

2022 Programme year

Report of the Secretary-General

# Disability inclusion in the United Nations system



## Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 77/189, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it a progress report on steps taken by the United Nations system towards mainstreaming disability inclusion, including implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

The report outlines the progress made in 2022, on the basis of an analysis of submissions by United Nations entities and country teams reporting under the Strategy's accountability framework. It reflects on opportunities and challenges facing the Organization and synergies forged between the Strategy and other system-wide efforts.

---

# Table of contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Advancing disability inclusion in the United Nations system</b>	<b>4</b>
Ⓐ	Fostering participation across the system	5
Ⓑ	Synergies with system-wide strategies	6
<b>2.</b>	<b>Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy</b>	<b>7</b>
Ⓐ	Accountability at the entity level	8
	Leadership, strategic planning and management	11
	Inclusiveness	13
	Programming	16
	Organizational culture	18
Ⓑ	Accountability at the country level	20
	Leadership, strategic planning and management	23
	Inclusiveness	25
	Programming	27
	Organizational culture	30
Ⓒ	Inter-agency coordination	32
Ⓓ	Challenges and opportunities	33
<b>3.</b>	<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>36</b>

# 1. Advancing disability inclusion in the United Nations system

As the world approaches the midpoint of the period of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the acceleration of progress towards and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals are of the highest priority for the Organization. This includes fulfilling the rights and needs of more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide, who continue to face persistent barriers to their full inclusion and meaningful participation in society.

As we seek to realize the Goals, reaching the world's most marginalized populations has never been more essential. Advancing disability inclusion across the United Nations system remains critical to support Member States in their implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and achievement of the Goals for persons with disabilities.

The accountability framework of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy provides the Organization with a clear road map to accelerate progress on disability inclusion. The present report demonstrates that, four years after its launch, the Strategy is reshaping areas in which the Organization previously faltered. Entities and country teams are addressing structural aspects of their programmes and operations, thus prompting a reassessment of their values, methods and priorities, including at the senior management level. The report details major trends, opportunities and practices across the system, and the positive impact of inter-agency collaboration in accelerating the Organization's efforts to enhance disability inclusion in a variety of areas.

The results of the reporting are clear: system-wide progress will not be achieved if entities and country teams work independently of each other to implement the Strategy. We cannot wait for solutions to materialize. The foundational tools, resources and guidance put in place as a result of the Strategy must be operationalized. It is imperative that, in the system, greater focus be placed on addressing disability inclusion in a systematic, coordinated and cross-functional manner, including at the highest levels of the Organization. Only then will the United Nations lead by example on disability inclusion.

# A

## Fostering participation across the system

The participation of persons with disabilities, in all their diversity, is fundamental to an inclusive and accessible society. Since its launch, the Strategy has increasingly fostered the engagement and participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations throughout the Organization's work. The imperative to promote representation and diversity and to consult with specific groups and organizations of persons with disabilities in order to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and needs is increasingly reflected.

Meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations remains foundational to the achievement of all the indicators and central to the drive of the Strategy, and is accordingly an indicator within the Strategy's accountability framework. Entities are increasingly undertaking meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities, as they move toward effective and systematic engagement with persons with disabilities. United Nations entities are also establishing more formalized partnerships to deepen and sustain collaboration on all aspects of the Strategy, and beyond the specific indicator on consultation.

At the country level, increased efforts are being made to engage with organizations of persons with disabilities, including at the leadership level, and to ensure their input in strategic planning, coordination mechanisms, accessibility assessments, programming, humanitarian efforts and capacity development. The participation of and consultation with persons with disabilities are increasingly reflected in internal operations, with the emergence of resource groups for staff members with disabilities and staff members who provide support to persons with disabilities. Efforts are also being made to gather data on staff members with disabilities, gauge their levels of satisfaction and respond to their concerns through comprehensive staff engagement surveys.

Despite these areas of progress, more needs to be done to expand consultations beyond disability-specific issues, ensure that persons with disabilities in all their diversity are represented, consulted and engaged, and deepen the involvement of persons with disabilities across all aspects of the Strategy. While an inclusive and intersectional approach is unfolding thanks to the Strategy, consultations with a more diverse range of stakeholders and networks of persons with disabilities are required.

## B

# Synergies with system-wide strategies

Disability inclusion requires a holistic and intersectional approach to address the rights and needs of persons with disabilities in all their diversity. Modelled on the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and launched concurrently with the United Nations Youth Strategy (Youth 2030), the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy fosters synergies with other system-wide agendas and takes an intersectional approach.

As a result, disability inclusion is progressively being reflected in the Organization's existing commitments and mechanisms targeting gender and youth. Entities are focusing more on including women and girls with disabilities in actions on gender equality. At the country level, efforts are accelerating to integrate disability inclusion into gender structures, programming and capacity-building. For example, the Spotlight Initiative, a joint initiative by the European Union and the United Nations, has enabled country teams to address the way that gender-based violence affects women, young women and girls with disabilities. These steps help reach women and girls with disabilities who face significant marginalization and barriers to their participation and inclusion in society. Similarly, entities and country teams are beginning to include young persons with disabilities in decision-making processes and promote youth-led disability initiatives. To bolster these efforts, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) initiated the Youth 2030 Disability Task Team in 2022, a coordination mechanism comprising youth with disabilities and United Nations entities that promotes the rights and meaningful participation of young persons with disabilities and strengthens inter-agency collaboration, in line with the youth and disability system-wide strategies.

The emerging synergies reflect the growing understanding of disability inclusion as relevant to all areas of the Organization's work and that the Strategy can be leveraged to increase the efficacy and breadth of other system-wide strategies.

## 2. Implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

Seventy-seven United Nations entities and 131 country teams reported on progress for the 2022 programme year (1 January–31 December 2022) under the Strategy’s accountability framework.

As in previous years, progress was reported against the indicators of the entity accountability framework and the country team accountability scorecard on disability inclusion, using a self-assessed five-point grading system with the following ratings: missing requirements, approaching requirements, meeting requirements, exceeding requirements and not applicable. At a minimum, entities and country teams should aspire to meet requirements, with the long-term goal of exceeding them.

# A

## Accountability at the entity level

In 2022, the number of entities reporting under the entity accountability framework continued to rise, reaching 77 entities, compared with 73 in 2021. This number represents an increase of 35 per cent since 2019, and comprises: (a) 49 Secretariat entities, including 19 peace and political missions and 5 regional economic commissions; (b) 7 funds and programmes; (c) 11 specialized agencies; and (d) 10 other and related entities.<sup>1</sup>

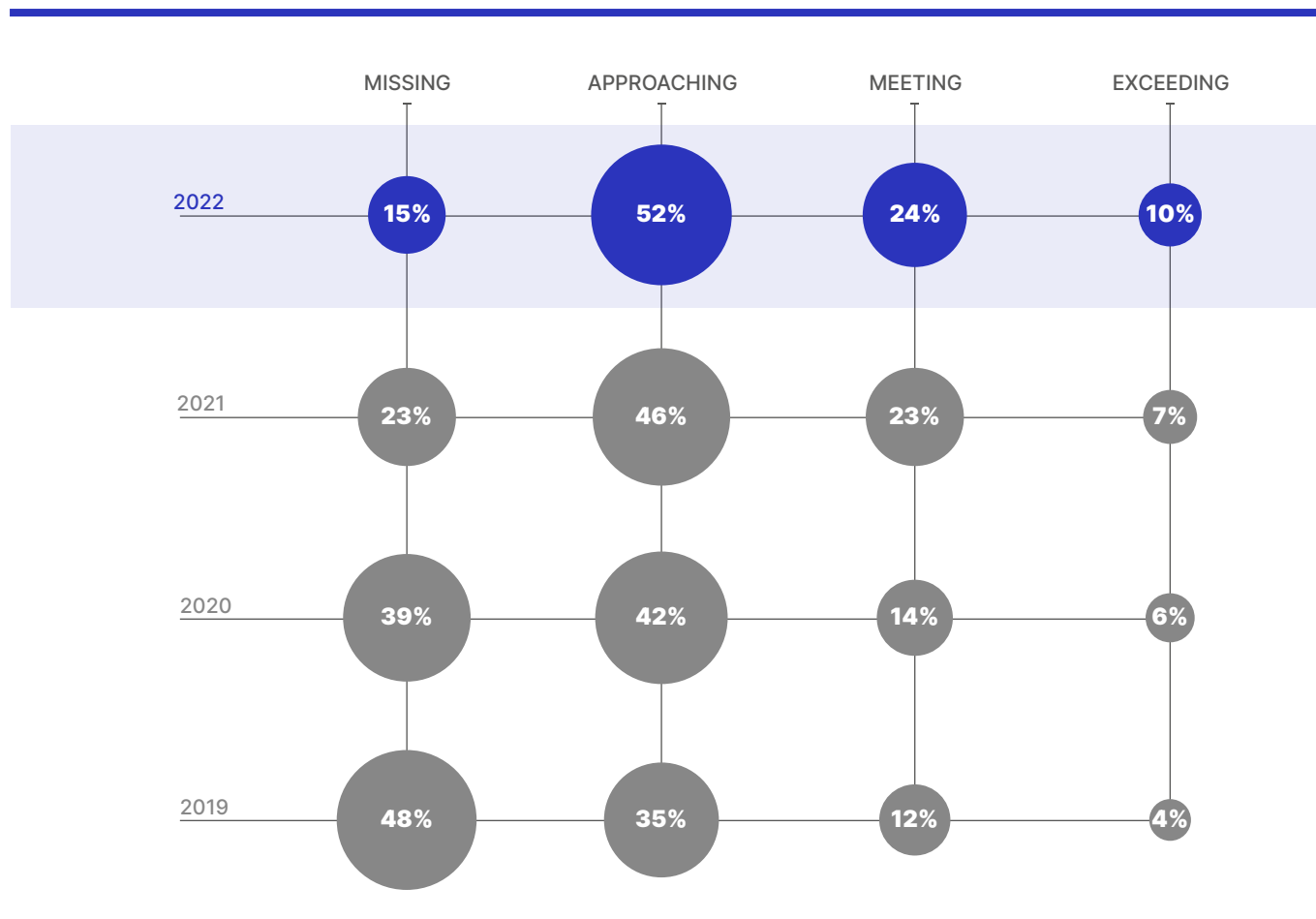
Entities continued to make substantial progress in implementing the Strategy. Thirty-four per cent of the Strategy's requirements were met or exceeded in 2022, compared with 30 per cent in 2021, indicating an improvement. Furthermore, there was a manifest reduction in the percentage of entities missing requirements, which dropped from 23 per cent in 2021 to 15 per cent in 2022. The adoption of system-wide tools, such as guidelines on consultation, procurement, evaluations and communications, and the development of system-wide training opportunities have contributed to supporting entities in approaching or meeting specified requirements. Systemic actions at the Secretariat level in relation to accessibility, procurement and employment also contributed to this progress.

