

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Committee on Social Development**Seventh session**

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

**Review of implementation of the Incheon Strategy to
“Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in
Asia and the Pacific****Review of implementation of the Incheon Strategy to
“Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in
Asia and the Pacific****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

Disability-inclusive development is key to fulfilling the commitment to leave no one behind contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Asia-Pacific region has made further commitments to uphold and advance the rights of persons with disabilities through the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. Approaching the end of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, persons with disabilities in the region continue to face barriers in many aspects of life, including employment, decision-making, accessibility and education.

The present document contains a brief overview of the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific during the Decade and the ongoing preparations for the final review of the implementation of the Decade and the Incheon Strategy. It also contains a preliminary analysis of the priorities, achievements and challenges faced by governments of countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region in implementing disability-inclusive development, based upon information received from members and associate members of the Commission.

The Committee on Social Development may wish to review the issues and recommendations contained in the present document and provide the secretariat with guidance on preparations for the upcoming High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, to be convened in October 2022, and to provide guidance on the future direction of its work related to advancing disability-inclusive development and empowering persons with disabilities.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 29 July 2022.

** ESCAP/CSD/2022/L.1.

I. Introduction

1. Persons with disabilities represent 15 per cent of the world's population. This translates into an estimated 700 million people in Asia and the Pacific.¹ In 2012, building on the achievements of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993–2002, and the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003–2012, members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) proclaimed the period from 2013 to 2022 the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities² and adopted the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.³

2. The Incheon Strategy comprises 10 disability-specific development goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators, which are the first set of goals agreed in the region to track progress towards disability-inclusive development. In 2017, the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy was adopted, provided additional guidance on catalysing disability-inclusive development. These frameworks are underpinned by and aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The year 2022 marks the end of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, and ESCAP is conducting a final review of its implementation to chart the post-2022 path towards disability inclusion in the region. A voluntary national survey was disseminated to all members and associate members of the Commission in August 2021 to gather information on the progress made towards realizing disability rights and inclusion across the region, in particular the achievement of the goals and targets of the Incheon Strategy. As of 15 May 2022, the governments of 24 countries and territories had submitted responses to the survey.⁴

4. The present document contains an introduction to the review process at the end of the Decade and the preliminary findings of the survey. Secondary desk research was conducted to collect and analyse data from other reliable sources and to supplement the survey responses.⁵

¹ The figure was calculated as 15 per cent of the estimated population of the region at midyear 2021. See World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva, WHO, 2011); and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), “2021 ESCAP population data sheet”, available at www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Pop_data_sheet2021_20211230.pdf (accessed on 21 April 2022).

² Commission resolution 68/7.

³ Commission resolution 69/13, annex, appendix I.

⁴ Bangladesh; Bhutan; Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; China; Cook Islands; French Polynesia; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Maldives; Marshall Islands; Mongolia; Nauru; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Singapore; Thailand; Türkiye; and Uzbekistan.

⁵ For example, the ILOSTAT portal of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Global SDG Indicators Database and the most recent State party reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

II. Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022

A. Work of the Commission on disability-inclusive development

5. ESCAP served as the secretariat of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, an advisory body for the full and effective implementation of the Incheon Strategy. Over the course of the Decade, with funding support from Australia, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, as well as from the Nippon Foundation and Rehabilitation International, ESCAP has provided technical assistance to several Governments and civil society organizations in the region.

6. To support the development of inclusive employment and social protection systems, ESCAP is assisting the Government of Bhutan in mainstreaming disability perspectives into relevant policies and programmes. ESCAP is providing technical support to the provincial government of Batangas, the Philippines, to implement a pilot project on disability assessment, which aims to facilitate the issuance of disability identity cards and increase access for persons with disabilities to disability-related services. To facilitate inclusive disaster risk reduction and management, ESCAP is supporting national and local policymakers in incorporating disability and gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction policies and measures.

7. In support of building an accessible environment for all, ESCAP has assisted 15 Governments and other entities in formulating action plans to improve the accessibility of the built environment and public transport. Technical guidance has also been provided to the Government of Thailand to ensure accessibility standards relating to goods and services are applied in public procurement processes. Furthermore, to strengthen the capacity of Governments to produce quality disability data, ESCAP developed partnerships with disability focal points in 17 countries. National stakeholder consultations were held to assess disability data gaps and increase awareness of the Incheon Strategy and the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning.

8. In response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, ESCAP has collaborated with civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, in five countries to advance disability rights and inclusion during the pandemic and beyond. Essential support and services, such as community-based mental health counselling, vocational skills training and assistance to persons with disabilities in accessing social protection programmes, were delivered to persons with disabilities to mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic.

9. In addition, to enhance the technical knowledge of members and associate members of the Commission on the goals of the Incheon Strategy, the secretariat developed a series of knowledge products on the topics of employment, political participation, early intervention and inclusive education, gender equality and women's empowerment, disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and disability inclusion in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Final review of the implementation of the Decade

10. As the end of the Decade approaches, ESCAP is leading a comprehensive final review of its implementation. The process includes an analytical review and preparatory meetings, culminating in the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, to be held in Jakarta and online from 19 to 21 October 2022.

