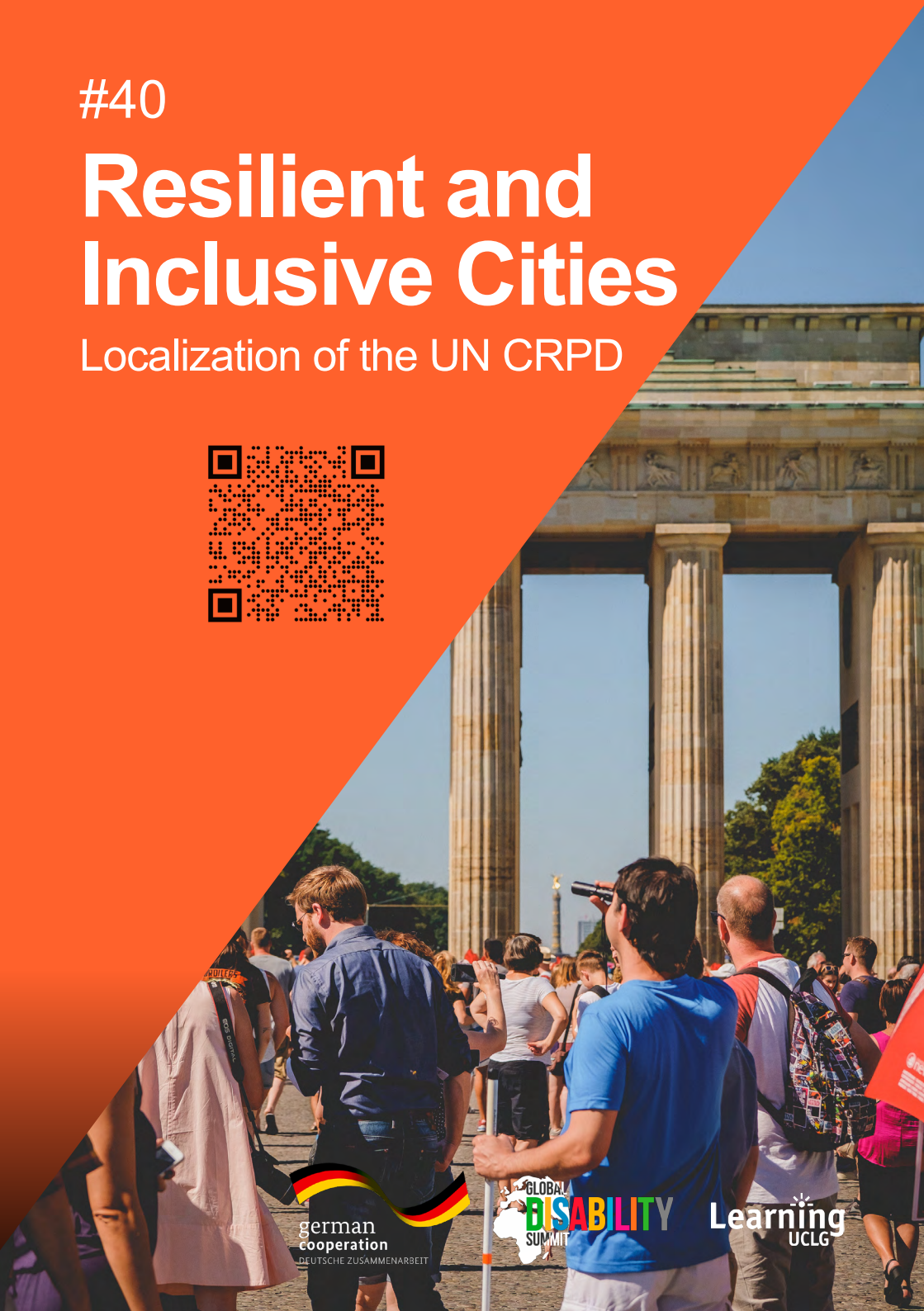# #40

Resilient and Inclusive Cities

Localization of the UN CRPD

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CITIES FOR ALL
GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON INCLUSIVE
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Contents

Foreword

In an era marked by rapid urbanization and the pressing challenges posed by depressed economic growths and climate change, the notion of resilience in our cities has never been more critical. As we strive to create urban environments that are not only sustainable but also inclusive, we must embrace innovative approaches that prioritize equity among all residents.

As cities grow, the need for urban environments that are inclusive, accessible, and equitable for all people, regardless of ability, is paramount. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities articles 9 on accessibility, 5 on equality and non-discrimination, 30 on participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport, along with the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities, provide vital frameworks to guide us in creating urban spaces that empower every citizen.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) underscores the rights of persons with disabilities to participate fully in society, with access to services, employment, housing, and education. By embracing the six principles of the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities — non-discrimination, accessibility, participation, inclusive urban policies, capacity-building, and data for development — we can build cities that reflect the values of equality and respect.

The **New Urban Agenda calls for sustainable and inclusive urban development, ensuring that people with disabilities are part of the city-building process**. Yet, data reveals significant challenges.

Globally, approximately 1 billion people live with disabilities, many of whom face barriers in accessing transportation, housing, and essential services.

Discrimination, limited mobility, and lack of accessible infrastructure hinder their full participation.

With over 60% of people with disabilities in urban areas facing challenges in transportation, and with high unemployment rates among this group, the need for inclusive policies is clear. Accessible housing and tailored services are equally critical to promoting independent living and social inclusion.