---

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

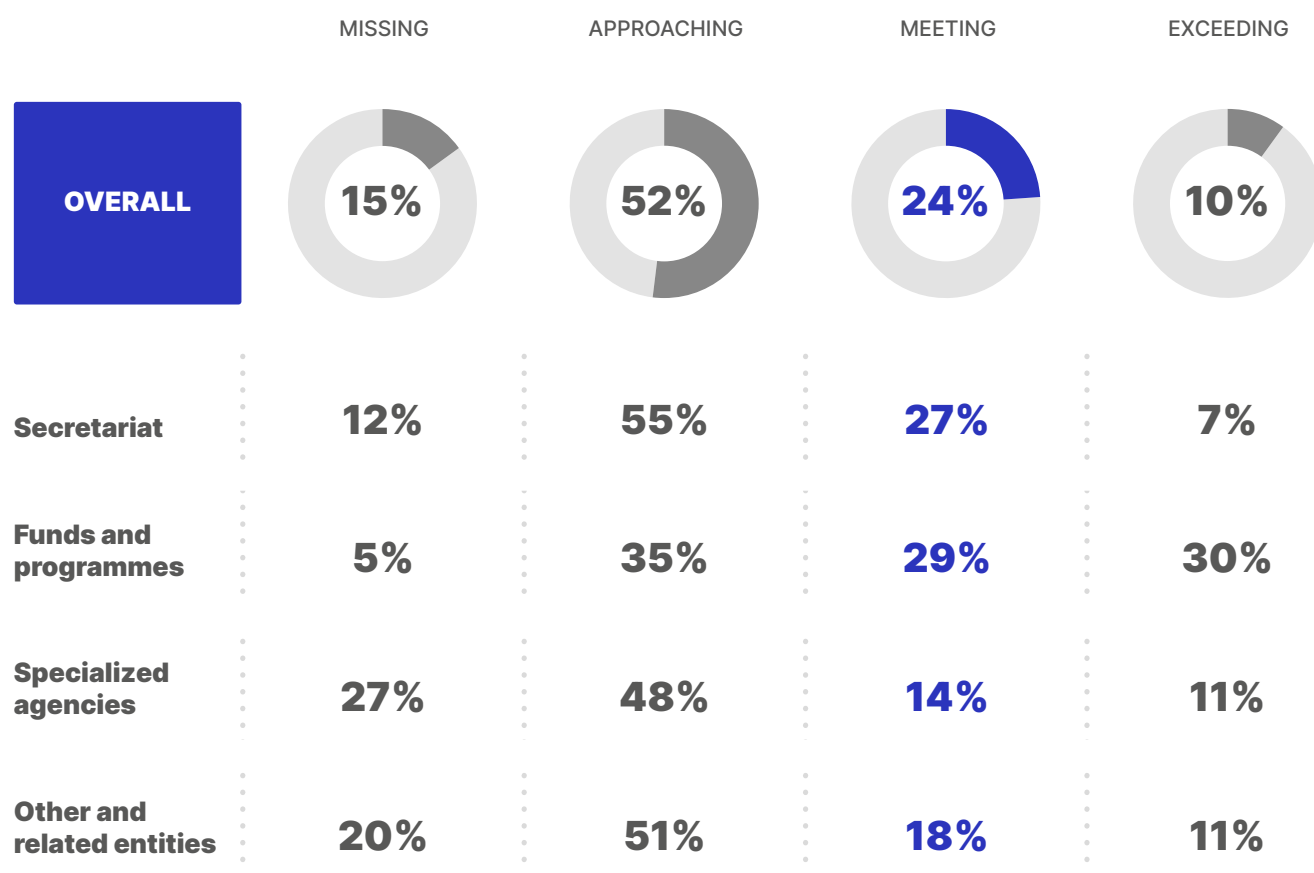


Figure I  
**Overall rating comparison for United Nations entities, 2019–2022**



Despite these positive developments, 67 per cent of the requirements of the Strategy are not being met. Several entities possess knowledge about the range of tools available for promoting disability inclusion across the system. However, they have not endorsed or integrated these tools into their strategies and operations. Coordinated action by the United Nations system in several critical areas, particularly in relation to internal operations and accessibility, building on collective lessons learned and best practices available, will be essential to systematically accelerating progress on disability inclusion moving forward.

Figure II  
**2022 rating for the United Nations system, by entity type**



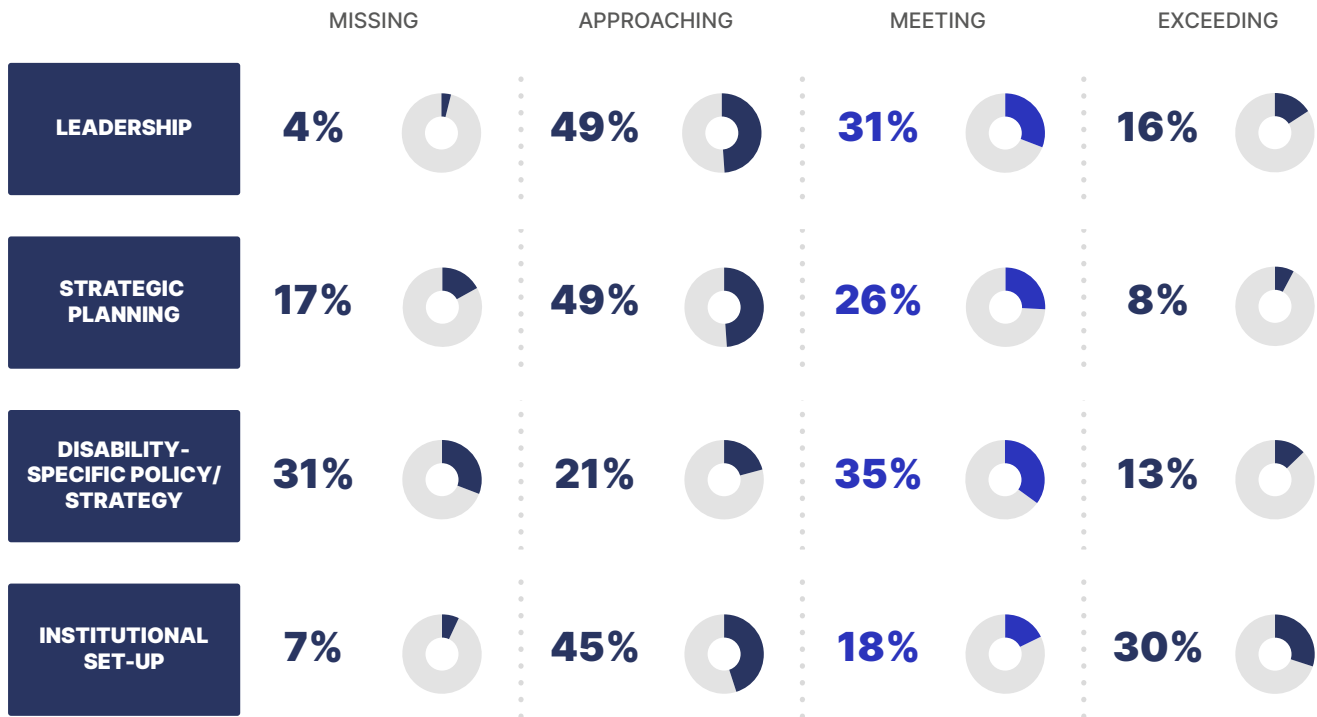
Overall, all types of entities have made progress in implementing the Strategy. Since the last report, Secretariat entities have improved their performance by 13 per cent, meeting or exceeding the requirements outlined by the indicators. Performance has increased by 9 per cent for funds and programmes, by 47 per cent for specialized agencies and by 52 per cent for other and related entities, albeit from a low base for some. Importantly, there has been a significant reduction in instances of missing requirements across all types of entities. Funds and programmes are now exceeding requirements for 30 per cent of the indicators.



## Core area 1

# Leadership, strategic planning and management

Figure III  
2022 rating for United Nations entities in core area 1, by performance indicator



Sustainable and transformative organizational change, as envisioned by the Strategy, requires that disability inclusion be embedded in leadership, strategic planning and management processes. It is therefore encouraging that, across the system, the commitment of senior leadership continues to evolve, progressing from participation in events to the adoption of accountability mechanisms on disability inclusion for senior personnel and the appointment of senior management as disability champions. In tandem, and with the support of senior leadership, entities are progressively incorporating disability inclusion into their strategic plans, results frameworks and budget documents. Crucially, they are developing and implementing policies and strategies to guide action on disability inclusion across both programmes and operations and utilizing disability inclusion markers to track resources allocated to disability inclusion.

