United Nations
Sustainable Development Group
System-Wide Evaluation Office

Evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

September 2025
SWEO/2025/002 Summary Report



Overview

This system-wide evaluation of the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the UNDIS to advance disability inclusion in the United Nations system. 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 independent assessment after five years of implementation to evaluate progress and results achieved.

The independent evaluation covers the period 2019-2025, focusing on the conceptualization and design of the UNDIS, its alignment with international frameworks and its operationalization by all United Nations entities and country teams at country, regional and global levels.

The evaluation was utilization-focused, participatory and theory-based, and incorporated a mixed methods approach, integrating different evaluation methods. It drew on qualitative and quantitative data to strengthen the reliability of data and the validity of the findings and recommendations.

The findings are based on the analysis and triangulation of multiple data sources, including interviews with United Nations staff and external stakeholders, extensive document review, analysis of survey data and an in-depth analysis of 15 United Nations country teams (UNCTs), two peace missions and 37 entities.

UNDIS relevance and design: The evaluation finds that the UNDIS is relevant to, and well aligned with, the goals of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with regards to persons with disabilities and that it adequately translates these goals into a framework with a stronger focus on its internal transformation as a foundation. The UNDIS adopted a twin-track approach, combining mainstreaming and disability-targeted measures, with more emphasis on the mainstreaming track to advance disability inclusion system-wide. The UNDIS is missing certain key elements that are present in other strategies, such as: a clear vision and clear 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 implementation of the UNDIS. 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 define accountability lines and mechanisms clearly 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 have not yet implemented nor reported on the UNDIS.

The evaluation finds the UNDIS design process included consultation with persons with disabilities. However, the absence of an external accountability mechanism for engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) on UNDIS implementation undermines the commitment to ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

Effectiveness of the UNDIS: Overall progress in UNDIS implementation has varied. The evaluation finds that, for both UNCTs and United Nations entities, there have been improvements on reasonable accommodation, accessibility and policies over time. While some entities have made significant efforts, overall progress 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 there has been less progress in the areas of inclusiveness, in particular on accessibility, reasonable accommodation, procurement and on organizational culture. At the UNCT level, the largest

improvements were related to institutional set-up and coordination, capacity development for staff, and communication and leadership, while progress on accessibility and accommodation, consultation with persons with disabilities, and joint programmes has been slower. The evaluation notes persistent challenges for, and negative experiences of, employees with disabilities. Efforts to challenge negative attitudes have not yet fully transformed organizational culture.

The UNDIS has not fully implemented the twin-track approach. Indicators are focused primarily on mainstreaming and do not capture the full scope of targeted disability inclusion work. In terms of implementation of intersectionality and equity approaches in programming, the evaluation finds limited evidence of 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.

The efficiency of UNDIS implementation: The 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, while, at the same time, there is evidence of inefficiencies in processes, decision-making and the development of the policies and guidance necessary to support UNDIS implementation at a higher level.

The evaluation confirms 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. However, limited resources have affected the capacity of UNCTs and United Nations entities to optimize that learning 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, but more opportunities could be leveraged for better integration and efficiency.

The evaluation finds that partnerships for disability inclusion remain underutilized and limited in number, scope and scale. Resources for implementing the UNDIS are largely insufficient and inconsistent across United Nations entities. 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.

The sustainability of the UNDIS and its results: There have been insufficient efforts to institutionalize adequate support for UNDIS implementation at the United Nations Secretariat, which significantly hinders progress across the system. The UNDIS coordination structure is under-resourced and important functions to support UNDIS implementation are not being carried out to the extent required. The current institutional anchorage and resourcing models for UNDIS implementation are fragile. Strong and committed leadership support for the UNDIS is not consistent across all levels of United Nations leadership nor across all entities and UNCTs. The depth and effectiveness of integration of UNDIS into entity and UNCT frameworks and processes varies significantly, with significant gaps between stated commitments and actual systematic integration.

Conclusions and recommendations: 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 from a low baseline and accelerating efforts to embrace disability inclusion. However, implementation has varied considerably across the complex United Nations landscape. While some entities and UNCTs have achieved significant advances, others have made limited progress, and the UNDIS has not yet succeeded in getting sufficient traction to be fully transformative across the entire system.

