



# INCLUSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC MYANMAR

Strategies for Constitutional and Democratic Reform

*Nathalie Ebead and The Myanmar Coordination Initiative of Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (MCERP)*

---

## SUMMARY

This Brief explores inclusion strategies for persons with disabilities (PWD) in post-coup Myanmar in the light of the ongoing transitional constitutional and democratic reform process. It highlights the challenges faced by PWD before and since the 2021 coup, including those of Myanmar's interim government institutions in supporting PWD. It analyses how inclusive Myanmar's interim government institutions are for PWD, and what the Federal Democracy Charter (FDC) states about including PWD in consideration of the international legal framework for PWD. This Brief is the result of 2023 interviews and consultations with PWD, civil society working with PWD and interim government institutions.

---

**This Brief explores inclusion strategies for persons with disabilities (PWD) in post-coup Myanmar in the light of the ongoing transitional constitutional and democratic reform process.**

---

## 1. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR INCLUSION AND EFFECTIVE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN POST-COUP MYANMAR?

According to a 2019 survey, 12.8 per cent of Myanmar's 54.38 million population (an estimated 5.9 million people) live with disabilities, of whom 12.4 per cent (896,242 people) are in the Yangon region. Before the coup, 78 per cent of populations with disabilities received no assistance from either the government or civil society organizations (CSOs). The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup have increased the number of people living with disabilities and exacerbated their difficult situation, with 2.3 million PWD in need (UNFPA 2022; UN OCHA 2023). Disability prevalence varies across states and regions in Myanmar, with relatively high rates reported in Chin (21 per cent), Rakhine, Ayeyarwady and Magway (17 per cent each) and Mon (15 per cent) while the lowest were observed in Shan and Kachin (9 per cent each) (BNI 2022b; UN OCHA 2023).

---

**In a survey conducted for International IDEA in 2022, PWD were identified as the most marginalized segment of the population.**

Among the six types of disabilities assessed by the 2019 survey, the most common type was difficulty in seeing (6.3 per cent), followed by difficulty in walking or in climbing steps (5.4 per cent), in remembering or concentrating (4.4 per cent), in hearing (2.4 per cent), in carrying out self-care (1.9 per cent) and, lastly, in communicating (1.6 per cent). The rate was higher among women (13.9 per cent) than men (11.6 per cent) (BNI 2022b). In a survey conducted for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in 2022, PWD were identified as the most marginalized segment of the population, with even less access to political voice and decision making than ethnic or religious minorities. Obviously, forms of exclusion and discrimination are cumulative, and therefore PWD among such population groups face multiple intersectional disadvantages.

Disability rights, as part of Myanmar's larger human rights movement, gained significant momentum following the catastrophic Cyclone Nargis in 2008 (Cheesman, Skidmore and Wilson 2010). Although services for individuals with disabilities have been available since the 19th century, a more concerted focus on their rights emerged with the increased presence of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups in the post-cyclone period (Saha 2011; Ware 2014). A landmark event was the comprehensive disability survey conducted in 2009 by The Leprosy Mission International in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare. This survey shed light on the systemic disadvantages faced by people with disabilities in Myanmar, catalysing a shift in national discourse and policy.

Myanmar's engagement with global disability rights norms, particularly the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in December 2011, marked a turning point.<sup>1</sup> This was followed by the enactment of the National Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015, with implementing by-laws introduced in 2017. A National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established to effectively improve the situation of PWD. Members of the committee also included representatives from organizations representing PWD, CSOs and volunteers. These legislative steps and established bodies were crucial in integrating disability rights into the broader national agenda. The disability issue began to be woven into various sectors, as evidenced by the Social Security Law (2012), part of the labour law reform, and the national social protection strategy (Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2014). Furthermore, the Myanmar Policy for Early Childhood Care and Development (2014) and other developments as part of the larger economic and social reforms (2012–2015) began to reflect this inclusivity. The inclusion of disability identification in the 2014 national census and the development of the Universal Service Strategy for Myanmar (2018–2022), which led to the discussion of an 'accessible-for-all' strategy as part of the information, technology and communication national strategy development conversations, were other notable milestones.

---

<sup>1</sup> Myanmar has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCRPD, which would allow PWD whose rights have been violated to bring complaints to the Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Despite these advancements, the narrative surrounding the rights of PWD faced significant disruption following the 2021 military coup. The military managed to capture major state structures by force but has not been able to establish legitimate or effective government in three years, with legitimate representative bodies and a widespread resistance movement opposing the imposition of military rule. By the end of 2023, less than half of the territory of Myanmar was under some form of control by the military. Myanmar is now confronting severe political, social, security and financial crises. At the time of reporting, 18.6 million people, including 6 million children, are now in humanitarian need in Myanmar, 1 million more than in 2023 (UN OCHA 2023). This situation significantly impedes PWD from accessing essential services, including those provided by international relief and humanitarian organizations, as well as governance institutions affiliated with the junta and pro-democratic groups.

Reports and interviews conducted indicate that individuals with disabilities are among the most adversely affected since the 2021 coup, experiencing a loss of rights and education, compromised health and diminished livelihoods (BNI 2022a; International IDEA–MCERP interviews<sup>2</sup> 2023; OCHA 2023). Furthermore, since the coup, the availability and accessibility of data concerning the needs of PWD have been significantly diminished, and advocacy for PWD has been severely reduced for fear of reprisal (UN OCHA 2023). In post-coup Myanmar, there are more PWD than before, owing to the massive increase in conflict, use of landmines and food scarcity, and increasingly limited access to healthcare (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

Key challenges for PWD include a lack of access to information, education and basic services due to displacement, and increased isolation due to a lack of freedom of movement. Accessible information, education and services that consider the specific needs of PWD are particularly lacking, such as sign language or captioning services for those with hearing impairments, and tailor-made services such as voice recordings for those with visual and cognitive impairments (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

Civic education is particularly lacking for PWD, who have had no or very limited access and exposure to information about human rights, democracy, elections and constitutional design processes. Consequently, PWD have very limited knowledge of or information about the post-coup interim government institutions and their work; they are not able to effectively participate in political life or provide their perspectives to the ongoing transitional constitutional design process outlined in the FDC (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

The PWD have little access to information related to the National Unity Government (NUG), particularly when it comes to inclusion on events and

---

**Individuals with disabilities are among the most adversely affected since the 2021 coup, experiencing a loss of rights and education, compromised health and diminished livelihoods.**

<sup>2</sup> The methodology for this paper consists of seven semi-structured interviews and one workshop with PWD and Myanmar interim government institution representatives which were carried out online. Due to the sensitive nature of many of the interviewees' comments, names and other identifying information have been removed.

