



**UNPRPD** MPTF  
Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

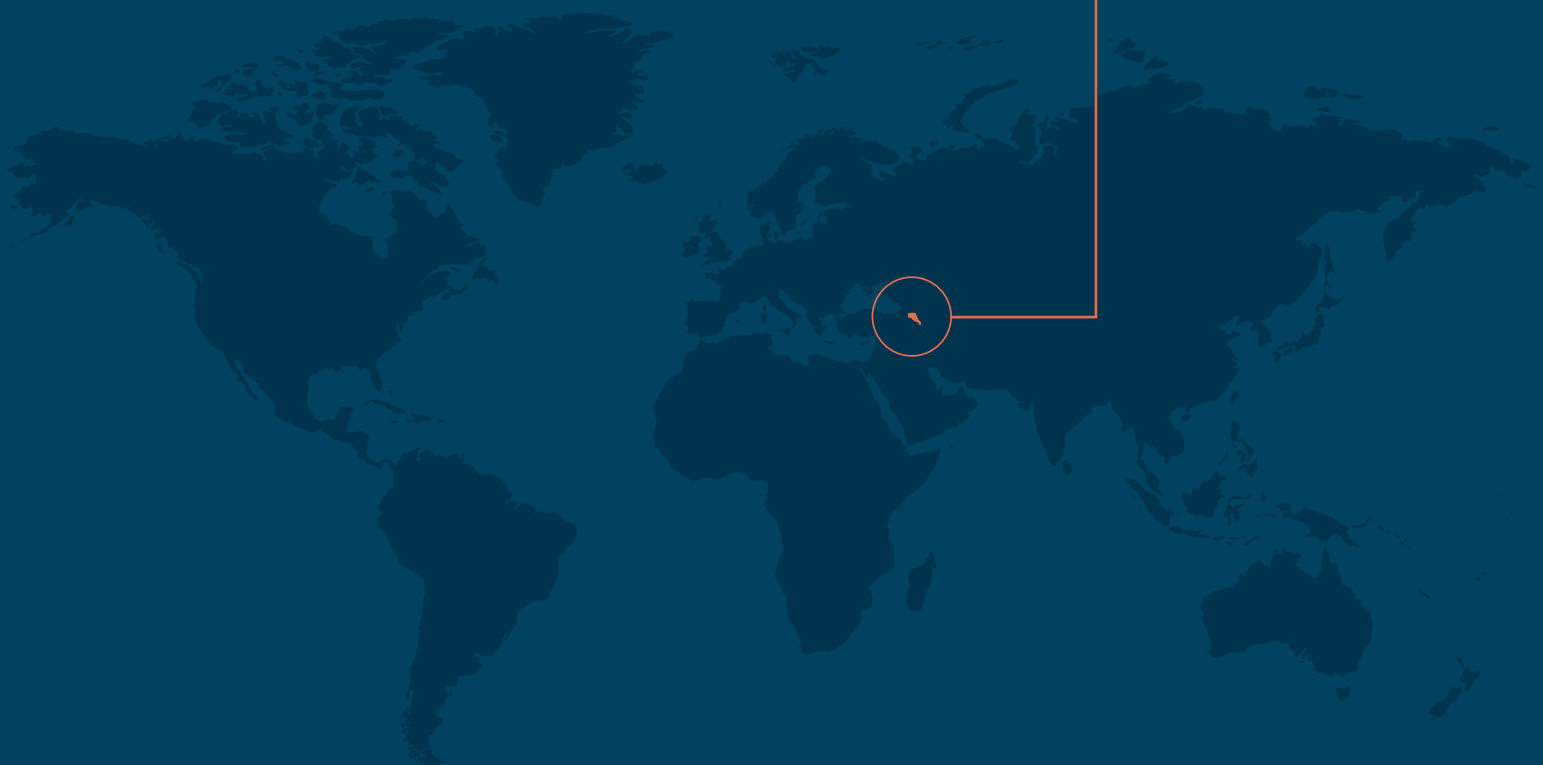


UNITED NATIONS  
ARMENIA



# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## ARMENIA



**COUNTRY BRIEF**



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# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN **ARMENIA**

## COUNTRY BRIEF

November 2022

### Disclaimer

This brief was prepared by the Technical Secretariat. It summarizes the key findings from the situational analysis report and does not necessarily reflect the position of the UNPRPD MPTF.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>ICF</b>	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
<b>LRPD</b>	Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>MoESCS</b>	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
<b>MoLSA</b>	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
<b>MPTF</b>	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
<b>NA</b>	National Assembly
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OPDs</b>	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>UNPRPD</b>	United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>USS</b>	Unified Social Service
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# 1 BACKGROUND

The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UNPRPD MPTF) is a unique partnership that brings together United Nations (UN) entities, governments, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), and broader civil society to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and disability inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the country level around the world.

