



Beyond the Margins: Centering Disability-Inclusion in the Architecture of Peace

A Global Toolkit for Advancing Persons with Disabilities in Peacebuilding



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Acknowledgments: The authors would like to thank external reviewers Tuomas Tuure of the Abilis Foundation and Amu Urhonen, Chair of the Abilis Foundation. We would also like to thank Dr. Cosmas Mugambi of the HSED Group Africa, who prepared the 'Report for an Assessment on Disability Inclusion in the Peace Processes in Target Federal Member States in Somalia, and the Development of the Disability Inclusion Toolkit, under the project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency, 'Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia' for Finn Church Aid (FCA).

Cover image: 'Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia', funded by the Government of Sweden (SIDA). 2024-2025. Photo: Finn Church Aid.

To Cite: Roland, Jessica and Lucy Sobol. Beyond the Margins: Centering Disability-Inclusion in the Architecture of Peace. The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, the Abilis Foundation, and Finn Church Aid. <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Global-Toolkit-1.pdf>

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Mosharraf Hossain (in wheelchair, back to camera), Director of Policy and Influencing of the Action on Disability and Development (ADD) International, addresses the special event in observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. 2015. UN Photo/Amanda Voisard.

Introducing the Toolkit

This global toolkit offers practical guidance for peacebuilding organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities on how to partner and mainstream the inclusion of persons with disabilities across peacebuilding processes, institutions, and agendas. Too often, persons with disabilities are excluded from decision-making in times of conflict and recovery, despite being deeply affected by violence and already active in advancing peace within their communities.

Grounded in the belief that peace cannot be just or sustainable without disability inclusion at every stage of the peacebuilding cycle, this toolkit outlines opportunities, recommended actions, and systemic shifts necessary to support the leadership, protection, and participation of persons with disabilities in building and sustaining peace.

Our Language

Throughout this toolkit, the use of the term *persons with disabilities*, in line with the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, and international human rights standards, reflects a rights-based understanding of disability, emphasizing the relationship between persons with impairments and the societal and environmental barriers they face.^{1 2}

This toolkit also uses the acronym OPDs to refer to *Organizations of Persons with Disabilities*. This term is recognized by the CRPD and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) to reflect the leadership and self-representation of persons with disabilities. OPDs differ from disability service providers or organizations working on disability from a charitable perspective as they are representative bodies led, governed, and staffed by persons with disabilities themselves.

Who Is This Toolkit For?

This toolkit is intended for peacebuilding practitioners, humanitarian actors, persons with disabilities, OPDs, policymakers, funders, researchers, and broader civil society organizations engaged in peace and security efforts. It offers guidance for both disability-focused and non-disability-focused actors who seek to partner and build more inclusive peace systems. The toolkit is especially relevant for those working on implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agendas, national action plans, conflict prevention, conflict mediation, and post-conflict recovery and development.

¹ United Nations General Assembly. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

² United Nations. (2019). *UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)*. <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

What Is This Toolkit For?

This toolkit is a practical resource for advancing the meaningful participation, leadership, and protection of persons with disabilities in peacebuilding efforts. While it is not a comprehensive disability inclusion manual, it provides actionable guidance on how to integrate disability perspectives into the strategies, frameworks, and operational practices of peacebuilders. It highlights specific entry points for change for advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities and OPDs across the prevention, response, and recovery stages of conflict.

The toolkit draws on insights from a project implemented by Finn Church Aid in Somalia as a case study. While the Somalia case study findings are not universally applicable, this case offers valuable learnings and reflections. Users of this toolkit are encouraged to adapt its recommendations based on local contexts. Each section provides guidance on actions and next steps.



Jessica Roland (left) and Tuomas Tuure (right) during the Peacemakers Network's Advisory Group Meeting in Helsinki, Finland. 2023.

Glossary

Ableism: Discrimination, prejudice, or systemic bias against persons with disabilities, rooted in the assumption that disability is a defect or deviation from a presumed norm. Ableism manifests in societal structures, institutions, and attitudes that exclude or disadvantage persons with disabilities, and it intersects with other forms of marginalization. Challenging ableism is essential to advancing full participation and equal rights in peacebuilding.^{3,4}

Accessibility: The design and adaptation of environments, systems, services, and communication to ensure persons with disabilities can participate fully and equally. Accessibility includes physical, digital, communicational, institutional, and attitudinal dimensions, and is a foundational element of inclusive peacebuilding.⁵

Human Rights-Based Approach: A Human Rights-Based Approach focuses on the root causes of inequality and non-realization of human rights instead of symptoms of poverty and sees development as a process. Attention is paid to political and legal structures, cultural and social structures, forms and root causes of inequality and discrimination, as well as unequal division of resources.⁶

Persons With Disabilities: Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.⁷

Intersectionality: A framework for recognizing how overlapping identities, such as disability, gender, age, race, indigeneity, and sexual orientation, interact to produce unique experiences of exclusion or marginalization.⁸ Intersectional approaches are essential to inclusive and equitable peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding: A comprehensive set of strategies and practices aimed at preventing conflict, addressing root causes of violence, supporting social cohesion, and promoting sustainable peace.⁹ Inclusive peacebuilding centers the leadership and participation of those most affected by conflict, including persons with disabilities.

3 International Disability Alliance. (2022). Not Just Ticking the Disability Box? Meaningful OPD Participation and the Risk of Tokenism. https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_executive_summary_v07.pdf

4 United Nations. (2023). Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/78/174). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78174-peacebuilding-and-inclusion-persons-disabilities-report-special>

5 United Nations. (2019). United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

6 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2006). Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FAQen.pdf>

7 United Nations General Assembly. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

8 United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. (2022). Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/minorities/30th-anniversary/2022-09-22/GuidanceNoteonIntersectionality.pdf>

9 United Nations Peacekeeping. (2025). Terminology. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>

Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
OPDs	Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
NAPs	National Action Plans
UNSCR Resolution 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
UNSCR Resolution 2475	United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Conflict
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

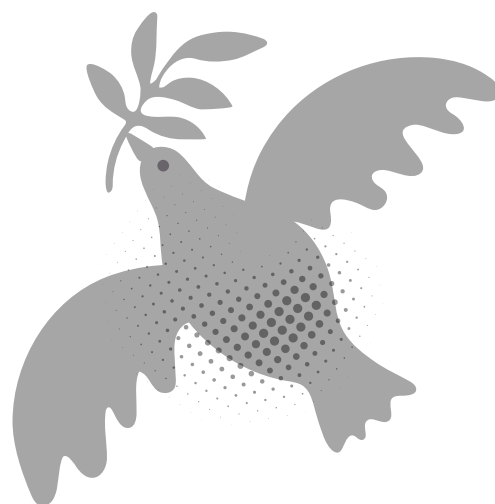
Partnering for Inclusive Peace: Centering Persons with Disabilities in All Phases of Peacebuilding

Disability inclusion must be embedded across all peacebuilding and development efforts. One of the most powerful tools for advancing the work of persons with disabilities is **partnership**. Meaningful partnership, particularly with OPDs and disability leaders, should be prioritized across all phases of peacebuilding, from planning to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. These collaborations strengthen the legitimacy, visibility, and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts, while supporting accessible systems rooted in community leadership. These partnerships also foster cross-movement solidarity and communal advocacy, ensuring that the needs and contributions of persons with disabilities are not siloed but recognized across peace and security frameworks.¹⁰

In peacebuilding contexts, partnership is not only about inclusion, but also about **shifting power**. By treating inclusion as a cornerstone rather than a secondary goal, peacebuilders can ensure that response systems are reactive, transformative and sustainable for all. Partnering with OPDs promotes resource-sharing, centers lived expertise and helps address systemic barriers to participation. This global toolkit aims to show practical ways that peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can partner to strengthen their efforts in peacebuilding, bolstering a whole-of-society approach.