**PWD have little access to information related to the National Unity Government (NUG), particularly when it comes to inclusion on events and activities and information on key legislation or policy documents such as the FDC.**

activities and information on key legislation or policy documents such as the FDC. On activities, CSOs working with PWD reported that they heard through informal channels that certain CSOs were invited to NUG events, such as the International Day of People with Disabilities (3 December), but that a lack of communication meant that the wider CSO network was not informed. Similarly, some CSOs heard that the NUG was 'drafting a new NGO law and disability organisations were invited, but we didn't know which organisations went' (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023). In terms of the NUG's wider strategy on PWD, there is limited information among PWD and CSOs working with PWD on contact points for PWD: 'I have heard they have set up a channel for PWD. I have also heard they work with PWDs who are in safe locations, and with PWD internationally to have consultations and seek their advice' (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

Before and since the coup, women with disabilities have been more likely to experience gender-based violence in their homes, neighbourhoods, and communities, and have often been prevented from accessing health services including sexual and reproductive health information and services (UNFPA 2022). Most women and girls with disabilities do not have the opportunity to attend school. Furthermore, when social stigmatization is compounded by disability it limits access to justice through institutional mechanisms for many women with disabilities (Khum 2019). Myanmar has historically had severe discrimination against PWD, with parents often feeling shame regarding children with disabilities, communities looking down on PWD (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023), and women and girls with disabilities facing multiple and intersectional discrimination (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2019a).

---

## **2. WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL AND PRE-COUP NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES HAVE FOR MYANMAR'S TRANSITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS?**

The international legal framework relevant to the rights of PWD includes the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states in article 21 that 'everyone has the right to take part in the government of his [or her] country, directly or through freely chosen representatives' and that 'everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his [or her] country'. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) repeats these rights, although Myanmar has not yet ratified the ICCPR. In 2022, the NUG expressed a commitment to accede to the ICCPR as soon as circumstances allow. The key human rights treaty for PWD is the 2006 UNCRPD, ratified by Myanmar in 2011, which Myanmar's interim government institutions should adhere to and implement.

Under the UNCRPD and Myanmar's 2015 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights as everyone else

politically and economically, as well as in education, public affairs and various other aspects of life.

Article 5 of the UNCRPD provides that state parties are to prohibit all discrimination based on disability and promote equality, particularly for women and girls (article 6). Article 8 obliges states to raise awareness throughout society regarding PWD and to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices. Article 9 commits state parties to provide access for PWD, on an equal basis, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and other facilities and public services in urban and in rural areas.

Article 11 provides that state parties must protect PWD in situations of risk such as conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Article 16 obliges states to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect PWD from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender-based aspects.

Article 24 provides that states are to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels for PWD and lifelong learning directed to the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity, including enabling PWD to participate effectively in a free society.

Article 25 provides that PWD should have access to the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination based on disability.

Article 29 provides that states actively promote 'an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs', including in 'the activities and administration of political parties', and ensures the right of PWD to 'stand for elections, to effectively hold office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, facilitating the use of assistive and new technologies where appropriate'.

The UNCRPD Optional Protocol, which Myanmar has not ratified, gives the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities competence to examine individual complaints of alleged violations of the Convention by states parties to the protocol. The Optional Protocol establishes two procedures aimed at strengthening the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. The first is an individual communications procedure allowing individuals to bring petitions to the Committee claiming breaches of their rights; the second is an inquiry procedure giving the Committee authority to undertake inquiries of grave or systematic violations of the Convention. The first procedure would make the UNCRPD directly applicable in Myanmar's national law if Myanmar acceded to the protocol.

---

**Under the UNCRPD and Myanmar's 2015 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, people with disabilities are entitled to the same rights as everyone else politically and economically.**

**Myanmar's courts also have an important role to play to ensure that the rights of PWD are guaranteed by Myanmar's government and that state structures implement the obligations of the UNCRPD.**

Myanmar's courts also have an important role to play to ensure that the rights of PWD are guaranteed by Myanmar's government and that state structures implement the obligations of the UNCRPD. In accordance with the International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities, Myanmar's government and state structures need to recognize the full capacity and rights of PWD to participate in court proceedings and eliminate barriers to their doing so. This includes amending legislation, practices and court orders that prevent PWD from initiating legal claims or filing for appeal, or that subject them to detention in a mental health or other facility. Alternative justice mechanisms can be supported and clear communication between PWD and the courts facilitated through the use of intermediaries (UN Human Rights Special Procedures 2020).

Another mechanism to monitor UNCRPD implementation is reports to the UN human rights treaty bodies, which focus on the actions taken and implementation gaps in Myanmar. Myanmar last reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015 and 2019, with concluding observations made and a list of issues outlined by the Committee in 2019. Since then, the Committee has postponed the list of issues prior to reporting for Myanmar to 2028 (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017, 2019b). The situation of PWD is also referenced in Myanmar's Universal Periodic Review reports, the latest of which was submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in November 2020 and discussed in 2021 (UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 2020). Recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council included to continue to strengthen efforts for inclusive education and healthcare, including for children with disabilities living in remote areas; to strengthen legislative frameworks providing protection from discrimination and violence, including all forms of sexual violence; and to effectively include PWD in addressing environmental challenges. It was also recommended to include the effective and meaningful participation and consultation of PWD in the implementation and monitoring of the UNCRPD (UN General Assembly Human Rights Council 2021).

Despite these legal guarantees, many PWD remain deprived of their rights under the law. In Myanmar, no laws prohibit discrimination and violence against women and girls with disabilities. The absence of such laws is felt, specifically, in areas such as employment, access to education, healthcare and additional state services, including access to referral services. For this reason, it is crucial for the issue of sexual violence against women with disabilities to be recognized in new legislation against violence against women (Khum 2019).

In addition to legislative reform, coordinated and consistent implementation of the obligations under the international legal framework and pre-coup legislation is of key importance:

1. *Limited cross-sector integration.* Although disability inclusion has been a topic of discussion at various levels—from national policymaking to grassroots development—its integration into policymaking discussions often remains superficial. Rather than being woven into the fabric of



all development agendas, disability issues are frequently addressed in isolation and relegated to special sessions or specific segments of broader conversations. This approach risks treating disability inclusion as a peripheral concern rather than a central priority.

