand the diversity of OPDs and the need for greater investment in OPDs as strategic partners.

The efficiency of UNDIS implementation

The evaluation finds that UNDIS has been operationalized with mixed efficiency. Inter-agency cooperation has resulted in efficiency gains that take advantage of the comparative strengths of different entities and could be expanded further across the United Nations system. The evaluation found examples of gains in efficiency and maximizing use of resources through leveraging learning and sharing resources and experiences. However, the evaluation also found evidence of inefficiencies in processes, decision-making and development of policies and guidance necessary to support UNDIS implementation at a higher level.

The evaluation confirmed there is a strong demand for better sharing of knowledge, tools and good practices and a significant appetite for learning generated by increased awareness of disability inclusion. Feedback loops and systems for capturing outputs, monitoring, evaluation and reporting have been established. However, reduced resources have affected the capacity to optimize the learning from these processes and to leverage the capacity development and solution-focused support function of the Disability Inclusion Team.

The UNDIS has generated intersectoral collaboration and synergies with other cross-cutting issues, and more opportunities could be leveraged for better integration and efficiency, including alignment of reporting calendars and some indicators.

The evaluation found that even although the United Nations system has advanced in generating partnerships for disability inclusion, these collaborations remain limited in number, scope and scale. Private sector engagement represents a growing, but underutilized, area of opportunity for advancing disability inclusion. The evaluation found examples of collaborations with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and academia, which produced promising results and demonstrate how external disability inclusion expertise can bring strong added value. Partnerships and innovation are promising approaches that can spur action and promote efficiencies but have been under-utilized.

In terms of resource allocations for implementing the UNDIS, the evaluation found these are largely insufficient and inconsistent across United Nations entities, significantly impacting timely and efficient implementation. While some positive examples exist, most entities struggle with resource constraints, which often leads to delays in implementation. Despite very limited investment, small-scale seed funding has yielded catalytic progress, but it has often not been sustained or taken to scale.

In terms of human resources, capacities and training, evidence from the evaluation points to the importance of dedicating employees, with specific expertise, to disability inclusion. Across the United Nations system, the requirements stemming from the UNDIS have led to the creation of roles dedicated to disability inclusion that did not exist before, from small teams to focal point roles. However, UNDIS responsibilities are usually an add-on to existing employee duties. While the focal point system is an essential mechanism to ensure that disability is mainstreamed, it is not sufficient on its own and has notable limitations when under-resourced. Although there are specific training resources and a growing range of good practices and tools, investment in capacities, expertise and knowledge across the system does not meet the level required to unleash the potential of the UNDIS as a transformative tool for the United Nations.

The sustainability of the UNDIS and its results

The evaluation finds that there have been insufficient efforts to institutionalize adequate support for UNDIS implementation at the Secretariat level, which significantly hinders progress that could drive meaningful and systemic change across the United Nations. The UNDIS coordination structure, especially the Disability Inclusion Team in the EOSG, is under-resourced – in both human and financial terms – and, as a result, important functions to support UNDIS implementation are not being carried out to the extent required.

Moreover, the current institutional anchorage and resourcing models for UNDIS implementation are fragile, further compromising its long-term sustainability at a time of rising uncertainty. Budget tracking for disability inclusion spending is largely absent, which limits the ability to assess the level of investment in relation to results.

Strong and committed leadership support for the UNDIS it is not consistent across all levels of United Nations leadership nor across all entities and UNCTs. The most successful examples of leadership demonstrate active engagement from senior management in establishing systems, allocating resources and creating accountability mechanisms. In certain entities and UNCTs, overall support appears inconsistent and heavily dependent on individual champions rather than being systematically embedded across all leadership levels, which is essential if disability inclusion is to be sustained over time.

In terms of integration, while most entities have taken steps to integrate the UNDIS into their frameworks and processes, the depth and effectiveness of this integration varies significantly. Entities show stronger integration in leadership and policy, while disability inclusion integration into operations and programming is more challenging and lagging behind. The best UNCT examples show disability inclusion embedded in

cooperation frameworks, working structures and operational processes backed by dedicated resources, but many countries still have significant gaps between stated commitments and actual systematic integration.

The evaluation found that most entities and UNCTs report some level of engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, and there have been promising approaches to support, partner and engage with OPDs in sustained, meaningful and resourced ways and with mutual benefits. However, the quality, consistency and impact of this engagement vary significantly. Resource limitations and systemic barriers to formal partnerships with organizations representing persons with disabilities present a challenge to long-term UNDIS implementation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Over the past five years, the UNDIS has proven to be a relevant and timely instrument for advancing disability inclusion across the United Nations system. The strategy, anchored by its accountability framework, has served as a catalyst for systematic change, creating momentum and accelerating efforts to embrace disability inclusion throughout United Nations entities and country teams. While the UNDIS has enabled significant progress from a relatively low baseline in 2019, implementation has varied considerably across the complex United Nations landscape, and it has not succeeded in getting sufficient traction to be fully transformative across the entire system. There are islands of success where entities and UNCTs have made important advances over the last five years. Many entities with pre-existing disability inclusion initiatives have leveraged the UNDIS to structure, systematize and strengthen their efforts through "whole-of-organization" approaches. Other United Nations entities and country teams have made limited progress, and some entities have yet to implement the UNDIS at all.

Where UNDIS implementation has succeeded, it has been driven by mutually reinforcing factors. The accountability framework provided a coherent structure, with stronger results when multiple components were implemented together. Senior leadership commitment has proven catalytic by securing institutional uptake, enabling whole-of-organization approaches and elevating disability inclusion as a strategic priority. The technical expertise and commitment of focal points has played a critical brokering role – mobilizing support with a solution-focused ethos, connecting actors to build capacities and a shared responsibility, and contributing to sustained momentum. Employees with disabilities have raised visibility and created a sense of urgency that is often absent without their presence. Direct engagement with OPDs has enhanced relevance and accountability, challenged assumptions and fostered new forms of external oversight. Finally, enabling conditions, such as inclusive national frameworks and prior organizational commitments, have significantly shaped the pace and depth of implementation.

However, while the UNDIS has successfully established institutional frameworks for disability inclusion, focusing primarily on policies, processes and compliance mechanisms, progress toward meaningful outcomes for persons with disabilities remains limited. It is nearly 20 years since the approval of the CRPD and progress of the United Nations towards achieving the level of disability inclusion that is expected of Member States has been extremely slow. The United Nations has not achieved its ambition of becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities or effectively mainstreaming disability inclusion across development, humanitarian, peace and security programming. The programmatic dimension of the UNDIS lacks a unifying system-wide vision for coordinated implementation. Further challenges include the absence of sustainable institutional arrangements, insufficient mechanisms for system-wide accountability and learning, and inadequate resource allocation. The UNDIS must now rapidly evolve from addressing institutional readiness to accelerating the delivery of tangible results for persons with disabilities, both within and outside the United Nations system.

UNDIS 2.0: Overall UNDIS vision and goals

In the context of United Nations system reform and constrained resources, and within the framework of Agenda 2030 and the CRPD, the UNDIS should be revised. Revision of the UNDIS is an opportunity to reaffirm

the key focus and goals of the UNDIS and embed disability inclusion system-wide, leading to more effective, efficient and sustainable progress.

The lack of clarity on the basic elements of a strategy including the goals, level of ambition, timeframe and expected levels of results, as well as uneven understanding of the interconnectedness of the internal and external components of the UNDIS, resulted in gaps in optimizing different and complementary contributions to transform a common United Nations system. The revised UNDIS should therefore incorporate principles, a theory of change and clearer overall vision and goals. This needs to be backed by a clear institutional architecture and accountability mechanisms (Recommendation 2) and adequate sustainable resources (Recommendation 3).

Recommendation 1: Revise the UNDIS to clearly define the vision and time-bound goals. Incorporate key guiding principles and approaches with a theory of change that reflects the goals, the causal pathways, the expected results at different levels and the interconnectedness across its components. Focus the UNDIS on a higher level of ambition to advance and accelerate disability inclusion within the United Nations and in the countries that the United Nations serves.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

The revised UNDIS, UNDIS 2.0, should:

- Incorporate strategic foundations including: a) a strengthened ambition to make the United Nations system more inclusive and increase support to the implementation of the SDGs and the CRPD; b) a system-wide approach by articulating structural enablers that support coherent and efficient transformation across the entire United Nations system; and c) a strategic orientation to disability inclusion to ensure that UNDIS remains purpose-driven and aligned with the overarching objective of accelerating inclusive outcomes
- Reflect key normative principles including commitments to: a) equity and to reaching those further behind, recognizing disability inclusion as intrinsic to equity-focused approaches and as a precondition for systemic transformation; b) intersectionality and supporting mechanisms that enable intersectional analysis, foster cross-sectoral collaboration, and promote integrated responses that address the overlapping forms of exclusion and discrimination, addressing issues within the United Nations and through external support; and c) uphold as an operational standard, aligned with the CRPD, engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations
- Retain a twin-track approach, strategizing the areas of targeted disability inclusion work (including through cross-sectoral collaboration) that are most necessary and strategic to yield wider results at scale as well as sustaining the focus on mainstreaming disability inclusion across the system as the primary lever for systemic disability inclusion at scale
- Sustain its inherent flexibility and integrate a differentiated approach for entities while ensuring the relevance and contextualization of UNDIS in all contexts, including development, humanitarian, peace and security
- Take into consideration important operational pathways including adopting a realistic and contextualized approach, prioritizing efficiencies and creating enabling conditions
- Include a clear institutional architecture for implementation with clear roles and responsibilities.

UNDIS 2.0: Means of implementation

The absence of a multi-year, system-wide action plan with clear time-bound goals has significantly limited the UNDIS from reaching its full potential. The development of the necessary system-wide policies, strategies, guidance and tools to support the effective and efficient implementation of the UNDIS has been limited, slow and fragmented. A comprehensive action plan would anchor the system-wide aspects of UNDIS 2.0 and complement the existing accountability frameworks established for individual entities and UNCTs.

At the entity and UNCT levels, the current UNDIS accountability framework has been effective in creating initial traction and commitment to disability inclusion, but it requires substantial revision to capture the full scope and depth of the United Nations' disability inclusion efforts. Critical elements, such as financial resource allocation, disability-disaggregated data collection, intersectionality considerations, programmatic aspects and the necessary organizational culture shift, are insufficiently captured in the current indicators. The existing monitoring systems and reporting mechanisms focus predominantly on output-level internal changes and compliance measures rather than tracking meaningful outcomes and impacts on persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the framework fails to adequately capture the extensive contributions made through programmatic work, including joint programming initiatives and field-level interventions. The self-assessment approach currently used to monitor progress across the system raises serious concerns about reliability of data. Most critically, the framework lacks robust feedback mechanisms that would drive continuous learning, improvement and adaptation based on lessons learned and evolving best practices. While all UNCTs report on the UNDIS, there remain a number of entities that do not do so.

The full realization of the UNDIS's transformative potential as a system-wide strategy is also severely constrained by structural weaknesses in its governance and institutional arrangements, particularly the absence of an adequately empowered and resourced central coordination mechanism. The current Disability Inclusion Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General operates with only two staff members and depends on a fragile extra-budgetary funding model, which limits its ability to provide the effective coordination, technical support and robust strategic leadership required for system-wide transformation. This under-resourcing has cascading effects: the team cannot adequately support the focal point network, develop necessary guidance materials, or provide the strategic oversight needed to ensure coherent action across entities. The launch of the UNDIS without a comprehensive assessment of necessary resources and support structures has contributed to this chronic under-resourcing and inconsistent implementation across the system. Strengthening this core unit with appropriate human resources, predictable and sustainable funding, and clear authority is not merely an operational imperative but represents a fundamental test of the genuine commitment by the United Nations to disability inclusion. Only with an adequately resourced and an empowered coordination mechanism can the United Nations unleash the full potential of the UNDIS and demonstrate a truly cohesive, responsive and accountable system that lives up to its promise of leaving no one behind.

The UNDIS focal point system serves as the critical backbone for disability inclusion across the United Nations system, with evidence demonstrating that dedicated staff with specific expertise are essential for driving progress. These focal points facilitate vital inter-agency cooperation and knowledge sharing, and help embed disability inclusion into organizational processes and frameworks. However, this set-up faces severe systemic challenges that fundamentally undermine its effectiveness. Most significantly, UNDIS responsibilities are typically added to existing staff duties rather than being dedicated positions, creating an unsustainable burden. This is compounded by the absence of explicit governance arrangements, creating confusion about roles and responsibilities, and inconsistent leadership support across entities and UNCTs.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the means of implementation through developing system-wide, entity and UNCT action plans that translate UNDIS 2.0 into action; revise the accountability framework as the key implementation tool of the UNDIS; and establish a sustainable institutional framework so that UNDIS 2.0 can be implemented in an efficient and coordinated manner.

Timeline: Q2 2026–Q3 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.1: Revise the UNDIS accountability framework[3] to reflect the vision, goals, components and expected results of UNDIS 2.0. The revised accountability framework should:

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3. The UNDIS accountability framework has two components (a) the UN entity accountability framework and (b) the UNCT accountability scorecard (UNDIS paragraph 9).

- Include an enhanced set of indicators based on the experience of the last five years and ensure greater alignment between the UNCT scorecard and the entity accountability framework
- Add indicators to better capture outcomes for persons with disabilities and strengthen programmatic indicators to capture results at the outcome level.
- Where possible, seek greater alignment with indicators of the Youth2030 strategy and UN-SWAP accountability frameworks, working closely with the concerned structures to reciprocate alignment and seek best calendar requirements to reduce the reporting burden
- Where relevant, revise accountability framework indicators to facilitate feeding UNDIS reporting into other processes (for example, more explicit connections with voluntary national reviews, universal periodic reviews, CRPD reviews, QCPR), enabling better alignment with Member State priorities and international obligations
- Update the technical guidance documents related to the UNDIS accountability framework, including more examples of good practices, links to existing resources and adding examples of implementation across different contexts. Specifically, ensure that revisions to the accountability framework take into account the needs of entities and UNCTs working in humanitarian contexts as well as ongoing reforms in the humanitarian sector
- Provide non-reporting entities with targeted outreach and support to facilitate their reporting on the accountability framework
- Develop tailored solutions for different categories of entities with consistent approaches to waivers for specific indicators.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.2: The Secretary-General should ensure that institutional arrangements are adequately and sustainably resourced and have the necessary authority and capacity to support the implementation of UNDIS 2.0. This should include consideration of the establishment of:

- A Disability Inclusion Office with leadership at the appropriate level (that is, the authority to convene entities' principals) that would ensure effective and efficient UNDIS implementation monitoring, knowledge management, technical assistance and support to coordination across entities and UNCTs, building and utilizing partnerships beyond the United Nations
- An inter-agency standing group to ensure system-wide coordination of UNDIS implementation and facilitate cross-entity learning
- Enhanced mechanisms to promote disability inclusion through existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the CEB, UNSDG and IASC and with legislative and governing bodies
- A stronger entity and UNCT focal point network with clear terms of reference for focal points, clarifying their role in supporting coherent UNDIS 2.0 implementation.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.3: Develop a time-bound system-wide UNDIS action plan to coordinate the implementation of system-wide priorities and actions and the development of related system-wide guidance, capacity building and learning. The UNDIS action plan should:

- Provide an actionable road map for the United Nations system (complementing requirements at entity and UNCT levels, for example, at HLCM, the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), EOSG levels), including high-level and measurable targets for the system as a whole, and (revised) timelines for the implementation of identified priorities drawing from the recommendations of the evaluation[4]

4. For example, in the area of the United Nations becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities: prioritizing the development of system-wide reasonable accommodation guidelines and a common "United Nations reasonable accommodation passport", harmonized approaches to track the share of the UN workforce that self-identifies as persons with disabilities, or a timeline for all common United Nations premises to meet basic accessibility levels.

- Specify the resources required to enact the priorities and actions of the system-wide action plan (for example, resourcing the work currently undertaken by the UNDIS team, the development of system-wide reasonable guidelines and other priorities stemming from the evaluation recommendations).

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.4: Executive heads of United Nations system entities should prioritize and support the development of entity-specific disability inclusion action plans aligned with the UNDIS, developed in consultation with employees with disabilities and OPDs. These should align with UNCT implementation and include, where appropriate, regional-level mechanisms and actions, and strengthen collaboration across different levels within entities in addressing disability inclusion.

Timeline: by Q3 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.5: Resident Coordinators should convene the UNCT to develop, implement and monitor disability inclusion action plans to advance the CRPD and SDGs and strengthen capacities to do so, making use of existing initiatives and mechanisms, including the GDF.

Action plans should:

- Be based on a comprehensive disability situation analysis to complement existing disability mainstreaming in broader strategic planning processes (CCA, CF).
- Be developed through dialogue with government, private sector, INGOs, and CSOs.
- Be based on meaningful engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, including a role in monitoring.

Timeline: by Q3 2026

Sustainable investment and resources for UNDIS implementation

The UNDIS has not placed sufficient emphasis on the critical role of resources as a lever for change. This is reflected in the absence of financial considerations in the accountability framework and the lack of detailed resource commitments at the launch of the UNDIS, including for the unit responsible for UNDIS coordination and support.

Nonetheless, the UNDIS has delivered value, even with the limited human and financial resources that have been available to entities and UNCTs to support its implementation.

The lack of dedicated financial resources to support implementation has had mixed effects. On the positive side, this has prompted United Nations entities and UNCTs to identify efficient and creative approaches to disability inclusion. Some United Nations entities have effectively used mainstreaming as a cost-effective approach to integrate disability inclusion across all programming activities. However, these gains are offset by a funding gap that has significantly hindered progress, as the resources required to build capacity, mobilize and coordinate engagement and support progress with the necessary preconditions to advance disability inclusion were largely insufficient.

Moreover, the lack of systematic resource tracking mechanisms for disability inclusion and the absence of dedicated, sustainable funding streams and budget allocation systems means that the United Nations system cannot accurately measure its investment in disability inclusion or ensure adequate resourcing for disability-related expenditures in critical areas.

Partnerships represent a largely untapped solution to these resource challenges, offering pathways to expand financial capacity and achieve efficiency gains through collaborative mechanisms. Despite their

recognized potential for spurring action and promoting systemic change, the United Nations has significantly underutilized these partnerships, leaving them limited in both number and scope. Current engagement with OPDs varies dramatically in quality and consistency due to systemic barriers and inadequate investment in these relationships. Without meaningful investment in building the capacity of OPDs as strategic counterparts and developing sophisticated partnership models that enable co-designed, co-financed solutions with OPDs, the private sector, international financial institutions, civil society and academia, the United Nations risks falling short of its transformative ambitions for systemic change in disability inclusion at the scale required.

Recommendation 3: Ensure adequate, sustainable and efficient investment in UNDIS implementation, building on the twin-track approach, leveraging partnerships with a view to taking inclusion to scale, and monitoring resource allocation to disability inclusion.

Timeline: Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.1: UNDIS 2.0 should track resource allocation to disability inclusion through: (1) consistent utilization of a unified system-wide tracking mechanism across entities and UNCTs. This should be supported by clear operational guidance and approaches to monitor and report on resources allocated to disability inclusion. It should capture the strategic, twin-track investment approach to disability inclusion, including mainstreaming with ambitious targets for disability inclusion (particularly in programming), and (2) strategizing priority investments that address the structural drivers of inequality for persons with disabilities (specifically, disability-targeted initiatives with demonstrated potential for catalytic impact).

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.2: Executive heads of United Nations entities should leverage mutually reinforcing partnerships, in particular with the Global Disability Fund, and harness the United Nations' role in brokering South-South and triangular cooperation. This also requires strategic financing and implementation coalitions with OPDs, the private sector, international financial institutions, civil society and academia to co-design, co-finance and implement inclusive solutions at scale. It is important to invest in OPDs (including capacity strengthening to partner with the United Nations and non-United Nations stakeholders) as strategic counterparts of the United Nations, including the development of more explicit guidance to enhance the effective engagement of underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, including persons with disabilities facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Knowledge management, learning and capacity strengthening

The launch of the UNDIS has sparked a significant increase in demand for guidance and resources, highlighting a strong appetite for progress across the United Nations system. While current efforts offer examples that can lay a valuable foundation, they are insufficient for effective and sustainable implementation across the United Nations system and have failed to meet the needs of those working to implement the UNDIS. The United Nations system remains constrained by limited expertise across entities and UNCTs, inadequate investment in capacity strengthening, inefficient knowledge management systems leading to duplication of efforts, and an overemphasis on compliance-focused reporting rather than capturing meaningful outcomes.

Addressing these challenges involves a shift from compliance-oriented reporting to embracing a learning-focused approach that leverages partnerships and innovations, drawing from successful initiatives spearheaded by individual disability champions. Robust knowledge sharing and the development of accessible, comprehensive tools emerge as key priorities for the United Nations system. They are also cost-efficient solutions to promoting more effective implementation of the UNDIS. Moreover, the institutionalization of

disability inclusion training, with a focus on practical competencies and mandatory participation, is crucial. High turnover and competing responsibilities of focal points further highlight the need for systematic capacity building.

Recommendation 4: System-wide knowledge management, learning and capacity for promoting disability inclusion should be further institutionalized and strengthened, to ensure more effective and efficient implementation of the UNDIS by United Nations entities and UNCTs. This should be achieved through partnerships, leveraging expertise, mapping good practices, supporting adaptive learning and mandating disability inclusion training for all staff.

Timeline: Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 4.1: Executive heads of United Nations system entities should build on existing efforts and further develop and resource coordinated mechanisms to provide more effective, systematic and efficient management of the generation, organization, sharing and use of knowledge on disability inclusion. They should:

- Ensure that knowledge sharing platforms are utilization-focused, sustainable and accessible, to optimize the sharing and use of existing knowledge within the United Nations, through:
  - Identifying and leveraging hubs of expertise within the United Nations system that can be tapped for specialized knowledge (such as ILO's expertise on reasonable accommodation in the workplace or the case studies, guidance and tools found in the Global Disability Fund's Knowledge Hub)
  - Mapping good practices and resources across the system (including private sector collaboration and South-South cooperation) and investing in critical gap areas identified through funding innovation and partnerships
  - Facilitating the contribution of employees with disabilities to the body of knowledge on disability inclusion and related learning processes
  - Building on local knowledge to ensure that solutions are tailored to specific contexts at the country level, recognizing that not all good practices are transferable to different contexts
- Foster knowledge partnerships both within and beyond the United Nations system to maximize the collection, organization, sharing and dissemination of disability inclusion practices, tools and resources
- Mobilize the expertise of, and learning from, the diversity of persons with disabilities and OPDs, including underrepresented groups and persons with disabilities facing intersecting forms of discrimination
- Support the development of communities of practice, not only for disability inclusion generally but also for disability inclusion into specific issues such as procurement, human resources, accessibility and across the range of programmatic sectors
- Ensure that knowledge systems make full use of evaluation evidence, especially with regard to identifying what works, for whom and in what contexts.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 4.2: Executive heads of United Nations system entities should facilitate diverse approaches to learning and capacity strengthening, including:

- Ensuring mandatory initial training on disability, disability rights and disability inclusion (beyond the entities where it is already mandatory), including by senior leaders
- Developing stronger guidance on disability inclusion capacity building within entities at headquarters, regional and country levels.

- Mapping the availability of training in or outside the United Nations system and further developing training options in specific areas where there are gaps. Where appropriate, mainstream disability inclusion to training packages in other areas
- Acknowledging the critical role of UNDIS focal points and variation in their levels of knowledge and experience, encourage peer learning, support onboarding and develop an induction package for newly appointed disability inclusion focal points.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Inclusive organizational culture, accommodation and accessibility

The Secretary-General aims to make the United Nations an employer of choice for persons with disabilities, but progress has been slow, and the system is far from achieving this ambitious goal. While some improvements have been made on reasonable accommodation, accessibility and employment policies since 2019, advancements have occurred sporadically rather than through a systematic, system-wide approach. Overall progress is insufficient and is limited by persistent challenges of discrimination, stigma, and sub-optimal attitudes and organizational culture, which is reflected in the high levels of dissatisfaction reported by United Nations employees with disabilities. While some entities have invested in this area, many have not. Progress is particularly slow among many entities in the United Nations Secretariat.

Awareness-raising and promoting understanding of disability inclusion through a rights-based approach represents the first crucial step toward transforming organizational culture with recognition that disability inclusion benefits everyone within the United Nations. The role of staff unions in promoting and implementing the UNDIS requires additional study and there is significant potential to further engage staff unions in constructive discussions that could lead to greater inclusion.

The findings reveal significant gaps in the United Nations' approach to reasonable accommodation, with persisting negative experiences among employees with disabilities and those with dependents with disabilities. While some system-wide guidance has been developed to create conditions for more inclusive operations, implementation lacks coherence across the United Nations system, including within the Secretariat and its associated entities. The evidence indicates that persons with disabilities who require additional support face substantial barriers not only in applying for positions but also in performing their daily job functions and advancing their careers within the United Nations as an employee. Despite efforts to address these challenges through various initiatives, the organizational culture has not yet been fully transformed, suggesting that current reasonable accommodation practices remain inadequate and inconsistently applied across different entities and levels of the United Nations.

Progress toward creating an inclusive workplace environment has been uneven across the United Nations system, with significant variation in both commitment and implementation. While some entities have established consultation mechanisms for employees with disabilities and those with dependents with disabilities, these are predominantly found in larger entities and often function in an ad hoc manner or focus narrowly on employment-related issues. Efforts to challenge negative attitudes and transform organizational culture have not yet achieved their intended impact, leaving many employees with disabilities continuing to face barriers in their work environment. The lack of systematic approaches to workplace inclusion, combined with insufficient resources and inconsistent leadership commitment across all levels, has resulted in fragmented progress that fails to create the comprehensive accessibility and inclusive culture necessary for meaningful workplace transformation.

Recommendation 5: The United Nations system should step up and strengthen efforts to foster an inclusive organizational culture and accessible workplace, positioning the United Nations as an employer of choice for persons with disabilities by developing and implementing comprehensive evidence-based and data-driven strategies to address accessibility, reasonable accommodation

and organizational culture. Special efforts should be made in the United Nations Secretariat.

Timeline: Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 5.1: The Secretary-General should request that the HLCM explore and report on options to recruit and retain persons with disabilities through:

- Developing and adopting a harmonized approach and systems to identify, track and enhance the proportion of United Nations employees who self-identify as a person with disabilities
- Promoting and actively supporting the leadership of persons with disabilities in senior United Nations roles
- Ensuring equitable access to professional development, training and leadership opportunities for employees with disabilities and mentorship or sponsorship programmes that specifically support employees with disabilities in their career progression
- Ensuring statements that promote non-discrimination and disability inclusion as well as accessible formats of United Nations online adverts and accessibility of all United Nations online recruitment platforms
- Establishing a comprehensive and resourced programme for employment of persons with disabilities (for example, like the United Nations Young Professional Programme) to strengthen entry points and talent pipelines into the United Nations workforce, with attention to diversity
- Actively expanding the pool of talents with disabilities through United Nations Volunteers internship programmes, with requirements that prioritize personal experience and demonstrated commitments over formal education requirements and with adequate mentorship and connection to employee resource groups and disability focal points.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 5.2: The Secretary-General should request that the HLCM explore and report on options to ensure systematic provision of reasonable accommodation as a right and an essential component of non-discrimination in the workplace through the development and adoption of clear system-wide policy, procedure, guidelines and mechanisms for transparent, efficient and person-centred reasonable accommodation. This should take into consideration:

- Streamlined administrative requirements including appeal processes with regular tracking and analysis of outcomes
- A "system passport" approach to allow employees to move between entities and carry with them reasonable accommodations that have already been agreed
- The importance of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities with higher support needs to access reasonable accommodation and workplace adjustments required to perform their job, including consideration of specific funding mechanisms (either entity specific or system-wide)
- Investment in enhancing knowledge and capacities of managers and human resource staff to ensure the better inclusion of the diversity of persons with disabilities and provision of reasonable accommodation.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 5.3: The Secretary-General should request that the HLCM explore and report on options to more actively promote an inclusive and accessible workplace including taking more consistent steps to raise awareness of disability inclusion (including towards employees with dependents with disabilities). Taking into consideration:

- Enhanced measures to ensure physical accessibility of United Nations buildings, and establishment of accessibility thresholds to ensure that all common United Nations premises meet basic accessibility levels
- Enhanced measures to ensure that online human resource platforms, processes and tools, particularly those related to recruitment, are accessible to the diversity of persons with disabilities
- The sharing of experiences of effective approaches that challenge stigma and bias, including through disability champions networks, partnerships with OPDs, staff unions, employee resource groups and system-wide campaigning.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

1. Introduction



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1. This independent evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) was conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group's (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) between June 2024 and July 2025 (See Annex A). The 2019 UNDIS is the first system-wide mechanism aimed at providing the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations. It envisioned an external assessment after five years of implementation to evaluate progress and results achieved.

2. Persons with disabilities represent an estimated 16 per cent of the world's population or approximately 1.3 billion people.[5] Nearly 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in low-income and middle-income countries,[6] and are often among the poorest in their communities. Persons with disabilities face physical, communication and attitudinal barriers that lead to discrimination and restrict their participation in society on an equal basis with others. They often experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes such as higher rates of unemployment, lower education outcomes, poorer health status, and higher poverty rates. Further, those from marginalized groups and those facing intersecting forms of discrimination often face higher levels of exclusion.

3. The 2024 Disability and Development Report[7] on accelerating the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) states that for 30 per cent of SDG targets, progress for persons with disabilities is insufficient, and that for 14 per cent, the target has been missed, progress has stalled or gone into reverse (particularly for targets on access to financial resources, healthcare, water[8] and building resilience of persons with disabilities during disasters and other emergencies). According to the 2025 Global Disability Inclusion Report, while structural efforts to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) have been the cornerstone of progress, significant gaps remain, which are more pronounced in lower-income and fragile contexts, including humanitarian settings. The report specifies that fragmented approaches to inclusion hinder systemic impact at a time when global trends are reshaping societies and economies worldwide.

1.1 The United Nations and disability inclusion

4. The United Nations approach to disability rights has evolved significantly since 1948. Initially, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established equality principles that included persons with disabilities, though it viewed disability primarily as a condition. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights further strengthened this foundation when adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966.

5. A pivotal shift occurred in the 1970s, with a movement away from viewing persons with disabilities as welfare and service recipients and a shift towards recognizing them as rights-holders. The 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons marked the transition to a social and human rights approach, promoting equal rights and opportunities. The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) advanced these efforts, established the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3) and led to the adoption of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993).

6. The adoption of the CRPD in 2006 represented a milestone. Uniquely, persons with disabilities actively participated in drafting this legally binding treaty, embodying the principle "nothing about us without us." The CRPD also has a stand-alone article on international cooperation (Article 32), which enshrines the concept of inclusive development and requires that international development programmes are inclusive of, and accessible to, persons with disabilities. The principles guiding the CRPD comprise: (a) respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;

5. WHO. 2022. Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities.
6. Ibid.
7. UN DESA. 2024. Disability and Development Report 2024. Advance Unedited Version.
8. Global Disability Summit. 2025. Global Disability Inclusion Report.

(b) non-discrimination; (c) full and effective participation and inclusion in society; (d) respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; (e) equality of opportunity; (f) accessibility; (g) equality between men and women; and (h) respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities. Together with other international human rights and development instruments, the CRPD provides a comprehensive framework for national policymaking and legislation, including international cooperation, for building an inclusive society, and for development. The CRPD entered into force in 2008 and has established two monitoring mechanisms: 1) the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and 2) the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The CRPD has been ratified by 191 countries and signed by 164 countries and regional organizations.

7. In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)[9] and its SDGs recognized disability as a cross-cutting issue and explicitly addresses it in five SDGs, namely on education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, and data, monitoring and accountability. In addition, persons with disabilities are recognized among disadvantaged groups for whom progress must be particularly monitored. Other frameworks followed suit: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction emphasized disability inclusive approaches, and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action increased visibility in crisis situations. The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit led to Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines[10] widely used by United Nations country teams (UNCTs). In 2019, the United Nations Security Council addressed the impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities in its first resolution concerning disability.[11]

8. In April 2018, the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General, highlighted the urgent need for the United Nations system to improve its performance regarding disability inclusion in the context of supporting Member States to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the principles of "leaving no one behind" and "reaching the furthest behind first" in all United Nations pillars. An institutional review[12] led by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities found that the United Nations system evidenced good practices in mainstreaming disability inclusion, but it lacked a systematic approach to ensuring the mainstreaming across all pillars of work in the United Nations system. The review identified the need for a policy, good practices and recommended actions in accessibility for the effective implementation of the CRPD and the achievement of the SDGs for persons with disabilities.

