



Health equity for persons with disabilities: Guide for action

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

What is disability inclusion?

“Disability inclusion” refers to the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity and the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work of the health sector, in compliance with the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). Disability is not the same as a health condition. It results from the interaction between health conditions and impairments that a person experiences, and a range of contextual factors related to different environmental and personal factors.

What is the Health equity for persons with disabilities: Guide for Action?

The Health equity for persons with disabilities: Guide for action (or Disability inclusion guide for action) is a planning tool. It supports ministries of health to plan appropriate actions to strengthen disability inclusion across their health system. These actions can be integrated in the health systems strengthening efforts of countries.

How was the Disability inclusion guide for action developed?

The Disability inclusion guide for action is a “living document”. It was developed in consultation with selected World Health Organization (WHO) country offices, ministries of health and country stakeholders, including organizations of persons with disabilities, who piloted tools and informed iterations of the toolkit. As disability inclusion in health systems continues to evolve globally, the toolkit will be further refined to reflect how the approach is adapted and applied in different countries. This will include expansion of technical guidance on specific topics and the documentation of country case studies and practice examples.

Who is the Disability inclusion guide for action designed for?

Ministries of health are the primary users of the Disability inclusion guide for action. However, it includes components which engage and/or are relevant to other ministries and stakeholders, such as civil society partners involved in cross-sectoral public health interventions and wider disability inclusion. The Disability inclusion guide for action is

designed for use at national levels, but the process and tools could also be adapted for use in local, district or regional level planning.

How is the Disability inclusion guide for action process organized?

The Disability inclusion guide for action is a planning process organized in a cycle of overlapping and continuous phases. The steps undertaken in each phase and adapted to different country contexts, include:



1. Prepare (3–6 months)

- 1.1. Confirm roles, responsibilities and resources
- 1.2. Identify, engage and dialogue with stakeholders
- 1.3. Establish a Disability inclusion guide for action working group

2. Assess (3–6 months)

- 2.1. Collect data and information
- 2.2. Assess status of disability inclusion in the health sector
- 2.3. Document and validate findings

3. Design (3–6 months)

- 3.1. Prioritize entry points and actions with costing
- 3.2. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework
- 3.3. Validate, finalize and endorse the plan

4. Implement and monitor (ongoing in line with health sector strategic planning cycle)

- 4.1. Disseminate and integrate the action plan
- 4.2. Facilitate intersectoral coordination and shared learning
- 4.3. Evaluate and report on the results to contribute to future strategic planning

How is WHO supporting countries to implement the Disability inclusion guide for action?

In partnership with the ministry of health, WHO can conduct the situation assessment, which includes desk-based research as well as in-country information and data collection. WHO can also support the drafting of the action plan to advance health equity for persons with disabilities, with a monitoring and evaluation framework; and co-facilitate meetings and workshops with key stakeholders. WHO colleagues will conduct at least two visits to implementing countries during this process.

Who should lead the Disability inclusion guide for action process?

The ministry of health should lead and oversee the Disability inclusion guide for action process, with support from WHO. It is essential to identify a focal point who will coordinate with WHO colleagues and relevant stakeholders. A working group will also be established, involving respective departments, such as health financing; other ministries, such as social affairs; relevant health and disability experts; and health and disability actors, including organizations of persons with disabilities. The working group will participate in meetings and workshops and provide feedback on the reports and documents developed throughout the Disability inclusion guide for action process. They will also support the government to implement the action plan, and engage in its monitoring, evaluation, and review processes.

What are the entry points for disability inclusion that will be explored in the situation assessment?

The situation assessment and subsequent action plans include the components of health systems strengthening through the primary health care approach. These are also the strategic entry points for disability inclusion in the health sector outlined in the [WHO Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities](#). They include political commitment, leadership, and governance; health financing; engagement of stakeholders and private sector; models of care; health and care workforce; physical infrastructure and health information and communication; digital technologies for health; systems for improving quality of care; monitoring and evaluation; and health policy and systems research.

How is disability inclusion in the health system assessed?

The Disability inclusive health system assessment tool outlines the criteria for each strategic entry point which demonstrates different levels of disability inclusion. Levels range from “needs establishing”, which represents very low or emerging levels of disability inclusion, to “needs no immediate action” where disability inclusion is at a high level and just needs monitoring over time. Through a series of facilitated workshop activities or group discussions, the working group is asked to score each entry point in terms of progress on disability inclusion and provide evidence – through additional documents and information – relating to the criteria in the tool.

Will we have to collect a lot of additional information and data?

The Disability inclusion guide for action starts by collating and reviewing the data and information that already exists on persons with disabilities and health equity. Consultations with persons with disabilities and their families are also undertaken to hear firsthand their experiences accessing health services and priorities for improvements. Stakeholder interviews assist in identifying potential skills, capacities and contributions on disability inclusion and foster their engagement in actions, many of which will be cross-sectoral. Finally, the Disability inclusion guide for action process will strengthen the collection and analysis of disability information and data over time, ideally through existing mechanisms for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) monitoring and the primary health care measurement framework. WHO colleagues will provide technical support to each of these steps in the Disability inclusion guide for action process.

How does the Disability inclusion guide for action process build on and strengthen previous assessments and existing plans on disability inclusion?

Existing assessments and plans will be reviewed as part of the desk-based data and information collection, providing an update on progress, and identifying gaps and opportunities to further strengthen disability inclusion across the health sector.

How will actions be implemented?

The Disability inclusion guide for action will support the ministry of health in partnership with other stakeholders to develop a disability inclusion action plan. However, the actions in this plan will be aligned with and can be integrated into other strategic and operational plans in health and other sectors. For example, actions on strengthening disability inclusion competency of the health care workforce can be integrated into wider workforce development operational plans. Similarly, actions to address social determinants of health, such as access to social protection, education, and employment, can feed into the implementation of national disability strategies.

How is the Disability inclusion guide for action different to the Rehabilitation guide for action?

The [Rehabilitation guide for action](#) supports the ministry of health to strengthen health systems to provide rehabilitation, making it available to everyone at all levels of health care, whenever needed. Rehabilitation is one of many health services that persons with disabilities may need – they also need to access the full range of health services and activities available to the wider population. The Disability inclusion guide for action

focuses on ensuring persons with disabilities have access to mainstream health services and strengthening their inclusion in wider health system processes (e.g. governance, financing, improving quality of care).

How long does the Disability inclusion guide for action process take?

The length of time required to undertake the Disability inclusion guide for action process will depend on the country context, how familiar stakeholders are with disability inclusion, the structures already established in the government for disability inclusive planning, and approval processes in the ministry of health. The Prepare, Assess and Design phases commonly take 3–6 months each, as such the process of developing an action plan can take up to 1.5 years. The implementation and monitoring of disability inclusive actions is then ongoing and should be monitored and evaluated in line with wider health sector strategic planning cycles.

Where can I get more information about the Disability inclusion guide for action?

The Disability inclusion guide for action, accompanying practice examples, tools and resources are available on the website: www.who.int/activities/supporting-countries-to-advance-health-equity-for-persons-with-disabilities

WHO can provide technical support to ministries of health to implement the Disability Inclusion Guide for Action process and facilitate regional sharing and learning between countries.

For further information, contact disability@who.int