2. *Compartmentalization within agendas.* The tendency to compartmentalize disability inclusion within each agenda, rather than promoting it as a cross-cutting theme, indicates a fragmented approach. By not integrating disability considerations into all aspects of development—from public service development to infrastructure and economic policy—there is a missed opportunity to fully realize the principles of inclusivity and accessibility in all facets of society.
3. *Centralization.* The responsibility for disability inclusion before the coup largely remained within the ambit of the Social Welfare Ministry. This centralization suggests a limited view of disability as primarily a welfare issue rather than a multifaceted concern that intersects with various governance and societal development aspects. Such a perspective can lead to a narrow approach to addressing the needs and rights of PWD, overlooking the broader impacts on and contributions to areas such as employment, education, infrastructure and economic development.
4. *Lack of shared responsibility.* The lack of shared responsibility among different ministries and sectors for disability inclusion reflects a broader challenge in policy coordination and implementation. When disability inclusion is not seen and communicated as a collective responsibility, it risks being marginalized in the broader national development and reform agenda. The emergence of decentralized governance, giving federal states and local authorities much greater powers and responsibilities for service delivery, has yet to be reflected in Myanmar's disability policy. It can be expected that a much higher burden will be placed on subnational and local authorities in the future. However, national and international legal obligations must be honoured, and standardization, data collection and country-wide coordination will be essential for living up to the expectations contained in such legal frameworks.

Although Myanmar has made commendable progress in recognizing and discussing disability inclusion, integrating these principles into the full spectrum of constitutional reform and interim policymaking remains an area that needs significant improvement. Disability inclusion needs to be embedded as a core consideration across all sectors and all levels of government, with shared responsibility and coordinated efforts among various ministries and stakeholders. This approach would ensure more comprehensive and effective realization of disability rights and inclusivity in Myanmar (Soe 2019).

---

**When disability inclusion is not seen and communicated as a collective responsibility, it risks being marginalized in the broader national development and reform agenda.**

### 3. WHAT DO THE PRINCIPLES OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRACY CHARTER MEAN FOR THE EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE TRANSITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS?

The Federal Democracy Charter (FDC) aims to build a federal democratic union in which democracy is exercised, and equal rights and self-determination are guaranteed.

The FDC includes key principles and human rights that should apply equally to all people in Myanmar, regardless of race, gender, disability, or sexual orientation (article 27 part I). These include the principles of non-discrimination, gender equality and protection of minorities. The FDC's human rights catalogue includes the principle of non-discrimination outlined in article 47, which includes PWD and commits interim government institutions to protect PWD from discrimination and promote and respect their rights.

In article 16 (part I), the FDC states that independent commissions are to be established, including a Commission for Persons with Disabilities, as well as a Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission and a Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence.<sup>3</sup>

The FDC also recognizes the role of all key stakeholders in implementing its vision, including Myanmar's interim government institutions—the NUG, the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the actors within the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC)—outlining their pledge in chapter 5 of the FDC to initiate effective policies of universal education and health services for all people, including PWD.

The FDC only outlines PWD rights in article 47 (part I) and chapter 5 (part I), with scope for further expansion of the rights of PWD in future FDC amendments. The FDC's provisions have implications for the drafting of a transitional constitution that respects the rights of PWD, for the establishment of future inclusive institutions, and for legislative reform and policy measures sensitive to PWD's needs negotiated and enacted by Myanmar's interim government institutions in the transition period. The same applies to subnational constitutions, which the federal states are entitled to adopt, but which must be aligned with federal constitutional principles and relevant international obligations.

For the FDC principles that refer to PWD's rights to be implemented, the effective participation of PWD in the transitional constitutional reform process will be needed to ensure that their perspectives are captured in accordance with the principle 'Nothing about us without us'. This also means that PWD need to be meaningfully represented in interim government institutions and any future institutions established under a new transitional or permanent

**The effective participation of PWD in the transitional constitutional reform process will be needed to ensure that their perspectives are captured in accordance with the principle 'Nothing about us without us'.**

<sup>3</sup> The FDC uses the term 'differently abled', which given its negative connotations in Burmese and English should be reviewed to align with terminology used in the UNCRPD, which in English refers to 'persons with disabilities'.



constitution, with affirmative action measures—such as quotas—a possible mechanism to achieve this.

#### 4. HOW INCLUSIVE AND AWARE ARE MYANMAR'S POST-COUP INTERIM GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS OF THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES?

Myanmar's interim national unity institutions, which were formed after the 2021 coup and include the NUG, CRPH and the platform of actors within the NUCC, do not currently include adequate representation of PWD, particularly in leadership positions at the level of ministers or deputy ministers, as CRPH committee chairpersons or through a system of focal points.<sup>4</sup> While all interim government representatives are aware of PWD in their ranks, there is no systematic mapping of Myanmar's interim government institutions that shows whether and how many PWD are represented in the different entities.

To facilitate sectoral coordination to build a future federal democratic union, a total of nine Joint Coordination Committees (JCCs) composed of NUCC members and NUG representatives have been formed; however, none of them focus on PWD.

Within the NUG, the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MoHADM) is the primary ministry charged with coordinating work on PWD, including legislative and policy reforms. In February 2022, the MoHADM on behalf of the NUG issued a series of 'Commitments on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' after consultation with the Myanmar Coordination Initiative for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities (MCERP) (MoHADM 2022). These commitments include ensuring the inclusion and equal participation of PWD during the formation of the future federal democratic union and the establishment of interim administrations, leaving no PWD behind; ensuring the humanitarian protection of PWD including the provision of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation programmes; and geographically mapping and collecting data on PWD for planning purposes. The MoHADM is also considering putting forward a proposal to the NUCC for the creation of a JCC on PWD (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

