



GUIDELINES

**MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES**



2023

These Guidelines were prepared by **Ekaterine Skhiladze** in cooperation with the Accessible Environment for All non-governmental organization and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The views expressed in the publication are those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of UNDP and the UNPRPD Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

EDITORIAL TEAM:

Rusudan Tushuri
Rusudan Kokhodze
Nino Jomarjidge

GEORGIAN LANGUAGE EDITOR:

Ekaterine Bujjashvili

DESIGNER:

Sopo Meskhishvili



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ABBREVIATIONS

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

OPDs Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

OSCE/ODIHR OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

PRPD United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

PWD Persons with Disabilities

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

UN United Nations

INTRODUCTION

Participation is a key principle of human rights and an essential indicator of a democratic society's development.¹ Participation includes engagement in all aspects of public life and at all levels of decision-making, including legislative, executive and local government. Achieving this necessarily entails access to public services, budgeting, the programming process, law-making activities, the right to be elected, the capacity to make informed choices and other precursors.²

Globally, persons with disabilities face numerous barriers in terms of enjoying the right to participation. For example, a lack of supporting services; physically inaccessible environments, services and information; and discriminatory practices and sociocultural and socioeconomic contexts, individually and synergistically impede involvement in decision-making processes. These barriers are so pervasive that persons with disabilities are often hindered from participating in decision-making processes that are related to other basic rights.

It is worth noting that recent legislative changes in Georgia have created the conditions for effective, national-level implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Pursuant to Article 11 of the Constitution of Georgia, the State shall create special conditions for persons with disabilities to exercise their rights. Furthermore, the Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³ defines more precisely the spirit of Article 11 and provides practical ways to implement it.

The Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities focuses on the importance of ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. The Law's first article defines basic principles and mechanisms, including those for promoting the participation of persons with disabilities. In implementing the Law, state bodies undertook efforts to create and develop mechanisms to increase participation, for example, by establishing councils and commissions.⁴ Note, however, that these initiatives remain

1 This document uses 'substantial', 'full' and 'meaningful' participation interchangeably.

2 The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) specifically refers to the rights of persons with disabilities to public and political participation (Articles 29, 30 and 33) and to the creation of equal opportunities to enjoy these rights. See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Ch_IV_15.pdf

3 The Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020), available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4923984?publication=0>

4 For example, an advisory mechanism was created at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia on the rights of persons with disabilities, and a corresponding action plan have been developed. The United Coordination Council (and various subcommittees) was created at the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia for measures aimed at implementing the Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

fragmented and thus far have had minimal impact on increasing the meaningful participation and involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

Persons with disabilities comprise diverse groups of people. Similarly, the barriers that less visible groups face are also diverse. That is why the goal of these Guidelines is to share information on essential principles of participation and practical examples and ways to promote the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities with a broad range of stakeholders.



1

About the Guidelines

1.1. What do the Guidelines cover?

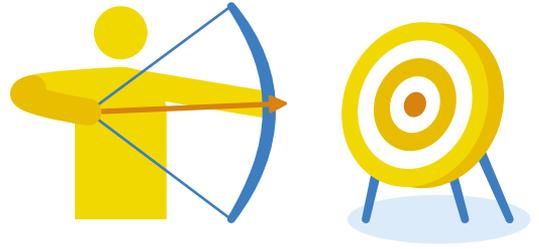
These Guidelines defines essential activities to be carried out by responsible bodies at every decision-making level to ensure the substantial participation of persons with disabilities. It also details international and local standards and practical ways and possibilities for applying them.⁵

This is the first time Guidelines of this type have been published in Georgia. This document was prepared with the involvement of persons with disabilities (including children), their legal representatives, persons with disabilities activists, representative organizations of persons with disabilities and organizations working on these issues. The advisory process also included inputs from the Parliament of Georgia, state agencies, local self-government bodies and international organizations.⁶

In developing its recommendations, the Guidelines considered the diverse needs of persons with disabilities and the impacts of other factors. The recommendations provide guidance for implementing inclusive policies and programmes and practical ways for persons with disabilities to substantially participate in decision-making processes.

5 These Guidelines analyse existing international and national standards, agreements and reports regarding the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

6 Focus group meetings and interviews with persons with disabilities, their representative organizations and parents were held during the preparation of these Guidelines. A draft version was shared with them, state bodies and representatives of local self-governments. Feedback and information provided was used when preparing the final version.



Goals of the Guidelines

Increase accountability

Define the roles and obligations of accountable bodies/persons to ensure the substantial participation of persons with disabilities.



See diversity

Emphasize the needs of various groups of persons with disabilities and show ways to ensure their involvement in decision-making processes.



Raise awareness

Raise awareness of responsible persons to implement inclusive programmes to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.



1.2. Whom is it intended for?

These Guidelines are intended for all organizations and institutions whose functions include developing, coordinating and implementing public policies or programmes or providing services at the central or local level. This guide should be used in relation to activities such as programming, budgeting,⁷ law-making activities and public service delivery. In particular, government agencies include:

- » The Parliament of Georgia;
- » The Government of Georgia and its Administration;
- » The Office of the State Minister of Georgia;



⁷ For additional information regarding the involvement of persons with disabilities in the budgeting process, see: M. Kukava 'Local budgeting for disability inclusion' (2022), available at: <https://www.undp.org/georgia/publications/disability-inclusive-budgeting>

- » Ministries and state subordinate institutions under their sphere of governance;
- » Local self-government bodies; and
- » Legal entities under public law that are under the control of the Government of Georgia and its ministries.

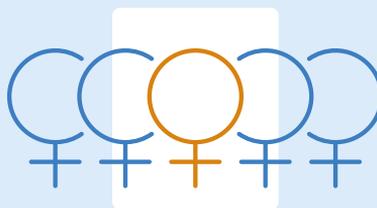
This document will also be of interest to private and non-governmental sector entities that wish to improve inclusive environments and promote the substantial participation of persons with disabilities.

1.3. Why is it important?

Persons with Disabilities make up **15** percent of the world's population.⁸



One out of every **five** women is likely to become a person with disabilities in her lifetime.



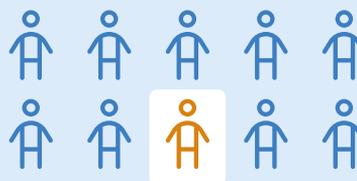
46 percent of the population **60** years old and above has a form of disability.



8 World Bank and World Health Organization, 'World Report on Disability' (2011), available at: <https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability>

One child out of every **10** has a disability.⁹

These children are often subject to unequal and discriminatory practices. Furthermore, crises and conflicts have disproportionately large impacts on their legal status (see, for example, the disparate impacts of the coronavirus pandemic¹⁰).



Ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes is important to integrating their experiences, views and opinions into state policies. Active and informed participation of everyone in public decision-making activities related to them is consistent with the human rights-based approach and ensures good governance and social accountability.¹¹

In the context of decision-making processes, ‘substantial participation’ implies not only consultations and gathering relevant information, but also partnership and using their resources in decision-making and implementing those decisions.

The group of persons living with disabilities is not homogenous; their experiences differ based on factors such as the barriers that they face, their sex and their gender identity.¹² Ensuring their participation in every process of decision-making requires seeing inclusion and diversity as a wide spectrum, particularly in recognizing that different approaches are required for the participation of women with disabilities or other underrepresented groups (e.g. persons with psychosocial disabilities, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc.).

