



General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 September 2022

Original: English

Seventy-seventh session

Item 69 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

Disability inclusion in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [76/154](#), in which the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General submit to it a progress report on steps taken by the United Nations system towards mainstreaming disability inclusion, including implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

The report outlines the progress made in 2021, on the basis of an analysis of submissions by United Nations entities and country teams reporting under the Strategy's accountability framework. The report reflects on opportunities and challenges facing the Organization in relation to disability inclusion, including in the context of humanitarian crises and of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) recovery.

* [A/77/150](#).

** The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.



I. Advancing disability inclusion in the United Nations system

1. The world has much changed since the launch of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy in 2019. Our resilience has been tested by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in all dimensions, including health, work and education, in addition to climate change and increasing humanitarian and security crises. An estimated 1 billion persons with disabilities globally¹ – the world’s largest minority group – continue to be among the hardest hit. The commitment of the United Nations to bringing about transformative and systematic change on disability inclusion across the system could not be more timely.

2. The Strategy is driving the United Nations to evaluate its fundamental ways of working. It has brought renewed clarity on the need for consistency in the way the Organization operates and how we assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of its programmes and operations for persons with disabilities. In addition, the Strategy is allowing the Organization to be nimbler in the face of global crises. It has proven to be pivotal in mobilizing and scaling up coordinated efforts for disability-inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery. Yet much work lies ahead.

3. The present report demonstrates that the United Nations is starting to reap the benefits from the foundational actions taken since 2019. Areas where the Organization had clearly been remiss are evolving. From headquarters to the field, the Organization is increasingly integrating disability inclusion into strategic planning and consultations, and assessing and addressing accessibility, including in procurement. Achieving disability inclusion, however, requires a core shift in mindset. This will only be achieved by building the capacity and knowledge of staff and by creating an enabling environment for persons with disabilities in the workplace.

4. As Member States and the United Nations work towards the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals, we must continue to be ambitious in addressing disability inclusion to realize the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely, to leave no one behind. We must also continue to place greater emphasis on persons with disabilities who face heightened exclusion as a result of intersecting factors, such as gender, age and ethnicity. In 2021, I announced my vision for Our Common Agenda, a global effort to tackle the biggest problems faced by humanity and make a tangible difference in people’s lives. The United Nations cannot achieve that vision without the equal and active participation of all persons with disabilities across sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights. To that end, a policy on age, gender and diversity is being developed as part of Our Common Agenda that will address the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

5. The support demonstrated by Member States to disability inclusion and to the Strategy remains critical to achieving success. In this regard, I welcome the recognition of the role of the Strategy in contributing to the rights of persons with disabilities and continued requests for reporting to maintain accountability, reflected in General Assembly resolutions [75/233](#) and [76/154](#). In turn, the Strategy plays a key role in enabling the United Nations system to support Member States in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and making commitment, resources and action converge to bring greater attention to persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

¹ World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva, 2011).

II. Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

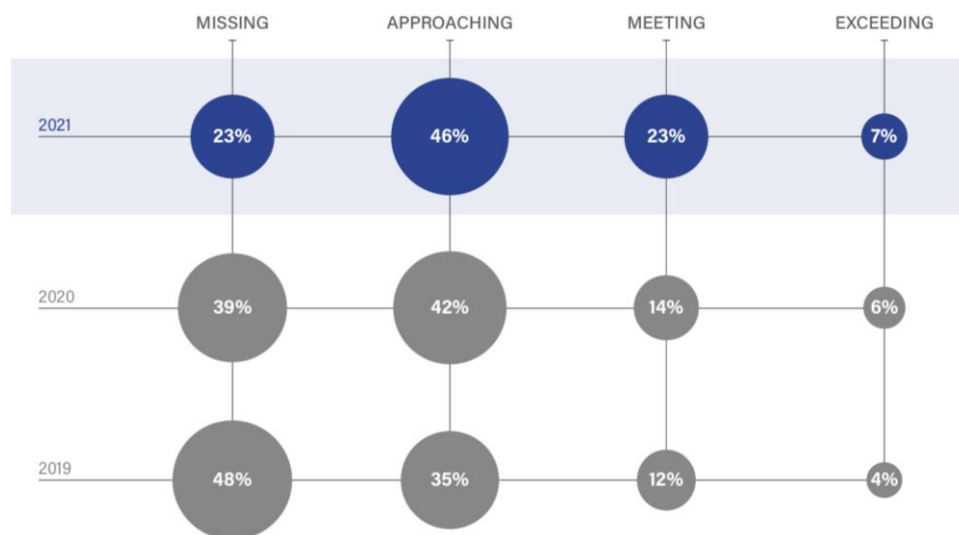
6. The present report is the third report on the implementation of the Strategy. It outlines the progress made in 2021, on the basis of an analysis of reports submitted by 73 United Nations entities and 130 country teams under the Strategy's accountability framework. As in previous years, progress is reported against the indicators of the entity accountability framework and the country team accountability scorecard, using a self-assessed five-point grading system with the following ratings: missing requirements, approaching requirements, meeting requirements, exceeding requirements and not applicable. At a minimum, entities and country teams should aspire to meeting requirements, with the long-term goal of exceeding them.

7. Under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Sustainable Development Unit within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General oversees the implementation of the Strategy across the system. The Unit hosts the dedicated Disability Inclusion Team, which provides coordination, technical assistance and practical tools and resources to entities and country teams to implement and report on the Strategy.

A. Accountability at the entity level

Figure I

Overall rating comparison for United Nations entities, 2019–2021



8. In 2021, the number of entities reporting under the entity accountability framework rose by over 10 per cent, to 73 entities, comprising: (a) 47 Secretariat entities, including 18 peace operations and 5 regional commissions; (b) 6 funds and

programmes; (c) 10 specialized agencies; and (d) 10 other and related entities.² Entities reported through the dedicated online reporting platform.

9. Entities continue to demonstrate progress on disability inclusion across all areas of the Strategy at a higher rate than in previous years. Since 2019, there has been a notable increase in the percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements (from 16 to 30 per cent), while the percentage of entities missing requirements has dropped by half (from 48 to 23 per cent). The greatest concentration of progress in 2021 was among entities moving from approaching to meeting requirements, a promising trend that affirms the effectiveness of the accountability framework to drive progress. However, with the system as a whole still not meeting 70 per cent of the Strategy's benchmarks, there is a need to maintain momentum and redouble efforts on disability inclusion.

² The reporting entities, organized into the four categories under which the analysis was carried out, are as follows: (a) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Department of Global Communications, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Department of Operational Support, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs/Department of Peace Operations, Department of Safety and Security, Development Coordination Office, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Office of Internal Oversight Services, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia/United Nations Support Office in Somalia, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, United Nations Mission in South Sudan, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Office at Geneva, United Nations Office at Nairobi, United Nations Office at Vienna/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization/Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, and United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia; (b) United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme Habitat (UN-Habitat), United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Volunteers and World Food Programme; (c) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Telecommunication Union, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Health Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization and World Tourism Organization; and (d) International Organization for Migration, International Trade Centre, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations System Staff College and United Nations University.