These efforts are increasingly supported by an institutional set-up that facilitates implementation of the Strategy. Larger entities are moving beyond reliance on a single individual with substantive expertise on disability inclusion by establishing steering committees and extensive focal-point networks with technical leads at the regional and country levels. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have established networks of custodians for the Strategy's indicators, which provide a forum for information-sharing and exchange, and support activities such as the mapping of disability inclusion work, planning and recommendations for mainstreamed and targeted actions across the Strategy's indicators, and monitoring.

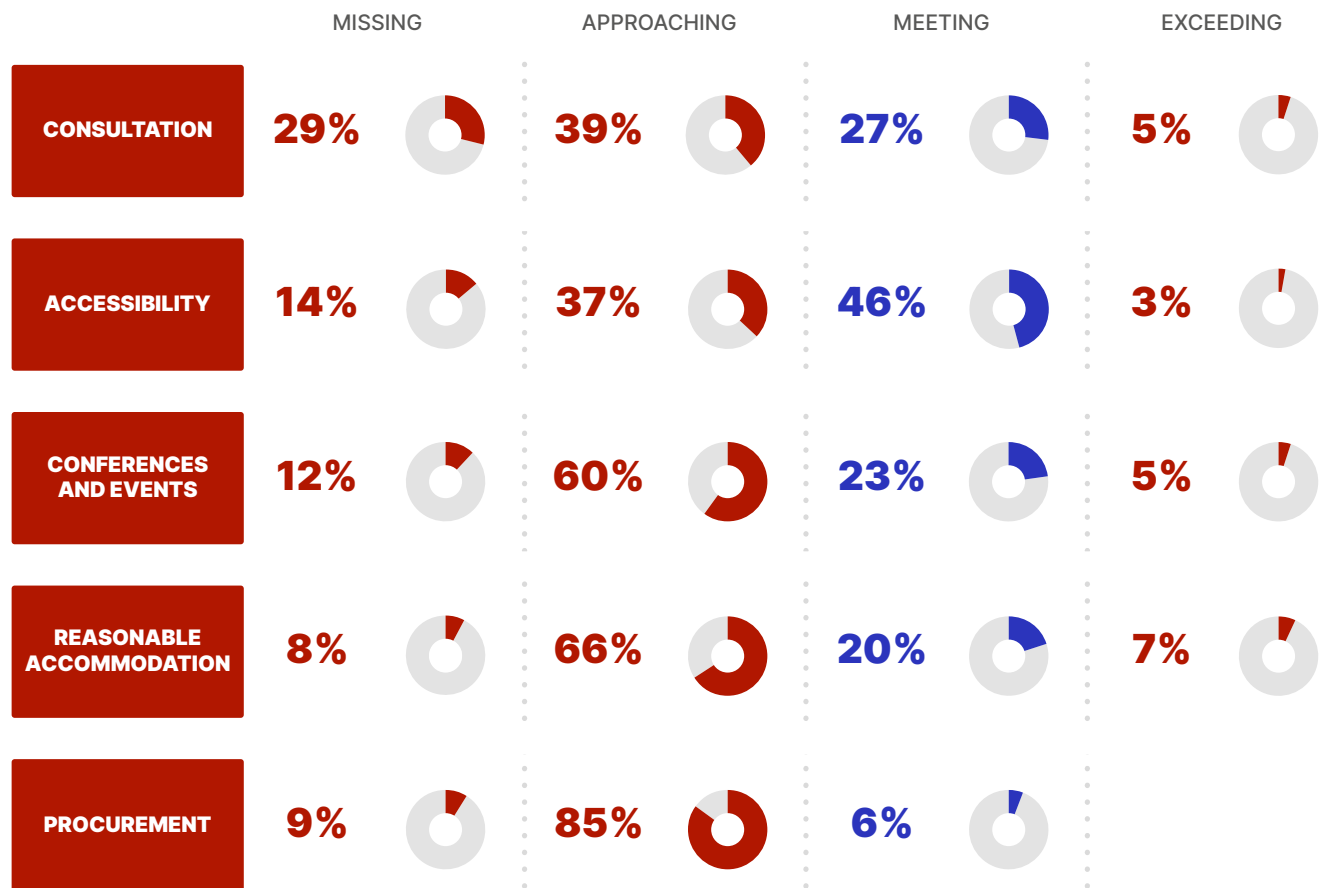
Disability inclusion and accessibility help desks have been established by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme (WFP) to build internal capacity through the delivery of technical assistance and the dissemination of tailored resources and training. Institutional set-ups are also supporting enhanced coordination in relation to cross-cutting issues, particularly in Secretariat entities. In 2022, the Development Coordination Office launched an inclusion focal points network for Headquarters, regional offices and resident coordinator offices to support the implementation of its disability inclusion and gender strategies, while the Department of Safety and Security has integrated disability inclusion into its gender and inclusion focal point network.

However, a considerable number of entities, particularly smaller Secretariat entities with specialized mandates, peace operations and entities new to disability inclusion, still face challenges in this area due to capacity constraints, high staff turnover and limited substantive knowledge and expertise regarding disability inclusion. Such entities could benefit from active engagement in entity and Secretariat focal point networks on disability inclusion, from the utilization of training and technical resources developed to support implementation of the Strategy, and from tailored guidance and technical assistance to effectively mainstream disability inclusion into existing policies and strategies or to develop action plans that are aligned with the Strategy's indicators. Reporting demonstrates that senior leadership in smaller entities can play a significant role in advancing disability inclusion. For example, the senior management coordination mechanism of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa has begun to assess implementation of the Strategy in its quarterly programme implementation reviews, following a proposal put forward by its senior leadership in 2022.



## Core area 2 Inclusiveness

Figure IV  
2022 rating for United Nations entities in core area 2, by performance indicator



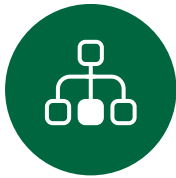
With the launch of the Strategy, the importance of physical and digital accessibility is increasingly recognized as a precondition to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Organization's work, whether as beneficiaries, partners or staff. Yet, the reporting on indicators of accessibility, reasonable accommodation, procurement and conferences and events reflects varying levels of progress, with a high focus on improvements related to physical accessibility. This illustrates that, despite considerable efforts, entities across the system still face significant challenges in operationalizing guidance and using existing tools to create sustainable and adequately funded mechanisms around accessibility and disability-inclusive procurement practices.

In relation to procurement, websites, e-tendering and vendor management systems have become more accessible. Entities such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have integrated disability inclusion and accessibility into procurement templates and policies. However, challenges remain in operationalizing existing guidance and measuring the extent to which disability inclusion is reflected in procurement agreements themselves. A review of relevant products for accessibility during the renewal process of long-term agreements, such as the review undertaken by the Supply Division of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2022, presents opportunities for action in this area.

The progress made in enhancing the accessibility of common premises and services – for example, in United Nations offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi – will benefit many Secretariat and smaller entities situated within them. Furthermore, reports reflect an increasing number of accessibility assessments and evaluations focused on digital accessibility, digital infrastructure, and information and communications systems, demonstrating that understanding of the scope of accessibility continues to grow. However, entities should prioritize the phasing-out of inaccessible digital legacy systems moving forward, as exemplified by the plans of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to replace digital corporate tools with more accessible platforms when current contracts come to an end. Sign language interpretation and communication access real-time translation services are increasingly utilized for conferences, events and meetings, yet their regular use is hampered by high costs and a lack of systematic approaches to the procurement of such services. A key challenge for smaller entities based at Headquarters and common premises is operationalizing requirements relating to both accessibility and procurement. An example of good practice is the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, which invested in ensuring the accessibility of key products, materials and processes to enable youth with disabilities to participate in its work and events.

