GUIDE
TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

For inclusive meetings!

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Why this guide?

Several existing national, regional and international instruments specific to people with disabilities are now part of the legal framework of West African States, and oblige them to implement mechanisms to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) are respected.

The recent ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) reinforces these mechanisms. The full and effective participation and integration of people with disabilities in society, non-discrimination, and accessibility are the founding principles of this Convention (Article 3).

“Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

Discriminatory behaviour and environmental barriers are elements that put a person in a disabling situation, more than any physical or mental impairment.

Making each event accessible for disabled people is therefore a way of breaking down these attitudinal and environmental barriers so as to INCLUDE people with disabilities in society at all levels.

This guide is part of the inclusive development process supported by Handicap International, which ensures that persons with disabilities can enjoy the same rights as any other member of society, and are resource persons as regards the development and implementation of policies.

It provides a basis for the organization of events in which people with disabilities can participate, by ensuring physical access and access to information for all without discrimination, and thus giving everyone the opportunity to be a full citizen.

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Contact Name</th>
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### List of sign language interpreters and Braille printing facilities in the 8 countries: (non-exhaustive list)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Sign Language interpreters</th>
<th>Braille printing</th>
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Situation of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the 6 countries of the DECISIPH project:

![Map showing ratification dates](image)

**www.un.org/disabilities (October 2010)**

There are several types of disability, which can be divided into four main categories:

- **Physical impairment;**
- **Visual impairment;**
- **Hearing impairment;**
- **Mental impairment.**

When planning an event, it is essential to take into account all types of disabilities, so that the venue can be accessible to as many people as possible.

Do not forget that any special provision for persons with disabilities will also benefit other groups of people, such as the elderly, pregnant women, people suffering from obesity, short people, people carrying heavy loads, illiterate people...

**An environment that is easily accessible for people with disabilities benefits EVERYONE.**
What should you think of before the meeting?

Involving persons with disabilities

The best way to organize an event that is accessible to all is to solicit the participation of persons with disabilities when planning the event. Indeed, they know best what their specific needs and potential difficulties are, as well as the most practical solutions.

If you cannot involve PWDs, you can make a simulation involving volunteers acting as PWDs to ensure that all options have been considered.

Based on the evaluation, it is important to capitalize on the experience and disseminate successful accessibility practices.

It is essential to establish appropriate evaluation criteria in order to have an environment that is more accessible to all for future events, thus reducing disabling situations for participants and moving towards an inclusive society where the rights of every member are respected.
How to evaluate?
The evaluation may be in the form of a short questionnaire that can be filled out and returned immediately after the meeting; More elaborate questionnaires can also be considered. In this case, note down the email addresses of all stakeholders of the meeting and distribute the questionnaires by email; Individual interviews are also possible, especially if the meeting is followed by a meal, a break, a concert...

Make interviews with participants

What target?
All stakeholders involved directly or indirectly in the event can contribute to the evaluation;
External stakeholders, the public (with and without disabilities), the staff of the organizations involved, and the organizers are resources and sources of information for evaluating the accessibility of the meeting for persons with disabilities;
The Disability Advisor and the attendants may also arrange a debriefing immediately after the event, or later on, after gathering all the information (questionnaires, interviews...).

Choosing the venue
When choosing the venue, it is essential to verify that the location is accessible to all (transport possibilities, sidewalk, slope...) and that everyone can get about, regardless of the type of disability (width of doors and corridors, presence of stairs, elevators...).
It is important to respect the chain of movement by ensuring access to all the locations that are necessary for the successful holding of the event, if they are not already accessible (main room, toilets, catering, other activities...).
The autonomy of persons with disabilities outside and inside the facility should be optimal. It is advisable to have on a common entrance for all, and consider several other entrances to avoid difficulty in getting in or out.

Use visible, legible and understandable directional signs
Effective and appropriate signage will allow everyone to get their bearings upon arrival at the venue. This may include a general plan of the premises (entrance, venue, itinerary, emergency exits)...

Use signage that is visible, legible and easy to understand
Inform stakeholders

To make the information accessible to the greatest number, it is important to make recommendations for the future contributors.

They should send in advance a detailed description or the exact text of their contribution. This can be used to produce a Braille translation and/or a printout, but also to facilitate the work of interpreters (sign language, foreign languages). Contributors can also use visual tools to reach a wider audience and to present the key information in different formats (audio, photos, movies...). They should also think about adapting all their facilitation methods (role-play, practical exercises...).

They can also use visual tools to support their intervention so as to reach a larger audience, and present the key information in various formats (audio, photos, films...).

The presentations should follow certain rules:
- using large print (minimum font 14), bold text,
- contrasting colours (black/white or yellow),
- easily legible font (Arial or Helvetica), airy layout...

Disability awareness for the staff

For the inclusive actions to have a strong and lasting impact, the organizers of the meeting have to raise awareness of all stakeholders about the concept of disability, the needs associated with the different types of impairment at the meeting; and the concept of “inclusive meetings”. For this, the organizers may solicit the help of DPOs.