Figure II
2021 rating for the United Nations system, by entity type

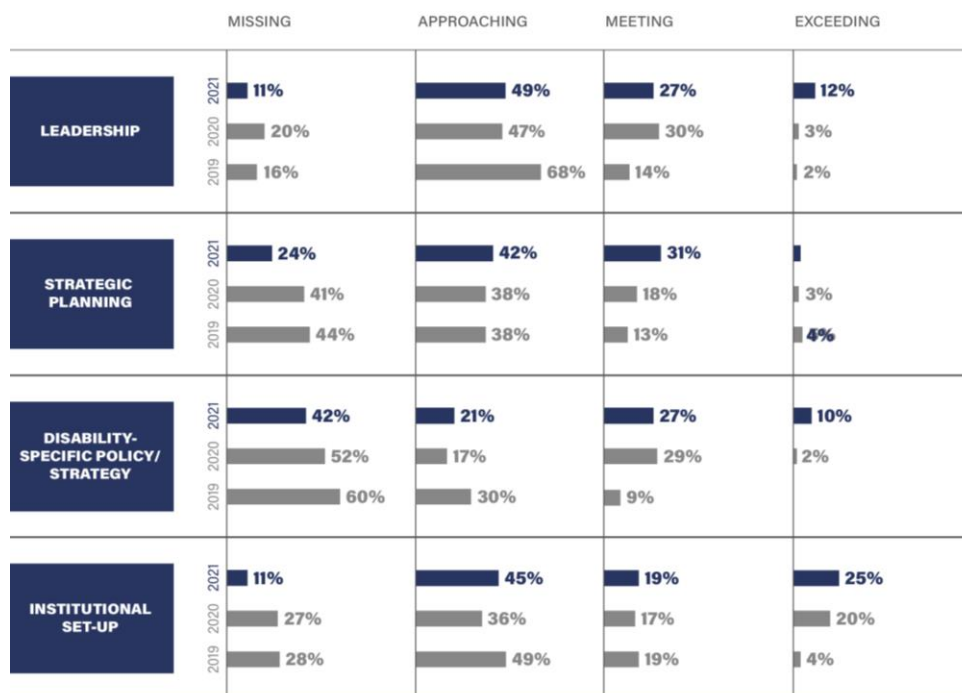


10. Since 2020, Secretariat entities and funds and programmes have enhanced their performance by 13 and 21 per cent, respectively, towards meeting or exceeding the requirements contained in the indicators. Over half of the funds and programmes (54 per cent) are now meeting or exceeding performance, while specialized agencies and other and related entities carry on making steady progress across the board.

11. After three years, the areas with the highest performance are joint initiatives, accessibility, reasonable accommodation and institutional set-up. At the same time, some of the highest rates of progress have been reported in areas where the system had previously lagged behind, for example, in consultation, procurement and communication, reflecting the fact that initial steps are being taken in those areas. Nonetheless, despite actions taken over the past three years, a high proportion of entities are not yet meeting the benchmarks of the Strategy in the areas of procurement, capacity development and evaluation.

Core area 1: leadership, strategic planning and management

Figure III
2021 rating for United Nations entities in core area 1, by performance indicator



12. Leadership is of prime importance as it has an impact on success across all core areas. Where an entity exceeded requirements under the leadership indicator, it tended to meet or exceed core area 1 ratings overall. Conversely, where an entity missed the requirements under leadership, it did not meet or exceed any of the core area 1 indicators. Since 2019, performance on leadership has significantly increased, from 16 to 39 per cent meeting or exceeding requirements. A total of 77 per cent of entities have committed to disability inclusion in their strategic planning documents, and 58 per cent have adopted disability-specific policies or strategies. Following the adoption of a disability rights strategy, senior management in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regularly participates in the review of the strategy, its corresponding action plan and the formulation of remedial actions to accelerate progress towards disability inclusion.

13. Among the 56 entities that reported integrating disability inclusion in their strategic plans, 25 included targeted and mainstreaming commitments on disability inclusion into the results statements and/or indicators of strategic planning documents. Entities have also made significant efforts to refine the implementation of the Strategy, with 42 entities reporting the development of disability-specific policies or strategies. Some entities in the Secretariat are developing action plans in place of a stand-alone strategy, such as the Department of Safety and Security, several peace operations, including in Abyei, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Somalia, and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region.

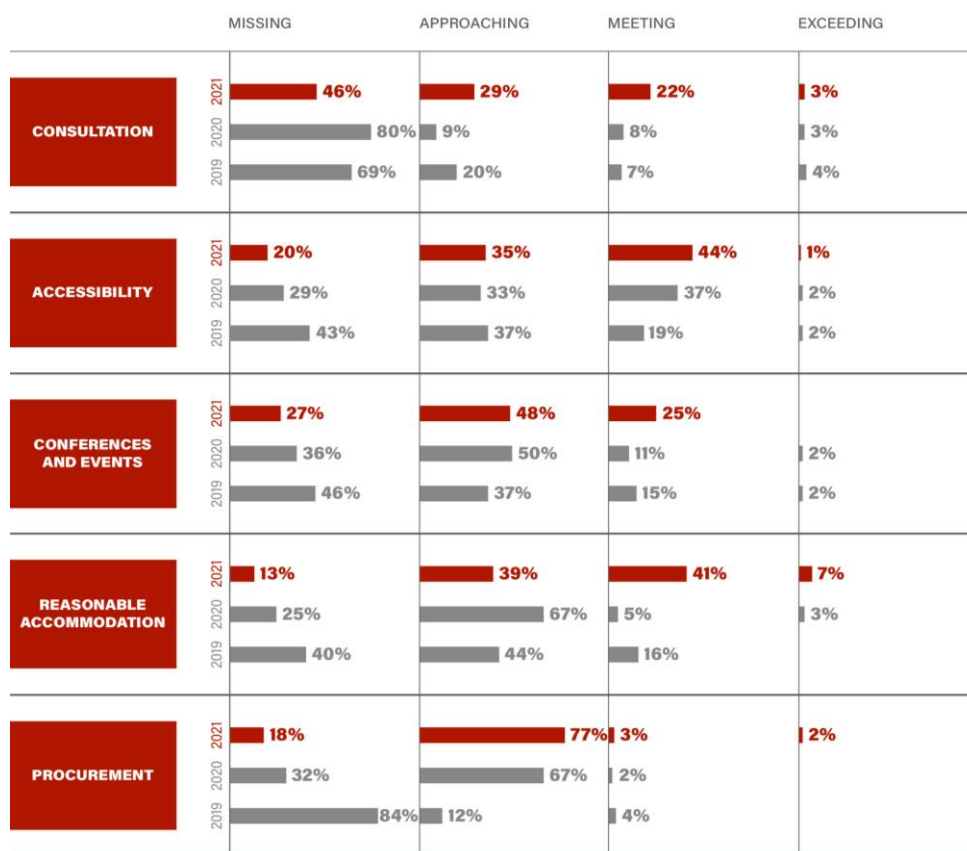
14. Progress on core area 1 was also determined by how high in the structure the unit coordinating implementation was positioned; teams placed closer to the entity leadership were more likely to meet or exceed the requirements under those indicators. A total of 89 per cent of entities have a dedicated focal point on disability inclusion, and 32 entities have a disability focal point network (compared with 24 in 2020). Several larger entities