This global toolkit is structured around the conflict cycle: **prevention, response, and post-conflict recovery**, to examine when and how disability inclusion can and must be included throughout all peacebuilding stages. To achieve transformative change, each phase of conflict offers specific opportunities on the individual, institutional and socio-cultural levels. When persons with disabilities design, lead and implement peace processes at all levels, when their role in peacemaking is well understood across all levels; then the results of those processes are more likely to be sustainable.

Ultimately, mainstreaming the inclusion of persons with disabilities is not a technical fix, but a political imperative. It requires asking who defines peace, who benefits from peace processes, and who continues to be left behind. As this global toolkit outlines, ensuring full and meaningful inclusion is not just the responsibility of OPDs and disability-focused actors and institutions, it is a collective responsibility of all peace and security institutions and practitioners.



¹⁰ United Nations. (2023). Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/78/174). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78174-peacebuilding-and-inclusion-persons-disabilities-report-special>

Prevention, Participation, and Leadership

UNSCR 2475 recognizes the critical contributions of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in conflict prevention and calls for their full and effective consultation and participation across all stages of peace processes.¹¹ This call builds on the 1982 World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons urged Member States to invest in peaceful solutions to social exclusion, including through prevention and mediation,¹² as well as the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, also affirming the right to participation.

However, most peacebuilding processes still fall short of these goals in practice,^{13 14} including the realities and leadership of persons with disabilities in conflict prevention frameworks. The barriers that persons with disabilities face are multifaceted, with pre-existing vulnerabilities exacerbated in conflict settings. To advance partnerships which promote the participation and leadership of persons with disabilities and OPDs in conflict prevention, first we look at the individual level of change needed.

Individual Level Change

On the individual level, this starts with peacebuilding organizations and OPDs partnering to perform an **inclusive and intersectional conflict analysis**.

This critical step is echoed by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, who emphasized the need for conflict analysis tools that recognize exclusion and marginalization as drivers of violence and instability, calling for disability to be mainstreamed in the earliest stages of peacebuilding.¹⁵

11 United Nations Security Council. (2019). Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict (S/RES/2475). [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475\(2019\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475(2019))

12 United Nations. (1982). *World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/world-programme-of-action-concerning-disabled-persons.html>

13 United Nations General Assembly. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*. <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

14 United Nations General Assembly. (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

15 United Nations. (2023). *Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/78/174)*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78174-peacebuilding-and-inclusion-persons-disabilities-report-special>

Persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach to inclusion is not sufficient. An intersectional approach, exploring how factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, type of impairment, the level of support required and context overlap with disability, is crucial for developing comprehensive, effective solutions.¹⁶ Performing an inclusive and intersectional conflict analysis lays a critical foundation for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, encouraging the systematic consideration of conflict drivers, actors, relationships, and root causes.

Traditional conflict analysis frameworks frequently overlook persons with disabilities, failing to account for their experiences of structural exclusion, social stigma, and systemic inaccessibility that are exacerbated in times of crisis. Partnering with persons with disabilities and OPDs offers essential expertise in identifying risks, addressing exclusion, and strengthening resilience. Consulting with persons with disabilities and OPDs also supports their leadership in conflict prevention strategies through understanding their unique risks, lived experiences and perspectives, and needs, as well as strengthens their capacity on conflict prevention tools. Supporting OPDs as core partners in peacebuilding helps prevent conflict by addressing the root causes of inequality and exclusion before they escalate.¹⁷

Speaker Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group opening of the Conference of States Parties (CoSP 18). 2025.

Without prioritizing inclusive conflict analysis, peacebuilding efforts risk perpetuating the very inequalities and gaps to participation that fuel conflict. To ensure these efforts are strengthened in the long-term, platforms and networks should be advanced to continue building on the leadership and participation of persons with disabilities to lead in conflict prevention efforts.

For peacebuilding and OPDs to be able to work together on conducting a conflict analysis, both partners should **ensure that persons with disabilities have the means and ability to participate**. Persons with disabilities often face significant, uncompensated costs to engage in peacebuilding, including transportation, assistive technology, and personal aids. These are not optional expenses; they are essential conditions for meaningful participation and must be fully resourced across all peacebuilding budgets and programs. The international community, including donors, implementing agencies, and multilateral institutions, should recognize these needs as core operational costs and integrate accessibility into standard budgeting and procurement procedures.^{18 19}



16 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Global Disability Inclusion Report. <https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report-Proof-4.pdf>

17 International Disability Alliance (2022). Not Just Ticking the Disability Box: Meaningful OPD Participation and the Risk of Tokenism. https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_executive_summary_v07.pdf

18 United Nations. (2023). *Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/78/174)*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78174-peacebuilding-and-inclusion-persons-disabilities-report-special>

19 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Global Disability Inclusion Report. <https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report-Proof-4.pdf>

Institutional Level Change

On the institutional level, following the development of a conflict analysis, peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can then partner to **inform or reform policies** needed to address barriers faced by persons with disabilities in conflict prevention and to **help design community-based early warning mechanisms**, while building the capacity of community responders. Some of these policies include national peace strategies and action plans, such as WPS and YPS agendas, as well as working to strengthen disability rights laws. Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should push for national laws to align with the UN CRPD, notably Articles 11 on Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies and Article 29 on Participation in Political and Public Life.²⁰

Partnering to gather vital data is also crucial on the institutional level throughout all cycles of conflict, as also highlighted by UNSCR 2475, which recognizes the need for analysis on the impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities.²¹ Without disability-specific data and indicators, disaggregated further by age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other identity factors, peacebuilding systems are more likely to reproduce existing inequities. Disability inclusion must be built into the design of information systems, and OPDs should be meaningfully involved in defining what data is needed and how it is used to identify risk and design interventions.^{22 23}

Socio-Cultural Level Change

On the socio-cultural level, partnership between peacebuilding organizations and OPDs is needed on **awareness raising on the critical role of persons with disabilities in conflict prevention**. This can be achieved through **co-designed intersectional peace education efforts**. Peace education offers an important entry point for preventing conflict and raising awareness of critical issues within the community through fostering values of inclusion, dialogue, and nonviolence. Peace education can be utilized to showcase the importance of persons with disabilities leading and participating in conflict prevention efforts. Community disability-inclusive peace education must ensure materials are accessible for all members of the community.²⁴ This includes requiring accessible environments, such as ensuring accommodations have ramps and accessible seating, including interpretation, offer both braille and alternative digital formats.



20 United Nations General Assembly. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*. <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

21 United Nations Security Council. (2019). *Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict (S/RES/2475)*. [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475\(2019\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475(2019))

22 Conciliation Resources. (2021). *Untapped peacebuilders: Including persons with disabilities in building peace*. https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Untapped_peacebuilders_including_persons_with_disabilities_in_building_peace.pdf

23 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). *Global Disability Inclusion Report*. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

24 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2022). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

Prevention, Participation, and Leadership: Somalia Case Study Lens

In Somalia, the STRONG project assessment revealed a complex landscape regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in conflict prevention, participation, and leadership. While some gains have been made, persons with disabilities remain significantly underrepresented in early conflict prevention mechanisms. Their exclusion is driven by structural barriers, such as inaccessible communication platforms and venues, limited awareness among peace actors on how to engage persons with disabilities, and prevailing social stigma. In contexts where persons with disabilities were engaged through local peace dialogues or NGO-led interventions, they demonstrated capacity to contribute meaningfully to identifying conflict triggers and mediating tensions.

In Puntland and Baidoa, inclusive peace education programs and youth initiatives have allowed persons with disabilities to participate in community recovery activities through advocacy, public storytelling, and training. Despite a clear appetite for engagement, reflected in **72.3 percent of community respondents supporting disability inclusion in peace processes**, actual participation remains limited.