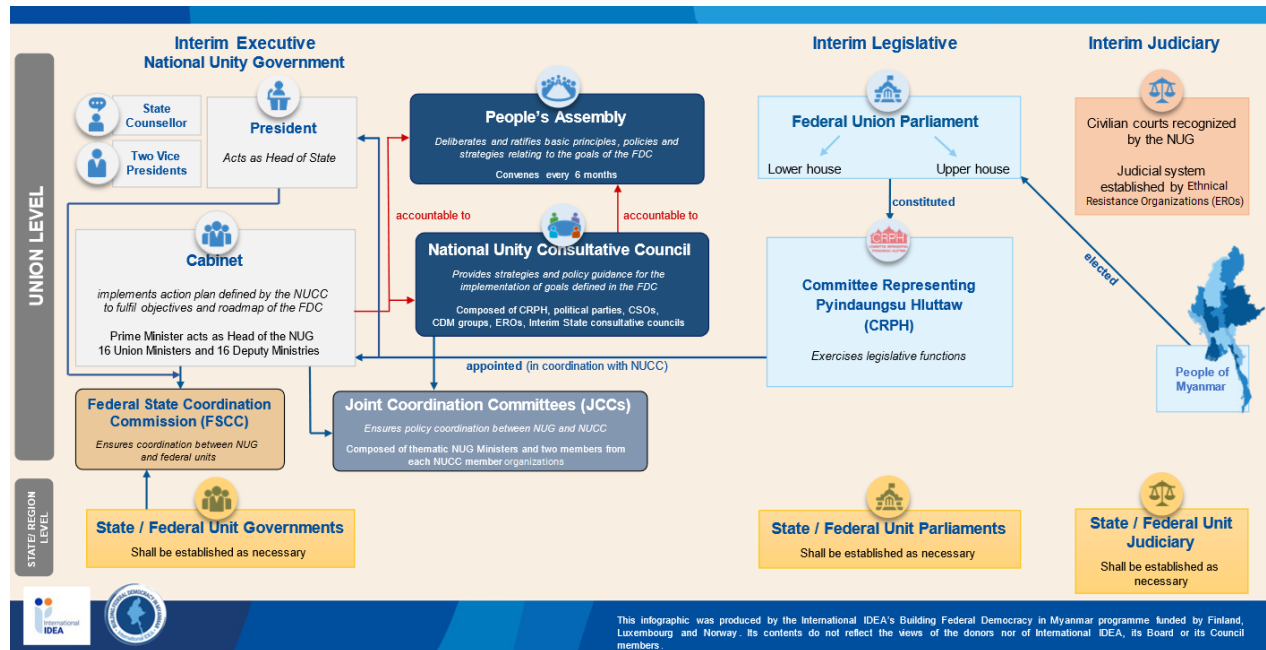
The NUG's Ministry of Health has formed a National Health Committee with multi-ethnic representation, which has formulated 10 directive principles related to health based on the FDC. Out of the 10 principles, 3 specifically address PWD, emphasizing the inclusion of their health and social care in policies. Online platforms such as a telehealth social media page have been established, allowing doctors with disabilities to contribute and providing easier access for PWD to health services (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023) (see Figure 1).

<sup>4</sup> Actors within the NUCC include members of the CRPH, political parties, general strike committees, ethnic resistance organizations and CSOs, and other elected parliamentarians, Civil Disobedience Movement actors, women and young people.

**Myanmar's interim national unity institutions, which were formed after the 2021 coup and include the NUG, CRPH and the platform of actors within the NUCC, do not currently include adequate representation of PWD, particularly in leadership positions.**

**In February 2022, the MoHADM on behalf of the NUG issued a series of 'Commitments on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.**

Figure 1. Myanmar's Interim National Unity Government



The NUG's Ministry of Education (MoE) has made efforts to provide interim education to PWD by establishing 'Myanmar Basic Education Home' on Facebook, offering practical tips to provide special education and raising public awareness through engaging cartoon characters. These characters emphasize the abilities of PWD, showcasing, for instance, how traits such as mood swings in autism can be transformed into strengths within a supportive environment. Tips for family members on assisting children with special needs are also provided. To further support home-based learning, the MoE has developed and launched a guidebook applicable to all children, their parents and communities. This guidebook includes instructions on providing special care for PWD (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023). However, these resources need to be made accessible for PWD as well (see Figure 2).

The Federal Education Policy, adopted by the NUCC in 2022, includes education for PWD (paragraph 8) and outlines the interim government's commitment to create accessible education opportunities for PWD based on their specific disabilities. It also outlines that the NUG should make efforts to enable PWD to be able to attend private schools. The policy also recognizes the potential of PWD to serve as teachers.

The NUG's Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs has focused on conducting public awareness campaigns and training to prevent discrimination against PWD. It has also collaborated with other ministries to provide rehabilitation services for PWD and support interim education efforts for PWD by providing accessible computers for the visually impaired. The Ministry of

Figure 2. Public awareness illustration for PWD



Source: Facebook page of Myanmar Basic Education Home, <<http://tinyurl.com/2s436s4v>>, accessed 6 February 2024.

Human Rights and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could take on a more active role in conducting awareness campaigns focused on the rights of PWD, and could monitor violations of PWD's human rights and report them to the UN system (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

Within the CRPH and among its Members of Parliament there is awareness that the parliament must play a key role in legislative reform that empowers PWD and prevents their discrimination, with the acknowledgement that the CRPH and the Myanmar Women's Parliamentary Network must take a more active role on the issue of PWD in relation to legislative reform and support public awareness raising. The CRPH Legal Affairs and Public Affairs Committees would have a key role in consulting with PWD and CSOs working on PWD to provide expertise to legislative proposals such as reforming the 2015 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law (International IDEA–MCERP interviews 2023).

There is at present no dedicated representation of organizations of PWD among the large civil society sector participating in the NUCC. Also, it is as yet too early to determine to what extent the emerging state-level structures (interim state councils) provide adequate representation of PWD and take on responsibilities in this regard. However, within the NUCC, different actors such

**Within the CRPH and among its Members of Parliament there is awareness that the parliament must play a key role in legislative reform that empowers PWD and prevents their discrimination.**

---

**There is at present no dedicated representation of organizations of PWD among the large civil society sector participating in the NUCC.**

as ethnic resistance organizations, CSOs and political parties have taken an active role in supporting PWD.

The Border Health and Development Centre, an ethnic service provider on the Thailand–Myanmar border, is working with the NUG’s Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs to provide medical rehabilitation for people disabled through conflict and to provide information on how to use assistive devices and mental health support. The resources being used were developed by MCERP.

The Karenni Nationalities Defence Force in Kayah state also has a collaboration with the MoHADM, facilitated by MCERP, to provide support for rehabilitation for injured resistance fighters. The Karenni State Consultative Committee and Interim Executive Committee, under the Karenni State Consultative Committee’s strategic guidance, have formed various committees (health, education, development, etc.) and have started having discussions about supporting PWD, together with the Karenni National People’s Party. These discussions include conducting assessments in internally displaced persons’ camps, but those assessments are likely not to be fully systematic or guided by best practice.

Currently, both the Karenni Army and the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force support PWD with mild injuries at their base camps, and in some cases severely wounded persons are brought over to the Thai side of the border. However, they do not have a systematic referral process, and resources or pathways for healed PWD affected by conflict are severely lacking. PWD are in serious need of rehabilitation support and medical aid, but also mental health support and livelihood opportunities.

Despite the efforts of national-level interim government institutions to support PWD since the coup, they also face a myriad of challenges including difficulty in collecting data on the situation or numbers of PWD owing to the security situation; a lack of human and financial resources to provide effective and accessible information, services or infrastructure; and a lack of communication and coordination among ministries, the NUCC and the CRPH, and between state and local authorities and the union level. Understanding of the implications of the international legal framework outlined in the UNCRPD and the principles of the FDC for Myanmar’s obligations towards PWD remains limited.