By collecting robust data and prioritizing inclusivity in planning, we can create **cities that offer opportunity, dignity, and independence for all**. Let us embrace this vision and work together to build cities that leave no one behind.

H.E. Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o
EGH Governor, Kisumu County

Introduction

The rapid pace of urbanization presents both challenges and opportunities for cities worldwide to foster inclusion and resilience for all. Today, more than half of the global population resides in urban areas, a figure projected to reach 70% by 2050, including approximately 2 billion older persons and persons with disabilities. Currently, 16% of the world's population experience disabilities, with over two-thirds residing in low- and middle-income countries. Additionally, 46% of older persons (aged 60 and above) experience disabilities, and by 2050, older persons will constitute 21% of the total population.

Urbanization significantly shapes both environmental and social conditions, directly influencing how cities are experienced by their residents. Inclusive urban planning is essential for resilience and *Build Back Better* strategies as it fosters an enabling environment ensuring equitable access to services, opportunities, and equal participation in the community.

However, current trends in urbanization highlight the risks to sustainability and economic prosperity, increasing vulnerability and risks during and after crises and emergencies, particularly for the most marginalized groups in society.

Of these groups, persons with disabilities and older persons are disproportionately affected by climate change, disasters, and pandemics because of inaccessible physical, digital and social environments. Inaccessibility threatens their safety, homes, families, health, food security, water access, sanitation, and livelihoods. Public spaces, transportation, and other critical infrastructure remain largely inaccessible, causing unnecessary barriers to daily participation. Such barriers include inaccessible streets, websites, housing, public buildings, sanitation, healthcare facilities, education, and employment.

International commitments and recognition to the principles of accessibility, universal design and disability inclusion are legally mandated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and embedded across key global frameworks including the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the New Urban Agenda. Despite international commitments, disability inclusion is often overlooked in resilience planning, climate adaptation policies, and "Build Back Better" strategies, significantly increasing risk during emergencies and disasters.[1]

These risks often result in persons with disabilities being left behind. It is estimated that 73% of persons with disabilities would face challenges during evacuations, and 6% would be unable to evacuate at all. Furthermore, 72% lack a personal preparedness plan for disasters, and fewer than half of emergency and disaster relief locations are accessible. Alarmingly, most persons with disabilities report being unaware of local Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans and have had little to no involvement in community-level decision-making[2] in local climate adaptation, resilience and DRR planning processes.[3]

Addressing these gaps is not only a matter of equity but also a crucial component of building truly resilient and sustainable cities. Prioritizing accessibility and disability inclusion in urban resilience planning will enhance the safety and well-being of persons with disabilities, strengthening overall community resilience in the face of increasing disasters and emergencies.

[1] UNESCAP, Report on Safe and Inclusive Transport and Mobility, 2020

[2] Global survey: According to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2023

[3] UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development 2024 (p. 333-334)

Resilient and Inclusive Cities: Localization of the UN CRPD

Background

The global municipal movement recognizes the **critical importance of universally accessible, inclusive, and resilient cities for sustainable development**. Since 2019, UCLG has been actively shaping and committed to the localization of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) through initiatives such as the Cities for All Global Compact and the Global Community of Practice on Inclusive and Accessible Cities and Territories.

Resilient and Inclusive Cities Hub
Promoting Resilient Cities that Work for All

As part of this ongoing commitment, the **2025 Global Disability Summit (GDS) marks a significant milestone in advancing disability-inclusive resilience at the local level**. Taking place on April 2–3 in Berlin, and co-hosted by the Governments of Germany and Jordan alongside the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Summit aims to enhance the impact of international cooperation in upholding the rights and inclusion of all persons with disabilities.

A key outcome of the GDS will be the **launch of the multilateral initiative for Resilient and Inclusive Cities Hub (RICH)**—a pivotal step in supporting cities and local governments in implementing disability-inclusive resilience building efforts that are in line with the UNCRPD. Recognizing cities as the front line of local action, RICH will mobilize commitments and resources to ensure that urban resilience investments and strategies prioritize accessibility and inclusion for all.

Peer-learning objectives & summary

As part of the global municipal movement's preparation towards the Global Disability Summit 2025, and with the support of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) convened a peer learning for its membership activity under the theme of Resilient and Inclusive Cities. From February 5th & 6th. The **activity aimed to establish a foundation for municipal engagement in the GDS 2025** with the specific objectives to:

- Share detailed information on the upcoming GDS and its commitments.
- Showcase innovative practices in resilient and disability-responsive urban policies and programs implemented by local governments.
- Explore how local actions can be aligned with GDS commitments, connecting global frameworks with local solutions.

The peer-learning activity consisted of two interactive sessions with Local and Regional Governments from across the globe to discuss challenges and best practices for ensuring disability-inclusive urban resilience strategies and planning, while also exploring how the GDS and RICH initiative could further support local actions towards the implementation of the UNCRPD.

Peer Learning on Resilient and Inclusive cities

February 5 and 6
14:00 - 16:00 CET

Keynote presentations

2025 Global Disability Summit and Multilateral Resilient and Inclusive Cities Hub initiative

How we progress on disability inclusion and accessibility are good indicators of how we are fulfilling the promise of leaving no one behind. **The third Global Disability Summit (GDS) in April of 2025 is a milestone for accelerated action towards equitable implementation of the 2030 Agenda**. The Deputy Commissioner for the 2025 GDS, Alexander Gorsdorf, introduced the rationale for the Summit, its relevance, how stakeholders can engage, stressing that the world is facing multiple crises while the world is off-track towards the global goals.