have dedicated personnel with expertise on disability inclusion, and smaller entities that are still building their knowledge and expertise on the issue have appointed focal points who may rely on the support of sister entities or consultants, as well as the Disability Inclusion Team within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The International Labour Organization (ILO) disability champions network offers staff the opportunity to become champions by working to identify strategies to mainstream disability inclusion. The initiative has been a success, with over 50 champions thus far, generating a disability-inclusive culture that emphasizes equality and horizontal participation.

Core area 2: inclusiveness

Figure IV

2021 rating for United Nations entities in core area 2, by performance indicator



15. The full and active participation of persons with disabilities across the work of the Organization is vital to the achievement of disability inclusion. The positive trend of entities meeting or exceeding requirements in the areas of accessibility and reasonable accommodation (from 39 to 45 per cent and from 8 to 48 per cent, respectively), illustrate concerted efforts to roll out accessibility plans and reasonable accommodation policies, which are fundamental to the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The proportion of entities meeting the requirements for accessible conferences and events has more than doubled, to 25 per cent; however, the lack of funding continues to be identified as a challenge. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is undertaking efforts to improve accessibility at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, including by facilitating physical access, providing support for sign language interpretation and developing its own artificial intelligence-based real-time captioning tool.

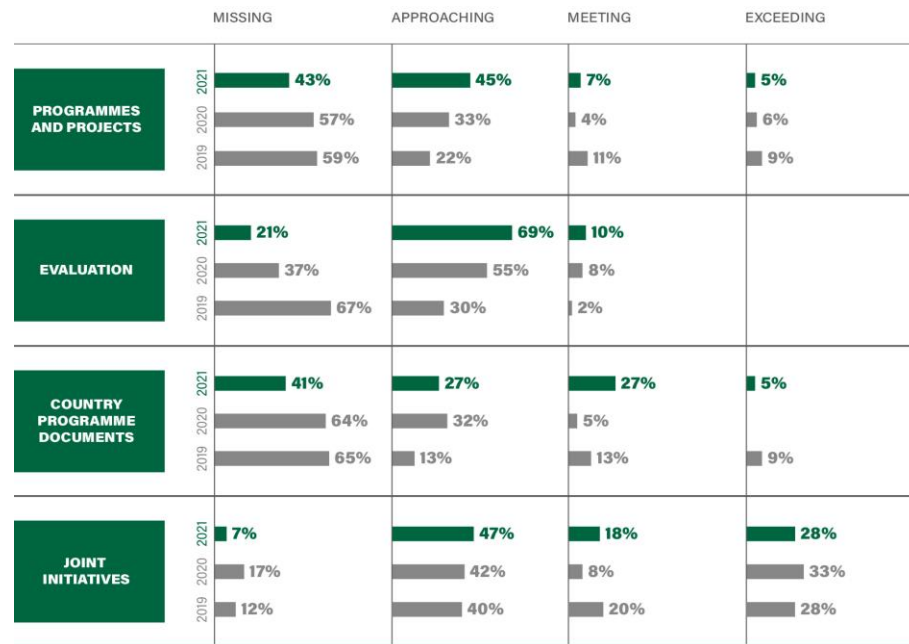
16. The proportion of entities that reported missing requirements with regard to consulting persons with disabilities almost halved from 2020 to 2021 (from 80 to 46 per cent). While many entities had already been undertaking consultations, the shift from missing to approaching requirements is largely due to the release and adoption of system-wide guidelines on consulting persons with disabilities. Despite that progress, 75 per cent of entities continue to report missing or approaching requirements. The development of partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities reported by nine entities will support good practices in that area. Entities should also make efforts to reach out to marginalized groups of persons with disabilities and consider intersectionality. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is working on actively including women with disabilities in its Women’s Participation Project.

17. Reports show that, since 2019, entities that had undertaken baseline assessments on accessibility have followed through with the development of action plans. While physical accessibility has received substantial focus, the accessibility of digital platforms has also been enhanced as a result of COVID-19; 21 entities reported improvements to their websites, online learning and multimedia tools to comply with web accessibility standards. A total of 33 entities are implementing a reasonable accommodation policy, some with a funded mechanism of amounts ranging from \$30,000 to \$300,000. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has developed an automated process for online requests for reasonable accommodation, which also allows for the tracking of decisions, spending and user satisfaction. The steady rate of progress on disability-inclusive procurement since 2019 demonstrates increased awareness among procurement officers, owing to guidelines developed by the Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management in 2020. However, only 5 per cent of entities are meeting or exceeding requirements, signalling a knowledge gap on incorporating accessibility-related criteria into procurement documents. The World Food Programme (WFP) conducted staff training on disability inclusive procurement, updated procurement manuals to integrate accessibility and established a mechanism to support requisitioners in aligning procurement requirements with disability inclusion and accessibility criteria.

Core area 3: programming

Figure V

2021 rating for United Nations entities in core area 3, by performance indicator



18. Joint initiatives remains the area with the highest performance overall, with 93 per cent of entities participating in at least one inter-agency network on disability inclusion, while 33 entities are participating in at least one joint entity initiative on disability inclusion. At the individual level, 57 per cent of entities have adopted guidance on mainstreaming disability inclusion into programme or project cycles, an increase from 43 per cent in 2020. While reporting on country programme documents has fluctuated since the Strategy was launched, as familiarity with the indicators has grown, an increase from 5 to 32 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding requirements since 2020 demonstrates that disability inclusion is being mainstreamed in entity guidance to countries, while 79 per cent have integrated disability inclusion into evaluation guidance. A lower rate of progress of entities meeting or exceeding requirements across core area 3 signifies that the systematic tracking of programmes and projects on disability inclusion is yet to be achieved.

