



Disability inclusion matters

Every child has the right to grow up feeling happy, safe and loved. Free to play and learn with their peers. Free to find a sense of belonging in the world and to feel valued – at home, at school and within their community.

But many children struggle to realize these rights. Every day 240 million children with disabilities, or 10 per cent of the world's children, face various barriers that hinder their full participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Barriers related to mobility or communication can prevent children with disabilities from playing with friends, going to school or getting routine vaccinations, medical help and even emergency support during a crisis. Stigma and discrimination are also barriers that can lead to further isolation, mental health issues, neglect and violence.

Disability inclusion starts when every one of us contributes to removing physical, attitudinal and communication barriers, including in the digital divide.

UNICEF's vision is a world fit for *every* child. Inclusion is at the heart of what we do, driven by our commitment to leave no child behind.

The data demands action

Disability inclusion is not new to UNICEF. It has been a growing area of work for more than a decade. In 2021, UNICEF released the most comprehensive statistical analysis of children with disabilities, revealing that as many as 240 million children with disabilities continue to be left behind.

Compared with children without disabilities, children with disabilities are:

49% **34%** **25%**

more likely to have **never attended school** more likely to be **stunted** more likely to be **wasted**

41% **51%**

more likely to **feel discriminated against** more likely to **feel unhappy**

The extent to which children with disabilities are deprived, discriminated against and lack hope for the future makes it clear that societies are not doing enough to realize the most basic human rights of all children. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation even worse.

Including children with disabilities in all aspects of life must be a priority for all of us. If provided an environment that enables their full participation, their energies, talents and ideas will make a positive impact to families and communities, around the world.

UNICEF leading the way

Since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, disability inclusion has become a part of the human rights and development agendas, with increased support and investment from the global community.

With its strong presence in 190 countries, UNICEF is uniquely positioned to advance disability inclusion at scale across the globe. UNICEF is a trusted partner not only for national governments but also for donors, researchers, local and international civil society, and the private sector.

Within the United Nations system, UNICEF has a uniquely cross-sectoral mandate and a comparative advantage in its ability to raise attention to and invest in programming, research standard-setting, and resource mobilization across contexts, sectors and political environments, to shift norms and to promote inclusion for all children.



Introducing the DIPAS

UNICEF's Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS) was developed with the aim of delivering disability-inclusive support and services for children in their communities and of mainstreaming disability inclusion across every aspect of our work and our world.

Disability inclusion is not a new priority for UNICEF. It is included in our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan and has been a growing area of work for more than a decade. The DIPAS is guided by the CRPD, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).

Each thematic sector at UNICEF is already making progress towards its own commitments on disability inclusion. What is new, though, is that the DIPAS provides a road map for cross-sectoral coordination that goes beyond our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan. It shows us how we can strengthen service delivery in communities by working together, strategically, across sectors. As one UNICEF, we will drive more efficient and effective outcomes for children with disabilities. The DIPAS lays the foundations for building truly inclusive communities.

The DIPAS also focuses inwards, providing comprehensive organizational strategies to help UNICEF to become a model for an inclusive, diverse workplace, and a global leader for disability inclusion.