The GDS is a structured global mechanism centered around concrete and actionable pledges, called Commitments. Diverse stakeholders, including Local and Regional governments, can make official Commitments to implement the rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the UNCRPD.

GDS Commitments are essential for systematically integrating disability inclusion into development cooperation, driving action, and ensuring accountability in advancing the rights and dignity of all persons with disabilities worldwide. Commitments serve as a catalyst for transforming aspirations into concrete and lasting actions that reflect the diverse contexts of stakeholders. By fostering meaningful partnerships, particularly with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), GDS Commitments help sustain progress and strengthen collective efforts to leave no one behind.

Key initiatives to support the implementation of Commitments, specifically the Multilateral initiative on Resilient and Inclusive Cities Hub

(RICH), were explored. The head of the UN Global Disability Fund, Dr. Ola Abu Al Ghaib introduced this milestone initiative that will be launched at the GDS. The RICH initiative is of particular relevance to Local and Regional governments as it is a funding mechanism and knowledge innovation hub to support cities in their efforts to localize the UN CRPD towards more inclusive and resilient spaces for all. The RICH initiative will support the implementation of the UN CRPD though disability and accessibility mainstreaming into broader investments, strategies, and plans across all urban, infrastructure, services, and technologies.
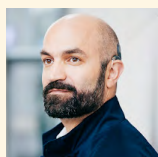
Alexander Gorsdorf
Deputy Commissioner for the 2025 GDS

Dr. Ola Abu Al Ghaib
Head of the UN Global Disability Fund

Building resilience and inclusion through accessible information in emergency situations

Equitable access to critical information is paramount to prepare for, withstand and handle emergency situations. The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICT's (G3ict) Director of the Global Advisory Network, Monica Duhem, highlighted the present risks for persons with disabilities due to lack of accessibility of many early warning systems (e.g., only audible signals) and platforms that lead to unequal access to critical information during emergencies. As a response, the presentation provided key take-aways to consider when revising resilience and emergency preparedness and response strategies, in particular on digital communications including:

1. **The need to revise emergency preparedness, urban resilience, and response plans and support persons with disabilities to develop individual preparedness plans**. In revising plans for inclusion, it is key to consider the different dimensions of accessibility barriers faced by the different disability groups and the roles played by support networks.

2. **Inclusive resilience is fostered by equitable and multi-stakeholder practices and processes**. Diverse stakeholders, including all levels of government, civil society and the private sector, should work together to develop and revise emergency plans and protocols across sectors. This revision includes giving tools to first-responders on how to respond more inclusively. Civil society often knows what is missing from response and evacuation plans. OPDs in particular are essential partners for Local and Regional Governments to identify gaps and solutions needed to promote the rights of all persons with disabilities and intersecting groups, in particular older persons.

Monica Duhem
Director of the Global Advisory Network
G3ict

Local Actions towards Disability Responsive and Resilient Cities

Local Actions towards Disability Responsive and Resilient Cities

To explore key learnings and practices for building more resilient and inclusive cities, participating Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) shared their main challenges, thematic priorities, and key actions. Participants highlighted how crises such as climate change, conflicts, economic instability, and health emergencies affect persons with disabilities. They also reflected on the **role of local and regional governments in addressing these challenges through disability responsive resilience-building efforts** to promote socio-economic equity.
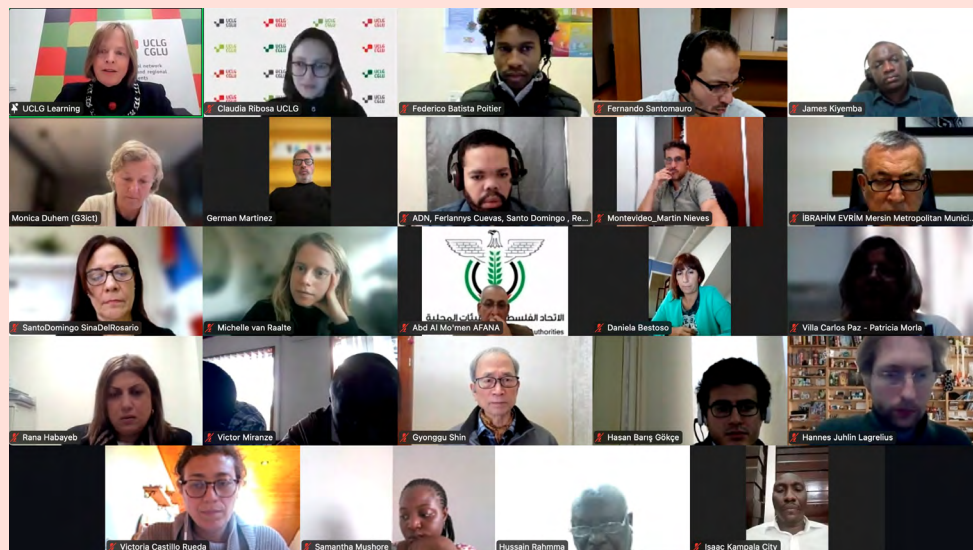
Main challenges

Current and common challenges to mainstream accessibility and disability rights across local policies and programs including:

- **Data and mappings**: Capturing reliable data disaggregated by disability to inform policies and decision-making remain a common challenge. Contextualizing the Washington Group Questions in survey and census exercise can improve data collection while working with representative organizations can support building trust

- **Mainstreaming accessibility** is limited by the lack of knowledge about accessibility and universal design among urban practitioners, resulting in fragmented approaches with limited impact.