9 UN DESA, Ageing and Disabilities, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/disability-and-ageing.html>

UN Children’s Fund, Children and Youth with Disabilities (2013), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/disabilities>

10 COVID-19 Outbreak and Persons with Disabilities, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/covid-19.html>

11 General comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention (2018), para. 2.

12 The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health defines disability as the result of the interaction of both internal and external factors and focuses on three components: 1) body functions and structure; 2) possibilities of participation (individual and social level); and 3) personal and external factors, available at: <https://resources.relabhs.org/resource/a-practical-manual-for-using-the-international-classification-of-functioning-disability-and-health/>

The substantial participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes positively impacts the provision of state programmes, services and events (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Impacts of Ensuring the Substantial Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Decision-making Processes

 Without the substantial participation of persons with disabilities	 With the substantial participation of persons with disabilities
<p>National policy documents and legislation are neutral and do not establish different rules, requirements or criteria to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (e.g. legislation on domestic violence is neutral and not effective in preventing, detecting or reacting to violence against persons with disabilities).</p>	<p>National policy documents and legislation consider the needs of persons with disabilities (e.g. legislation on domestic violence encompasses specific guidelines to implement criminal law policy, specifies accessible procedures for questioning, defines accessibility of services, etc.).</p>
<p>The needs of persons with disabilities are not properly considered when planning infrastructure projects. Therefore, already completed projects need to be adjusted, which significantly increases expenses.</p>	<p>Project planning and implementation include the substantial participation of persons with disabilities from the beginning, saving time and financial resources.</p>
<p>State services do not consider the needs of persons with disabilities and are therefore not inclusive or only establish general requirements and criteria.</p>	<p>State services consider the needs of various groups, which positively affects their rights and social and economic welfare.</p>
<p>Local self-government bodies are focused on one-time assistance for persons with disabilities and their families (e.g., food donations, one-off payments, etc.).</p>	<p>Support measures taken by local self-government bodies for persons with disabilities have long-term perspectives; social programmes are inclusive and contribute to persons with disabilities' independence and the creation of equal opportunities for them.</p>



2

Regulatory framework

2.1. International legislation and standards

Several international instruments recognize the importance of ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Pursuant to these documents, public decision-making requires the **active** and **informed** involvement of all persons affected by the decisions.

Pursuant to [Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#),¹³ ‘Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.’ Furthermore, everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. Pursuant to Article 21, the will of the people shall be based on principles of universality and equality.

Article 25 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)¹⁴ strengthens the same principle: Each citizen should have the right and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes without discrimination or restrictions. In addition, the Covenant, especially Article 2, emphasizes opportunities for participation and considers the obligation of the state to ensure such opportunities exist.

13 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (adopted December 10, 1984), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/human-rights/universal-declaration/translations/english>

14 International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (adopted December 16, 1966), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

Pursuant to Article 4(3) of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#),¹⁵ ‘in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.’

Other international instruments that should be noted:

Article 5 of the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)¹⁶ emphasizes the significance of enjoying political rights. Pursuant to Article 7 of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#),¹⁷ ‘States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country’ and promote their participation. Pursuant to Article 12 of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#),¹⁸ ‘States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely ... and the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard ... either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body.’

[General comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)¹⁹ defines the participation of children in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention through representative organizations. The document further explains and indicates in more detail the obligations of the state in relation to the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities.

15 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted December 13, 2006), available at: <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

16 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (adopted December 12, 1965), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cerd.pdf>

17 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted December 18, 1978), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

18 Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted November 20, 1989), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>

19 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 7: on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention (adopted November 7, 2018), available at: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d/PPRiCAqhKb7yhsnbHatvuFkZ%2Bt93Y3D%2Baa2pjFYzWLBu0vA%2B-B7QovZhbuyqzjDN0plweYI46WXrJJ6aB3Mx4y/spT%2BQrY5K2mKse5zjo%2BfvBDVu%2B42R9iK1p>

States Parties shall develop relevant legal and regulatory procedures for the full and equal involvement of persons with disabilities in processes such as decision-making, as well as development of legislation, policy and action plans, etc.



States Parties shall develop formal advisory mechanisms. For this, they may use surveys, meetings and other methods, as well as allocate relevant time, involve organizations of persons with disabilities in early stages, and disseminate relevant information in a timely manner before each process.



The opinions of persons with disabilities, as expressed by their representative organizations, shall be given due weight. With the effort of States Parties, these opinions should not be taken only formally, or with a symbolic approach to consultation.



The States Parties shall ensure that all the activities related to public decision-making or consultations are accessible to each person with disabilities (including persons with sensor or mobility disability and psychosocial needs). This can be achieved through developing relevant, accessible formats.



The States Parties shall adopt relevant legislation and regulations as well as develop programmes through which they will effectively ensure the participation of children with disabilities and will reveal their will and priorities.



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)²⁰ are the basis of the 2030 Agenda. Its universality and inclusivity cover every state; therefore, the document acquires special importance in the effective and practical implementation of the Agenda. The 17 SDGs consist of 169 tasks, which are measured by 231 global indicators. A key principle of sustainable development – leave no one behind – implies that no SDG can be considered as achieved unless everyone benefits from its outcomes. Thus, participation and involvement are fundamental principles for realizing these goals.



Addressing a number of key SDG issues (e.g. governance, coordination, budgeting, legislation, accountability, capacity building and international cooperation) is only achievable with the participation of persons with disabilities.²¹ To implement them at the national level, an SDG coordination mechanism was established with the Administration of the Government of Georgia (Council of Sustainable Development Goals),²² and a national document of Sustainable Development Goals was developed.²³

Although all SDGs are **inclusive** and **universal**, several are particularly relevant to issues related to persons with disabilities, as highlighted below.²⁴

20 Detailed information on the SDGs is available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

21 Detailed information on inclusive SDGs is available at: <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability>

22 Detailed information on Council of SDGs, available at: <https://sdg.gov.ge/text-page/33>

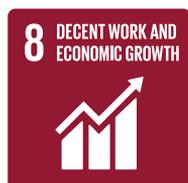
23 Detailed information on National Document of Goals (2015), available at: <https://sdg.gov.ge/text-page/34>

24 Detailed information is available at: https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THAT ARE PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES²⁵



Ensure equal and accessible education by creating an inclusive educational environment and providing appropriate support for persons with disabilities.



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment for persons with disabilities to ensure their full access to the labour market.



Emphasizes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in social, economic and political processes.



Develop accessible cities, water resources and sustainable transportation systems; ensure universal access to safe, inclusive and green public spaces.



Emphasizes the significance of monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and the significance of gathering data (particularly, on disabilities).

25 Further information is available at: https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/sdgs/disability_inclusive_sdgs.pdf

International practice

Ensuring the substantial participation of persons with disabilities remains a challenge in many countries. An analysis of practices demonstrates that there are different approaches to solving existing challenges. For example, several countries use a mandatory quota mechanism to promote the participation of persons with disabilities.²⁶



In **Croatia** and **Slovakia**, the accessibility of election materials and polling stations holds an important place. In Croatia, for example, the Information Commissioner supervises the implementation of a special law concerning the accessibility of websites and programmes.²⁷

All citizens in **Norway** have the right to participate in elections. The Constitution allows for the only exception: 'Rules may be laid down by law concerning the right to vote of persons otherwise entitled to vote who on election day are manifestly suffering from a seriously weakened mental state or a reduced level of consciousness.' In all other cases, persons with mental or physical disabilities have the right to participate in elections. To exercise this right, a special assistant may also be appointed, as required.

Persons with disabilities are active members of political parties and actively participate in parliamentary activities. It should be noted that Norway conducts well-organized public discussions on every initiative or change, where persons with disabilities are also involved.

Some funding mechanisms in Norway are also interesting; organizations of persons with disabilities can receive funding to implement various initiatives, including travelling to participate in discussions and meetings of the United

26 Such mechanisms are also found in Uganda, in the form of parliamentary quotas and in Tunisia – at the local-self-government level.