In 2020, UNPRPD adopted a new programme design approach and embarked on a collaborative strategic review. This led to a new Strategic and Operational Framework 2020-2025, which moves towards proactive, results-oriented joint programming to drive implementation of the CRPD and disability inclusive SDGs.

The UNPRPD launched its fourth funding call and invited UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to submit proposals for joint country-level programmes with the objectives of advancing CRPD implementation and improving the implementation of disability inclusive SDGs. To support the delivery of these objectives, the UNCTs were invited to submit an expression of interest under the UNPRPD's Fourth Call for Proposals. The successful teams were then allocated a budget to deliver an induction training, conduct a country situational analysis and complete a full joint programme proposal.

As part of the induction phase, this summary presents findings from the situational analysis process based on UNPRPD's theory of change and the essential preconditions to ensure disability inclusion. UNCT Armenia received funding to conduct a situational analysis through a multi-stakeholder process, using UNPRPD MPTF's template and with support from UNPRPD MPTF's Technical Secretariat.

From March 2021 to February 2022, UNCT Armenia conducted the comprehensive situational analysis. The methodology included a desk review of relevant literature, key informant interviews and focus groups, stakeholder mapping exercises, and consultative workshops with key stakeholders.

This brief provides a summary of the key gaps and opportunities presented in the full report. The full situational analysis report with additional background and context can be found [here](#).

# 2

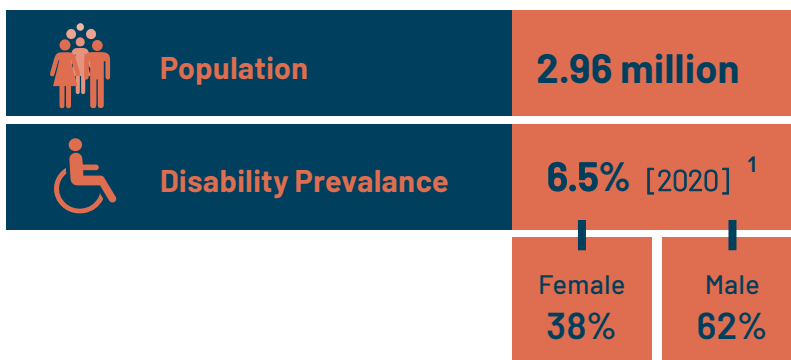
## WHY A COUNTRY ANALYSIS?

Many countries still struggle to transform the CRPD into concrete policies, systems, programmes and services that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. It is urgent that governments and their implementation partners deliver on their SDG commitments through CRPD-compliant interventions. To support countries in the most catalytic way requires understanding the main bottlenecks and priorities in each country in relation to the fulfilment of the CRPD. We needed to know who the key stakeholders are, how implementation/monitoring mechanisms are functioning (or not), which capacities stakeholders may need to improve, and which ongoing development processes could be leveraged to become more disability inclusive.

The situation analyses were carried out to:

- Inform the design of future PRPD-funded programmes in the country and serve as a baseline for them;
- Inform UNCTs of gaps in achieving disability inclusion in ongoing national processes and programmes and recommend further, in-depth analysis where needed;
- Build a base of mutual understanding and working relationships among UN entities, government, OPDs and other civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as the private sector and academia, as the basis for future co-design of joint programmes;
- Strengthen the capacity of those stakeholders to more effectively include and address the rights of persons with disabilities as outlined in the CRPD; and,
- Serve as an advocacy tool for ODPs and other civil society partners, both national and international.

# 3 INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY CONTEXT IN ARMENIA



At year-end 2020, the number of persons with disabilities registered in the Republic of Armenia social security system was 191,827, of whom 72,844 were women. The number of children under 18 with disabilities in Armenia is 8,771 (around 1.2 percent of all children), of whom 2,757 are girls. Persons with disabilities make up 6.5 percent of the population, while according to World Health Organization (WHO) data, approximately 15 percent of the world's population (over 1 billion people) has a disability. This indicates that the Armenian data is not yet based on CRPD-compliant data collection methods or definitions of disability.

# 4 FINDINGS

## 4.1 Stakeholder coordination mechanisms

The key stakeholders responsible for implementing and monitoring the CRPD are highlighted below. A comprehensive list of stakeholders is included in the full report.