- **Insufficient financial** resources limit disability inclusion and accessibility efforts.

- **Limited awareness** in communities on the rights of persons with disabilities and of municipal staff on how to plan and design for a more equitable urban physical and digital environment.

- **Attitudes and health**: Community attitudes and social behaviors are key contributors to structural discrimination of persons with disabilities.

Municipalities need to play a role in combating this, including by addressing increasing mental health issues in cities and supporting programs on independent living.

- **Accessible communications**: Challenges exist to ensure equitable participation city council meetings and consultations due to a lack of accessible public information sharing between the municipality and residents in various formats.

- **Undue financial burden**: Limited access to accessible transportation and provisions for reasonable accommodations causes undue financial burdens on individuals with disabilities to find alternative modes of transport and personal assistance.

The discussion featured four city case studies, illustrating concrete strategies and innovative approaches to integrating disability inclusion into urban resilience strategies and planning. Through these discussions, participants identified critical linkages between their initiatives and broader resilience strategies, shaping a collective understanding of practical solutions for more inclusive urban development.

Case Studies: Learnings and practices from four cities

CASE STUDY 2
Jericho, Palestine

Samar Tamimi
Jericho Municipality

CASE STUDY 4
Arua, Uganda

James Kiyemba
VNG International (U)

CASE STUDY 1
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Ferlannys Cuevas
Santo Domingo (ADN)

CASE STUDY 3
Visakhapatnam India

Madhavi Jallepalli
Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation

Case Study 1: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Promoting Urban Resilience through Accessible Intersections

Ferlannys Cuevas
Analyst in the Inclusion Department
Santo Domingo (ADN)

Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, has an estimated 79,241 persons with disabilities, representing 7.7% of the population. Through the department of inclusion, created in 2020 during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the city is working to enhance accessibility while addressing the risks to public safety posed by natural disasters.

Santo Domingo invests to curb the accessibility gaps in public spaces as only 15% of public spaces in the city are accessible. Additionally, given high exposure to hurricanes and flooding, Santo Domingo is prioritizing upgrades in public space and drainage systems to mitigate flood risks. For this reason, and to enhance inclusive mobility and urban resilience, the city worked with the Popular Savings and Loans Association to improve accessibility across public spaces and intersections under its project "Accessible Intersections".

For the project, main intersections and urban corridors that had a link with public service centers, metro stations, recreational services and commerce were identified and prioritized for interventions. This focus was also driven by reports of difficulties in mobility by persons with disabilities, particularly in getting to their workplaces.

The results of this project included improvements in accessibility and safety to recreational, educational, sport and workplaces for persons with visual, auditory, intellectual and physical-motor disabilities. In addition to improvements in public space, awareness on the dignified treatment of persons with disabilities by public and private transport operators and riders along with improved assistance by police personnel also improved.

Although tangible improvements were achieved, there remain challenges to integrating universal accessibility across the city. One of the main challenges is due to the fact that the city was developed and expanded without taking into account criteria for universal accessibility, which has led to narrow and discontinuous sidewalks. Additional challenges include drivers and informal vendors parking on sidewalks, high costs of podo-tactile pavement parts and specialized traffic signals, along with the fluctuation of electric power that causes irregular availability of traffic signals.

Irrespective of existing challenges, Santo Domingo is still prioritizing reclaiming public spaces to build equity and promote autonomy in the city while demonstrating how inclusive services and accessible spaces contribute to resilience.

Challenges

→ **Accessibility Gaps**: Only 15% of public spaces are accessible, with many lacking essential features like tactile surfaces, visual and audible signals, and accommodations for invisible disabilities.

→ **Climate Vulnerability**: The city faces high exposure to hurricanes and urban flooding, increasing risks to public safety and accessibility.

→ **Barriers to Inclusion**: Persons with disabilities and older persons face restricted access to public spaces, services, education, and employment due to inadequate infrastructure and limited participation in decision-making.

Practices and Initiatives

→ **Implementing accessibility and Universal Design**: Applying accessibility standards across public spaces, street crossings, intersections, and parks to promote autonomy and inclusion.

→ **Climate-Resilient Infrastructure**: Upgrading drainage systems and reclaiming public spaces to mitigate flood risks while enhancing accessibility.

→ **Meaningful community engagement**: Involving persons with disabilities and older persons in city councils and advisory groups to shape policies and emergency responses.

→ **Strengthening capacities**: Providing training for municipal staff and communities, including sign language training for emergency personnel.

Scalability and Resilience

Santo Domingo's integrated approach demonstrates how accessibility and climate resilience are heavily interlinked. By prioritizing inclusive design, community participation, and infrastructure upgrades, the city enhances both everyday accessibility and crisis preparedness.