27 Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Good practices and challenges faced by States in using the guidelines on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs (2022), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/report-good-practices-and-challenges-using-guidelines-participation>

Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The existing funding mechanism determines the strength of the organizations.²⁸



France established a National Advisory Council in order to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. The Council performs an advisory function and involves persons with disabilities in the implementation of State policies. According to the Social Issues and Family Code, the French government is obliged to hold a national conference on issues related to persons with disabilities every three years. In this regard, the example of France is interesting because it defines a specific mechanism of accountability, transparency and inclusion of persons with disabilities at the legislative level.²⁹

28 Visit to Norway - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (2020), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc4341add3-visit-norway-report-special-rapporteur-rights-persons>

29 Visit to France - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (2019), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc4054add1-visit-france-report-special-rapporteur-rights-persons>

2.2. National legislation

Pursuant to Article 11 of the [Constitution of Georgia](#),³⁰ ‘All persons are equal before the law. Any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, origin, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other views, social affiliation, property or titular status, place of residence, or on any other grounds shall be prohibited.’ As Article 11, Paragraph 4 elaborates, ‘the State shall create special conditions for persons with disabilities to exercise their rights and interests.’

[The Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)³¹ ‘defines the basic principles and mechanisms of accessibility for persons with disabilities to living independently and participating fully in all aspects of life without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.’ According to this law, the State shall ensure ‘the opportunity to participate in the social, cultural, sports, economic and political life of the country on an equal basis with others.’

[The Law of Georgia on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination](#)³² is intended to ‘eliminate every form of discrimination and to ensure equal rights of every natural and legal persons under the legislation of Georgia,’ irrespective of any characteristics, including disability. Furthermore, according to the law, refusal of reasonable accommodation is a form of discrimination.

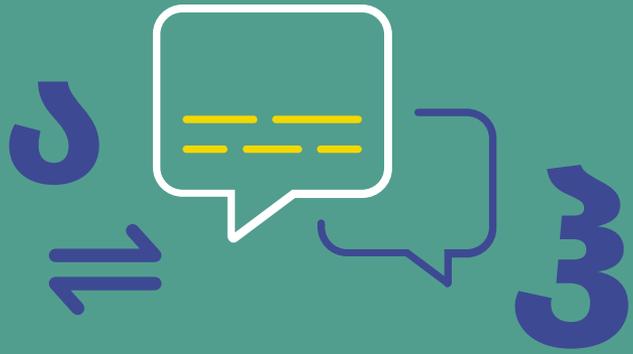
Article 85 of the [Organic Law of Georgia Local Self-government Code](#)³³ reads: ‘To ensure the participation of citizens in the exercise of local self-government, municipal bodies and officials of the municipal bodies shall be obliged to provide organizational and material and technical conditions for receiving and meeting citizens, for ensuring their participation in the activities of the municipal bodies, including sessions of collegiate public institutions, and transparent decision-making.’

30 The Constitution of Georgia, Article 11 (adopted in 1995), available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>

31 Law of Georgia on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (adopted in 2020), available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4923984?publication=0>

32 Law of Georgia on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination (adopted in 2014), available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2339687?publication=0>

33 Organic Law of Georgia Local Self-Government Code (adopted in 2014), available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2244429?publication=65>



3

Basic concepts and definitions³⁴

3.1. Who are persons with disabilities?

These Guidelines adopt the Law of Georgia on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2's definition of a person with disabilities: 'a person with substantial physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, when combined with various barriers, may hinder his/her full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'³⁵

A human rights-based approach places persons with disabilities at the centre of their rights and takes into account the barriers and risks that they face. This approach requires that decision-makers recognize the possibilities, contributions and achievements of persons with disabilities. It also requires that decision-makers facilitate substantial participation by identifying and eliminating barriers to participation.³⁶

Persons with disabilities are a diverse group (e.g. women, children, ethnic minorities) with dissimilar identities and needs. Due to the intersectionality of these factors, persons with disabilities often face discrimination on multiple grounds.³⁷ In order for these persons not to be left behind, it is important to see and recognize their differences and to take purposeful actions to involve persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

34 Definitions are taken from the Law of Georgia on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and from the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

35 Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020), Article 2.

36 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination, para. 39.

37 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination, para. 19.

3.2. What are organizations of persons with disabilities?

Most managerial positions of representative organizations of persons with disabilities are held by persons with disabilities. Generally, the organizations' main functions are to advocate for persons with disabilities; to help in learning activities, trainings and technical issues; and to promote human rights. The merits of organizations of persons with disabilities include the development of international and national legislation, raising awareness and increasing the accountability of state agencies.³⁸ In general, these organizations substantially differ from service providers³⁹ and organizations working on issues of persons with disabilities.

Organizations of persons with disabilities:⁴⁰

-  Work at the local, national, regional and/or international levels;
-  May represent one or more groups of persons with disabilities or be open to membership of all persons with disabilities;
-  May act as separate organizations, coalitions or umbrella organizations that aim at joint and coordinated representation with state agencies and international and private institutions; and
-  Reflect the diversity of the community of persons with disabilities (e.g. sex, gender, race, status of migrant/refugee, etc.).

38 Depending on the importance, the state should develop legal mechanisms to protect organizations of persons with disabilities from pressure. In order to strengthen them, the method and form of financing should be determined.

39 The definition and forms of activity of organizations of persons with disabilities should be clearly written in the legislation.

40 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 7: on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the (2018).

3.3. Terminology related to the participation of persons with disabilities⁴¹

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION: ‘A principle which involves necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden or obligation, and where needed in a particular case, ensures that persons with disabilities exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.’



UNIVERSAL DESIGN: ‘The design of products, environments, trainings, programmes and services to be usable by people without the need for special adaptation and a specialised design. Universal design shall not exclude assistive devices and/or other support for particular groups of persons with disabilities where needed.’



SIGN LANGUAGE: ‘A non-verbal, visual language, where information is coded by manual means and mimicry.’



ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT: A combination of physical, institutional and social conditions that provides a person with disabilities with an equal opportunity to benefit from all public goods, including participation in cultural, sports, political or other activities in a public gathering place, as well as from transport, information and communication facilities on an equal basis with others.



The definition of accessibility also includes access to services and programmes in both the public and private spheres.

41 Definitions are taken from the Law of Georgia on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and from the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES, DEVICES AND MOBILITY AIDS: Specially manufactured or generally available external products (e.g. devices, instruments, equipment, software) that maintain and improve an individual's condition and independence, as well as facilitate their participation in various areas of daily life (e.g. wheelchairs, prostheses, hearing aids, visual aids, specialized software and hardware).



BARRIERS: Factors that prevent participation and create limited opportunity. Barriers limit accessibility for persons with disabilities and prevent them from participating in public and social life. Barriers may be *attitudinal* (perceptual), *environmental* or *institutional*.

- » **Attitudinal** (perceptual) barriers are mindsets that are created mainly from discriminatory preconceptions, cultural stereotypes and stigmas.
- » **Environmental** barriers include physical barriers in the natural or man-made environment that obstruct access for people with disabilities. Such barriers may hinder access to both the physical environment and information and communication means.
- » **Institutional** barriers include legislation, policy, strategy or established practices, which hinder the participation of persons with disabilities.



DISCRIMINATION ON DISABILITY GROUNDS: Such treatment or creation of conditions due to disability that puts a person exercising rights established by the legislation of Georgia in an unfavourable position compared to other persons exercising similar rights or that puts persons in substantially unequal conditions in equal conditions, except for cases where such treatment or the creation of such conditions serve a purpose determined by law for protecting public order and morals, has an objective and reasonable justification, and is required in a democratic society, and the means used are proportionate to the achievement of such purpose.



MAINSTREAMING OF RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:⁴² Process that includes evaluation of the impact of any planned activity on persons with disabilities. This is a way to implement inclusive processes as well as to eliminate those barriers that impede the equal involvement of persons with disabilities and the enjoyment of human rights.