Awareness, knowledge and sensitivity within Myanmar’s interim government institutions about how to work with and for PWD is basic, and the provision of accessible information to PWD in the form of accessible written statements or key documents such as the FDC, or information on key media outlets such as Public Voice Television or on social media, are limited. This is even more the case when it comes to minority languages and marginalized communities, including the Rohingya.

Many more efforts are needed in the current interim period and in the future to effectively include PWD in political processes, to create an enabling environment for PWD and to connect policy documents to effective implementation on the ground.

---

## 5. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM

This section outlines strategies for inclusive and equal political participation of PWD that Myanmar's interim government institutions can consider in relation to the transitional constitution and the building of a future federal democratic union.

### 5.1. Representation and consultation

Myanmar's interim government institutions, including those at the state and local levels, need to ensure that the voices and perspectives of PWD are represented in the leadership of interim government institutions and are included in ongoing negotiations towards a transitional constitution and the establishment of interim and future democratic institutions. This will ensure that FDC principles and human rights outlined in a future transitional constitution also recognize the rights of PWD, and that the governance implications to create an enabling environment and increased political participation are understood by interim and future government institutions on all levels. It will also allow reform, a more effective implementation of existing PWD legislation and national policy frameworks, and increased adherence to Myanmar's international obligations under the UNCRPD.

There are a variety of mechanisms and tools that can be used to increase the representation of PWD, which need to be applied using a disability lens. These can include affirmative action measures such as legislative or voluntary quotas for PWD for future institutions. Quotas can increase access to political decision-making processes, empowering PWD to be leaders in their communities. There are different types of quotas, including legislated candidate quotas, reserved seats, voluntary party quotas or placement mandates, which can positively influence the ability of PWD to stand as candidates in elections or to be elected. Whether through the constitution, legislation or party agreements, quotas are ultimately determined by decision makers and need to be a best fit for Myanmar's context (Global Disability Rights Now 2017).

Other mechanisms can include the establishment of permanent or ad hoc PWD consultative bodies to the NUCC or CRPH or within ministries or state-level structures—made up of PWD, CSOs working with PWD and experts—when legislation or policies are being developed. They can also include the creation of PWD structures and focal points within interim government institutions, with the mandate to ensure that government staff and the work of interim

---

**Myanmar's interim government institutions, including those at the state and local levels, need to ensure that the voices and perspectives of PWD are represented in the leadership of interim government institutions.**

government institutions are sensitive to the needs and challenges of PWD. The plan to establish a JCC for PWD at the union level is a good first step.

For proper implementation, it is important for interim government institutions to map and define the scope of organizations of PWD and recognize the different types. In addition, interim government institutions should conduct a baseline assessment to understand whether and how many PWD are already represented within its structures, as well as those at the state and local levels, and at which levels and in which positions. This assessment can then form the basis for decision making on appointing and including PWD within interim government leadership and structures.

#### *Legislative and constitutional reform*

Constitutional and legislative reform processes should ensure that the rights of PWD are clearly specified and that PWD have the same rights as all other citizens. Such provisions can have an impact on how inclusive certain sectors, such as education, employment or health systems, are for PWD.

Within a constitution, in sections such as the preamble, bill of rights, and equality and non-discrimination clauses, it is important to include language that acknowledges the rights of PWD. Rights of PWD should be incorporated at all levels of government, whether local, state/regional or national.

It is also important to affirmatively guarantee inclusive education, health and reasonable accommodation at work. The principle of reasonable accommodation relates to measures that make employment opportunities equally accessible to PWD, such as making workplaces physically accessible, modifying test procedures and allowing employees to adjust work schedules, without imposing 'undue hardship' on employers (Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

Around the world, a growing number of constitutions include disability in their overall equality provisions (Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020). For example, the Maldives's 2008 Constitution states: 'Everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms included in this Chapter without discrimination of any kind, including ... mental or physical disability' (Constitution of the Maldives 2008: article 17; Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

Bolivia's Constitution says: 'The State shall promote and guarantee the continuing education of children and adolescents with disabilities ... under the same structure, principles and values of the educational system, and shall establish a special organization and development curriculum' (Constitution of Bolivia 2009: article 85; Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

Under the Brazilian Constitution, the government commits to implementing the right to education through 'special educational assistance for the handicapped, preferably within the regular school system' (Constitution of Brazil Third Edition 2010: article 208; Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

---

**Constitutional and legislative reform processes should ensure that the rights of PWD are clearly specified and that PWD have the same rights as all other citizens.**



Malawi's Constitution states: 'Every person shall be entitled to fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction or discrimination of any kind, in particular on basis of gender, disability or race' (Constitution of Malawi 1994, rev. 2017: article 31, cf. article 13(g); Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

Fiji's Constitution states: 'A person with any disability has the right to reasonable adaptation of buildings, infrastructure, vehicles, working arrangements, rules, practices or procedures, to enable their full participation in society and the effective realisation of their rights' (Constitution of Fiji 2013: article 42(2); Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

Spain's Constitution states: 'The public authorities shall carry out a policy of preventive care, treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the physically, sensorially and mentally handicapped by giving them the specialized care they require' (Constitution of Spain 1978, rev. 2011: article 49; Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

The intersection of rights for other marginalized groups and rights for PWD should also be considered so that a constitution reflects the rights of women and girls with disabilities; Indigenous people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people with disabilities; or people with disabilities from ethnic or religious minorities (Global Disability Rights Now 2018).

In terms of legislative reform, legislation to replace Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law should consider the rights of PWD, and the 2015 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law should be amended to prohibit discrimination and violence against women and girls with disabilities.

## 5.2. Coordination and whole-of-government approach

Interim government institutions should take a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of PWD. Such an approach provides a useful coordination framework for all activities across government ministries, CRPH parliamentary committees, JCCs and the platform of actors within the NUCC, as well as close and effective coordination with state- and local-level structures. This will enable Myanmar to implement its obligations under the UNCRPD.

Many countries define and implement a whole-of-government approach through a national disability inclusion strategy, which can also designate a specific entity—such as a ministry, department or committee—as a coordinating body across government, while respecting the mandates of designated sector ministries as well as mechanisms for consultation with PWD or CSOs working with PWD. The strategy can include an action plan and financing instruments across all sectors as well as mid-term reviews and evaluations, which allow for adjustments and monitoring of implementation. The national strategy builds on and adheres to national legislation and constitutional provisions. Examples of countries that have national disability

---

**Interim government institutions should take a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of PWD.**

inclusion strategies are Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, which includes countries with federal constitutions or significant levels of devolution.