However, only 45.4 percent of surveyed persons with disabilities reported involvement in peacebuilding initiatives over the last five years, with most participation taking place in localized dialogues supported by OPDs and civil society organizations.

86.4 percent of respondents in a national peacebuilding survey identified the lack of sign language interpretation as a barrier to participation, while 70.2 percent pointed to physical inaccessibility of venues. Furthermore, persons with lower support needs were twice as likely to participate compared to those with high support needs, illustrating disparities in who is reached even within the disability community. Cultural and financial barriers further restrict access, particularly for women and youth with disabilities, who face compounding layers of marginalization.²⁵

'Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia', funded by the Government of Sweden (SIDA). 2024-2025. Photo: Finn Church Aid.

25 Finn Church Aid (FCA). (2025). An assessment on disability inclusion in the peace processes in target federal member states in Somalia, and development of disability inclusion toolkit under the project Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia (STRONG). Mogadishu: FCA Somalia Country Office.

Leadership representation of persons with disabilities in peace processes is similarly constrained. **While disability was on the agenda in 87.3 percent of peacebuilding activities that involved persons with disabilities, their participation often lacked substance, with only 18.1 percent holding leadership roles and 9.7 percent serving in advisory capacities.** Many of these roles were tokenistic and donor-driven, lacking meaningful influence or continuity.

Nevertheless, the assessment identified emerging leaders, such as disability advocates using media and art to promote peace and inclusion,²⁶ and the assessment observed growing momentum at the grassroots and sectoral levels through civic education initiatives, youth peace forums, and collaborations with traditional leaders. These initiatives are beginning to normalize the participation of persons with disabilities in governance and social dialogue. These efforts, though still limited in scale, are vital steps toward dismantling exclusion and building a more inclusive and resilient peace process that recognizes persons with disabilities as full stakeholders in Somalia's future.



'Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia', funded by the Government of Sweden (SIDA). 2024-2025. Photo: Finn Church Aid.

Key Partnership Actions to Ensure the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Conflict Prevention Efforts

Individual Level: Partnering for Inclusive Conflict Analysis and Leadership

1. Co-design and implement inclusive and intersectional conflict analysis tools

Peacebuilding organizations should develop conflict analysis frameworks that explicitly include disability as a factor, disaggregated by gender, age, type of impairment, support needs and other relevant identity factors. Peacebuilding organizations should collaborate with OPDs to gather insights on exclusion, marginalization, and drivers of conflict and engage persons with disabilities in mapping local risks and resilience strategies, with special attention to intersectional barriers.

2. Promote the leadership of persons with disabilities in peacebuilding design and strategy

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should identify and mentor emerging leaders with disabilities for roles in peace committees, advisory bodies, or mediation teams. Peacebuilding organizations should partner with OPDs to deliver leadership and conflict prevention training tailored to persons with disabilities, ensuring accessible formats and inclusive facilitation.

3. Build joint capacities on inclusive peacebuilding and conflict prevention

Peacebuilding organizations should facilitate joint workshops for peace actors, OPDs, and community members to build shared understanding of disability-inclusive conflict prevention, including areas of disaster risk reduction planning (DRR) and emergency preparedness plans. All partners should use these platforms to challenge tokenistic inclusion and promote meaningful participation, while reflecting disability inclusion from the outset, adapting evacuation plans and infrastructure for resilience.

4. Address the structural and financial barriers of persons with disabilities to participate in conflict prevention

Peacebuilding budgets must fully cover essential accessibility-related costs, such as transportation, assistive technology, and personal aids as core, non-negotiable operational expenses. Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should jointly ensure that funding proposals and project designs include clear provisions for accessibility, with transparent mechanisms for allocating and tracking resources dedicated to enabling persons with disabilities' participation. Donors, implementing agencies, and multilateral institutions should institutionalize accessibility by embedding it within standard budgeting, planning, and procurement procedures for all peacebuilding programs.



Lassi Murto (left) on panel 'Breaking the Barriers to Ensure the Active Leadership and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities at the National Dialogues Conference in Helsinki, Finland. 2022. Photo: Maria Santto.

Individual Level: Reform, Data, and Mechanism Design

1. Address policy reform and practice for systemic inclusion

Peacebuilding organizations should collaborate with OPDs to review and advocate to change policies that perpetuate exclusion, including peace and security frameworks and disability rights law. Both partners should promote the integration of inclusive approaches into national and local peace strategies, with measurable commitments and accountability mechanisms.

2. Develop inclusive early warning and response mechanisms

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should ensure persons with disabilities in all their diversity are involved in designing community-based early warning systems and preparedness mechanisms to address the unique barriers and risks they face in crisis and pre-conflict contexts, including persons with physical, sensory, psychological, and intellectual disabilities. Both partners should equip systems with accessible technologies and communication tools.

3. Generate and use disability-disaggregated data

Peacebuilding organizations should partner with OPDs and research institutions to collect and analyze data on the experiences of persons with disabilities in conflict settings. All partners should involve persons with disabilities in disaggregating data by gender, age, impairment type, and other relevant identity factors to inform tailored prevention interventions and interpreting results.

4. Strengthen OPDs as peacebuilding partners

Peacebuilding organizations should draft formal MOUs with OPDs to embed them as technical advisors and co-implementers in peacebuilding and humanitarian action and move beyond token consultation to co-ownership. Peacebuilding organizations and donors should provide sustained funding and technical assistance to OPDs to participate in and lead prevention programming. Peacebuilding organizations should also include OPDs in peacebuilding consortia, policy forums, and donor consultations.

Socio-Cultural Level: Awareness, Education, and Community Engagement

1. Promote disability-inclusive peace education

Peacebuilding organizations should co-develop peace education curricula with OPDs that address exclusion, stigma, and the role of persons with disabilities in building peace. Both partners should ensure peace education is accessible and inclusive across formal and informal settings.

2. Normalize participation through community forums and dialogues

Peacebuilding organizations should create inclusive spaces for civic dialogue where persons with disabilities and OPDs are seen as equal participants. Both partners should collaborate with community leaders to advocate for inclusion and address stigma at the grassroots level.

Conflict Response and Protection

UNSCR 2475 emphasizes the need to consider the particular needs of persons with disabilities in humanitarian response, expressing its commitment to address the disproportionate impact of armed conflict and related humanitarian crises on persons with disabilities, including abandonment, violence, and a lack of access to basic services.²⁷ As of the publication of this toolkit, this continues to be reflected in ongoing conflicts.

For instance, by Summer 2025, in Gaza, there have been more than 49,000 casualties, with around 118,000 people injured. The lack of medical services has led to moderate cases becoming critical, with an estimated over 1,000 children having lost at least one limb in less than a year of the conflict.

In Sudan, 25 million people need urgent humanitarian assistance, including an estimated 1.85 million persons with disabilities as of 2008 who are among those most affected. And of the 3 million persons with disabilities in Ukraine, 1.8 million are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, more than half of displaced households include at least one person with a disability, and 300,000 people have acquired disabilities because of injuries caused by the war.²⁸

Field visit to the ecological charcoal and improved cookstove production site at Bulengo Internally Displaced Camp, as part of the United Nations Development Programme funded project on strengthening youth and disability inclusion in climate action in North Kivu. 2023.

Photo: Enable the Disable Action.