Case Study 2: Jericho, Palestine

Creating Inclusive & Safe Open Spaces

Samar Tamimi
Head of Mayor's Office &
Coordinator of Strategic plan
Jericho Municipality

Jericho, a city with a rich cultural heritage and growing tourism, faces challenges in providing inclusive and safe open spaces for its residents and visitors. Many public areas lack accessibility features, such as ramps, tactile paving, and lighting, making them unsafe and unwelcoming for persons with disabilities, older individuals, and children. Jericho's efforts to retrofit existing spaces and create new inclusive public areas aim at improving accessibility, safety, and community engagement. By improving open spaces, Jericho aims to enhance social inclusion, boost tourism, and improve the quality of life for all.

Although faced with urban challenges due to factors such as the occupation and aging infrastructure, the city has prioritized creating open and inclusive public spaces for women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities - with the perspective that public spaces are cornerstones of the social and cultural fabric. The main aims of Jericho's interventions are to ensure accessibility in existing and new public spaces, promote safety and participation for all residents and visitors and enhance the city's tourism sector by making public spaces more welcoming and accessible.

To transform the public space for inclusion, Jericho took concrete steps starting with an assessment through surveys with residents, particularly those with disabilities to identify the existing barriers. Following the assessment, the city collaborated with a wide range of actors from urban planners, architects, OPDs, along with women's and children's to design inclusive features in the public space. Through this initial six month assessment, planning and design phase, the city allocated funds to adapt two concrete spaces for accessibility that included a public park and tourist site. Within a five month period, these two spaces were retrofitted with ramps, accessible seating and tactile pathways.

In parallel to these updates to the public space, and still ongoing, Jericho has been working with local communities by engaging them through city tours, events for discussion and meaningful consultation through children's ut the planning and implementation phase. In addition to these engagements the city has built awareness with the community on the importance of accessible spaces through workshops and media campaigns with the public with key stakeholders from OPDs who shared their expertise on inclusive design, the tourism sector that supported efforts to make tourist sites accessible and international NGOs which provided additional technical and financial support.

The main results included increased equity in public spaces that improved the community's trust in local government's work, safety of pedestrian mobility in the nighttime, and growth in tourism, particularly of tourists with disabilities. Although there have been tangible steps forward in creating safe and inclusive spaces in Jericho, continued challenges to continue this work include lack of sustainable funding, community's attitudes towards changes that have slowed advancements and resources to maintain accessibility.

Challenges
→ **Urban and socio-political challenges**
→ **Poor public space accessibility and social barriers** limiting mobility, particularly for persons with disabilities
→ **Community attitudes** on whether changes need to be made

Practices and Initiatives
→ **Improved safety**: Better lighting and accessible pedestrian-friendly streets have reduced accidents and increased nighttime use of public spaces
→ **Inclusive Cultural Heritage**: Accessible updates to public space and tourism sites, leading to more participation for residents and visitors with disabilities
→ **Inclusion & Community Trust**: Residents reported feeling safer and included

Scalability and Resilience

Despite resource constraints, Jericho's approach of community and engagement and partnerships with OPDs has been a key success and is a model that can be adopted to other cities across Palestine and internationally, particularly those with tourism-driven economies.

Jericho aims to continue to expand this work to more public spaces and mainstream inclusive design into urban planning policies to ensure long term equity and resilience.

Case Study 3: Visakhapatnam, India

Promoting Urban Resilience through Universal Accessibility
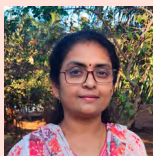
Madhavi Jallepalli
Assistant Director for Welfare of Differently Abled, Transgender & Senior Citizens
Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation

Visakhapatnam, also known as the city of Destiny, is a coastal city in Andhra Pradesh, India, has a population of 1.96 million, including an estimated 38,600 persons with disabilities (1.96%). Limited accessibility in the public and mobility of persons with disabilities, represents a risk for urban resilience. As part of the city's commitment to implement the concept of an "Inclusive Society", the city has retrofitted public buildings and spaces, working with an emphasis on a multi-sectoral approach to improve resilience and equity for all persons.

As a way of addressing the barriers being faced by persons with disabilities and promoting universal accessibility in India, the Government of India launched the Accessible India Campaign in 2015.

Under the Accessible India Campaign, the city has upgraded 32 government buildings from hospitals, mental health facilities, Commissioner Police's office, welfare hostels to educational institutions. Upgrades to these facilities include ramps, railings, accessible washrooms, tactile and wayfinding elements, drinking water stations, and parking. As part of these efforts, persons with disabilities are able to take advantage of the Grievance Redressal Day and enter the District Administrative office to voice their concerns and highlight existing barriers in the city limiting their participation.

In addition to these physical infrastructure changes, Visakhapatnam is also promoting inclusive and independent mobility to these places. The city has achieved this by providing assistive technologies such as wheelchairs, white canes, tricycles, and AI-based smart glasses. With a look towards the future, Visakhapatnam the city has done an accessibility audit to understand gaps and areas where accessibility still needs to be included. Future plans include expanding accessibility across all government and private buildings, integrating tactile pathways, Braille signage, and making outdoor spaces (parks, beaches, and tourist sites) universally accessible. Key stakeholders supporting the city's interventions financially are the national government and private sector.

Despite these advancements, the main barriers to improving the urban sustainability and accessibility in Visakhapatnam remain the financial constraints and limitations of funding at a large scale and limited socio-economic opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Challenges

→ **Financial resources**: Limited large scale and sustainable financing to support mainstream accessibility

→ **Limited Accessibility**: Many public and private buildings and spaces remain inaccessible.

→ **Mobility Barriers**: Lack of accessible transportation and assistive devices.