The UNDIS has successfully established institutional frameworks for disability inclusion, focusing primarily on policies, processes and compliance mechanisms. However, the absence of an adequately empowered and resourced coordination mechanism limits capacity for strategic leadership, while separate self-assessment reporting raises data reliability concerns across the system. 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.

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, ensuring that the accountability framework captures the full scope of the United Nations' disability inclusion work.

The UNDIS needs to 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.

The evaluation makes five strategic recommendations.

Recommendation 1 - Revision and design of the UNDIS: 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.

Recommendation 2 - Institutionalization of UNDIS: 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 UNIDS 2.0 can be implemented in an efficient and coordinated manner.

Recommendation 3 - Investment in UNDIS: 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.

Recommendation 4 - Institutionalization of Knowledge Management: 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.

Recommendation 5 - Organizational culture, accessibility and reasonable accommodation: 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.

Introduction

1. 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.

2. 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

3. 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.

4. 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 (Table 1). 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 (Figures 1 and 2).

5. 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.

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

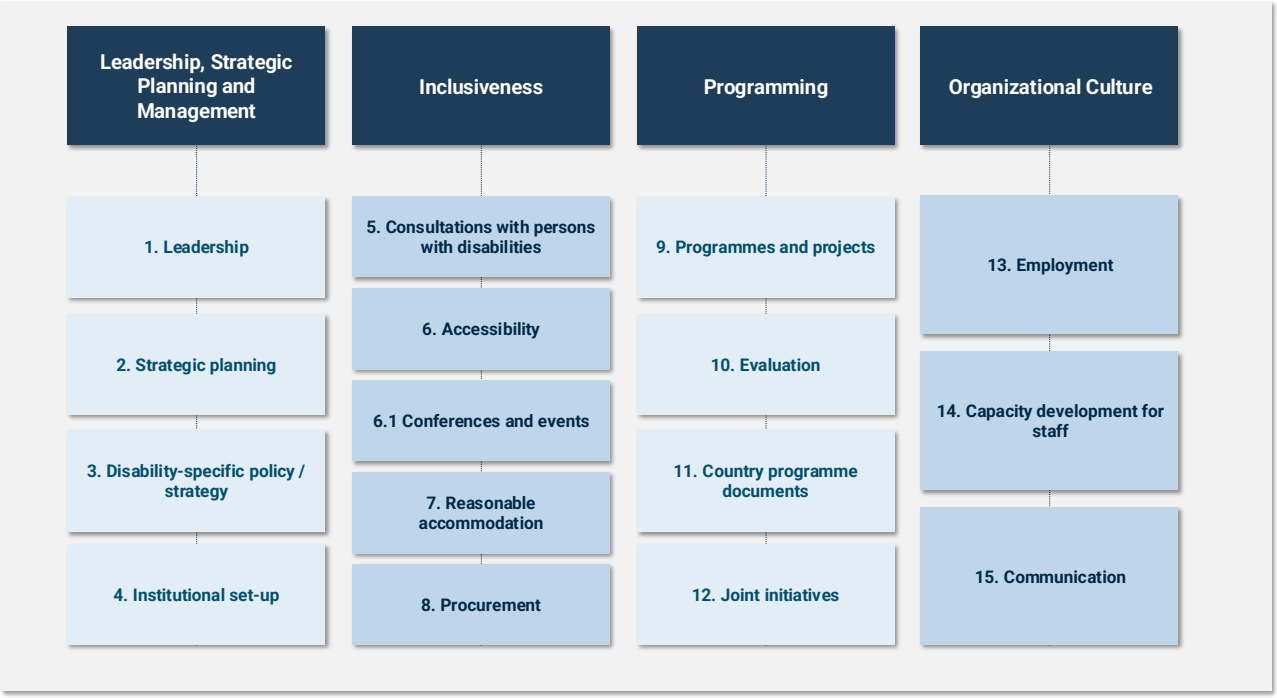
Definition of disability inclusion in the context of the evaluation
The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work of the Organization, the development of disability-specific programmes and the consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *UN. 2019. United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. See p.2, f.n.1.*

Evaluation features

6. **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.