3.4. Rights-based terminology⁴³

Terms that are used when referring to or talking about persons with disabilities can either empower or weaken them. Below are some terms and definitions to be aware of:

Vulnerable/vulnerability: Persons with disabilities are not inherently vulnerable; barriers and insufficient support lead to their vulnerability. Rights-based language uses ‘vulnerability’ in conjunction with a proper thematic aspect. For example, girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence, while boys with disabilities are more likely than others to be bullied.

Care/support: A carer or support person is a widely established term that refers to a person (most often a family member) who cares for a child, elderly or other person with a disability. When talking about an adult with a disability, rights-based language prefers the term ‘support’ rather than ‘care’.

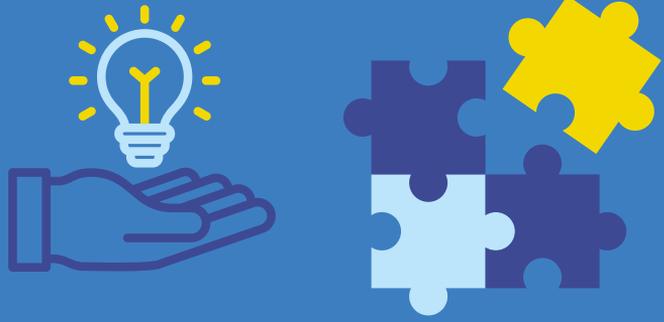
42 Manual for representatives of UN agencies and implementing partners, ‘Including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in United Nations Programming at Country Level’ (2011), available at: https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/undg_guidance_note.pdf

43 Terminology is adopted from the UNPRPD Joint Programme Introductory Training Information Materials, ‘Comprehensive Approaches and Prerequisites for Inclusive Development’.

ADDITIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES TO NOTE⁴⁴

 Words that do not create stereotypes or discriminatory environments	 Words that do create negative or stereotypical environments
Person with disabilities	Disabled
Person with an intellectual disability	Retarded Mentally retarded
Person with a mental health problem Person with psychosocial needs	Mentally ill Spiritually sick Insane
Wheelchair user Person with reduced mobility	Tied to a wheelchair Cripple
Deaf	Deaf-mute
Hard-of-hearing person/hearing-impaired	Mute
Blind Partially sighted	Blind person
Person with an autism spectrum disorder Person with Down syndrome A person with cerebral palsy	Autistic Down Paralysed

44 For the purposes of these Guidelines, the most frequently used terms have been selected. Note, however, that this list is not comprehensive and does not include all possible terms. The terminology is taken from the 'Services of Disabled Persons at the Public Service Hall,' Barkaia, Margalitadze. (2018).



4

What To Do: Key Approaches and Necessary Steps

In order to ensure the substantial participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, it is important to know key aspects of international and local legislation and policy. In addition, it is important to take into consideration the country context and the environmental factors that may impact the effective use of these Guidelines. Examples include:

- » Existing legislation and policies on issues of persons with disabilities;
- » Existence, accessibility and effectiveness of services for persons with disabilities;
- » Existence of organizations of persons with disabilities, related rules on their registration and funding levels, sources and mechanisms;
- » Existence of expertise on issues of persons with disabilities, which can help form or support consultative groups;
- » Existence and quality of disaggregated data on persons with disabilities, particularly data that incorporates diversity factors.

To illustrate, if the organizations of persons with disabilities lack resources, it will be necessary to first strengthen them and involve them in consultations at the programming, implementation and monitoring stages. In situations of insufficient legal framework, it is necessary to first change existing regulations and then support their implementation.

4.1. The significance of cooperating with organizations of persons with disabilities

Cooperating and partnering with organizations of persons with disabilities increases the accountability of decision-making persons and agencies and enhances the effectiveness of the programmes they implement. Reflecting on a slogan of persons with disabilities (“Nothing About Us Without Us”), relevant agencies should cooperate with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations and not make decisions on their behalf.

As with any other partnership, common interests, values, expectations and capacity building must be agreed upon from the beginning. Furthermore, partnership or cooperative funding schemes should not unduly impede the independence of organizations of persons with disabilities or hamper their participation in monitoring or holding accountable relevant public bodies whose activities should be monitored.

Organizations of persons with disabilities should be distinguished from organizations established for persons with disabilities, which offer services or advocate on their behalf. State Parties should give special importance to the opinions of persons with disabilities as expressed through organizations of persons with disabilities. State Parties should also support organizational capacity building and ensure that their views are prioritized in decision-making processes.⁴⁵



45 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 7: on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the (2018).

According to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 7, 'State Parties should strengthen the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities at the international level, for instance at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and regional and universal human rights mechanisms. The participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, will thus result in greater effectiveness and equal use of public resources, leading to improved outcomes for such persons and their communities.'⁴⁶

Persons with disabilities — like every other person — should be able to participate in decision-making processes at all stages of public administration. Achieving this in practice involves a two-pronged approach:

- ① **Inclusive mainstreaming**; and
- ② **Targeted measures** for ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities.

Inclusive mainstreaming, together with targeted measures, means that, in general, the public and persons with disabilities are involved in all stages of programme development and implementation, including monitoring. It is particularly important to ensure the:

- » Participation of persons with disabilities in every process (planning, development, acceptance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and at all phases, from inception to completion;
- » Consolidation of internal organizational policies on issues related to persons with disabilities, including facilitating employment, integrating prohibitions against discrimination, increasing accessibility and other areas;
- » Existence of a favourable environment to establish and develop organizations of persons with disabilities, constant consultations with them, receiving advice and developing cooperative formats;
- » Promotion of the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, by the effective use of the right to active and passive suffrage;⁴⁷

46 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 7: on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the (2018), para.32.

47 For detailed information, see Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities, OSCE/ODIHR (2019), available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/414344>

- » Consideration of safe spaces for meetings, programmes, consultations and other activities;

Safe space is a place or environment, where the person or group of persons can be sure that they will not be subjected to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or physical harm.

- » Consideration of the diversity of persons with disabilities in consultation processes, particularly underrepresented groups (e.g. children, women, persons with psychosocial needs, etc.); and
- » Availability and accessibility of all information and communications, locations and procedures.
- » Allocation of sufficient time and budget for planning and implementing effective and accessible processes, using reasonable accommodation wherever necessary or beneficial.

To ensure that persons with disabilities can substantially participate in decision-making processes at all levels, it is essential to meet certain prerequisites that will make their further participation more effective and significant. Furthermore, it is essential to involve persons with disabilities not only thematically (i.e., in issues related to them), but also in all general issues and processes that are related to current events in the country.

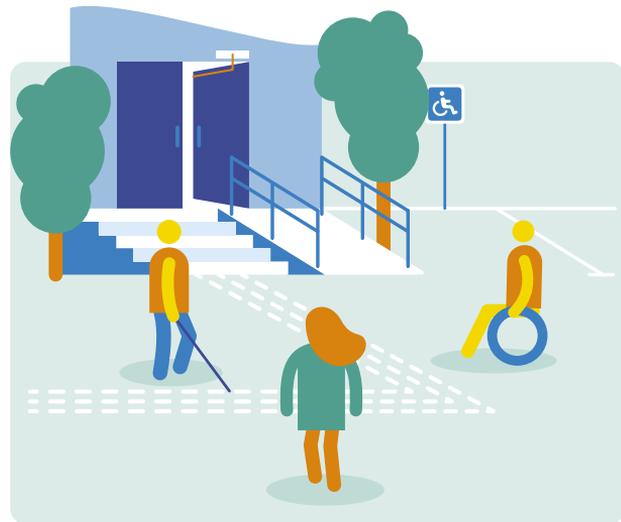
Persons with disabilities often are involved only in issues related to them (e.g. when special laws or programmes are adopted). However, their participation is essential with regard to all other issues, even issues that are not directly related to the community of persons with disabilities. These issues impact them just as they impact any other member of society (e.g. domestic violence, reproductive health, elections, etc.).