### Government

- The **Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs** (MoLSA) has the overall mandate to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the CRPD. It has taken the lead in preparing a series of laws, policies and plans and cooperates actively with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that address issues facing persons with disabilities and OPDs operating in Yerevan and other locations in Armenia.
- The **National Commission for Persons with Disabilities** acts as a platform for consultation and coordination of the activities carried out by various agencies and organizations, including OPDs and civil society. It is a platform for members from government and civil society can discuss legislation, policies and strategies to ensure disability-specific and disability-sensitive approaches. Similar commissions also operate at the regional level. Although these commissions are well intended, in practice, the effectiveness of OPD and NGO participation is open to question, as no clear and concrete accessibility mechanisms or monitoring tools are in place.
- The **Office of the Human Rights Defender** is mandated to monitor implementation of the provisions of the UNCRPD, as well as to prevent violations of the rights of persons with disabilities and offer them protection. Cooperation has been established among the Human Rights Defender's office and OPDs and NGOs representing persons with disabilities. In 2019 a Public Council (ombudsman) was established under the Human Rights Defender's Office to improve protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and strengthen cooperation between civil society and the Defender's Office.

### Organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)

Under current legislation, the Republic of Armenia has a single approach to registering NGOs. OPDs, like other CSOs, are registered in accordance with the country's Law on Non-Governmental Organizations. The process of registering NGOs is not disability sensitive and includes restrictions on registering groups of persons with intellectual and/or psychological disabilities.



Although the number of OPDs has increased in recent years (to around 30), the research showed that certain groups of persons, such as those with albinism, short stature or psychosocial disabilities, are relatively less involved in OPDs. In some cases, there are no organizations that represent them. The main areas of engagement of the most active OPDs include issues related to the rights of women and children with disabilities, education, advocacy and social assistance. A few NGOs and associations in the country provide services to persons with visual and hearing disabilities and advocate for their rights. Some organizations seek to deal with the problems of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. However, persons from these groups are rarely actively involved in social, political, socio-economic and decision-making processes.

At the time of the research, one OPD coalition was active and functioning in Armenia - the Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reform. Its main objective is to protect the rights of persons with different types of disabilities.

Most OPDs are funded by donor organizations, such as the European Union, Council of Europe (CoE), United States Agency for International Development, and other European and U.S. agencies. In recent years, OPDs have been able to provide specific services funded by grants from the State budget.

## UN system

In 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) began to collaborate with OPDs. This work has continued through other projects. Many OPDs are now actively involved in developing and implementing programmes coordinated by UN agencies, while UN agencies also support OPDs' capacity building.

## Summary of stakeholder coordination analysis

- Although persons with disabilities and OPDs/NGOs representing their rights are included in the national, regional and capital city commissions for persons with disabilities, in practice, the impact of their participation in developing legislation, strategies and policies and in decision-making processes is unclear. There are no concrete mechanisms, supports or monitoring tools to ensure that they can participate meaningfully.
- There are no clear mechanisms to enable OPDs to assess the extent to which, or the grounds on which, the government accepts or considers their recommendations, opinions and observations on sectoral documents and legal acts.
- Armenia lacks an enabling environment that would facilitate the creation of genuine OPDs. Presently, most such organizations are run jointly by persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities.
- NGO legislation is not disability sensitive and restricts the registration of groups of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, who are not considered to have legal capacity.

- There is no formal, legal distinction between NGOs representing or defending the interests of persons with disabilities and OPDs.
- Only one active coalition operates in the country with the main objective of protecting the rights of persons with different types of disabilities.
- Groups of persons with certain disabilities (such as albinism, short stature and psychosocial disabilities) are relatively less involved in OPDs and in some cases, no organizations representing such persons exist.
- Persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities are less actively involved in social, political, socioeconomic and decision-making processes.
- Some OPDs, especially in the regions, experience capacity and information gaps.

## 4.2 Preconditions for disability inclusion

In its Strategic Framework, UNPRPD has identified five preconditions as foundational elements that must be in place to address the rights of persons with disabilities across sectors. The following findings focus on these preconditions in the Armenian context.

- 1 Equality and non-discrimination
- 2 Accessibility
- 3 Inclusive service delivery
- 4 CRPD-compliant budgeting and Financial management
- 5 Accountability and governance

### Equality and non-discrimination

Armenia signed the UNCRPD on 30 December 2007, and on 18 December 2009 its Constitutional Court ruled that the Convention complies with the country's constitution. On 22 September 2010, the country's National Assembly (NA) ratified it, although Armenia has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention. However, on 11 June 2020, the government adopted a draft law on ratification of the Optional Protocol, which was then forwarded to the NA for ratification. The draft law had not yet been included on the NA's agenda for parliamentary debate as of early 2022.

As a Member State of the CoE, Armenia has ratified and is successfully applying a number of CoE legal instruments, including disability-related regulations. The most important of these are the European Convention on Human Rights and case law developed by the European Court of Human Rights. The latter is important for national legal developments and for the design of strategies, concepts and standards by State bodies.