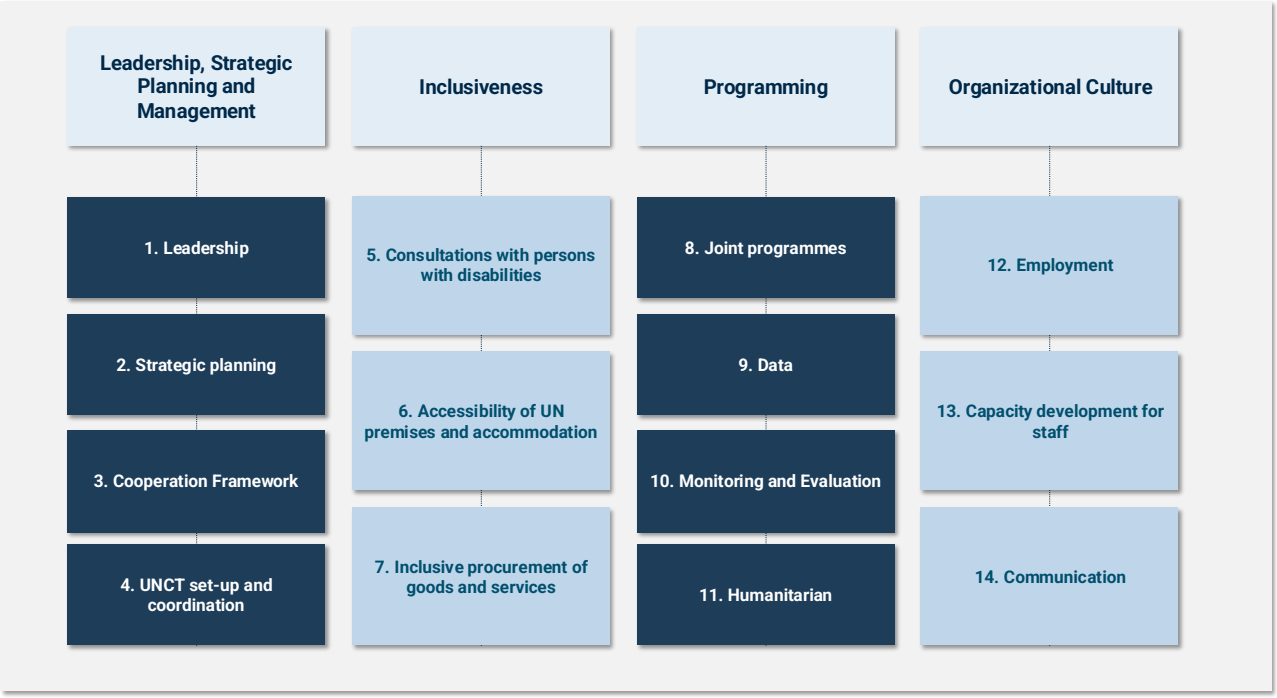
1. For UNDIS reporting, the definition of entities is those bodies, offices or departments within the United Nations system which are able to implement the UNDIS. This includes all Secretariat departments, and stand-alone offices or missions that are not within the operations or programme of another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

Figure 1: Entity accountability framework



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

Figure 2: UNCT scorecard



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

7. **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 2).

Table 2: 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?