11. The aim of the analytical review is to examine the state of disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific, based on responses to the above-mentioned voluntary national survey received from governments, civil society organizations, United Nations entities and other stakeholders and on existing reliable sources. The findings from the survey and desk research will be included in key background documents for submission to the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting and in a regional synthesis report. Initial results of the analytical review are contained in the present document.

12. A series of preparatory meetings, including an expert group meeting (June 2022) and stakeholder consultations (July 2022), have been held to generate recommendations from all stakeholders in the region on strategic directions and priorities for action in the next phase of disability-inclusive development. Members and associate members of the Commission, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, private sector organizations, United Nations entities, development partners and other relevant entities have given additional impetus to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy, in line with the spirit and time frame of the 2030 Agenda.

13. The Decade will conclude in October 2022 at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting, at which participants may renew their commitment and strengthen their support for advancing disability rights and inclusion. The Meeting participants will review the progress made and the challenges remaining in the implementation of the Decade and the Incheon Strategy and discuss forward-looking policies and strategies concerning persons with disabilities. It is expected that an outcome document will be adopted to guide regional efforts towards deepening cooperation to integrate disability-inclusive development into the Sustainable Development Goals during the period 2023–2030.

III. Status of disability-inclusive development in key areas

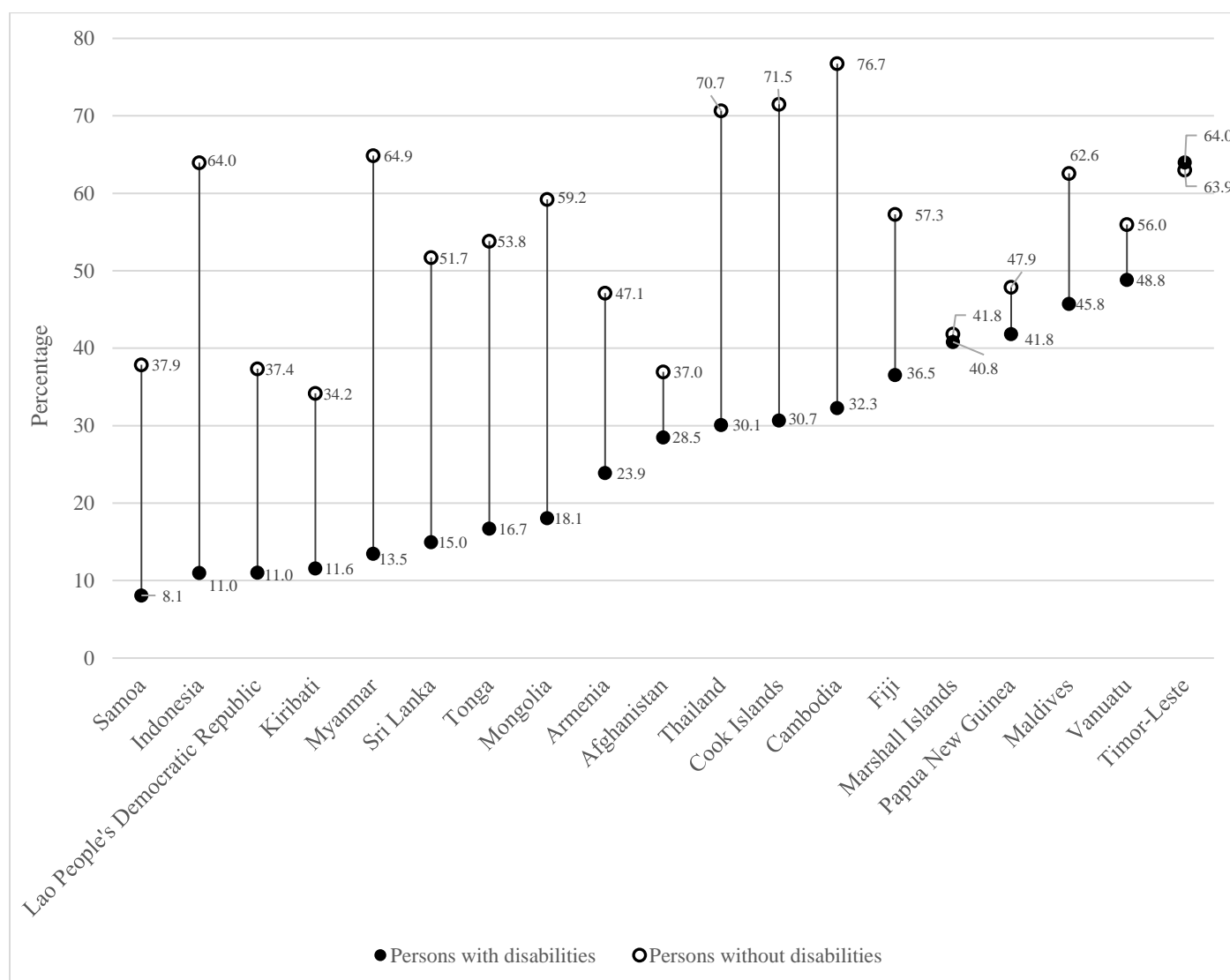
14. The present section contains an overview of the status of disability-inclusive development in Asia and the Pacific, with a focus on key areas concerning persons with disabilities. Data are drawn from United Nations databases and the responses of governments in the region to the voluntary national survey.