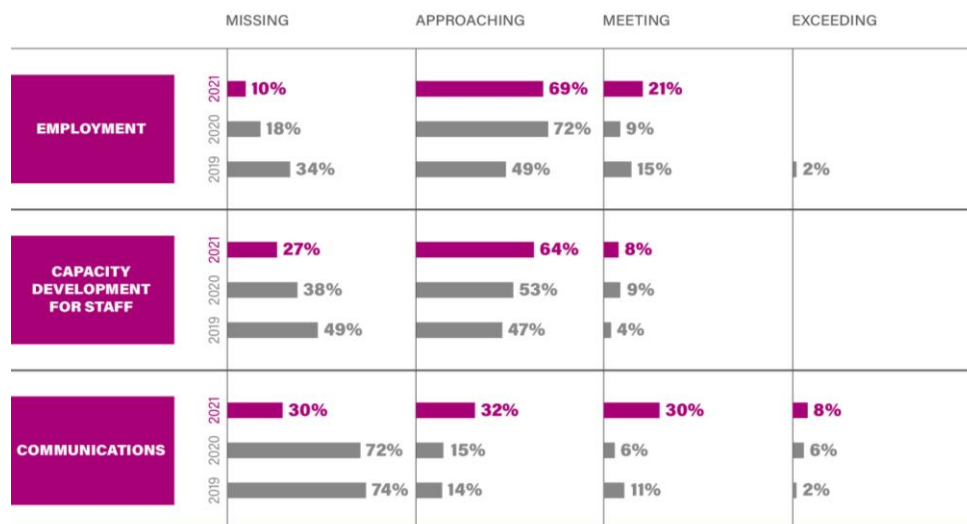
19. Several entities are making use of dedicated disability markers and indicators to track disability inclusion in country programme documents and to monitor the progress of programmes and results at the country level. Disability markers can also serve to measure results that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has introduced new guidelines for projects that include a tagging system to indicate whether disability inclusion is mainstreamed in the project design, and feature a section on disability inclusion analysis to be integrated in each project. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reviewed its country programme documents in 2021 and identified that 97 per cent included analysis and programming on disability inclusion.

20. Progress on evaluation is due to a large extent to the United Nations Evaluation Group's integration, in 2021, of disability inclusion into its human rights evaluation guidance. As a result, in 2021, the proportion of entities missing requirements dropped from 37 to 21 per cent, while those approaching requirements rose from 55 to 69 per cent. However, data reported since 2019 highlight the need for greater knowledge to make progress in this area. To enhance the capacity of evaluation managers, the United Nations Population Fund held a dedicated session on disability inclusion dimensions in evaluations during its virtual global evaluation retreat.

Core area 4: organizational culture

Figure VI

2021 rating for United Nations entities in core area 4, by performance indicator



21. While the percentage of entities meeting or exceeding requirements remains lower across all indicators of core area 4, demand for more knowledge and resources has risen since the Strategy was launched. As a result, 72 per cent of entities (compared with 51 per cent in 2019) took steps to provide opportunities for staff learning on disability inclusion; however, training has not yet been made mandatory. The development of the Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines in 2021 contributed to a significant reduction in missing requirements, from 72 per cent in 2019 to 30 per cent in 2021. A total of 90 per cent of entities have adopted employment policies or strategies on disability inclusion as a result of increasing overall awareness; however, more needs to be done to translate those policies into results.

22. The lack of a robust system to track the number of persons with disabilities currently employed or being recruited across the Organization continues to pose a challenge. Efforts to ensure the accessibility of recruitment platforms and overall advances on physical and digital accessibility combined with reasonable accommodation should yield positive results for the employment of staff with disabilities in the coming years. A total of 10 entities have created employee resource groups, providing a platform to staff with disabilities and staff with dependants with disabilities to provide input on disability inclusion initiatives. The Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities run by the United Nations Volunteers programme placed 157 volunteers with disabilities in 2021, while the programme's Global Talent Pool rose to almost 5,000 candidates who self-identify as persons with disabilities.

23. Steps to enhance staff knowledge have resulted in 53 entities offering learning opportunities and resources, covering both substantive and operational content on disability inclusion for staff at all levels. At the end of 2021, an online training course entitled "Disability inclusion: building an inclusive and accessible United Nations", developed by the Office of Human Resources in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was launched and made available on Inspira. Efforts are under way to make it mandatory. Meanwhile, entities are increasingly including persons with disabilities in their mainstream communication through websites, social media, public campaigns and events. In 2021, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia conducted an assessment of its communications that culminated in a report with concrete recommendations on how to improve disability-inclusive communication. The World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted disability and health through a series of external campaigns and events. Its Department of Communication worked with "Embracing Disability Affinity – Resource Group" on an internal campaign that showcased stories from staff with disabilities and parents with dependants with disabilities, and a series of webinars to debunk disability myths and reduce stigma. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations highlighted the work of women with disabilities in a communication campaign titled "In their hands: women taking ownership of peace".

B. Accountability at the United Nations country team level

Figure VII
2021 overall rating for United Nations country teams



24. In 2021, 130 United Nations country teams reported under the accountability scorecard through the United Nations Sustainable Development Group's information management system. Country teams made steady progress to approach requirements in 38 per cent of the indicators and met requirements in 24 per cent of the indicators (compared with 34 and 20 per cent, respectively, in 2020), and they exceeded requirements in 5 per cent of the indicators (compared with 4 per cent in 2020). It is encouraging that the proportion of indicators for which country teams are missing requirements has dropped from 42 to 33 per cent, demonstrating increased engagement on disability inclusion. However, with 71 per cent of country teams still not meeting the Strategy's benchmarks, increased and accelerated efforts are required to advance disability inclusion.

25. Performance continues to progress evenly across United Nations country teams by regions: Europe and Central Asia have the strongest ratings, either meeting or exceeding requirements of 46 per cent of indicators; followed by Asia and the Pacific (30 per cent), Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean (27 per cent each) and Africa (26 per cent). Progress has been achieved across all areas of the Strategy with leadership, strategic planning and management representing the top core area with the highest performance achieved against the strategic planning and data indicators and the lowest against accessibility and procurement.

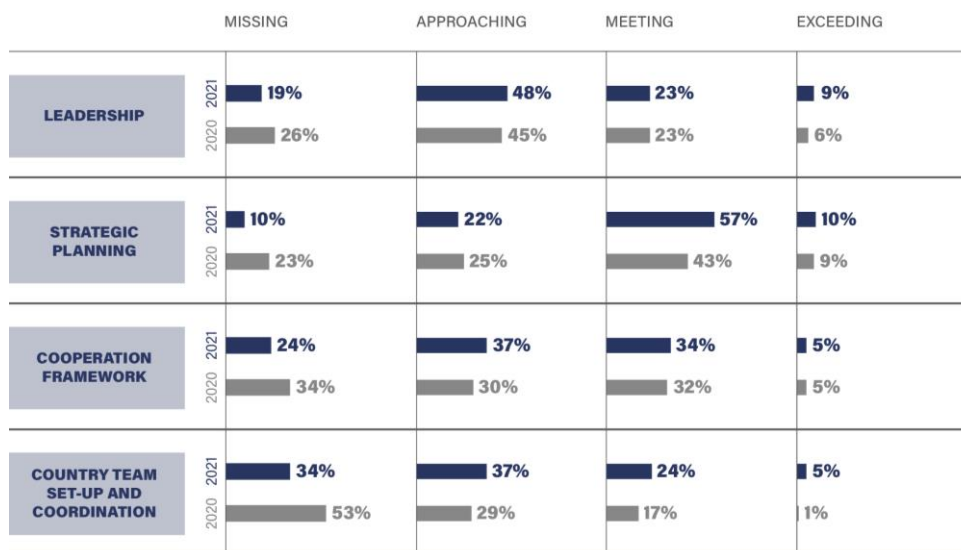
Figure VIII

2021 overall rating for United Nations country teams, by region



Core area 1: leadership, strategic planning and management

Figure IX
2021 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 1, by performance indicator