At the national level, Armenia has adopted several laws to protect persons with disabilities. The key one is the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (LRPD), which entered into force on 4 June 2021. It seeks to ensure the provision, protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. Another important law is the Law on Functionality Assessment, also adopted in 2021. Several legal aspects relating to persons with disabilities, such as legal capacity, active legal capacity and issues related to compulsory medical care for citizens in psychiatric institutions, are regulated by the Civil Code of the Republic of Armenia.

### Key findings

- Armenia has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which would allow individuals or groups of individuals to file complaints to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities about systemic problems affecting them.

- Armenian legislation lacks a distinct non-discrimination law. This legislative gap weakens enforcement of the newly adopted LRPD, which seeks to curb discrimination on the grounds of disability.
- Following the adoption of the Law on Functionality Assessment, the government was expected to speedily adopt regulations providing detailed procedures for operation of the system. However, the regulations have not been adopted, creating a major operational gap between the law and its enforcement.
- National legislation does not clearly define the concepts and legal grounds for intersectionality and multiple discrimination. This contributes to the absence of institutionalized administrative and court practices to protect the rights of vulnerable women and children with disabilities.
- The State and municipal bodies lack experience in implementing the LRPD, resulting in a lack of intersectoral coordination and collaboration in its implementation.

## **Inclusive service delivery**

### **Disability assessment and referral services**

The 2021 Law on Functional Assessment calls for persons with disabilities to undergo an assessment of their health, activity level, participation and environmental obstacles as the basis to determine limitations to their functionality. The outcome will define the social services and other support measures suited to the individual's needs. According to the law, this process is to be carried out in alignment with the WHO's International Classification Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). However, the tools and procedures required to guide practitioners' application of the WHO classification system have not yet been introduced. Medical examinations are still being performed pursuant to existing regulations, reflecting the medical model of disability assessment.

Nevertheless, the government, particularly MoLSA, has begun to introduce reforms to the disability assessment system with support from the UN. MoLSA established a unified social service agency (USS) that brings together four key entities in social protection: social security service; medical-social examination; state employment offices; and regional/ community level social assistance divisions. As a result of this unification, many services were centralized. Persons with disabilities, particularly those with mobility problems, raised concerns about reaching assessment centres, which are often located far from their homes. Reaching these centres often requires that persons living in rural areas travel long distances, which is difficult due to the lack of accessible transportation.

Respondents also mentioned how difficult it is to challenge the decisions of the assessment commissions. Administrative bodies deny most appeals, leading complainants to seek a judicial remedy. However, pursuing a case in administrative court can take up to two years, deterring people from doing so.

Another issue relates to the subjective nature of decisions. As mentioned, the medical approach to assessment still prevails in Armenia and the assessment commissions often

decide that an individual's current disability has not limited his or her life activities. Under such circumstances, citizens are generally advised to re-apply to the local disability commission for re-examination if their condition worsens. This requires additional diagnostic, medical and rehabilitative measures, which involve significant financial costs. Many applicants are unable to obtain new medical records due to lack of financial resources. This does not comply with the requirements of the Convention, which specifies that disability should not become an additional financial burden for persons seeking to exercise their rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated these problems. Examinations scheduled for February 2020 were postponed until April 2020 and then again to October 2020. An electronic filing procedure was introduced, but many applicants were unable to submit electronic applications within the required timeframe. Many applicants were not even informed about the new electronic procedure.

### **Disability support services**

Under the Law on Social Assistance, the main social services include counselling support, rehabilitation support, in-kind support, housing, day care, legal assistance, disbursement of pensions, benefits and other monetary payments, services defined by law, and services requiring medical and social expertise. According to MoLSA, around 14,000 assistive devices are provided annually. If the beneficiary is not able to visit a USS site due to a health condition or other problem, USS officials and the multidisciplinary team are to make a home visit or communicate by video at the beneficiary's request.

Starting in 2019, tenders have been announced for the implementation of disability support services; organizations certified by MoLSA are eligible to participate in the tender process. State budget grants are provided to the organizations that win the tenders.

### **Mainstream services**

The situational analysis focused primarily on inclusive education. It also highlighted the continued practice of the institutionalization of persons with disabilities.

In 2016, the Government of Armenia launched its universal inclusive education reform, Education for All, to enhance access to education for children with disabilities. In 2021, a process to mainstream inclusive education was launched in the country's last two regions: Ararat and Vayots Dzor. Other regions have already launched similar efforts. Universal inclusive education is expected to be fully introduced in Armenian public schools by August 2025. In May 2020, the government approved a new preschool education law, which calls for accessible, inclusive and quality preschool education for all children in urban and rural areas, special education and development needs assessment of preschool-age children, and provision of individual services and support.

Significant problems have been identified with regard to implementation of these inclusive education initiatives. Physical accessibility of schools is still a problem. Textbooks, learning materials and programmes are frequently not tailored to needs. The State does not provide transportation to school as a support service. Parents are also concerned by the lack of assistive devices for children. The variety and quality of assistive devices are inadequate to meet the needs of children with multiple disabilities and deafness.

