

**Disability Constituency 9th APFSD Statement, 2022**

COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated and exposed the long standing disparity, persons with disabilities face. Under normal circumstances, they are less likely to access basic health care, quality education, livelihood, social and empowerment opportunities in order to participate equally in their communities. This leads to social inequality, unemployment, living in poverty and overpopulated areas, increasing their exposure to outbreaks and health risks, experiencing higher rates of violence, and abuse, to being among the most marginalized in any humanitarian crisis.

To ensure that persons with disabilities are protected, participate equally, contribute meaningfully, respond effectively and are not left behind, it is ethically imperative that necessary steps are taken by everyone. We urge Governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, communities and individuals at all levels to work in tandem with organizations of persons with disabilities to ensure persons with disabilities, in particular, women, children and young persons with disabilities are not an afterthought but remain central for the full implementation of the 2030 agenda.

In-depth understanding, political will, genuine commitment, cooperation, coordinated action, disability disaggregated data, adequate resourcing and realization of the pre-conditions to inclusion of persons with disabilities, is key to **Building Back Better from COVID-19, While Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific** . The precondition to inclusion can be referred to as the prerequisite for disability inclusion, and if not realized, will drastically undermine the inclusion of all persons with disabilities across all stages of development, further widening the gap and leaving them behind.

There are six different themes which are pre-conditions for inclusion. These are accessibility, assistive device, social protection, support services, community based inclusive development (CBID) and non-discrimination. These measures need to be in place first, before inclusion for persons with disabilities can be achieved. Integrating the pre-conditions into the response and building back better mechanism will promote and ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities, **Leaving No One Behind**.

Addressing the barriers faced by persons with disabilities, presents a unique opportunity to leverage partnerships right across from global to community level, and collectively design, implement disability-inclusive development in consultation with persons with disabilities towards advancing 2030 Agenda. It calls for putting persons with disabilities at the core and valuing them as fundamental contributors of planning, implementation, response and monitoring, thus prohibiting any form of discrimination, placing particular emphasis on intersectionality.

Below are key recommendations for building back better:

* Ensure preconditions for meaningful consultation with and active participation of all persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of development.
* Ensure mainstreaming disability in development, with twin track approach and targeted actions including prioritization of the collection and use of disability disaggregated data.
* Ensure accessible infrastructure, services, programs, information, communication and technology. Accessibility is fundamental to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.
* Establish accountability and monitoring mechanisms to ensure disability inclusion.
* Ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities in climate change, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, economic recovery, employment and educational opportunities.

Consequently, this will enable all stakeholders to better serve everyone and strengthen the means of implementation and partnerships for the goals to build back better.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities is a vital part of achieving the pledge to leave no one behind, and a critical test of accountability to the global commitments of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy along with our very own, Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Incheon Strategy.