4.2. Eliminating barriers

Inclusion and participation cannot be achieved if barriers continue to exist. Eliminating *attitudinal*, *environmental* and *institutional* barriers will facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities. The process also incorporates identifying barriers in the physical environment and access to information, defining ways to overcome them and taking proper measures to implement solutions.

Eliminating the barriers that face the community of persons with disabilities is the first step towards achieving their substantial participation. To achieve this, it is necessary for accountable agencies⁴⁸ to pay special attention to informing and educating their staff and the general public and to improving access to physical environments and information and communications.

Accessible Environment – the set of physical, institutional and social conditions that enables a person with a disability to benefit from all public goods on an equal basis with others, including participating in cultural, sports, political or other events in places of public gathering; using all available transportation options; and accessing all means of information and communication.



48 Responsible agencies include all state institutions and organizations that work on issues of persons with disabilities within the framework of the Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

4.2.1. Inform and educate

- » All agencies should retrain employees on key aspects of the rights of persons with disabilities. Priority should be given to retraining those employees who work at citizen service offices, hotlines, on the issues of service administration, etc. Ultimately, all employees should be retrained, including persons with disabilities.
- » To develop and implement inclusive and non-discriminatory policies for persons with disabilities, it is important to inform and retrain people working in decision-making positions on several issues, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, national legislation in the general area, the key aspects of relevant policy documents, state obligations and approaches to implementation.
- » Accountable agencies should disseminate updated information on existing programmes and services in order to properly inform citizens. This information should be accessible to persons with disabilities, their families, professionals and the general public.

Dissemination activities should also consider geographical coverage, particularly when using electronic means (e.g. rural Internet connectivity).

Dissemination should also consider the accessibility of ethnic minorities (e.g. ensure translation into relevant languages).



- » It is important to carry out information campaigns that showcase persons with disabilities and their rights, achievements and important roles in society. These campaigns should emphasize measures to eliminate barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities should engage and participate in all stages of planning and implementing these and other information campaigns.

- » Formal and informal educational programmes should be based on the principles of equality and full participation. People with disabilities and their representative organizations should be involved in these programmes at all stages of planning and implementation.
- » Information campaigns should consider social and cultural barriers that may prevent persons with disabilities, especially underrepresented groups (e.g. women, children, people with psychosocial needs, etc.), from accessing existing information.
- » Responsible agencies should ensure that all websites and communications means are accessible to persons with disabilities. This accessibility should include people with intellectual disabilities (e.g. through simplified access to information). It should also include adapting information to the appropriate age of potential users (e.g. children with disabilities).

Furthermore, information should be presented in a simple, easy-to-understand form.

It should not contain legal terms or formal sentences.

Children/persons with special needs should be able to perceive it correctly.

FOR THIS PURPOSE, PLEASE:

- ① Evaluate the knowledge of employees on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- ② Plan and conduct training activities on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- ③ Evaluate the accessibility of your websites and update them accordingly.
- ④ Consider the needs of persons with disabilities in awareness-raising campaigns.

4.2.2. Accessibility

Physical Accessibility

-  Responsible agencies must recognize the importance of accessibility for equal participation in all areas of life. An action plan should be developed to achieve accessibility in the public and private spheres.
-  It is important to develop standards and guidelines to eliminate physical access barriers, including in the private sector. All stakeholders should be consulted in detail on these issues.
-  In efforts to eliminate physical access barriers, special attention should be paid to involving and raising the awareness of architects, engineers, builders and other professionals.
-  Developing accessibility norms and standards should involve organizations of persons with disabilities from the initial stages, thus maximizing results.
-  Accessibility audits should be regularly conducted, including collecting data on improved physical environments. Individual agencies should plan the periodicity of inspection and the manner of data collection. Fulfilling this obligation is particularly important for service providers and educational and public institutions.

Persons with disabilities should have access to data on the accessibility of physical environments.

Government measures should be based on progress evaluations and continuous data analysis (e.g. the physical environment of how many schools have improved, what is the existing situation and what is planned).

FOR THIS:

- ① Develop an action plan that includes measures required for accessibility, related performance indicators, tasks to achieve the goals set, required financial and human resources, responsible persons/structural units; specific timelines for tasks and opportunities to monitor set tasks.
- ② Organizations should evaluate whether their infrastructure meets the standards of physical accessibility.
- ③ Infrastructural project planning should ascertain whether the architect, engineer or builder possesses the knowledge of physical accessibility standards (and, if necessary, train accordingly).
- ④ Involve persons with disabilities and their organizations in discussions related to physical accessibility norms and standards.

Access to information and communication

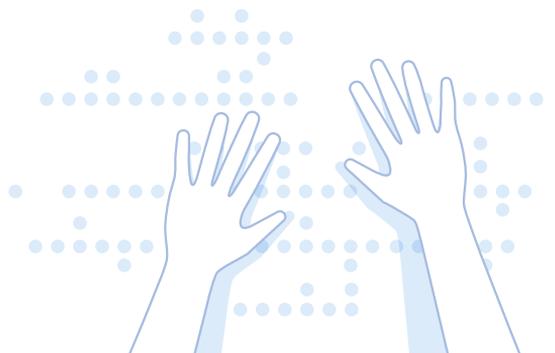
-  Persons with disabilities, their families and representatives should be fully informed about diagnosis, rights, existing services and programmes. Such information should be presented in an accessible form.
-  Agency action plans should include activities and ways to provide information on services. Accessibility formats should include braille, audio recordings, large fonts and other accommodations for people with impaired vision.
-  Sign language should be recognized as an official form of communication; state services should offer sign language interpreter services.
-  Responsible agencies should develop a communications strategy that responds to the need to involve broad groups of persons with disabilities. Strategy documents should define the methods and possibilities of effectively communicating with persons with disabilities, including children and underrepresented groups.
-  Responsible agencies should implement modern and innovative methods of accessing information (e.g. mobile applications) and alternatives to website access, such as text messages, distribution of informational materials in social gathering areas and printed materials for communities with minimal Internet access.



Organizations of persons with disabilities should be involved in all stages of development and implementation of communication strategies. Their opinions, experiences and practices should be considered in improving existing and introducing new mechanisms.

FOR THIS:

- ① Evaluate whether information on available services and programmes is accessible to persons with disabilities, their family members and their representatives.
- ② Purchase/supply technical equipment for activities such as printing documents in braille, preparing audio recordings, transmitting electronic material in audio format, etc.
- ③ Secure the services of sign language interpreters.
- ④ When developing communication strategies and campaigns, consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.



4.3. Recognition of the roles of persons with disabilities and building their capacities

4.3.1. Building the capacities of persons with disabilities

It is essential to build the capacities of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. This may include increasing funding opportunities for these organizations or carrying out trainings/educational events for persons with disabilities.

Empowering employees of agencies/state institutions and conducting training events on the issues of persons with disabilities empowers persons with disabilities.



Local self-governments should identify persons with disabilities for involvement in decision-making processes. Their needs and barriers to their participation should be studied so that planned activities can be adapted to these needs. Exploring barriers includes thorough preparation, including determining the extent to which persons with disabilities have access to information about planned events, whether transportation is accessible to attend meetings, if the available space is accessible, etc.

Local self-governments, in consultation with local organizations, should create regularly updated databases that will allow municipalities to include persons with disabilities in decision-making processes and to consider accessibility needs when planning events.



State authorities should identify persons with disabilities, including children, their parents and representatives, study the needs of these persons and include them in the planning and implementation of events/policies within their sphere of competence. All events and activities must be adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.



It is necessary to raise the capacities of families of persons with disabilities to access information and services.