For example, no special communication measures are taken to allow children with hearing and speech disorders to express themselves and, subsequently, engage fully in the educational process. Mainstream schools do not offer activities (for example, painting, ceramics, dance and music) taught by specialists in working with children with special educational needs. Institutions that offer extracurricular activities usually refuse to admit these children.

The challenges facing institutions of higher education are similar to those described above: lack of an accessible physical environment and adapted textbooks. However, significant efforts have been made to build ramps at entrances to university buildings and design accommodations in restrooms.

## Key findings

- Disability assessments are still performed based on the medical model of disability because government regulations defining new procedures and frameworks under the recently passed Law on Functional Assessment have not yet been finalized.
- Procedures and grounds for challenging the decisions of disability assessment bodies are complicated, time consuming and costly.
- A significant gap exists between the need for and the capacity of care and social rehabilitation services to meet those needs. Some regions of the country lack access to rehabilitation services.
- The quality of rehabilitation services is unsatisfactory for several reasons: limited State funding, lack of State mechanisms to oversee operation of the services, lack of professional staff, and an overburdened support services system overall.
- The rehabilitation services provided are insufficient for children with multiple or severe disabilities. Services are not provided regularly or continuously and do not offer the full scope of specialized treatments, such as physiotherapy, ergotherapy, speech therapy, hydrotherapy and psychology.
- Access to expensive treatments (such as chemotherapy) for persons with disabilities remains problematic due to the high costs of drugs and the limited compensation offered by the government. As a result, these persons often cancel their treatment plan.
- Due to the lack or insufficient number of community-based services, persons with psycho-social and intellectual disabilities still have no alternative to receiving long-term treatment and care in mental health facilities, keeping them confined for long periods of time.
- All levels of the education system face challenges ensuring the availability of inclusive education, such as the lack of physical accessibility, transportation support and assistive devices; insufficient availability of textbooks and curricula adapted to children with special educational needs; and lack of access to arts and cultural activities led by specialists skilled in working with children with special needs.

## Accessibility

Armenia has laws that mandate accessibility within its public institutions and transportation systems (see full report for further details at [unprpd.org](http://unprpd.org)). However, the situational analysis highlights that accessibility remains a key issue due to physical barriers, lack of universal design and reasonable accommodations, and poor communication systems.

### Key findings

- Lack of physical accessibility in public spaces is widespread and systemic. Most educational, cultural, sport and leisure facilities, public transport and built infrastructure (including court buildings, penitentiary facilities, polling stations and mental health centres) lack basic physical accessibility standards.
- The government lacks a comprehensive, coordinated programme to eliminate physical barriers in public spaces in the regions. Funding to build ramps and other accommodations are not allocated proportionally between the regions and the capital, nor among the regions.
- Sign language translation services at courts are not reimbursed by the government, unlike translation services for foreign language speakers, which are provided free of charge.
- Important messages and information provided by the government is not provided in accessible formats to persons who are blind, deaf or have intellectual disabilities.

### CRPD compliant budgeting and Financial management

Funding for the disability sector in the 2017-2021 State budgets is not always visible. In some instances, activities for persons with disabilities are covered under other budget lines. Data addressing the disability sector exclusively is not presented - neither in the budget planning phase, performance reports nor budget explanations - and the available results contain only information on expenditures incurred.

Available information on such expenditures does show that funding increased for most disability-related sectors between 2017 and 2021. However, funding was cut substantially in certain sectors, such as inclusive education in primary schools (reduced by 44 per cent), secondary schools (reduced by 42 per cent) and inclusive education (reduced by 40 per cent). Some sectors received no funding at all for 2020 and 2021; for example, day-care services for persons with mental health problems, medical/social rehabilitation services, and community-based services for children with disabilities or in difficult life situations. Additionally, no funds were allocated to collect, process or disseminate statistical data and research information on persons with disabilities and their rights in accessible formats and technologies.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, macroeconomic forecasts for the government's interim expenditure programme for 2021-2023 were revised and State budgets in different sectors were redistributed, although there was no targeted redistribution in the disability sector. While budget redistribution as a result of COVID-19 prevention activities is a globally recognized practice, the lack of activities targeted to meet the real needs of persons with disabilities in this process is problematic.

## Key findings

- No resources are allocated to national monitoring mechanisms or to promote participation by OPDs in the monitoring process.
- No funding is allocated for the Office of the Human Rights Defender, despite its mandate to serve as the monitoring body for implementation of the CRPD under article 33.
- No funding is allocated in the budget to collect, process and disseminate statistical data and disability surveys.
- Despite a sustainable increase in funding for several areas during the last three years, 2019 and 2020 funding was cut or eliminated in certain areas.
- The budgeting process does not provide measurable indicators to assess the impact of efforts to resolve specific systemic problems.

