

Submission for the fourth cycle of the UPR of Switzerland

Disability Inclusion in Swiss International Cooperation

July 2022

Submission by CBM Switzerland

CBM (Christian Blind Mission) Switzerland is an international development organization and a member of the CBM Global Federation. We work alongside people with disabilities living in the world's poorest places to fight poverty and exclusion, to transform lives and build inclusive communities. We also advocate for the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Swiss international cooperation. CBM is recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a specialist organization and has consultative status with ECOSOC. CBM Switzerland carries the Zewo seal of approval and is a partner organization of Swiss Solidarity.

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1. Overview

During the last UPR Review cycle in 2017, Switzerland supported recommendation 147.27 made by the Government of India stating that Switzerland should:

"Take measures to explore means to ensure the full implementation of its international human rights obligations by all constituent units of the Swiss Confederation"

The full implementation of human rights obligations also applies to the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, and therefore also to Swiss international cooperation.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in particular, recognizes the responsibility of countries that have ratified the Convention to include persons with disabilities in their international development efforts and humanitarian action. Article 32 of the CRPD specifically focuses on international cooperation. Additionally, Article 11 of the CRPD specifies countries' obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.

Both Articles direct attention to the concerns and contributions of persons with disabilities within a country's international cooperation efforts, demanding that nation states undertake 'appropriate and effective measures between and among States and, as appropriate, in partnership with relevant international and regional organisations and civil society; in particular with organisations of persons with a disability'¹.

While some steps have been taken, significant progress still needs to be made for Switzerland to achieve a fully inclusive development cooperation in line with the CRPD.

A recently published Factsheet on the disability inclusiveness of Swiss development and humanitarian aid², raises some key concerns on disability inclusion in Switzerland's international cooperation. It found that:

- there is no consistent approach to disability inclusion across Switzerland's work internationally;
- there are isolated projects on disability inclusion, but not a comprehensive approach to ensure all international programmes are disability inclusive;
- there is no requirement for disability disaggregated data.

¹ United Nations. December 2006. [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 32](#).

² Polly Meeks. September 2021. [Factsheet on CRPD implementation in SWITZERLAND, with a focus on disability inclusiveness of development and humanitarian aid](#).

According to the OECD DAC disability marker, which Switzerland has started applying to project data since 2018, most Swiss projects do not have any objectives on disability inclusion yet. In both 2019 and 2020, only 3% of projects had at least one objective on disability inclusion³.

Switzerland was reviewed for the first time under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2022. The Committee on the CRPD made several recommendations⁴ to the Government of Switzerland in relation to disability inclusion in its international cooperation.

Furthermore, during the recent Global Disability Summit held in February 2022⁵, Switzerland committed to

1. Developing an action plan 2022-2024 for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Switzerland's international cooperation.
2. Successfully implementing the 2022-2024 Action Plan.
3. Increasing consultation and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national policies and systems and in international cooperation.

So far, no concrete progress has been noted on the achievement of these commitments.

³ CBM Switzerland. June 2022. [FACTSHEET: OECD DAC Disability Policy Marker and its application in Switzerland's ODA reporting](#)

⁴ Swiss Disability and Development Consortium. April 2022. [CRPD Review of Switzerland: Outcomes on International Cooperation.](#)

⁵ Global Disability Summit 2022. [Commitments by Swiss Development Cooperation.](#)

2. Analysis

2.1. On an overarching set of disability inclusion guidelines

Switzerland has certainly taken some steps in the right direction when it comes to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and international cooperation. However, Switzerland's efforts on ensuring that its international cooperation is inclusive need to be framed by an overarching set of guidelines. There are currently no disability inclusion guidelines, and no adequate financial and human resources that would allow for a comprehensive approach.

In her 2020 report, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stressed that donors who solely focus on "developing guidance and building internal capacity around disability inclusion in general" are not doing enough. Such approaches are "insufficient to achieve systematic change, since a strategic framework is needed to provide direction and focus on disability inclusion"⁶.