→ **Employment Gaps**: High unemployment due to limited skill development and educational opportunities.

Practices and Initiatives

→ **Accessibility Improvements**: 32 government buildings upgraded, inclusive public parks developed, and plans to make outdoor spaces, beaches, and tourist sites accessible.

→ **Mobility Support**: Distribution of assistive technologies (wheelchairs, white canes, AI-based smart glasses) through CSR programs.

→ **Employment & Skills Development:** Quota system in public employment, career fairs, skills training, financial support for entrepreneurs, and expansion of dedicated schools and colleges.

Scalability and Resilience

A multi-sectoral approach combining infrastructure upgrades for accessibility, assistive devices, and economic empowerment fosters inclusive urban resilience. Scaling these initiatives through policy enforcement, corporate partnerships, and demand-driven education helps create more equitable opportunities and foster resilience also during slow on-set and acute crises.
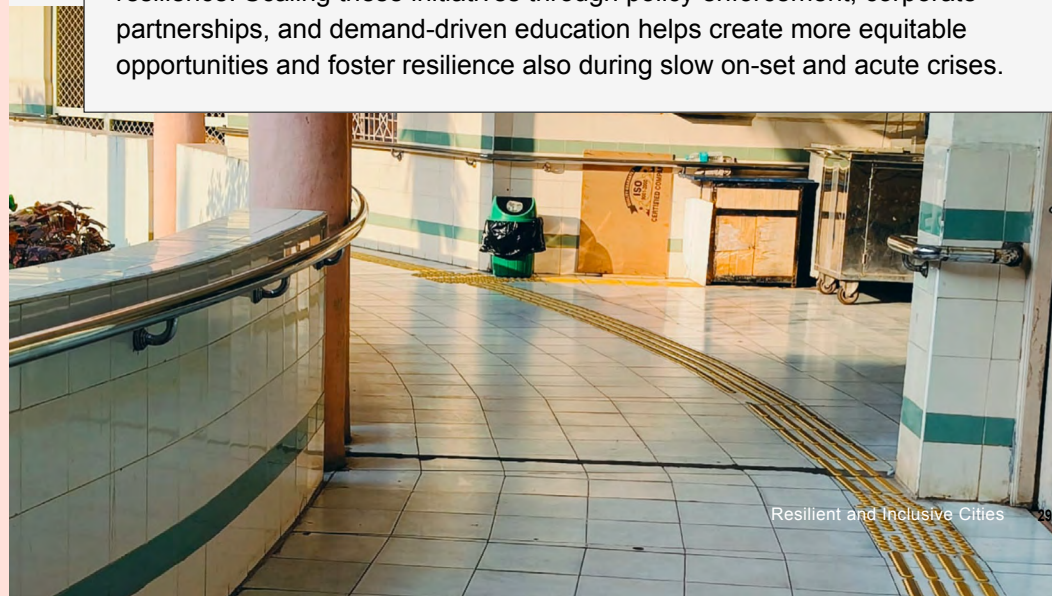
Case Study 4: Arua, Uganda

The Local Inclusion Agenda – breaking barriers and enhancing inclusive decision-making

James Kiyemba
Programme Governance Advisor
VNG International (U)

The city of Arua, in western Uganda, is home to around 384,656 inhabitants. Of this population, persons with disabilities in Arua City are living in acute poverty due to inadequate access to land for agriculture, inaccessible public infrastructure, financial and socio-economic services due to the limited focus on inclusive services, and negative attitudes from the community. These attitudes manifest as social exclusion, stigmatization, and discrimination exhibited during land inheritance, ownership rights or resources to lease, leading to high dependency and limited engagements in productive ventures, community development initiatives, and socio-economic activities further worsening their livelihoods.

To address these challenges, in 2022 Arua City Council collaborated with VNG International to better understand the demographic, livelihood status and needs of persons with disabilities in Arua. Additionally, the City Council also measures the level of engagement with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to aid mainstreaming across all service sectors. The study established that Arua City Council has a total of 4,779 persons with disabilities facing critical livelihood and socio-economic challenges with 90% of them living in acute poverty. These challenges include accessing banking and credit services due to the absence of reasonable accommodation which limits their ability to save, invest, and secure credits, thereby hindering their right to independent living.

To address the above challenges, key stakeholders in Arua city including; Local Government leaders, representatives of OPDs, CSOs, NGOs, cultural and religious organizations, the private sector, media, men and women with disabilities were actively engaged in processes that led to the development of Arua City Local Inclusion Agenda (LIA), which was approved on 30th October 2023 as an approach to institutionalize accessible solutions for disability inclusion, and to lobby and advocate for enhanced service delivery and community transformation.

Through this multi stakeholder approach, Arua City Council was able to ensure direct support to persons with disabilities in Arua city under the LIA through direct financial assistance, participatory and capability building workshops for the community on legal framework for disability inclusion, and also a number of assistive technologies including wheelchairs, white canes, hearing aids, crutches, adjustable delivery beds.

The LIA in Arua is building urban resilience with tangible results that aim to address the existing barriers for persons with disabilities and their families that lead to poverty and threaten urban resilience. Some of these results include 77% of persons with disabilities are meaningfully engaged with City Council budgeting and planning, allocation by the Ministry of Health and Arua City Council for assistive technologies and ramps to facilitate accessibility to banking services.