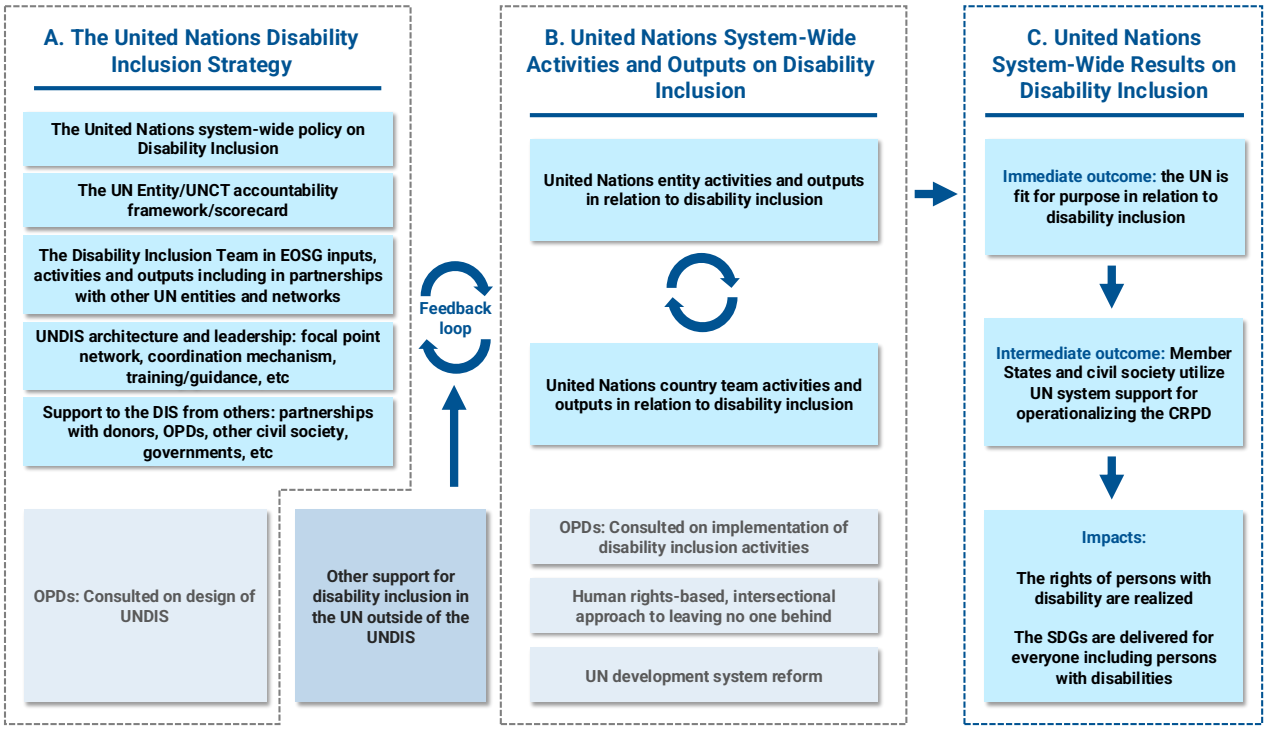
8. **Overall approach**: The evaluation was utilization-focused and conducted in ways that help to inform decisions and improve performance. The evaluation integrated human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind. It was conducted in a participatory manner, 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.

9. 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.

10. **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 3).

11. 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.

Figure 3: Theory of Change



Source: Designed by evaluation team.

12. **Data sources**: Data collection and analysis were undertaken within nine blocks of evidence set out in Table 3. 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 3: Blocks of evidence

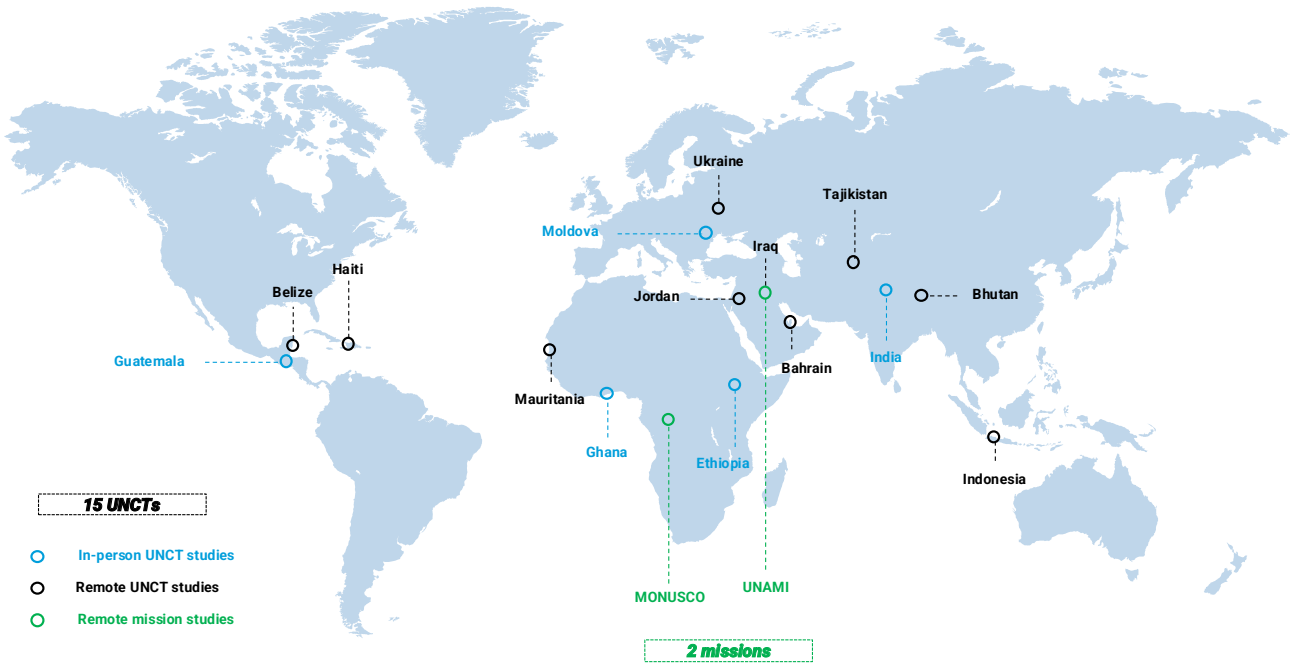
Evidence blocks	Evidence
Block 1: Analysis of UNDIS entity accountability framework and UNCT scorecard data	Analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the accountability framework for United Nations entities and UNCTs from 2019-2024
Block 2: UNCT studies	Interviews conducted in 15 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
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