## Accountability and governance

### Inclusive evidence and data gathering systems

A census was planned for October 2020 that would have included the Washington Group Short Set of Questions and was expected to yield data on persons with disabilities. However, due to the 2020 military conflict with Azerbaijan and the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent national lockdown, the census was not conducted and was rescheduled to October 2022.

Current legislation provides for a national statistical data system that collects data differentiated by income, gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location and other categories (based on SDG target 17.18). However, domestic legislation does not explicitly define disability as a distinct data collection category. Thus, despite Armenia's commitments in the context of fulfilling requirements for statistics and data collection laid out in Article 31 of the UN Convention, unified comparative statistical data remains incomplete. Some disaggregated statistical data is available on the rights of persons with disabilities by sector; however, the data are not reflected through uniform indicators/codes that are used effectively by different sectors and different bodies. This affects the efficient, comprehensive identification of real needs.

### National accountability mechanisms

The 2018 amendment to the Constitutional Law on the Human Rights Defender authorized the Defender to monitor application of the provisions of the UN Convention and prevent and protect against violations of the rights of persons with disabilities. The amendment also established Armenia's compliance with the Convention's requirement for an independent monitoring body.

In exercising the above function, the Human Rights Defender established a Public Council for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that includes experienced NGOs and independent experts. Two important tasks of the Public Council are to contribute to ensuring protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and to strengthening cooperation between civil society representatives and the Human Rights Defender's office.



Effective cooperation exists between the Human Rights Defender and members of the Public Council for discussing, recording and resolving sectoral issues. As part of these activities, discussions have taken place on obstacles that emerged during the state of emergency and martial law – in particular, systemic issues related to achieving the right to education of persons with disabilities; legal, practical issues related to the definition of disability status; appeals of commission decisions; and possible solutions to those problems. In connection with these issues, the Human Rights Defender’s office fulfilled its mandate by raising these issues with relevant State bodies and making recommendations.

## Key findings

- Armenia’s data collection and processing framework, managed by the National Statistics Committee, does not include a distinct category for disability.
- Comprehensive data on persons with disabilities and their service needs are not available in the national disability assessment system, hindering the possibility of developing a database that could inform policies and programmes.
- The current system of collecting general statistics on persons with disabilities is inconsistent and lacks common criteria. The statistics are reflected primarily in numerical indicators, which do not capture the substantive data needed to reveal the causes and nature of problems.
- The country lacks a unified, centralized comparative statistical data system. The current system offers fragmented and disaggregated statistical data by sector, which are not reflected in visible uniform indicators/codes that can be used effectively in different sectors and by different bodies.
- There is a lack of effective public reporting on and monitoring of State bodies’ performance with regard to national policies, strategies and projects concerning persons with disabilities.

### 4.3 Cross-cutting approaches: Participation, gender, inequalities

The UNPRPD has adopted three cross-cutting approaches to be applied across all of UNPRPD MPTF's work, including its structures, programmes, and processes, to ensure full and meaningful participation of all persons with disabilities.



#### **Participation:**

Enabling full and effective participation of persons with disabilities



#### **Inequalities:**

Ensuring the inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities



#### **Gender:**

Addressing gender inequality and advancing the rights of women and girls with disabilities

## Participation

The situational analysis highlights several barriers to ensuring the effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in decision-making processes. Specifically, it highlights the lack of regulations and practices to enable meaningful participation.

While many OPDs are already involved in developing and implementing important strategic programming, it is nonetheless critical to develop better mechanisms to facilitate more effective participation by OPDs representing the interests/rights of persons with different disabilities (especially underrepresented groups). Some OPDs regularly participate, in national level meetings of UN special mechanisms and consultative bodies to present information on the human rights protection system. They are also active in submitting shadow reports to UN treaty body committees. However, OPD participation in governmental and UN consultation platforms is still often tokenistic and many disability groups remain voiceless.

## Gender

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended intensified efforts to prevent and counter multiple and intersectional gender discrimination by including the concept of disability-based discrimination in all legislative acts and policies related to women and girls, as well as ratifying the CoE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and applying the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee. However, national legislation does not clearly define the concepts and legal grounds for intersectionality and multiple discrimination. These key gaps contribute to the absence of institutionalized administrative and court practices to protect the rights of vulnerable women and children with disabilities. Further, the law on domestic violence lacks a definition of violence based on disability. Given

the absence of a dedicated non-discrimination law, this is a major gap, which results in the failure to investigate and record violence motivated by discrimination based on both gender and disability (that is, intersectionality). The support centres for women and girls with disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence are not distributed equitably throughout Armenia; they are located only in the capital and in three regions.