A. Employment

15. Employment-to-population ratios of persons with disabilities was low across the region as a significant proportion of persons with disabilities were unemployed or outside the labour force, according to disability-disaggregated data compiled by ILO for 19 countries in Asia and the Pacific (figure I). The average employment-to-population ratio was 21.4 per cent for persons with disabilities, while it was 62.9 per cent for persons without disabilities. With the exception of Timor-Leste, persons with disabilities had lower

employment-to-population ratios than persons without disabilities in all of the countries. Persons without disabilities were at least two times more likely to be employed than persons with disabilities in 11 countries.

Figure I
Employment-to-population ratio, by disability status (latest available year)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT, Data catalogue database. Available at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/> (accessed on 3 April 2022).

16. According to the ILO data, the employment-to-population ratio of women with disabilities is lowest compared to other groups. On average, the employment-to-population ratio was 15.8 per cent for women with disabilities compared to 27.3 per cent for men with disabilities, 50.6 per cent for women without disabilities and 75.8 per cent for men without disabilities. Men with disabilities were at least two times more likely to be employed than women with disabilities in six of these countries. Women without disabilities were at least three times more likely to be employed than women with disabilities in eight countries.

B. Accessibility

17. Regarding the accessibility of government buildings, relevant laws and technical standards were available in 11 of the 12 countries and territories, for which responses to the voluntary national survey were received. At least five Governments conducted accessibility audits. The laws, technical standards and accessibility audit reports often covered the availability of stable routes, accessible toilets, directional and informational signage, personal assistance and staff training, among others. The proportion of accessible government buildings in the national capital ranged from 1.3 per cent in Türkiye, 6.6 per cent in Mongolia and 8.5 per cent in the Philippines to 84.7 per cent in the Republic of Korea, 98.7 per cent in Singapore and 100 per cent in Hong Kong, China.

18. Noticeable progress has been made to strengthen laws, technical standards and accessibility audits to promote the accessibility of public transportation. Regarding international airports, of the 13 governments that responded to the survey, 11 had developed laws, 9 had relevant technical standards and 5 had conducted accessibility audits. The average proportion of accessible international airports in the reporting countries and territories was 62.2 per cent. Moreover, 12 governments reported whether laws, technical standards and accessibility audits concerning the accessibility of bus and rapid transit systems were available. While most had laws and technical standards,⁶ only three governments had conducted accessibility audits for the bus system and three had done so for the rapid transit system.

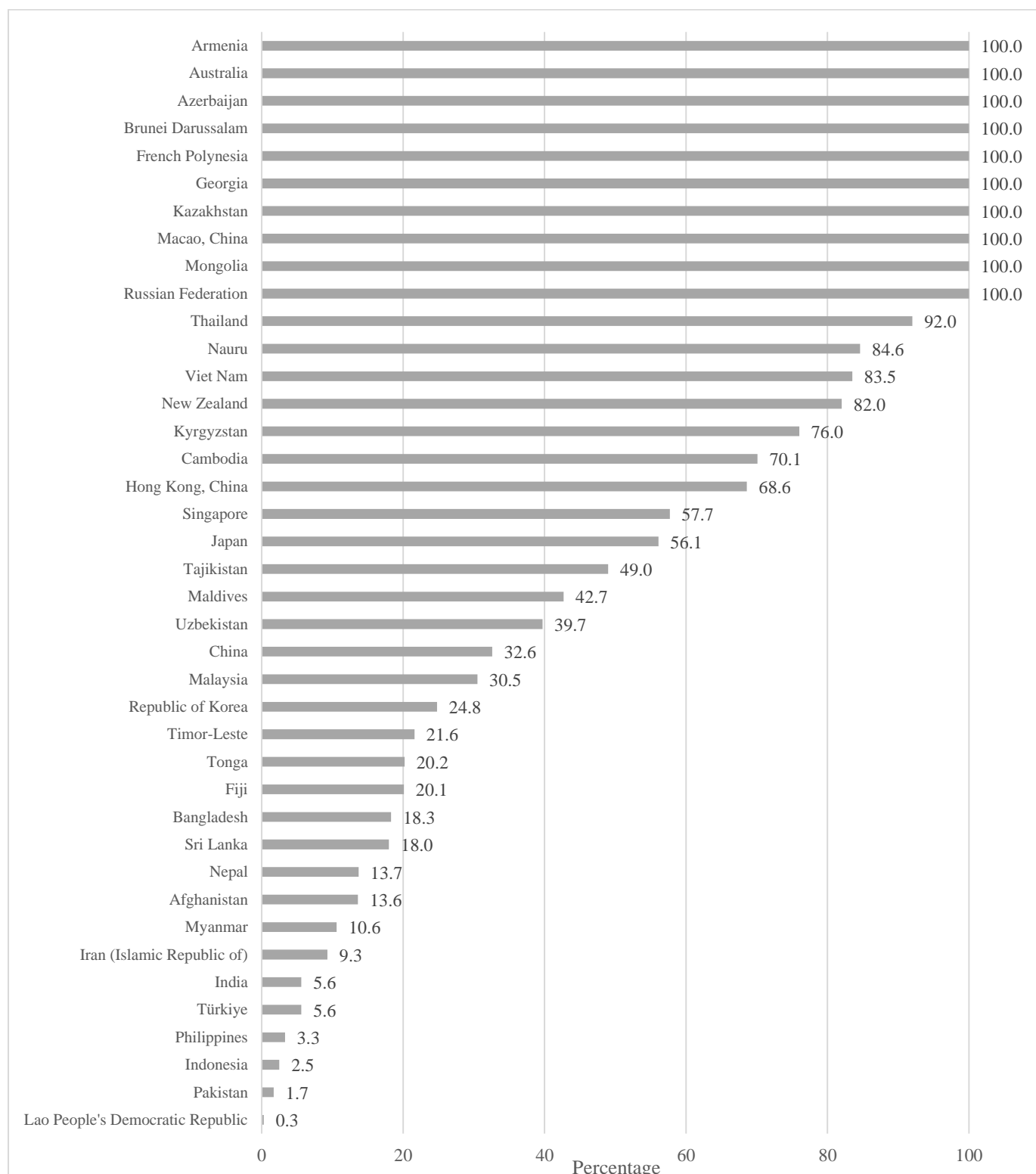
19. The lack of accessible public documents and websites hinders persons with disabilities from effectively receiving information and communicating with others. The findings from the survey suggest that more efforts are needed to make public documents and websites accessible for all. Of the 12 governments reporting on the availability of accessible copies of their constitutions, 9 had made the documents available in accessible DOC or PDF format and 6 had provided ePub format and easy-read versions. Five governments reported that their constitution was available in Braille. Among the 10 governments with data on national government websites, few had accessibility features: 7 had adjustable fonts, 5 had adjustable line spacing, 4 had adjustable contrast schemes, 4 had keyboard accessibility, 4 had a read-out function, 4 had graphic elements with alternative text and 1 had videos in sign language.