26. Country team leadership continues to demonstrate strong commitment to disability inclusion. A total of 80 per cent of country teams reported that resident coordinators and heads of agencies are championing disability inclusion both internally and publicly, a 6 per cent increase from 2020. A total of 32 per cent meet the requirements by placing disability inclusion as a recurring item on the agenda of leadership meetings, for example, in Azerbaijan, Benin, China, Fiji, Guatemala, Kosovo, Malawi and Montenegro. In addition, 9 per cent of country teams exceed the requirements by also reflecting disability inclusion in both programming and operations in their workplans as part of performance appraisal. Country teams in El Salvador, Eswatini, Guyana, Togo and Ukraine highlighted the positive practice fostered by resident coordinators and heads of agencies of meeting and consulting directly with organizations of persons with disabilities.

27. The common country analysis serves to determine strategic priorities and is the main pathway for embedding disability inclusion in the programme cycle. This is the area where country teams perform best; only 10 per cent have yet to incorporate disability inclusion in their common country analysis, down from 23 per cent in 2020. A total of 57 per cent of country teams meet the requirements by conducting disability-inclusive analysis in at least one thematic area, and 10 per cent exceed them by doing so in most thematic areas, including in periodic updates of the common country analysis. Several country teams consulted organizations of persons with disabilities in the process of developing and updating their common country analysis, including in the Dominican Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe. In Thailand, efforts were made to consult with organizations representing the diversity of persons with disabilities, including those at the intersections of gender and age, among others. The socioeconomic impact assessments of the COVID-19 pandemic have also served to give visibility to persons with disabilities and enhance their inclusion in the common country analysis.

28. Addressing disability inclusion in cooperation frameworks with Governments ensures outcomes inclusive of persons with disabilities at the country level. While 76 per cent of cooperation frameworks refer to the inclusion of persons with disabilities,

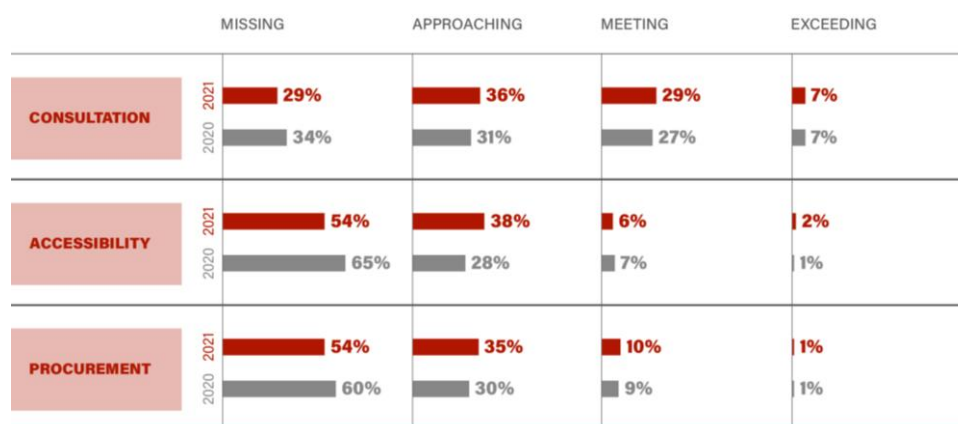
only 39 per cent substantively reflect disability inclusion in results frameworks and outcome areas, including the frameworks in Chile, Ethiopia, Serbia and Zambia. The commitment to leaving no one behind has been a catalyst for country teams' efforts to mainstream disability into the frameworks. Social protection, economic empowerment, education, participation and access to justice are some of the most common results areas where persons with disabilities have been reflected, which also correspond with multiple Sustainable Development Goals and targets under the 2030 Agenda. Looking ahead, many country teams have reaffirmed their intention to mainstream disability inclusion in new cooperation frameworks.

29. Given that work on disability inclusion is cross-cutting in nature, better coordination and joint action at the country level will have a positive impact moving forward. An increasing number of country teams have established a coordination mechanism, progressing from 47 to 66 per cent of country teams since the previous report. In many instances, those mechanisms have been embedded in gender, human rights or "leave no one behind" thematic groups or task forces. A total of 29 per cent of coordination mechanisms have also provided substantive input on disability inclusion at critical junctures of the cooperation framework cycle. Country teams in Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Eswatini, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago and Uzbekistan have made efforts to include organizations of persons with disabilities in joint national-United Nations steering committees.

Core area 2: inclusiveness

Figure X

2021 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 2, by performance indicator



30. Country teams are slowly building their engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities. It is encouraging that over two thirds of United Nations country teams are undertaking at least one consultation annually, while more than one third are consulting more frequently on such topics as integrating disability inclusion in the cooperation framework cycle or designing and implementing joint projects and COVID-19 response and recovery. However, with nearly one third of country teams still not consulting persons with disabilities at all, concrete actions and leadership oversight are required to further advance this critical area, which is foundational to the overall success of the Strategy. A total of 7 per cent of country teams exceed the requirements by having a partnership with such organizations. For example, the Fiji multi-country office has a formal partnership with the Pacific Disability Forum through principles of engagement, which is aimed at strengthening joint efforts for disability-inclusive development in the Pacific.

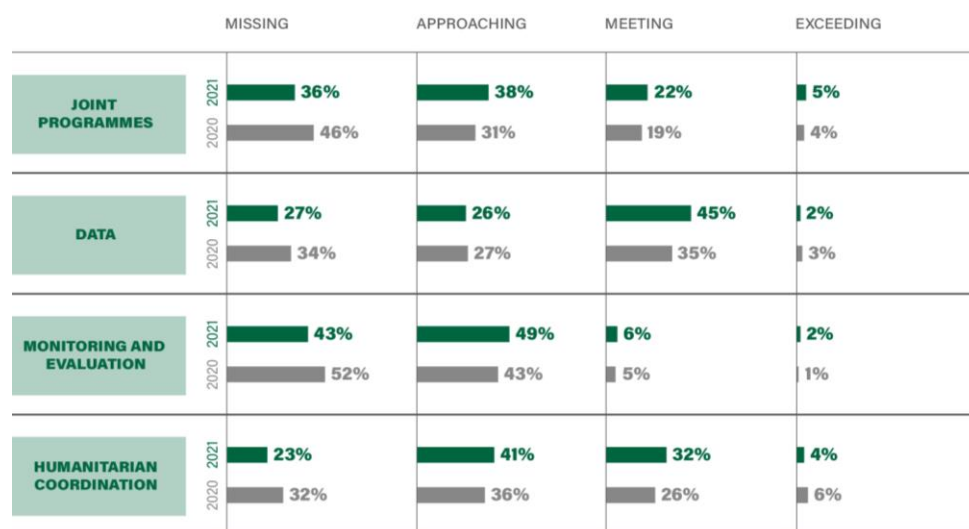
31. Country teams are advancing incrementally in rendering common premises and services accessible. A total of 38 per cent of country teams approach requirements by assessing the accessibility of their premises and services and keeping records of reasonable accommodation requests. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of Moldova and Zimbabwe, organizations of persons with disabilities participated in country team accessibility assessments. However, only 8 per cent of country teams meet the requirements by having adopted accessibility plans. Only three country teams exceed the requirements under this indicator. Despite improvements in the proportion of country teams missing the requirements with regard to accessibility, down from 65 to 54 per cent, the majority continues to lag behind. Of note, many country teams are adapting their procedures in line with the business operations strategy 2.0, which will support improved performance on accessibility in the coming years.