## **Inequalities**

Several OPDs are led by women with disabilities and some NGOs specialize in identifying and addressing issues related to this population. Groups of underrepresented persons with disabilities, such as those with psychosocial disabilities or albinism, are often not engaged within OPDs. In some cases, there are no organizations representing them. Further, persons with disabilities from these groups are rarely actively involved in social, political, socio-economic, and decision-making processes. It is an important challenge for OPDs to engage with, empower and represent these groups.

## **4.4 Disability inclusion in broader development, humanitarian and emergency contexts**

### **National development plans**

Armenia presented its second Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2020. Persons with disabilities are highlighted in several areas, including assistive technology, inclusive education, employment and decent work, and gender equality.

The Government of the Republic of Armenia and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Armenia presented the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Armenia 2021-2025, which includes efforts to strengthen disability-inclusive efforts. The report states that “although the rights of persons with disabilities have been high on the government agenda through the ongoing comprehensive reform, an enabling legal and policy framework and disability-inclusive policy, programming, and services at all levels remain to be seen.”<sup>2</sup> Progress on the UNSDCF outcomes to date may be found in the 2021 UN Country Annual Results Report for Armenia, which also include key results from the Country Common Analysis.<sup>3</sup>

### **Climate change, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action**

Armenia is located in a region at high risk for natural emergencies and is thus subject to serious impacts from earthquakes, landslides, hail, floods, strong winds and forest fires. Preventing emergency situations, reducing disaster risk, and protecting the population should be considered issues of national security and understood as preconditions for sustainable development.

MoLSA and the Rescue Service of the Ministry of Emergency Situations pursue a consistent policy of civil defence and population protection in emergencies, with a special focus on persons with disabilities. The Ministry's system includes a crisis management centre containing all relevant databases, including information about the location of persons with disabilities by region.

Despite these systemic improvements, the country's shelters are often inaccessible for persons with disabilities, particularly due to the lack of warning sounds and light signals for persons with visual and hearing disabilities. Moreover, current legal provisions do not include toolkits or mechanisms to guarantee the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities during civil defence emergencies. The Draft Law on Civil Defence does not address the needs of persons with disabilities and inclusive evacuation plans and disaster risk management are lacking at all levels.

### **COVID-19:**

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly hindered efforts to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The report highlights the challenges that they have experienced in accessing essential services including food, health services, necessary hygiene items and proper living conditions. Public health measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic did not give adequate consideration to persons with disabilities. They were isolated and restricted from public settings, which impacted their access to essential needs. Individuals in institutional settings were further isolated and had limited communication with their community. In addition, procedures for payment of pensions and other social allowances were established without reference to individual situations and the specific needs of persons with disabilities affected by COVID-19.

# 5 CONCLUSIONS

The Government of Armenia has made considerable efforts to bring its legislation and policies in line with the standards and requirements of the UN CRPD. It undertook major reforms of its legislation and relevant legal frameworks, although several draft regulations and laws are still in progress for adoption. In addition, the government developed several policy papers based on the fundamental principles of the Convention, such as the application of the social model of disability. The government has sought new opportunities for cooperation and partnership with OPDs, NGOs and international organizations and their various initiatives, such as the UNPRPD's efforts to develop participatory and inclusive strategies and projects for persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, armed conflict in 2020 and the spread of COVID-19 significantly hindered these efforts. While the authorities need resources to ensure that conditions meeting the fundamental principles of the Convention are finally put in place, it should be noted that many other problems are systemic in nature, and thus call for organizational and managerial changes rather than financial resources. Current joint efforts by the government, in cooperation with OPDs/CSOs and international partners offer a fresh perspective for meaningful progress on current reforms.

To address the challenges identified in the situational analysis, key recommendations are outlined below. A full list of recommendations may be found in the full report.

- The State should ensure a favourable environment for the establishment and operation of organizations representing persons with disabilities. In this context, measures should be taken to formally distinguish between OPDs (membership organizations that are led by persons with disabilities) and NGOs (groups supporting the interests of persons with disabilities). This could be addressed in the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- MoLSA should develop intersectional cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the MoESCS and the Ministry of Territorial Administration to introduce a unified policy on community-based services. The policy should address ensuring adequate accountability and monitoring structures, coordinated work of all stakeholders and routine provision of information to the public.

- NGOs, OPDs, government officials and civil servants involved in important decision-making processes should receive regular training on various aspects of the Convention, with a special focus on intersectionality and multiple discrimination.
- At all levels of the education system, reasonable accommodations should be promoted, including physical accessibility, adapted pedagogical methods, individual education plans/curriculum and assistive technologies for education. Professional staff with the required skills for working with children with different disabilities should be ensured at mainstream schools. This issue should be raised with the MoESCS.
- MOLSA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, should develop indicators for assessing the effectiveness and impact of measures envisaged by the State budget in the disability sector.
- MOLSA and the National Bureau of Statistics should revise the current system of data collection to ensure compliance with the Convention's requirements on availability and accessibility of disaggregated data. It is recommended that the UN provide technical support to review the current system and recommend changes to it.