The one and only focal person on disability in the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) sits within the department on institutional partnerships whose primary task is the promotion of partnerships and SDC's institutional dialogue with Swiss organizations. Given the cross-cutting nature of disability, the focal person, and an associated team on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in international cooperation, should sit centrally within the SDC Secretariat - similar to other thematic focal points - to be able to work with and towards all departments, to ensure a transversal approach.

The lack of such a cross-cutting approach becomes evident when new strategies are being published, not considering the rights of persons with disabilities, such as, for example, Switzerland's recently published Digital Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–2024⁷, which does not touch upon accessibility issues. New technologies offer great opportunities for inclusion and participation, especially for persons with disabilities, but also risks and barriers if equal access to these is not guaranteed.

Furthermore, Switzerland's international cooperation strategy 2021-2024⁸ does not effectively and holistically integrate the concept of 'inclusion' and the rights of persons with disabilities as a cross-cutting theme throughout and in line with the CRPD. However, this type of approach is essential to ensure that no one is left behind.

2.2. On the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations

In general, there is little evidence of meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in Swiss international cooperation. Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities should take

⁶ United Nations General Assembly A/75/186. July 2020. [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar.](#)

⁷ Swiss Federal Council. November 2020. [Digital Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–2024](#) (German only).

⁸ Swiss Confederation. 2021. [Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024.](#)

place across all departments and all agencies of the Swiss Government, which at the federal level also includes the SDC and therefore also for external affairs.

SDC, however, does not yet consult in a meaningful way with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, nor ensure their full and active participation, neither for the development of strategies and policies nor in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects. This is particularly concerning since the CRPD Committee adopted in 2018 General Comment No. 7 on the participation of persons with disabilities.

2.3. On data collection and disaggregation

The SDC guidance on 'Leave No One Behind'⁹ highlights the importance of collecting disaggregated data, however, it does not make any clear recommendations or requirements on disability data. It states that context determines the criteria for disaggregation.

The SDC Guidance on results indicators linked to the new Swiss International Cooperation Strategy does not make it mandatory to disaggregate all data by disability. Disaggregation is required for gender and at least one vulnerable/left behind population group. The choice of the latter depends on the context.

All programmes and projects in international cooperation, in all contexts, must collect data on disability and disaggregate along disability in order to track their quality and impact, and to make sure persons with disabilities in general and specific groups of persons with disabilities are not left behind in line with Article 31 of the CRPD and SDG 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.4. On humanitarian action and disability inclusion

Switzerland has signed the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, but to date no plan for implementation has been presented. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent Switzerland's Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes are inclusive of and accessible for persons with disabilities.

The implementation plan of the Charter must have clear and measurable objectives and indicators, including for DRR, and be adequately resourced with personnel and budget. This implementation plan should be guided by the IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action¹⁰ and Article 11 of the CRPD.

⁹ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. 2018. [SDC Guidance on Leave No One Behind](#).

¹⁰ IASC Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. July 2019. [Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#).

3. Recommendations for the fourth cycle of the UPR of Switzerland

In follow-up to UPR recommendations 147.27, we recommend that Switzerland:

- 1. Develop guidelines for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and mainstream their rights across all other strategies in international cooperation.

Note: This recommendation is reinforced by the [CRPD Committee's Concluding Observation 62a](#) for Switzerland

- 2. Adopt measures to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, throughout all strategy, policy, and programme cycle processes regarding Switzerland's international cooperation

Note: This recommendation is reinforced by the [CRPD Committee's Concluding Observation 10a and 62b](#) for Switzerland

- 3. Collect and disaggregate data on disability in all of Switzerland's humanitarian and development programmes

Note: This recommendation is reinforced by the [CRPD Committee's Concluding Observation 60c](#) for Switzerland

- 4. Adopt an action plan to implement the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

Note: This recommendation is reinforced by the [CRPD Committee's Concluding Observation 24b](#) for Switzerland