The state should strengthen the mechanisms for protecting persons with disabilities from violence, improve preventive campaigns and collect relevant statistics. All services should be accessible to persons with disabilities, as violence (including domestic violence) can be a significant obstacle to participation.

National mechanisms for protection against domestic violence should include an appropriate approach to identifying cases of violence against persons with disabilities and cases of neglect of their best interests (e.g. the police should undergo appropriate training, and questionnaires/services for violence survivors should meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities).

FOR THIS:

- ① Be sure to invite persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to public, advisory or other councils.
- ② Constantly monitor the provision of services to persons with disabilities.
- ③ Plan and implement preventive measures.

4.3.2. Building the capacities of organizations of persons with disabilities

- » All responsible agencies should recognize the roles that organizations of persons with disabilities play in representing persons with disabilities in national and local-level decision-making processes. Governments should use these organizations' resources and support when making decisions.
- » Necessary support to organizations of persons with disabilities includes economic, establishment and capacity building.
- » Agencies should create communication platforms for working with organizations of people with disabilities and involve them in formulating and developing state policies. Advisory boards, committees and regular work processes should be established and initiated. It is also important to enhance existing mechanisms and promote effective work.

- » Organizations of persons with disabilities can help identify existing barriers, needs and priorities and can help implement and evaluate services and programmes related to the rights of persons with disabilities. These organizations should also participate in public awareness raising and advocacy processes.
- » Organizations of persons with disabilities can play advisory roles through permanent participation and representation on decision-making bodies of state-funded agencies, public commissions and consultative mechanisms. Temporary roles in specific projects and activities can achieve similar participation.

4.3.3. Participation in political life

- » In order to effectively realize the right to active and passive suffrage of persons with disabilities, it is important to evaluate existing legislative and institutional spaces and make appropriate changes.



- » Political parties should promote the visibility of persons with disabilities within the ranks of their party and develop inclusive internal party policies. This will promote the involvement of persons with disabilities in party activities and help develop appropriate accessible formats for informing the public.
- » Governments must ensure informational and physical accessibility for the effective use of the right to active and passive suffrage. It is important to produce relevant statistics and data.
- » In order to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in elections, the methodologies of producing statistics should be improved. This will allow governments to determine the electoral activities of persons with disabilities and their needs in terms of accessibility, reasonable accommodation and adaptation.

4.4. Collection of disaggregated data

It is essential for state agencies to collect and analyse data on gender, age, disability and other characteristics of persons with disabilities and to analyse the barriers and risks they face. Data analysis allows the assessment of programming inclusiveness by examining quantitative and qualitative participant data. Furthermore, disaggregated data contributes to the development of appropriate indicators to assess the participation of persons with disabilities and to monitor programme and project progress.

4.4.1. The importance of data collection

Quantitative data

-  Governments should collect demographic data on persons with disabilities, including the number, type of disability, age, sex and location.
-  Governments should also create databases that include information on the numbers of accessible and inaccessible facilities. This data should include whether the facilities are public or private, their types and geographical distribution. Quantitative data on the needs and risks of persons with disabilities should be regularly updated, including on crimes, discriminatory actions and rights violations.



Qualitative data



It is necessary to collect and analyse the opinions of persons with disabilities in order to qualitatively assess their substantial participation in decision-making processes.



To study the risks and barriers faced by persons with disabilities, responsible agencies should conduct focus groups and hold individual meetings with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. It is also important to analyse the results in order to improve the implementation of state policies.



It is essential to collect detailed information on organizations of persons with disabilities and study their activities in detail (e.g. mapping). Data collection should include in-depth information on their quantity, thematic activities, geographical distribution and other factors that can support advisory processes.



5

Cross-cutting Issues: Special Attention for Underrepresented Groups

Real or perceived differences in people’s personal characteristics significantly affect their experiences, capabilities, resources, needs and vulnerabilities. It is vital to recognize intersectional factors when carrying out measures to promote the participation of persons with disabilities so that each person is able to substantially participate, effectively enjoy their rights and have access to justice.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴⁹ draw special attention to the rights of women and children with disabilities and the safeguards they need to realize their rights. This approach is necessary due to the prevalence of gender inequality and the risks of neglecting the rights of children. Pursuant to the Convention, “States Parties should take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of [their] human rights and fundamental freedoms.” For example, due to the influence of sociocultural norms, women with disabilities may not be given the opportunity to attend village meetings or participate in decision-making processes.

Article 7 of the Convention states, “States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right.”

49 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 6 and Article 7.

5.1. Age

Age includes socioculturally defined stages of a person's life. A person's abilities and needs change with age; age can both strengthen and weaken a person's ability to enjoy their rights. In order to develop the right approaches for all age groups (children, youth, adults, and elderly), it is essential to assess their diverse needs, barriers and threats. An important aspect is the participation of children in decision-making processes, which should not be done only with the involvement of parents or legal representatives. It is also important to address the sociocultural barriers that older people face in engaging in decision-making processes.

According to paragraph 25 of the General Comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "State Parties should adopt legislation, regulations and develop programmes to ensure that everyone understands and respects the will and preferences of children and considers their personal evolving capacities at all times." Furthermore, "Children with disabilities are themselves best placed to express their own requirements and experiences, which are necessary in developing appropriate legislation and programmes in accordance with the Convention."⁵⁰

5.2. Gender

Gender refers to social constructions and differences between the sexes. Issues related to gender equality also include the rights of various groups that are often considered vulnerable members of the disability community due to existing stigma, prejudices and stereotypes. Consequently, it is important to promote their participation in decision-making processes.

5.3. Other Characteristics

Some groups and organizations that represent persons with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial needs or vision and hearing impairments face obstacles when establishing, registering and maintaining representative organizations. Governments should take appropriate measures to substantially involve such groups in consultation processes.

Furthermore, persons with disabilities who are members of ethnic minority groups in Georgia face various obstacles (e.g. language barriers) and difficulties accessing services and other types of information; these obstacles should be considered when involving them in decision-making processes.

50 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General comment No. 7: on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the (2018), para. 25



6

Criteria and Indicators to Assess the Quality of Substantial Participation of Persons with Disabilities⁵¹

 Indicators	 Responsible agencies/bodies
 Legislation and policy	
National legislation is harmonized with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.	The Parliament of Georgia
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
The government has created a coordinating mechanism with a clear mandate, sufficient funding and authority for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the directions of state policies.	The Government of Georgia
Mechanisms have been created	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Mandate and authority are defined	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Sufficient funding is allocated	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> PARTIALLY <input type="checkbox"/> NO

51 Recommendations are based on information obtained through desk research and meetings with persons with disabilities and their organizations.

There is an advisory platform at the level of the Parliament of Georgia that ensures the involvement of persons with disabilities and organizations in law-making processes.	The Parliament of Georgia
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<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
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Advisory mechanisms at the local self-government level have been created and provide for the substantial participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations; municipalities share practices with each other.	Local self-government bodies
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Mechanisms are created	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Authority is defined	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
Municipalities share practices with each other	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

To promote the development and sustainability of organizations of persons with disabilities, financial support is provided to them from state budget funds.	The Government of Georgia The Parliament of Georgia
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<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
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 **Programming, access to services**

A biopsychosocial assessment model for determining disability status has been introduced; the mechanism is available with a geographical perspective.	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia
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<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> PARTIALLY	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
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Agency and state-level statistical data collection mechanisms have been created; collected data reflects the diversity of groups of persons with disabilities and can be used when developing programmes.	The Government of Georgia National Statistics Office of Georgia
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Mechanisms have been created	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Statistical data is disaggregated	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> PARTIALLY	<input type="checkbox"/> NO