# ANNEX 1: 26 SELECTED COUNTRIES

Argentina  
Colombia  
Guatemala  
Panama  
Trinidad & Tobago

## AMERICAS

Cameroon  
DRC  
Eswatini  
Ghana  
Rwanda  
Sierra Leone  
Tanzania  
The Gambia  
Tunisia  
Zimbabwe

## AFRICA

Montenegro  
North Macedonia  
Republic of Moldova

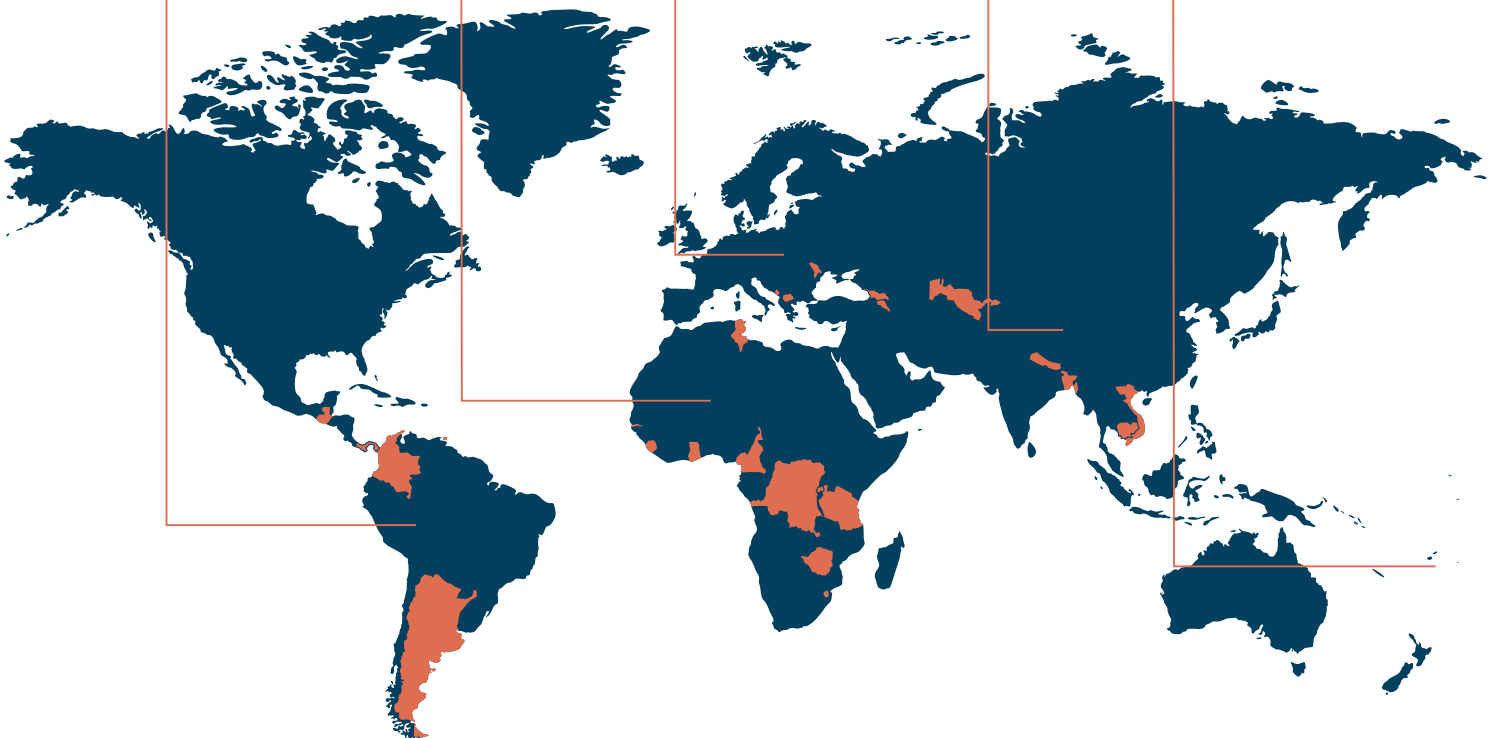
## EUROPE

Armenia  
Bangladesh  
Cambodia  
Georgia  
Nepal  
Uzbekistan  
Vietnam

## ASIA

Cook Islands

## OCEANIA



# ENDNOTES

- 1 Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia 2020
- 2 <https://armenia.un.org/en/135999-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-2021-2025>
- 3 <https://armenia.un.org/en/184463-2021-un-country-annual-results-report-armenia>





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