9. Against this backdrop, the Secretary-General initiated a process to develop a United Nations system policy, action plan and accountability framework to strengthen system-wide accessibility and the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities. This became the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).[13] The UNDIS was launched by the Secretary-General in June 2019 as the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations.[14]

10. After the launch of the UNDIS, the United Nations Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system, (the key mechanism for guiding the United Nations development system in the framework of the 2030 Agenda), has increasingly recognized the importance of disability inclusion. Recent QCPR resolutions (2020 and 2024)[15] have emphasized mainstreaming disability in development programmes and policies, ensuring accessibility in United Nations-supported initiatives, promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in alignment with the CRPD and strengthening data collection to better track progress on disability inclusion.

9. UN. 2015. A/RES/70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
10. IASC. 2019. IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.
11. UNSC. 2019. S/RES/2475(2019). Resolution 2475.
12. IASC. 2018. Strengthening the System: Foundations for a Disability Inclusive United Nations.
13. In this document, UNDIS refers to the complete strategy document and all its components.
14. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.
15. UN. 2020. A/RES/75/233. UN. 2024. A/RES/79/226.

11. The second SDG Summit, in 2023, marked the halfway point to the 2030 deadline and aimed to reinvigorate global commitment amid multiple crises, providing high-level political guidance on transformative actions and establishing a new phase of accelerated progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. The political declaration[16] positioned persons with disabilities as active participants in sustainable development rather than merely beneficiaries. It recognized disability within broader vulnerability frameworks, while emphasizing equal participation and benefits and it acknowledged the intersection of disability with gender, specifically addressing barriers facing women and girls with disabilities. Education received particular attention with commitments to address disability gaps and create inclusive learning environments.

12. The "Pact for the Future," adopted in 2024,[17] emphasizes the importance of full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society and decision-making processes. In line with the UNDIS, it called for accessibility for persons with disabilities to allow their full, meaningful and effective participation and equality in all aspects of the work of the United Nations.

1.2 The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

13. The UNDIS aims to strengthen disability inclusion across programmes and operations and enable the United Nations system to better support Member States in the implementation of the CRPD and their achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other development and humanitarian commitments. Its goal is to systematically embed the rights of persons with disabilities into the work of the United Nations system, both externally, through disability inclusive programming, and internally, through improved accessibility, building employee knowledge and capacity, increasing senior leadership commitment, coordination and communications, and building trust and confidence among persons with disabilities. The aim is to ensure their value is recognized, their rights and dignity respected and that, in the workplace, they find an enabling environment in which to fully and effectively participate on an equal basis with others. The definition of disability inclusion included in the UNDIS is provided in Box 1.

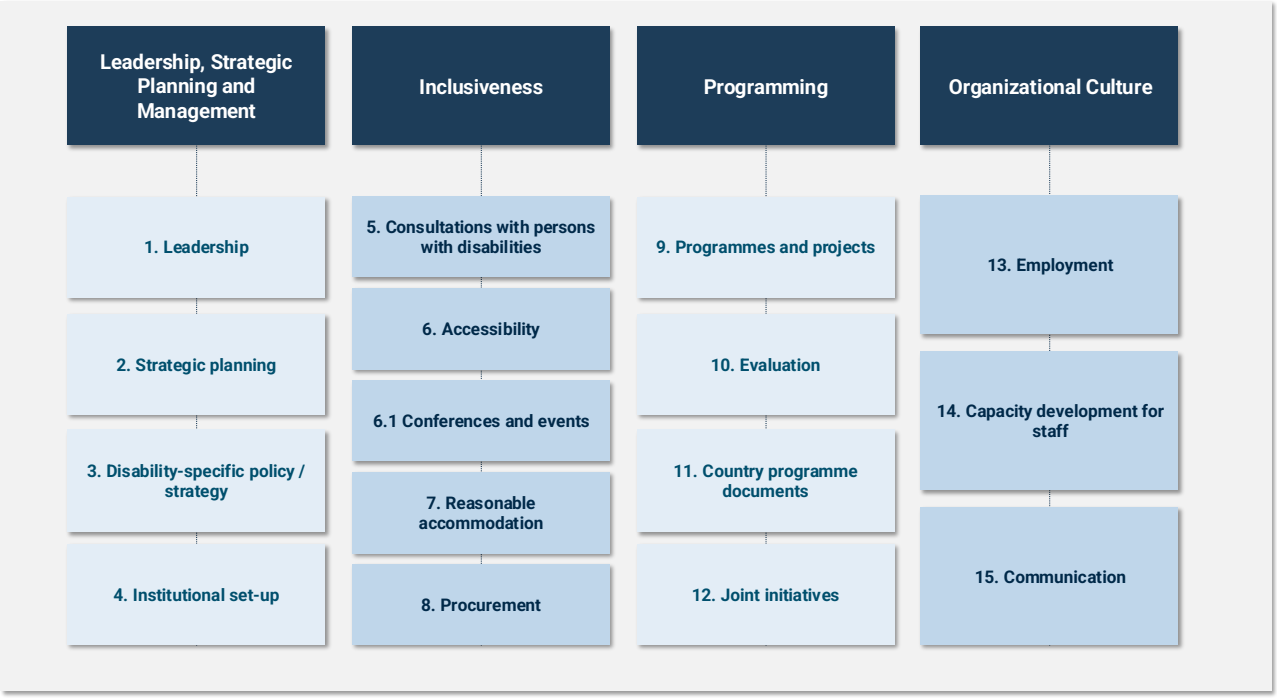
Box 1: Definition of disability inclusion in the context of the evaluation

> The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work of the Organization, the development of disability-specific programmes and the consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[18]

14. The UNDIS was modelled on the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) and launched at the same time as the United Nations Youth Strategy ("Youth2030"). The UNDIS consists of a system-wide policy and an accountability framework. The policy embodies the United Nations vision for disability inclusion and sets out the areas and functions on which the United Nations will focus in order to realize the objective of achieving disability inclusion. The accountability framework is a tool for monitoring and tracking progress of UNDIS implementation and includes two aligned components: (a) an entity accountability framework, with 15 common-system indicators,[19] and (b) a United Nations country team accountability scorecard with 14 indicators focusing on delivering at the country level. Both are aligned and are organized around four areas: 1) leadership, strategic planning and management; 2) inclusiveness; 3) programming; and 4) organizational culture. See Figure 3 and Figure 4.

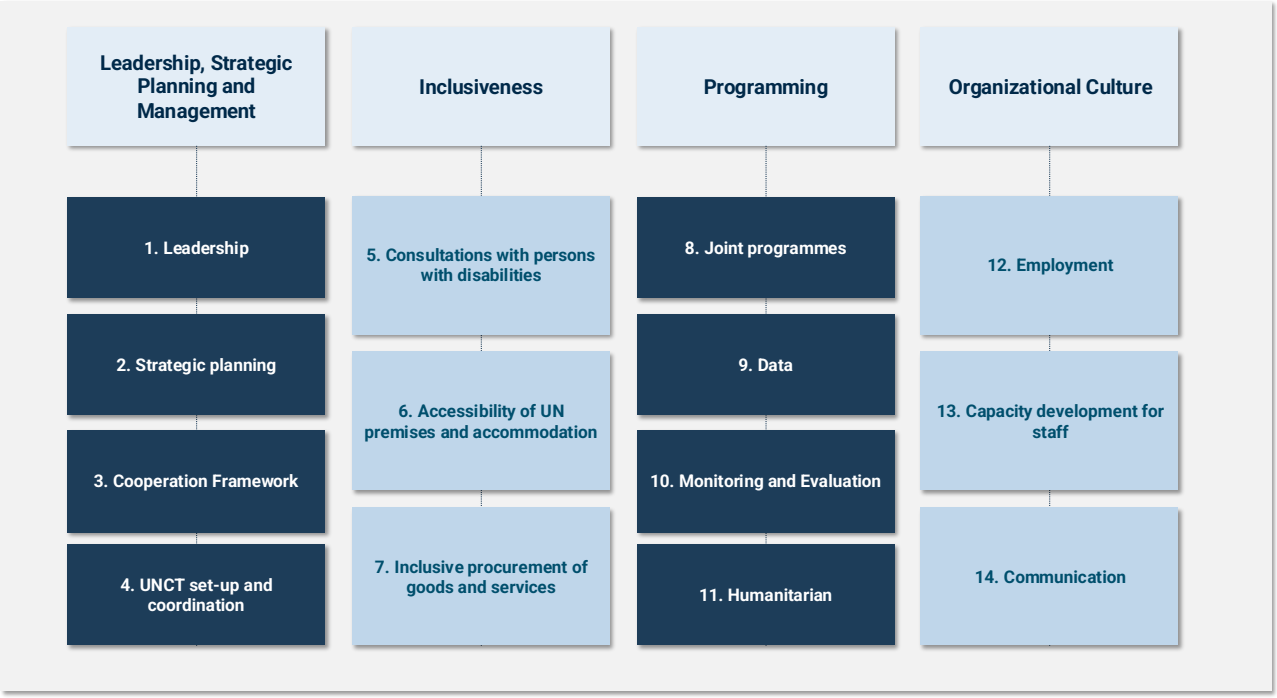
16. UN. 2023. A/RES/78/1.
17. UN. 2024. Summit of the Future Outcome Documents. September 2024. Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations.
18. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. See p.2, f.n.1.
19. The entity accountability framework includes an additional indicator, 6.1 which is considered part of indicator 6.

Figure 3: Entity accountability framework



Source: Designed by evaluation team based on the UNDIS (2019).

Figure 4: UNCT scorecard



Source: Designed by evaluation team based on the UNDIS (2019).

15. The UNDIS is implemented across the United Nations system by United Nations entities[20] and by United Nations country teams. Reporting against the UNDIS accountability framework is voluntary and occurs annually, with 81 entities reporting in 2023 and 132 UNCTs in 2024.

20. For UNDIS reporting, the definition of entities is those bodies, offices or departments within the United Nations system that are able to implement the UNDIS. While no strict parameters are applied, this includes all Secretariat departments, and stand-alone offices or missions that are not within the operations or programme of another entity, all funds and programmes and specialized agencies. The total number of entities changes as they are established or wound down (for example, peacekeeping missions) and as entities may decide to report separately even if they are within another department (for example, OICT).

16. A Disability Inclusion Team was established in 2019 in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) to support the coordinated implementation of the UNDIS across the United Nations system. The Disability Inclusion Team supports coordination at entity and UNCT levels on disability inclusion, supports the development of tools and resources to implement the UNDIS, provides technical assistance, monitors and assesses system-wide implementation and reports on progress and challenges through the Secretary-General's annual report on the system-wide implementation of the UNDIS.

17. Two focal point networks, one for entities and one for UNCTs, were created to support the coordinated implementation and sharing of good practices and lessons learned. Through the UNDIS, seed funding was available to UNCTs to support the development of action plans across both programming and operations.[21]

18. The UNDIS was launched by the Secretary-General in 2019, in a period that saw a number of important global developments supporting the rights of persons with disabilities through international cooperation,[22] but was quickly followed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, United Nations Member States passed a series of resolutions for the implementation of the UNDIS (Table 3).

Table 3: Key resolutions related to UNDIS implementation (2019-2024)

Resolution	Title
A/RES/74/144	Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: accessibility
A/RES/75/154	Inclusive development for and with persons with disabilities
A/RES/75/233	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
A/RES/79/226	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

1.3 Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope

Purpose

19. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide an independent assessment of the UNDIS after five years of implementation in order to present evidence of progress and results as well as gaps in achievement of the UNDIS goals, identify good practices and lessons learned, and provide recommendations for possible revisions of the UNDIS and implementation of disability inclusion in the United Nations system until 2030 and beyond. The evaluation aims to contribute to accountability and learning on disability inclusion in the United Nations system and inform processes and key events in this area.

20. The evaluation is anticipated to be used by a variety of stakeholders, including all United Nations entities and UNCTs implementing the UNDIS, United Nations employees with and without disabilities, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, broader civil society organizations, Member States, donors and other partners working with the United Nations on disability inclusion.

21. Sums ranging from USD 15,000 to USD 70,000 were provided to 13 UNCTs in 2022.
22. Establishment of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities for Sustainable Development and a Disability Data Disaggregation Joint Statement by the disability sector calling for a harmonized approach to monitoring SDGs for persons with disabilities (2017); the first Global Disability Summit, the adoption of the first disability policy marker by the OECD (2018); the IASC Guidelines on Inclusive Humanitarian Action for Persons with Disabilities; and the first UN Security Council resolution concerning persons with disabilities (Resolution 2475) (2019).

Evaluation objectives

21. The specific objectives of the evaluation include: assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the UNDIS to advance disability inclusion; facilitating learning by capturing good practices and lessons learned; identifying barriers and enabling factors of UNDIS implementation, as well as opportunities for its improvement; providing recommendations for consideration by United Nations entities and UNCTs; and contributing to processes and key events on disability inclusion.

Scope of the evaluation

22. The evaluation covers operationalization of all areas of the UNDIS by the United Nations system from its launch in June 2019 until the end of data collection in April 2025. The evaluation is global in scope and includes the implementation of the UNDIS by all entities and UNCTs, including at headquarters, regional and country levels in all types of contexts in which the United Nations operates.

23. The evaluation focuses on the UNDIS and its contribution to advancing disability inclusion in the United Nations system. The evaluation also focuses on the conceptualization and design of the UNDIS, its alignment with international frameworks such as the CRPD and its operationalization across all areas, focusing on important effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability aspects. The evaluation does not assess UNDIS implementation and results by single entities or UNCTs, nevertheless, it does assess the contribution of the UNDIS to advancing disability inclusion in entities and UNCTs for the purpose of learning and extracting good practices and evidence of contribution to different levels of results. The evaluation further seeks to identify any unintended effects, positive or negative, in the operationalization of the UNDIS.

The evaluation answered the following evaluation questions (Table 4), which were derived from the evaluation Terms of Reference (Annex A) and adjusted during the design phase of the evaluation as reflected in the inception report.[23]

Table 4: Evaluation questions (Table 1 duplicate)

EQ Focus	Evaluation Questions
EQ1: Relevance of the UNDIS to the CRPD and SDGs	Was the UNDIS design relevant and fit for purpose in creating an institutional framework for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
EQ2: Effectiveness of the UNDIS in terms of its contribution to greater disability inclusion	To what extent has UNDIS contributed to progress and change on disability inclusion in the United Nations system?
EQ3: Efficiency of the implementation of the UNDIS	Has the UNDIS been operationalized in an efficient manner?
EQ4: Sustainability of the results	To what extent are results and effects of UNDIS implementation sustainable?

23. Adjustments were based on inception interviews and further work on the UNDIS Theory of Change described in Section 4.

2. Approach and Methodology



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2.1 The overall approach

24. The evaluation was utilization-focused and conducted in ways that enhanced the likely use of both the results and the process itself to inform decisions and improve performance. It was also conducted in a participatory manner, involving stakeholders in the evaluation process at different stages, including preparatory, inception, data collection, analysis and reporting and dissemination phases. The evaluation specifically reached out to persons with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities and to persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at global, regional and country levels[24] to ensure that their inputs and perspectives were incorporated at relevant stages of the evaluation process.

25. A mixed methods approach was utilized, integrating different evaluation methods and drawing on, and integrating, qualitative and quantitative data to strengthen the reliability of data and the validity of the findings and recommendations. This was done to capture a wider range of perspectives on, and to broaden and deepen comprehension of, the implementation of disability inclusion in the United Nations system. Efforts were made to make all data collection, analysis and communication tools, including workshops, groups meetings and surveys, reports and communication products as accessible and inclusive as possible. The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations,[25] as well as the UNDIS guidance concerning consulting persons with disabilities.

26. The evaluation follows UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations system and abides by the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct.

27. In line with the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Gender Equality and Human Rights in Evaluation, the evaluation integrated human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB).

28. The core evaluation team (seven) included three men and four women. Two of the evaluation team members have lived experience of disabilities. The evaluation management group, evaluation advisory group and reference group include members with a lived experience in disabilities.

29. In the preparatory phase, a stakeholder map was developed based on a stakeholder analysis. The design of the evaluation integrated gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and LNOB, including in the evaluation questions and lines of enquiry and in data collection and analysis methods. These ensured a gender balance and diversity of disabilities in the selection of key informants to be interviewed and included in focus group discussions. Interview and focus group discussion guides included questions on human rights, intersectionality, gender equality, disability inclusion and LNOB. Data collection instruments were designed to ensure inclusiveness, aiming to create a safe and respectful environment where participants felt empowered to share their perspectives without obligation to disclose personal information unless they choose to do so. Persons with disabilities were consulted during the development of the tools. The online survey platform[26] was selected to optimize accessibility and analysis of survey data was disaggregated by gender, age and disability type where possible. Desk-based analysis of documentation considered the extent to which cross-cutting issues are mainstreamed into the UNDIS and its implementation guidance.

24. Participation of OPDs in the evaluation survey by level: Global OPDs: 39 respondents; regional OPDs: 58 respondents; national OPDs: 137 respondents; subnational OPDs: 43 respondents. Participation of UN staff: 384 staff with disabilities, 183 staff with dependents with disabilities.
25. UNEG. 2022. Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting on the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Evaluation Indicator. Jan 2022.
26. Accessible Surveys was selected as the survey platform of choice. See Annex E for more details.

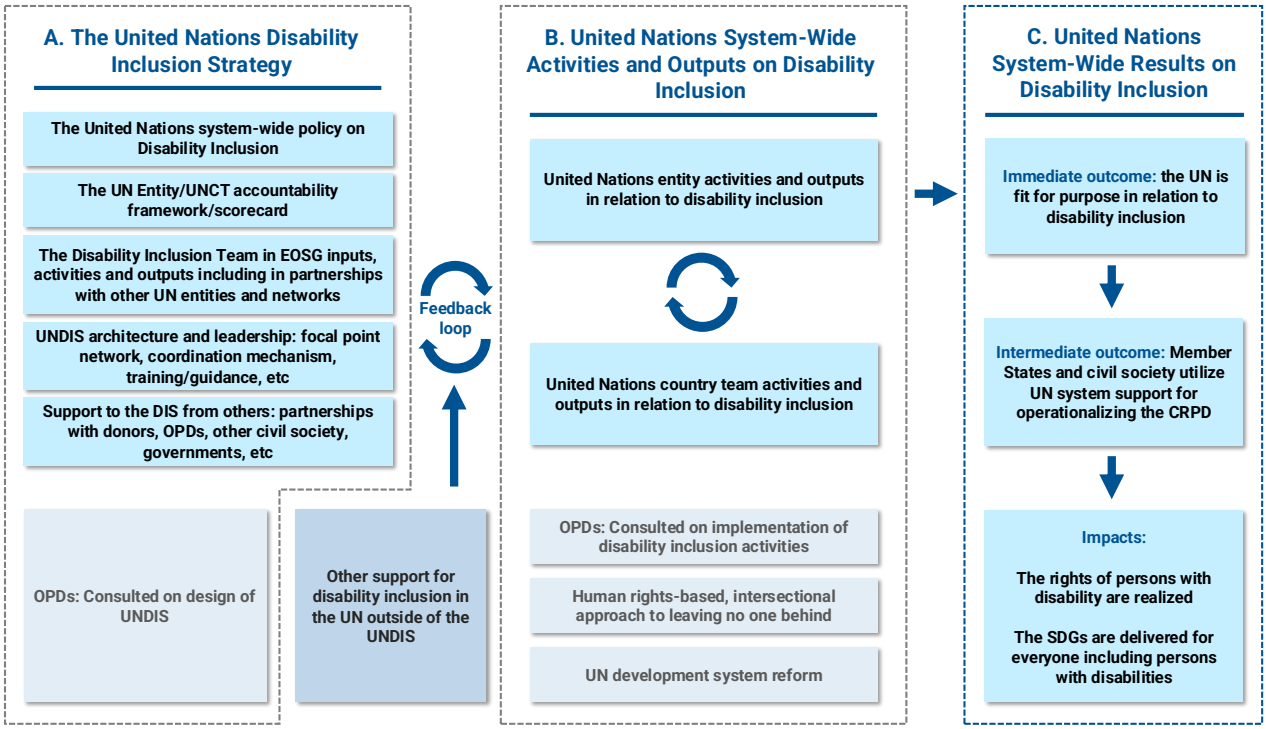
2.2 Methodological approach

30. The evaluation utilized a theory-based approach complemented by contribution analysis to assess the effectiveness of the UNDIS. Given that the UNDIS does not contain an explicit theory of change in its design, the evaluation team reconstructed one for the evaluation to help understand what was intended by the UNDIS, in order to identify the assumptions made in terms of achieving its intended results. The details of the Theory of Change created can be found in Annex C.

31. The reconstructed Theory of Change was utilized to assess the contribution of the UNDIS to progress and achievement of results, particularly changes in UNCT and entity outputs as reported under the UNDIS accountability framework. The approach set out to produce a credible and evidence-based narrative that can explain how and why the changes took place.

32. A modified "most significant change" approach was utilized to identify the potential contribution of entity and UNCT outputs to higher-level results in disability inclusion. The overall conceptual framework is given in Figure 5. Beyond the outputs monitored and reported on through the UNDIS, there is no comprehensive and regular monitoring of the results at a higher level (outcomes or impact). Moreover, some data are difficult to quantify, such as changes in individual mindsets or organizational culture. As a result, the evaluation used the stories of stakeholders, primarily persons with disabilities, to identify and analyse examples of most significant changes that may have taken place as a result of the implementation of the UNDIS. The UNDIS being primarily a strategy to make the United Nations fit for purpose on disability inclusion, the evaluation did not seek to assess the changes in the lives of persons with disabilities "served" by the United Nations, but to identify elements that illustrate the readiness of the United Nations to deliver on disability inclusion through being equipped as an inclusive and accessible system.

Figure 5: Theory of Change (Figure 1 duplicate)



Source: Designed by evaluation team.

2.3 Data sources and stakeholders

33. A series of assumptions for each evaluation question was identified through the Theory of Change. The evaluation question and assumptions were matched with lines of inquiry and data collection approaches in an evaluation matrix (see Annex B).

34. Data collection and analysis was undertaken within nine blocks of evidence set out in Table 5. Each block of evidence included the collection and analysis of a specific type of data. Full details on methodology and data collection are provided in Annex E.

Table 5: Blocks of evidence (Table 2 duplicate)

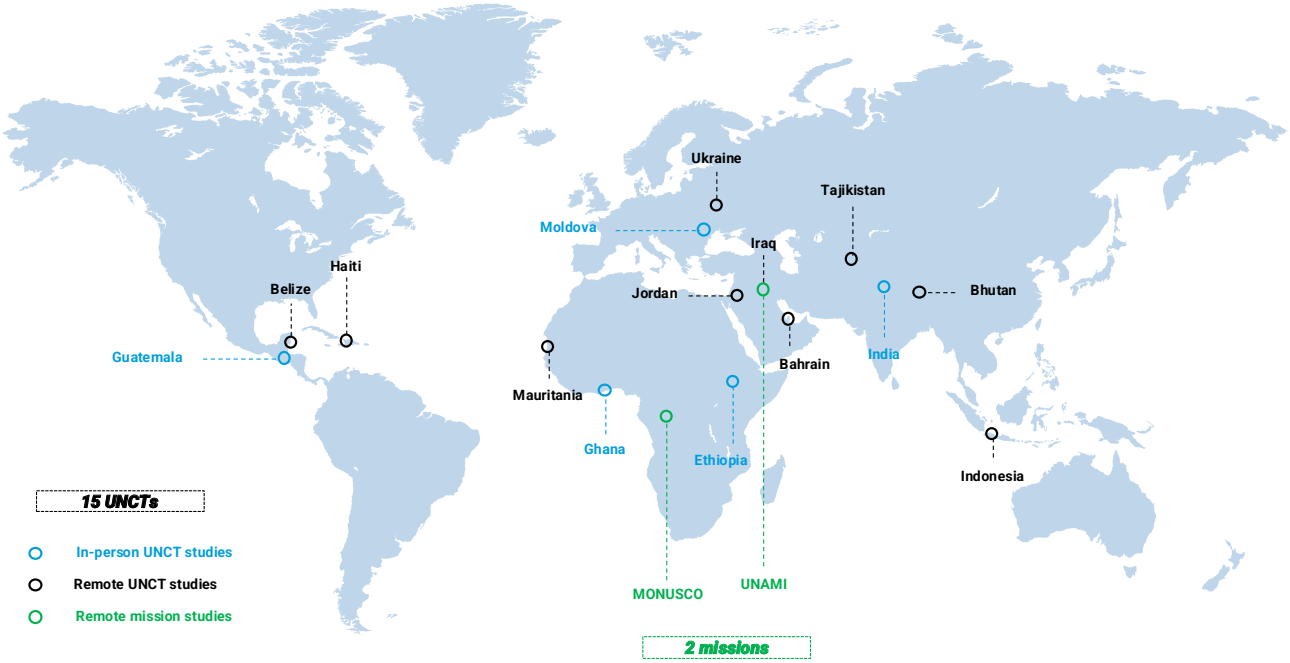
Evidence blocks	Evidence
Block 1: Analysis of UNDIS entity accountability framework and UNCT scorecard data	Analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the accountability framework for United Nations entities and UNCTs from 2019-2024
Block 2: UNCT studies	Interviews conducted in 15 countries (5 in-person, 10 remote)
Block 3: United Nations entity studies	Interviews conducted in major United Nations locations; remote studies undertaken included peacekeeping missions (total: 37 entities)
Block 4: Comparative studies and analysis	Three comparative studies conducted: (a) United Nations system-wide strategies on other areas such as gender and youth, (b) United Nations entities' disability inclusion strategies, and (c) non-United Nations disability inclusion strategies
Block 5: Surveys	Surveys to United Nations employees with disabilities (583 responses) and members of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) (242 responses) examining current situation and changes since 2019[27]
Block 6: Organizational analysis	Analysis of data on UNDIS architecture, including coordination and mainstreaming mechanisms
Block 7: Review of evaluation evidence	Analysis of 20 United Nations evaluation reports with disability inclusion as a central focus and a further 209 United Nations evaluation reports identified to have included coverage on disability inclusion
Block 8: Key documents review	Desk review of key documents related to the UNDIS (including relevant documents from outside the United Nations). This included a detailed review of relevant documentation gathered from 15 UNCTs, 2 missions and 32 entities
Block 9: Other data	Other quantitative data analysed for evidence triangulation

35. Primary and secondary data were gathered and analysed at country, regional and global levels of the United Nations development system.

36. Country-level data collection focused on 15 countries, balancing typologies and regional representation. Of the 15 UNCT studies listed in Figure 6, 5 were conducted in person (Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, India and Moldova) and 10 remotely (Bahrain, Belize, Bhutan, Haiti, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Tajikistan and Ukraine). In addition, the evaluation also covered remotely: the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a special political mission, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), a peacekeeping mission (Figure 6).

27. A total of 781 valid respondents completed the survey. Several respondents completed both surveys in their separate capacities as former United Nations employees with disabilities and as members of OPDs, resulting in a total of 825 valid responses.

Figure 6: Map of UNCT and mission studies (Figure 2 duplicate)



Source: Designed by evaluation team.

37. To ensure that all key stakeholders were identified and consulted, a stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken during the preparatory phase and finalized during the inception phase based on a document review and consultations with stakeholders at all levels from the United Nations system. The stakeholder map with internal and external stakeholders is included in Annex D.

38. The evaluation team met with stakeholders from 37 entities. In-person visits were made to Geneva, Nairobi and New York, with other entities covered remotely. A total of 651 stakeholders were consulted. Table 6 provides a breakdown of stakeholders consulted by stakeholder type and sex. Numbers of persons with disabilities consulted were collated by aggregating the number of interviewees who self-identified as a person with disabilities. The actual number of persons with disabilities interviewed may have been higher. Annex D contains further disaggregation of stakeholders by entities, missions and countries.

Table 6: Stakeholders consulted

	Stakeholder type	Female	Male	Persons with disabilities	Total
Global	UN entities/missions	129	69	28	198
	OPDs	8	5	5	13
Country	RCO/UNCT/UN employees/Gov/OPDs/ Development partners *Others: human rights institutions, tertiary educational institutions, refugees*	254	186	120	440
	Total	**391**	**259**	**153**	**651**

2.4 Methods for analysis, triangulation and validation

39. The evaluation matrix guided the preparation of evidence tables containing the evidence collected. The evidence was triangulated across different data sources and data collection methods to formulate findings and allow the evaluation team to identify the strength of evidence and any data gaps for each assumption.

40. Different methods were utilized to analyse data including: (a) contribution analysis and most significant change to assess progress and contribution of the UNDIS to changes; (b) content analysis for qualitative data from different blocks of evidence and descriptive statistics for quantitative data from scorecards and surveys; and (c) comparative analysis to extract good practices and similarities and differences from the comparative studies undertaken.[28]

41. The evaluation included internal validation of evidence through an analysis workshop, which took place at the end of data collection where the evidence and its strength were both assessed and triangulated to formulate findings under each evaluation question. Once the findings were clear, the emerging conclusions across the findings were formulated.

42. External validation included debriefing sessions with the Resident Coordinators and United Nations system stakeholders at the end of each in-country mission, participation in the Global Summit on Disability[29] to validate preliminary findings and a validation workshop with the Evaluation Reference Group to present preliminary findings. The first draft of the evaluation report was presented to the Evaluation Reference Group and United Nations system disability focal points for validation and feedback.

2.5 Limitations

43. Several potential limitations were identified in the inception phase and actions taken to mitigate them. Nonetheless, there are three limitations that should be noted:

- The UNDIS accountability framework that was used to assess the performance of entities and UNCTs in terms of UNDIS implementation relies on self-reporting by the entities and UNCTs and quality assurance by the UNDIS team (one round of validation and comments). Specific issues related to the accountability framework, its indicators and reporting processes are covered in the findings chapter. Evidence from the UNDIS accountability framework reporting was triangulated with other data sources, such as entity and UNCT studies.
- The evaluation approach utilized faced the challenge of assessing the contribution to higher-level results (beyond outputs), particularly at the external programmatic level, from UNDIS implementation. The survey of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and United Nations employees with disabilities, combined with entity and UNCT studies, provided evidence of change since the launch of the UNDIS in relation to internal changes. Assessing results at the programmatic level and the potential contribution to higher-level results from UNDIS implementation at the country level was more challenging, partly due to the relatively short implementation period since the launch of the UNDIS and the limited monitoring and reporting of results. The use of most significant change for case studies provided some evidence of programmatic results at different levels, which was then utilized.

28. As part of the evaluation, a comparative analysis was conducted to extract key learnings and good practices from the two other UN system-wide strategies—Youth2030 and the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women—to inform the UNDIS analysis and provide insights for its future implementation. This was not intended as a direct comparison, as the three strategies differ significantly. For example, UN-SWAP benefits from over a decade of implementation experience and is supported by a dedicated entity, within a broader enabling environment shaped by multiple UN gender-related frameworks. In terms of the strategies' impact on the UN workforce, it is important to acknowledge that while workforce data on gender and age is often readily available, basic data on persons with disabilities working in the UN system remains limited for a diverse array of reasons — including confidentiality concerns, discrimination, and data collection challenges.

29. The Global Disability Summit was co-hosted by Germany, Jordan and the International Disability Alliance and held in Berlin from the 2nd to the 3rd of April, 2025.

- There was limited engagement with entities that have not reported on or implemented the UNDIS (approximately 20), which limited the analysis of insights and rationale behind this, and what can be done to support implementation of the UNDIS in the future. Nonetheless, the evaluation utilized evidence from interviews to identify factors that play a role in entity reporting and ways to address them in the future.

3. Findings



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44. This findings chapter is structured by the four questions the evaluation set out to answer and is guided by the assumptions related to each. Selected good practices are highlighted in boxes.

3.1 The design of the UNDIS and its relevance

EQ1: Was the UNDIS design relevant and fit for purpose in creating an institutional framework for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Alignment with the CRPD and 2030 Agenda

Finding 1: The UNDIS is relevant and well aligned with the goals of the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda with regards to persons with disabilities. It adequately translates those goals into a framework that sets a path for the United Nations to use the goals as a foundation for a stronger focus on internal transformation. The UNDIS adopted a twin-track approach to disability inclusion. It combined mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to disability with disability-targeted measures, with more emphasis on the mainstreaming track in order to advance disability inclusion at scale throughout the system. The UNDIS aligns with other United Nations frameworks but does not explain connections with these frameworks in detail.

45. The UNDIS provided a response to the need for the United Nations system to improve its performance regarding disability inclusion to support Member States to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first in all United Nations pillars. This urgent need was flagged by the Executive Committee established by the Secretary-General and evidenced in the 2018 report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.[30] As such, it filled a critical gap in supporting the United Nations system to deliver on its commitments for persons with disabilities and it drew attention to what this requires. Key informants among civil society stakeholders who engaged with the United Nations before the UNDIS called for such a strategy and welcomed its adoption as an important milestone for the system.