²⁷ United Nations Security Council. (2019). Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict (S/RES/2475). [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475\(2019\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475(2019))

²⁸ Global Disability Summit. (2025). Global Disability Summit 2025 – Day 2 [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvPnSm5Bpil&t=4494s>

From a deeper intersectional lens, data also shows that persons with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience violence and sexual assault, and less likely to access legal protection or preventive services.²⁹ **Women and girls with disabilities suffer up to three times greater risk of rape, are twice as likely to be survivors of domestic violence** and other forms of gender-based violence, and are likely to experience abuse over a longer period and with more severe injuries than women without disabilities.³⁰ These numbers are again exacerbated further in times of conflict. In the case of Ukraine, there are reports of fake and potentially forced marriages of women with disabilities to allow men to avoid military service by gaining the legal right to leave the country for treatment.³¹

Centering persons with disabilities and OPDs in protection efforts ensures peacebuilding systems are more equitable, resilient, and inclusive. Their participation strengthens the reach and responsiveness of protection systems, transforming how peace is built and who it serves. So, what partnership areas of change are needed?

Individual Level Change

For change on the individual level, partnership is needed through **joint capacity-strengthening on conflict response**, as emphasized by UNSCR 2475.³² Persons with disabilities and OPDs often lack the knowledge or access to information and skills to effectively claim their rights as citizens and to actively participate in conflict response.

Inversely, emergency responders and peacebuilding organizations need capacity-strengthening on both designing and implementing emergency response systems with persons with disabilities in mind, to ensure aid systems uphold the principles of justice and dignity. To ensure deeper understanding of these issues, training sessions should include running scenario-based exercises and assessments to continue building trust and mutual understanding between persons with disabilities and OPDs and peacebuilders and emergency responders.

Another capacity-strengthening area to bolster the protection of persons with disabilities, are **trainings on peace mediation and negotiation skills for persons with disabilities and OPDs**, to strengthen their ability to actively respond to conflict within their communities and to ensure their specific needs are met. Ceasefire agreements and peace negotiations frequently overlook the specific needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities.³³ Studies have shown that such agreements rarely include provisions addressing their protection, participation, or access to justice.³⁴

This widespread exclusion not only silences the experiences of persons with disabilities but also undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of peace efforts. Peacebuilding organizations must promote the active leadership and participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs within negotiations to ensure their needs are addressed.

29 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>

30 UN Women. (2017). Fact Sheet: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities. <https://unfpa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/08/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>

31 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Global Disability Inclusion Report. <https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report-Proof-4.pdf>

32 United Nations Security Council. (2019). Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict (S/RES/2475). [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475\(2019\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475(2019))

33 International Civil Society Action Network. (2019). Steps for Inclusion in Ceasefire Agreements. <https://icanpeacework.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICAN-BPI-Steps-for-Inclusion-in-Ceasefire-Agreements.pdf>

34 Political Settlements Research Programme. (2020). Disability and Peace Agreements. <https://www.politicalsettlements.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Peace-Agreements-Disability-Report-DIGITAL-1.pdf>

Institutional Level Change

For conflict response on the institutional level, partnership is needed between OPDs and peacebuilding organizations to **advance inclusive protection systems** that recognize the legal rights, experiences, and leadership of persons with disabilities across all stages of conflict and recovery. When peacebuilding actors fail to consult persons with disabilities or partner with OPDs, response efforts often lack accessible shelters, legal services, or complaint mechanisms; conditions that leave communities behind during and after conflict.³⁵ For example, when conflict escalated in the Central African Republic, persons with disabilities faced challenges fleeing violence, with many abandoned and left behind. Those reaching camps experienced barriers to basic needs, including sanitation and health care.

A man with physical disabilities living in a camp reported:

“My tricycle doesn’t fit inside the toilet, so I have to get down on all fours and crawl. Initially I had gloves for my hands, so I didn’t get any [feces] on them, but now I have to use leaves.”³⁶

By excluding persons with disabilities from protection mechanisms, systems fail to uphold the core peacebuilding principle of leaving no one behind.

Research also demonstrates that the exclusion of persons with disabilities from crisis response is not only widespread, but deadly. Human Rights Watch documented cases where persons with disabilities were abandoned during attacks and left without access to food, water, or medical support, leading to avoidable deaths.³⁷ Amnesty International also found that in Myanmar, persons with disabilities who could not flee the violence were extrajudicially executed or tortured.

For example, a 67-year-old farmer stayed at home when most of his village fled in March 2019, in part because his severe hearing impairment prevented him from hearing nearby fighting between the military and an armed group. He later described being beaten and tied to a post for hours as Myanmar soldiers questioned him about the armed group. Other persons with disabilities who had very limited mobility were burned inside their homes.³⁸

These are not isolated cases but evidence of systemic neglect that peacebuilding actors must urgently address.³⁹

35 International Disability Alliance. (2022). Not Just Ticking the Disability Box: Meaningful OPD Participation and the Risk of Tokenism. https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_executive_summary_v07.pdf

36 United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Global Disability Inclusion Report. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

37 Human Rights Watch. (2023). People with Disabilities in Humanitarian Emergencies. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/22/people-disabilities-humanitarian-emergencies-and-situations-risk>

38 Amnesty International. (2023). Submission to the Global Disability Summit. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/IO4064542023ENGLISH.pdf>

39 Human Rights Watch. (2018). UN: War’s Impact on People with Disabilities. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/03/un-wars-impact-people-disabilities>

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action reinforce that **protection must be framed not as charity, but as a matter of rights and accountability, grounded in humanitarian and international law.**⁴⁰

Peacebuilding responses must be co-developed with OPDs to ensure that inclusion is not framed as individualized care but as part of community resilience. Current approaches to individualized protection are often costly, inflexible, and incapable of addressing collective and intersectional needs across diverse populations.⁴¹

Collaborative, community-led models that integrate persons with disabilities into planning, implementation, and monitoring processes lead to more sustainable and inclusive response systems.⁴² Protocols must ensure investigation, prosecution, and redress, especially considering that persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable to displacement and conflict-related violence. Peacebuilding systems must also address environmental and infrastructural barriers, such as inaccessible transport routes, disrupted power supplies, or communication systems, that can isolate persons with disabilities during emergencies. These challenges not only affect access to immediate aid but also create long-term obstacles to participating in peace processes, community dialogues, and post-conflict decision-making.⁴³ Without addressing these structural barriers, persons with disabilities remain excluded from shaping recovery strategies and sustaining inclusive peace.



Capacity building workshop for disability organization leaders in Goma on advocating for disability-disaggregated data collection to track Sustainable Development Goal progress, as part of the Citizen Data project, funded by the Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data. 2023. Photo: Enable the Disable Action.

40 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2019). *Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2019-11/IASC%20Guidelines%20on%20the%20Inclusion%20of%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action%2C%202019.pdf>

41 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). *Global Disability Inclusion Report*. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

42 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). (2019). *ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Enabling-Masterplan-2025.pdf>

43 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (2025). *8 Ways People with Disabilities Can Become More Disaster Resilient*. <https://www.fema.gov/blog/8-ways-people-disabilities-can-become-more-disaster-resilient>

Socio-Cultural Level Change

Effective conflict response and protection at the socio-cultural level require **partnerships in both digital and offline community communication tools**, including leading efforts on platforms like social media and radio to support protection initiatives. Pervasive discrimination affects persons with disabilities at all levels, with stigma related to disabilities present in several contexts limiting their effective participation. When persons with disabilities and their distinct needs are recognized, it is often from the perspective of persons with disabilities as victims, often without having persons with disabilities part of the discussions, rather than as active change agents whose participation and contributions improve the whole peace and dialogue process.

Digital online spaces have the potential to be the great equalizer for persons with disabilities as it can overcome many of the physical, social, and systemic barriers that traditionally hinder their full participation in society. When designed inclusively, these spaces can radically expand access to information, education, employment, civic participation, and peacebuilding initiatives. Through remote and/or home-based inclusion, persons with disabilities have access to assistive tools, such as screen readers, voice recognition, and captioning. Digital spaces allow persons with disabilities to share their stories, ideas, and leadership through blogs, podcasts, and webinars.