<p>The National Human Rights Strategy and the corresponding Action Plan consider all aspects of the rights of persons with disabilities, including tasks and activities to ensure substantial participation at all government levels.</p>	<p>The Parliament of Georgia The Government of Georgia</p>
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<p>Issues of persons with disabilities are considered</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> FULLY <input type="checkbox"/> PARTIALLY <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
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<p>State agencies and institutions are allocated an appropriate budget for implementing services and activities and for ensuring the accessibility of their physical facilities and disseminated information.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia</p>
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
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 **Capacity building/resources**

<p>Public-sector workers receive ongoing training on the use of a human rights-based approach to disabilities; prohibitions against discrimination; the provision of reasonable accommodations; and the accessibility of information and communications.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia Administrative bodies</p>
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
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<p>Awareness-raising campaigns and activities are planned and carried out that inform persons with disabilities, their families, national and local decision makers and the general public about the rights of people with disabilities.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia</p>
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<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
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<p>When planning relevant activities, events and programmes, accessibility of information, communication and the physical environment for persons with disabilities is considered.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia The Parliament of Georgia Local self-government bodies Administrative bodies</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
<p>Special attention is paid to the participation of children with disabilities and their representatives. Planned activities are considered with a child-friendly approach that encourages their direct participation in decision-making processes.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia The Parliament of Georgia Local self-government bodies Other administrative bodies</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
<p> Monitoring and evaluation</p>	
<p>A data collection system has been introduced, including for exercising the right to vote. It includes data on the involvement of persons with disabilities, among them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Number of activities; ▶ The rate of participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations; and ▶ The rate of consideration of their recommendations. 	<p>The Government of Georgia Central Election Commission Local self-government bodies</p>
<p>Data collection system is implemented</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>
<p>Data is diverse</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>

<p>For the substantial participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in consultation mechanisms, working groups and formats have been established that ensure their thematic and broad involvement.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia Local self-government bodies Other administrative bodies</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
<p>Opportunities for inclusive participation are introduced in advisory mechanisms, including for the effective participation of women, children, the elderly, refugees and asylum seekers and representatives of ethnic and other minorities.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia Local self-government bodies Other administrative bodies</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	
<p>Reports of existing advisory mechanisms on the issues of persons with disabilities are prepared, published and accessible by the general public; the reports reflect information on the activities of these mechanisms.</p>	<p>The Government of Georgia Local self-government bodies Other administrative bodies</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p>	

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ANNEX I: Guidelines to Organize Accessible Meetings

Prepared according to the European Forum of Persons with Disabilities (EDF)¹ document: ‘EDF Guidelines Accessible to All for Meetings.’ Special thanks to EDF for granting permission to use the guide. The work was translated into Georgian by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Supported by the Partnership’s Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF). The opinions expressed in the publication are those of the author and may not reflect those of the United Nations Development Program and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Partnership Multi-Partner Trust Fund Insights.

ABOUT THE DOCUMENT:

The document emphasizes the critical influence of meeting space, planning, and structure on the ability of persons with disabilities to actively engage and participate in decision-making processes. It outlines specific actions and considerations for organizers both before and during the meeting, aiming to provide support throughout this process.

1 The European Disability Forum is an independent NGO that represents the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe.

1 MEETING VENUE

If possible, try to visit the venue of the meeting in advance (and ideally ask for an expert check in house or through a local disability organisation) to check the accessibility of premises and anticipate possible problems. Here are the things you should look for:

Basic Access

Stairs and Ramps

- ▶ The entrance should not have stairs, and if it does, there should be a lift or ramp as an alternative.
- ▶ Make sure the ramp is not too steep (tolerated slope is 5%, min. acceptable ramp width 90cm).
- ▶ All ramps and stairs/steps need to have handrails.

Doors:

- ▶ Doors should be at least 85 cm wide.
- ▶ Sliding doors should be at least 110 cm width.
- ▶ Make sure there are normal entrance doors in addition to any revolving doors, as these are not accessible.

Toilets:

- ▶ The minimum dimensions for a fully equipped toilet (toilet bowl and sink) are 200cm x 225 cm.
- ▶ Rotation space of 150 cm diameter.
- ▶ A space of at least 110 cm is required in the direction of the door.
- ▶ The door should have a minimum width of 100 cm and should open towards the outside. Sliding doors are also acceptable.
- ▶ There should be a space of at least 90 cm width on the left or right of the toilet bowl, so that wheelchair users can approach it.
- ▶ Don't place the bin for sanitary towels in the open space designated for people with wheelchairs.
- ▶ There should be a wall mounted sink without a column underneath.
- ▶ There should be a vertical mirror of a 100 cm height installed at the same height with the upper surface of the sink.
- ▶ A tactile map of the toilet at the entrance can be helpful.



Lifts:

- ▶ Command systems should have audio and light signals so that everyone can use them regardless of disability.
- ▶ Lift button (both outside and inside the lift) should be installed between 80 and 120 cm high in order to be reached by a wheelchair user.
- ▶ These buttons should also be indicated in Braille.
- ▶ There should be a manoeuvring space of 150 cm diameter in front of the lift door.
- ▶ Cabin Dimensions: min. 140 cm deep and min. 110 cm wide.
- ▶ Adequate lighting (100 lux).
- ▶ Mirror and a support bar should be present.



2 MEETING ROOM



Room arrangement:

- ▶ Meeting room with no steps, ramps if necessary.
- ▶ If there is a podium, a ramp or a wheelchair lift needs to be installed if one of the speakers is a wheelchair user.
- ▶ Avoid thick carpets if possible, since it makes it more difficult to circulate in wheelchairs.
- ▶ Avoid tripping hazards such as loose cables or personal belongings in the aisles.
- ▶ Make sure the thresholds of a door are not too high, since it is hard for wheelchair users to navigate.



Clear signs can help people navigating the space:

- ▶ Clearly indicate where to find the toilets, refreshments, and exits in clear and simple language.
- ▶ Black writing with font Arial is best for readability.
- ▶ The signs should have pictograms too.



Seating:

- ▶ Make sure there are spaces for wheelchair users. They must be flat and near the escape routes.
- ▶ There must be space in between rows and in the aisles to circulate with a wheelchair.
- ▶ Deaf or hard of hearing persons need an unobstructed view of the sign language interpreter.
- ▶ Classroom style seating is the preferred option to allow use of assistive devices and computers/tablets to access electronic documents.



3 CHOICE OF ACCOMMODATION

If your event or meeting involves guests staying at a hotel or other accommodation, you should also check the accessibility of the rooms. We recommend that you visit the hotel in advance; even if the hotel advertises accessible or adapted rooms the reality often varies.

Check:



Entrance (see requirements for meeting venue).



Lift (see requirements for meeting venue).



Accessibility of corridors.



Accessible dining and breakfast room.



Room:

- ▶ There should be free moving space of 90 cm around all furniture.
- ▶ Rotation space of 150 cm.
- ▶ Cupboard with clothes hangers on 130 cm height maximum.
- ▶ Preferably no thick carpets.
- ▶ Information about hotel services and emergency procedures in accessible formats.
- ▶ Key cards should have a tactile distinction so blind and partially sighted people can learn how to insert the card in the door without having to go through several attempts.
- ▶ It is preferable that room numbers are also in Braille and in big font size, with good contrast and lighting.

Bathroom (See requirements for meeting venue).

In addition to them:

- ▶ Rotation area of 150 cm.
- ▶ Preferably a roll-in shower (without border).

 **NOTE:** Check with the participants beforehand, they know best what they need. Some persons with disabilities might manage in a regular room but this should be confirmed.