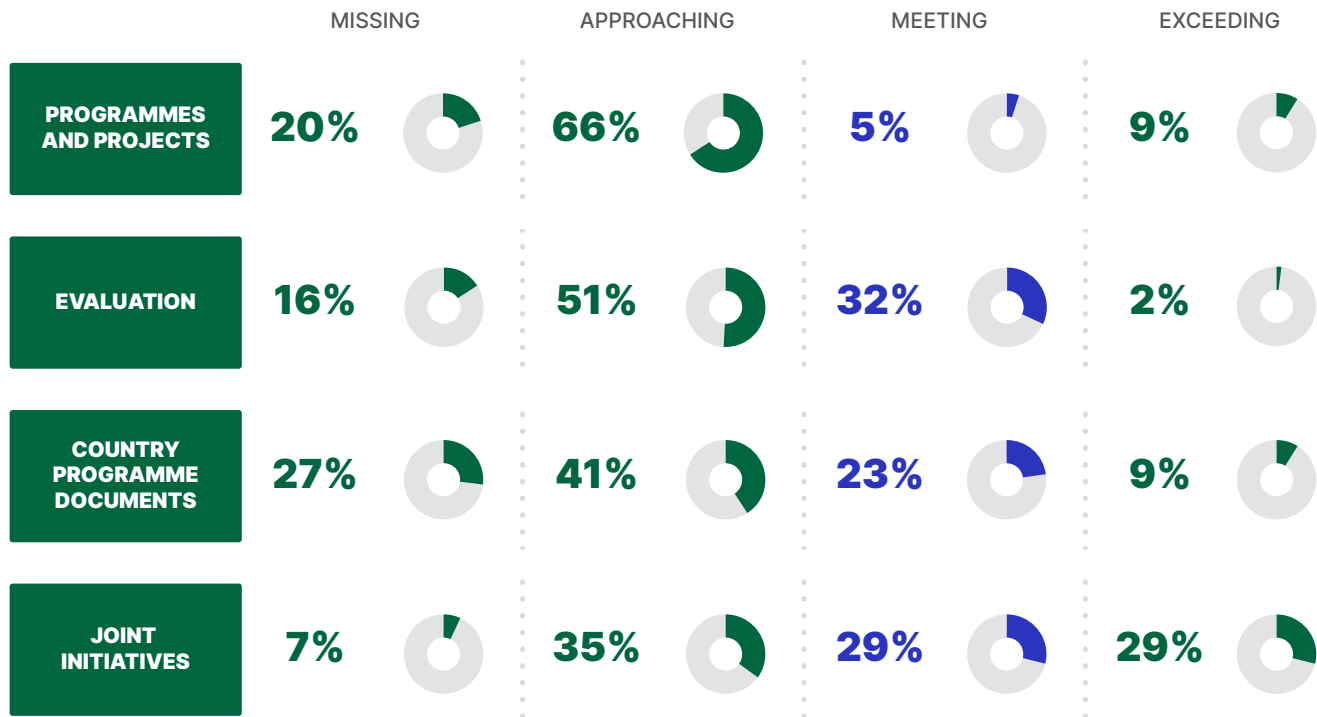
Entities' understanding of reasonable accommodation as an anti-discrimination measure is steadily increasing, with entities such as UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA reporting progressive implementation of formalized, comprehensive approaches to reasonable accommodation and the establishment of centralized funding mechanisms. Effective use of these funds requires adequate measures to ensure that managers, applicants and staff are aware of the funds and related policies and processes. Reporting by Secretariat entities demonstrates that reasonable accommodation is still largely provided on an ad hoc basis, while the lack of control over funding allocations, coupled with restrictions on the development of relevant policies by individual Secretariat entities, requires targeted guidance from Headquarters. As reasonable accommodation is a critical enabler of the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the Organization, it is imperative to systematize such processes and dedicate sufficient funds, within allocated resources, to ensure progress in this area. The establishment of funding mechanisms by Secretariat entities, such as the Development Coordination Office's fund for personnel in the resident coordinator system and accompanying procedural guidelines, demonstrate promising opportunities.

An increased focus on promoting participation has facilitated progress in consulting persons with disabilities. Some agencies, funds and programmes, such as WFP, have developed corporate-level, context-specific consultation guidance to support progress in this area, while others have adopted the 2021 system-wide Guidelines on Consulting Persons with Disabilities. Entities are establishing partnerships and collaborating with a broader range of organizations of persons with disabilities, including organizations of women and youth with disabilities and cross-disability organizations working at the regional level. However, systematic and active involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities in all disability-specific and broader issues remains challenging, indicating the need for further training to operationalize existing guidelines effectively.



## Core area 3 Programming

Figure V  
2022 rating for United Nations entities in core area 3, by performance indicator



In the area of programming, the majority of entities have established guidance on mainstreaming disability inclusion into programmes and projects, while more than half of the agencies, funds and programmes producing country programme documents have mainstreamed disability inclusion into their guidance for these documents. Humanitarian entities continue to use the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action to guide the mainstreaming of disability inclusion throughout the humanitarian programme cycle.



Despite these positive trends, entities face challenges both in operationalizing available guidance and in capturing the extent of disability inclusion across their programmes and projects. Disability inclusion markers developed since the Strategy's launch are a key monitoring and accountability tool for entities, and an accelerated uptake of the markers will contribute to progress in this area. A disability inclusion marker has been integrated into the Secretariat's enterprise resource planning system, Umoja, and has been applied by a small number of entities, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Economic Commission for Africa. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, using a disability marker and disability disaggregated data, and UNICEF, employing a disability tag, have assessed the extent to which disability inclusion has been mainstreamed into their programmes and projects in 2022, which has enabled them to meet annual targets by 67 per cent and 90 per cent, respectively. UNFPA has mainstreamed disability inclusion through its country programme policy and procedure, with a noteworthy 88 per cent of the entity's draft country programme documents submitted to its internal Programme Review Committee addressing the rights of persons with disabilities in 2022.

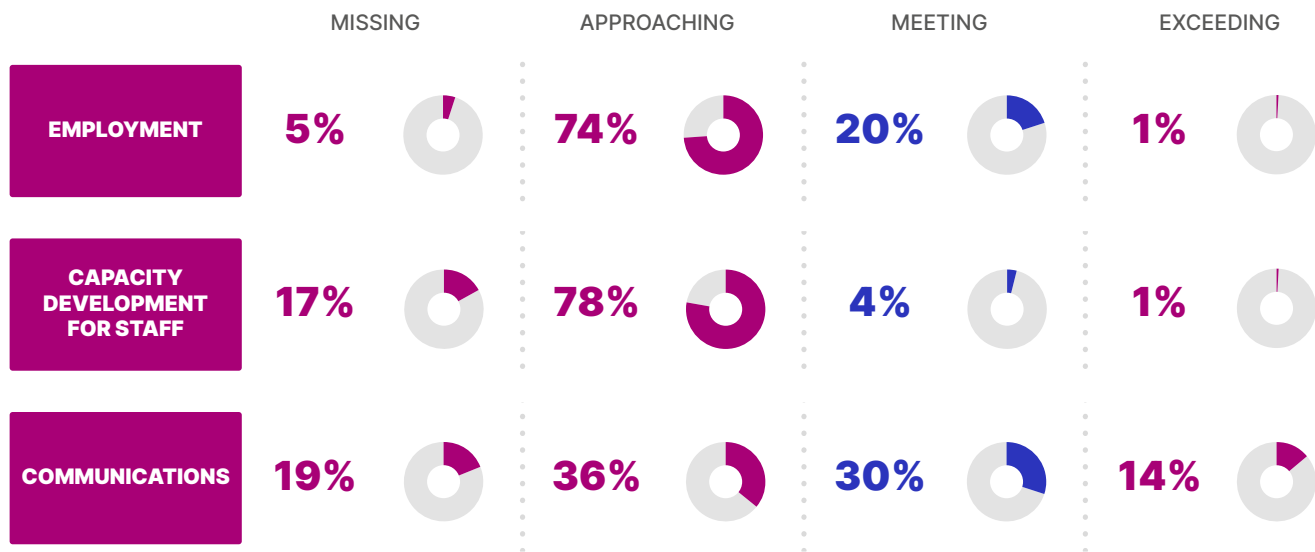
Integrating disability inclusion into evaluations is crucial for progress in programming. Reporting by entities on their use of the system-wide Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting, developed in 2022 by the United Nations Evaluation Group, coupled with an increase in the integration of disability inclusion into entities' terms of reference, inception and evaluation reports, underscores the potential impact of collaborative, system-wide guidance to support entities in meeting the Strategy's standards. As part of its role as the central evaluation unit for the Secretariat, the Office of Internal Oversight Services integrated disability inclusion into internal guidance it produced on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues into evaluations in 2022, which has since been adapted and disseminated to other Secretariat entity evaluation sections.

Joint initiatives remain a catalyst for disability inclusion, deepening collaboration and information- and knowledge-sharing through inter-agency networks and working groups dedicated to disability inclusion. The Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action exemplifies this collaborative approach, comprising more than 50 members from various entities and civil society organizations. Their ongoing efforts consistently promote disability-inclusive humanitarian action.



## Core area 4 Organizational culture

Figure VI  
2022 rating for United Nations entities in core area 4, by performance indicator



A robust, inclusive and diverse workforce, well equipped with knowledge and capacity on disability inclusion, will contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system. The continued underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the Organization's workforce, coupled with the slow rate of progress towards enhancing the capacity of existing staff regarding disability inclusion, risks a reversal of the hard-earned gains achieved since the Strategy's launch.

With 95 per cent of entities reporting on employment-related action, it is evident that the Strategy has significantly increased system-wide awareness and implementation of existing employment policies and strategies to attract, recruit and retain staff with disabilities. Moreover, it has propelled entities to update or develop such policies where required. Strategies and initiatives, including partnerships with specialized recruitment platforms and job fairs with organizations of persons with disabilities, have been implemented to enhance employment opportunities. Through United Nations Volunteers, approximately 200 persons with disabilities contributed their skills and expertise to 22 entities at Headquarters and in regional and country offices. There is a growing focus on including self-identification questions in employee satisfaction surveys to collect

data on staff members with disabilities. Despite these efforts, reporting reveals that close to 90 per cent of entities either cannot identify staff with disabilities or, if identified, find their satisfaction and well-being lower compared to the general staff body.

In capacity development, there has been an uptick in the availability of training courses and modules on disability inclusion across the system. However, United Nations entities and Secretariat departments should ensure, within existing resources, that further training is made available to address capacity gaps in operations, especially related to accessibility, reasonable accommodation, procurement and evaluation. Only 5 per cent of entities report having made disability inclusion training mandatory. A model to replicate is the mandatory e-learning programme on disability inclusion of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which has an 84 per cent compliance rate. ILO is also preparing a tailor-made disability training course for senior management.