C. Social protection

20. Available data suggest that the coverage of social protection benefits is insufficient in much of the Asia-Pacific region. As seen in figure II, data for 40 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region from the ILO Social Security Inquiry show that persons with severe disabilities collected disability social protection benefits at a median rate of 46 per cent. Ten countries and territories had 100 per cent coverage: Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Brunei Darussalam; French Polynesia; Georgia; Kazakhstan; Macao, China; Mongolia; and the Russian Federation. Among the remaining 30 countries and territories, 21 had less than 50 per cent coverage and 7 had less than 10 per cent coverage.

⁶ For the bus system, nine governments had laws and eight had technical standards. For the rapid transit system, eight governments had laws and seven had technical standards.

Figure II
Proportion of persons with severe disabilities collecting disability social protection benefits (latest available year)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from ILO, Statistics on social protection, SDG indicator 1.3.1 – Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, database. Available at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/social-protection/> (accessed on 3 April 2022).

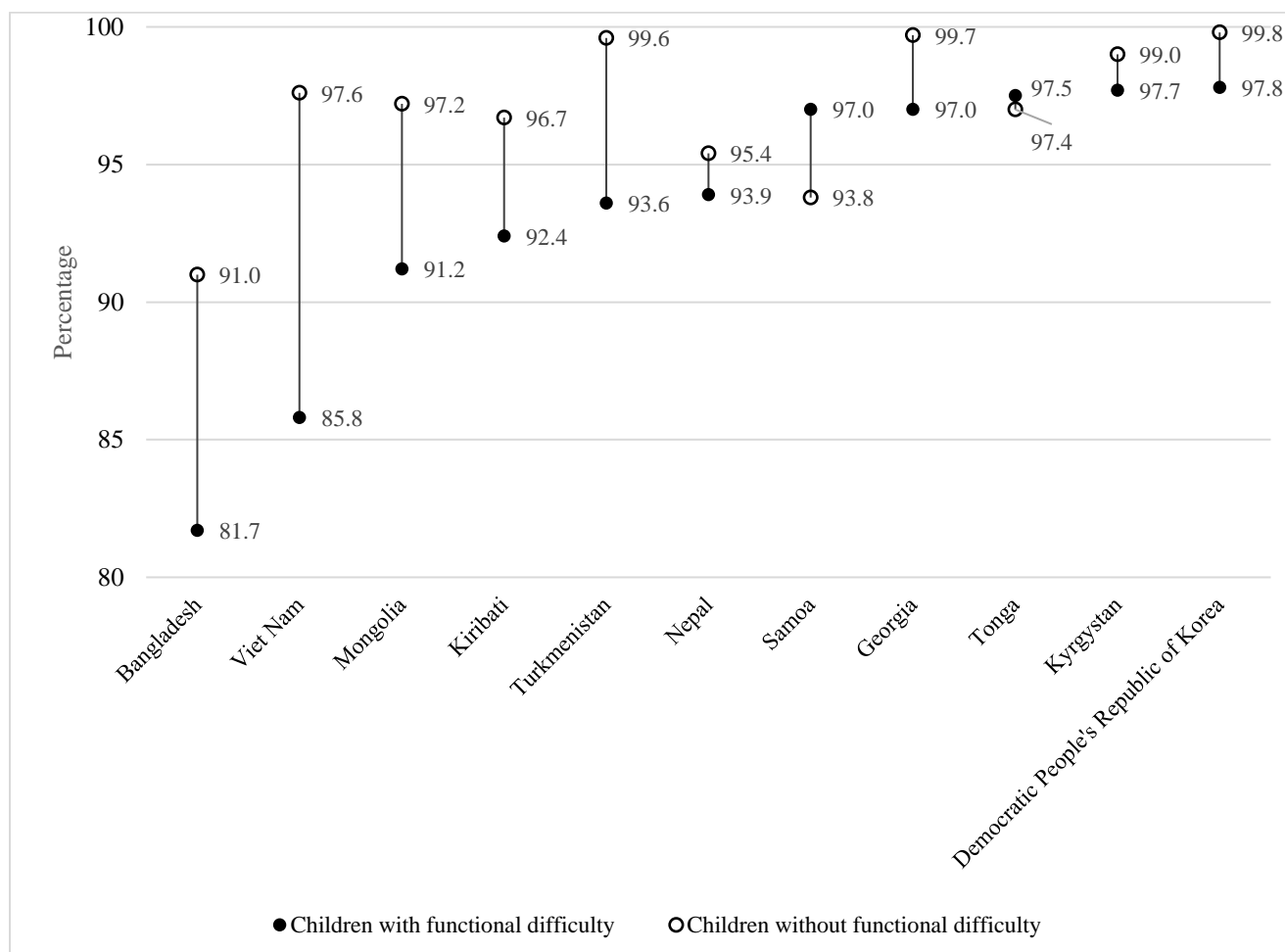
D. Early childhood intervention and education