46. The UNDIS highlights contributions to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making an explicit contribution to the commitment to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first.[31] It supports the mainstreaming of disability inclusion into sustainable development efforts by committing the United Nations to systematically embed the rights of persons with disabilities across its work[32] and to collect and analyse quality, accessible data disaggregated by disability,[33] addressing a key requirement for monitoring progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for persons with disabilities. In comparison, the UN-SWAP[34] evolved over time to become more specific in the way it integrates indicators on gender-related SDG outcomes[35] (UN-SWAP 2.0) and strengthen the accountability framework requirements in connection with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and SDG results (UN-SWAP 3.0).

47. The UNDIS is explicitly grounded in the CRPD and adequately translates its purpose, principles and key obligations into an institutional framework to guide implementation by the United Nations system. The UNDIS embraces the social model of disability and aligns with the purpose of the CRPD (Article 1) in its clear

30. IASC. 2018. Strengthening the System: Foundations for a Disability Inclusive United Nations. Dec 2018.
31. UN. 2015. A/RES/70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
32. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy -paragraph 17.
33. UN. 2015. A/RES/70/1. Paragraph 74 section (g).
34. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.
35. Gender equality has a stand-alone Goal in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Goal 5).

intention to seek the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.[36] It aims to address exclusion and discrimination on the basis of disability, including multiple and intersecting discrimination, including against employees who have dependents with disabilities. The language and orientations of the UNDIS across its core areas are consistent with the corresponding sectoral articles of the CRPD. As an example, indicator 13 (employment) aligns with Article 27 on work and employment. Based on the comparative analysis of disability inclusion strategies, other organizations such as the European Union and the World Bank also emphasize alignment with and support to the implementation of the CRPD as the focus of the strategies.

48. While the CRPD provides a normative framework to address the barriers that hinder the participation of persons with disabilities, the UNDIS translated its provisions into concrete implementation pathways for removing these barriers across United Nations entities and programmes. The UNDIS, and particularly its accountability framework, is formulated as a structured, systemic framework, with a commitment to systematically embed the rights of persons with disabilities into its work, both externally, through programming, and internally. The indicators, supported by the technical notes, effectively transform CRPD principles and orientations into actionable steps with measurable criteria, unpacking their implications across key areas. For example, indicator 8 (procurement) details concrete steps that can be taken to ensure that procurement policies and processes enact the principle of non-discrimination and actively promote accessibility and inclusion.

49. The UNDIS adopted a twin-track approach to disability inclusion. It combined mainstreaming a human rights-based approach to disability and disability-targeted measures, with more emphasis on the mainstreaming track–implicitly acknowledged as the strategic area of investment to advance disability inclusion at scale throughout the system. This is in line with the emphasis placed by the CRPD on the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of sustainable development.[37] Other strategies on disability inclusion have also incorporated a similar twin-track approach combining mainstreamed and targeted implementation of activities.[38]

50. The principle of participation, central to the CRPD (articles 3, 4.3 and 33.3), is clearly integrated through UNDIS indicator 5 (consultation with persons with disabilities), which requires systematic close consultation with, and the active involvement of, organizations of people with disabilities (OPDs) and is also applied across all other indicators in the technical notes. This supports the system to meaningfully include the perspectives of persons with disabilities into decision-making processes throughout the United Nations system.

51. The UNDIS document demonstrates consistency with other United Nations frameworks and supports the mainstreaming of disability inclusion across all its work by listing a range of prominent global frameworks, agendas and resolutions[39] without explaining connections with these frameworks in detail.

UNDIS intervention logic and design

Finding 2: The UNDIS lacks an overarching theory of change that clearly outlines the goals, the pathways for change and the causal assumptions about how proposed interventions will lead to desired results. The UNDIS does not sufficiently reflect the relationship between the United

36. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy - paragraphs16, 17, 22.
37. UN. 2006. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
38. World Bank, DFAT, FCDO, and the European Union.
39. The UNDIS mentions: "the Sendai Framework; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III); multiple resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council; and the World Humanitarian Summit as well as other agreements that may be adopted in the future" – paragraph 14.

Nations internal and external disability inclusion work or define the exact scope and expected contribution of the UNDIS itself. While the UNDIS accountability framework provides a clear road map for each area of entity change, acting as a logical framework, it does not adequately define the interrelationship between the different components. Furthermore, the UNDIS is missing certain key elements that are present in other strategies, such as clear institutional arrangements for system-wide coordination and an implementation timeline.

52. The UNDIS reaffirms the commitments of the United Nations system "to pursue the goals of inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities and their human rights, well-being and perspectives". It recalls the importance of the need "to systematically embed the rights of persons with disabilities in the work of the United Nations both externally, through programming, and internally" and to ensure that, as a workplace, the United Nations provides "an enabling environment in which to fully and effectively participate on an equal basis with others", with an explicit goal to represent persons with disabilities "in particular at decision-making levels".[40] Consistently, the UNDIS states that "the ultimate goal is to achieve equality of outcomes and foster an inclusive culture within the United Nations system", covering both internal and external dimensions.[41]

53. The UNDIS, however, lacks an overarching theory of change that reflects goals and pathways of change or that identifies causal assumptions about how proposed interventions will lead to desired results. Evidence from key informant interviews confirms the lack of clarity on the overall logic as a gap, including the ways in which the UNDIS, which has a strong focus on the internal objective of ensuring that the United Nations system is fit for purpose in relation to disability inclusion, will play a key role in enabling the United Nations system to support Member States in their achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the CRPD.[42] As such, it leaves some ambiguity on the articulation between the internal and external aspects of the United Nations work and between the United Nations and its counterparts as to whose role it is to effectively advance disability inclusion, and what the exact scope and contribution of the UNDIS is expected to be.[43] The UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS) provides an example of how internal and external aspects are interrelated and contribute to a wider corporate impact vision to advance the rights of children with disabilities (Box 2). The UN-SWAP, currently in its 3.0 version, introduced an overall Theory of Change in its 2.0 iteration. This revised version consolidates the logic of intervention by spelling out the results expected from the United Nations and those to be achieved by Member States. Similarly, the Youth2030 strategy outlines how system-wide actions will support progress within five key priority areas to advance the rights of youth (Box 3).

54. The UNDIS accountability framework presents a road map for achieving the requirements of each indicator, with the logic of each set out in its entity technical guidance (technical notes[44] and stand-alone guidelines for specific indicators[45]), which further explain the rationale and change strategies, as well as suggested steps for progress. The accountability framework is formulated as a coherent and clear road map from which several entities have directly derived their own disability strategy.[46] The UNDIS does not include a detailed rationale explaining the context and experiences of persons with disabilities as a justification for action, which is usually found in other disability strategies.[47]

40. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy - paragraphs 17-21.
41. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy - paragraph 22.
42. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy - paragraphs 6-7.
43. IASC. 2018. Strengthening the System: Foundations for a Disability Inclusive United Nations. Dec 2018 -paragraph 12.
44. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy; UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. Entity Accountability Framework: Technical Notes; UN. 2019. UN Country Team Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion.
45. The stand-alone guidelines for entity indicators 5 (consultation with persons with disabilities), 8 (procurement), 10 (evaluation) and 14 (capacity development for staff) consolidate the UNDIS with a set of complementary tools that further explain the intervention logic.
46. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy -paragraphs 6-7.
47. FCDO, World Bank.

Box 2: UNICEF DIPAS

UNICEF's Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS) 2022-2030, developed through a consultative process in 2021 and 2022, establishes a comprehensive framework for achieving UNICEF's ambitious vision of a more inclusive world by 2030. The document includes a Strategic Framework to model dynamic inclusivity, which outlines four goals for children with disabilities; six cross-sectoral strategic priorities; programmatic and organizational strategies, supported by key enablers (such as partnerships; financing and resource mobilization; and leadership, accountability and coordination). The DIPAS highlights and explains the complementarity and interdependency between programmatic engagement and disability-inclusive operations, as well as organizational culture, and how it supports the ambition that "UNICEF becomes a truly disability-inclusive organization in everything it does". Each component of the expected organizational change is articulated in a wider diagram showing how all concur to the overall goal. Progress is monitored through 34 indicators embedded in the overall UNICEF Strategic Plan Results Framework, ensuring that DIPAS is part and parcel of the corporate strategy. The essence of UNICEF's desired change in disability inclusion is also captured by an additional seven DIPAS corporate commitments, such as a target of 10 per cent of total expenditure dedicated to disability inclusion by the year 2030 or a target of 7 per cent of employees with disabilities by 2030, which helps communicating the vision in a clear and concise way.

Box 3: System-wide strategies' Theories of Change

The United Nations System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (UN-SWAP) and the Youth 2030 strategy present different conceptualizations of how system-wide strategies create change. Currently both articulate Theories of Change that underscore how United Nations' system-wide efforts are instrumental in advancing transformative outcomes for women and youth; but the UN-SWAP initially focused solely on building institutional capacities assuming results would follow and, later, evolved from a process-focused to a more outcome-integrated approach. Youth 2030, on its turn has integrated outcome-level objectives from its inception.

UN-SWAP 2.0 and 3.0 integrated accountability for gender-related SDG achievements, supported by a Theory of Change that differentiates between results within the United Nations' direct spheres of control and influence, and those within its sphere of interest, under the responsibility of Member States. The UN-SWAP Theory of Change frames United Nations system-wide contributions in driving change towards gender-equal power relations and enabling environments for the empowerment of women and girls. Similarly, the Youth 2030 strategy outlines cross-cutting system-wide actions (leadership, knowledge and innovation, investment and solutions catalyst, and accountability) to support the overall capacity of the United Nations to advance and deliver on the five key priority areas, including amplifying youth voices, improving access to education, employment, and health services, protecting rights, and fostering youth leadership in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. Phase 2 of Youth2030 calls for accelerated action to meet the strategy's goals and sets strategic priorities to address gaps identified in the first phase. It also introduces a results framework outlining intended impact, outcomes, and outputs, each explicitly linked to corresponding indicators in its accountability frameworks.

55. While the effort and milestones expected at the level of entities and UNCTs are clearly captured in the accountability framework, there is no equivalent for the United Nations system as a whole. Therefore, the priorities and overall performance measures of what an inclusive United Nations system would look like (such as measuring progress towards becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities[48]) are not fully clear in the absence of a succinct set of strategic corporate indicators, as captured by UNICEF, for example, in its seven DIPAS core commitments with a clear timeline.

56. The institutional architecture for strategizing, supporting, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the UNDIS at the global level is mentioned but not defined in detail, creating accountability challenges. At the overall system level, the UNDIS lacks a comprehensive "means of implementation"– the interdependent mix of financial resources, guidance, capacity-building and enabling environment components

48. UN. 2020. Disability Inclusion in the United Nations System. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the UNDIS in 2019. Page 34.

(at the entity level there are examples of established budgets for their disability inclusion strategy). While the main document of the UNDIS formulates strong commitments to accelerate progress on disability inclusion, these are not matched with detailed commitments on resource allocation. Resource considerations spelled out in paragraph 26 (i) lack specificity regarding funding mechanisms. The United Nations Youth2030 strategy document, for instance, clearly outlines the governance and coordination arrangements, including the composition of its bodies, the reporting mechanisms, and the time-bound implementation horizon. Youth2030 phase 2 sets unlocking resources for the youth agenda across the United Nations as a key priority and its scorecard includes funding for youth-related results as an indicator, which is also the case for UN-SWAP. The presence of financial resources as a dimension in both frameworks underscores the recognition that resource allocation is a critical lever for system-wide change.

The accountability framework

Finding 3: The accountability framework provides a useful guide for taking action and implementing the UNDIS, mainly by including process-oriented indicators and emphasizing policy adoption and institutional readiness on disability inclusion. However, it does not capture the full scope of the United Nations disability inclusion support, particularly in the areas of: programming for persons with disabilities; culture shift; data on disability; intersectionality; and resource allocation. Furthermore, the framework does not clearly define accountability lines and mechanisms as an effective accountability tool, and monitoring is based on self-reporting of progress, which affects the reliability of data.

57. The UNDIS accountability framework currently serves as an effective road map for implementing disability inclusion at the entity and country levels, providing clear technical guidance with staged and process-oriented indicators that have guided implementation. The framework established a structured approach that has been relevant to support the first five years of the UNDIS, offering direction through technical notes and resources that help entities and UNCTs understand implementation requirements. This is further discussed in Section 3.2 on effectiveness but illustrated here by the examples of WFP and ILO and the use of the framework as a road map for change.

58. In 2020, WFP reported that it had missed the requirements of 10 of the 15 UNDIS accountability framework indicators. This was an improvement from its assessment that it missed all indicators in 2019. In response, it developed the UNDIS Road Map 2020-2022 to guide its actions in this area. The road map was approved by its Executive Board in November 2020 and, since 2023, has been followed by annual disability inclusion workplans. Since 2021, WFP has reported annually to its Executive Board on its progress. It is also taking a realistic and gradual approach to rolling out the UNDIS to its regional and country levels. In its latest 2024 UNDIS report, WFP has met or exceeded all but three of the indicator requirements, with the intention to meet or exceed all by the end of 2025.

59. UNFPA saw similar improvements in its performance by adopting a "whole-of-institution" approach to UNDIS implementation. Building on its programmatic approach to disability inclusion adopted in its "We Decide" programme in 2016 and on existing operational guidance on employment of persons with disabilities, UNFPA established an UNDIS Task Force located in the Office of the Executive Director, bringing together senior management across all parts of the entity. Reported performance against the indicators in 2019 was rated as exceeding in one indicator and meeting seven. By 2023, it was exceeding in 11 indicators and meeting in 3. During that period, the procurement indicator was consistently reported as missing but, as of 2025, it will be addressed entity-wide through the UNFPA Supply Chain Management Unit Strategy, endorsed by the Deputy Executive Director (Management).

60. ILO provides another example of how the accountability framework galvanized disability inclusion work across the organization. While ILO had been active on disability inclusion prior to the UNDIS, it has had a

strong relevance and a catalytic role in accelerating progress on disability inclusion for the entity. In particular, the UNDIS accountability framework provided a framework for a more structured, systematic and whole-of-organization approach. Adopting a rigorous approach to thoroughly assess and embed the implications of UNDIS indicators across the work of its different departments, ILO has set the pace for its own progress against UNDIS indicators in its new Disability Strategy 2024-2027. In 2024, ILO reported meeting or exceeding in nine indicators (as compared to one in the initial report).[49]

61. The UNDIS accountability framework is structured around four core areas and a set of 14 indicators for UNCTs and 16[50] indicators for entities. The four core areas of the accountability framework (see Figures 3 and 4 in Section 1.2) are considered of limited added value as a way to structure the indicators, as they overlap significantly (for example, inclusiveness and organizational culture or management and programming are not mutually exclusive) and do not contribute to conceptual clarity. The scope of organizational areas for change is fairly comprehensive, covering institutional, operational and programmatic aspects, and includes specific elements of strategic importance to disability inclusion, including consultation with persons with disabilities (indicator 5), accessibility (indicator 6) and reasonable accommodation (indicator 7). However, financial resources, data (entity accountability framework only) and knowledge management are not captured through stand-alone indicators.

62. As the first strategy to initiate change towards disability inclusion, the UNDIS indicators and their related criteria focus largely on internal operations, although the UNCT scorecard includes a range of indicators involving engagement with government priorities and processes (for example, criterion "9.c.ii. The UNCT works with at least one government partner on data on persons with disabilities"). In comparison, the UN-SWAP in its 3.0 version now features seven dimensions and 18 indicators with a majority that relates to internal operations (5 dimensions, 13 indicators) but also includes externally focused indicators related to SDGs (2 dimensions, 5 indicators). The Youth2030 strategy has 18 dimensions and 41 indicators, including 17 operational indicators and 24 programming indicators.

63. The UNDIS accountability framework provides a set of indicators and related criteria with a simple logic for reporting progress. The sequence for progressing from "approaching" to "meeting" and "exceeding" is considered broadly logical although it may benefit from adjustments reflecting the learning from five years of implementation (such as adjusting the sequence of criteria under some indicators and reformulating to avoid overlaps). Similar to other system-wide strategies, the existence of a set of two accountability frameworks mirroring each other but adapted to the realities of entities and UNCTs supports clarity on the common directions across the system. However, there is less alignment on humanitarian action and data, which are not detailed in the entity accountability framework. The self-reporting approach places the responsibility for quality primarily on the reporting entity or UNCT, and therefore the quality of reporting is largely influenced by their respective reporting cultures (rigour in assessing target achievement, levels of verification of progress reported). For example, ILO reported "missing" under indicator 2 in 2023 because disability was not part of the ILO strategic framework overview (2.c.i.), yet the ILO has a disability expenditure tracking system in place (2.c.iv.), a more demanding criteria necessary to "exceed".

64. Overall, the accountability framework includes process-oriented indicators and emphasizes policy adoption and institutional mechanisms for readiness on disability inclusion. The criteria set under indicators vary greatly in terms of the organizational effort they demand, with some criteria considered easier to achieve (for example, indicator 1 on leadership or indicator 12 on joint initiatives), while others require long-term, significant transformation of internal practices (such as indicator 11 on country programme documents or the indicators on accessibility). Owing to its flexible design (see finding 4 below), the accountability

49. Documentary review and case study.
50. Indicator 6.1 on conferences and events is considered part of indicator 6 on accessibility.

framework leaves room for entities and UNCTs to set and achieve their own targets, for example under entity accountability framework indicators 6.1 (conferences and events) or indicator 8 (procurement).[51]

65. The framework entails a range of relevant milestones to put the United Nations system in motion and make it fit for purpose with regards to disability inclusion. However, this goal requires a more ambitious intent in strategic areas, such as resource allocation or data. For example, indicator 2 on strategic planning mentions tracking resource allocation at the "exceeds requirements" level, which places financial accountability as an aspirational goal rather than a basic requirement. Entities can therefore meet baseline compliance without demonstrating any resource tracking for disability inclusion initiatives. In comparison, both the UN-SWAP 3.0 and the Youth2030 strategy include stand-alone indicators to track financial resources (UN-SWAP performance indicator 10 "financial targets"; Youth2030 entity accountability framework indicator 3 "funding for youth").

66. After five years of implementation, some entities and UNCTs are calling for more strategic or ambitious indicators (such as reporting numbers of employees with disabilities or amounts allocated to initiatives supporting disability inclusion) to transform what has been an effective road map into a more robust accountability mechanism that drives meaningful disability inclusion throughout the United Nations system. The UN-SWAP 2.0 and 3.0 (revised in 2018 and 2024 respectively) suggest the importance of an adaptive approach, updating the indicators with the learning from implementation and to reflect evolutions of the system.

67. The use of the term "system-wide policy" in the UNDIS[52] (as opposed to the use of "system-wide strategies" in the UN-SWAP and the Youth2030 strategy) lacks clarity: there are specific definitions of policies, particularly within the Secretariat, which supersede the UNDIS (for example Secretary-General Bulletins) and to which entities are held accountable. Beyond the Secretariat, some entities have developed policies relating to either the entirety of the UNDIS or particular elements of it, especially those relating to human resources, to enable accountability within the entity, or of the entity to its governing body. Moreover, the dual role of certain United Nations entities (primarily Secretariat entities) that both implement the UNDIS and support its implementation is not specified, leaving some lines of responsibility unclear on functions that are common to more than one entity, such as accessibility of United Nations Secretariat premises.

68. The yearly reporting requirement has incentivized progress on disability inclusion; however, the framework lacks clear and meaningful accountability mechanisms for it to be an effective accountability tool. The accountability framework does not provide for consequences in cases of poor performance nor for recognition of good practice or high achievement. Drawing from the UN-SWAP, UN Women sends letters to heads of entities highlighting poor performance and urging improvements — an approach that has helped prompt senior-level attention. Furthermore, some reporting lines are insufficiently defined or are ambiguous, such as accountability for results for heads of entities and country representatives, while Resident Coordinators report on progress on the UNDIS as part of their performance review. Some entities have established strong accountability mechanisms with their governing bodies (for example, WHO, ILO, OHCHR, UNICEF, IFAD, WFP), however, there is no systematic and systemic mechanism to hold all entities in the United Nations system to account.

69. The UNDIS reporting format undermines accountability as UNDIS global results reports are published in an aggregated format, which, unlike the UN-SWAP and Youth2030, does not provide public information on results by entity or UNCT. This prevents external stakeholders from monitoring progress at both global and country levels, adding to the absence of a global external accountability mechanism. In particular, OPDs cannot access information about the accountability framework and reporting processes, limiting their ability to engage with implementation efforts and hold the UNCTs and entities to account. Moreover, the lack of access to detailed reporting across entities and countries reduces opportunities to identify, support and learn

51. Entity scorecard Indicator 6.1 criterion "6.1.c.ii. Policies and guidelines on accessibility of conference services and facilities are in place and accessibility targets are established and met"; indicator 8 criterion "8.c.iii. Target is established and met for number/percentage of relevant procurement documents that have accessibility as a mandatory requirement".
52. The UNDIS has two parts, a policy and an accountability framework.

from ongoing efforts, for example, for mutual reinforcement between entities and their country offices. Box 4 provides the examples of how the UN-SWAP and the Youth2030 strategy each established transparent reporting processes.

Box 4: Transparency of system-wide scorecards

In the case of Youth 2030, all individual annual reports (UNCT and entities) are made publicly available on the Youth Office website. The reports are launched at high-level global events and integrated into the yearly QCPR and Secretary-General's report to Member States on the United Nations Youth Office. Similarly, as recommended by the 2019 JIU review, UN-SWAP increased transparency by reshaping ECOSOC reporting to include both aggregated and disaggregated figures for individual entities and publishing scorecards on UN-Women's website.

Flexibility of the UNDIS

Finding 4: The UNDIS is inherently flexible as a common framework for the whole United Nations system and includes adaptive aspects that have led to meaningful implementation across diverse entities and mandates. Drawing from useful experience and insights from the first years of implementation, there is need for more detailed guidance on differentiated approaches reflecting the diversity of mandates, operating environments and institutional structures.

70. The UNDIS incorporates flexibility into its design and approach to implementation, reflecting the inherent diversity across United Nations entities. As explicitly stated in UNDIS, "not every indicator in the framework is applicable to every United Nations entity, given the variety of entity functions".[53] This has served as a cornerstone for adaptability, allowing the framework to be applied meaningfully across entities ranging from normative bodies to operational entities. While maintaining a system-wide approach to disability inclusion, this flexibility created space for entities to interpret and implement the framework in ways that align with their specific mandates, whether they focus on humanitarian response, development programming, or peace operations.

71. The framework's rating system provides a practical mechanism for flexibility in implementation. UNDIS paragraph 34 specifically enables entities to mark indicators as "not applicable" when certain requirements are not relevant to their function or operational context. This adaptability feature allowed both resource-rich entities and smaller entities with limited capacity to engage meaningfully with the framework without being penalized for structural or mandate-related limitations. For instance, smaller entities like the Youth Office (with only 14 staff members) can utilize this flexibility when addressing indicators that might be more relevant to larger entities like WFP (with over 20,000 employees), ensuring assessment remains contextually appropriate while still driving progress toward disability inclusion.

72. The UNDIS has led to stronger ownership by allowing a balance between standardization and customization, with entities able to build upon the core framework with tailored approaches that address their unique operational contexts. Entities were able to develop supplementary indicators or implementation strategies that better reflect their specific work while maintaining alignment with the system-wide accountability framework, thus enhancing rather than restricting implementation of disability inclusion. For example, UNHCR found it more relevant for organizational mainstreaming to complement its Age, Gender and Diversity Policy with a Five-Year Action Plan on Disability Inclusion, and to integrate it into its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework than to develop a stand-alone strategy on disability inclusion. However, evidence from the accountability framework analysis and interviews has shown the use of “not applicable” has not been coherent or consistent across entities (see Finding 7 for more on the use of “not applicable”). Lessons on how to deal with flexibility can be learned from other system-wide strategies, as illustrated in Box 5.

53. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. See paragraph 30.

Box 5: Addressing Institutional Diversity in UN-SWAP 3.0 and Youth 2030 Reporting

Both UN-SWAP 3.0 and Youth 2030 incorporate flexible approaches to reflect the varied mandates and functions of United Nations entities. UN-SWAP 3.0 explicitly categorizes entities and provides differentiated guidance through annexes and self-reporting checklists. These tools clarify expectations, especially for entities with administrative roles, and provide clear instruction on how to justify non applicable response to each indicator. Clear guidance and engagement with focal points has led to improved reporting and ownership. Youth 2030 uses a mandate-assessment tool and an automated platform to generate tailored reporting templates. It distinguishes between mandatory operational indicators and optional programming ones, recognizing institutional diversity. Entities can select relevant indicators, ensuring alignment with their specific mandates.

73. The absence of rigid timeframes within the UNDIS framework allowed for flexibility to accommodate varying entity implementation capacities and diverse baseline starting points regarding disability inclusion – some with substantial work already undertaken and others starting with limited experience in this area. This flexibility allowed entities to progress at paces appropriate to their resources, contexts and mandates and acknowledges that sustainable institutional change requires contextually appropriate timelines.

74. The UNDIS also proved flexible to evolving priorities during the global COVID-19 pandemic, when supplementary tools and resources were developed to support United Nations entities in strengthening disability inclusive responses during the crisis.

75. The framework enabled creative implementation approaches to navigate institutional constraints within different United Nations contexts. For example, while "mandatory" training cannot be unilaterally implemented in Secretariat entities due to policy limitations, entities have developed alternative approaches to progress on such indicators. Similarly, entities governed by policies from higher authorities or those operating in shared United Nations facilities have found adaptable ways to advance disability inclusion despite these structural constraints. This flexibility allows entities to make progress even when direct implementation of specific indicators might be challenging due to governance arrangements or operational realities.

76. At the country level, the UNDIS allowed country offices the flexibility to implement according to their specific circumstances and diverse operational contexts, from development settings to humanitarian responses and peace operations. Evidence from case studies show UNCTs prioritized indicators most relevant to their specific context while maintaining alignment with the overall framework, allowing for contextually appropriate implementation that addresses local needs and priorities. For example, India focused more on indicator 9 on data in relation to opportunities identified to collaborate with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on citizen-generated data. Haiti increased its focus on indicator 11 (humanitarian) and held a consultation with OPDs to understand how persons with disabilities are affected by the humanitarian crisis. This balance between system-wide consistency and contextual adaptation ensures that disability inclusion efforts remain both meaningful and effective across the varied environments where the United Nations operates.

The UNDIS and intersectionality

Finding 5: The UNDIS commits to an intersectional approach but does not explicitly guide the United Nations system to embrace an intersectional response to disability inclusion. Nor does it consider strategies to ensure equity between different groups of persons with disabilities from various underrepresented and marginalized groups or how to prioritize the furthest behind.

77. The UNDIS explicitly recognizes intersectionality in its policy framework, most notably in paragraph 23, which acknowledges the complex interplay of multiple forms of discrimination affecting persons with disabilities and commits to an intersectional approach that considers how various factors create distinct

lived experiences for persons with disabilities. The UNDIS also acknowledges "discrimination by association, including against employees who have dependents with disabilities".[54]

78. The UNDIS integrates intersectionality across the 15 indicators of the accountability framework and technical notes but not in a systematic way. The complementary UNDIS guidelines on consultation with persons with disabilities (entity and UNCT indicator 5), and the guidelines on disability inclusive communications (entity indicator 15 and UNCT indicator 14) provide more detailed guidance but are stand-alone documents and not an integral part of the core documents used for reporting. This creates a gap between the policy commitment to intersectionality and the actual mechanisms designed to measure progress in this area. The UNDIS would have benefited from greater integration with other United Nations frameworks such as the Gender and Youth strategies and utilization of common indicators that recognize multiple and intersecting identities, which could ensure consistency in how intersecting forms of discrimination are monitored across frameworks.[55] For example, UN Women has found that the entity-wide scope of the UNDIS has been instrumental in addressing the intersectionality between disability and its other mandates. To deepen this intersectional work, UN Women identified a need to apply existing gender-related tools more broadly, proposing, for instance, the evolution of gender-responsive budgeting into gender and disability-responsive budgeting.

79. Beyond intersectionality considerations, the diversity of the disability community manifested in the multiplicity of disabilities and support requirements is not clearly addressed. Except for the above mentioned UNDIS guidelines, the UNDIS main document and related frameworks do not explicitly address the specific situation and support needs of persons with disabilities, such as persons with deafblindness, persons with psychosocial disabilities, or persons with intellectual disabilities, among others. A distinct gap exists within the guidance to address equitable approaches and solutions for underrepresented groups to ensure they are prioritized and specifically considered across all areas of the UNDIS. Equitable measures ensuring specific safeguarding, or tailored accessibility and communication approaches (for example, the use of Easy Read), or prioritizing actions that do no harm and leave no one behind, can provide fairer opportunities for inclusion that reflect the diversity of the population of persons with disabilities. There are opportunities for the UNDIS to integrate resources and guidance for intersectional programming, drawing on existing tools developed by the Global Disability Fund (GDF) and entities with a specific mandate.[56]

Consultation with persons with disabilities

Finding 6: The design process of the UNDIS included consultation with persons with disabilities and the document itself entails numerous references to active engagement with persons with disabilities. The absence of an external accountability mechanism for ongoing discussion with OPDs on the overall UNDIS implementation or ongoing monitoring and review of progress in its implementation undermines the commitment to ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

80. Consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities is recognized as a core element of the human rights-based approach and underpins the UNDIS. Persons with disabilities were consulted and engaged during the process for the development of the UNDIS through involvement of the International Disability Alliance (IDA), a global umbrella network of OPDs, and the International Disability and Development

54. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. See paragraph 19.
55. DCO has initiated a review of all current and proposed accountability frameworks to assess opportunities to integrate them into a single scorecard.
56. The GDF (previously the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) was established in 2011 by 6 UN entities (ILO, OHCHR, UNDESA, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO) as a UN multi-donor trust fund, to develop the capacities of national stakeholders, particularly governments and OPDs, for the effective implementation of the CRPD, including through promoting disability inclusive internationally agreed development goals.

Consortium, a global network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and OPDs, which have been serving as regular civil society counterparts to the United Nations on disability inclusion. In addition, OPDs and employees with disabilities were consulted as part of the 2018 report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[57] which informed the development of the UNDIS. The accountability framework contains a specific indicator (5) on consultation with OPDs, which was influenced by the International Disability Alliance, which contributed actively to the development of the related guidelines that unpack the meaning of "meaningful engagement".[58] Through the International Disability Alliance and its members, a diversity of regional and global OPDs have been consulted during the development of the UNDIS. However, there is limited evidence of engagement with national OPDs during this process. An extended consultation process reflecting the diversity of persons with disabilities as well as contexts in which the UNDIS is implemented,[59] could have contributed to building shared ownership and initial collaborations between the United Nations and OPDs.

81. Most importantly, there are no clearly defined mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of UNDIS implementation by OPDs, which is a missed opportunity to engage with OPDs as meaningful counterparts and establish these partnerships as a core component of UNDIS accountability. The governance model adopted under Youth2030 offers a useful reference in this regard. It established a High-Level Steering Committee that provides strategic guidance for implementation and includes United Nations staff and youth-led organizations, networks and movements. The 2024 interim review of Youth2030[60] found that these governance structures are functioning effectively, while also recommending broader youth representation.

While OPDs have a unique role to play as representative organizations of persons with disabilities and can bring a perspective on internal issues, such as employment or accessibility, employees with disabilities have a unique insider's perspective on the barriers and solutions that can make the United Nations an inclusive employer. The aspiration of an "increased representation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity among all categories of United Nations employees, in particular at the decision-making levels" is clear and (partly) measured through indicators 13 (entities) and 12 (UNCTs). However, consultation with employees with disabilities (and those with dependents with disabilities who may experience discrimination by association) to support the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of related actions has not been systematically ensured.

57. IASC. 2018. Strengthening the System: Foundations for a Disability Inclusive United Nations. Dec 2018.
58. UN. 2019. Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities. Indicator 5.
59. There are a few examples such as guidance on how to proceed in context where OPDs may not be present or where they may not represent the populations with whom UN entities are working.
60. UN. 2024. Youth2030: First Interim Review.