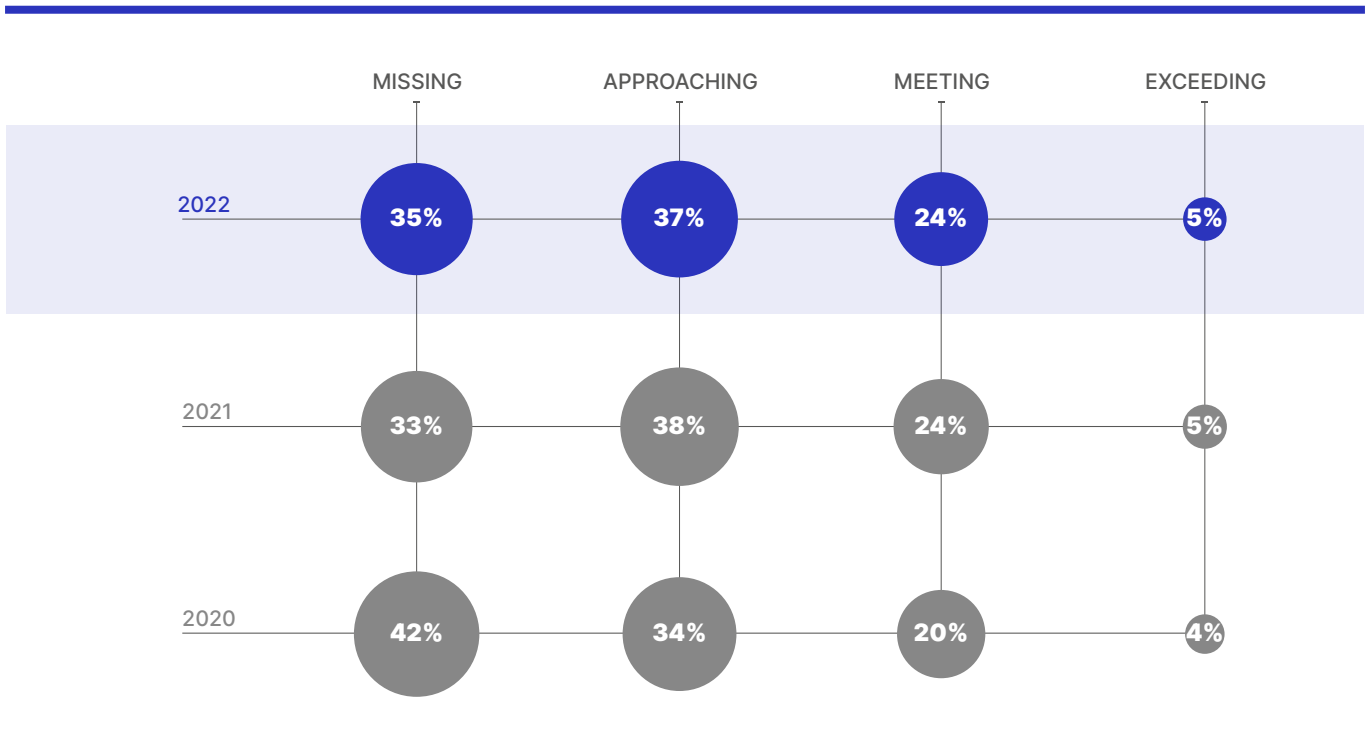
The Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines, developed by the Department of Global Communications, have contributed to more inclusive and respectful communication around persons with disabilities across the system. Entities are increasingly recognizing the importance of disability-inclusive communications and are striving for more diverse representation of persons with disabilities in mainstream internal and external communications. However, many entities reported not having internal guidelines or procedures for disability-inclusive communications, a requirement that entities could meet by adopting the system-wide guidelines and implementing them.

# B

## Accountability at the country level

In 2022, all 131 United Nations country teams reported under the accountability scorecard for the third consecutive year. Overall, country teams approached requirements in 37 per cent of the indicators, met requirements in 24 per cent and exceeded requirements in 5 per cent. The proportion of indicators for which country teams are missing requirements increased from 33 per cent in 2021 to 35 per cent in 2022, due in part to a deeper understanding of the Strategy's benchmarks and more informed self-assessment. With 72 per cent of the Strategy's indicators not yet being met by country teams, urgent and intensified efforts are imperative to driving implementation at the field level.

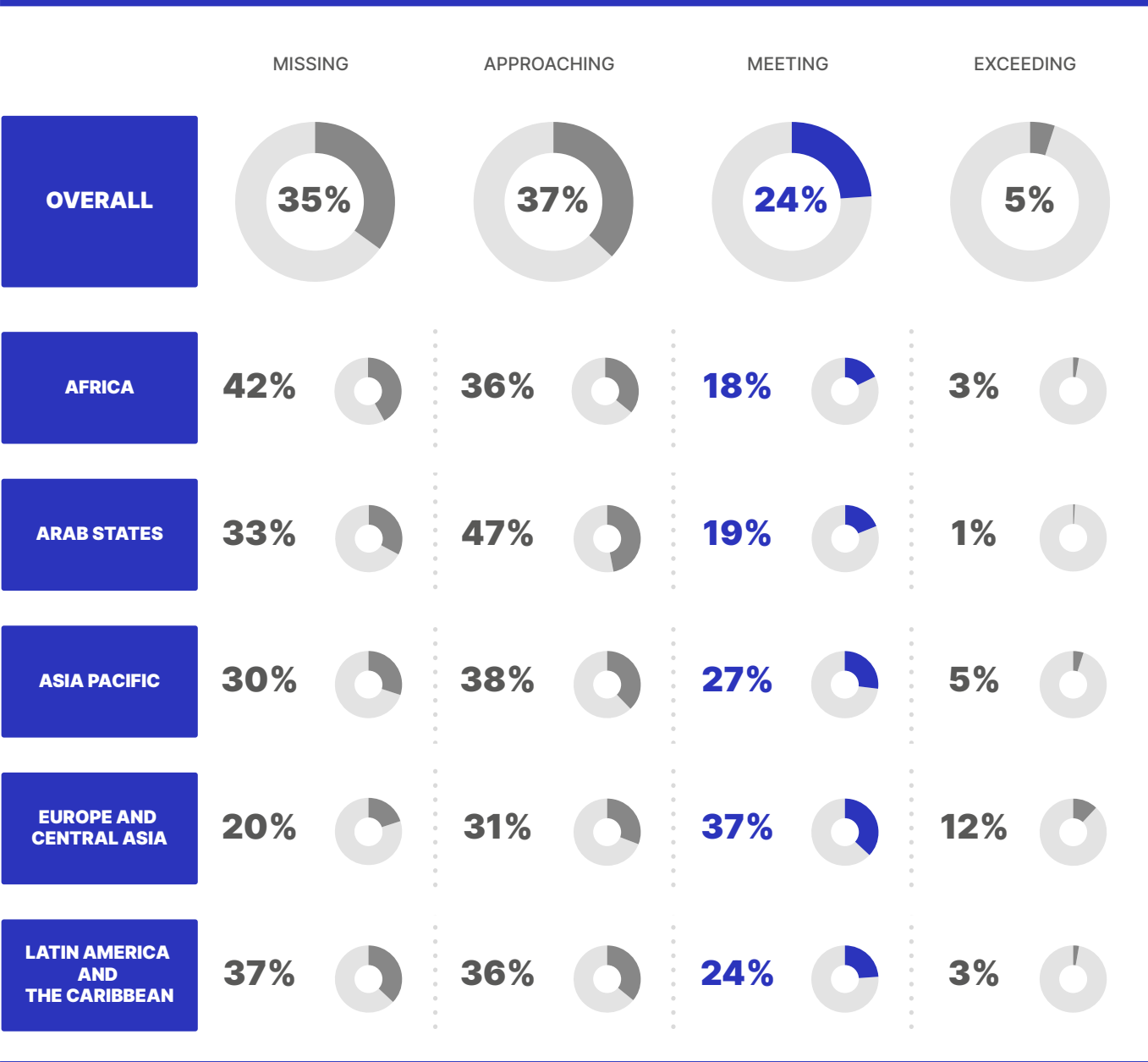
Figure VII  
Overall rating comparison for United Nations country teams, 2020–2022



At the regional level, Europe and Central Asia continued to improve its ratings, moving from meeting or exceeding the requirements in 46 per cent of indicators in 2021 to 49 per cent in 2022. This region underwent in-depth training on disability inclusion during 2022. The Asia-Pacific region has also noted progress, moving from meeting or exceeding requirements in 30 per cent of indicators in 2021 to 32 per cent in 2022, thanks in part to a successful roll-out project with targeted technical assistance. The situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, on the other hand, has remained static, and the Arab States and Africa have experienced regression. These developments demonstrate the importance of providing targeted and consistent support to country teams to sustain and enhance the progress already made.

Reports from country teams highlight advancements in disability inclusion efforts, even though the full extent of these advancements may not be captured by the reporting on the Strategy's requirements. There is a growing coherence of actions across indicators, positively indicating a more holistic approach to addressing disability inclusion. Furthermore, more targeted embedding of the principle of "leaving no one behind" is contributing to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the work of country teams. This includes supporting governmental initiatives, such as law and policy reforms, and ensuring that persons with disabilities are consulted and taken into account in programmes from inception, so that programme results have an impact on their lives. Furthermore, tailored capacity-building initiatives and targeted scorecard roll-out initiatives bolstered the ability of some country teams to advance in multiple areas of the Strategy.