Digital spaces also allow for connecting with the community through online groups and platforms, intersectional organizing, and e-consultations. However, training is critical to ensure persons with disabilities and OPDs know how to address online harassment and recognize misinformation. Alarming, extremist groups have exploited vulnerabilities, targeting specifically individuals with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities for recruitment or coercion, tapping into their push and pull factors of vulnerability.⁴⁴

In contexts where internet access is limited or unreliable, **offline forms of partnered community communication can be co-created. Community radio**, for example, allows for disability inclusion through signposting for blind persons listening, audio dramas, and public service announcements and is a powerful and life-saving tool to help ensure the inclusion, safety and participation of persons with disabilities in conflict response. Community radio allows for timely alerts and updates, connects listeners with others through sharing stories and broadcasting supportive messages and can help in raising awareness on responding to the needs of persons with disabilities in conflict areas to ensure they are not left behind. Radio also allows for listener feedback mechanisms, to support two-way communication, provides a platform for OPDs to share updates and promote their services and can help in countering misinformation.

44 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017). Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System. https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Child-Victims/Handbook_on_Children_Recruited_and_Exploited_by_Terrorist_and_Violent_Extremist_Groups_the_Role_of_the_Justice_System_E.pdf

Conflict Prevention and Response: Somalia Case Study Lens

The STRONG project assessment revealed several critical findings concerning the intersection of conflict response, peacebuilding, and protection in advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Somalia. First, **the assessment revealed that the conflict response landscape in Somalia remains largely unprepared to meet the specific protection needs of persons with disabilities.** Despite the country's ratification of the UN CRPD, conflict-related emergencies continue to expose persons with disabilities to heightened risks and systemic neglect. Humanitarian responses, including shelter, health services, water and sanitation (WASH), and security, often fail to incorporate disability-inclusive measures, leaving many individuals without access to life-saving assistance. Security threats in high-conflict zones exacerbate these challenges, particularly for women and girls with disabilities who are at increased risk of gender-based violence and often lack access to protective services or justice mechanisms. Social and cultural stigmas surrounding disability compound these protection gaps. In many instances, persons with disabilities are seen as burdens or are intentionally excluded from household-level decision-making during displacement or evacuation, resulting in further marginalization.⁴⁵

There were also multiple layers of exclusion noted in forums advancing peace. **41.9 percent of persons with disabilities reported that venues for peace meetings were physically accessible.** In cities like Mogadishu and Galkacyo, barriers such as the absence of ramps, narrow entrances, and lack of adapted restrooms excluded many from participating. There was also an absence of sign language interpreters and a lack of assistive devices. Additionally, financial constraints, inadequate transportation, and insecurity also prevented full engagement by persons with disabilities.⁴⁶

Despite these challenges, there is strong interest and willingness among persons with disabilities to engage in peacebuilding, with **78.3 percent expressing a desire to participate in future initiatives.** For example, community-based peace media initiatives, including radio shows hosted by persons with disabilities, have played a role in challenging stigma and fostering inclusion.

Another powerful example of inclusive peacebuilding was in Puntland, through the leadership of a blind elder who played a key role in mediating clan reconciliation efforts. Despite his disability, the elder was widely respected across clan lines for his wisdom, neutrality, and deep understanding of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

45 Finn Church Aid (FCA). (2025). An assessment on disability inclusion in the peace processes in target federal member states in Somalia, and development of disability inclusion toolkit under the project Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia (STRONG). Mogadishu: FCA Somalia Country Office.

46 Ibid.

His physical impairment was perceived by many as a symbol of impartiality, enabling him to facilitate dialogue between rival groups without being viewed as politically or socially biased. Community members trusted him to listen without judgment, and his role as a mediator was seen as both effective and transformative.

This case highlights how persons with disabilities, when given the opportunity and support, can serve as credible and powerful actors in local peace processes, challenging stigma and expanding definitions of leadership and authority in Somali society.⁴⁷

The assessment also found promising efforts toward inclusive protection in some districts. For instance, in Mogadishu and Puntland, disability-focused NGOs have trained security actors and humanitarian responders on inclusive practices, including the identification of persons with disabilities during needs assessments and the provision of assistive devices.

Programs in places like Baidoa and Kismayo have piloted inclusive safe spaces for women and youth with disabilities, offering psychosocial support, legal aid, and livelihood opportunities. These examples, although scattered, demonstrate the feasibility and impact of inclusive conflict response models.⁴⁸



'Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia', funded by the Government of Sweden (SIDA). 2024-2025. Photo: Finn Church Aid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Key Partnership Actions to Ensure the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Conflict Response

Individual Level: Building Mutual Capacity for Inclusive Protection

1. Conduct joint capacity-strengthening workshops on inclusive conflict response

Partners should facilitate co-led training between OPDs and humanitarian or peacebuilding organizations to build mutual understanding and strengthen inclusive response systems around areas such as humanitarian response, rights-based approaches and emergency planning. This includes being able to respond to violence, safeguard and provide accessible referrals, while offering scenario-based exercises to build trust and share strategies.

2. Develop and deliver partnered training on peace mediation and negotiation for OPDs

Peacebuilding organizations should offer targeted training for OPDs and persons with disabilities, including women and youth with disabilities, with the tools to engage in local mediation, negotiation, and community peacebuilding to be active participants and leaders in conflict response.

3. Conduct capacity-strengthening workshops for persons with disabilities and OPDs in digital safety, media literacy and online advocacy

Peacebuilding organizations should equip persons with disabilities and OPDs with skills to safely navigate digital spaces, identify misinformation or online harassment, and use digital platforms to share stories and organize collectively.

Institutional Level: Embedding Disability Inclusion into Protection Systems

1. Create inclusive protection task forces co-led by OPDs and humanitarian actors

Peacebuilding organizations, including humanitarian organizations, and OPDs should formalize partnerships to design and monitor inclusive protection in displacement camps, health services, shelters, and safe spaces utilizing a rights-based approach. All partners should ensure the representation of women, men, non-binary and young people with different disabilities.

2. Perform accessibility audits and infrastructure retrofitting

Peacebuilding organizations, including humanitarian organizations, should conduct disability-inclusive assessments with OPDs of shelters, venues, and health/WASH facilities and invest in retrofitting based on universal design principles.

3. Monitor humanitarian access and violations of rights during conflict

Peacebuilding organizations should ensure peacebuilding mechanisms include systems for monitoring how persons with disabilities are treated during conflict and displacement, including access to evacuation and shelter. Investigations into violations must center their experiences and be informed by OPDs.

4. Institutionalize inclusive complaint and legal redress mechanisms

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should partner to ensure reporting systems for abuse or neglect are accessible and that responders are trained to engage with persons with disabilities sensitively, timely, and effectively.

5. Integrate disability inclusion in ceasefire and peace agreements

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should advocate for ceasefire and peace agreements that specifically reference the protection, participation, and justice needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring OPDs are meaningfully involved to ensure commitments to accessibility, legal protection, inclusive demobilization and reintegration processes, and post-conflict service delivery are included.

Socio-Cultural Level: Shifting Narratives and Expanding Representation

1. Co-create inclusive online and offline community-based communication tools for early warning and response

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should develop joint community-based online and offline communication tools to help share disability-inclusive alerts and protection messaging to counter misinformation and foster social inclusion. Both partners should use SMS alerts, inclusive radio broadcasts, and audio public announcements to reach persons with disabilities during emergencies, incorporating repeated cues and signposting for blind persons listening.

2. Launch joint community-led peace media platforms

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should partner to scale up online and offline community-based media efforts that spotlight the participation and leadership of persons with disabilities in peace processes, such as elders mediating dialogue or youth producing radio shows to challenge stigma and redefine leadership.



Capacity building workshop on Positive Masculinity to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights for Persons with Disabilities through the Makoki ya Mwasi project, funded by the Embassy of Sweden. 2023. Photo: Enable the Disable Action.