3.2 The effectiveness of the UNDIS

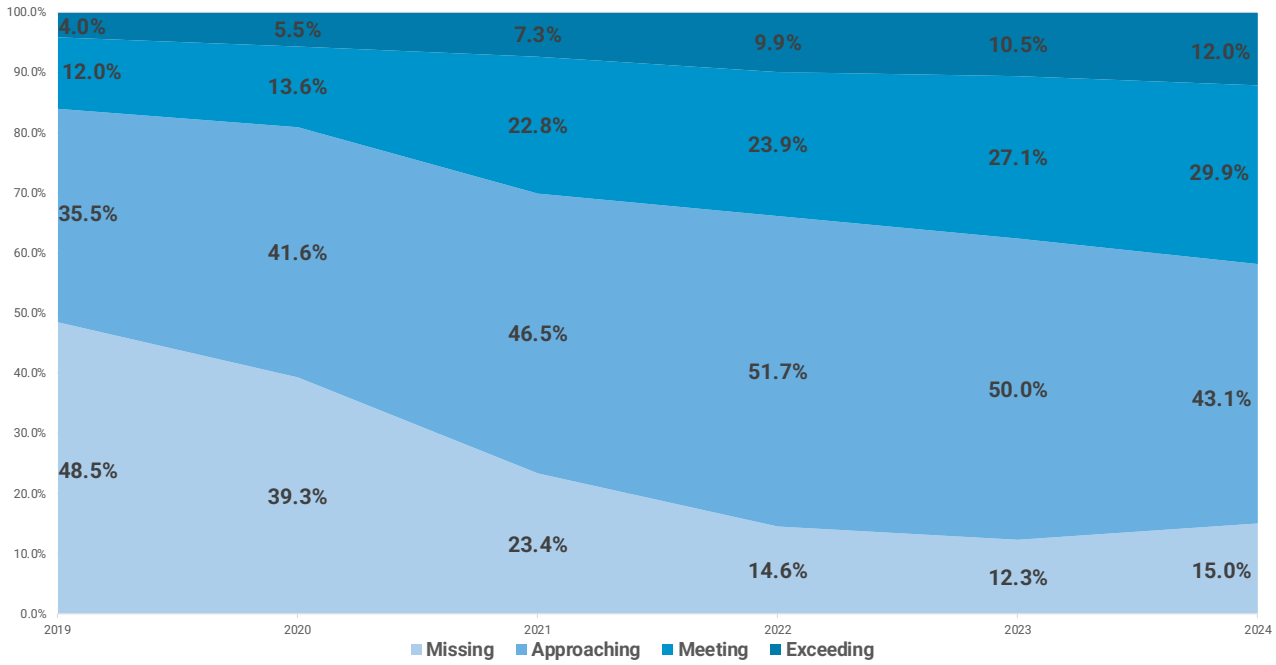
EQ2: To what extent has UNDIS contributed to progress and change on disability inclusion in the United Nations system?

Progress in implementing the UNDIS

Finding 7: There has been an overall improvement in meeting the requirements and uptake of indicators over time both for UNCTs and United Nations entities, but performance varies substantially across entities and UNCTs and across indicators. For entities, the largest improvement in performance was related to institutional set-up, while progress on leadership, strategic planning and disability policy and strategy has not been as strong. There has been less progress in the areas of inclusiveness, in particular on accessibility, reasonable accommodation, procurement and on organizational culture, including employment and capacity development. While significant efforts have been made by some entities and some UNCTs to implement the UNDIS, 18 per cent of entities have not reported at all on the UNDIS.

82. The annual report of the Secretary-General on UNDIS implementation indicates the extent to which entities and UNCTs have made progress across all indicators in the UNDIS since its launch. These data show that performance has improved considerably, albeit from a relatively low starting point (see Figures 7 and 8). By 2023, 37 per cent of indicators were met or exceeded across entities, up from 16 per cent in 2019. The data for 2024 show some further improvement, with 42 per cent of indicators met or exceeded.

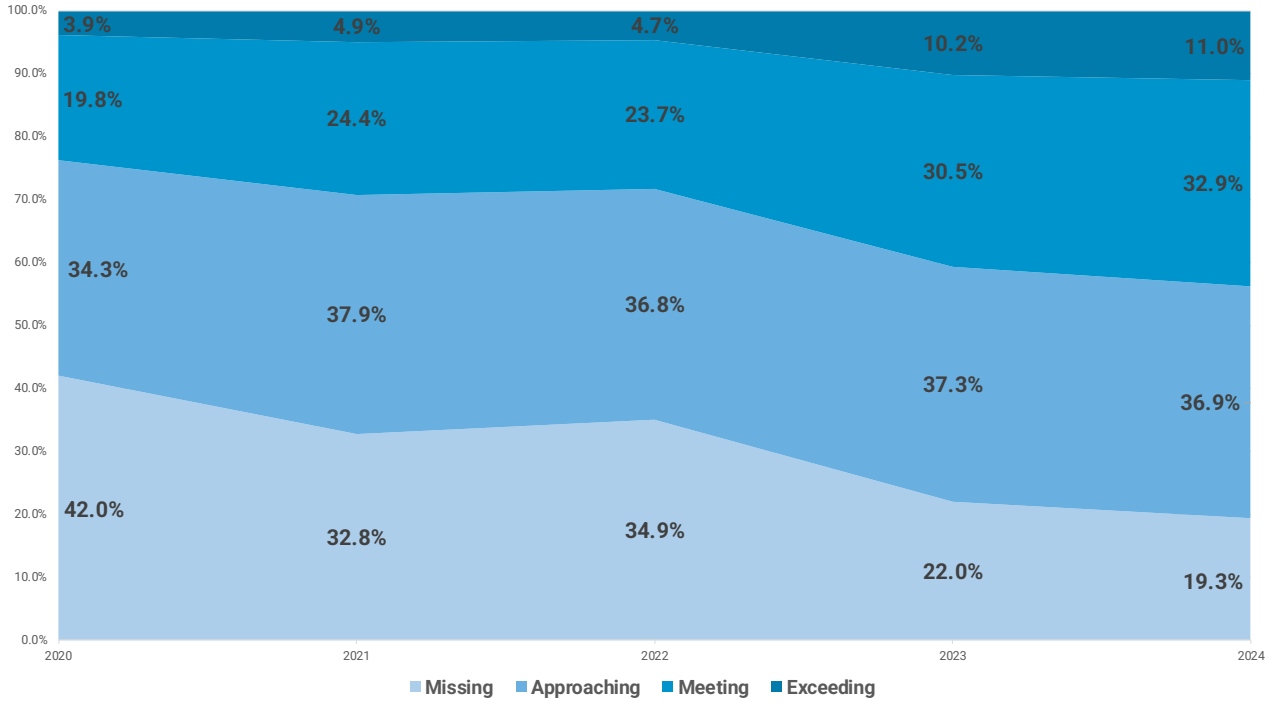
Figure 7: Percentage of indicators rated missing, approaching, meeting or exceeding requirements for United Nations entities (2019-2024)



Source: Analysis of United Nations entity accountability framework data by the evaluation team, data from annual Secretary-General's report on the UNDIS.

83. UNCTs display a similar trend, with figures of 24 per cent and 44 per cent for meeting or exceeding the indicator requirements for 2020 and 2024 respectively. Both the entity and UNCT data show encouraging performance and progress on the UNDIS.

Figure 8: Percentage of indicators rated missing, approaching, meeting or exceeding requirements for UNCTs (2020-2024)



Source: Analysis of UNCT scorecard data by the evaluation team, data from annual Secretary-General's report on the UNDIS.

84. Most importantly, the number of entities and UNCTs participating in annual UNDIS reporting has increased significantly over the last five years, as illustrated in Table 7. Among entities, while the total number reporting has increased, in 2023 only 81 of a projected 104 entities reported (78 per cent).[61] There was a further increase in 2024, with 85 entities (82 per cent) reporting. There is a preponderance of peacekeeping missions and small entities in the non-reporting group. UNDIS reporting by UNCTs is now part of the Resident Coordinator Office mandatory reporting obligations (alongside gender equality and human rights) ensuring that all UNCTs now report on progress in implementing the UNDIS.

Table 7: UNDIS accountability framework: Number of reporting entities and UNCTs[62]

		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entities	**Number**	57[63]	66	73	77	81	85
	%	55%	63%	70%	74%	78%	82%
UNCTs	**Number**		128	130	131	132	132
	%		97%	98%	99%	100%	100%

85. Several factors may have contributed to a lower rate of reporting by entities. First, although the UNDIS was adopted by the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) on behalf of the Chief Executive Board

61. The projected number of entities is based on characteristics agreed by the EOSG Disability Inclusion Team, including the level of leadership or status of department within the Secretariat, that the entity stands alone and is not within operations or programming of another entity, and the preference of the entity itself if there is some flexibility. The number of entities does change as entities (particularly peacekeeping or political missions) are created or closed.
62. The total number of eligible reporting entities and UNCTs was obtained by the evaluation team from the Disability Inclusion Team. The total number of entities: 2019: 97, 2020: 95, 2021: 102, 2022: 101, 2023: 104, 2024: 104. The total number of UNCTs has remained consistent at 132.
63. UNSOM and UNSOS reported separately in 2019, proceeded to joint reporting thereafter.

(CEB) in 2019, not all CEB entities agreed to its adoption,[64] with a number of respondents noting that UNDIS adoption and reporting is not considered obligatory since it does not derive from a Member State resolution. However, resolutions from Member States have called upon the United Nations system to implement the UNDIS and the Secretary-General to report on its implementation. A second factor that may contribute to lower reporting is the definition of entities, which is expansive, encompassing entities with very different mandates and capacities. While there is not a clear pattern in the type and size of entities not reporting (or reporting intermittently), evidence shows many are smaller entities, with fewer than 100 staff and some with fewer than 20 staff, and limited capacity, which may contribute to challenges to implement and report. This is especially a challenge in the context of multiple reporting requirements.

86. Evidence from entity studies shows that for some of the smaller entities that have reported on the accountability framework, certain indicators are perceived as not relevant given their small size or particular mandate, and this may be a factor for those entities not reporting (even if there is an opportunity to respond "not applicable"). In addition, there is evidence that some of the entities were unaware of the need to report or did not receive any communications on this obligation. The frequency of UNDIS focal point network meetings decreased significantly after 2020 and this, combined with the turnover in employees in the focal point role, may have contributed to some loss of contact between the Disability Inclusion Team and the network focal points and a lack of clarity on reporting obligations. There are a small number of entities (two in 2019 and one in 2021 and 2022) that started the reporting process but did not complete the submission of a report.

87. Alongside the non-reporting entities, there are also entities and UNCTs that have shown little progress in performance over the period of UNDIS implementation, and a small number of examples of performance deteriorating. As noted elsewhere in this report, the limited accountability to deliver UNDIS outputs may contribute to this. Since there is no publication of entity-specific data it is also difficult for entities to see their own progress unless they monitor this themselves. Lack of progress for some UNCTs could be due to: adjustments in the approach to reporting, which results in a less positive assessment of progress; revisions to Common Country Analyses (CCAs), which do not place as high an emphasis on disability inclusion; and the nature of some indicators, which reflect the multi-year programme cycle (for example UNCT indicators 2 and 3) and which would not change during that cycle.

88. While the Secretary-General's annual reporting focuses on aggregate performance across all indicators, analysis of the reporting data[65] reveals a mixed picture across United Nations entities and UNCTs, with some notable achievements alongside significant gaps in progress against specific indicators and overall performance across entities and UNCTs.

89. For UNCTs, the analysis shows that reported performance is not affected by country programming context (income, least-developed county or humanitarian contexts) or UNCT size (a proxy for capacity). There are some notable trends in regional performance, with Europe and Central Asia showing the strongest consistent performance, and the Asia Pacific region showing the greatest improvement (see Annex G). UNCTs that received seed funding through the UNDIS did perform marginally better year-on-year than those that did not, but also started from a highly accountability framework score (see Annex G). The seed funding was based on expressions of interest from UNCTs and so performance may reflect UNCTs' existing interest in improving disability inclusion. A similar pattern is also seen in those UNCTs that implemented a Global Disability Fund project, evidencing a slightly better performance from a slightly higher starting score (see Annex G). This may also reflect the nature of the Global Disability Fund, which supports UNDIS implementation as one of

64. IAEA noted to the evaluation team that, although the entity supported disability inclusion and appreciated the UNDIS initiative, it was not able to endorse the strategy since it had not been a part of the consultations on its content (Conclusions of the HLCM at its thirty-seventh session, April 2019).
65. The evaluation developed and utilized an index for assessing performance by UN entity and UNCT. Further information can be found in Annex E (Block 1) and Annex G.

its strategic aims.[66] By 2024, six UNCTs had reported meeting or exceeding all indicators. The proportion of UNCTs meeting or exceeding half of the indicators has steadily increased but remains below half of all UNCTs.

90. For entities, there are some clearer trends in performance, with entity location, entity type and existence of an employee resource group being associated with higher performance. There is also a clear positive trend in entity size and performance, with larger entities reporting better performance (See Annex G).

91. As noted in Finding 4, the possibility of reporting that an indicator is "not applicable" to an entity provides an opportunity to assess which indicators are considered less relevant to particular types of entities (see Table 8). For all entities, indicators 11 (country programme documents), 6 (accessibility) and 9 (programmes and projects) recorded the highest number of "not applicable" responses. This is also reflected in the data specifically for the Secretariat. Indicators 9 and 11 are reported as not applicable for entities with no programming at the country level or that do not develop programmes or projects. Indicator 6 was cited as not applicable in entities with limited or no control over their office space, or in the Secretariat when entities deferred to broader Secretariat policies. Although there was a slight reduction in the number of entities responding not applicable on indicator 6 in 2024, it is notable that for these three indicators the number of not applicable responses has increased in both absolute terms and relative to the number of entities reporting over the period of UNDIS implementation. The reasons for this increase are unclear.

Table 8: Number of entities reporting "not applicable" on accountability framework

Indicator No.	Number of "not applicable" responses					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1. Leadership	1					
2. Strategic planning	2		1	1	1	
3. Disability-specific policy/strategy	4	1				
4. Institutional set-up	4			1	1	2
5. Consultations with persons with disabilities	3		1			2
6. Accessibility	11	22	29	34	34	30
6 1. Conferences and events	3	3	2	1	1	2
7. Reasonable accommodation	7	5	3	1	2	2
8. Procurement	8	6	8	10	6	5
9. Programmes and projects	11	17	17	21	23	27
10. Evaluation	11	15	15	20	16	15
11. Country programme documents	34	44	51	55	57	63
12. Joint initiatives	7	2	1	2	2	3
13. Employment	4	1	1	1	1	
14. Capacity development for staff	4	2		1	1	
15. Communication		1			1	1

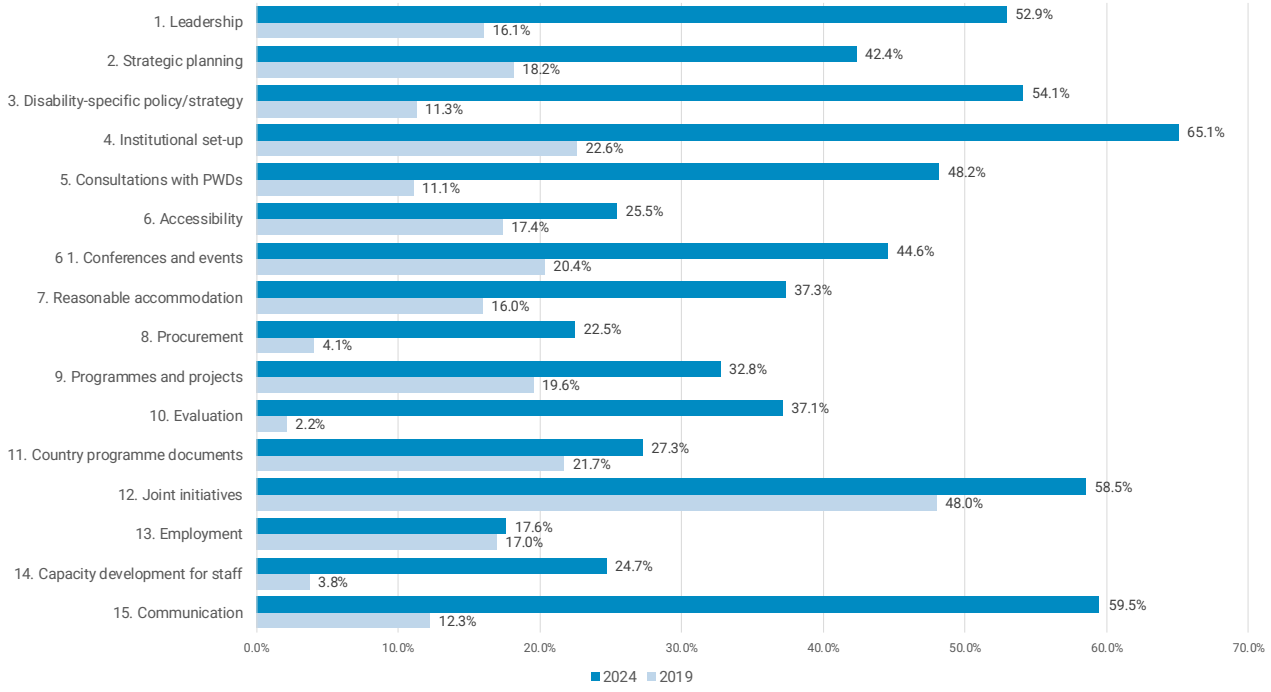
Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculation. See Annex G for more detail.

92. When considering performance against each indicator (Figures 9 and 10) there are clear patterns in both entity and UNCT reporting on areas of good performance, specifically those that fall within the core areas of leadership, strategic planning and management. For entities, the largest improvement in performance was

66. See GDF Strategic Approaches and 2024 Annual Report. By 2024, six UNCTs had reported meeting or exceeding all indicators. The proportion of UNCTs meeting or exceeding half of the indicators has steadily increased but remains below half of all UNCTs.

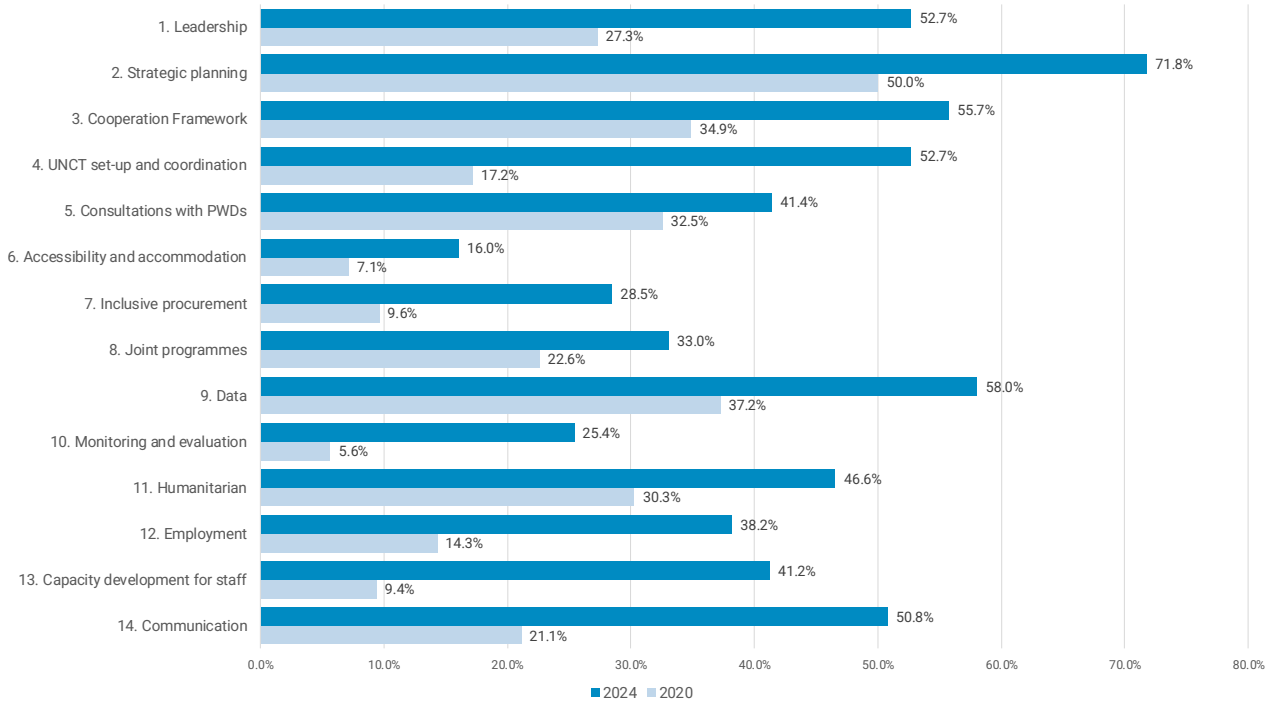
related to institutional set-up, while progress on leadership, strategic planning and disability policy and strategy has been good but not as strong as indicator 4. There has been less progress in the areas of inclusiveness (in particular: accessibility, reasonable accommodation, procurement) and organizational culture (in particular: employment and capacity development), although initial 2024 data suggest that there has been more progress in some of these areas – accessibility at the entity level (though not at UNCT level), and procurement, notably. This may be explained by the fact that some indicators are inherently more demanding and require preparatory steps such as new and updated procedures and training of concerned employees before this can be reported as meeting the criteria.

Figure 9: Percentage of entities meeting or exceeding indicator requirements, 2019 and 2024



Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculation. See Annex G for more detail.

Figure 10: Percentage of UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicator requirements, 2020 and 2024



Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculation. See Annex G for more detail.

93. The analysis of accountability framework open-ended questions on opportunities and challenges to implement the UNDIS has identified the most commonly cited examples (see Annex G). There are fewer opportunities identified than challenges, but the most frequently cited opportunities are strategies and guidance, United Nations collaboration, and leadership. Examples of strategies and guidance include not only the UNDIS itself but also the disability inclusion strategies and guidance of specific entities or guidance on thematic issues that cut across all entities (for example, UNEG guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluation). On United Nations collaboration, there is a recognition that the collective effort of United Nations entities can bring greater coherence and broad technical capacities to address programming issues. Greater collaboration through joint operational efforts (including common premises) can facilitate delivery of UNDIS outputs. Leadership at senior levels, including head of entity level, is seen as an important element in raising awareness, making the priority clear and giving credibility to entity actions, both internal and external. These three key opportunities are directly facilitated by the UNDIS at both entity and UNCT levels through the accountability framework and scorecard.

94. When identifying challenges to UNDIS implementation, significantly more references to challenges were made overall, but three were repeatedly cited: financial constraints and lack of capacity, lack of authority or mandate, and lack of guidance. Financial constraints were often noted in relation to the expected costs of improvements to physical accessibility and the costs of ensuring that meetings and conferences are accessible through sign language interpretation or CART[67] services, noting that such services are often expected to be funded through extra-budgetary resources; for Secretariat entities, the lack of centralized resources has been noted, contributing to inefficiencies particularly in ensuring accessible meetings (more on resources can be found in Section 3.3). For large-scale physical accessibility improvements, these are undertaken at the time of broader infrastructure projects, potentially delaying achievement of this indicator.

95. Lack of authority or mandate was cited in particular by Secretariat entities, which are guided by Secretariat-wide policies, particularly on employment, procurement, information and communication technology (ICT) (information accessibility), and physical accessibility in common premises.[68] The lack of guidance on common issues (for example, reasonable accommodation) is also considered a challenge, especially for those entities that are subject to Secretariat policies. There are also some entities that are seeking more guidance from Member States on aspects of the UNDIS to be able to move forward in implementation, particularly on ensuring and meeting the costs of increased accessibility of conferences and meetings.

Progress with inclusive operations

Finding 8: Progress has been made in creating the conditions for more inclusive operations through system-wide guidance in some areas but, while some good practices were identified, there is limited coherence across the United Nations system, including within the United Nations Secretariat and its associated entities. Moreover, there are persisting negative experiences of employees with disabilities (as well as employees with dependents with disabilities) and efforts to challenge negative attitudes have not yet fully transformed the organizational culture.

96. The UNDIS contains within its accountability framework several indicators that fall within the operational aspects of United Nations entity and UNCT work, specifically accessibility (physical and digital), procurement, employment and reasonable accommodation. Any system-wide guidance would stem from the work of the HLCM and its relevant networks on procurement, human resources (which has a disability inclusion sub-working group), and digital and technology. To date, system-wide guidance has been developed

67. Communication Access Real-time Translation.
68. This can also represent an opportunity as when the Secretariat does do something then the Secretariat entities benefit.

on the implementation of UNDIS indicator 8 (procurement),[69] and on a model policy on flexible working[70] that is intended, inter alia, to complement the UNDIS. Discussions are underway to consider whether HLCM should produce policy guidance on digital accessibility and inclusion, which, if agreed, could then be adopted by entities. Efforts on physical accessibility have not been considered system-wide, although through the Development Coordination Office's Business Operations Strategy there is consistent guidance for UNCTs on making United Nations premises, facilities and meeting spaces physically accessible. Historic guidance on design and construction of United Nations premises does exist (from 2012, updated 2016) and does include accessibility advice but focuses on new construction.

97. In 2018, the Joint Inspection Unit produced a report on Enhancing Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities to Conferences and Meetings of the United Nations System, providing ten recommendations. A 2022 update by the Secretary-General to Member States on implementation of these recommendations makes reference to progress in a number of areas, including improving remote access to meetings and providing sign language interpretation. Some of these improvements were also in response to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic but interviews found that a few aspects have been rolled back – particularly sign language interpretation, which must be requested, and paid for, by the conference organizer. The Secretary General's report notes that maintaining remote access through hybrid meetings would require more resources from Member States. While the 2022 report notes progress in specific areas, there are still key gaps, particularly in the development of a policy and guidelines for accessibility of conferences and meetings by the Secretariat.

98. UNDIS accountability framework data point to improvement for entities in terms of meeting or exceeding the requirements of accountability indicators 6 (accessibility) and 6.1 (conferences and events), although 2024 data suggest this has stalled for indicator 6.1, and declined for indicator 6. Indicator 6 is the one with the second highest level of "not applicable" (see Table 8). Secretariat entities in New York defer to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) and the Department of Operational Support (DOS) on this indicator. Opportunities for major improvements in physical accessibility often only come when major capital projects are undertaken. For example, the United Nations office in Nairobi has made steady progress in this area and a new capital project planned to be completed in 2030 has the clear objective of ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities to the premises. UNCTs face similar problems and performance in this area has not been strong. Table 9 sets out the data for entities and UNCTs.

Table 9: Percentage of entities meeting or exceeding indicators 6 and 6.1 on accessibility

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 6. Accessibility	17.4%	13.6%	25.0%	27.9%	34.0%	25.5%
Entity indicator 6 1. Conferences and events	20.4%	38.1%	45.1%	48.7%	38.8%	44.6%
UNCT indicator 6. Accessibility of United Nations premises and accommodation		7.1%	9.2%	7.7%	18.5%	16.0%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

99. One area in which there has been progress in system-wide guidance is in procurement. The guidance has been produced by the HLCM procurement network and is intended to be adopted by individual entities in their procurement frameworks. Despite this, entity progress on the procurement indicator (8) has been slow, with only 8 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding the indicator in 2023. In 2024 there was substantial improvement with 22.5 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding this indicator. Progress at the country level is similar, with 28 per cent of UNCTs meeting or exceeding this indicator by 2024, but also with a steadier rate of progress since the launch of the UNDIS (see Table 10).

69. UN. 2019. HLCM Procurement Network. Guidelines on the Implementation of Indicator 8.
70. UN CEB. 2021. UN System Model Policy on Flexible Work.

Table 10: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicators 8 and 7 respectively on inclusive procurement

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 8. Procurement	4.1%	1.7%	4.6%	6.0%	8.0%	22.5%
UNCT indicator 7. Inclusive procurement of goods and services		9.6%	10.9%	11.9%	22.0%	28.5%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

100. In the absence of system-wide guidance in other operations areas, entities and UNCTs have developed their own approaches and, although there has been some sharing of policies and guidance among entities, in some areas there is still significant variation across the system. In particular, approaches to reasonable accommodation implementation vary widely across the system. There are examples of entities (particularly larger ones) establishing centralized processes and funds for reasonable accommodation (ILO, UNICEF, OHCHR, WFP, WHO) and also digitized (electronic) systems for reasonable accommodation (OHCHR) (See Box 6).

Box 6: Examples of entity approaches to reasonable accommodation

UNICEF: UNICEF's Reasonable Accommodations Fund is grounded and guided by the CRPD, including the definition of Reasonable Accommodation (Article 2). UNICEF's Guide to Reasonable Accommodation Requests stresses the importance that accommodations can be both ongoing or a one-time request, and they can arise at any point in the employment relationship. It focuses on removing discriminatory barriers for productivity of qualified employees for an inclusive workforce to have persons with disabilities innovate from the inside and lead UNICEF towards better programming. It recognizes that many accommodations are inexpensive (<USD 500) or free and require mainly a flexible management style. UNICEF's RA process stresses documentation, timeliness, confidentiality, understanding needs and engaging with the employee, and having a process to fast track approvals for minor requests. Roles and responsibilities are clear, including those of the employee, the supervisor, the fund administrator, and the Reasonable Accommodation Committee (RAC) UNICEF's current RA Fund has an annual amount of USD 300,000. The RA Fund is also complementary to other internal funding including UNICEF's Greening and Accessibility Fund, and support through UNICEF's Accessibility Help Desk. An evaluation of the RA Fund concluded that the fund was aligned with international standards but also offered recommendations for improving reasonable accommodations within UNICEF, for example by shifting the "fund" towards a more centralised one-stop shop for RA support.

OHCHR: OHCHR's policy on RA is grounded in the CRPD and its definition of RA. The process for making RA requests is now digitized which allows OHCHR to centrally coordinate, track and account for all RA expenditures. Requests can be made for persons both inside (employees with disabilities) and outside the Organization (e.g. participants of a workshop organized by the OHCHR). In 2022, a dedicated budget line was created to charge reasonable accommodation requests, which do not impact the budget of the applicant's unit. The mechanism includes a satisfaction survey, with a database assessed annually together with the statistics database in the electronic system. In addition, OHCHR appointed focal points on reasonable accommodation at division/department level, who support applicants, evaluate the RA processed, identify why they were denied, and inform the challenges ahead to take remedial action. Expenditures on reasonable accommodation were approximately USD 35,000 for 10 requests in 2023 and USD 75,000 for 2 requests in 2024, with no arbitrary rejections reported or identified. While the mechanism may not be fully known to all employees with disabilities, it is identified as clear progress, particularly in that denials have to be justified by the organisation. OHCHR notes that complementary actions are needed at the United Nations system level to complement this RA process and prevent the overreliance on RA (for example preventing the use of RA to cover temporary health conditions or to ensure coverage of posts when extended leave is granted).

101. Reporting on the UNDIS accountability framework suggests that just over a third of entities met or exceeded the requirements of indicator 7 (reasonable accommodation) in 2024 (Table 11). While centralized reasonable accommodation systems are welcomed as important progress to equalize opportunities in the

workplace, they need to be well disseminated, and training provided, particularly to managers, to ensure a shared understanding of the purpose and scope of reasonable accommodation. Employees with disabilities report that reasonable accommodation is sometimes still perceived as a privilege or considered to set an unsustainable precedent.

102. Guidelines on reasonable accommodation were developed by the Secretariat in 2023, providing guidance to all Secretariat entities including peacekeeping operations, UN DCO and other large entities governed by Secretariat rules. These guidelines set out a process to apply for and approve reasonable accommodations but leave issues around funding to the discretion of individual entities and within existing resources, creating the conditions for different approaches, and providing limited resources for the (relatively rare) cases of employees requiring high support. The HLCM is currently considering how to address issues of reasonable accommodation through minimum standards to be adopted by all entities alongside standard guidance for such systems.

Table 11: Percentage of entities meeting or exceeding indicator 7 on reasonable accommodation

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 7. Reasonable accommodation	16.0%	8.2%	48.6%	26.3%	27.8%	37.3%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

103. Despite these positive developments, there is still a significant disconnect between entity policies and the lived experiences of employees with disabilities. In the survey conducted for the evaluation, less than a third of employees with disabilities surveyed believe the United Nations system to be inclusive and accessible (see Table 12). Evidence from interviews with employees with disabilities confirmed this perception and reported numerous examples of denial of reasonable accommodation, or struggle to obtain support.

Table 12: Evaluation survey Q9: How inclusive do you consider the UN entity you work with?

9. How inclusive do you consider the UN entity you work with?	A Man	A Woman	Nonbinary	I prefer not to say	Grand Total
Very inclusive and accessible to all persons with disabilities	18.7%	18.4%	18.2%	20.0%	10.7%
Inclusive and accessible to some groups of persons with disabilities	17.1%	23.0%	18.2%	40.0%	18.5%
Somewhat inclusive and accessible, but progress is needed	8.8%	5.4%	0.0%	0.0%	43.4%
Inclusiveness and accessibility is limited	42.0%	43.8%	54.5%	40.0%	21.1%
Not inclusive nor accessible at all	13.5%	9.5%	9.1%	0.0%	6.4%
Grand Total	**193**	**370**	**11**	**5**	**579**

Source: Data from survey conducted by evaluation team. See Annex F for more detail.