Figure VIII  
**2022 rating for United Nations country teams, by region**

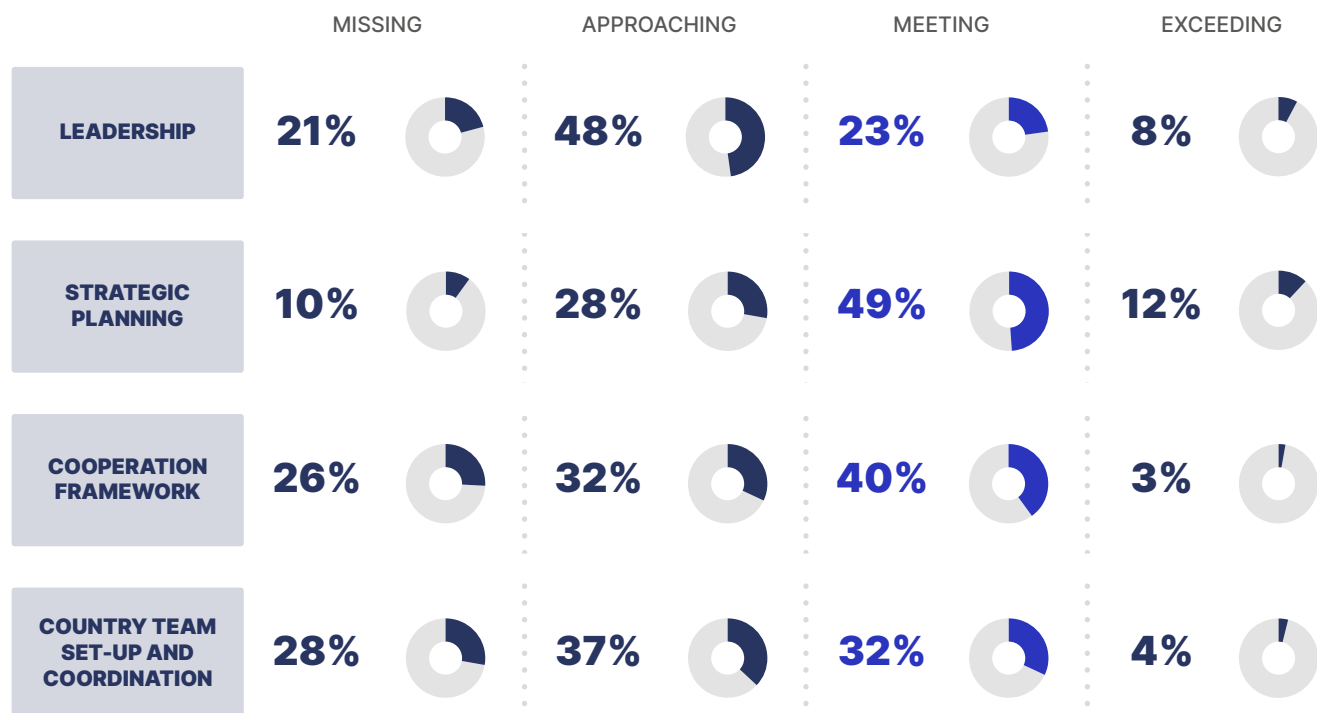




## Core area 1

# Leadership, strategic planning and management

Figure IX  
2022 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 1, by performance indicator



Leadership commitment at the country level has not progressed at the same pace as within entities. While many resident coordinators and heads of agencies champion disability inclusion internally and publicly, broader leadership engagement is needed to drive action and progress. Despite an uptick in senior leadership commitment within entities, it is crucial to ensure that this commitment consistently reaches the heads of agencies at the field level to drive more ambitious joint action on disability inclusion. A diverse group of country teams excel on this indicator, demonstrating that sustained attention and commitment to disability inclusion is attainable. For instance, in Zambia, disability inclusion has been a recurring item in heads of agencies' monthly meetings and retreats. Consistent engagement of this nature is vital to effectively tackling the challenges faced by country teams in implementing the Strategy.

Strategic planning remains the strongest area of performance for country teams, with the majority meeting or exceeding the requirements for this indicator. The vast majority of country teams include an analysis of the situation of persons with disabilities in common country analyses across various thematic areas such as gender, education, health care, poverty, human rights, climate change, disaster risk response and humanitarian action. Greater visibility is also given to women, children and youth with disabilities. During 2022, several country teams, including those in El Salvador, Eswatini, India, Lesotho, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uruguay and Zambia, consulted with organizations of persons with disabilities during the common country analysis, following the example set by many others in previous years.

The majority of country teams have made explicit commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities within their cooperation frameworks and are gradually incorporating disability inclusion into their outcome areas. Disability inclusion is being addressed across various thematic areas, including gender, education, health, social protection, human rights, discrimination and governance. Some country teams have developed their cooperation frameworks in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities. For example, the country team in Guatemala used the scorecard to infuse disability inclusion into their co-creation process with the Government, as evidenced in the outputs reflected in the results matrix of the cooperation framework. Considering that cooperation frameworks follow a multi-year cycle, progress in this indicator may be slower compared to others.

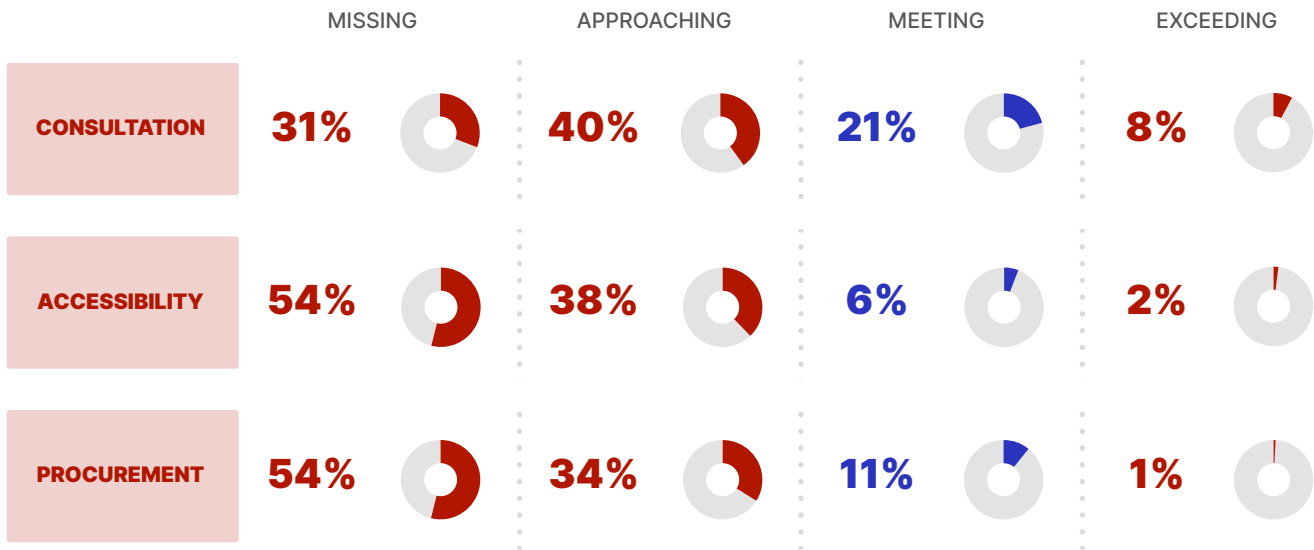
Disability inclusion coordination mechanisms facilitate more systematic implementation of the Strategy through increased collaboration and opportunities for joint planning and implementation. Reporting demonstrates that the progressive inclusion of disability in common country analyses and cooperation frameworks and their monitoring mechanisms is often stronger in country teams with existing disability inclusion coordination mechanisms. There has been substantial progress in establishing such mechanisms among country teams. Some country teams are in the process of formalizing these as structured mechanisms, and others have introduced such coordination measures for the first time. Several country teams have integrated disability inclusion into their existing task forces and teams, including those focusing on gender, human rights and inclusion groups. In Costa Rica, Madagascar, Rwanda, Serbia and Uzbekistan, organizations of persons with disabilities have been integrated into the country team coordination mechanisms.





## Core area 2 Inclusiveness

Figure X  
2022 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 2, by performance indicator



Country teams continue to engage with organizations of persons with disabilities on various issues, including common country analysis and cooperation frameworks. However, consultations often occur sporadically and are primarily led by individual country offices, demonstrating the need for more systematic and structured consultations by country teams as a whole. While most engagements are with umbrella organizations and disability councils at the country level, it is important to ensure that consultations are inclusive and considerate of marginalized groups of persons with disabilities. Notably, the country teams of Costa Rica and Guatemala have established advisory groups of persons with disabilities that integrate a diverse range of representative organizations.