Post-Conflict Response and Healing

UNSCR 2475 emphasizes the need to end impunity for criminal acts against persons with disabilities and to ensure that such persons have access to justice and effective remedies, as well as, underlines the benefit of providing sustainable, timely, appropriate, inclusive and accessible assistance, including reintegration, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support.⁴⁹ Historically, persons with disabilities have been excluded from political processes due to physical inaccessibility, lack of accommodations, and discriminatory laws or norms. As institutions are rebuilt in post-conflict societies, accessibility needs to be central, and OPDs must be co-leading these efforts.⁵⁰ **Post-conflict reconstruction presents a critical opportunity to dismantle these barriers and embed inclusive participation in the design of new systems.** Post-conflict reconstruction is not simply about infrastructure and aid, it is about rebuilding relationships, reimagining governance, and healing social divisions. Within this context, peacebuilding actors must prioritize the inclusion of persons with disabilities across all sectors of recovery, from legal systems to education, healthcare, and economic revitalization.



Amman-Berlin Global Disability Summit. 2025. Photo: [International Disability Alliance \(IDA\)](#).

Individual Level Change

For post-conflict response and healing on the individual level, a critical area in need of partnership is **addressing economic exclusion**, including livelihood and economic support, as well as **equal access to education**. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poverty, job insecurity, and lack of access to credit, land, and formal education, barriers that are often heightened in conflict-affected settings. Without targeted investment, peacebuilding efforts risk deepening these divides.

The 2025 Global Disability Summit (GDS) emphasized that equity in recovery requires disability-inclusive financing strategies that put **resources directly into the hands of OPDs and support long-term access to education, employment, and livelihoods.**⁵¹ However, it is important to make sure that economic support is targeted based on intersectional needs.

49 United Nations Security Council. (2019). Resolution 2475 on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflict (S/RES/2475). [https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475\(2019\)](https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2475(2019))

50 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Global Disability Inclusion Report. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

51 Global Disability Summit. (2025). Amman-Berlin Declaration. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GDS-Amman-Berlin-Declaration_final-draft.pdf

Women with disabilities experience higher levels of economic exclusion, including reduced participation in work and education. Women with disabilities are three times more likely to be illiterate compared to men without disabilities and they are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to men without disabilities. Women with disabilities also have lower earnings and job security, and reduced autonomy in controlling personal and household finances. Women with disabilities are also frequently under-represented in OPDs, women's organizations, national coordination mechanisms on disability, and local and national government bodies. Boys and men with disabilities also experience unique challenges due to the intersection of disability and gender. Risks associated with precarious employment, including economic exploitation and dangerous work environments, can be more common among men compared with women with disabilities, given their greater engagement in work. Men with disabilities can also face greater stigma when they are unemployed due to greater societal expectations in many contexts for men to be earning.⁵²



Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can support redress of survivors with disabilities through **partnering to promote their access to reparations**. Reparations provide formal acknowledgment of the harm persons with disabilities suffered, affirming their dignity and humanity, as well as support their access to medical and psychosocial support, rehabilitation services, and support for livelihood and education. This recognition is essential for healing and restoring trust in society and state institutions. Furthermore, the **UN CRPD obligates states to ensure remedies and reparations for victims of rights violations, including persons with disabilities**.⁵³ Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs must also **promote access to inclusive, comprehensive health and mental healthcare systems**, as conflict often disrupts access. Children with disabilities in conflict zones, including in Darfur, Sudan, and adults with disabilities in Ukraine, reported poor mental health outcomes more often compared with their counterparts without disabilities. For persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, distress is exacerbated by disruption to routines and care and support, as well as failure to provide easy-to-understand explanations of events.⁵⁴ 'Deaths of despair', including from suicides, drug overdoses, and alcohol use disorders, are more than three times more common among men with disabilities compared with women globally. Men with disabilities, particularly men with psychosocial disability, face an even greater likelihood, due to heightened exposure to risk factors such as social isolation, financial strain, and discrimination.⁵⁵

Florence Ndagire on panel 'Breaking the Barriers to Ensure the Active Leadership and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities at the National Dialogues Conference in Helsinki, Finland. 2022.
Photo: Maria Santto.

52 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). *Global Disability Inclusion Report*. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

53 United Nations General Assembly. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*. <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

54 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). *Global Disability Inclusion Report*. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

55 Ibid.

To help ensure recovery efforts are successful in building resilience of persons with disabilities, peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can **support access to physical and mental healthcare systems and create safe, inclusive and survivor-led spaces and peer-to-peer networks for persons with disabilities to share experiences and advocate for their rights.** This can enhance psychosocial recovery through fostering solidarity and belonging, while reducing stigma and isolation. Unlike short-term aid programs, networks offer ongoing, localized support that can adapt to emerging needs and strengthen community resilience.

Institutional Level Change

For post-conflict response and healing on the institutional level, partnership within transitional justice efforts are needed between peacebuilding organizations and OPDs to include **both access to justice and institutional reform.** Persons with disabilities are often disproportionately affected by conflict, facing targeted violence, neglect, forced displacement, and abuse. Access to justice allows them to seek redress for these harms, hold perpetrators accountable, and challenge the impunity that often follows conflict. Without access, their experiences remain invisible, and justice remains incomplete. Institutional legal reforms are also needed in post-conflict contexts to address systematic exclusion and discrimination in order to build inclusive governance systems. Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can assist persons with disabilities in ensuring their access to justice.



Policy reform is also necessary to dismantle these systemic barriers and ensure that persons with disabilities are fully included in society as equal citizens with rights, not as passive recipients of aid. Post-conflict reconstruction provides a rare opportunity to rebuild institutions from the ground up. Institutional reforms that explicitly include disability perspectives, such as in education, justice, healthcare, social protection, and political participation, help ensure that the “new” systems are inclusive, accessible, and equitable from the start. Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs are uniquely placed to advise governments on what is needed within institutional reforms through consultations with persons with disabilities and in alignment with the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies.⁵⁶

Another critical area for partnership on the institutional level is around **transforming peace systems to who holds power across designing, implementing, and evaluating post-conflict peacebuilding strategies.** Transforming peace systems requires empowering the most vulnerable and marginalized, which is why partnerships between peacebuilding organizations and OPDs need to be formalized and resourced through flexible and long-term funding.

As noted in the 2025 Global Disability Inclusion Report, OPDs are essential actors in humanitarian and peacebuilding spaces, but **often lack the funding and institutional access required to lead at scale.**⁵⁷

⁵⁶ United Nations. (2023). *Peacebuilding and the inclusion of persons with disabilities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/78/174)*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78174-peacebuilding-and-inclusion-persons-disabilities-report-special>

⁵⁷ United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). *Global Disability Inclusion Report*. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report_Proof-4.pdf

Disability inclusion receives less than one percent of funding globally, despite being the world's largest minority group, constituting 15 percent of the global population. The peacebuilding sector can strengthen disability inclusion by resourcing the leadership and participation of peacebuilders with disabilities. Targeted investments in inclusive infrastructure, including accessible transportation, assistive devices, communication support, and health services, enable peacebuilders with disabilities to work effectively in their communities and institutions. These investments not only increase access but contribute to broader social cohesion, equity, and sustainable peace outcomes.⁵⁸ Recognizing disability inclusion as a crosscutting peacebuilding imperative, not a siloed concern, ensures that systems integrate the multidimensional experiences of persons with disabilities and embrace the diversity of leadership needed for sustainable peace.

Flexible, multi-year financing should support OPDs' core capacities, leadership development, and participation in multilateral and national peace fora. Institutions must create mechanisms for accountability that track the extent to which OPDs influence peace programming and whether their inputs are reflected in decisions.⁵⁹

The Amman-Berlin Global Disability Summit Declaration calls on the international community to target 15 percent of international development programs implemented at country level to pursue disability inclusion as an objective.