32. Country teams are gradually moving towards disability-inclusive procurement practices. While 54 per cent of country teams still miss the requirements under this indicator, 46 per cent have incorporated accessibility as a criteria to consider in the procurement of external venues, goods and services. Several country teams are reviewing long-term-agreements, including on event management, for disability inclusion. A total of 11 per cent meet the requirements by including accessibility criteria in the periodic review of authorized external venues, including in Albania, Brazil, the Republic of Moldova and Trinidad and Tobago.

Core area 3: programming

Figure XI

2021 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 3, by performance indicator



33. Joint programmes provide the opportunity for country teams to harmonize their approaches, strengths and resources to advance disability inclusion more efficiently. A total of 65 per cent of country teams have mainstreamed disability inclusion in the majority of new joint initiatives, and 27 per cent meet or exceed the requirements by mainstreaming disability inclusion into existing joint initiatives, in addition to implementing a specific joint programme on disability inclusion. COVID-19 response and recovery have been an important entry point for disability inclusion in joint programmes, along with humanitarian response, gender and social protection. The multi-partner trust fund of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Spotlight Initiative have significantly contributed to catalysing joint efforts for disability inclusion that concurrently advance the 2030 Agenda.

34. Access to disability-disaggregated data enables the effective monitoring of disability inclusion and thus contributes to the success of all indicators. This is one of the areas where country teams have achieved the strongest performance and are increasingly meeting the benchmarks, with 47 per cent involved in mapping disability data and working with Governments to improve data collection through funding, training and technical assistance. Country teams are playing a critical role in supporting censuses and surveys to collect disability-disaggregated data using the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning and the UNICEF/Washington Group module on child functioning. However, it is proving more challenging for country teams to exceed the requirements (currently only 2 per cent do) by systematically incorporating disability inclusion into capacity-building initiatives for national statistical offices.

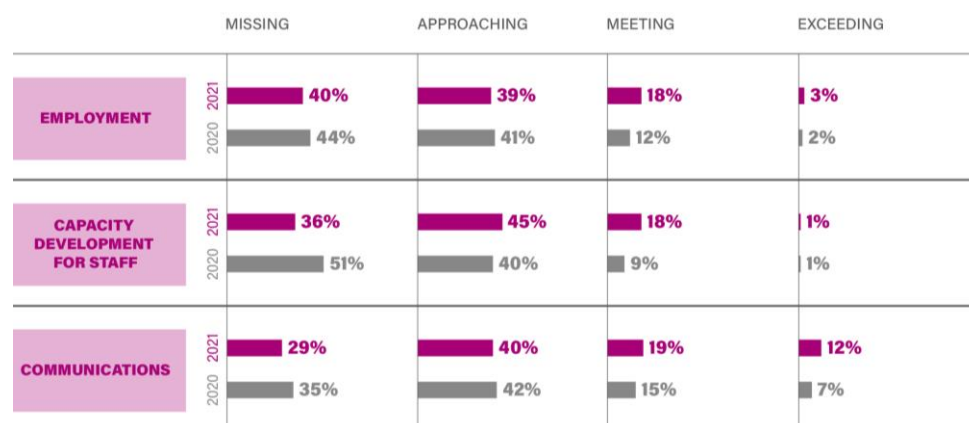
35. Monitoring and evaluation remain among the indicators with the weakest performance. There was some progress towards approaching requirements, from 43 to 49 per cent, by ensuring that the annual cooperation framework report incorporates disability inclusion results in its assessment. Yet there has been only a slight advance, from 6 to 8 per cent, of meeting or exceeding requirements, which reflects the limitations reported on technical training for monitoring and evaluation groups and staff. Only the country team in Viet Nam exceeds requirements with regard to this indicator; its evaluation of the One Strategic Plan 2017–2021 addressed progress related to disability inclusion. More guidance and support are needed for the formulation of indicators and use of data to measure disability inclusion effectively for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation.

36. The COVID-19 pandemic brought heightened visibility to the need to include persons with disabilities in humanitarian preparedness and response and, since the pandemic, rapid assessments are considering disability inclusion. Country teams have made solid progress since 2020, improving from 68 to 77 per cent of country teams and humanitarian country teams assessing how persons with disabilities are included in needs assessments, preparedness and response plans, 36 per cent of which spell out how humanitarian response addresses the specific risks faced by persons with disabilities and disaggregate data by disability. A total of 4 per cent of country teams exceed the requirements under this indicator, and central to this success is the active engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities. Although several country teams indicate that they do not have humanitarian country teams or that their countries are not in a humanitarian phase, it is important that all country teams have disability-inclusive preparedness and contingency plans.

Core area 4: organizational culture

Figure XII

2021 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 4, by performance indicator



37. Country teams have made advances towards meeting and exceeding the requirements relating to disability-inclusive employment, from 14 to 21 per cent, by taking targeted measures to encourage persons with disabilities to apply to vacancies. Several country teams include persons with disabilities in their workforce through the United Nations Volunteer programme. Yet the bulk of country teams miss the requirements (40 per cent) or, having recently made a commitment to non-discrimination in the employment of persons with disabilities, approach them (39 per cent). In the country team in the United Republic of Tanzania, the Human Resources Working Group established partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities to help to ensure that vacancy announcements reach persons with disabilities. A specific focal point was assigned by organizations of persons with disabilities working with the country team to support the dissemination of vacancy announcements among their networks.

38. Capacity development is an enabler for many other indicators, as it prepares and supports staff with understanding and applying disability inclusion in their field of work. Country teams are steadily progressing in ensuring the capacity development of their staff. A total of 64 per cent make training and learning resources on disability inclusion available to staff (compared with 50 per cent in 2020), and 19 per cent are annually conducting an inter-agency training on disability inclusion in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities (compared with 10 per cent in 2020). Country teams are taking specific actions to build the capacity of their staff on disability inclusion, while the Development Coordination Office and entities are facilitating online training and providing resources that can further support country teams' actions in this area. Only the country team in Zimbabwe exceeds requirements, by having the majority of staff participating in training on disability inclusion within the cooperation framework cycle.