4 BEFORE THE MEETING

General

-  Make sure website or online registration form for the event is accessible.
-  Registration form should ask for contact information and further information about accessibility needs, such as:
 - ▶ Special dietary requirements, including any food allergies
 - ▶ Transport needs (for wheelchair users) from airport/station to the meeting venue & return
 - ▶ Accessible room requirements
 - ▶ Personal assistant (e.g. for some meetings the assistant might need to register as well to get access to the venue)
 - ▶ Interpretation needs, including sign language, speech-to-text (captioning), or audio description
 - ▶ Accessible parking space needs
 - ▶ Provision of documents in accessible formats (such as large print, braille, easy-to-read versions, or accessible electronic format)
 - ▶ Open question to provide more details:
“Please let us know if you have any specific accessibility needs that we should know to make the conference a success for you”

-  Electricity outlets for computers and other electronic devices should be available everywhere in the room, ideally for every table.
 - ▶ Use extension cords if necessary but make sure they are safely taped to the floor.
-  Reserved parking places for wheelchair users near the meeting venue.
-  Try to make sure the venue has a silent room available where people can go to relax, to calm down. Meetings can be very stressful, especially for persons with mental ill-health or autism and taking a little time-out (away from people) can be very beneficial.
-  When using name tags with a lanyard, make sure to print the information on both sides so that no blank page is visible when the tag flips over.
-  Make sure that there are no artificial fragrances and scents available in meeting venues and accommodation rooms, and when possible encourage participants to avoid using strong scented perfumes.

Programme

-  Organise the programme so that breaks are scheduled at appropriate times.
 - ▶ Breaks should last at least 20 minutes along, and should be taken approximately every 90 minutes.
 - ▶ If there is an evening programme, make sure that 8 hours rest is still possible. If the «official» meeting ends by 11pm but the conference starts at 8 am on the next day, it can be a problem for many people.
-  The organiser should ensure that times are adhered to.
 - ▶ Since many persons with disabilities need to plan, for example, transport to and from events, resting times, or take medication with food, sticking to the schedule is important and respectful.
-  Distribute the programme in accessible formats, ideally ahead of time.
-  Allow sufficient time for discussion and questions as well as for interpretation.
-  Before starting the programme make an announcement with the applicable “housekeeping rules” including useful practical information, e.g. how to connect to the wifi.

Documents



Send meeting documents and practical details in advance.

- ▶ Venue of the meeting (mention the accessible entrance when this one differs from the principal entrance)
- ▶ Address of the hotel
- ▶ Telephone number of the organisers
- ▶ Transport information (public transport schedules, adapted transport schedules/ contact details)
- ▶ Location of reserved parking places



Prepare spare copies in braille, large print, and in accessible electronic format.



5 DURING THE MEETING

Welcome



One or two people should be available at arrival and departure to welcome and guide the participants to the conference room.

- ▶ During longer events it can be useful to have a help desk.



Brief the security guards and staff of the venue about the needs of the participants with disabilities so that also they are ready to assist if required.



When the person is there, address her or him directly and thereafter the person accompanying (personal assistant or sign language interpreter).



Be as natural and polite as possible as you would be with any other person.



Propose help, but wait until the offer for help is accepted before doing anything, and listen carefully.



People with reduced mobility:

- ▶ Make sure beforehand that the corridors and the meeting room are free from obstructions and well lit.
- ▶ Be at the main entrance on time and offer help to open the doors and to get over the steps.
- ▶ Be informed about the location of accessible toilets and what the evacuation procedures are in the event of an emergency.
- ▶ Only push a person in a wheelchair if you have the person's permission, and avoid too sudden or quick manoeuvres.



People with visual impairments:

- ▶ Always speak first. Introduce yourself and other persons clearly, explaining where they are in relation to the person.
- ▶ Say the person's name when you start a conversation so that he or she knows that you are talking to him or her.
- ▶ Before shaking hands, let the person know that you are about to do so.
- ▶ Always advise the person that you are leaving, so that he or she is not left talking to an empty space.
- ▶ If the person wants you to assist him or her in getting around, guide rather than lead. Ask the person how he or she would prefer to be guided (e.g. by the elbow, shoulder, etc.). Let him or her know when you are approaching steps or obstacles. Try to make sure in advance that the corridors and the meeting room are free from any obstacles.
- ▶ Be ready to give a brief description of the 'geography' (shape, size and windows) and contents (furniture and people) of a room. Warn a blind person about possible dangers in a new environment, for example, very hot radiators. To help a person to sit down, just place his/her hand on the back of the chair.
- ▶ Explain where the toilets can be found or show the way if necessary.



People with hearing impairments:

Find out how the person prefers to communicate – signing, lip reading or captioning:

- ▶ In case of captioning with a screen, make sure that the screen is big enough and that people who need it can easily see it.
- ▶ Sign language interpreters should be in front of the people they interpret for or well visible to them.
- ▶ If the person prefers lip reading, face him or her (make sure he/she is looking at you) and speak in a normal, clear and steady way.
- ▶ Do not shout or exaggerate your mouth movements, but use your facial expressions to emphasise your meanings.
- ▶ Make sure your face is in the light and do not put your hands in front of your mouth.
- ▶ Be ready to repeat yourself or rephrase a sentence if necessary. Some words are more difficult to interpret and so it may be useful to try different words.
- ▶ Keep distractions such as background noise to a minimum (avoid background music in the hall and in the conference room during breaks).



People with intellectual disabilities:

- ▶ Avoid lengthy written instructions or plans and diagrams on paper.
- ▶ Write down your name and telephone number for the person.
- ▶ For completing forms, check if the person needs assistance.
- ▶ Keep distractions such as background noise to a minimum.
- ▶ Give the person time to react and reply.
- ▶ Speak to the person in a normal, natural way.
- ▶ Don't take offence at unusual attitudes or reactions of the person.



Persons with speech impairments:

- ▶ Be patient, give them the time to speak, and let them finish their sentences before replying.
- ▶ If you do not understand, do not pretend to, but tell them that you haven't and ask them to repeat.



Persons with psychosocial disabilities:

- ▶ If the person is distressed, respond to him/her in a calm and polite way – try to see the person and not just the problem.
- ▶ If a person mentions that he/she has a psychosocial disability, take it seriously and treat the person with respect. It may be difficult for them to open up about it.
- ▶ Offer assistance if the person seems confused, overwhelmed or distressed.
- ▶ Calmly answer any questions the person might have; the information may be important to reassure him/her.

NOTE: Each person is different and cannot be categorised. The explanations above are for guidance only, please check with the participant directly what he/she needs or prefers.

Speakers

-  Inform speakers about the accessibility needs of the participants.
-  It is important that speaking times and schedules are adhered to.
-  Have speakers talk directly into the microphone and speak as slowly and clearly as possible to facilitate the work of the interpreters.
-  Check if the speaking arrangement is accessible. Speakers may need a ramp to get onto the stage, or the removal of a chair for a panel discussion.

Presentations

-  All presentations should be in accessible formats and given to participants and sign language interpreters in advance.
-  The content of the presentations should be clear, concrete, and easy to understand.
-  Ensure basic accessibility of Power Point Presentations:
 - ▶ Never use a picture as background for the text.
 - ▶ Make sure text and background have sufficient contrast.
 - ▶ Use a maximum of two fonts.
 - ▶ Use a large font.
 - ▶ Avoid block capitals and italics.
 - ▶ Do not use animations.
 - ▶ Slides are a visual support of your talk. Make sure to refer to all items on the screen.

 If videos are being used ensure that they are subtitled and give an audio description if no words are spoken in the video.

 Leave time for questions.

 Let audience members introduce themselves briefly before asking a question.

 If a microphone is passed around, check whether the needs help holding the microphone.

 When a deaf sign language user takes the floor, remember to give the microphone to the interpreter and not the person who signs.

6 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

 Breaks:

- ▶ For coffee breaks and lunches, make sure that low tables for wheelchair users (not only standing tables) are provided, together with some seats/chairs to rest for people that cannot stand for long time.

 For live captioning, an additional screen is required apart from the regular screen that displays the presentations. Make sure you check the space is big enough for two (or more) screens so that all participants can see both the presentations.