104. The most significant progress in inclusion was perceived when there were conscious efforts in raising awareness and establishing formal structures, however, deeper cultural transformation remains a work in progress across most entities. Disability inclusion cafés, networks and awareness-raising events across entities like UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and ILO have helped promote disability inclusion as part of overall workplace diversity. For example, WHO has been holding monthly "UNDIS Resource Group" meetings aimed at building employee capacity for implementing the UNDIS, both internally and externally. These meetings are open to all staff across the three levels of the entities – headquarters, regional and country offices. Evidence from entity interviews pointed to an evolving internal culture and a progressive challenging of the stigma against persons with disabilities. Evaluation evidence shows that United Nations entities have implemented capacity development initiatives and communication strategies, however, these have produced inconsistent results in

raising internal awareness and building employee skills for implementing existing disability inclusion policies and initiatives.

105. Similarly, among UNCTs, awareness and implementation of disability inclusion policies and strategies is generally stronger when consistent and sustained efforts are made to ensure this awareness. Disability inclusion initiatives face challenges in gaining visibility due to competing organizational priorities and the overwhelming volume of information circulating within the entities and across the UNCT. Training programmes are available but are often optional and lack targeted focus, which reduces uptake. Some entities and UNCTs have implemented mandatory training on disability inclusion, which has increased awareness and influenced attitudes among employees and addressed the limitations of one-off trainings and turnover of employees (more on training in Finding 19). Leadership support is an enabling factor, along with clearly assigned responsibilities to ensure attention to disability inclusion.

106. Some entity and UNCT case studies found that a rights-based approach to disability inclusion has not been fully embedded, hampering efforts to make them more inclusive. While some UNCTs and entities are actively promoting it, others show a lack of understanding of disability rights and still note cultural resistance and paternalistic attitudes. Interviewees across several entities acknowledged some confusion between mental health, neurodiversity, health conditions and disability, while others reported internal "resistance" to reasonable accommodation policies due to conflicts with their medical departments or risk aversion related to adaptations of recruitment or partnership modalities. Several entities continue to focus primarily on adjustments of the physical environment (such as building ramps) rather than embracing a comprehensive response to the rights of the diversity of persons with disabilities (including accessibility of information and communication and inclusive practices such as adjusted timelines, etc.).

107. On inclusive operations more broadly, the majority of respondents to the evaluation survey of United Nations employees with disabilities believe there has been progress and improvement since 2019 in most of these areas (see Table 13). Respondents noted positive developments particularly in relation to reasonable accommodation, physical and digital accessibility, and inclusive workplace culture. Positive examples are reported that would never have been possible before the UNDIS, some testifying to long-term transformations, such as coverage of personal assistance for travel, others being reported as occasional good practices, such as provision of sign language to a town hall address. While there have been improvements in attracting and recruiting persons with disabilities, progress in this area was perceived to be lower, and progress in retention and career development for employees with disabilities was perceived to be lower still.

Table 13: Evaluation survey Q11a: Since 2019, how has the UN entity you work(ed) with changed on: Provision of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities

11a. Since 2019, how has the UN entity you work(ed) with changed on: Provision of reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities	A Man	A Woman	Nonbinary	I prefer not to say	Grand Total
Improved a lot	13.5%	13.8%	9.1%	20.0%	13.6%
There was some improvement	40.9%	43.2%	45.5%	0.0%	42.1%
Did not change	18.7%	12.7%	36.4%	20.0%	15.2%
Got worse	2.1%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%
Got a lot worse	3.1%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
I don't know	21.8%	25.4%	9.1%	60.0%	24.2%
Grand Total	**193**	**370**	**11**	**5**	**579**

Source: Data from survey conducted by evaluation team. See Annex F for more detail.

108. Staff engagement surveys, conducted approximately every two years by larger entities (including the Secretariat and funds and programmes), have in recent years asked respondents to self-identify if they have a disability. While the evaluation had limited access to the raw staff engagement survey data, available evidence shows that overall measures of satisfaction, employee empowerment and recognition, resources and

support are relatively high (above 50 per cent for all employees), but that there are consistently lower levels of satisfaction among employees with disabilities. The biggest differences are around ethics and integrity, leadership, and confidence in processes and systems to address discrimination. Where there are data covering more than one reporting period, concerns about culture and values and leadership persist, with staff with disabilities noting lower satisfaction on these issues than staff who do not identify as having a disability.

109. Based on UNDIS accountability framework reporting and confirmed by entity and country studies, there has been progress in the area of employment for UNCTs but with little change in the case of entities (see Table 14). However, data on employment of persons with disabilities in the United Nations are limited. Although some entities currently ask applicants to declare if they self-identify as a person with disabilities in their application, no data are collected on staff or other employees who have a disability, including data on reasonable accommodation requests. Data are mostly collected through staff surveys, which are not compulsory and do not capture the real number of employees with disabilities. Only one entity interviewed collects detailed information of staff with disabilities, applying the Washington Group questions[71] in its global staff survey. Existing data suggest that the representation of persons with disabilities within the United Nations workforce remains extremely low. UNHCR reported that just 1.1 per cent of its workforce self-identifies as having disabilities, and WHO acknowledged limited progress on employment of persons with disabilities. Large UNCTs (with employees in the thousands) report very few employees with disabilities, highlighting the severe underrepresentation issue.

Table 14: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicators 13 and 12 respectively on employment

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 13. Employment	17.0%	9.2%	20.8%	21.1%	18.8%	17.6%
UNCT indicator 12. Employment		14.3%	20.8%	17.6%	33.1%	38.2%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

110. Employee resource groups[72] and similar networks have been established within a number of entities,[73] providing crucial peer support and advocacy for employees with disabilities and those with dependents with disabilities. However, the role of these groups, and the extent to which entities support them, is varied (see more under Finding 12).

111. Based on staff surveys, focus group discussions and interviews with staff with disabilities, workplace experiences for staff with disabilities vary considerably, with isolated positive examples overshadowed by systemic challenges including employment insecurity, struggles for reasonable accommodation, pressure to over-perform, limited career advancement and fears of disproportionate termination for persons with disabilities in the context of substantial funding cuts and United Nations reforms. Box 7 summarizes some of the key issues raised by employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities.

Box 7: Key concerns from interviews with UN employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities

Fear of disclosure and retaliation: Many employees with disabilities are still afraid to disclose their disabilities due to fear of negative reactions, perceived burdens, and potential non-renewal of contracts or career repercussions, particularly in entities with a mandatory rotation system.

71. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics promotes and coordinates international cooperation in the area of health statistics focusing on the development of disability measures suitable for census and national surveys.
72. Employee resource groups are voluntary, employee-led networks that focus on specific shared identities, backgrounds, or interests. They aim to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace, provide support, and create a safe space for employees to connect and share their experiences.
73. There is little information on employee resource groups or peer support groups, but the evaluation identified such groups in fourteen entities.

Recruitment barriers: Recruitment processes are seen as not conducive to diversity, with test modalities potentially disqualifying qualified individuals with disabilities. Dedicated internship programmes for persons with disabilities are seen as necessary to change the culture and bring in more employees with disabilities.

Career progression and retention: there are concerns about opportunities for career progression.

Financial burden of disability-related costs: Employees face significant out-of-pocket expenses for personal assistants and other disability-related costs, with current procedures often not allowing for reimbursement or direct allowances.

Sustainable support from the organization: The UNDIS is valued as a positive framework, providing definitions, accountability, and guiding activities for disability inclusion. It is considered a significant milestone. There is a strong desire for disability inclusion efforts to be more sustainable and not dependent on individuals or temporary funding.

Accountability and implementation of policies: A major critique is the lack of clear accountability for disability inclusion (UNDIS), leading to a perception of a gap between commitments and actual implementation, particularly in recruitment, provision of reasonable accommodation as a right and accessibility.

Reasonable accommodation: Employees report difficulties in obtaining reasonable accommodations, with requests being refused, taking too long, or managers lacking understanding of their responsibility to provide them. Some experiences highlight managers viewing reasonable accommodation as an additional burden rather than a right.

Accessibility beyond physical infrastructure: While physical accessibility is a concern (e.g., inaccessible buildings, heavy doors), information accessibility is also crucial.

Culture, attitudes and awareness: employees with disabilities and with dependents with disabilities face derogatory attitudes for advocating for their rights. Some managers have a charity model approach, viewing support as helping rather than fulfilling rights. Carers with dependents with disabilities report being treated differently and having their productivity questioned. Some interviewees reported that mandatory disability inclusion training has been a real eye-opener and transformed positively the relationship with colleagues.

Progress with inclusive programming

Finding 9: The UNDIS has led to an increase in explicit references to persons with disabilities in United Nations system programming, and there is evidence from United Nations funds and programmes on how this has started to translate into more inclusive and accessible interventions. There is, however, significant variation among the reporting entities that implement programmes. At the country level, integrating disability inclusion into workplans and implementation is not strategic or intentional across entities. There is limited evidence of the range of programmes that support inclusion of persons with disabilities, the numbers of persons with disabilities targeted, prioritized and reached by United Nations programmes and the financial resources allocated to disability inclusion, although some efforts have been made to define the tools and procedures to better track these in the future.

112. One of the four core areas of the UNDIS is inclusive programming, which is further articulated through four of the accountability framework and scorecard indicators: for entities, these are strategic planning (2), disability-specific policy and strategy (3), programmes and projects (9), and country programme documents (11) (see Table 15[74]). For UNCTs, the indicators cover similar programming-related areas within the country operating context: strategic planning (2), Cooperation Frameworks(CFs) (3) and humanitarian programming

74. Indicators for evaluation and joint initiatives are further discussed in Section 3.3.

(11) (see Table 16[75]). Guidance specific to programming emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming disability inclusion into all aspects of the programme cycle, but with clear and measurable interventions to address specific barriers to the realization of the rights of person with disabilities. The entity guidance clearly presents the link between entity strategic planning, disability inclusion strategies and country programme documents that set out entity-specific actions at the country level; the UNCT guidance focuses the joint efforts of all entities represented at the country level.

Table 15: Percentage of entities meeting or exceeding indicators on programming

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Indicator 2. Strategic planning	18.2%	21.2%	34.7%	34.2%	43.8%	42.4%
Indicator 3. Disability-specific policy and strategy	11.3%	30.8%	37.0%	48.1%	51.9%	54.1%
Indicator 9. Programmes and projects	19.6%	10.2%	12.5%	14.3%	24.1%	32.8%
Indicator 11. Country programme documents	21.7%	4.5%	31.8%	31.8%	41.7%	27.3%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

113. Accountability framework reporting suggests that integration of disability inclusion into strategic planning and country programme documents has steadily increased but then stalled or reversed in 2024 (see Table 15). There is variation in integration of disability inclusion in strategic planning, in some cases there are specific and concrete targets and indicators on disability inclusion (for example, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA), and in others they are being grouped under broader results areas or indicators alongside other groups (for example, UNHCR), which hampers accountability for specific results. While 85 per cent of entities report making explicit reference to disability inclusion in their strategic plans, only 10 per cent indicate that resources are allocated to mainstream disability inclusion or implement disability-specific programmes. This is backed by evaluation evidence that shows there is more emphasis on broad strategic commitments than on detailed implementation mechanisms or specific resource allocations. There have been only limited efforts to date to utilize markers for disability inclusion in planning, budgeting and monitoring systems. UNHCR has tracked disability inclusion in programme outputs since 2022, UNICEF has also been implementing this since 2022, WHO launched a marker for its Programme Budget 2024-2025, ILO plans to do so from 2026, and the Secretariat has introduced a marker into its resource planning system, but it is currently only applied to extrabudgetary resources; to be expanded to all resources within the next year. It may be worth noting that there is no external data reporting requirement for resources on disability inclusion, while this requirement does exist, for instance, for gender equality (for example, UN Data Cube).[76]

114. The evaluation found limited evidence from UNCT studies that UNCTs have introduced markers to tag expenditure on disability inclusion, but some entities have committed to allocating a certain proportion of project budgets to disability inclusion. The gap between planning and implementation is also evident when analysing indicator 9 (programmes and projects). While 60 per cent of reporting entities report having issued disability inclusion programming guidance, only 27 per cent have established and met a minimum target for the proportion of programmes or projects that mainstream disability inclusion. Additionally, 22 per cent of entities fall short of meeting minimum requirements under this indicator. Integration into country programme documents (entity indicator 11) has also increased over time, although only 24 entities currently report on this indicator.

115. The implications of the gap between planning and implementation are evident at the country level. Disability inclusion mainstreaming into programming remains uneven, and trickling down to the country level remains a work in progress. Even where corporate policies, guidance and structures are in place, these are

75. Indicators related to joint programmes, data, monitoring and evaluation are also relevant but covered in Section 3.3.
76. UNSDG and HLCM. 2024. Data standards for United Nations system-wide reporting of financial data.

often disconnected from implementation on the ground. In many countries, only a limited number of entities are visibly engaged in UNDIS implementation and demonstrate strong disability inclusion programming. This is reflected in the limited cross-sectoral embedding of disability inclusion in major strategic documents at the country level. While a large proportion of UNCTs, 92 per cent, include some analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities in their Common Country Analysis, only one third reflect this analysis across the majority of thematic areas, with others only making passing reference to disability in the context of persons with disabilities being a "vulnerable group". Some examples found in the case studies also suggest ineffective quality assurance in the development of Common Country Analyses, with language and proposed approaches to disability inclusion that are contrary to the CRPD and rights-based approaches.

Table 16: Percentage of UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicators on programming

Indicator No.	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Indicator 2. Strategic planning	50.0%	66.7%	61.1%	69.0%	71.8%
Indicator 3. Cooperation Framework	34.9%	37.7%	42.3%	58.9%	55.7%
Indicator 11. Humanitarian	30.3%	35.3%	33.9%	48.2%	46.6%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

116. A similar pattern is observed in Cooperation Frameworks: although 90 per cent of UNCTs explicitly commit to the rights of persons with disabilities in the Cooperation Framework, only 7 per cent show visible mainstreaming of disability inclusion across most outcome areas and joint workplans. The Moldova UNCT provides an example of a good practice with the development of a theory of change for disability inclusion through Global Disability Fund funding, which encompasses all key results areas of the UNSDCF, providing clear paths for programmatic interventions mainstreamed into the Cooperation Framework. Based on the analysis of evaluation evidence, joint programmes have contributed to advancing disability mainstreaming in United Nations programming – particularly in efforts to strengthen social protection systems,[77] however, 35 per cent of UNCTs do not meet the minimum requirements for joint programming, namely mainstreaming disability inclusion in the majority of new joint programmes or projects.

117. Qualitative evidence from UNCT studies suggests that at the country-level entities are focused on delivering the results set out in their entity strategic plan, more so than those results outlined in Cooperation Frameworks, with potential differences between the vertical (headquarters strategic plans, regional plans, country programme documents), and horizontal (cross UNCT) programming to address disability inclusion.

118. There has been steady progress on disability inclusion in humanitarian programming at the country level since 2019, although this appears to have stalled between 2023 and 2024 (Table 16). Guidance on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action had already been developed by IASC in 2019. One aspect of the cluster coordination system that has been useful for UNCTs is the involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities in these mechanisms, providing the opportunity for closer consultation on humanitarian programme interventions.

United Nations support to achieving the CRPD and SDGs for persons with disabilities

Finding 10: The UNDIS has supported more systematic United Nations approaches to disability inclusion in programming and demonstrating commitment but has not fully implemented the twin-track approach. Its indicators focus more on mainstreaming than on capturing the full scope of targeted disability inclusion work and support to Member States by United Nations entities, UNCTs and dedicated funds such as the Global Disability Fund.

77. Based on Evidence Block 7 - Evaluation evidence that reviewed more than 200 evaluations published by UN system entities between January 2021 and April 2024 mentioning disability inclusion.

119. The UNDIS notes that it will play a key role in enabling the United Nations system to support Member States in their achievement of the SDGs and the implementation of the CRPD. Nonetheless, some key informants in United Nations entities believe that the UNDIS is predominantly an internal accountability framework rather than a tool for improving external programming and supporting implementation of the CRPD. Recognition of the externally oriented role is much stronger in UNCTs, where Resident Coordinators and UNCT members have a responsibility to ensure that the delivery of the 2030 Agenda leads to results that advance human rights as a core purpose set out in the United Nations Charter.[78] Programming at the country level is the key instrument for this.

120. Evidence from case studies shows that the UNDIS supported a more systematic approach and framework for disability inclusion programming. Several entities identified concrete improvements in their support to Member States catalysed by the UNDIS, including the development of specific guidance notes on disability inclusive development, working with OPDs to respond to and support SDG reporting and collaborating on disability inclusive climate action frameworks. The UNDIS has also contributed to creating awareness of persons with disabilities and has forced entities to think much more strategically and provide better data on disability inclusion. This has, for example, enhanced participatory approaches with communities of refugees with disabilities, an often-overlooked population in disability inclusive development work.

121. **Demonstration of United Nations commitment to disability inclusion.** In specific contexts, the UNDIS has provided a framework for more coordinated efforts to support CRPD implementation. At the UNCT level, while disability inclusion was often driven by CRPD implementation that preceded the UNDIS, the strategy has prompted teams to demonstrate that they "walk the talk" in both operational and programming aspects. Country teams clearly articulate the relationship between internal and external aspects of the UNDIS, recognizing the importance of demonstrating its commitment to disability inclusion before engaging with national partners on disability inclusion issues. The need to do so was also an issue raised by OPDs interviewed in country studies.

122. Entities and UNCTs have also demonstrated their commitment to disability inclusion through communications. Both UNCTs and entities have performed well in terms of meeting or exceeding accountability framework requirements for communications – use of accurate and respectful terminology when referring to persons with disabilities as well as a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion (see Table 17). Just over half of UNCTs at least meet the requirement of integrating the human rights of persons with disabilities into UNCT communication workplans, up from 21.1 per cent in 2020. Similarly, there has been a substantial increase (12.3 per cent to 59.5 per cent) in entities meeting the requirement of making sure that persons with disabilities are reflected in mainstreamed communications. For example, in Tajikistan, the UNCT adopted a comprehensive approach to disability inclusive communication. A guide was developed in consultation with 45 OPDs and organizations of parents of children with disabilities, promoting person-first language and addressing harmful terminology from legacy CRPD translations. Disability inclusion was embedded in the UNCT communication workplan, integrated into joint and entity-led campaigns, and reinforced through targeted media outreach. These efforts contributed both to advocacy for CRPD ratification and to increasing the visibility of persons with disabilities in public discourse.

Table 17: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicators 15 and 14 respectively on communication

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 15. Communication	12.3%	12.3%	38.4%	44.2%	50.0%	59.5%
UNCT indicator 14. Communication		21.1%	30.5%	25.2%	46.9%	50.8%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

78. UN. 2021. Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System. Consolidated Version. September 2021. See p.11.

123. **Support for development of disability inclusive data.** The UNDIS has contributed to improved data collection on disability inclusion, which is crucial for effective CRPD implementation and achievement of the SDGs. UNCTs have addressed significant data gaps by supporting governments to conduct censuses with disability disaggregation, collecting citizen-generated data and supporting disability inclusion in SDG national indicator frameworks, and developing maps of vulnerability including data on persons with disabilities. The UNDIS has been leveraged to strengthen convening roles by organizing events to explore strategies to accelerate achievement of the SDGs with and for persons with disabilities and collaborating with government partners on disability inclusive SDG implementation.

124. Table 18 indicates that UNCTs have performed well on data since 2019, with almost 60 per cent now meeting or exceeding the indicator requirements. To meet requirements, entities have to: (a) map available data and data gaps on persons with disabilities in national statistical sources; and (b) work with at least one government partner on data on persons with disabilities. For example, the Global Disability Fund project in Ghana built upon the disability data mapping to develop a National Disability Data Collection Framework for Ghana together with the Government and OPDs. The project aims to establish a comprehensive and systematic approach to the collection, analysis and utilization of disability inclusive data.

Table 18: Percentage of UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicator 9 on data

Indicator No.	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
UNCT indicator 9. Data	37.2%	46.9%	42.7%	55.0%	58.0%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

125. To exceed the indicator requirements, a majority of capacity building initiatives for national statistical offices would need to take into account disability-related data. In Guatemala, significant progress has been made in strengthening disability data disaggregation, building on UNFPA support to the national census under a PRPD-GDF Joint Programme (supported by the UNFPA global programme We Decide).[79] The United Nations supported the National Council of Persons with Disabilities in releasing updated and disaggregated data on persons with disabilities. Validated through consultations with public officials and persons with disabilities, the data set includes: national, departmental and municipal population estimates; total number and prevalence of persons with disabilities; prevalence by type of disability; and data disaggregation by sex, age and ethnic identity. It also highlights disparities between persons with and without disabilities in literacy, school attendance, employment and quality-of-life indicators. This disaggregated data informed the participatory design of the Municipal Disability Policy in Camotán Municipality, with interest in using the Camotán experience to inform the scale-up of municipal disability policies nationwide. Beyond census data, the project has supported mapping disability-related information across national statistical sources, integrating the Washington Group Questions into administrative records, and strengthening national statistical capacities on disability data.

126. **United Nations support to CRPD and SDGs.** The indicators of the accountability framework are largely aimed at mainstreaming disability inclusion in strategic and planning documents, strategies and frameworks and processes, but less focused on direct support to disability inclusion. For example, UNCTs can meet indicator 3 on the Cooperation Framework by ensuing that outcome indicators are disaggregated by disability, sex and age as much as possible and that disability inclusion is visibly mainstreamed in one outcome area. To exceed requirements at least one Cooperation Framework outcome should specifically target persons with disabilities. Entity indicator 11 on country programme documents is fully focused on mainstreaming disability inclusion.

127. So, while there is progress in the context of the accountability framework (see Finding 3), UNDIS reporting does not fully capture all of the targeted work of the United Nations. For many entities and UNCTs,

79. The We Decide Programme is UNFPA's flagship initiative on disability inclusion and can be found here.

the UNDIS reporting process is the only way to report on disability inclusion work. Yet, the accountability framework does not capture the entirety of entity or UNCT contributions to disability inclusion and the results of programmes implemented at global, regional and country levels (examples of such work are provided in the paragraphs below). Some entities monitor and publish broader reports in line with their entity-specific disability inclusion strategies, but the lack of broader monitoring and reporting reduces the opportunity for a holistic approach to addressing disability inclusion in all its dimensions and capturing the full contribution of the United Nations to the objectives of the UNDIS.

128. Based on evaluation evidence and the country case studies, examples of direct support include supporting the development of road maps and action plans toward CRPD ratification, facilitating working groups under parliaments, arranging visits from CRPD committee members to engage with state officials, organizing annual round tables on preparation for CRPD ratification, providing technical assistance for policy development, and supporting availability of data on disability inclusion. Larger entities have long supported disability inclusion. For example, UNICEF has demonstrated effective support for disability inclusion by: 1) taking a cross-sectoral approach to deinstitutionalization; 2) advocating for inclusive education policies; and 3) scaling up accessible learning initiatives in partnership with governments.[80] Another example is in Paraguay, where UNICEF supported accessible and inclusive education through initiatives like Universal Design for Learning, Accessible Digital Textbooks, developing Paraguayan sign language materials, and generating evidence across programmes that target or include children with disabilities. UNICEF worked with the Government to scale up these programmes through teacher training and capacity building of Ministry of Education officials.

129. In Zimbabwe, UNFPA has taken a multifaceted approach to disability inclusion, defining that 15 per cent of its gender-based violence prevention programmes should benefit women and girls with disabilities, engaging multiple government ministries to conduct a disability assessment and organizing dialogues between parliamentarians and women and girls with disabilities as part of the national disability policy planning process. UNFPA also focused on providing accessible shelter and care to survivors with disabilities, including legal support. An assessment revealed infrastructure barriers and gaps in employee skills to assist survivors with hearing or intellectual impairments.[81] In the area of rural development, IFAD has made significant strides in promoting disability inclusion through funding the SPARK programme.[82] SPARK employs a multidimensional approach across Burkina Faso, India, Malawi and Mozambique to empower persons with disabilities in rural areas. By training disability inclusion facilitators, developing action plans and facilitating knowledge exchange, SPARK is catalysing systemic change to enable the full participation of persons with disabilities in agricultural development and rural transformation.[83]

130. Some Secretariat entities have a long history of supporting disability inclusion. For example, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has been doing so since 1993, when it launched a series of four consecutive region-specific and disability-specific decades for Asia and the Pacific in the follow-up to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983-1992. A recent evaluation synthesis on disability inclusion undertaken by OIOS identified such direct support by Secretariat entities in five categories, described in Table 19.

80. UNICEF. 2024. Global formative evaluation of UNICEF work on disability inclusion 2018-2022.
81. UNFPA. 2023. Disability inclusion in UNFPA's programmes: making it a reality. Technical Brief.
82. Implemented in collaboration with Light for the World, the International Labour Organization, and PROCASUR.
83. IFAD, ILO, Light for the World, PROCASUR. 2023. Learning Event Lessons and perspectives on disability inclusive rural transformation Brief Report.

Table 19: Categories of Secretariat entities' direct support to disability inclusion

Category	Description
Knowledge exchange	Production of knowledge products and research on disability inclusion to inform policy and advocacy efforts. It also involved establishing networks and platforms to foster the exchange of expertise on disability inclusion
Capacity building and technical assistance	Training and tailored support to enhance the capacity of governments and organizations to be more responsive to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities
Normative support	Provision of policy and legislative advice and the promotion of compliance with international disability rights standards and with the CRPD
Advocacy and high-level dialogue	Advocating for the inclusion of disability considerations in national and international dialogues and policy discussions
Direct support and service delivery	Provision of direct services to persons with disabilities, primarily through humanitarian assistance

Source: OIOS. 2025. Evaluation Synthesis on Disability Inclusion. Report number: IED-24-006.

131. There are other examples of United Nations' interventions focused specifically on disability inclusion. Between its operationalization in 2012 and 2024, the Global Disability Fund supported over 111 joint United Nations programmes in 100 countries across various regions, mobilizing over USD 100 million (annual report 2024). As per its strategy for 2020-2025, the fund has directly supported UNCTs to meet indicators on OPD participation, data collection, capacity building and on joint programming. The Global Disability Fund has reported yearly on UNDIS indicators providing an example of best practices on the indicators that it has influenced directly. In 2025, the new strategy for 2025-2030 was launched with the aim of investing in 130 countries across regions supporting transformative changes and innovation. With the new strategy, a catalyst hub will be established to support and coordinate efforts on capacity building and knowledge generation alongside enhancing work on OPD participation and policy and inclusive financing best practices.

132. Bhutan provides an example of the UNDIS coming together with other disability inclusion interventions including from the Global Disability Fund. In 2024, the UNCT in Bhutan undertook a focused "Disability Inclusion Surge" initiative, involving intensive efforts to mainstream disability inclusion both internally in United Nations operations and externally through programming. The timing was opportune, building upon recent progress in Bhutan, including the ratification of the CRPD in 2023, the development of a National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2019, and a landmark disability inclusion report in 2023. The arrival of a new head of the Resident Coordinator Office with experience from United Nations headquarters and inspiration from the UNDIS was a catalyst. The surge also coincided with the start of a new Cooperation Framework cycle, allowing disability inclusion to be mainstreamed from the outset, and capitalized on momentum from a Global Disability Fund project supporting the Government. The UNCT's focused efforts, championed by leadership commitment, resulted in significant progress in terms of implementing the UNDIS.

133. The UNDIS also indirectly supports Member States on CRPD implementation by facilitating cross-team collaboration on disability inclusion that brings together a wider range of entities than might be the case in joint programmes. This broader coordination function is particularly beneficial in humanitarian contexts where the cluster system supports the participation of persons with disabilities in coordination mechanisms and represents an important contribution to support progress with CRPD Article 11. The impact is evident through the establishment of formal coordination bodies with governments for policy engagement on disability inclusion, bringing together several ministries. This allows for more strategic collaboration and addresses previously fragmented approaches.

134. Evaluation evidence shows that joint programmes were effective in supporting governments in making significant progress in developing and adopting normative frameworks, policy instruments and

coordination mechanisms aligned with the CRPD. Joint programmes, aimed at strengthening social protection systems through universal coverage, sustained financing and service integration and improvement, provide several examples of disability mainstreaming into United Nations programming. The objectives incorporate system-level changes in policy frameworks and delivery mechanisms with measures for disability inclusion. However, evaluations reveal gaps between policy adoption and implementation, long timeframes for reform, lack of enforcement mechanisms and limited fiscal space. United Nations support faces challenges in implementation, coverage, coordination, funding and technical capacity, which affect the sustainability and scale of these improvements (more on joint programmes in Finding 14).

Consultation with organizations of people with disabilities

Finding 11: There has been significant progress in consulting with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. However, this engagement is still uneven across levels, countries and contexts and a significant gap remains in terms of systematic and meaningful consultation, particularly from the onset of the initiatives, in decision-making processes and in humanitarian response. The evaluation identified barriers for meaningful consultation and participation including the lack of necessary preconditions, the need for a systematic approach, the need to better understand the diversity of OPDs, and the need for investment in OPDs as strategic counterparts for inclusion.

135. Overall, the accountability framework shows substantial improvements in meeting accountability framework indicator 5 (consultation with persons with disabilities) (see Table 20), in particular for entities. Although the starting point was very low in 2019, this is one of the indicators that has shown the greatest improvement.[84] This positive trend is confirmed by OPDs through the survey with 63 per cent of OPD respondents reporting that their involvement or the involvement of their OPDs has improved over the last five years, including nearly 20 per cent who believe it has "improved a lot" (Table 21). This perception is also confirmed through interviews and focus group discussions with OPDs, where the participants noted the role of the UNDIS in increasing involvement with the United Nations.

Table 20: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicator 5 on consulting persons with disabilities

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 5. Consulting persons with disabilities	11.1%	10.6%	24.7%	32.5%	37.0%	48.2%
UNCT indicator 5. Consulting persons with disabilities		32.0%	34.6%	29.0%	35.6%	40.2%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

Table 21: Evaluation survey Q24: If you compare today with 5 years ago, how has your involvement / the involvement of your OPD with the UN changed?

24. If you compare today with 5 years ago, how has your involvement / the involvement of your OPD with the UN changed?	A Man	A Woman	I prefer not to say	Grand Total
It improved a lot	17.7%	20.7%	0.0%	19.1%
It improved in some ways	42.0%	45.5%	100.0%	44.0%
It stayed the same	22.7%	12.4%	0.0%	17.4%
It got worse	3.4%	4.1%	0.0%	3.7%
It got a lot worse	1.7%	2.5%	0.0%	2.1%

84. As an example of how the United Nations systematizes this indicator, for the past three years, WFP has had a mandatory corporate results framework indicator on the level of engagement of OPDs based on UNDIS benchmarks.

24. If you compare today with 5 years ago, how has your involvement / the involvement of your OPD with the UN changed?	A Man	A Woman	I prefer not to say	Grand Total
I am not sure	12.6%	14.9%	0.0%	13.7%
Grand Total	**119**	**121**	**1**	**241**

Source: Data from survey conducted by evaluation team. See Annex F for more detail.

136. While overall consultation with OPDs has increased, the evidence also suggests that meaningful consultations with persons with disabilities and OPDs vary significantly across United Nations entities and UNCTs. This is backed by evaluation evidence that shows that, despite the growing recognition of the importance of engaging with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, this is still uneven across levels, countries and contexts and a significant gap remains in terms of systematic and meaningful consultation, particularly from the onset of the initiatives, in decision-making processes and humanitarian response. Enabling practices that have contributed to increased consultation with OPDs include: mapping OPDs to be consulted; dedicated resources for OPD engagement; simplified contracting procedure for establishing partnerships; direct engagement with senior leadership; and inclusion of OPDs in United Nations governance structures.

137. For example, UNHCR included a member representing organizations led by refugees with disabilities in the advisory board. This board acts as a representative body for organizations led by refugees, internally displaced people, and stateless people and assists UNHCR in developing guidance for meaningful participation and advising practices of partnerships with OPDs. The entity also supported the creation of a Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities, produced dedicated tools on promoting participation of persons with disabilities through its field work, and piloted new modalities to engage in partnerships with OPDs that may not meet the usual due diligence requirements. Evaluation evidence also highlights that technical and financial support has been provided to organizations of persons with disabilities and networks of disability rights organizations to facilitate the development of networks focused on advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. Support has also been provided for the establishment or strengthening of disability-focused participatory institutions, such as councils. Box 8 below provides an example of the UNCT in Guatemala.

Box 8: Building the Conditions for Meaningful Participation of Persons with Disabilities in United Nations Programming

Advancing meaningful engagement with persons with disabilities has been a strategic priority for the UNCT in Guatemala. Supported by EOSG seed funding, a national mapping exercise, informed by an intersectional lens, identified representative organizations across disability types, geographic regions, and ethnic groups, with a focus on reaching those most left behind. This process led to the establishment of a national Consultative Council of Persons with Disabilities as a formal mechanism to inform UNCT programming. Additional targeted measures, such as sign language training for receptionists, were also implemented to strengthen institutional inclusiveness.