39. Performance on disability-inclusive communication varies across country teams. A total of 29 per cent miss the requirements and are yet to take steps to reflect persons with disabilities in mainstream communications. A total of 19 per cent meet the requirements by integrating the rights of persons with disabilities into the annual workplan of their inter-agency communication group. At the same time, 12 per cent of the country teams exceed the requirements, including in Georgia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkmenistan, which is the highest proportion of country teams exceeding requirements across all indicators. In Namibia, the inter-agency communication group has made concerted efforts to ensure that mainstream communications reflect persons with disabilities, and the Joint United Nations-Namibia Communication Strategy 2019–2023 contains a specific component on advocating disability-inclusive social transformation.

C. Addressing the rights of persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises

40. Conflict, natural disasters, climate change and the health and socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to the highest number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in decades worldwide. Persons with disabilities are among those most adversely affected in crises. The Strategy contributes to foster disability-inclusive humanitarian programming and action, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2475 \(2019\)](#) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2021, the Central Emergency Response Fund assisted an estimated 3 million persons with disabilities, the majority of whom, 1.6 million, were women and girls, and a further \$10 million was earmarked for persons with disabilities.

41. Entities working on humanitarian action have demonstrated considerable progress in performance, moving from meeting or exceeding requirements in 15 per cent of indicators in 2019 to 40 per cent in 2021. IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and WHO collaborate in an inter-agency initiative to strengthen disability-inclusive humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans. Entities are also promoting disability-inclusive humanitarian action by collecting disability-disaggregated data, documenting participation by organizations of persons with disabilities and developing related guidance.

42. Peace operations play a key role in the Organization's work to ensure disability inclusion in zones of crisis and conflict. The number of peace operations implementing and reporting on the Strategy has increased by 50 per cent since 2019, and they are enhancing commitment to disability inclusion through their strategic plans, appointing focal points and consulting organizations of persons with disabilities more frequently. However, more efforts are needed to reach the performance level of the entities in the areas of employment, communication and capacity development. Where peace operations have collaborated with country teams on the implementation of the Strategy, both sides have benefited. For example, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia supported the country team and humanitarian country team to further disability inclusion with regard to the disaggregation of data, and they share a common Strategy focal point. At the headquarters level, training was provided by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations for all staff on how to mainstream disability inclusion in its work.

43. Country teams and humanitarian country teams have expanded their focus on disability-inclusive humanitarian action through the development of resources, strengthening data collection to inform needs assessments, and the delivery of capacity-building and technical assistance to national authorities, humanitarian actors and organizations of persons with disabilities, among other initiatives. In Colombia, the country team and humanitarian country team included in their humanitarian needs overview an analysis of how persons with disabilities were affected by COVID-19, conflict, natural disasters and mixed migration.

44. Humanitarian response to COVID-19 served as an entry point for many country teams to leverage their work on disability inclusion. System-wide measures were taken to make resources and support available to persons with disabilities; humanitarian pooled funds and multi-partner trust funds, such as that of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are some of the instruments that enabled disability-inclusive COVID-19 response. Both entities and country teams continued to engage in monitoring and developing resources for disability-inclusive access to services, including through a gender lens that advances Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 10 and 16. For example, resources for women and girls with disabilities were developed to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and disability-inclusive gender-based violence services during the pandemic. In addition, the country team in Ukraine supported the presentation of a survey conducted by the National Assembly of People with Disabilities of Ukraine on the gendered impact of COVID-19, while the country team in Tajikistan led an awareness-raising campaign on the role of women with disabilities during the pandemic. Consultations were carried out by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and Sightsavers International with women with disabilities in Nigeria and the South Asia region, culminating in recommendations on involving women with disabilities in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

45. The United Nations system's response to COVID-19 also generated alternative modes of operation. Many entities and country teams invested in accessible online

platforms for meetings, events and learning that continue to serve staff with disabilities and other interlocutors, experts and participants with disabilities. The UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean conducted several analyses of the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities.

III. Overarching actions

A. Overall coordination and facilitation

46. High-level leadership remains key to implementing the Strategy at pace. During a meeting of principals convened in 2021, entity leadership recommended the development of a joint statement of commitment to enhancing coordination on disability inclusion, in particular at the country level. Regular updates, as well as tools and resources developed for implementing the Strategy, are circulated among the Senior Management Group. Resident coordinators, as the Secretary-General's interlocutors at the country level, continue to discuss the implementation of the Strategy during their annual global meeting, and disability inclusion is raised in regular exchanges between the Deputy Secretary-General and the country team leadership.

47. Complementing leadership actions, the Strategy focal point networks provide a dynamic space for knowledge-sharing and mutual learning at the technical level. The entity focal point network now comprises more than 80 entities, which meet quarterly. The country team focal point network, coordinated by the Development Coordination Office and the Disability Inclusion Team, includes more than 75 country teams, facilitating active peer-to-peer discussion and collaboration. Specialized technical-level meetings and sub-working groups within those networks have been set up to target common challenges, for example, a Secretariat focal point network and working group for peace operations.

48. To build knowledge and capacity, dedicated webinar series were also held; the Disability Inclusion Team collaborated with ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank on the employment of persons with disabilities, and with the Development Coordination Office on physical and digital accessibility and disability-inclusive human resources in country teams, as part of the roll-out of the business operations strategy 2.0, as well as country-specific trainings and general awareness-raising sessions on disability inclusion.

49. On the basis of both demand and gaps identified in reports, the Disability Inclusion Team coordinated the development of two key resources in 2021, in close collaboration with the International Disability Alliance: system-wide guidelines on consulting persons with disabilities, developed in collaboration with technical staff across programmes and operations; and disability-inclusive communications guidelines, developed with the Department of Global Communications. The guidelines seek to systematize the Organization's approach to consultation and communication through a human rights-based approach to disability. The guidelines and other practical resources are available on the dedicated Strategy website.

B. Inter-agency actions

50. Inter-agency actions and networks are critical to the success of the Strategy, as they provide a platform for exchange, coordination and cohesive action. In 2021, the United Nations Evaluation Group began to develop guidelines on mainstreaming disability inclusion in evaluations. The Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on

Management and the United Nations Evaluation Group continue to be key to building consensus and knowledge on disability-inclusive procurement and evaluations, respectively. In 2021, following a briefing held with the Digital and Technology Network on the role of accessibility in information and communications technology, the Network agreed to establish a sub-working group on digital accessibility.

51. The Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action gathers more than 50 members from across United Nations entities and civil society, including organizations of persons with disabilities and international non-governmental organizations, to foster cooperation on disability-inclusive humanitarian action. A project was launched through the Reference Group in 2021 to build the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities to engage in humanitarian action.