Although advancements have been made, challenges for the advancement of this work and the general inclusion of persons with disabilities still exist. With the rise of inflation and adverse effects of COVID-19 continue to threaten the economic livelihoods of the community, particularly of persons with disabilities. Additionally, there remain structural and institutional gaps for OPDs to take the lead on disability inclusion and support is still needed from the city and CSOs to provide mechanisms to strengthen their leadership. Lastly, inadequate financing and competing priorities hinder continued and sustainable actions on disability inclusion.

Through its Local Inclusion Agenda and actions towards more inclusive decision-making Arua City Council is working to reduce poverty and build urban resilience. By integrating inclusive decision-making, the city aims not only to address accessibility gaps but also to build a more resilient and participatory urban environment.

Challenges

→ Limited access to public facilities due to poor planning and lack of accessibility considerations and absence of accessible pedestrian paths, ramps, and sanitation facilities in key urban areas.

→ Inadequate signage and guidelines for persons with disabilities.

→ Weak enforcement of national disability rights legislation and policies

→ Limited meaningful engagement of OPDs and persons with disabilities in city planning and decision-making.

Practices and Initiatives

→ **The Local Inclusion Agenda**: Arua City Council has together with stakeholders, including OPDs, formulated the Local Inclusion Agenda (LIA), a structured framework which identifies the experienced barriers, gaps and solutions applicable in the city.

→ **Meaningful & Inclusive Stakeholder Collaboration**: Establishing partnerships with local OPDs, civil society organizations (CSOs), and private sector actors to address accessibility concerns and ensure persons with disabilities are engaged in urban planning and decision-making governance structures and planning committees.

→ **Legislative Support and Compliance**: Ongoing efforts to mainstream disability inclusion and enforcing accessibility standards into the revision of building codes and city development plans.

→ **Accessibility Audits and provision of assistive technologies**: Conducting participatory audits on tourism sites, hotels, and encouraging public and private sector entities to improve accessibility and distribute necessary assistive technologies to improve mobility and access.

→ **Awareness and Capacity Building**: Providing training and resources for city officials and service providers to implement inclusive practices.

→ **Information Accessibility**: Introducing accessible formats at public service desks to enhance communication for persons with disabilities.

Scalability and Resilience

The LIA process in Arua has been documented, inspiring similar initiatives in five other local governments in Uganda and beyond. It is an innovative process of working together with civil society and OPDs in particular to capture needed actions across the urban environment and relevant processes. Moving forward, continued stakeholder collaboration and trust-building in governance structures will be critical for scaling and sustaining these efforts.
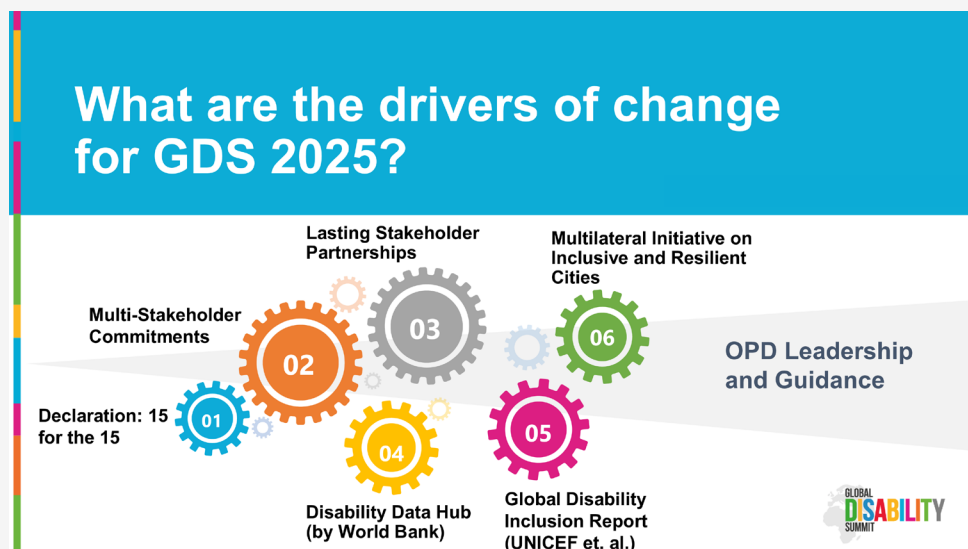
Opportunities and actions raised by participants

The cases presented are valuable examples of the work of local and regional governments. There are multiple entry points for more inclusion, through public service provision and governance mechanisms In addition to the presentations, main actions being led by Local and Regional governments, highlighted during the peer-learning include:

• Political actions focused on building alliances with the private sector to support increasing awareness on and consideration for accessibility across spaces and service provision.

• Building capacities through training initiatives to ensure inclusive practices across the city's emergency plans and emergency response practices.

• Municipal programs on care, skill and re-skilling, and educational support

• Workshops and campaign initiatives to enhance community awareness on disability rights, including accessibility.

• Mainstreaming disability inclusion in policies and infrastructure improvements, with the aim of enhancing participation and access to employment opportunities.

• Establishing relationships between municipalities and OPDs, including through activation of municipal committees and advisory groups, to increase effective participation in municipal processes, programs, and inclusive decision-making

• Mainstreaming disability inclusion across cultural policies and programs, considering cultural factors in resilience-building efforts, especially after disasters

• Development, revision, and adoption of building codes for public buildings and spaces, integral of accessibility

The envisioning exercise: Commitments for the Global Disability Summit

Following the keynote speeches, case study presentations, and in-depth discussions on challenges, best practices, and innovative approaches, participants engaged in further reflections on potential commitments for the upcoming and future editions of the GDS. Participants addressed challenges identified, and how Commitments could drive more action towards inclusive urban transformation.