Appoint a Disability Advisor, and select a team of attendants of persons with disabilities. This team may, for example, establish a method for evaluating accessibility for persons with disabilities at the event.

What you should think of after the meeting?

Disseminate

If journalists were present, get mp3 recordings of the contributions and interviews.

Ensure the provision and dissemination of key materials related to the event (documents, presentations, reports, training guides...) in the form of written documents, compilation CDs, or online on the Internet...

Compilation of documents on CD
(contributions, reports, interviews...)

Evaluate

It is essential to conduct an evaluation of the event in terms of its accessibility for persons with disabilities in order to identify the difficulties and suggest improvements for future meetings.

What to evaluate?

Communication about the event:
- accessibility for all people (audio-visual aid...);
- General accessibility of the venue: urban transport, personal transport, parking possibilities, signage;
- Movement inside: specific signs, access to the location of the event, to catering, accommodation, toilets...
- Security inside and outside;
- Quality of the reception and support;
- Access to the content of the meeting: specific materials, availability of information, role of the contributors...
- Involvement of persons with disabilities in all proposed activities, interaction between PWDs and other persons...
Transmission of information

The Disability Advisor can make a short speech to indicate clearly where the doors and emergency exits are, and to remind of the schedule of the event, in various forms (speech, writing, images).

Just before the beginning of the contributions, it is advisable to distribute to all participants the various documents on the event: detailed program, future contributions (speeches, PowerPoint presentations, pictures, graphics...).

Specific provisions, by type of disability

Visual Impairment:
Distribute documents in Braille, in large print or in digital format (for future use);
Be sure to describe in detail all the pictures and graphics displayed or distributed;
Someone can stay next to the person with visual impairment in order to communicate all the information necessary for the proper understanding of the contributions, and especially during the screening of films.

Hearing impairment:
Although the use of a sign language interpreter is the best way to communicate, we must not forget that some people - late deafened persons, for example - do not understand sign language. It is therefore necessary to use various channels to deliver the information to the whole audience;
Simultaneous transcription can be used, either by transcribing the speeches on paper so that the person can read them directly, or by using a computer and projecting the contributions later on a wall so that everyone can understand;
Emphasize the use of captioned films.

Outside, make special arrangements, depending on the type of disability

Physical impairment:
Marking of parking spaces reserved for persons with disabilities;
Installation of ramps and handrails;
Signage may include a special plan of accessible locations, and the movement of wheelchair users.

Hearing impairment:
Use clear visual signage (text and images).
People who cannot read should be able to find their bearings as readily as others.

Visual impairment:
Use tactile signs:
markings on the ground (with rubber, moquette, possibility to use contrasting levels or surfaces), or a handrail system (a rope, for example);
Use large print, with contrasting colours;
Develop a site map in relief, with translation into Braille.

Mental impairment:
Use symbols in the signage.

Check site security

Just before the meeting, it is essential to check that the site poses no potential obstacle or hazard for persons with disabilities.

Putting away bins and bulky items;
Closing the windows;
Filling the holes;
Keeping the doors wide open;
Ensure floor stability and security (slippery ground...).
The room
Reserve seats for persons with physical impairments near the doors, and seats for persons with hearing and visual impairment at the front near the contributor;
For better visibility, set up a podium for the contributors, which is easily accessible for persons with disabilities;
Provide a space for the sign language interpreter;
Public address system:
provide microphones for speakers and for people in the room;
Lighting: ensure that there is enough light at all the locations.

Security
Remove any potential barriers for persons with disabilities.

Catering
Ensure free movement in the room and access to food for everyone. Someone should help serve meals to those who have limited autonomy.

Toilets
Check that the floor is clean and is not slippery.
Set up a grab bar on the wall/floor, and/or a special chair (wood, metal) for pit toilets.

What should you think of during the meeting?

Welcome and guide

Personalized reception paying attention to individual needs is important to make persons with disabilities feel supported in their efforts and participation.
Attendants are expected to offer assistance to all participants (whether the disability is obvious or not) and, if necessary, escort them to the location of the event, and then give them an appropriate seat, depending on their disability.

For a person with a physical impairment:
walk beside the person at their own pace;
do not lean on their wheelchair.

For a person with visual impairment:
introduce yourself clearly;
announce changes in direction and floor level, as well as the obstacles;
when using a flight of steps, announce the first step and the last one.

For a person with a hearing impairment:
speak clearly and articulate well, facing the person;
use simple gestures and facial expressions when speaking.

Always speak directly to the person, and not to the attendant.
Always offer your help; the person will tell you if they need it or not.
Remain patient and attentive with everyone.

Disability awareness for the stakeholders

In order that stakeholders take into consideration the specific needs of certain persons, it is important to raise awareness about the various types of disability, the concept of "inclusive meeting", and the different elements to take into account in their contributions.

Think about:
Repeating the question before giving the answer;
Describing all the drawings, photographs and graphics used;
Facing the audience when talking…