21. Children with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region continue to lack access to early childhood interventions and primary and secondary education. The findings from UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys provide insight into the attendance rates of children with functional difficulties in early childhood education.⁷ Children with functional difficulties were less likely to participate in early childhood education than their peers without functional difficulties. For the seven countries in the Asia-Pacific region with available data, children aged 36 to 59 months with functional difficulties attended early childhood education at a median rate of 14.4 per cent, compared to 40.1 per cent for children without functional difficulties. The attendance rate of children without functional difficulties was higher than that of children with functional difficulties in all of the seven countries. In three countries, children without functional difficulties were 2.5–3 times more likely to attend early childhood education than children with functional difficulties.

22. The available data suggest that school attendance rates for children with functional difficulties were much better for those aged 7 to 14 years than for those aged 36 to 59 months, but children with functional difficulty still lagged behind those without functional difficulty (figure III). UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys for 11 countries showed that children aged 7 to 14 years with functional difficulties attended school at a median rate of 93.9 per cent compared to 97.4 per cent of children without functional difficulties. Children with functional difficulties had lower rates of school attendance in 9 of the 11 countries, with the gap being greater than five percentage points in four countries. In Samoa the proportion of children with functional difficulties attending school was slightly higher compared to children without functional difficulties and the proportions were almost equal in Tonga.

⁷ UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys database. Available at <https://mics.unicef.org/surveys> (accessed on 21 April 2022).

Figure III
Proportion of children aged 7 to 14 years attending school, by functional difficulty status (latest available year)



Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from United Nations Children’s Fund, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, database. Available at <https://mics.unicef.org/> (accessed on 2 May 2022).

E. Gender equality and women’s empowerment

23. Women and girls with disabilities often experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender and disability. Data related to sexual and reproductive health services from UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys showed a lack of access in some countries for women with functional difficulties.⁸ In the six countries with available data, the proportion of currently married or in-union women with functional difficulties who need family planning and have their needs satisfied with modern contraceptive methods ranged from 45.3 per cent in Georgia to 81.6 per cent in Kyrgyzstan. In Bangladesh, Georgia and Mongolia, women with functional difficulties were approximately six percentage points behind women without functional difficulties.

⁸ Ibid.

24. In accessing sexual and reproductive health services, women and girls with disabilities often face physical, attitudinal, information, legal and economic barriers. Furthermore, substituted decision-making and denial of personal autonomy can result in discriminatory practices such as forced sterilization, contraception and abortion.⁹ According to data from UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, in Georgia, Mongolia and Turkmenistan a smaller proportion of women with functional difficulties make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care compared to women without functional difficulties (76.8 per cent and 79.4 per cent in Georgia, 36.0 per cent and 38.9 per cent in Mongolia, and 30.4 per cent and 42.4 per cent in Turkmenistan).