This is tracked through a multi-year accountability mechanism in which governments, OPDs and other stakeholders publicly commit to inclusion goals and are required to report on progress through structured follow-up platforms and the Global Disability Summit Commitment Tracker.⁶⁰ This approach promotes long-term planning, mutual accountability, and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in shaping inclusive development and peacebuilding agendas.

Socio-Cultural Level Change

For post-conflict response and healing on the socio-cultural level, **moral repair within communities through key transitional justice mechanisms are needed to promote social cohesion, sustain peace and address systemic exclusion.** Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can partner in **national dialogues and with truth commissions** to ensure persons with disabilities are included in truth-telling processes, including through advocating for allocated seats for persons with disabilities, prioritizing their perspectives in transitional justice frameworks, and integrating their expertise in post-conflict legal reform. Participating or leading in truth-telling processes can validate persons with disabilities' suffering, restore their sense of agency, and help rebuild trust in public institutions that may have failed or ignored them during conflict. Without their participation, these violations risk being invisible in official narratives. Truth commissions must acknowledge these experiences to ensure that no group is forgotten or excluded from national healing, this includes capturing an inclusive historical record but also ensures processes of reparations and reform are inclusive of these harms.

58 United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2025). Global Disability Inclusion Report. <https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GIP03351-UNICEF-GDIR-Full-report-Proof-4.pdf>

59 Global Disability Summit. (2024). African Signal to the GDS 2025. <https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/African-Signal-to-the-GDS2025.pdf>

60 Global Disability Summit. (2025). Amman-Berlin Declaration. https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/GDS-Amman-Berlin-Declaration_final-draft.pdf

In Colombia, the national truth commission, established as part of the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), made notable efforts to include persons with disabilities in its work. This inclusion was shaped by a growing recognition that persons with disabilities had experienced specific and often invisible harms during the armed conflict and that they needed to be meaningfully included in the truth, justice, and reconciliation process. **The Commission officially recognized disability as a cross-cutting issue, not only as a medical or humanitarian concern but as a social and human rights issue connected to the conflict.** It also aimed to investigate and document the specific ways persons with disabilities were affected by the armed conflict, including both direct and indirect harms. The Commission collected testimonies from persons with disabilities, particularly those who had acquired impairments because of conflict-related violence, such as landmines, forced displacement, or targeted violence. The Commission worked in partnership with OPDs and civil society groups to identify cases and individuals for documentation, ensure inclusive methodologies in information gathering, and advocate for disability to be addressed in the Commission's public messaging and reporting.⁶¹

Another more localized way that peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can partner on this level is to **design and implement community-based attitudes and perceptions surveys to capture the bias of communities.** Conflict often also worsens pre-existing social stigmas and discrimination against persons with disabilities. Performing a survey and holding community-level discussions with persons with disabilities on their experiences in the conflict challenges these biases by affirming their right to speak, be heard, and be seen as active agents of change, not just passive victims. Their visibility helps shift public perceptions in the community and fosters dignity, empowerment, and inclusion.

Photo Exhibition "Witnessing a Way Forward: Protecting Lives. Building Peace" by Giles Duley. 2024. Photo: United Nations.

A final way that peacebuilding organizations and OPDs can partner on the socio-cultural level is through **working on memorialization or commemoration efforts within communities.** Post-conflict phases are moments of cultural redefinition, offering a space to shift societal narratives. Memorialization is a key part of collective healing, assisting with societal remembrance and respect of victims of the conflict and a way to foster non-repetition. When persons with disabilities are included, they are given space to process and narrate their own trauma and resilience. Memorialization efforts can set a precedent for broader societal inclusion, including accessible infrastructure, political participation, and equal rights. Inclusive commemoration can also promote reconciliation and shared narratives that transcend ableist divisions, building more cohesive post-conflict societies. Inclusion sends a message that post-conflict societies are committed to justice and equity, reducing the risk of future exclusion or grievance-based conflict.

A global example of this was done through photographer Giles Duley and the Geneva Academy. The partnership launched a **photo exhibition** to tell the stories of persons with disabilities during and following armed conflicts, including those in Gaza, Iraq, Uganda and Syria.⁶²



61 Legado Comisión de la Verdad. (2023). Log book of a journey towards peace: Systematization of the Truth Commission's working methods. https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/sites/default/files/2023-05/Bitacora_Travesia_Hacia_Paz_Ingles.pdf

62 Geneva Academy. Photo Exhibition: Disability and Armed Conflict. <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/event/all-events/detail/148-photo-exhibition-disability-and-armed-conflict#:~:text=This%20photo%20exhibition%20by%20Giles,or%20reconciliation%20processes%20following%20conflicts>

Post-Conflict Response and Healing: Somalia Case Study Lens

The STRONG project assessment found that Somalia's post-conflict recovery efforts have largely overlooked the unique needs and potential contributions of persons with disabilities, despite their growing visibility in civil society. Rehabilitation services, psychosocial support, and livelihood programs for conflict-affected populations rarely include tailored provisions for persons with disabilities, leaving many without essential support to rebuild their lives. Individuals who have acquired disabilities due to landmines, armed violence, or displacement trauma typically lack access to mental health services or structured follow-up, which severely hampers their reintegration. Although the Somali Red Crescent Society operates some rehabilitation centers, these services are concentrated in a few urban areas and remain inaccessible to many due to distance, cost, or lack of assistive technologies. Post-conflict rebuilding has also failed to incorporate universal design standards in schools, clinics, and administrative buildings, further entrenching exclusion.⁶³

Although persons with disabilities are occasionally invited to participate in district-level peace dialogues or NGO-led reconciliation events, **their involvement is often tokenistic and driven more by donor requirements than by a genuine commitment to inclusion.** These forums rarely provide persons with disabilities with opportunities to shape priorities or decisions in post-conflict recovery.

However, there are emerging examples of promising local practices. In some districts, post-conflict initiatives have **piloted inclusive livelihood and reintegration projects.** Encouraging examples of good practice were also observed in districts like Hobio and Puntland, where persons with disabilities have been included in **local dialogues, advocacy campaigns, and even Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs for ex-combatants with disabilities.** Promising collaborative partnerships are also emerging. OPDs such as the Somali Disability Empowerment Network (SODEN) and the Disability Aid Foundation (DAF) have begun to engage with government entities and international partners to push for inclusive development agendas. Through partnerships with agencies like the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union, and the Abilis Foundation, OPDs have gained opportunities to co-design programs, contribute to national planning, and advocate for disability rights in peacebuilding and governance forums. International donors increasingly require disability-inclusive frameworks in their funding conditions, empowering OPDs to demand more equitable participation. However, most of these partnerships remain project-based and dependent on external funding, highlighting the need for long-term institutional support and domestic budget allocations. The findings underscore that sustainable post-conflict recovery for persons with disabilities requires not only inclusive service delivery but also robust, cross-sectoral partnerships that elevate their voices and embed disability inclusion into national resilience and development strategies.⁶⁴

63 Finn Church Aid (FCA). (2025). *An assessment on disability inclusion in the peace processes in target federal member states in Somalia, and development of disability inclusion toolkit under the project Strengthening Democratic and Inclusive Local Governance in Somalia (STRONG)*. Mogadishu: FCA Somalia Country Office.

64 Ibid.

Key Partnership Actions to Ensure the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Post-Conflict Settings

Individual Level: Promoting Inclusive Recovery and Rehabilitation

1. Ensure inclusive livelihood and education programs

Peacebuilding organizations should co-design economic reintegration programs with OPDs to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities, especially those newly disabled due to conflict. Both partners should prioritize equitable access to vocational training, microfinance, land rights, and inclusive education, especially for women and young women with disabilities. Both partners should also integrate intersectional approaches to address the compounded exclusion experienced by persons with disabilities.