The Council aims to institutionalize a structured and predictable engagement model. The initiative also contributed to movement-building within the disability sector by creating a space for OPDs to connect, share information, and build collective agendas. Building on this experience, the UNCT developed dedicated guidance for all UN entities in Guatemala, setting out clear steps for conducting meaningful consultations with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The guidance sets out when and how to consult, how to partner with representative organizations, and how to ensure inclusive and respectful spaces. It includes specific accessibility measures for different disability types and tailored recommendations for consulting with children, youth, indigenous peoples, and older persons with disabilities.

138. There is no systematic implementation of meaningful consultation with OPDs across the United Nations system, and there appears to be a significant gap between formal commitments and actual implementation of consultation. In multiple instances, OPDs reported being unaware of key initiatives like the Disability Inclusion Working Group action plans, or not being consulted on UNDIS progress reports, highlighting a disconnect between policy and practice. Evidence suggests engagement often depends on specific projects or proactive individuals within United Nations entities rather than a systemic, embedded approach.

The scope,[85] the quality of consultation (including ensuring preconditions such as accessible venues and communication) and the extent to which they lead to changes emerge as significant barriers to meaningful consultation.

139. Only 17.2 per cent of OPD respondents to the evaluation survey consider that inputs provided through consultations are fully acknowledged and often lead to concrete actions, 55.8 per cent consider that they are taken into account but only to a certain extent, 11.2 per cent consider that they are not taken into account and 15.9 per cent are not sure.[86] Many engagements are therefore characterized by OPDs as being tokenistic rather than meaningful, with OPDs often consulted after plans are already conceptualized rather than being involved from the outset. UNCT and entity studies reveal a pattern of occasional rather than systematic engagement and a desire to move towards a more substantive engagement, co-creation and full partnership in decision-making processes. This also reflects the broader issues of accountability noted above. Evidence from OPDs interviewed shows a desire for stronger accountability mechanisms, including monitoring and evaluation and structured dialogues or feedback loops where they could publicly comment on United Nations progress on disability inclusion.

140. Evidence shows limited engagement across the United Nations system with the diversity of persons with disabilities, such as persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities or persons with deafblindness and women with disabilities. The intersectionality of disability with other identity factors remains largely unaddressed, with disability often treated as a homogenous category rather than recognizing the diversity within the disability community. At the global level, the International Disability Alliance, as a cross-disability and cross-regional network of OPDs, is the main interlocutor for United Nations entities (for example, for consultation on their disability strategy). Several entities have initiated collaboration with other global or regional OPDs on specific issues, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) with the World Blind Union on the Marrakesh Treaty, ESCAP with the Association of Southeast Asian Disability Forum on the Asia Pacific Decades of Persons with Disabilities, UNESCO with Inclusion International on Inclusive Education, WHO with the International Federation of Hard of Hearing and the World Federation of the Deaf on the World Report on Hearing, etc.

141. At the country level, UNCTs tend to engage with national cross-disability federations, which act as government interlocutors on disability. The evaluation found limited evidence of UNCTs seeking to confirm and support their ability to represent the diversity of persons with disabilities including more marginalized groups or of consultation with persons with disabilities who are the furthest behind. There are exceptions to this trend; for instance, UNCT Guatemala has made deliberate efforts to engage a diversity of persons with disabilities, including by addressing urban-rural disparities.

142. The necessary preconditions for meaningful consultation and participation were not always present, which undermines the effectiveness of consultations (see Table 22). The evaluation identified barriers for meaningful consultation and participation, such as: inaccessible meeting venues; lack of provision of reasonable accommodation; inadequate time for preparation; lack of accessible communication and information prior to and during consultations; no coverage of related costs; and limited availability of language support. These barriers particularly affected grassroot OPDs.

85. A total of 37.2 per cent of OPDs responding to the survey report that they are consulted on disability-specific issues and other issues such as education, social protection, health, while 34.3 per cent report that they are consulted only on disability-specific issues, but not on broader issues, 18.4 per cent responded that they are not consulted and 10 per cent responded that they are not sure. See Annex F Survey Question 27.
86. See Annex F Survey Question 28.

Table 22: Evaluation survey Q26: How does the United Nations organization or programme that you work with make sure persons with disabilities can take part?[87]

How does the United Nations organization or programme that you work with make sure per-sons with disabilities can take part?	I'm not sure	Not at all	In some ways	I'm not sure	Not at all
(a) Is the physical environment accessible? (such as offices, meeting venues, toilets)?	13.7 % (0%)	12.0% (23%)	54.8 % (58%)	19.5% (23%)	74.3% (81%)
(b) Is information and communication accessi-ble? (such as sign language interpretation, cap-tioning, hearing loop or microphone systems, accessible documents)?	10.8 (0%)	11.2% (23%)	56.8% (60%)	21.2% (17%)	78.0% (77%)
(c) Does the United Nations organization or programme have a positive attitude and are they willing to make sure persons with disabilities can take part?	10.0% (0%)	5.4% (13%)	51.9% (56%)	32.8% (30%)	84.7% (86%)
(d) Does the United Nations organization or programme have the knowledge on how to make sure persons with disabilities can take part?	12.4% (0%)	6.2% (15%)	56.2% (58%)	25.2% (27%)	81.4% (85%)
(e) Does this UN organization or programme give funding to make sure you/your organization of persons with disabilities (OPD) can take part, such as money for transportation, a personal assistant, an interpreter?	15.8% (NA)	29.9% (NA)	38.6% (NA)	15.8% (NA)	54.4% (NA)

Source: Data from survey conducted by evaluation team; 2019 IDA Global Survey on Participation of OPDs in Development Policies and Programmes. See Annex F for more detail.

143. The evaluation found varying levels of awareness about the UNDIS among OPDs. While 55 per cent of OPDs responding to the survey reported that they were aware of the UNDIS, many organizations are still unfamiliar with the strategy, suggesting insufficient outreach and communication from entities. This information gap limits the ability of OPDs to effectively engage with and monitor UNDIS implementation, undermining accountability and the potential for improvement. Moreover, there is also a significant need for capacity building within the United Nations system on the process of meaningful engagement, understanding the nature of OPDs and their diverse needs and building the capacity of employees for collaboration with OPDs (including security staff, volunteers).

Consultation with employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities

Finding 12: Specific mechanisms for consultation with employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities have been established mostly by larger entities and often have an ad hoc consultative function or are narrowly focused on employment issues. Employee resource groups can play a positive role in fostering a more inclusive workplace culture and as an enabler of progress on the UNDIS. However, their impact is limited by insufficient resources, which restricts their capacity to provide broader support. The evaluation found limited evidence of the contribution of staff unions to advance the rights of employees with disabilities.

144. Overall, there has been limited development of mechanisms to enable effective engagement of United Nations employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities. The UNDIS technical notes for entities stress the importance of employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with

87. A similar question was asked in the 2019 IDA Global Survey on Participation of OPDs in Development Policies and Programmes. Results from the 2019 survey are added in brackets for comparison alongside results from the survey conducted by the evaluation team.

disabilities with respect to internal operations and explicitly recommend consultation on employment, travel and mobility and other human resources policies. The UNDIS is not prescriptive about the mechanisms for consultation with employees (entity indicator 13), but the establishment of peer support groups or employee resource groups can provide such a mechanism. The evaluation was able to identify employee resource groups in 14 entities. At the country level, there was limited evidence of the existence of formal groups of employees with disabilities. This was partly due to the limited overall number of employees with disabilities but was also understandable more broadly, given concerns expressed by persons with disabilities regarding confidentiality and privacy in the working environments of employees.

145. Most employee resource groups have a mixed membership of employees with disabilities and employees with dependents with disabilities, and some groups have included external members to the United Nations. Some groups primarily have a peer support function, as in the case of the resource group at OHCHR, as peer support is a common core objective across all employee resource groups. Others also serve as interlocutors for consultations, primarily on human resources and accessibility issues (UNOG, ILO, WHO, WFP) and with mechanisms and mandates that are more or less formalized. Some have evolved into wider information sharing, awareness-raising and internal advocacy platforms, such as WHO's Embracing Disability Affinity Resource Group (See Box 99). Another example is the UN DCO-managed Disability Peer Support Network, which was created in 2022 as a safe space for personnel in the UN Resident Coordinator system to support and empower each other, share information and contribute to advancing the disability inclusion agenda in the Resident Coordinator system. It is open to personnel with disabilities, personnel with family members with disabilities and allies, and is a staff-led, confidential and interactive space. The size of these groups and frequency of engagement vary greatly, from online Yammer groups reported as dormant to large groups of more than 300 members interacting two times a month. Of the 579 United Nations employees with disabilities or with dependents with disabilities who answered the evaluation survey, 53 per cent answered that they were not a member of any employee groups related to disability.

146. Evidence shows that employee resource groups can play a positive role in fostering a more inclusive workplace culture and can be an enabler of progress on the UNDIS. There are clear examples of significant change secured through the advocacy work of some groups, such as simplified procedures negotiated with the medical department, their active contribution to cultural change and normalizing the narrative on disability. The relatively informal nature of these groups can be an asset to create more horizontal spaces for dialogue on disability inclusion. Evaluation evidence shows that their peer support function has been positively assessed and considered essential by members of active groups, but their impact is limited by insufficient resources, which restricts their capacity to provide broader support.

Box 9: WHO Embracing Disability Affinity Group

The employee resource group of WHO was started by 5 employees with disabilities as a forum for employees to connect, share information and support each other. The group grew rapidly to a membership of over 300 members and meets online once a month, and in 2024, the regional Pan-American office (PAHO) established its disability affinity group called "Voices of Inclusion". The group has exchanges with the DEI unit, is consulted by the institutional mechanism that coordinates UNDIS implementation and meets annually with the Executive Director of WHO. The Affinity Group has had a role in driving organizational cultural change and fostering a more inclusive environment, as well as creating learning opportunities on disability inclusion. It spearheaded internal campaigns and initiatives such as the 'Walk the Talk' event on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, or the internal "Embracing disability benefits everyone" campaign.[88]

147. The use of employee resource groups as a consultation mechanism is often not fully formalized or systematic. Respondents to the survey who are members of an employee resource group on disability reported low levels of consultation by management or human resources, including 19.7 per cent who were never consulted, and 34 per cent who were consulted occasionally on disability-specific issues (See Table 23). When consulted, only 16.2 per cent consider that their inputs are fully acknowledged and often acted

88. Independent evaluation of WHO Policy on Disability.

upon by the organization (see Table 24). The evaluation found limited evidence of the contribution of staff unions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and, as a result, some groups have developed direct engagement with senior leadership, while others face limitations in terms of influence and authority. A limitation mentioned by most groups is the voluntary nature of the role, which requires investment of time and resources from employees with disabilities or with dependents with disabilities.

Table 23: Evaluation survey Q17: How is your group consulted by the management or human resources in your entity?

17. How is your group consulted by the management or human resources in your agency?	A Man	A Woman	Nonbinary	I prefer not to say	Grand Total
Never	24.4%	17.1%	50.0%	0.0%	19.8%
Occasionally, on disability-specific issues	25.6%	39.5%	0.0%	0.0%	17.7%
Occasionally, on both disability-specific issues and other issues	25.6%	13.2%	0.0%	50.0%	17.7%
Regularly, on disability-specific issues	9.8%	11.8%	50.0%	0.0%	11.3%
Regularly, on both disability-specific issues and other issues	11.0%	7.2%	0.0%	50.0%	8.8%
Systematically, through established procedures	3.7%	11.2%	0.0%	0.0%	8.4%
Grand Total	**82**	**152**	**2**	**2**	**238**

Source: Data from survey conducted by evaluation team. See Annex F for more detail.

Table 24: Evaluation survey Q18: Do you consider that inputs provided through consultations with your group...

18. Do you consider that inputs provided through consultations with your group	A Man	A Woman	Nonbinary	I prefer not to say	Grand Total
Are fully acknowledged and often acted upon by the organization	17.3%	15.4%	50.0%	0.0%	16.2%
Are taken into account but only to a certain extent	44.4%	43.0%	50.0%	50.0%	43.6%
Are not taken into account	16.1%	14.1%	0.0%	0.0%	14.5%
I don't know	22.2%	27.5%	0.0%	50.0%	25.6%
Grand total	**81**	**149**	**2**	**2**	**234**

Source: Data from survey conducted by evaluation team. See Annex F for more detail.

148. Beyond employee resource groups, other strategies to consult with employees with disabilities include the integration of self-identification questions on disability in regular staff surveys, in order to compare experiences and identify differences in perceptions between employees with and without disabilities. Limitations related to this are discussed in Finding 8. Other more ad-hoc mechanisms include direct solicitation to employees with visible disabilities for their advice or testing accessibility, which can concentrate requests on a few individuals who may provide their own perspective but may not reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities, and whose main role may not be disability inclusion.

Equity and tailored approaches for the most marginalized

Finding 13: Evidence of United Nations efforts to ensure equity and tailored approaches for reaching the most marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities is relatively limited and persons with disabilities tend to be considered as a homogenous group. There are several structural limitations to intersectionality and equity approaches in programming, including: gaps in disaggregated disability data, gender, or other intersecting identities; insufficient resources; limited conceptual understanding of intersectionality; and

tension between universal and targeted approaches. Within the United Nations system, persons with disabilities who require more support face significant barriers in applying, performing their daily job and progressing with the United Nations as an employee.

149. **Equity in United Nations programming.** There is limited and inconsistent evidence of systematic steps and measures taken across entities to ensure equity and tailored approaches for the most marginalized and underrepresented persons with disabilities. While some entities have begun addressing intersectional approaches and marginalization, these efforts remain largely nascent. Much of the focus on intersectionality and marginalized groups is driven by entities' efforts to leave no one behind, a principle embedded in strategic plans and in UNCT Cooperation Frameworks, but lesser attention is paid to "working with the furthest behind first". There are also limited examples of entities with conceptual integration of intersectionality in their work.

150. Evidence shows significant gaps and limited attention to groups of persons with disabilities who are most marginalized and often underrepresented because of their disability. Entities often limit tailored approaches for the inclusion of persons from underrepresented groups due to not knowing how to fully engage with them. Issues concerning those who faced intersectionality, for example, persons with disabilities based on age, sexuality, migration, refugee status, etc., have also experienced limited attention, with the exception of some targeted actions (often mandate based) for women and youth with disabilities. There is insufficient understanding and a lack of guidance on best approaches to address these groups, difficulties identifying who is most at risk at being left behind in a given context, and limited use of data.

151. The conditions to ensure underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities are included within the United Nations' work remains limited, including approaches that address equity for groups that experience extra layers of discrimination and barriers to participation. Specifically, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities and persons with deafblindness are groups that do not frequently engage with the United Nations. The evaluation found evidence of enhanced participation of persons with intellectual disabilities in global disability-related events when intersectionality is integrated into entities' strategic plans; it can reinforce efforts at the country level to reach the most marginalized and underrepresented. Where specific approaches do exist, they are often mandate-focused (for example UN Women and UNFPA focusing on women with disabilities, UNFPA and the United Nations Youth Office focusing on youth with disabilities, UNHCR and IOM focusing on refugees and migrants with disabilities). These entity-level initiatives have also shown evidence of trickling down to the local level, offering effective approaches for these targeted groups within mandated programming. Guidance has been developed on the intersection of gender and disability, on programming with refugees with disabilities and on youth with disabilities (among the most marginalized groups). Although limited guidance on meaningful participation with underrepresented groups exists (United Nations Global Disability Fund), there is limited dissemination and use through either the entity-level or UNCT-level tools and resources, and insufficient efforts to proactively engage with OPDs representing these groups.

152. Several structural limitations to equity approaches in programming can be identified, including: data collection gaps (most entities lack disaggregated data on disability, gender, or other intersecting identities and external data, which would facilitate analysis on intersectionality, are often missing); insufficient resources; limited conceptual understanding of intersectionality; and tension between universal and targeted approaches.

153. **Equity and United Nations employment.** Within the United Nations system, experiences vary across different groups, with employees with disabilities with high support needs facing higher barriers to recruitment and appointment including complex assessments for reasonable accommodations, limited funding for such accommodations when they are costly (such as the provision of 24-hour personal assistance) and associated lengthy delays in appointments while decisions are being made. Case studies suggest that employees with higher support needs experience more disability-related discrimination as support and adaptations are preconditions to their work, while they also face additional challenges resulting from stigma and prejudice regarding roles or functions they may or may not be able to perform. Survey data also indicate there are significant differences in perceptions by employees from underrepresented groups in the workplace, those

with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial disabilities, and deafblindness indicated that they have personally experienced discrimination in the workplace because of their disability, while a further 35 per cent indicated they fear they might. Whereas in comparison, aggregated responses for all persons with disabilities show that 29 per cent of respondents indicated having experienced workplace discrimination, and only 22 per cent fear potential discrimination.

154. Furthermore, some employees with visible disabilities report being under higher pressure to perform in order to demonstrate that disability inclusion is possible and beneficial. For employees whose disabilities are not visible, there are complex factors at play including potentially less stigma, more limited attention to their accessibility requirements, or fear of the consequences of disclosing their disability.

3.3 The efficiency of UNDIS implementation

EQ3: Has the UNDIS been operationalized in an efficient manner?

The efficiency of institutional arrangements

Finding 14: The UNDIS has been operationalized with mixed efficiency. Inter-entity cooperation has resulted in efficiency gains that take advantage of the comparative strengths and specialization of different entities and could be expanded further across the United Nations system. The evaluation found examples of gains in efficiency and maximizing use of resources through leveraging learning and sharing resources and experiences. However, the evaluation also found evidence of inefficiencies in processes, decision-making and development of the policies and guidance necessary to support UNDIS implementation at a higher level.

155. Inter-agency collaboration has led to efficiency gains through specialization, allowing entities and existing dedicated funding mechanisms, such as the Global Disability Fund, to contribute their unique expertise, especially in relation to disability inclusive programming. ILO provided specialized expertise on employment of persons with disabilities, while UNHCR contributed technical knowledge on inclusion of refugees with disabilities. The Disability Inclusion Team in EOSG has also drawn on the specialized knowledge of networks to support the development of guidance, such as that produced by UNEG for designing and reporting on disability inclusive evaluations. The Department of Global Communications drew on work undertaken by UNICEF to develop guidance on disability inclusive communications, which has been shared across the United Nations system.

156. In 2024, 58.5 per cent of reporting entities met or exceeded indicator 12 (joint initiatives), showing that collaboration does happen (see Table 25). There are numerous examples of strategic collaborations across entities (also involving other stakeholders) that produced important evidence or innovations to advance the CRPD. These include initiatives such as the Disability and Development Report 2024 coordinated by DESA to take stock of SDG progress for persons with disabilities and the Global Disability Inclusion Report coordinated by UNICEF in 2025, which produced analyses on under-researched areas and recommendations for accelerating change, including through financing disability inclusion. OHCHR coordinated a range of initiatives on the development of community support and care systems for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, together with UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP within the UNPAID care and support initiative funded through the Global Disability Fund. UNICEF and WHO are founding members of the AT Scale partnership hosted by UNOPS to reach 500 million people with assistive technology by 2030.

157. The Global Disability Fund provided an important conduit to stimulate and resource multi-agency initiatives, and the IASC Disability Reference Group played a key role in promoting consistent inclusive humanitarian aid. Large funds and programmes actively engaged in the work of the Global Action on Disability network, a coalition of donors that spearheaded progress on inclusive international cooperation through collaborative decision-making and peer learning. On internal aspects, UNICEF and ILO co-chair the sub-group on disability inclusion under the HLCM, which seeks to address key bottlenecks that need a system-wide approach. These initiatives (especially with regards to programmatic work) are evidence of the vibrancy of disability inclusion work driven by a few entities and show how collaboration across entities can address important gaps in developing the innovation required to support Member States to implement the CRPD. However, an overall system-level action plan, and related coordination mechanism to ensure that such initiatives respond to strategic priorities and are coordinated with strategic intent, is missing.

158. There has been an improvement in performance of UNCTs in terms of meeting or exceeding the requirement for indicator 8 (joint programmes) (see Table 25). To meet the requirements, UNCTs need to implement a joint programme on disability inclusion in the current Cooperation Framework cycle. Only a third

of UNCTs reporting in 2024 met or exceeded indicator 8, up from less than a quarter in 2020. This suggests that inter-entity programming remains challenging, which does not preclude other forms of collaboration, as incentivized through indicator 4 (UNCT set-up and coordination). Entities have performed better on indicator 12 on joint initiatives, with 61.3 per cent meeting the requirements in 2024, up from 48 per cent in 2019, although the number reaching the requirement of being involved in at least one joint programme or initiative on disability inclusion in addition to active participation in the inter-entity coordination mechanism on disability inclusion, is quite low.[89]

Table 25: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicators 12 and 8 respectively on joint initiatives and programmes

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 12. Joint initiatives	48.0%	40.6%	45.8%	58.7%	63.3%	58.5%
UNCT indicator 8. Joint programmes		22.6%	25.2%	23.4%	28.2%	33.0%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

159. Disability inclusion working groups have been crucial in advancing the UNDIS at the country level and have provided an adequate platform for addressing the cross-cutting nature of disability inclusion. Accountability framework data show that both entities and UNCTs have performed well in this area (see Table 26). However, informants also raised the challenge of UNCTs being overwhelmed with participation in different working groups, which could also lead to inefficiencies in terms of connecting different agendas (for example gender and disability) and limited capacities to follow up on the work of each group. Moreover, the frequent lack of recognized terms of reference for this role and the subsequent gap in performance evaluations for employees who participate in these working groups may further reduce attention to disability inclusion in a context of competing priorities.

Table 26: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicator 4 on institutional set-up

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 4. Institutional set-up	22.6%	21.2%	43.8%	48.7%	50.0%	65.1%
UNCT indicator 4. UNCT set-up and coordination		17.2%	28.5%	35.1%	46.2%	52.7%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculations. See Annex G for more detail.

160. The evaluation found examples of gains in efficiency and maximizing use of resources through leveraging learning and sharing resources and experiences. For example, at the global level, the inter-agency working group on disability for Rome-based entities shared accessibility guidance across multiple entities, avoiding the need for each entity to develop its own standards independently. At the country level, UNHCR India implemented mutualized procurement for accessibility audits, which extended assessments from United Nations premises to refugee centres, reducing duplication of efforts and costs.

161. The evaluation also found evidence of inefficiencies in processes, decision-making and developing the policies and guidance necessary to support UNDIS implementation. To date, only the Procurement Network of the HLCM has produced guidance for system-wide adoption. Work is ongoing to identify a common minimum approach to reasonable accommodation that would reduce the inefficiencies of entities developing their own approaches. In the area of information technology, accessibility of applications and websites remains low, both in the Secretariat and in other entities, although there are global standards on digital accessibility that the Secretariat has adopted. The Digital and Technology Network of the HLCM is currently reviewing indicator

89. For UNDIS reporting, a joint programme or initiative is an activity or activities that at least two entities undertake on the basis of a detailed partnership. The UN entities involved may run a joint programme or initiative in association with actors from government, civil society or the private sector.

6 (accessibility), with the objective of proposing a specific indicator for information accessibility, which may bring a better understanding of the requirements and potentially more efficient approaches to meeting them.

162. The evaluation found examples of opportunities for greater efficiency, such as the process for review of new websites hosted by the Secretariat for accessibility before publication (estimated to total around 750-1000). This is currently undertaken by employees in the Department of Global Communications (DGC) who also have additional roles, thereby creating delays in approval and incurring employee time in both DGC and the entity concerned in clarifying how to ensure full accessibility. The Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT) has proposed technology that will automate this process, but budget constraints have prevented its adoption, leading to delays in publication and associated costs in employee time.

Information sharing, knowledge management and reporting

Finding 15: There is strong demand for better sharing of knowledge, tools and good practices and significant appetite for learning generated by increased awareness of disability inclusion. Feedback loops and systems for capturing outputs, monitoring, evaluation and reporting have been established. However, reduced resources have affected the capacity to optimize the learning from these processes and to leverage the capacity development and solution-focused support function of the Disability Inclusion Team.

163. **Information sharing and knowledge management.**[90] Notwithstanding the United Nation's long engagement on issues of disability inclusion and disability rights (Section 1.1), the practical aspects of addressing disability inclusion within the United Nations is relatively new for many entities and UNCTs. The launch of the UNDIS has created a strong demand for knowledge and learning on disability inclusion in general, and on the practical aspects of meeting the requirements of the UNDIS accountability framework in particular.

164. Within the United Nations, general information on disability rights and disability and development is available on iSeek as part of the Knowledge Gateway platform and on a comprehensive UN DESA page dedicated to disability. OHCHR provides substantial information related to the CRPD, its jurisprudence and resources to support its enforcement through disability inclusion in the SDGs (SDG-CRPD resource package)[91] and other entities provide access to information on disability inclusion in relation to their mandates. However, information and guidance on UNDIS implementation is more limited. Moreover, beyond the main UNDIS documents, resources often only exist in English, which limits access to a wealth of information for non-anglophone disability inclusion focal points and employees.

165. UNCTs can access information on the UNDIS from the UNSDG Knowledge Portal, which includes a special page on "Disability Inclusion Resources for United Nations Country Teams and Resident Coordinator System" and includes resources on each of the 14 UNCT accountability scorecard indicators. It acts as a well-organized depository of documents rather than a source of guidance for focal points and others at the country level. Based on evidence from interviews, some Resident Coordinator Office employees and focal points are not always aware of the existence or location of useful resources, including the UNSDG Knowledge Portal.

166. For entities, only a limited number of resource documents are available on the UNDIS platform. In addition to the overall technical guidance for entities to report on the accountability framework, specific guidance has been prepared for a number of indicators, including indicator 5 (consultations with persons with disabilities), indicator 8 (procurement), indicator 10 (evaluation) and indicator 15 (communication). The Global Disability Fund has also supported the development of guidance and tools on issues that this evaluation

90. For this evaluation, knowledge management is defined as the systematic management of the generation, sharing, use and brokering of substantive knowledge through tools and practices at organizational and individual levels (IFAD. 20204. Corporate level evaluation of knowledge management practices in IFAD).
91. See OHCHR website on persons with disabilities.

has found to be challenging to UNCTs and entities: meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in programming, and the inclusion of most marginalized groups of persons with disabilities. The Global Disability Fund has also developed a training package for United Nations employees, governments and OPDs on disability inclusion principles and cross-cutting issues including intersectionality, OPD participation and climate action.[92] However, many focal points have requested additional guidance to support their work in utilizing the accountability framework as a road map and for completing the annual UNDIS reports. Efforts have been made to support the work of focal points through webinars, with four UNDIS indicator webinars available in the resources section of the UNDIS internal website.

167. **Reporting.** At the entity level, all entities engage in annual accountability framework reporting against UNDIS indicators, providing some accountability and progress tracking. Several entities pointed to the benefit of using UNDIS reporting as an opportunity to take stock collectively of progress on disability inclusion that may be scattered across different departments. Some entities such as UNDP and WHO have established internal mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. UNDP has integrated disability markers into its strategic plan frameworks and project monitoring, while WHO conducts monthly meetings on UNDIS implementation open to all employees. However, many entities report receiving minimal feedback on their report submissions from the Disability Inclusion Team.

168. The self-assessment approach used across the system raises concerns about reliability and verification. Entities noted the subjective nature of self-reporting without external (non-United Nations) verification. This concern is exemplified in countries where a significant disconnect exists between accountability framework reporting and the reality described by United Nations employees and OPDs. In response, some entities have suggested implementing "spot checks or audits" to confirm the validity of self-reporting.

169. Technical issues with the UNDIS reporting platform were highlighted by some entities, including slow attachment uploads and limited space for information. Compared to the UN-SWAP reporting, some entities find UNDIS reporting more onerous and time-consuming, creating reporting fatigue (to the detriment of the UNDIS, which comes after the UN-SWAP in the reporting calendar).

170. The current accountability framework system primarily captures processes rather than outcomes or impact. Multiple countries noted that it does not adequately address complex issues such as intersectionality in programming goals. Several entities have called for better integration of reporting across diversity dimensions (gender, disability, etc.) and enhanced metrics, including mandatory templates for country programmes and an integrated approach. There are also limited systems to capture and share learning across entities or even within entities.

171. Evaluation. The integration of disability inclusion into evaluation processes varies widely across entities. The UNCT accountability scorecard data show that, at the launch of the UNDIS, only a very small number of entities were meeting the requirements of: (a) evaluation guidelines containing guidance on how to address disability inclusion; and (b) disability inclusion being mainstreamed effectively throughout the evaluation process and reflected in the terms of reference, inception and evaluation reports. As Table 27 shows, there has been a significant improvement over the past five years with an increase from only 2.2 per cent of entities meeting requirements in 2019 to 37 per cent in 2024.

Table 27: Percentage of entities meeting or exceeding indicator 10 on evaluation

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 10. Evaluation	2.2%	7.8%	10.3%	33.3%	32.3%	37.1%

92. 2877 participants attended the trainings of which 851 were government officials, 1037 were OPDs representatives and 460 were UN staff.

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculation. See Annex G for more detail.

172. To facilitate meeting requirements, the Disability Inclusion Team worked with UNEG to prepare a set of guidelines[93] to support integration of disability inclusion in evaluation design and implementation as well as report on the evaluation indicator. Although the guidance was finalized at the beginning of 2022, it had already been incorporated into UNSDCF evaluation guidance at the end of 2021. A contributory factor to slow progress on meeting this indicator may be the length of programme cycles and the time it will take for entities and UNCTs to move beyond incorporating disability inclusion into evaluation guidance or having disability-specific results in the UNSDCF (approaching requirements). The evaluation evidence reveals that, while many evaluations are incorporating disability inclusive methodological elements, significant challenges remain in ensuring adequate representation and participation of persons with disabilities in evaluation processes.

173. To exceed the requirements, entities need to undertake a meta-analysis of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations relating to disability inclusion once in a five-year period. The meta-analysis has the potential to provide important learning for the entity on what is working and provide lessons learned for similar entities in the United Nations system. While the reports are available on the UNEG website, there is no place for them to be made easily available to the UNDIS focal points and others interested in learning from evaluation evidence. This leads to less than efficient use of the evidence resulting from evaluations.

Intersectoral collaboration and synergies

Finding 16: The UNDIS has generated intersectoral collaboration and synergies with other cross-cutting issues, and more opportunities could be leveraged for better integration and efficiency, including alignment of reporting calendars and some indicators.

174. The implementation of the UNDIS has made some progress in creating intersectoral approaches and synergies with other system-wide strategies, though this progress remains limited and inconsistent. Evidence from both entities and UNCTs indicates that, while conceptual understanding of integration exists, practical implementation faces significant challenges. The overall picture shows entity-specific initiatives rather than systematic implementation across the United Nations system, with many entities expressing a desire for greater integration between different frameworks but acknowledging that siloed approaches still predominate.

175. Several United Nations entities have attempted to integrate disability inclusion with other frameworks, particularly focusing on age, gender and diversity approaches. UNHCR integrated disability inclusion into its age, gender and diversity policy framework rather than creating a separate disability strategy. Similarly, other entities have implemented cross-sectoral work through their mandates using a "diversity, equity and inclusion" strategy that integrates multiple dimensions of diversity rather than treating disability as separate. These entity approaches remain exceptions rather than the norm across the system and there is a need for each entity to find the right balance between integration and preserving the specificity of each issue. Integrated approaches, while bringing efficiency gains, run the risk that, under a common diversity agenda, insufficient resources are allocated to technically support disability inclusive and accessible interventions and to cover disability-related extra costs (acknowledging that compared with issues like gender, the United Nations system lags behind with regards to expertise and know-how on disability and that participation of some persons with disabilities requires extra costs).

176. Multiple entities highlight the problem of siloed accountability frameworks. The burden of separate reporting systems for gender, disability and other inclusion dimensions creates inefficiencies, with some entities indicating that further guidance and information related to intersectoral approaches would be useful. Some common indicators between the UNDIS and the UN-SWAP facilitate reporting and suggest possibilities

93. UNEG. 2022. Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting on the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Evaluation Indicator. Jan 2022.

for greater alignment. These examples, while limited, demonstrate that integration is possible when intentional structures, resources and technical capacity are dedicated to the effort.

177. Some UNCTs have created structural mechanisms to facilitate integration, though with varying degrees of effectiveness. A number of UNCTs have established disability inclusion working groups within broader structures such as a human rights and inclusion working group. Despite these structural arrangements, the evidence indicates that scorecards and accountability frameworks for different inclusion priorities still operate in isolation from each other in most contexts. This disconnect between structural proximity and operational integration suggests that formal mechanisms alone are insufficient to achieve true intersectoral approaches. However, there are opportunities to collaborate to enhance efficiency such as the Ghana UNCT decision to align its Disability Inclusion Month with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence to exploit the synergies of working together.