IV. Priorities, achievements and challenges in advancing disability-inclusive development

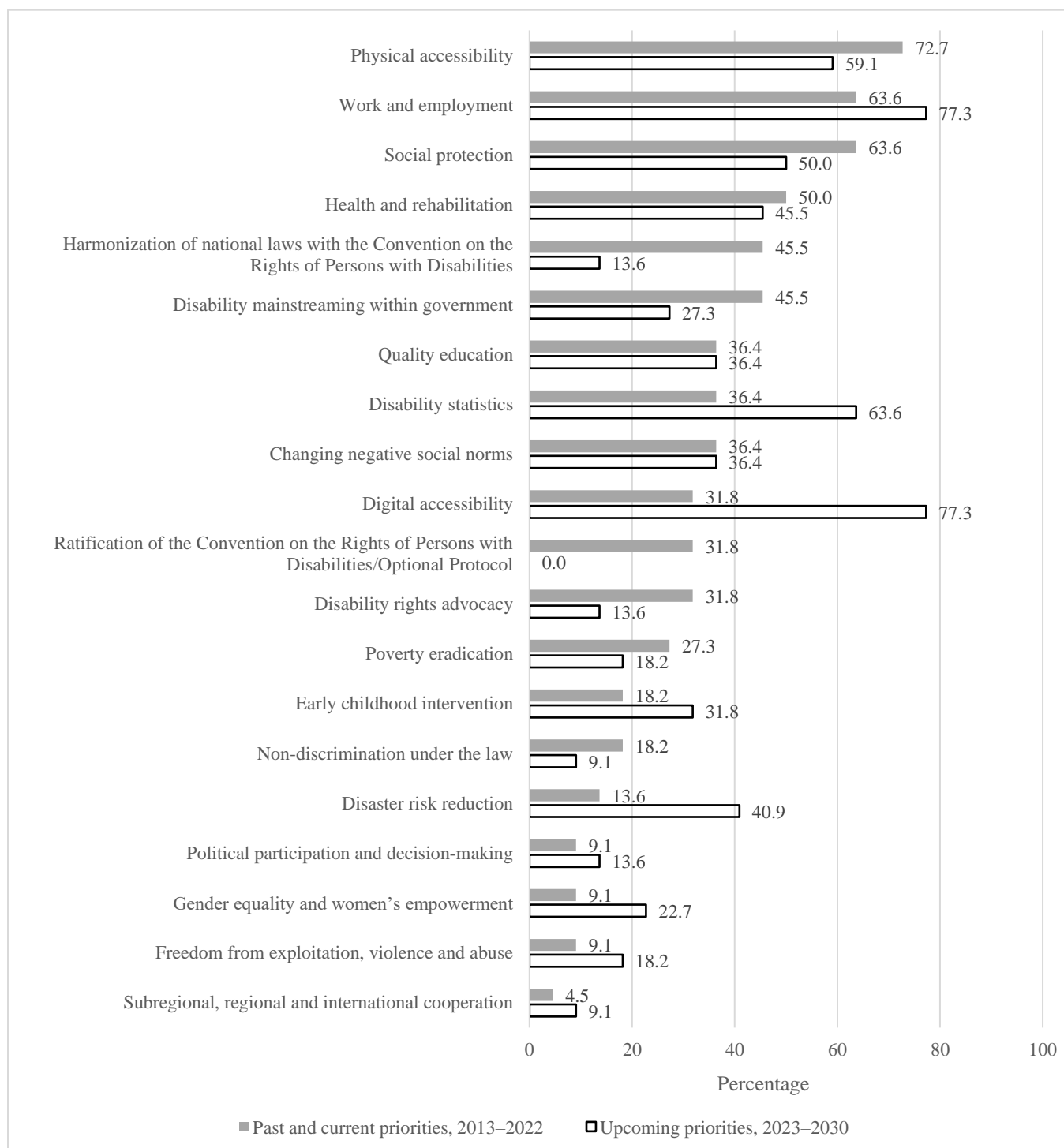
25. The present section contains an overview of priorities, achievements and challenges identified by governments in advancing disability-inclusive development during the implementation of the Decade. The information was sourced from government responses to the voluntary national survey.

A. Priorities for accelerating disability-inclusive development

26. In response to the voluntary national survey, 22 governments listed their top priorities for advancing disability-inclusive development from 2013 to 2022 (figure IV). Access to the physical environment and transportation was identified by 72.7 per cent of the survey respondents as a critical area of concern, followed by work and employment (63.6 per cent), social protection (63.6 per cent), health and rehabilitation (50.0 per cent), harmonization of national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (45.5 per cent) and disability mainstreaming and coordination within government (45.5 per cent).

⁹ See A/72/133.

Figure IV
Priorities for disability-inclusive development identified by
22 governments in the Asia-Pacific region



27. Regarding the priorities from 2023 to 2030, work and employment, and access to knowledge, information and communication were reported by 77.3 per cent of respondents to the survey. Disability statistics and physical accessibility were identified as priorities by 63.6 per cent and 59.1 per cent, respectively, of respondents to the survey.

28. Noticeably, more governments are intensifying efforts in a few areas for the next phase of disability-inclusive development. Some 31.8 per cent of governments reported digital accessibility as a past and current priority, while 77.3 per cent recognized it as an upcoming priority. A significant increase was observed in the prioritization of disaster risk reduction and management (from 13.6 per cent to 40.9 per cent) and disability statistics (from 36.4 per cent to 63.6 per cent).