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.

Evidence blocks	Evidence
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

13. 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 4. 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.

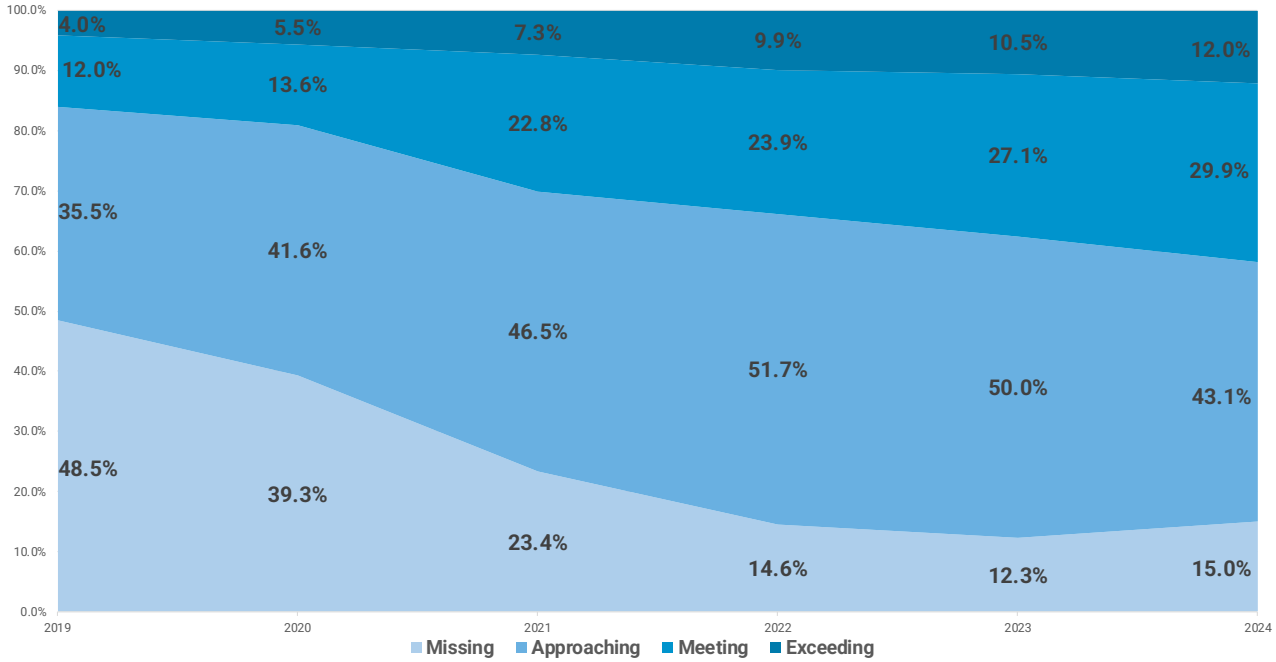
Figure 4: Map of UNCT and mission studies



Source: Designed by evaluation team.