What are the drivers of change for GDS 2025?

- Declaration: 15 for the 15
- 02 Multi-Stakeholder Commitments
- 03 Lasting Stakeholder Partnerships
- 04 Disability Data Hub (by World Bank)
- 05 Global Disability Inclusion Report (UNICEF et. al.)
- 06 Multilateral Initiative on Inclusive and Resilient Cities
- OPD Leadership and Guidance

The rationale for Local and Regional governments making GDS commitments

- **Drives political commitment**: Making commitments at the GDS signals strong political will on disability inclusion, reinforcing local and regional governments' (LRGs) dedication to inclusive governance.

- **Strengthens leadership and advocacy**: It bolsters LRGs' leadership role in advancing disability inclusion at the local level, showcases practices and innovations undertaken, and helps mobilize support from other stakeholders.

- **Positions Local and Regional Governments as key stakeholders**: By actively engaging, LRGs reiterate their role as essential partners to ensure that local needs and priorities are represented in global discussions on transforming global frameworks into action.

- **Enhances community-driven action**: Being closest to the people, LRGs are best placed to co-create and implement inclusive policies and solutions in direct collaboration with persons with disabilities and their communities.

- **Translating aspirations into concrete action**: By breaking down broad goals into specific, context-driven steps, stakeholders can systematically translate vision into tangible progress.

- **Promotes transparency and accountability**: Public commitments contribute to greater transparency in disability inclusion efforts and help build accountability mechanisms that strengthen trust in local and regional governance.

- **Fosters effective partnerships**: Commitments facilitate deeper collaboration with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations

As part of the exercise, participants developed draft GDS Commitments as a way of understanding how to engage in the Summit processes and present their important contributions. The decision to formally submit GDS commitments remains the prerogative of each Local and Regional Government (LRG). The following example commitments were highlighted:

- Mainstreaming disability rights and accessibility across cultural policies and programs to foster resilience.

- Scale up implementation of accessibility (CRPD Article 9), work and employment (article 27), freedom of expression and opinion (article 28).

- Integrate disability inclusion and accessibility consideration in city master plans with the involvement of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

- Accelerate implementation of the Local Inclusion Agenda through integration of a municipality-wide work plan.

- Ensure budget allocations for accessible communications and provision of reasonable accommodation for municipal consultations and stakeholder meetings.

- Conduct accessibility mappings and audits of public spaces.

- Conduct institutional capacity development for municipal staff on disability inclusion and accessibility using national and global frameworks.

- Conduct data collection exercises with persons with disabilities in the city to better identify experiences and requirements to inform municipal policies and practices.

Peer Lessons Learned

Way forward

Recognizing the transformative role of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) in advancing disability-inclusive urban resilience, it is essential to address the diverse local and contextual challenges they face. These include limited awareness on how to implement accessibility and Universal Design principles, limited involvement of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in urban planning and decision-making, and lack of adequate financing mechanisms to support the long-term sustainability of inclusive urban development initiatives.

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Overcoming these challenges requires a systemic shift toward disability-inclusive resilience planning, ensuring that accessibility and meaningful participation are embedded in urban policy and practice. Strengthening peer learning and knowledge exchange among LRGs and institutionalizing OPDs engagement in formal governance structures can help co-create inclusive policies and projects. Expanding financing mechanisms through public-private partnerships will be essential to support long-term inclusive development. At the same time, cities need to update and enforce accessibility standards within urban resilience frameworks and invest in comprehensive disability-disaggregated data collection.

By embedding disability rights and lived experiences at the heart of localization agendas, urban policies and resilience strategies, cities can foster urban spaces that are inclusive, adaptive and resilient for current and future generations.

Key recommendations

1. **Ensure that Local and Regional governments, alongside civil society, are fully engaged as key stakeholders in advancing disability-inclusive urban resilience**, in alignment with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN CRPD.

2. **Support the mechanisms to ensure meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations (OPDs)**, ensuring their active participation in shaping urban resilience and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

3. **Strengthen SDG localization efforts by harmonizing policies and implementing international accessibility standards and universal design principles** in the built and digital environment, by including these principles at the core of urban resilience strategies and in compliance with the UN CRPD.

4. **In direct collaboration with national governments, promote and strengthen LRGs' capacity to mainstream accessibility and work with OPDs** by supporting well-resourced capacity building initiatives to equip them with the necessary competencies, human resources, technical expertise, and financial support.

5. **Regularly generate and utilize disability-disaggregated data to support city-wide mappings** that identify and address barriers to inclusion and accessibility, particularly within climate and disaster risk assessments.

6. **Establish regular, accessible and participatory consultation mechanisms** that enable all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities and older persons, to actively engage in the development, implementation, and monitoring of disability-inclusive urban resilience strategies.

7. **Identify and implement varied and accessible communication channels for crisis information, emergency preparedness and response** to address the diverse accessibility needs of persons with disabilities.

8. **Establish multilateral partnerships to support collaborative dialogues with donors and other stakeholders** on existing local accessibility barriers to explore possibilities for technical and financial resource mobilization to support initiatives to address barriers.