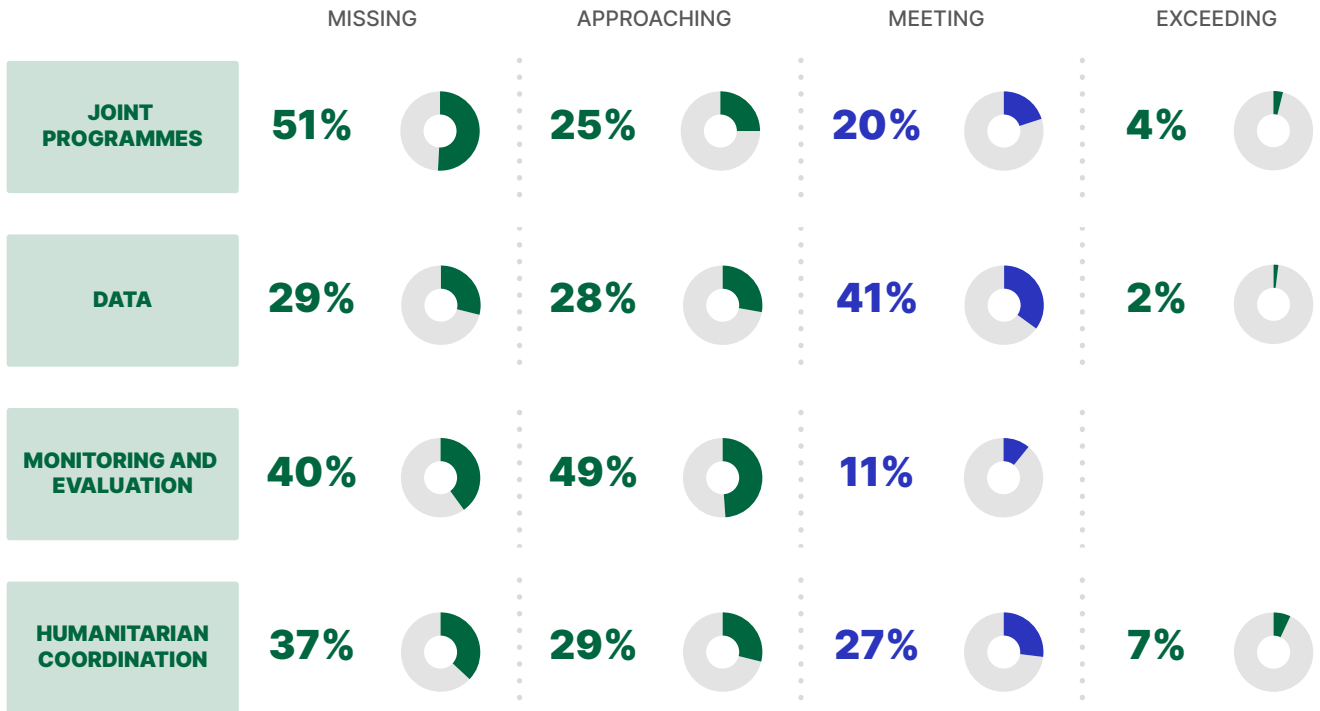
Country-level efforts are required to render common premises and services more accessible. Some country teams have taken advantage of new premises or expansion opportunities to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities. They have also conducted accessibility audits, assessing both physical accessibility and the accessibility of services, including information and communications technology. In Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan and Zambia, these audits were conducted in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities. However, 54 per cent of country teams have not yet undertaken baseline accessibility assessments of their common premises and services, often due to limited capacity, knowledge, and funding through their respective entities.

Disability-inclusive procurement also continues to be a challenge for country teams, with inconsistent implementation of accessibility criteria in the procurement of venues, goods and services. The country team in Georgia has included accessibility as a mandatory criterion for the periodic review and procurement of venues, services and construction works, as well as for establishing long-term agreements with vendors. The UNICEF Toolkit on Accessibility offers valuable guidance and checklists for conducting accessibility assessments, while the development, implementation and monitoring of accessibility plans in Nepal and Viet Nam serve as good practice that could be replicated by others. Many country teams are adapting their procedures through the business operations strategy 2.0, which will contribute to improved performance on accessibility in the coming years.



## Core area 3 Programming

Figure XI  
2022 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 3, by performance indicator



While disability inclusion is increasingly reflected in strategic planning processes and country assessments, the results of these efforts are not yet filtering through to the area of programming. The progressive increase in new joint programmes that mainstream disability inclusion witnessed in the reporting from 2020 and 2021 highlights the success of the system in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the response to and recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. However, the significant decline in 2022, in the areas of both joint programmes and humanitarian response, suggests that, despite actions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, disability inclusion is not yet reflected as a cross-cutting issue in the work of country teams. Furthermore, the absence of disability-specific indicators in the results matrices of the cooperation framework and the lack of availability of disability-disaggregated data, coupled with limited data-sharing among country offices, make it challenging for country teams to assess progress towards disability inclusion.

The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities remains the primary vehicle for implementing disability-specific joint projects. Other platforms enabling mainstreaming and joint programmes on disability inclusion comprise the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, the Spotlight Initiative and the Peacebuilding Fund. Valuable insights can be collected from the country teams from North Macedonia, Rwanda, Somalia, Turkmenistan and Zimbabwe, which lead in this area. For example, in 2022, the country team of North Macedonia had seven joint programmes in implementation, with six of them contributing to disability inclusion.

Many country teams are collaborating with national statistical offices to enhance disability-related data collection, acknowledging the significance of this information for their own operations. Several country teams reported working on improving data collection on children with disabilities through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, while some have promoted and supported the use of the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning. Increasing work is also being done on administrative data and information management systems. Apart from limited data-sharing among country offices, progress in relation to data is hindered by challenges such as limited access to governmental services and resources, especially in countries experiencing political instability or national crises.

Country teams are beginning to address the capacity of monitoring and evaluation groups in measuring disability inclusion; this progress aligns with the increasing integration of disability inclusion in cooperation frameworks. Addressing this capacity will be vital, as reporting shows that while disability inclusion is mentioned in many annual reports on cooperation frameworks, the reports continue to have limited disability-specific indicators against which to measure results annually and within evaluations. United Nations entities and Secretariat departments should ensure that disability-specific indicators are incorporated into monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

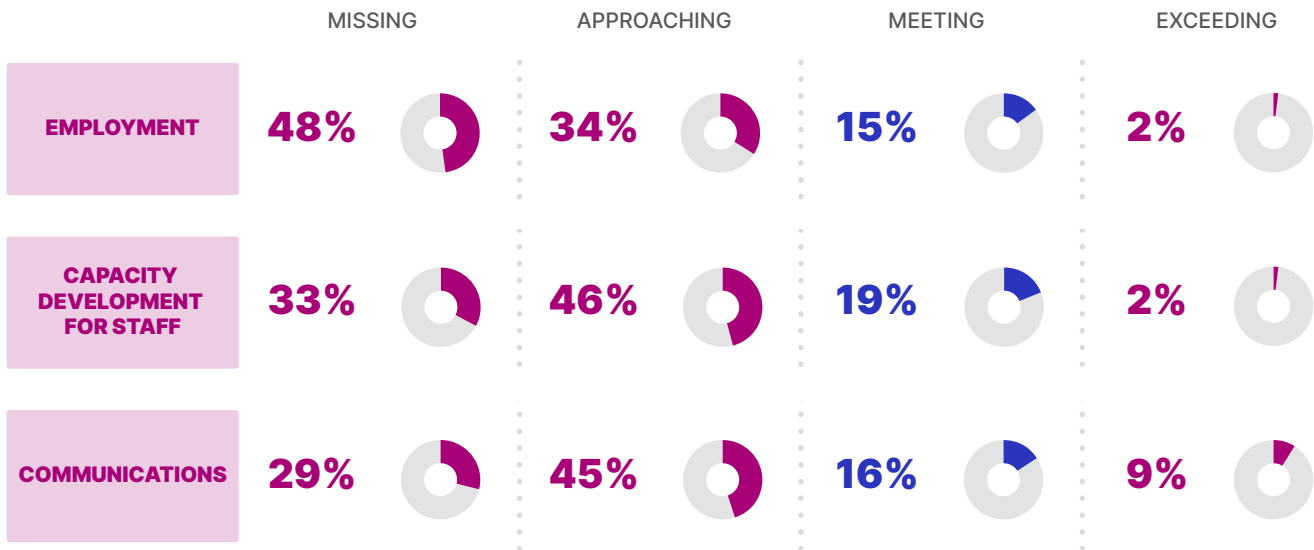
Disability inclusion in humanitarian emergency planning is an indicator where implementation of the Strategy has regressed. The COVID-19 crisis triggered action on and resources for a disability-inclusive emergency response, particularly in the areas of joint programming and humanitarian planning and action. However, this has since slowed down, indicating that this good practice has not yet translated into progress in wider humanitarian and emergency preparedness.

Nevertheless, country teams facing critical humanitarian emergencies tend to be more active in including persons with disabilities in response, even if formal assessments or plans are lacking. There is a need to systematize and formalize this work. In Mozambique, for instance, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations participate in the humanitarian coordination mechanisms, particularly the country-level protection working group. It is important to highlight that this indicator is relevant to all country teams, and even those without a humanitarian situation or national emergency must develop emergency preparedness and response plans. For example, country teams in Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Panama, Serbia, Thailand and Viet Nam are considering persons with disabilities in their emergency preparedness and response measures.



## Core area 4 Organizational culture

Figure XII  
2022 rating for United Nations country teams in core area 4, by performance indicator



Country teams must take substantial action to meet employment indicator requirements. Although some entities within country teams have non-discrimination employment statements explicitly referencing persons with disabilities, this practice is not widespread at the country level. A standardized country team non discrimination employment statement could help enhance this indicator. More extensive outreach efforts are also necessary to attract individuals with disabilities. To promote inclusive recruitment practices, internal capacity-building is crucial, including for the provision of accessible formats and accommodation during the recruitment and onboarding processes. Country teams can use the terms of reference for baseline assessments on inclusive human resources to facilitate progress. In addition, the implementation of disability-inclusive common human resource services in the business operations strategy 2.0 is expected to contribute to advancements in this indicator.

Disability task teams and focal point networks are conducting capacity-building, with some country teams reporting initiatives in partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities. The Sustainable Development Group knowledge portal hosts resources for all indicators, including guidelines and training courses. Furthermore, projects under the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have also served as a vehicle for building staff capacity in disability inclusion. Despite these initiatives, many country teams have reported a lack of training resources on disability inclusion for their staff. Even where these resources exist, inter-agency training on disability inclusion is often insufficient.

Country teams continue to promote disability inclusion in communications, albeit not systematically. Although the Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines are referenced, they could be utilized more extensively. Campaigns and activities related to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and United Nations Day are often leveraged to highlight disability in communications. Challenges such as staff turnover and the limited availability of suitable national staff for communications and advocacy have been reported. Nevertheless, a number of countries excel in developing inclusive communications. For example, in Indonesia, the country team implemented various communications actions on disability inclusion, including an inter-agency campaign for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, a job fair, accessible communications products and various other initiatives promoting disability inclusion.