Myanmar's 2018–2022 Universal Service Strategy, which was developed before the coup to ensure that all citizens, including those with disabilities, had access to essential services, is a useful document to build on and adapt to the transitional post-coup situation.

### 5.3. Accessible information and communication

For PWD inclusion to be genuine, interim government institutions should systematically and openly approach, consult and involve, in a meaningful and timely manner, PWD and organizations of PWD. They should invest time in explaining their role, responsibilities and work to PWD in an accessible manner.

This requires access to all relevant information, including key statements and documents, and websites or social media pages of government bodies, in accessible digital formats and with reasonable accommodation when required, such as the provision of sign language interpreters, captioning services, easy read text and plain language, Braille and tactile communication. Open consultations should provide PWD with access to all the spaces of public decision making on an equal basis with others, including all relevant public decision-making bodies within interim government institutions. For the Burmese language this requires consideration of the different types of sign language and the level of knowledge of PWD. Ideally, a standardized Burmese sign language version—such as the one developed by Japan International Cooperation Agency from 2002 to 2010—should be taught and popularized throughout interim government communications. This way a national standard of sign language could be instituted.

The views of PWD, through their representative organizations, should be given due weight. Interim government institutions should ensure that they are heard not just as a mere formality or as a tokenistic approach to consultation. Interim government institutions, including at state level, need to consider the results of such consultations and reflect them in the decisions adopted, by duly informing participants of the outcome of the process.

Acknowledging that the adaptation of information to the requirements of PWD requires funding, for which dedicated international funds are available, and qualified personnel, interim government institutions should nevertheless make continuous efforts to dedicate funding to informing PWD in an accessible manner and to identifying a pool of qualified personnel to conduct sign language and other forms of communication. Key statements or meetings could be conducted in an accessible format or major news outlets such as Public Voice Television could be encouraged to make information more accessible. Full and effective participation of PWD should be understood as a continuous process, not as an individual one-time event.

**For PWD inclusion to be genuine, interim government institutions should systematically and openly approach, consult and involve, in a meaningful and timely manner, PWD and organizations of PWD.**

#### 5.4. Awareness raising and capacity building

Stigma, discrimination and prejudice are manifestations of how society and individuals view PWD. For this reason, it is important that all interim government institutions, including at the state and local levels, ensure that the behaviour of their staff and their work have the objective of changing attitudes towards PWD in a manner that respects PWD, that no assumptions are made concerning the abilities and capabilities of PWD and that PWD are encouraged to express their views and opinions on the challenges they encounter. A positive attitude towards PWD must be promoted within interim government institutions and through their work and initiatives that champion the rights of PWD.

This requires sensitization to working with and for PWD by mainstreaming knowledge, awareness and training about PWD within interim government institutions at all levels and during the implementation of their projects and activities, which should incorporate a disability lens to sensitize people to the needs and challenges of PWD.

Education in the form of formal education and vocational training is a key tool in this regard, and equal access to education for children with disabilities is critical to provide a foundation for full participation later in life. Many children with disabilities are excluded from schools entirely or put in separate schools. The NUG MoE as well as Myanmar's academic community and universities can take on a key role in encouraging the inclusion of PWD in schools and incorporating a disability lens in educational curricula, including when conducting civic education. Vocational training for PWD can also be conducted.

To be truly inclusive, schools and classrooms must be equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities, and teachers must be adequately trained, which requires investment. All countries can take steps to improve high-quality, inclusive education through planning, community mobilization and political will, rather than funding alone. Successful projects across a range of countries, such as Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Laos, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia, have shown that inclusive education is achievable (Mariga, McConkey and Myezwa 2014; Heymann, Sprague and Raub 2020).

#### 5.5. Disability data collection

Disability data are essential for Myanmar to be able to develop evidence-based policies to monitor the implementation of the UNCRPD and to measure progress towards set targets in national legislation or strategies. This is a challenging task, requiring time and capacity, particularly in contexts of conflict and crises where humanitarian assistance is needed.

Several international organizations have developed frameworks and tools to support countries in disaggregating data on disability. These include the World

---

**It is important that all interim government institutions, including at the state and local levels, ensure that the behaviour of their staff and their work have the objective of changing attitudes towards PWD.**

**Words matter. The language that we use to refer to PWD shapes our perception of the world. It is therefore important to raise awareness about the language that is appropriate to use when talking to or about PWD.**

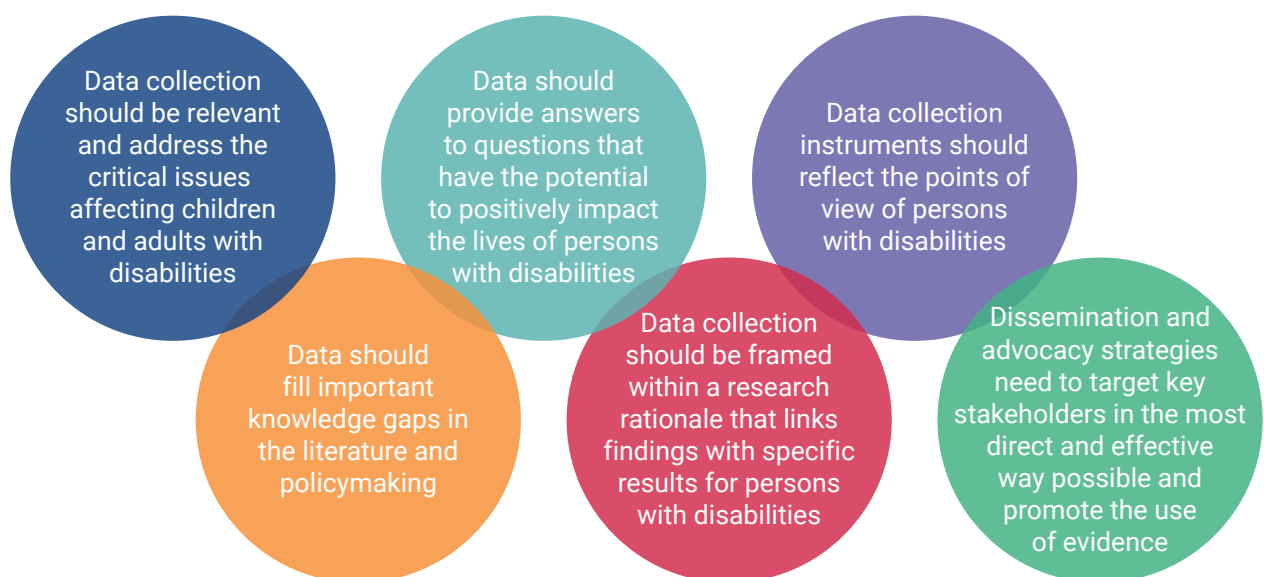
Health Organization's [Functioning and Disability Disaggregation Tool \(FDD11\)](#) and its [conceptual framework to measure disability](#), or the [Washington Group on Disability Statistics](#), which has developed tools for use in national censuses or surveys, [which are increasingly used in humanitarian action](#). As of 2021, over 75 countries were using these tools.