52. In 2021, the multi-partner trust fund of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities supported 42 country programmes, four multi-country and four global programmes to accelerate disability inclusion, addressing such topics as equality and non-discrimination, accessibility, inclusive service delivery, budgeting and financial management compliant with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and accountability and governance. The Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund continued to fund 35 joint programmes on integrated social protection at the country level. These projects and programmes work in complementarity with the Strategy to elevate disability inclusion across national agendas, bringing persons with disabilities to the fore, and contribute to fulfilling the commitment in the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.

IV. Challenges and opportunities

53. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been at the forefront of the world's agenda since 2020. As we move towards recovery, there is a clear opportunity to transform how the Organization works to make it more accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities. The Strategy is charting a path that provides confidence in the capacity and flexibility of the system to embrace disability inclusion. This is the moment to invest in long-term mainstream and targeted measures to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and shape a more inclusive and accessible world for all.

54. Disability inclusion remains an emerging area of work for humanitarian and peace operations. While operating in difficult and high-risk situations poses unique implementation challenges requiring more targeted and, in some cases, individualized support, the potential positive impact on persons with disabilities, who are among those most in need of assistance and support in such contexts, is high. The increasing number of conflicts and crises make action in this area even more imperative. The examples of Iraq and Somalia demonstrate how peace operations can embrace disability inclusion as part of their mandate, and the achievements and lessons learned from implementation will be critical to encouraging others to follow suit. In this regard, targeted support to peace operations will remain a priority, to build on the initial good practice established by the forerunners.

55. Building the capacity of staff remains foundational to the Strategy's success. This must be a priority for the Organization, moving forward, and opportunities to build knowledge and awareness on disability inclusion must be readily available to staff at all levels. To address this gap, two tailored training initiatives are under development and will be rolled out in 2022: a 90-minute all-staff online training module on disability inclusion, developed in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College; and an in-depth five-week interactive training course, developed in collaboration with ILO and its International Training Centre, to support

targeted learning for disability inclusion focal points and others working directly on disability inclusion.

56. There is increasing recognition by staff at all levels of the fundamental necessity to consult persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. However, shifting mindsets to the effect that persons with disabilities are consulted not just on disability-specific issues but on all areas of work will require conscious efforts and senior-level engagement. The system-wide guidelines on consulting persons with disabilities provide initial direction, and the increasing examples of partnerships between organizations of persons with disabilities and entities and country teams will demonstrate how this can be achieved. The roll-out of the guidelines in 2022 with the International Disability Alliance will contribute to a greater understanding of the benefits of engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities in their diversity to inform and add value to the work of the United Nations. Moreover, strengthening relations with those organizations will enhance the Organization's capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by being better equipped to reach the furthest behind first.

57. Several entities and country teams have been increasing their investment in disability inclusion, yet a lack of financial resources is repeatedly raised as an obstacle to more concerted action. While financial constraints should not impede action, coordinated efforts are needed to ensure that existing resources are systematically invested in a manner that contributes to disability inclusion and accessibility, rather than maintaining the status quo. Better tracking of resources is also required to establish the extent of disability inclusion across programmes and projects. To address this gap, the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, in collaboration with the Disability Inclusion Team, has developed a disability inclusion marker, which has been integrated on a pilot basis in the Secretariat's enterprise resource planning system, Umoja. The marker will enable Secretariat entities to monitor and report on the extent of disability inclusion within programmes and projects. UN-Women also developed a paper on gender-responsive disability marker options to explore opportunities for introducing disability inclusion markers to result-based reporting systems.

58. Lastly, as I have consistently reiterated, it is the Organization's goal to be an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. Through the Strategy's implementation, the United Nations is improving the accessibility of its offices and establishing more inclusive human resources practices, which will pave the way for greater diversity in its workforce. However, there is no mechanism to know how many persons with disabilities are working in the system, which limits the ability to monitor progress. To better track the number of persons with disabilities joining the Organization, the Office of Human Resources in the Secretariat is currently reviewing options to include a disability self-identification question in the Inspira recruitment system. The mechanism will create an opportunity to improve data collection on the number of applicants and personnel with disabilities, and help to identify gaps in policies and procedures and improve representation in the workplace. Currently, the available mechanism is the Secretariat staff survey, which in 2021 reported 2.9 per cent of staff self-identifying as persons with disabilities.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

59. As we move into the fourth year of the Strategy's implementation, it is clear that staff at all levels, supported by their leadership, are taking action to advance disability inclusion across programmes and operations. While findings demonstrate that

significant progress has been made since 2019, a majority of benchmarks set by the Strategy to achieve the transformative change on disability inclusion are still not being met. At the same time, there is an ever-increasing pool of tangible practices that can be drawn from within the United Nations system to achieve disability inclusion. I remain fully committed to the Strategy and commit the support of my office for its implementation, including in those areas requiring targeted focus, such as peace operations.

60. The continued leadership of principals, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and resident coordinators remains a vital element to maintaining momentum on disability inclusion and the success of the Strategy. I am once again renewing the call to senior leadership across the system to continue to empower staff to engage on the Strategy's implementation and to expand the allocation of human and financial resources, particularly in areas where performance remains low.

61. Reporting under the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system has demonstrated how the indicators of the Strategy can be used to track disability inclusion across mainstream efforts of the United Nations, and this approach can also translate to other mainstream settings to enhance accountability on disability inclusion. The Strategy thus serves to harmonize and optimize efforts to support Member States and partners to implement the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind.

62. As the Organization strives to raise its standards and performance on disability inclusion, it must continue to draw on the knowledge and resources of Member States and the private sector, particularly in the areas of employment and accessibility. By joining forces, the United Nations system and all stakeholders can align practices, set new benchmarks and serve as models for transforming physical and virtual workplaces and the representation of persons with disabilities within workforces, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 8.

63. Member States continue to play a key role in holding the United Nations system to account with regard to disability inclusion and in ensuring that resources remain available to support advancement in this area. With the emergence of new global threats and crises, vigilance is required to prevent the diversion of funding from disability inclusion, which could put at risk the modest state of resources available and imperil some of the hard-earned gains achieved in the past years.

64. Lastly, active consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities should be at the centre of all that the United Nations does, as they are its key partners in the journey to disability inclusion. The Organization is better informed and equipped to act effectively and efficiently when it works with persons with disabilities, not only on disability-specific matters, but systematically and across all areas of its mandate. We count on organizations of persons with disabilities to continue to hold our feet to the fire.

65. Now is the time to renew and multiply efforts, commitments and investment into implementing the Strategy. The Organization still has a long way to go and cannot afford to stop short in its progress. But the journey itself is a reaffirming process that is mobilizing it to learn, share and strategize for greater cohesion and coherence in its acts and values. I look forward to continuing this journey together towards a stronger and more inclusive United Nations and future for all.