178. The connection between disability inclusion and the leaving no one behind principle in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks represents the most consistent area of conceptual integration, though this high-level linkage does not always translate to practical programming integration.

Use of partnerships and innovation for efficiency

Finding 17: While the United Nations has advanced in partnerships for disability inclusion, these collaborations remain limited in number, scope and scale. Private sector engagement represents a growing, but underutilized, area of opportunity for advancing disability inclusion. Collaboration with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and academia has produced promising results and demonstrates how external disability inclusion expertise can bring strong added value and expertise. Partnerships and innovation are promising approaches that can spur action and promote efficiencies but have been underutilized.

179. **Partnerships.** Partnerships with OPDs are an important enabler of progress on the UNDIS and are widely acknowledged as an efficient way to raise awareness on disability inclusion, improve accessibility, access technical expertise on disability inclusion and support local ownership. Exchange of experiences among entities and UNCTs could enhance this even further, for example through sharing of OPD mappings, tools and guidance for OPD engagement, strategies for partnering with small-scale community-based organizations, etc. (see Finding 11)

180. Beyond engagement with OPDs, the UNDIS and its accountability framework are not intentional about the importance of partnerships to promote efficiencies. As a result, although the evaluation identified promising approaches to partnerships, such initiatives are often ad hoc, limited in scope and rarely scaled up or systematically replicated across contexts. Moreover, the strategic importance of fostering ecosystems of partnerships is not sufficiently taken up as an approach to disability inclusion within most United Nations entities or country teams. Collaborations exist with disability-focused INGOs, academia or think tanks such as the Christadelphian Bible Mission (CBM), Humanity & Inclusion or the Centre for Inclusion Policies, including a majority of project-based partnerships, and a few examples of long-term agreements setting the basis for an ecosystem of technical resources on disability inclusion (UNICEF, WFP).

181. Private sector engagement represents a growing, but underutilized, area of opportunity for advancing disability inclusion. The evaluation identified several illustrative, though largely ad hoc, examples of such engagement. These include partnerships that leveraged the private sector for a more inclusive working environment and employment-related initiatives, and initiatives on inclusive technologies and entrepreneurship (for example, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Bahrain). An example of the former is the ILO Global Business and Disability Network, which groups more than 40 multinational enterprises, more than 45 national business and disability networks across the globe, mostly in the Global South, and 7

non-business associate members such as the International Disability Alliance to promote the employment of persons with disabilities in private sector companies. There were examples of mobilization of in-kind contributions, such as partnering with artificial intelligence (AI) companies that provide solutions to enhance digital accessibility (UNICEF); or with companies and their philanthropic foundations to deliver free or reduced cost assistive technologies. UNCT India secured funding from the private Omedia foundation to finance a joint study by UNDP, UNICEF and WHO.

182. External disability inclusion expertise can bring strong added value. Entities collaborating with INGOs and academia have produced promising results. With INGOs, examples include the WFP Disability Inclusion Helpdesk, which is serviced by the CBM Global Inclusion Advisory Group and mobilizes a large network of advisors with a wide range of expertise to provide sector-specific and contextualized advice. Also, ILO has collaborated with Light for the World to advance disability inclusive rural development in India and Malawi, and with Leonard Cheshire in Bangladesh and Kenya to integrate Washington Group Questions into labour force surveys. In Ghana, Sightsavers provided a free accessibility audit to the UNCT. Academic partnerships have also played a key role in advancing knowledge production and capacity-development. Examples of these include: the Global Disability Inclusion Report with the Center for Inclusive Policy (CIP) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; and a training programme on inclusive social protection for OPDs from 33 countries, developed through the Global Disability Fund programme on inclusive social protection, delivered jointly by UNICEF, ILO, CIP, and Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University. The Global Disability Fund has also established a collaboration with the new Lancet Commission on Disability and Health focusing on generating evidence to improve health systems for people with disabilities and ensure their inclusion in healthcare.

183. While there is initial recognition of the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation to advance disability inclusion, there is very limited evidence on the use of this modality. WHO in India facilitated a South-South exchange between India and Egypt on an assistive technology manufacturing system, while collaboration is being explored between the India company Jaipur Foot and UNHCR Mauritania to facilitate access of refugees with disabilities to assistive technologies at a reduced cost. Tajikistan is also exploring South-South cooperation with India on the viability of a prosthetics factory in the country.

184. Across all levels, while multilateral development banks – such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank – are taking steps to mainstream disability inclusion into the design and implementation of projects and loan agreements, the evaluation found little evidence of structured or coordinated engagement with the United Nations system in this regard. Similarly, partnerships with the media remain largely underdeveloped, representing missed opportunities for raising public awareness on this issue.

185. **Innovation.** The United Nations demonstrates limited and inconsistent use of innovation[94] to achieve disability inclusion goals efficiently. While there are some notable innovative approaches, these appear to be scattered rather than systematic across the United Nations system. The evidence indicates isolated rather than coordinated innovations, with significant implementation gaps even where innovative approaches exist.

186. Process and system innovations include innovative partnership models, such as UNHCR developing a modified grant agreement for small organizations including OPDs, with a maximum ceiling of USD 12,000 per year, with no requirements attached but that the funds be used to open a bank account and that the OPD progressively complies with partnership requirements. IOM developed creative ways to engage OPDs, including recruiting an OPD member and "seconding them back" to the OPD. Other innovations include: ILO's Disability Champions' network complementing the custodian focal point model with a horizontal platform for mutual learning mobilizing existing expertise and interest (inviting guests such as Gallaudet University or holding an information session on inclusion of deaf persons); and the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities, which established a pipeline of qualified professionals.

94. The evaluation takes a very broad and general definition of innovation: "Doing things differently and doing different things". See UNSSC. n.d. The UN Innovation Toolkit.

187. However, the evaluation identified significant limitations and missed opportunities, with resource constraints often limiting innovation. There is slow adoption of available technologies, with entities noting that, while AI could be leveraged to enhance the accessibility of training materials, this has not been explored. Limited cross-entity learning is a major issue, with minimal evidence of innovations being shared systematically across United Nations entities.

Resource allocation and disbursements

Finding 18: Resource allocations for implementing the UNDIS are largely insufficient and inconsistent across United Nations entities, significantly impacting timely and efficient implementation. While some positive examples exist, most entities struggle with resource constraints, which often leads to delays in implementation. Additionally, current resource allocation approaches lack systematic consideration of additional costs required to reach marginalized groups of persons with disabilities. Despite very limited investment, small-scale seed funding has yielded catalytic progress, but it has often not been sustained or taken to scale.

188. Evidence indicates that overall, resource allocations for UNDIS implementation are largely insufficient and inconsistent across United Nations entities, which significantly impacts timely implementation. At the system level, the UNDIS has only been resourced through limited extra-budgetary resources. Most entities struggle with resource constraints that limit their ability to implement the UNDIS comprehensively.

189. Resources are needed to advance on a significant part of the UNDIS indicators: for example, initial investments to improve physical and digital accessibility, targeted initiatives and sustainable and equitable incorporation of persons with disabilities into the United Nations workforce can be cost effective but do require dedicated resources. Disability inclusion needs catch-up investments and this is an issue that has been underprioritized (for example investing in training personnel, accessibility adjustments). It also requires functioning costs in recognition that for some persons with disabilities, preconditions for participation have a cost (for example covering the cost of sign language interpretation in a workshop, of a personal assistant for an employee with a disability travelling on a mission, etc.).

190. Moreover, there is substantial evidence that current resource allocation approaches lack systematic consideration of the additional costs required to reach marginalized groups of persons with disabilities. This is particularly evident for persons with higher support needs. Multiple entities report that reasonable accommodation funds are insufficient for persons with higher support needs, such as personal assistance or sign language interpretation. Even entities with dedicated reasonable accommodation funding mechanisms report that they may be insufficient to cover more expensive types of reasonable accommodation, such as provision of 24-hour personal assistance, although there is wide acknowledgement that this concerns a very limited number of employees overall.

191. Some entities have established dedicated funding mechanisms, such as UNDP, which allocated USD 500,000 over a five-year period for reasonable accommodation measures and WHO, which utilized flexible funding to initiate work on the UNDIS. UNICEF stands out with a corporate commitment to allocate 10 per cent of its overall budget to disability inclusion by 2030 and the recent creation of a Children with Disabilities Fund. Recently, 15 entities endorsed the Amman-Berlin Declaration on Global Disability Inclusion,[95] whereby they agreed to monitor the commitment that by 2028, at least 15 per cent of official development assistance-funded projects have objectives that contribute significantly to disability inclusion. However, these positive examples stand in stark contrast to severely under-resourced approaches. The delays in implementation directly correlate with resource limitations. Moreover, the United Nations entity accountability framework reports consistently raise resource issues as the major challenge in implementing the strategy.

95. ILO, IFAD, IOM, FAO, UNCDF, UNDP, UNESCO, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDRR, UNFPA, UN Women, WFP, WHO.

192. Despite these constraints, entities and UNCTs are searching for efficiencies to implement the UNDIS. Progress with the UNDIS procurement indicators means that attention is paid to ensure that expenses made by the United Nations system do not create new barriers for persons with disabilities (such as building inaccessible schools, developing inaccessible software or selecting inaccessible workshop venues). There are examples of conditioning purchases to compliance with accessibility standards or a minimum workforce of persons with disabilities and of briefing and notifying potential bidders in advance to maintain a fair process, which fuel a virtuous circle of spending inclusively and supporting inclusive businesses. There is evidence that the leverage power of the United Nations, including its economical weight in cities such as Geneva with large numbers of employees, is not sufficiently used to foster accessibility and inclusion. Several entities acknowledged the potential of negotiating better access to disability-related goods and services for non-Swiss employees with disabilities or employees with dependents with disabilities living in Geneva. For example, WHO provides an example of securing accessibility adjustments from the bus company in Geneva.

193. Furthermore, supporting progress with entity indicators 2 (strategic planning) and 9 (projects and programmes), UNICEF, UN Women, UNHCR and UNDP have developed guidance for inclusive budgeting, including ways to estimate and embed disability-related costs in projects' budgets. This includes recommended percentages earmarked to cover project-related accessibility and reasonable accommodation costs, recalling that when planned at the onset, accessibility implies minimal extra costs (for example, 1 per cent for a school building as per World Bank estimates[96]). Similar examples were found in entities at the country level, for example, OHCHR Moldova, which now earmarks funds in programme and project budgets to ensure disability inclusion.

194. Since the adoption of the UNDIS, the Global Disability Fund has financed UNCTs through a specific channel to support implementation of the UNDIS. Country studies for this evaluation found that Global Disability Fund funding has been a catalyst in a number of ways, including supporting the capacity and development of OPDs, supporting the UNCT to mainstream disability inclusion in UNSDCFs, and the development of technical guidance for the United Nations and partners on disability inclusion in specific contexts (for example, accessibility of shelters in humanitarian contexts, reintegration of ex-combatants with disabilities). Global Disability Fund support was generally seen as complementary to and supportive of UNDIS implementation.

195. Reasonable accommodation is, by definition, a search for affordable solutions to equalize opportunities for persons with disabilities, including employees with disabilities and persons with disabilities involved in United Nations interventions. Embracing this new concept, entities and UNCTs have engaged in identifying necessary and appropriate adjustments that do not come with a disproportionate cost. A wide range of reasonable accommodation measures do not have any costs, such as flexible working arrangements or adjusting office space. Although progress has been made, challenges persist regarding a unified, system-wide approach and the lack of dedicated and sustainable funding. While the establishment of reasonable accommodation funds in some entities represents an important step forward, the evaluation found significant inconsistencies across the system. The majority of entities operate without dedicated financial resources or established request procedures, increasing the risk of discretionary practices by managers. Importantly, albeit in specific cases, the evaluation also identified resistance from senior management to advancing the inclusion of employees with disabilities due to the perceived cost and its impact on already constrained budgets. The absence of appropriate mechanisms and funding to cover the costs associated with employees requiring higher levels of support may result in the United Nations deprioritizing such candidates or limiting their opportunities for mobility within the system

196. Evidence from the evaluation shows some instances of promising funding approaches. UNDIS seed funding has catalysed initial attention to the issue and progress in several countries, for example supporting OPD engagement, accessibility audits and adjustments, and internship programmes reserved for persons with disabilities.

96. World Bank. 2005. Education for All: The Cost of Accessibility.

Human resources

Finding 19: Evidence points to the importance of dedicating employees, with specific expertise, to disability inclusion. However, UNDIS responsibilities are usually an add-on to existing employee duties. Although there are specific training resources and a growing range of good practices and tools developed by UNCTs and entities that are frontrunners on the UNDIS, investment in United Nations capacity expertise and knowledge across the system does not meet the level required to yield the UNDIS potential as a transformative tool for the United Nations.

197. Across the United Nations system, the requirements stemming from the UNDIS have led to the creation of roles dedicated fully or partially to disability inclusion that did not exist before, from small teams of experts to focal points roles with a limited percentage of their time (identified or not). The evaluation team met with a range of individuals who have been championing disability inclusion in their respective entities. With varied profiles and seniority, these employees are often passionate, committed individuals who play a critical role in identifying entry points and opportunities to promote disability inclusion at all levels. The scope and nature of the UNDIS means that they need to engage with a wide range of departments, explore the implications of being an inclusive entity across multiple technical and operational issues, develop partnerships and find strategies to promote a new and sometimes complex agenda against multiple competing priorities. The role is demanding and requires a solution-focused mindset and the ability to identify opportunities, to network and to mobilize and motivate others, alongside technical insights on the CRPD and disability inclusive development and the ability to transfer these skills. In contexts where UNDIS progress has been significant, many informants refer to their disability inclusion colleagues as effective employees who are central to making the changes happen.

198. Yet full-time positions are the exception rather than the norm[97] and there is not yet a critical mass of technical experts to advance disability inclusion at the expected level across the United Nations system. Staffing limitations represent a significant barrier to timely implementation. While a few entities and UNCTs have invested in dedicated disability inclusion positions, most lack dedicated full-time employees for UNDIS implementation, and rely on a focal point system, with responsibilities typically assigned as an add-on to existing employee's duties. Some focal points are able to dedicate only minimal time to disability inclusion work, which sometimes is not reflected in terms of reference or performance evaluations and often lack the required technical expertise in disability inclusion. Importantly, the high turnover of focal points significantly undermines both the efficiency and continuity of disability inclusion efforts.

199. While the focal point system is an essential mechanism to ensure that disability is mainstreamed across entities' departments and across entities at the country level, it is not sufficient on its own and has notable limitations when under-resourced. It has structural limitations such as limited accountability (the role is often not included in terms of reference or performance evaluations) and often the focal point lacks seniority. The evaluation also identified a challenge related to the development of capacities of disability inclusion focal points. While the disability inclusion team conducted regional workshops and trainings and focal point meetings at the global level, the turnover of focal points would require more robust onboarding and training efforts.

200. At the country level, in many instances, responsibility for disability inclusion falls to Resident Coordinator Office human rights advisors where they exist or, in other cases as well as in entities, responsibility falls to broader positions responsible for LNOB and inclusion, with varied and often temporary funding arrangements. Some UNCTs have made progress in appointing disability advisors – often United Nations volunteers with disabilities – whose contributions were positively and clearly recognized for advancing the UNDIS agenda (see Box 10). However, these remain isolated cases and are short-term positions.

97. Especially fixed term core funded positions.

Box 10: United Nations Volunteers with disabilities

In 2023, there were 304 persons with disabilities who served as volunteers through UNV, including 127 Online Volunteers and 187 onsite United Nations Volunteers. Diversity is also evident in the age range of United Nations Volunteers (18 to 80 years), representation from 180 nationalities, and the fact that nearly 90 per cent of United Nations Volunteers come from the Global South. Many of these volunteers are financed through the UNV Special Voluntary Fund which supports volunteer opportunities for persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, underrepresented nationalities, and other marginalized groups.

201. There is broad consensus across the United Nations system on the need for dedicated technical expertise to advance the implementation of the UNDIS, grounded in a human rights-based approach. While the evaluation identified commendable efforts to build internal capacities, these remain insufficient in reach, quality and efficiency to meet the level of ambition required. Stakeholders consistently underscored that employee knowledge and awareness of disability inclusion remains limited across the system. As a result, there is a strong call to institutionalize disability inclusion training as mandatory, a step already taken by some entities, such as UNICEF. In 2025, the "Putting Words into Action" course also became mandatory for Secretariat entities.

202. Although there has been an overall upward trend in the percentage of both reporting entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding the requirements for indicators 14 and 13 respectively, both on capacity development, it is worth noting that both started from very low levels (see Table 28).

Table 28: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicators 14 and 13 respectively on capacity development

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entities indicator 14. Capacity development	3.8%	9.4%	8.2%	5.3%	21.3%	24.7%
UNCT indicator 13. Capacity development		9.4%	18.3%	20.6%	36.4%	41.2%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculation. See Annex G for more detail.

203. There are disability-specific trainings that have been commended by their quality in laying the foundations for United Nations employees to work on disability inclusion. The course "The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy – Putting Words Into Action", delivered by the United Nations system Staff College, had 8,032 enrolments with an average completion rate of 64 per cent. This accounts for approximately 6 per cent of United Nations personnel and participation from senior employees (D1 and above) was low. Another key initiative is the ITC-ILO course "Promoting Disability Inclusion: Make the Change Happen", a paid course launched in 2022. The course has trained 166 participants from across the United Nations system, including UNDIS focal points and those working on disability inclusion in the field. Overall, interviewees recognize the quality of those training courses. In contrast, a course for United Nations and New York employees received negative feedback from employees with disabilities and key informants. Such lack of consistency across different initiatives can lead to variation in understanding and capacity across the United Nations.

204. Entities and UNCTs have invested in a wealth of guidance, tools and processes aiming to raise awareness and develop capacities on disability inclusion adapted for their own mandate and contexts. However, especially at the country level, there is a significant efficiency gap in knowledge management, with UNCTs in different countries independently developing guidelines and tools that could be enhanced by leveraging existing resources and experiences from other contexts. Importantly, while guidance encourages progress by supporting how to effectively address disability inclusion aspects in particular contexts, it is not enough on its own unless supported by enforced and structured processes within entities, UNCTs, and across the system, including training, resource allocation and leadership.

3.4 The sustainability of the UNDIS and its results

EQ4: To what extent are results and effects of UNDIS Implementation sustainable?

Institutionalization of the UNDIS

Finding 20: There have been insufficient efforts to institutionalize adequate support for UNDIS implementation at the Secretariat level, which significantly hinders progress that could drive meaningful and systemic change across the United Nations. The UNDIS coordination structure, especially the Disability Inclusion Team in the EOSG, is under-resourced – both human and financially – and as a result, important functions to support UNDIS implementation are not being carried out to the extent required. Moreover, the current resourcing model is fragile, further compromising the long-term implementation and sustainability of the UNDIS, at a time of rising uncertainty.

205. The Disability Inclusion Team in EOSG was established as a temporary structure at the time of the UNDIS launch, with the Secretary-General's Senior Adviser on Policy designated to provide high-level leadership, guidance and coordination support to UNDIS implementation.[98] In 2021, the Disability Inclusion Team was moved to the Sustainable Development Unit within EOSG and has never exceeded three professional posts. At the same time, the demise of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the CRPD (IASG-CRPD) and the discontinuation of the United Nations Secretary-General Special Envoy on Disability, has led to perceptions of weaker institutional arrangements for disability inclusion in the United Nations (this evaluation found no evidence of formal decision made regarding these).

206. Moreover, the Disability Inclusion Team in EOSG currently operates on an extra-budgetary basis, making its sustainability vulnerable to shifts in donor priorities that could jeopardize UNDIS implementation. The team is widely acknowledged to be under-resourced, and a considerable part of its time is spent on fundraising to keep the team functioning. This resource limitation fundamentally changes the Disability Inclusion Team's role, impacting its ability to coordinate system-wide implementation effectively. The Disability Inclusion Team is currently heavily focused on the accountability framework management and reporting, and many important functions to provide comprehensive support to UNDIS system-wide implementation are missing. Qualitative evidence from case studies reveals that capacity development, knowledge management, high-level promotion and coordination, and technical expertise are functions that are currently unattended, hindering effective implementation and sustainability of the UNDIS. The lack of effective institutionalization of an empowered and resourced coordination mechanism limited the conversation at a strategic level on disability inclusion and hindered the possibility of driving more meaningful and impactful organizational change.

Box 11: Institutionalisation of UN-SWAP and Youth 2030

The United Nations System-wide Action Plan builds upon a well-established structure developed over more than a decade, characterized by significant dedicated capacity, systematic operational processes, and technical support mechanisms. It benefits from a comprehensive coordination structure with a dedicated and well-staffed team at UN Women, which also collaborates with other UN Women units. Youth 2030, in its turn, has a governance structure with high-level leadership engagement. It has a High-Level Steering Committee, a Joint Working Group providing technical leadership through task teams, and a dedicated Secretariat hosted in the United Nations Youth Office. Youth 2030 started with no core budget, relying entirely on voluntary contributions and temporary staffing arrangements including personnel on loan, short-term contracts, part-time staff and interns. A significant turning point came in 2022 when Member States passed a resolution creating the Youth Office, providing more stable resources.

98. UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. See paragraph 35.

207. Within the United Nations Secretariat some progress has been observed through the deployment of more dedicated disability inclusion personnel. However, the evidence indicates this has not translated to stronger institutionalization. In particular, key Secretariat functions that are essential to system-wide progress on the UNDIS are still insufficiently institutionalized, affecting performance on key issues described in this report, including the delayed development of a reasonable accommodation policy (only finalized in 2024), the absence of an updated employment policy, inadequate physical accessibility and limited resolution of cross-system IT and digital network issues. Those shortcomings are widely acknowledged by United Nations stakeholders at global and country levels, who recognize that greater efforts are required for the United Nations Secretariat itself to lead by example.

208. There is a strong correlation between having a robust institutional set-up to coordinate disability inclusion across levels – both for entities and UNCTs (indicator 4) and overall performance across indicators. This is also supported by evaluation evidence, which shows that intersectoral dedicated structures are effective in coordinating disability inclusion within United Nations entities, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of disability inclusion and fostering greater engagement. Where they exist, custodian focal point systems, when properly backed by disability inclusion technical expertise, are essential to mobilize all departments on disability inclusion, generate ownership and ensure the smooth operation of disability inclusion with the United Nations.

209. Lessons learned from evaluation evidence show that there are challenges in establishing an effective institutional set-up, particularly in clarifying responsibilities and ensuring accountability. These challenges are exacerbated at regional and country levels, where awareness and capacity for both programming and organizational efforts lag behind the growing emphasis on disability inclusion. A total of 65 per cent of entities reported having a unit or individual with substantive expertise on a human rights-based approach to disability. However, only 33 per cent of all entities indicated that they had a unit with a coordination role across relevant departments and country offices (2024 data). At the country level, 80 per cent of UNCTs reported having a disability inclusion mechanism established within the wider UNCT coordination mechanism, with 45 per cent reporting that this mechanism provides substantive input into the Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework, in consultation with OPDs. At the country level, qualitative evidence from the case studies shows that the custodian system proposed by UNDIS – where specific entities are assigned responsibility for advancing particular indicators – has brought different parts of the UNCTs together to discuss and move disability inclusion initiatives forward. The custodian focal point approach has also been successful in a number of entities, creating ownership on disability inclusion across departments.

210. However, the reliance on focal points with multiple responsibilities – rather than dedicated positions – further weakens implementation, as the UNDIS is often added to already existing portfolios. Moreover, this add-on responsibility is often not supported by clear terms of reference or recognized as part of an employee's performance review. Qualitative evidence from case studies reveals that, in some cases, focal points have yet to be appointed or have only recently been designated – within both entities and UNCTs. Evidence from several evaluations highlight that "double-hatting" of employees leads to prioritization based on an employee's existing expertise rather than need.

211. The evidence collectively suggests that the UNDIS was launched without explicitly estimating the effort and costing the resources required to implement a system-wide strategy on a new issue for the United Nations with transformative implications and, as a result, the UNDIS was not underpinned with sufficient resources for coordination and implementation, creating inconsistency across the system and vulnerability to changing priorities.

Leadership

Finding 21: While there are examples of strong and committed leadership support for the UNDIS, it is not consistent across all levels of United Nations leadership nor across all entities and UNCTs. The most successful examples of leadership demonstrate not just verbal commitment but active engagement from senior management in establishing systems, allocating resources and creating accountability mechanisms. In certain entities and UNCTs, overall support appears inconsistent and heavily dependent on individual champions rather than systematically embedded across all leadership levels, which is essential if disability inclusion is to be sustained over time.

212. The weak institutionalization of the UNDIS points to a broader issue of leadership not being fully mobilized. Several interviewees suggested that the UNDIS should be further protected and solidified as part and parcel of the core United Nations agenda through a specific Member States resolution. Competing priorities and resource constraints present significant challenges to leadership support for the UNDIS. Multiple entities and UNCTs report that disability inclusion competes with other priorities, especially in resource-constrained environments. Disability inclusion is one among the Secretary-General's 23 stated priorities, yet the UNDIS has limited resource commitments

213. Leadership support for the UNDIS varies significantly across United Nations entities and UNCTs. While data from accountability framework reporting show improved performance in leadership among both entities and UNCTs, 47 per cent of reporting entities and 47 per cent of UNCTs still have not met the requirements for this indicator in 2024 (See Table 29). This indicator is broadly considered by UNDIS focal points as one of the easiest to meet, yet only 18 per cent of entities and 14 per cent of UNCTs have reported exceeding the requirements.

Table 29: Percentage of entities and UNCTs meeting or exceeding indicator 1 on leadership

Indicator No.	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Entity indicator 1. Leadership	16.1%	33.3%	39.7%	46.8%	54.3%	52.9%
UNCT indicator 1. Leadership		27.3%	32.1%	31.3%	48.1%	52.7%

Source: Accountability framework reports and evaluation team calculation. See Annex G for more detail.

214. The quantitative nature of the accountability framework makes it difficult to capture leadership in all its dimensions. On the one hand, expectations regarding leadership are considered by some to be too low, as the framework does not account for the importance of representation of leaders with disabilities or of the role of middle management across levels and throughout the entities and UNCTs in driving change. On the other hand, for both UNCTs and entities, the requirements to approach the indicator are relatively undemanding, as they mainly involve actions to increase the visibility of disability inclusion internally and publicly. While some entities have taken very seriously the need to secure leadership at the highest level, through mechanisms for reporting regularly to their governing bodies, the overall requirements for these indicators are often treated as a checkbox exercise. Such findings are backed by evaluation evidence, which highlights gaps at middle management levels and a lack of accountability mechanisms for leadership regarding disability inclusion commitments.

215. For UNCTs, the leadership indicator shows the strongest positive correlation with overall performance. This is backed up by qualitative evidence from the case studies, which shows that where leadership is present, it goes beyond formal statements of support, and includes championing disability inclusion, allocating human and financial resources, establishing accountability mechanisms and embedding disability inclusion into UNCT programming and operations.

216. Importantly, qualitative evidence indicates that, where leadership support exists, it remains heavily reliant on individual champions rather than being systematically embedded across all levels of United Nations leadership, institutional frameworks and systems. Moreover, leaders with prior exposure to disability issues, through family members or previous work experience, tend to show stronger support. Leadership transitions often disrupt progress on disability inclusion if it becomes less of a priority. The evaluation also found cases where leadership transition has had a smaller impact in prioritization of disability inclusion. In these cases, an initial leadership push for the UNDIS had an important role in fostering institutionalization of practices, such as strong inter-agency groups or continuous OPD engagement. Additionally, having a dedicated position for disability inclusion and persons with disabilities as employees within the UNCT were also identified as important factors that contribute to the sustainability of disability inclusion efforts. Member State context and prioritization of disability inclusion also played an important role in the sustainability of efforts driven by UNCTs. This pattern suggests that UNDIS implementation still remains overly dependent on leaders' personal connection to the issue and context-related opportunities rather than being embedded in organizational systems and culture.

217. The evaluation team found limited evidence of meaningful incentives, either financial (such as funds for implementation) or recognition-based, that would encourage consistent engagement with UNDIS priorities. Only recently (2025), the United Nations Secretary-General Awards, organized by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, introduced a specific category on "Inclusion of persons with disabilities" to recognize significant performance by United Nations Secretariat personnel. Additional ad hoc examples were identified at regional level. For instance, UN DCO recognized the Resident Coordinator Office in Guatemala for championing disability inclusion in 2023, as part of its annual regional recognition initiative, which acknowledges UNCTs' performance. Similarly, there has been limited progress in including accountability frameworks within senior and middle managers performance review processes, a practice that has been widely recommended by stakeholders consulted, aiming at ensuring leadership commitment. At the country-level, heads of entities need stronger incentive from respective headquarters offices. Some examples of leadership accountability from outside the United Nations can be found in Box 12.

Box 12: Leadership accountability outside the United Nations

Leadership has been marked as a key priority within strategies outside the United Nations. For example:

Leadership accountability through public campaigns: Barclay's Bank's Chief Executive of the UK Corporate Bank is one of many leaders who has signed onto the "CEOs are IN" Disability Equality Index Campaign, an initiative created by Disability:IN. By signing the 'CEO Letter on Disability Inclusion,' CEOs commit to benchmarking their disability inclusion journey with the Disability Index.

Investing in leaders with disabilities: Barclays Bank and also Australia's DFAT have both prioritised in their strategies the importance of investing in leaders with disabilities. Acknowledging the importance of finding solutions to invest in leaders with disabilities, and to create a system that allows persons with disabilities to evolve into leadership positions. This can include providing leadership development to persons with disabilities in the movement, supporting academic leaders with disabilities, or focusing on promoting employees with disabilities (Australia DFAT and Barclay's Bank).

UNDIS integration into processes and frameworks

Finding 22: While most entities have taken steps to integrate the UNDIS into their frameworks and processes, the depth and effectiveness of this integration varies significantly. Entities show stronger integration in leadership and policy, while the integration of disability inclusion into operations and programming is more challenging and lagging behind. The best UNCT examples show disability inclusion embedded in Cooperation Frameworks, working structures, and operational processes backed by dedicated resources, but many countries still have significant

gaps between stated commitments and actual systematic integration.

218. The integration of UNDIS implementation shows considerable variation across the system, with different levels of integration at strategic, programmatic and operational levels. Despite this variation, trends are observed for both entities and UNCTs: there has been more progress in areas related to leadership, strategic planning and management (core area 1), while the remaining core areas continue to lag behind. For entities, while there has been some improvement in inclusiveness, programming shows that institutional efforts are not fully trickling down, with indicators progressing slowly, with the exception of joint initiatives. For UNCTs, inclusive operations remain a major area of challenge. For both entities and UNCTs, organizational culture is an area where, despite some progress, persistent limitations remain, especially in employment and capacity development.

219. At the entity level, strong integration examples include: a comprehensive approach with incorporation of disability inclusion into strategic plans; the development of disability-specific policies or strategies; the establishment of disability markers for projects; systems of custodian focal points for specific indicators; dedicated units and employees; and leadership accountability at different levels (ILO, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, WFP). However, although entities have formally included disability inclusion into strategic frameworks, operationalization into programming and trickling down to the country level is still lagging behind.

220. It is also worth noting that, for entities, there is a strong correlation between having a disability-specific policy (indicator 3) and overall performance. In 2023, 65 per cent of entities reported having a policy or strategy on mainstreaming disability inclusion in place, and 30 per cent reported having an action plan for its implementation, but only 12 per cent reported on its implementation to governing bodies. Qualitative evidence from case studies shows that, even for entities that are not directly engaged in programming, the process of developing a specific strategy, policy, or action plan kickstarts learning processes on disability inclusion – from a more comprehensive and informed perspective – and often reveals important gaps in operations and capacities. However, the analysis of some of these documents reveals that only a few meet the criteria set out in the UNDIS technical notes (for example, consultation with OPDs, references to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and resourcing components). This is partially explained by the application of different criteria to meet the indicator, reflecting the types of entities and mandates. Although the criteria are being applied differently, the guidance on indicator 3 has remained as originally issued.

221. At the country level, there are very good examples of comprehensive implementation of the UNDIS. In those cases, disability inclusion has been integrated into Cooperation Frameworks, working structures and operational processes backed by sustained leadership and dedicated resources. In these instances, such efforts have resulted in notable advancements. In the majority of UNCTs, progress has been made in integrating disability inclusion into UNSDCFs and Common Country Analyses, although this has not always translated into strategic and coordinated approaches to disability inclusive programming. Moreover, efforts to embed disability inclusion into day-to-day operations either remain in the early stages or are encountering significant implementation challenges. In the countries consulted, operations management teams are often still in the process of initiating discussions on how to integrate disability inclusion effectively. In cases where these discussions have progressed, and guidance and protocols have been developed, the actual implementation of these measures is still pending. Where there has been concrete guidance, it is possible to see improvements, such as inclusive communication, where several countries have adapted the global guidance to their context and implemented it.