Data collection on PWD needs to be carefully planned so that data collection tools match the purpose of data collected and inform the sample size. They should also consider and build on existing data such as registration data, nationwide surveys or censuses. Myanmar's 2014 National Census, which includes disability, is a key data source to build on to inform future policies and service provision for people with disabilities.<sup>5</sup> Pilot testing and analysis should precede a comprehensive roll-out of data collection and involve qualified and trained interviewers. All data collection tools need to be tailored to Myanmar's specific context, languages and culture, particularly in relation to the use of appropriate terminology (see Figure 3).

#### 5.6. Use of terminology and language for persons with disabilities

Words matter. The language that we use to refer to PWD shapes our perception of the world. It is therefore important to raise awareness about the language that is appropriate to use when talking to or about PWD. Inappropriate language can make people feel excluded or offend them and can be a barrier to full and meaningful participation. The use of derogatory or inappropriate

Figure 3. Inclusive data collection



Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Producing Disability Inclusive Data, 20 July 2020, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/producing-disability-inclusive-data-why-it-matters-and-what-it-takes>>, accessed 24 January 2024.

<sup>5</sup> The Myanmar 2014 Census, however, did not use the full set of Washington Group short set questions or train enumerators on how to communicate with PWD.

language may amount to discrimination and affect the enjoyment of human rights (UN Office at Geneva n.d.).

The UNCRPD states that PWD ‘include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’ (United Nations 2006: article 1).

People-first language is the language used in the UNCRPD and the most widely accepted language to refer to ‘persons with disabilities’. This means that the person, not the disability, is emphasized, by placing a reference to the person or group before the reference to the disability. In Myanmar, ‘differently abled’ (ထူးခြားသန့်စွမ်း) is often used in legal documents and communications. In English, the use of the term is clear; however, in Burmese, it can be problematic, as ‘different’ carries negative connotations. PWD organizations have frequently communicated their preference to government agencies to be referred to as ‘persons with disabilities’ (မသန့်စွမ်း), even submitting a full terminology guide to the government in 2018 (Sedona 2019). However, the people-first rule does not necessarily apply to all types of disabilities and there are exceptions such as ‘blind persons’, ‘people who are blind’ or ‘deaf or deafblind persons’. PWD are not a homogeneous group and may self-identify in different ways. These identities should be respected and recognized (UN Office at Geneva n.d.).

The portrayal of PWD as intrinsically vulnerable should be avoided. Vulnerability is produced by external circumstances and is not inherent to a person or group. Everyone can be vulnerable in a given situation or period. Some PWD may be more vulnerable than other groups to certain crimes, such as gender-based violence, but less vulnerable to others, such as identity theft. When the specific barriers and circumstances causing vulnerability are addressed, the PWD are no longer vulnerable (UN Office at Geneva n.d.).

Labelling or stereotyping of PWD should be avoided. A person’s disability or impairment should not be mentioned unless it is relevant. Instead, the skills or requirements needed should be mentioned and a person’s impairment only mentioned if it brings clarity or provides useful information (UN Office at Geneva n.d.).

It is important to note that disability rights language is also continually evolving. It is possible that translations from one language to another will not accurately reflect the preferred terminology used by the local disability community. To ensure that the appropriate terminology is used, consultations with local disability rights organizations should be conducted.

Myanmar’s interim government institutions at all levels should be sensitive to the appropriate use of terminology for PWD in all their communication in consideration of appropriate terms for PWD in Burmese and other languages and in key documents such as the FDC or the future transitional constitution, state constitutions or key legislation, as well as in their work and awareness-raising activities.

---

**People-first language is the language used in the UNCRPD and the most widely accepted language to refer to ‘persons with disabilities’.**

---

## REFERENCES

- Bolivia, Constitution of Bolivia, 2009, <[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia\\_2009](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Bolivia_2009)>, accessed 30 January 2024
- Brazil, Federal Republic of, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil, Third Edition, 2010, <[https://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/docs/acceso\\_informacion\\_base\\_dc\\_leyes\\_pais\\_b\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.oas.org/es/sla/ddi/docs/acceso_informacion_base_dc_leyes_pais_b_1_en.pdf)>, accessed 30 January 2024
- Burma News International (BNI), 'Almost all opportunities for people with disabilities lost after coup', 1 October 2022a, <<https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/almost-all-opportunities-people-disabilities-lost-after-coup>>, accessed 3 January 2024
- , 'Disabled face discrimination in Myanmar', 21 July 2022b, <<https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/disabled-face-discrimination-myanmar>>, accessed 2 January 2024
- N. Cheesman, M. Skidmore and T. Wilson (eds), *Ruling Myanmar: From Cyclone Nargis to National Elections* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Publishing, 2010)
- Fiji, Constitution of Fiji 2013, <[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Fiji\\_2013](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Fiji_2013)>, accessed 30 January 2024
- Global Disability Rights Now, 'Utilizing quotas to increase political participation of persons with disabilities', 7 November 2017, <<https://miusa.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/utilizing-quotas-increase-political-participation-persons-disabilities>>, accessed 3 January 2024
- , 'Building disability rights through inclusive constitutions', 5 June 2018, <<https://miusa.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/building-disability-rights-through-inclusive-constitutions>>, accessed 3 January 2024
- Heymann, J., Sprague, A. and Raub, A., *Advancing Equality: How Constitutional Rights Can Make a Difference Worldwide* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), <<https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.81>>
- Khum, T. N., 'Women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination in Myanmar', ActionAid Myanmar, 20 May 2019, <<https://myanmar.actionaid.org/stories/2019/women-and-girls-disabilities-face-double-discrimination-myanmar>>, accessed 2 January 2024
- Malawi, Constitution of Malawi 1994 (rev. 2017), <[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Malawi\\_2017](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Malawi_2017)>, accessed 30 January 2024
- Maldives, Constitution of the Maldives, 2008, <[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Maldives\\_2008](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Maldives_2008)>, accessed 30 January 2024
- Mariga, L., McConkey, R. and Myezwa, H., *Inclusive Education in Low-Income Countries: A Resource Book for Teacher Educators, Parent Trainers and Community Development Workers* (Cape Town: Atlas Alliance and Disability Innovations Africa, 2014)
- Myanmar, Republic of the Union of, *Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan* (Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2014), <[https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/Media.action;jsessionid=y7pmQzIFuiPHBy1Ema426swqPq6\\_MJB-R0abpne3XORvwwQbwKf2!1945465934?id=14768](https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/Media.action;jsessionid=y7pmQzIFuiPHBy1Ema426swqPq6_MJB-R0abpne3XORvwwQbwKf2!1945465934?id=14768)>, accessed 2 January 2024
- , Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MoHADM), 'Commitments to the rights of persons with disabilities', 16 February 2022, unpublished