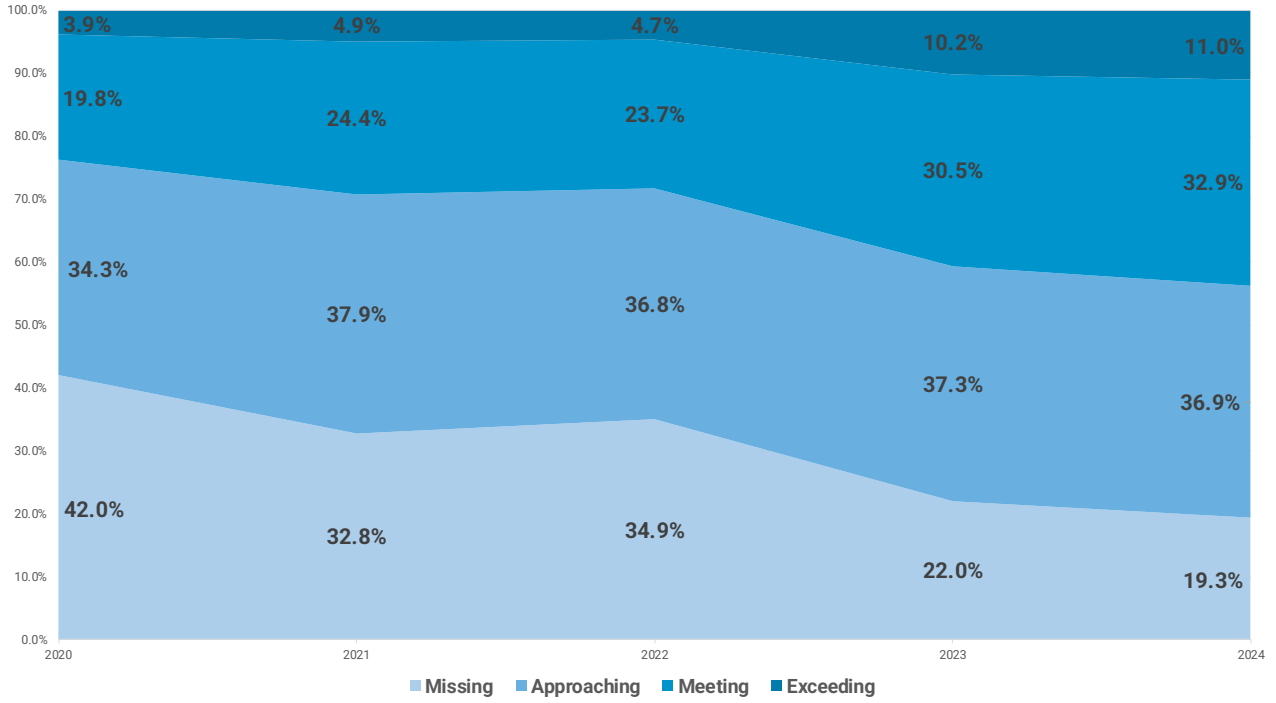
14. **Triangulation and validation**: The evidence from data collection was triangulated across different data sources and data collection methods to formulate findings. The evaluation included internal validation of evidence where the evidence was assessed and triangulated to formulate findings under each evaluation question. External validation included debriefing sessions with United Nations system stakeholders, validation workshops with the evaluation management, reference and advisory groups, and a recommendations workshop with the Evaluation Reference Group.

Figure 5: 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.

Figure 6: 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.

Evaluation findings

The design of the UNDIS and its relevance

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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

19. 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 (Figure 5). 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 (Figure 6).

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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

25. 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.

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. 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.

29. 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.

30. 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

31. 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.

32. 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.

33. 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.

34. 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.

35. 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

36. 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.

37. 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.

38. 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

39. 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.

40. 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

41. 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.

42. 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.

43. 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.

44. 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:

- 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:

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

- 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]
- 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

45. 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.

46. 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.

47. 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.

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.

48. 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.

49. 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

50. 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.

51. 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

52. 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.

53. 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.

54. 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.

55. 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

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

Evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

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