222. Without addressing the identified gaps, there is a risk that commitments will remain aspirational rather than lead to substantive change. Finally, although a five-year timeframe does not fully support interpretations of trends across multiple planning cycles, the weak institutionalization of the UNDIS, compounded by leadership transitions, could result in disability inclusion being deprioritized in the next programming cycle. This may partly explain the slight decrease in the number of "meets" and "exceeds" ratings in indicators related to UNSDCFs and country programme documents in 2024 (respectively UNCT scorecard indicator 3 and entity accountability framework indicator 11).

Sustainable financial and human resources

Finding 23: UNDIS implementation lacks sustainable financing mechanisms and dedicated human resources for disability inclusion, resulting in under-resourced and fragmented implementation, and jeopardizing long-term progress.

223. Beyond the few larger entity examples that have committed dedicated resources to disability inclusion through budgeting mechanisms, the evidence consistently shows insufficient and short-term funding mechanisms for implementation of disability inclusion initiatives, both related to operations and in programming.

224. Integrating financial commitments into the regular budget remains a challenge. Resident Coordinator Offices operate with minimal resources and limited flexibility. While the evaluation identified some creative pooled funding initiatives within UNCTs, these remain ad hoc, unsystematized, and highly dependent on contextual variables such as leadership, the prioritization of the agenda by Member States, and the presence of employees with disabilities who champion the agenda. Even where seed funding is playing a crucial role in establishing an enabling environment for progress, it may not play a catalytic role in mobilizing other resources and is often insufficient for sustainable implementation. This pattern of initial funding without sustained investment is evident across multiple countries and has impeded the implementation of planned initiatives. Accessibility audits that are not followed by adjustments due to limited funding not only undermines efforts but may also involve reputational risk. Most importantly, seed funding has played a critical role in initiating engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities, and its discontinuation may jeopardize the emerging efforts of UNCTs, feeding perceptions of tokenism. At the entity level, evidence from case studies shows that disability inclusion programming relies – for most of the entities – on extra-budgetary resources and project-based funding, which are often limited and subject to shifting priorities. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of intentionality around strategic partnerships, which could contribute in-kind and other types of resources, promote cost efficiencies, and enhance disability inclusion efforts through shared expertise and coordinated approaches.

225. Budget tracking for disability inclusion spending is largely absent across the system. Overall, the lack of financial data on disability inclusion investment limits the system's capacity to assess its level of investment in the agenda and undermines accountability. While some entities have introduced disability tagging systems, these markers are not always mandatory, and their implementation has been inconsistent across entity levels and units. Evaluation evidence points to challenges, including poorly developed systems, a lack of understanding of how to use these systems, and disconnection between headquarters guidance and country operations' awareness and implementation. Some entities are able to report specific budget amounts for projects that target persons with disabilities as beneficiaries. However, most are unable to properly track or report on disability-related expenditures. Recently, Secretariat systems advanced in making the use of the existing disability inclusion marker mandatory, and the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget (OPPFB) and EOSG are currently exploring options for a United Nations system-wide financial reporting standard, similar to the gender marker. Additionally, the lack of expenditure tracking related to reasonable accommodation hinders the ability to assess the scale of funding required, undermining effective reasonable accommodation budget planning and limiting efforts to build an evidence base and raise awareness among senior leadership.

226. Despite some progress in deploying dedicated disability inclusion personnel, human resources remain inadequate across the United Nations system to advance disability inclusion in a sustained manner. The current structure relies heavily on focal points with multiple competing responsibilities, unclear mandates and limited accountability mechanisms. Moreover, in many cases, focal points have either not been appointed or only recently designated. The high turnover rates among focal points, combined with insufficient onboarding training for new appointees, not only hampers UNDIS effectiveness and its ability to drive systemic change, but also contributes to institutional knowledge gaps and discontinuity in disability inclusion efforts across

the system. While United Nations volunteers with disabilities have played a crucial role in advancing disability inclusion in many UNCTs, their positions typically depend on temporary funding mechanisms. Although some efforts have been made to maintain them through cost-sharing arrangements, positions that depend on temporary funding mechanisms not only create employment insecurity but also undermine the sustainability of disability inclusion work. Moreover, mandatory training on disability inclusion is not being implemented consistently across all United Nations entities, and existing guidance and knowledge management systems are insufficient to ensure the workforce has the necessary competencies to advance disability inclusive approaches. These combined factors create a structural weakness in the United Nations' human resource capacity to meaningfully advance disability inclusion as a sustained priority.

227. The inadequacy of financial and dedicated human resources is explicitly acknowledged by multiple stakeholders, who also show concern regarding future restrictions to funding the United Nations and the risk that disability inclusion will be deprioritized. There is a widespread recognition that, without proper financial investment, disability inclusion efforts will remain superficial and unsustainable.

Sustainable engagement with persons with disabilities

Finding 24: Most entities and UNCTs report some level of engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, and there have been promising approaches to support, partner and engage with OPDs in sustained, meaningful, resourced ways and with mutual benefits. However, the quality, consistency and impact of this engagement varies significantly. The awareness of the United Nations of OPD dynamics, its resource limitations and systemic barriers to formal partnerships with organizations representing persons with disabilities all remain significant challenges to long-term UNDIS implementation across the United Nations system.

228. It has already been noted that the UNDIS has played a role in improving engagement with OPDs as explained above (Finding 11). Collaboration is also more formalized with 22.8 per cent of OPD respondents to the survey reporting that they have formal partnership with one United Nations entity or more.59 Appropriate and innovative partnerships with OPDs have been developed in some contexts to support aspects of the UNDIS, for example UNHCR adapted a pilot modality for grant agreement tested with stateless persons, with a maximum ceiling of USD 12,000 per year, with no due diligence requirements attached, but a request to progressively comply with partnership requirements (for example, opening a bank account). Yet strict United Nations due diligence processes and partnership criteria continue to hinder the establishment of formal partnerships across the system, and simplified grant mechanisms enabling smaller disability organizations to access funding remain the exception.

229. Regular engagement mechanisms are a key factor in developing meaningful, long-term partnerships with OPDs and harnessing the transformative potential of more equal partnerships. The evaluation found promising examples of the inclusion of disability organizations in Joint Steering Committees or the creation of formal coordination mechanisms between the United Nations and OPDs with increasingly clear mandates (Bhutan, Ghana, Guatemala, India), that range from advising the United Nations on corporate disability inclusion policy work, programming and operation to joint communication efforts and agenda-setting. Engagement with OPDs (and persons with disabilities more generally) is also reported to dispel misconceptions and wrong assumptions about the capacities of persons with disabilities, and to facilitate the identification of solutions and strategies that not only support disability inclusion but also contribute to more inclusive approaches for all.

230. A key factor supporting sustainable partnerships between OPDs and the United Nations is the understanding of each other's mandates, added value, areas of expertise and gaps, as well as the identification of common objectives (which opens room for mutual learning and reinforcement). OPD respondents to

the survey largely agree that the way the United Nations works with OPDs supports their technical and organizational capacities: 44.3 per cent consider that the ways the United Nations works with OPDs builds their organizational capacities, and 43.9 per cent that it builds their technical capacities. A total of 39.7 per cent of OPD respondents consider that this collaboration helps to advance their priorities, while 19.2 per cent consider on the contrary that it creates extra work that does not always align with their priorities.

231. Recognizing and addressing the imbalance of resource and capacity is another factor supporting the development of sustainable and meaningful collaborations with OPDs and investing in building stronger counterparts to advance disability inclusion and accountability. In this regard, UNICEF developed a strategy to build the capacities of OPDs, including strengthening the diversity of persons with disabilities represented, particularly youths with disabilities, and has developed a partnership with the International Disability Alliance to this end. However, evidence shows that the United Nations does not adequately address the costs associated with OPD participation and does not sufficiently invest in building their capacity to become stronger and more strategic allies. Only 21.03 per cent of OPDs responding to the survey consider that the United Nations adequately covers the costs of meaningful OPD engagement. Where the history of collaboration with OPDs is longer, there is greater recognition of opportunity costs for OPDs including their time, human resources, financial resources, own priorities, and the need for a two-way relationship. UNCTs consistently acknowledge that the availability of funding is essential to establishing and maintaining such engagement. However, the evaluation found mixed evidence regarding the extent to which different UNCTs are able to secure funding to sustain these efforts beyond short-term or project-specific support. While significant progress has been made and is acknowledged by OPDs, failure to address these challenges may result in fatigue, negatively affecting the sustainability and potential benefits of OPD engagement.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations



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Overarching conclusions

232. Over the past five years, the UNDIS has proven to be a relevant and timely instrument for advancing disability inclusion across the United Nations system. Anchored by its accountability framework, the UNDIS has served as a catalyst for systematic change, creating momentum and accelerating efforts to embrace disability inclusion throughout United Nations entities and UNCTs. While the UNDIS has enabled significant progress from a relatively low baseline in 2019, implementation has varied considerably across the complex United Nations landscape, and it has not succeeded in getting sufficient traction to be fully transformative across the entire system. There are islands of success where entities and UNCTs have made important advances over the last five years. Many entities with pre-existing disability inclusion initiatives have leveraged the UNDIS to structure, systematize and strengthen their efforts through whole-of-organization approaches. Other entities and UNCTs have made limited progress, and some entities have yet to implement the UNDIS at all.

233. Where UNDIS implementation has succeeded, it has been driven by mutually reinforcing factors. The accountability framework provided a coherent structure, with stronger results when multiple components were implemented together. Senior leadership commitment has proven catalytic by securing institutional uptake, enabling whole-of-organization approaches, and elevating disability inclusion as a strategic priority. The technical expertise and commitment of focal points has played a critical brokering role – mobilizing support with a solution-focused ethos, connecting actors in order to build capacities and a shared responsibility, and contributing to sustained momentum. Employees with disabilities have raised visibility and created a sense of urgency that is often absent without their presence. Direct engagement with OPDs has enhanced relevance and accountability, challenged assumptions and fostered new forms of external oversight. Finally, enabling conditions such as inclusive national frameworks and prior organizational commitments have significantly shaped the pace and depth of implementation.

234. However, while the UNDIS has successfully established institutional frameworks for disability inclusion, focusing primarily on policies, processes and compliance mechanisms, progress toward meaningful outcomes for persons with disabilities remains limited. It is nearly 20 years since the approval of the CRPD and progress of the United Nations towards achieving the level of disability inclusion that is expected of Member States has been extremely slow. The United Nations has not achieved its ambition of becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities or effectively mainstreaming disability inclusion across development, humanitarian, peace and security programming. The programmatic dimension of the UNDIS lacks a unifying system-wide vision for coordinated implementation. Further challenges include the absence of sustainable institutional arrangements, insufficient mechanisms for system-wide accountability and learning, and inadequate resource allocation. The UNDIS must now rapidly evolve from addressing institutional readiness to accelerating the delivery of tangible results for persons with disabilities, both within and outside the United Nations system.

UNDIS 2.0: Overall UNDIS vision and goals

235. In the context of United Nations system reform and constrained resources, and within the framework of Agenda 2030 and the CRPD, the UNDIS should be revised. Revision of the UNDIS is an opportunity to reaffirm the key focus and goals of the UNDIS and embed disability inclusion system-wide, leading to more effective, efficient and sustainable progress.

236. The lack of clarity on the basic elements of a strategy including the goals, level of ambition, timeframe and expected levels of results, as well as uneven understanding of the interconnectedness of the internal and external components of the UNDIS, resulted in gaps in optimizing different and complementary contributions to transform a common United Nations system. The revised UNDIS should therefore incorporate principles, a theory of change and clearer overall vision and goals. This needs to be backed by a clear institutional architecture and accountability mechanisms (Recommendation 2) and adequate sustainable resources (Recommendation 3).

Recommendation 1: Revise the UNDIS to clearly define the vision and time-bound goals. Incorporate key guiding principles and approaches with a theory of change that reflects the goals, the causal pathways, the expected results at different levels and the interconnectedness across its components. Focus the UNDIS on a higher level of ambition to advance and accelerate disability inclusion within the United Nations and in the countries that the United Nations serves.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

The revised UNDIS, UNDIS 2.0, should:

- Incorporate strategic foundations including: a) a strengthened ambition to make the United Nations system more inclusive and increase support to the implementation of the SDGs and the CRPD; b) a system-wide approach by articulating structural enablers that support coherent and efficient transformation across the entire United Nations system; and c) a strategic orientation to disability inclusion to ensure that UNDIS remains purpose-driven and aligned with the overarching objective of accelerating inclusive outcomes
- Reflect key normative principles including commitments to: a) equity and to reaching those further behind, recognizing disability inclusion as intrinsic to equity-focused approaches and as a precondition for systemic transformation; b) intersectionality and supporting mechanisms that enable intersectional analysis, foster cross-sectoral collaboration, and promote integrated responses that address the overlapping forms of exclusion and discrimination, addressing issues within the United Nations and through external support; and c) uphold as an operational standard, aligned with the CRPD, engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations
- Retain a twin-track approach, strategizing the areas of targeted disability inclusion work (including through cross-sectoral collaboration) that are most necessary and strategic to yield wider results at scale as well as sustaining the focus on mainstreaming disability inclusion across the system as the primary lever for systemic disability inclusion at scale
- Sustain its inherent flexibility and integrate a differentiated approach for entities while ensuring the relevance and contextualization of UNDIS in all contexts, including development, humanitarian, peace and security
- Take into consideration important operational pathways including adopting a realistic and contextualized approach, prioritizing efficiencies and creating enabling conditions
- Include a clear institutional architecture for implementation with clear roles and responsibilities.

UNDIS 2.0: Means of implementation

237. The absence of a multi-year, system-wide action plan with clear time-bound goals has significantly limited the UNDIS from reaching its full potential. The development of the necessary system-wide policies, strategies, guidance and tools to support the effective and efficient implementation of the UNDIS has been limited, slow and fragmented. A comprehensive action plan would anchor the system-wide aspects of UNDIS 2.0 and complement the existing accountability frameworks established for individual entities and UNCTs.

238. At the entity and UNCT levels, the current UNDIS accountability framework has been effective in creating initial traction and commitment to disability inclusion, but it requires substantial revision to capture the full scope and depth of the United Nations' disability inclusion efforts. Critical elements, such as financial resource allocation, disability-disaggregated data collection, intersectionality considerations, programmatic aspects and the necessary organizational culture shift, are insufficiently captured in the current indicators. The existing monitoring systems and reporting mechanisms focus predominantly on output-level internal changes and compliance measures rather than tracking meaningful outcomes and impacts on persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the framework fails to adequately capture the extensive contributions made through programmatic work, including joint programming initiatives and field-level interventions. The self-assessment approach currently used to monitor progress across the system raises serious concerns about reliability of data. Most critically, the framework lacks robust feedback mechanisms that would drive continuous learning,

improvement and adaptation based on lessons learned and evolving best practices. While all UNCTs report on the UNDIS, there remain a number of entities that do not do so.

239. The full realization of the UNDIS's transformative potential as a system-wide strategy is also severely constrained by structural weaknesses in its governance and institutional arrangements, particularly the absence of an adequately empowered and resourced central coordination mechanism. The current Disability Inclusion Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General operates with only two staff members and depends on a fragile extra-budgetary funding model, which limits its ability to provide the effective coordination, technical support and robust strategic leadership required for system-wide transformation. This under-resourcing has cascading effects: the team cannot adequately support the focal point network, develop necessary guidance materials, or provide the strategic oversight needed to ensure coherent action across entities. The launch of the UNDIS without a comprehensive assessment of necessary resources and support structures has contributed to this chronic under-resourcing and inconsistent implementation across the system. Strengthening this core unit with appropriate human resources, predictable and sustainable funding, and clear authority is not merely an operational imperative but represents a fundamental test of the genuine commitment by the United Nations to disability inclusion. Only with an adequately resourced and an empowered coordination mechanism can the United Nations unleash the full potential of the UNDIS and demonstrate a truly cohesive, responsive and accountable system that lives up to its promise of leaving no one behind.

240. The UNDIS focal point system serves as the critical backbone for disability inclusion across the United Nations system, with evidence demonstrating that dedicated staff with specific expertise are essential for driving progress. These focal points facilitate vital inter-agency cooperation and knowledge sharing, and help embed disability inclusion into organizational processes and frameworks. However, this set-up faces severe systemic challenges that fundamentally undermine its effectiveness. Most significantly, UNDIS responsibilities are typically added to existing staff duties rather than being dedicated positions, creating an unsustainable burden. This is compounded by the absence of explicit governance arrangements, creating confusion about roles and responsibilities, and inconsistent leadership support across entities and UNCTs.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the means of implementation through developing system-wide, entity and UNCT action plans that translate UNDIS 2.0 into action; revise the accountability framework as the key implementation tool of the UNDIS; and establish a sustainable institutional framework so that UNDIS 2.0 can be implemented in an efficient and coordinated manner.

Timeline: Q2 2026–Q3 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.1: Revise the UNDIS accountability framework[99] to reflect the vision, goals, components and expected results of UNDIS 2.0. The revised accountability framework should:

- Include an enhanced set of indicators based on the experience of the last five years and ensure greater alignment between the UNCT scorecard and the entity accountability framework
- Add indicators to better capture outcomes for persons with disabilities and strengthen programmatic indicators to capture results at the outcome level.
- Where possible, seek greater alignment with indicators of the Youth2030 strategy and UN-SWAP accountability frameworks, working closely with the concerned structures to reciprocate alignment and seek best calendar requirements to reduce the reporting burden
- Where relevant, revise accountability framework indicators to facilitate feeding UNDIS reporting into other processes (for example, more explicit connections with voluntary national reviews, universal

99. The UNDIS accountability framework has two components (a) the UN entity accountability framework and (b) the UNCT accountability scorecard (UNDIS paragraph 9).

periodic reviews, CRPD reviews, QCPR), enabling better alignment with Member State priorities and international obligations
- Update the technical guidance documents related to the UNDIS accountability framework, including more examples of good practices, links to existing resources and adding examples of implementation across different contexts. Specifically, ensure that revisions to the accountability framework take into account the needs of entities and UNCTs working in humanitarian contexts as well as ongoing reforms in the humanitarian sector
- Provide non-reporting entities with targeted outreach and support to facilitate their reporting on the accountability framework
- Develop tailored solutions for different categories of entities with consistent approaches to waivers for specific indicators.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.2: The Secretary-General should ensure that institutional arrangements are adequately and sustainably resourced and have the necessary authority and capacity to support the implementation of UNDIS 2.0. This should include consideration of the establishment of:

- A Disability Inclusion Office with leadership at the appropriate level (that is, the authority to convene entities' principals) that would ensure effective and efficient UNDIS implementation monitoring, knowledge management, technical assistance and support to coordination across entities and UNCTs, building and utilizing partnerships beyond the United Nations
- An inter-agency standing group to ensure system-wide coordination of UNDIS implementation and facilitate cross-entity learning
- Enhanced mechanisms to promote disability inclusion through existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms such as the CEB, UNSDG and IASC and with legislative and governing bodies
- A stronger entity and UNCT focal point network with clear terms of reference for focal points, clarifying their role in supporting coherent UNDIS 2.0 implementation.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.3: Develop a time-bound system-wide UNDIS action plan to coordinate the implementation of system-wide priorities and actions and the development of related system-wide guidance, capacity building and learning. The UNDIS action plan should:

- Provide an actionable road map for the United Nations system (complementing requirements at entity and UNCT levels, for example, at HLCM, the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), EOSG levels), including high-level and measurable targets for the system as a whole, and (revised) timelines for the implementation of identified priorities drawing from the recommendations of the evaluation[100]
- Specify the resources required to enact the priorities and actions of the system-wide action plan (for example, resourcing the work currently undertaken by the UNDIS team, the development of system-wide reasonable guidelines and other priorities stemming from the evaluation recommendations).

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.4: Executive heads of United Nations system entities should prioritize and support the development of entity-specific disability inclusion action plans aligned with the UNDIS, developed in consultation with employees with disabilities and OPDs. These should align with UNCT implementation and

100. For example, in the area of the United Nations becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities: prioritizing the development of system-wide reasonable accommodation guidelines and a common "United Nations reasonable accommodation passport", harmonized approaches to track the share of the UN workforce that self-identifies as persons with disabilities, or a timeline for all common United Nations premises to meet basic accessibility levels.

include, where appropriate, regional-level mechanisms and actions, and strengthen collaboration across different levels within entities in addressing disability inclusion.

Timeline: by Q3 2026

Sub-recommendation 2.5: Resident Coordinators should convene the UNCT to develop, implement and monitor disability inclusion action plans to advance the CRPD and SDGs and strengthen capacities to do so, making use of existing initiatives and mechanisms, including the GDF.

Action plans should:

- Be based on a comprehensive disability situation analysis to complement existing disability mainstreaming in broader strategic planning processes (CCA, CF).
- Be developed through dialogue with government, private sector, INGOs, and CSOs.
- Be based on meaningful engagement with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, including a role in monitoring.

Timeline: by Q3 2026

Sustainable investment and resources for UNDIS implementation

241. The UNDIS has not placed sufficient emphasis on the critical role of resources as a lever for change. This is reflected in the absence of financial considerations in the accountability framework and the lack of detailed resource commitments at the launch of the UNDIS, including for the unit responsible for UNDIS coordination and support.

242. Nonetheless, the UNDIS has delivered value, even with the limited human and financial resources that have been available to entities and UNCTs to support its implementation.

243. The lack of dedicated financial resources to support implementation has had mixed effects. On the positive side, this has prompted United Nations entities and UNCTs to identify efficient and creative approaches to disability inclusion. Some United Nations entities have effectively used mainstreaming as a cost-effective approach to integrate disability inclusion across all programming activities. However, these gains are offset by a funding gap that has significantly hindered progress, as the resources required to build capacity, mobilize and coordinate engagement and support progress with the necessary preconditions to advance disability inclusion were largely insufficient.

244. Moreover, the lack of systematic resource tracking mechanisms for disability inclusion and the absence of dedicated, sustainable funding streams and budget allocation systems means that the United Nations system cannot accurately measure its investment in disability inclusion or ensure adequate resourcing for disability-related expenditures in critical areas.

245. Partnerships represent a largely untapped solution to these resource challenges, offering pathways to expand financial capacity and achieve efficiency gains through collaborative mechanisms. Despite their recognized potential for spurring action and promoting systemic change, the United Nations has significantly underutilized these partnerships, leaving them limited in both number and scope. Current engagement with OPDs varies dramatically in quality and consistency due to systemic barriers and inadequate investment in these relationships. Without meaningful investment in building the capacity of OPDs as strategic counterparts and developing sophisticated partnership models that enable co-designed, co-financed solutions with OPDs, the private sector, international financial institutions, civil society and academia, the United Nations risks falling short of its transformative ambitions for systemic change in disability inclusion at the scale required.

Recommendation 3: Ensure adequate, sustainable and efficient investment in UNDIS implementation, building on the twin-track approach, leveraging partnerships with a view to taking inclusion to scale, and monitoring resource allocation to disability inclusion.

Timeline: Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.1: UNDIS 2.0 should track resource allocation to disability inclusion through: (1) consistent utilization of a unified system-wide tracking mechanism across entities and UNCTs. This should be supported by clear operational guidance and approaches to monitor and report on resources allocated to disability inclusion. It should capture the strategic, twin-track investment approach to disability inclusion, including mainstreaming with ambitious targets for disability inclusion (particularly in programming), and (2) strategizing priority investments that address the structural drivers of inequality for persons with disabilities (specifically, disability-targeted initiatives with demonstrated potential for catalytic impact).

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.2: Executive heads of United Nations entities should leverage mutually reinforcing partnerships, in particular with the Global Disability Fund, and harness the United Nations' role in brokering South-South and triangular cooperation. This also requires strategic financing and implementation coalitions with OPDs, the private sector, international financial institutions, civil society and academia to co-design, co-finance and implement inclusive solutions at scale. It is important to invest in OPDs (including capacity strengthening to partner with the United Nations and non-United Nations stakeholders) as strategic counterparts of the United Nations, including the development of more explicit guidance to enhance the effective engagement of underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, including persons with disabilities facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Knowledge management, learning and capacity strengthening

246. The launch of the UNDIS has sparked a significant increase in demand for guidance and resources, highlighting a strong appetite for progress across the United Nations system. While current efforts offer examples that can lay a valuable foundation, they are insufficient for effective and sustainable implementation across the United Nations system and have failed to meet the needs of those working to implement the UNDIS. The United Nations system remains constrained by limited expertise across entities and UNCTs, inadequate investment in capacity strengthening, inefficient knowledge management systems leading to duplication of efforts, and an overemphasis on compliance-focused reporting rather than capturing meaningful outcomes.

247. Addressing these challenges involves a shift from compliance-oriented reporting to embracing a learning-focused approach that leverages partnerships and innovations, drawing from successful initiatives spearheaded by individual disability champions. Robust knowledge sharing and the development of accessible, comprehensive tools emerge as key priorities for the United Nations system. They are also cost-efficient solutions to promoting more effective implementation of the UNDIS. Moreover, the institutionalization of disability inclusion training, with a focus on practical competencies and mandatory participation, is crucial. High turnover and competing responsibilities of focal points further highlight the need for systematic capacity building.

Recommendation 4: System-wide knowledge management, learning and capacity for promoting disability inclusion should be further institutionalized and strengthened, to ensure more effective and efficient implementation of the UNDIS by United Nations entities and UNCTs. This should be achieved through partnerships, leveraging expertise, mapping good practices, supporting adaptive learning and mandating disability inclusion training for all staff.

Timeline: Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 4.1: Executive heads of United Nations system entities should build on existing efforts and further develop and resource coordinated mechanisms to provide more effective, systematic and efficient management of the generation, organization, sharing and use of knowledge on disability inclusion. They should:

- Ensure that knowledge sharing platforms are utilization-focused, sustainable and accessible, to optimize the sharing and use of existing knowledge within the United Nations, through:
  - Identifying and leveraging hubs of expertise within the United Nations system that can be tapped for specialized knowledge (such as ILO's expertise on reasonable accommodation in the workplace or the case studies, guidance and tools found in the Global Disability Fund's Knowledge Hub)
  - Mapping good practices and resources across the system (including private sector collaboration and South-South cooperation) and investing in critical gap areas identified through funding innovation and partnerships
  - Facilitating the contribution of employees with disabilities to the body of knowledge on disability inclusion and related learning processes
  - Building on local knowledge to ensure that solutions are tailored to specific contexts at the country level, recognizing that not all good practices are transferable to different contexts
- Foster knowledge partnerships both within and beyond the United Nations system to maximize the collection, organization, sharing and dissemination of disability inclusion practices, tools and resources
- Mobilize the expertise of, and learning from, the diversity of persons with disabilities and OPDs, including underrepresented groups and persons with disabilities facing intersecting forms of discrimination
- Support the development of communities of practice, not only for disability inclusion generally but also for disability inclusion into specific issues such as procurement, human resources, accessibility and across the range of programmatic sectors
- Ensure that knowledge systems make full use of evaluation evidence, especially with regard to identifying what works, for whom and in what contexts.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 4.2: Executive heads of United Nations system entities should facilitate diverse approaches to learning and capacity strengthening, including:

- Ensuring mandatory initial training on disability, disability rights and disability inclusion (beyond the entities where it is already mandatory), including by senior leaders
- Developing stronger guidance on disability inclusion capacity building within entities at headquarters, regional and country levels.
- Mapping the availability of training in or outside the United Nations system and further developing training options in specific areas where there are gaps. Where appropriate, mainstream disability inclusion to training packages in other areas
- Acknowledging the critical role of UNDIS focal points and variation in their levels of knowledge and experience, encourage peer learning, support onboarding and develop an induction package for newly appointed disability inclusion focal points.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Inclusive organizational culture, accommodation and accessibility

248. The Secretary-General aims to make the United Nations an employer of choice for persons with disabilities, but progress has been slow, and the system is far from achieving this ambitious goal. While some improvements have been made on reasonable accommodation, accessibility and employment policies since 2019, advancements have occurred sporadically rather than through a systematic, system-wide approach. Overall progress is insufficient and is limited by persistent challenges of discrimination, stigma, and sub-optimal attitudes and organizational culture, which is reflected in the high levels of dissatisfaction reported by United Nations employees with disabilities. While some entities have invested in this area, many have not. Progress is particularly slow among many entities in the United Nations Secretariat.

249. Awareness-raising and promoting understanding of disability inclusion through a rights-based approach represents the first crucial step toward transforming organizational culture with recognition that disability inclusion benefits everyone within the United Nations. The role of staff unions in promoting and implementing the UNDIS requires additional study and there is significant potential to further engage staff unions in constructive discussions that could lead to greater inclusion.

250. The findings reveal significant gaps in the United Nations' approach to reasonable accommodation, with persisting negative experiences among employees with disabilities and those with dependents with disabilities. While some system-wide guidance has been developed to create conditions for more inclusive operations, implementation lacks coherence across the United Nations system, including within the Secretariat and its associated entities. The evidence indicates that persons with disabilities who require additional support face substantial barriers not only in applying for positions but also in performing their daily job functions and advancing their careers within the United Nations as an employee. Despite efforts to address these challenges through various initiatives, the organizational culture has not yet been fully transformed, suggesting that current reasonable accommodation practices remain inadequate and inconsistently applied across different entities and levels of the United Nations.

251. Progress toward creating an inclusive workplace environment has been uneven across the United Nations system, with significant variation in both commitment and implementation. While some entities have established consultation mechanisms for employees with disabilities and those with dependents with disabilities, these are predominantly found in larger entities and often function in an ad hoc manner or focus narrowly on employment-related issues. Efforts to challenge negative attitudes and transform organizational culture have not yet achieved their intended impact, leaving many employees with disabilities continuing to face barriers in their work environment. The lack of systematic approaches to workplace inclusion, combined with insufficient resources and inconsistent leadership commitment across all levels, has resulted in fragmented progress that fails to create the comprehensive accessibility and inclusive culture necessary for meaningful workplace transformation.

Recommendation 5: The United Nations system should step up and strengthen efforts to foster an inclusive organizational culture and accessible workplace, positioning the United Nations as an employer of choice for persons with disabilities by developing and implementing comprehensive evidence-based and data-driven strategies to address accessibility, reasonable accommodation and organizational culture. Special efforts should be made in the United Nations Secretariat.

Timeline: Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 5.1: The Secretary-General should request that the HLCM explore and report on options to recruit and retain persons with disabilities through:

- Developing and adopting a harmonized approach and systems to identify, track and enhance the proportion of United Nations employees who self-identify as a person with disabilities

- Promoting and actively supporting the leadership of persons with disabilities in senior United Nations roles
- Ensuring equitable access to professional development, training and leadership opportunities for employees with disabilities and mentorship or sponsorship programmes that specifically support employees with disabilities in their career progression
- Ensuring statements that promote non-discrimination and disability inclusion as well as accessible formats of United Nations online adverts and accessibility of all United Nations online recruitment platforms
- Establishing a comprehensive and resourced programme for employment of persons with disabilities (for example, like the United Nations Young Professional Programme) to strengthen entry points and talent pipelines into the United Nations workforce, with attention to diversity
- Actively expanding the pool of talents with disabilities through United Nations Volunteers internship programmes, with requirements that prioritize personal experience and demonstrated commitments over formal education requirements and with adequate mentorship and connection to employee resource groups and disability focal points.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 5.2: The Secretary-General should request that the HLCM explore and report on options to ensure systematic provision of reasonable accommodation as a right and an essential component of non-discrimination in the workplace through the development and adoption of clear system-wide policy, procedure, guidelines and mechanisms for transparent, efficient and person-centred reasonable accommodation. This should take into consideration:

- Streamlined administrative requirements including appeal processes with regular tracking and analysis of outcomes
- A "system passport" approach to allow employees to move between entities and carry with them reasonable accommodations that have already been agreed
- The importance of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities with higher support needs to access reasonable accommodation and workplace adjustments required to perform their job, including consideration of specific funding mechanisms (either entity specific or system-wide)
- Investment in enhancing knowledge and capacities of managers and human resource staff to ensure the better inclusion of the diversity of persons with disabilities and provision of reasonable accommodation.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 5.3: The Secretary-General should request that the HLCM explore and report on options to more actively promote an inclusive and accessible workplace including taking more consistent steps to raise awareness of disability inclusion (including towards employees with dependents with disabilities). Taking into consideration:

- Enhanced measures to ensure physical accessibility of United Nations buildings, and establishment of accessibility thresholds to ensure that all common United Nations premises meet basic accessibility levels
- Enhanced measures to ensure that online human resource platforms, processes and tools, particularly those related to recruitment, are accessible to the diversity of persons with disabilities
- The sharing of experiences of effective approaches that challenge stigma and bias, including through disability champions networks, partnerships with OPDs, staff unions, employee resource groups and system-wide campaigning.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

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