Saha, S. R., 'Working through Ambiguity: International NGOs in Myanmar', Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard University, September 2011, <<https://www.pkforum.org/partnerships>>, accessed 2 January 2024

Sedona, *Disability Terminology Handbook*, 2019, <<https://www.myanmaritv.com/news/disability-terminology-handbook-launched-correct-usage>>, accessed 2 January 2024

Soe, S. K. Z., 'Influence of donor aid policy on disability inclusion in Myanmar', Thesis, 7 May 2019, <<https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/20373>>, accessed 2 January 2024

Spain, Constitution of Spain 1978 (rev. 2011), <[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Spain\\_2011](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Spain_2011)>, accessed 30 January 2024

United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006, <<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>>, accessed 2 January 2024

United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 'Initial report submitted by Myanmar under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2014', 6 October 2017, <<https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhshuiKFgJsJP%2BQzmzZEKiuT55LxYf%2F1V00bQkV8mShK7XGZ3iAmW5hqniBhJZFkHJxHNHXi3TUV7gsSYoiApMbVfncLj0LRA6zmgRILYLdIH>>, accessed 2 January 2024

—, 'Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stresses the needs to address the situation of women, girls and ethnic minorities in dialogue with Myanmar', 29 August 2019a, <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/08/committee-rights-persons-disabilities-stresses-needs-address-situation-women>>, accessed 2 January 2024

—, 'Concluding observations on the initial report of Myanmar', 22 October 2019b, <<https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhshuiKFgJsJP%2BQzmzZEKiuSXRnJ2eH2jJu%2B2FNPv9EPtd%2B09hJKgHZ5wbxjQrNt4paUeCAMQiiXHt%2B0iXGf%2Bs7SwjtlxXiXNkQ2K1CGSEWqY>>, accessed 2 January 2024

United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council, 'National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 5 of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21, Myanmar', A/HRC/WG.6/37/MMR/1, 2 November 2020, <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3893960?ln=en>>, accessed 22 January 2024

—, 'Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review', A/HRC/47/13, 12 April 2021, <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc4713-report-working-group-universal-periodic-review-myanmar>>, accessed 22 January 2024

United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, 'International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities', August 2020, <[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Disability/SR\\_Disability/GoodPractices/Access-to-Justice-EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Disability/SR_Disability/GoodPractices/Access-to-Justice-EN.pdf)>, accessed 22 January 2024

United Nations Office at Geneva, 'Disability-Inclusive Language Guidelines', [n.d.], <<https://www.ungeneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf>>, accessed 3 January 2024

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Humanitarian Needs Overview Myanmar', Humanitarian Programme Cycle, January 2023, <<https://myanmar.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/Myanmar%20>

[Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview%20-%202023\\_0.pdf](#)>, accessed 2 January 2024

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 'Strengthening support and inclusion for persons with disabilities amid humanitarian crisis in Myanmar', 20 December 2022, <<https://myanmar.unfpa.org/en/news/strengthening-support-and-inclusion-persons-disabilities-amid-humanitarian-crisis-myanmar>>, accessed 2 January 2024

Ware, A., *Context-sensitive Development: How International NGOs Operate in Myanmar* (Melbourne, Vic: Deakin University, 2014)

---

## ABBREVIATIONS

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>CRPH</b>   | Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw                                |
| <b>CSO</b>    | Civil society organization   |
| <b>FDC</b>    | Federal Democracy Charter  |
| <b>ICCPR</b>  | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights                         |
| <b>JCC</b>    | Joint Coordination Committee   |
| <b>MCERP</b>  | Myanmar Coordination Initiative for Equal Rights of People with Disabilities |
| <b>MoE</b>    | Ministry of Education  |
| <b>MoHADM</b> | Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management                     |
| <b>NGO</b>    | Non-governmental organization  |
| <b>NUCC</b>   | National Unity Consultative Council  |
| <b>NUG</b>    | National Unity Government  |
| <b>OCHA</b>   | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs           |
| <b>PWD</b>    | Persons with disabilities  |
| <b>UNCRPD</b> | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities         |

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nathalie Ebead is International IDEA's Programme Manager for the Myanmar Building Federal Democracy programme. Previously she was International IDEA's Programme Manager for the MyConstitution programme in 2022 and for the EU-funded Support to Elections and Democracy (STEP Democracy) Programme in Yangon, Myanmar from 2020-2021.

---

## ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

### International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

#### *What we do*

We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

We bring states and non-state actors together for dialogues and lesson sharing. We stand up and speak out to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

#### *Where we work*

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

#### *Our publications and databases*

We have a catalogue with more than 1,000 publications and over 25 databases on our website. Most of our publications can be downloaded free of charge.

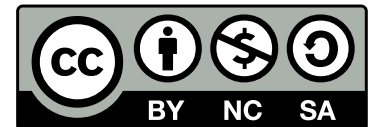
<https://www.idea.int>

### The MCERP

The Myanmar Coordination Initiative of Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities (MCERP) is a disability-rights advocacy and research organization, supporting the rights of persons with disabilities in Myanmar since 2021. Composed of disability activists and disability focused researchers from Myanmar, MCERP seeks to support opportunities for persons with disabilities and strengthen institutional responses to disability in Myanmar's conflict-affected regions.

© 2024 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

International IDEA publications are independent of specific national or political interests. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of International IDEA, its Board or its Council members.



The electronic version of this publication is available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) licence. You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the publication as well as to remix and adapt it, provided it is only for non-commercial purposes, that you appropriately attribute the publication, and that you distribute it under an identical licence. For more information visit the Creative Commons website: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0>.

Copyeditor: Prepress

*Design and layout:* International IDEA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.10>

ISBN: 978-91-7671-740-0 (PDF)



**International IDEA**  
Strömsborg  
SE-103 34 Stockholm  
SWEDEN  
+46 8 698 37 00  
[info@idea.int](mailto:info@idea.int)  
[www.idea.int](http://www.idea.int)