2. Expand access to inclusive healthcare and psychosocial support

Peacebuilding organizations should partner with OPDs to develop mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) systems that are trauma-informed, gender-sensitive, and disability-inclusive. Partners should together train healthcare workers on inclusive practices and support the provision of assistive technologies. Both partners should also ensure continuity of care and outreach to rural and conflict-affected populations.

3. Invest in community-based rehabilitation services

Peacebuilding organizations should partner with OPDs to scale up rehabilitation services for landmine survivors, ex-combatants, and other conflict-affected persons with disabilities. Both partners should develop mobile and decentralized rehabilitation units, especially in remote areas.

4. Facilitate peer-to-peer networks for survivors with disabilities

Peacebuilding organizations should co-design economic reintegration programs with OPDs to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities, especially those with a disability, impairment or condition due to conflict. Both partners should prioritize equitable access to vocational training, microfinance, land rights, and inclusive education, especially for women and young women with disabilities. Both partners should also integrate intersectional approaches to address the compounded exclusion experienced by persons with disabilities.



Caroline Atanga speaking on panel 'Breaking the Barriers to Ensure the Active Leadership and Participation of Individuals with Disabilities at the National Dialogues Conference in Helsinki, Finland. 2022.
Photo: Maria Santto.

Institutional Level: Advancing Justice, Governance, and System Reform

1. Guarantee access to justice for persons with disabilities

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should support legal aid programs and disability-accessible reporting mechanisms to ensure persons with disabilities can seek redress for conflict-related harm. Both partners should also train justice sector actors on disability rights and ensure accessibility in all legal processes.

2. Promote inclusive institutional and policy reform

Peacebuilding organizations should partner with OPDs to co-develop national disability-inclusive strategies in education, justice, governance, healthcare, and social protection, to name a few. Both partners should embed persons with disabilities' perspectives in post-conflict legislative reform processes to dismantle systemic discrimination and align post-conflict governance reforms with SDG 16 and the UN CRPD.

3. Ensure inclusive reparations programs

Peacebuilding organizations should co-design reparation frameworks with OPDs that include financial, medical, psychosocial, and educational support. Both partners should advocate for formal recognition of disability-related harms in transitional justice mechanisms and national reparations policies.

4. Support long-term, flexible funding and leadership of OPDs

The peacebuilding sector, including donors, should shift from short-term project-based partnerships to sustained, multi-year financing models that build OPDs' core capacities. The peacebuilding sector should adopt partnership principles from the Global Disability Summit, including shared governance, transparency, and long-term co-leadership.

Socio-Cultural Level: Shaping Norms, Narratives, and Collective Healing

1. Facilitate inclusive truth-telling and transitional justice

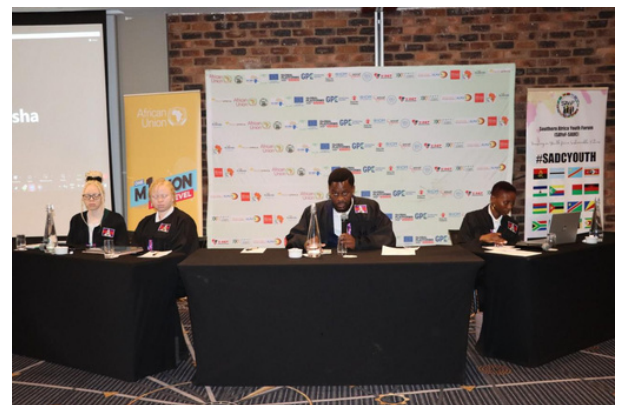
Peacebuilding organizations, in partnership with OPDs, should ensure that national dialogues, truth commissions, and transitional justice processes include the voices and testimonies of persons with disabilities. Both partners should advocate for allocated seats for persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in transitional justice bodies.

2. Conduct community perception surveys and dialogue forums

Peacebuilding organizations should collaborate with OPDs to design and implement surveys assessing community biases and experiences of persons with disabilities during conflict. Both partners should use the findings to inform community-based education and stigma-reduction campaigns.

3. Promote inclusive community memorialization

Peacebuilding organizations and OPDs should support persons with disabilities-led initiatives in memorialization and public commemoration to foster dignity, recognition, and reconciliation. Both partners should ensure accessibility in memorial sites, ceremonies, and storytelling platforms.



Disability Cluster of the 3rd Southern Africa Development Community Youth Parliament in Johannesburg. 2025. Photo: Southern Africa Development Community.

Conclusion

Mainstreaming the inclusion of persons with disabilities across peacebuilding systems is not a technical adjustment, it is a structural, political, and moral imperative. This global toolkit has laid out the pathways, principles, and practices necessary to move beyond tokenism and toward transformative inclusion. Grounded in the leadership of OPDs, informed by intersectional analysis, and aligned with global frameworks such as the CRPD and UNSCR 2475, this resource offers practical steps to embed disability inclusion across all stages of the conflict cycle.

By organizing actions across the individual, institutional, and socio-cultural levels, the toolkit highlights how peacebuilding must be reimagined from the ground up, through inclusive early warning systems, equitable access to justice, accessible infrastructure, participatory governance, and trauma-informed healing. The case study from Somalia reinforces that inclusion is not aspirational; it is achievable, necessary, and already in motion in many places.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in peacebuilding is a collective responsibility. It requires peace and security actors, from governments to civil society, religious and traditional leaders, and donors to recognize the agency, knowledge, and rights of persons with disabilities not as an afterthought, but as foundational to just and lasting peace.

This toolkit is not an end; it is a beginning. A guide for peacebuilding practitioners, policymakers, OPDs and persons with disabilities, to shift systems, uplift voices, and ensure that the architecture of peace is not only inclusive but co-designed by all. Let us move beyond the margins together.



Young people with disabilities in Ukraine exploring and learning to strengthen psychological wellbeing amidst the ongoing conflict. 2024.
Photo: Abilis Foundation.

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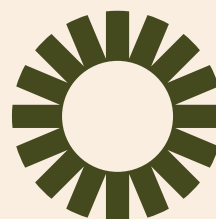
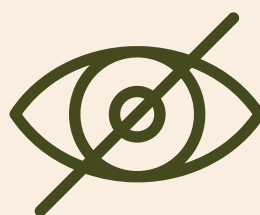
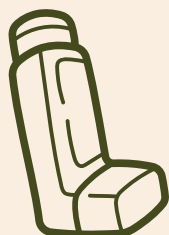
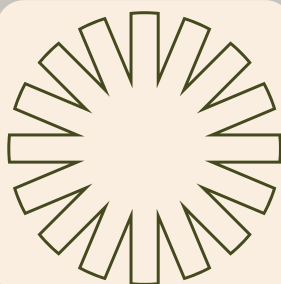
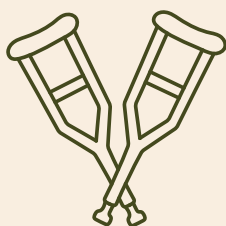
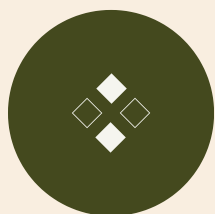
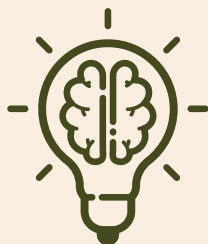
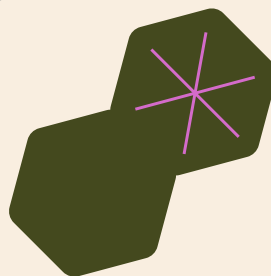
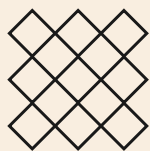
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