## Inter-agency coordination

The Strategy has strengthened inter-agency coordination on disability inclusion. In September 2022, I called on senior leadership to address with urgency areas within the Organization's operations that required reform and requested the High-level Committee on Management to prioritize disability inclusion in 2023 to address common challenges, particularly in relation to operations within the system. The High-level Committee on Management has established a sub-working group on disability inclusion. Coordinated by UNICEF and ILO, and supported by the Disability Inclusion Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the sub-working group has established several work streams led by different focal entities to address and enhance the inclusiveness of the United Nations as an employer of choice for persons with disabilities and to address accessibility of the workplace.

Under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, the Disability Inclusion Team in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General continues to oversee, provide technical support for and monitor implementation of the Strategy across the system. The Team coordinates entity and country team focal point networks and holds regular quarterly meetings to provide a platform for focal points to discuss challenges and bottlenecks and share good practices.

Inter-agency networks play a key role in developing guidance mandated by the Strategy. Following the successful roll-out in 2021 of procurement guidelines by the Procurement Network of the High-level Committee on Management, in 2022 the United Nations Evaluation Group developed and launched the Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting. This is a step-by-step manual on ensuring that disability is included and present at every stage of the evaluation life cycle, from developing questions to ask, identifying key stakeholders and ensuring the inclusion of organizations of persons with disabilities. This practical guidance has contributed to improved performance on evaluation by entities reporting in 2022 and underscores the crucial role of inter-agency networks and the importance of collaborative system-wide guidance.

The Disability Inclusion Team and the Development Coordination Office continued to collaborate closely to support implementation of the Strategy at the country level and to ensure alignment with other system-wide frameworks. Such frameworks include the roll-out of the business operations strategy 2.0, which contains several disability-inclusive common services, and the integration of the country team accountability scorecard into the UN-Info platform for harmonized reporting. The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Inter Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its sub-working groups, and the United Nations Working Group on Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion continue to mobilize action and collaboration between entities and country teams.



## D

# Challenges and opportunities

The commitment of senior leadership has been vital to maintaining the momentum on the Strategy. Reporting demonstrates a significant correlation between entity commitment and country team leadership, with improvements across the Strategy's accountability framework indicators. While commitment within senior leadership at the entity level has progressed significantly since 2019, it is crucial to ensure that this commitment is consistently demonstrated by resident coordinators and heads of agencies at the field level, in order to drive more ambitious action on disability inclusion across country teams. Resident coordinators' annual meetings and/or regional retreats should include disability inclusion as a matter of priority to support further action in this area.

The Strategy's momentum continues to grow and the depth to which the system is embedding disability inclusion is increasing. However, this progress has revealed that certain aspects of the Strategy, such as accessibility, reasonable accommodation, employment and capacity-building, require higher prioritization and targeted resources. Smaller entities and country teams often face difficulties due to limited resources and staff capacity, and overlapping crises further divert already limited funds. The Strategy's system-wide implications call for proactive measures to ensure regular, adequate resources. Furthermore, better coordination mechanisms, systematic mainstreaming and information-sharing systems are as crucial as ensuring dedicated resources.

In 2022, the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, in collaboration with the Disability Inclusion Team, developed a disability inclusion marker in the Umoja integrated planning, management and reporting system. The Umoja marker enables Secretariat entities to track the extent to which projects address the rights of persons with disabilities, are disability-inclusive and support the identification and reduction of gaps between policy and financial commitments. A small number of Secretariat entities utilized the marker in 2022, though on a limited scale. Of the 5,553 projects listed in Umoja, 1,223 utilize the marker, of which 301 include mainstream or targeted initiatives on disability inclusion. Greater uptake of the marker and its accompanying guidance and online training module will enable Secretariat entities to assess disability inclusion in their programmes and projects and establish targets.

To truly reflect the diversity of our societies and achieve the transformation envisaged by the Strategy, more inclusive workplaces and increased representation of persons with disabilities are needed in the Organization. Upholding the promise made at the launch of the Strategy, the United Nations system is committed to becoming an employer of choice for persons with disabilities. Findings from annual reporting underscore the need for a coordinated and multifaceted approach in creating disability-inclusive workplaces, addressing critical enablers of participation, such as accessibility, reasonable accommodation and staff capacity development. Coordinated efforts through the sub-working group of the High-level Committee on Management are targeting the structural and operational bottlenecks in this area.

Given the extensive changes that the Strategy demands across various programmes and operations, and the limited expertise on disability inclusion overall, both entities and country teams continue to need specific technical assistance and support. In this context, the Disability Inclusion Team fulfils a crucial role in coordinating system-wide action and providing technical assistance. The development of targeted resources and training to facilitate enhanced knowledge in key areas will continue, and the United Nations system plans to harness the momentum and knowledge of the past four years to produce a report compiling effective learning, good practices, resources and training from across the Organization. Focus will be placed on the development of tools to address areas that focal points and the reporting identify as particularly challenging, and on the continued roll-out of in-depth regional training for country team focal points.

Peace operations continue to face challenges in implementing the Strategy. While the number of missions reporting on the Strategy has increased from 18 to 19, many have reported that they encounter obstacles in advancing its implementation, including the availability of resources, a lack of data, security crises and political instability. Moreover, the reporting suggests a need for tailored technical assistance to support a greater understanding of the Strategy and its implementation in crisis and conflict zones. Despite these challenges, peace operations are reporting progress, particularly in relation to commitment and initial advances in areas such as leadership, consultation and accessibility. To expedite action, in 2023 the Disability Inclusion Team will launch a targeted project with seed funding (voluntary contributions) for seven peace operations. Being under the umbrella of the Secretariat, peace operations would also benefit from increased leadership and support from Headquarters, including the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Operational Support.

While targeted technical assistance and support provided to entities and country teams is essential, there is also a critical need within the Organization for broader capacity-building on disability inclusion. To address this gap, two training courses were launched in 2022 in collaboration with the Disability Inclusion Team: a five-week, 30-hour online training course, entitled “Promoting disability inclusion: Make the change happen”, developed with the International Training Centre of ILO; and an all-staff online training module, entitled “United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy – Putting Words into Action”, developed with the United Nations System Staff College, which has enjoyed positive feedback and high participation and will be available in Arabic, French and Spanish in 2023. While there is an increase in the technical resources available, training and engagement with such resources remain optional and sporadic. The United Nations system must look to prioritize the building of its capacity on disability inclusion and progressively making all-staff training mandatory.

Tailored strategies, attentive to country teams' specific realities and needs, are necessary to create meaningful change. To strengthen efforts at the country level, the Disability Inclusion Team began the second phase of the targeted roll-out of the country team accountability scorecard on disability inclusion in 2022. This involved technical assistance and seed funding for 16 country teams to formulate concrete action plans to advance disability inclusion across programmes and operations. Through such support, country teams strengthened partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities, enhanced staff knowledge and capacity about disability inclusion, performed accessibility assessments of and improved common premises and digital platforms, integrated disability inclusion into strategic documents and country analyses, established disability inclusion focal points and networks, and conducted targeted outreach to organizations of persons with disabilities to enhance engagement in employment and career fairs. The United Nations system plans to continue these targeted roll-out projects in the coming years. In addition, in-depth training for disability inclusion focal points in country teams and inclusion focal points in resident coordinator offices is progressively being undertaken to build the capacity of country teams to deliver as one on disability inclusion.

# 3. Conclusions and recommendations

At the start of the fifth year of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the United Nations system acknowledges that progress is ongoing but the desired pace has not yet been reached. Coordinated, system-wide efforts are required to advance disability inclusion and ensure that the United Nations leads by example. Now is the time to redouble our efforts and investments for the full inclusion and meaningful participation of more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide.

The support and leadership of Member States has been vital to the success of the Strategy thus far. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions [75/233](#), [76/154](#) and [77/189](#), the United Nations system will continue to report on progress, to maintain accountability across all areas of the Strategy and at all levels of the system. Together, and in partnership with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, we can achieve our aim: an inclusive, accessible and sustainable world for all, and a United Nations that is positioned to support Member States in their achievement of global commitments for persons with disabilities.

To accelerate progress through the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the United Nations system should:

- a.** Scale up the knowledge and capacity of senior leadership regarding disability inclusion and leverage senior-level mechanisms to drive engagement, progress and accountability, and prioritize disability inclusion in annual meetings and/or regional retreats of the resident coordinator system;
- b.** Ensure that the United Nations system is equipped to lead on disability inclusion. New investments (not disability-specific) should take into account accessibility and disability inclusion in order not to create new barriers for persons with disabilities and existing resources should be systematically invested in a manner that contributes to disability inclusion. The allocation of resources to disability inclusion should be tracked to sustain and measure progress in the years ahead;

- c.** Make training on disability inclusion mandatory, establish focal points to coordinate entity and country team action and facilitate their participation in existing coordination networks to allow for the exchange of good practices and the identification of challenges, as well as opportunities for improvement;
- d.** Coordinate, through the High-level Committee on Management, efforts to target structural and operational bottlenecks in the areas of human resources, reasonable accommodation and accessibility, which will be essential to increasing employment of persons with disabilities across the system. Critical enablers, such as reasonable accommodation for personnel with disabilities, must be systematized and physical and digital accessibility improved to enable persons with disabilities to work in the United Nations system on an equal basis with others;
- e.** Include persons with disabilities, in all their diversity, in broader civil society consultation mechanisms and processes and establish partnerships; and consult and actively involve organizations of persons with disabilities in programme planning, design, implementation and monitoring.

**United Nations**  
disabilitystrategy@un.org