B. Achievements made during the Decade

29. Among the 22 reporting countries and territories, 54.5 per cent identified improved access to the physical environment and transportation as one of the key achievements during the Decade. Accessibility is a prerequisite for inclusive societies, and access to the built environment and transportation is an integral part of accessibility rights. Governments have developed laws, policies and technical standards to enhance physical accessibility. For example, in Cambodia, promoting accessibility was a joint effort of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction and the Ministry of Cults and Religions, by issuing an interministerial declaration, guidelines on physical accessibility and information letters. In India, the nationwide Accessible India Campaign launched in 2015 aims to achieve universal accessibility for all. As of 2021, accessibility audits had been conducted for 1,662 buildings in 48 cities.¹⁰ In the Republic of Korea, both anti-discrimination and programme-focused legal measures have been introduced to promote accessibility and universal design across different sectors. Audits and incentive-based and punitive measures have been implemented to improve the accessibility of the built environment. According to a field survey conducted in 2018, the proportion of accessible buildings increased from 67.9 per cent in 2013 to 80.2 per cent in 2018.¹¹

30. Among voluntary national survey respondents, 50 per cent reported achievements in developing disability laws, strategies and programmes, reflecting the commitment of governments in the region to accelerate disability-inclusive development. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic enacted the Law on Persons with Disabilities in 2019 to uphold disability rights, eradicate all forms of discrimination and create an environment where persons with disabilities can fully participate in society. The Government of Mongolia adopted the Law on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the National Program for Rights, Social Participation and Development Support for Persons with Disabilities (2018–2022) in 2017, introducing and reinforcing concepts such as universal design, reasonable accommodation, independent living and community-based inclusive development. The Government of the Russian Federation approved the State programme “Accessible Environment” in 2019, aiming to address the diverse needs of persons with disabilities through an integrated approach.

31. Among respondents to the voluntary national survey, 50 per cent of the governments noted enhanced health and rehabilitation services as a significant achievement. Many Governments in the region have provided one-stop and community-based services for persons with disabilities, which are critical for

¹⁰ India, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, *Annual Report of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for the Year 2021-22* (New Delhi, 2022).

¹¹ *Disability at a Glance 2019: Investing in Accessibility in Asia and the Pacific – Strategic Approaches to Achieving Disability-Inclusive Sustainable Development* (United Nations publication, 2019).

their well-being. In the Philippines, the Government enacted a law in 2019 providing for the mandatory PhilHealth coverage for all persons with disabilities. PhilHealth, a health insurance scheme providing universal health coverage, was mandated to develop packages that address the specific health needs of persons with disabilities. In Thailand, the cost of assistive devices for persons with disabilities was covered by the Gold Card universal health coverage scheme.¹² Databases on social welfare were developed and connected with public health organizations to facilitate access to health-care services for persons with disabilities.

32. Quality education for persons with disabilities was an achievement reported by 50 per cent of the survey respondents. Education provides a path by which persons with disabilities can break away from poverty and actively contribute to development processes. Many governments have made efforts to develop accessible learning environments and build the capacity of teachers and education personnel, seeking to establish an education system that is inclusive at all levels. The Government of Bhutan runs the special education needs programme, with a long-term objective of ensuring that all children with disabilities have access to general education in mainstream schools. As of July 2021, 30 schools, including 21 schools with special education needs programmes, enrolled 754 children with disabilities.¹³ In Maldives, the Inclusive Education Policy 2020 was formulated to provide equal opportunities for students with disabilities at all levels of education. The Department of Inclusive Education made efforts to adjust special education units to inclusive classrooms, develop inclusive curricula and assessment systems, and provide teacher training, among others. In Nauru, it is prohibited to deny access to education based on disability status. Steps were taken to include students with disabilities in mainstream schools.

33. Some 45.5 per cent of the governments made achievements in strengthening inclusive social protection systems. Some governments assisted persons with disabilities through a mixture of contributory and non-contributory schemes throughout the life cycle. In addition, a few social protection programmes offer basic income security help to cover disability-related costs and support access to health care and other essential services. In Brunei Darussalam, the disability allowance is compatible with the old-age pension according to the Old Age and Disability Pension Act (Amendment) Order, 2021. In addition, a new monthly benefit was introduced for carers of persons with disabilities. In Fiji, the disability allowance is universal and compatible with employment status. Depending on the recipient's circumstance, it can contribute to basic income security or to covering disability-related costs. Along with transport and health-care concessions, the Government of Fiji is supporting persons with disabilities through a combination of social protection schemes.¹⁴ In French Polynesia, starting in 2020, persons with disabilities could continue to receive part of the disability allowance when employed, supporting their skills development. Previously, people lost their disability allowance after obtaining employment.

¹² UNICEF and Thammasat University, *Final Report: Policy Implementation Analysis on Disability Grant of Thailand* (Bangkok, 2019).

¹³ Bhutan, Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, *Annual Education Statistics 2021* (Thimphu, 2021).

¹⁴ Alexandre Côte, "Disability inclusion and social protection", in *Handbook on Social Protection Systems*, Esther Schüring and Markus Loewe, eds. (Cheltenham, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Northampton, Massachusetts, Edward Elgar, 2021).

34. Increased access to knowledge, information and communication was identified by 40.9 per cent of the governments as an achievement. To address the digital and information divide between persons with and without disabilities, some governments have improved the accessibility of technology products and information and enhanced the digital skills of persons with disabilities. In China, the National Sign Language and Braille Standardization Action Plan (2015–2020) was implemented nationwide, in particular in schools and public service entities, to assist persons with visual and hearing impairments in accessing education opportunities and critical information. In Hong Kong, China, all government websites adopted the level AA standard of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (version 2.0 or 2.1) promulgated by the World Wide Web Consortium. The government also provided free assessment and advisory services to commercial entities to help them understand and meet the technical requirements of web accessibility. In Indonesia, training in digital literacy was provided to persons with diverse disabilities at national and local levels under the national digitalization programme.

35. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its harmonization with national legislation was reported as an area of achievement by 36.4 per cent of survey respondents. Ratifying or acceding to the Convention is a milestone in promoting disability-inclusive development. To ensure the effective implementation of the Convention, some governments have undertaken legislative reviews and harmonized their national laws with the Convention. To further align with the requirements of the Convention concerning anti-discrimination, the Government of Japan passed a revision of the Act for Eliminating Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities in 2021. Under the revised Act, companies are required to provide reasonable accommodation, strengthen collaboration among administrative organs and promote supportive measures to eliminate discrimination based on disability. In the Marshall Islands, the Nitijela (parliament) ensured the Motor Traffic (Disabled Parking) Act 2007, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2015, Human Rights Committee Act 2015, Child Rights Protection Act 2015 and Senior Citizens Act 2018 were in line with the Convention. In Türkiye, Act No. 5378 on persons with disabilities was revised in 2014 to come into line with the requirements of the Convention. The revision included definitions of terms such as disability-based discrimination, reasonable accommodation and accessibility.

36. Disability mainstreaming and coordination within government was another critical achievement identified by 36.4 per cent of survey respondents. Advancing disability-inclusive development requires whole-of-government and all-of-society approaches. Several countries have established multisectoral coordination mechanisms on disability issues. In Pakistan, a national committee was formed under the leadership of the Federal Minister for Human Rights to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Incheon Strategy. Its members included government officials responsible for various thematic areas and representatives of civil society organizations and United Nations entities. Similar institutional settings were proposed at the provincial level. A special committee on persons with disabilities was established under the leadership of the Speaker of the National Assembly, consisting of members of different parties.

37. Decent work and productive employment, which are central to poverty reduction and the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, were noted as an achievement by 36.4 per cent of the respondents. Some governments have strengthened legal frameworks, enhanced vocational training and promoted employment services to support the employment of persons with disabilities. The Government of Bangladesh is building an inclusive technical and vocational education and training system¹⁵ and implementing initiatives such as quotas, job fairs and entrepreneurship training to support persons with disabilities in obtaining employment. In Singapore, in 2021, the Government introduced a new wage offset scheme, the Enabling Employment Credit, to incentivize employers to hire persons with disabilities. The number of employers receiving financial support increased from approximately 3,200 in 2012 to 6,100 in 2020. The number of employed persons with disabilities also rose from approximately 5,000 in 2012 to more than 9,200 in 2020.

38. Several governments mentioned the following achievements: strengthened disability rights advocacy (31.8 per cent), improved disability statistics (31.8 per cent) and increased participation of persons with disabilities in political processes and decision-making (22.7 per cent), among others.

C. Challenges in advancing disability-inclusive development

39. A total of 21 governments reported challenges and barriers to disability-inclusive development. Negative social norms and perceptions about disability were identified by 61.9 per cent of the respondents as a key challenge. Despite the introduction of social and human rights models of understanding disability, some government officials, service providers and the general population still regard impairments or medical conditions as the main cause of disability. They neglect the attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder persons with disabilities from fully and effectively participating in society on an equal basis with others. The biomedical model of disability views persons with disabilities as incapable of living independently in the community and contributing to development efforts. Many governments highlighted the urgent need to raise awareness of disability rights, eliminate discrimination based on disability, fight the ableism mindset and end the charitable approach to supporting persons with disabilities.

40. The inaccessible environment was a challenge noted by 57.1 per cent of the survey respondents. Access to the built environment, transportation, information, communications and other services is critical for persons with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of life. However, many people with disabilities, in particular those living in rural and hard-to-reach areas, experience accessibility-related challenges. Governments stressed the significance of enhancing laws, policies and technical standards to support the development of inclusive and universal design-based cities and communities for all.

41. Approximately 52.4 per cent of the governments reported limited institutional capacity as a challenge in promoting disability-inclusive development. A few governments noted the lack of a multisectoral approach and coordination among government entities. Often, disability perspectives were not mainstreamed into the work of ministries or public organizations beyond the focal ministry on disability issues. Moreover, financial and human

¹⁵ ILO, “Good practices for inclusion of persons with disabilities: a replication guide for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions”, 1 November 2017.

resources for the cause of disability inclusion were limited, restricting the effective implementation of disability policies and programmes. Many governments emphasized that advancing disability-inclusive development should take a whole-of-government approach and required more investment.

42. Other challenges and barriers identified by governments included the lack of accurate disability data (42.9 per cent), implementation of inclusive policies and programmes (28.6 per cent), employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (28.6 per cent), quality and inclusive education (28.6 per cent) and trained and sensitized personnel to provide disability-related services (23.8 per cent). Notably, some governments (19.0 per cent) underscored that women and girls with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with psychosocial disabilities were marginalized and encountered additional difficulties in development processes.

V. Conclusion

43. Persons with disabilities continue to be left behind, lacking access to basic services, education and employment, the physical environment, public transportation and information and communications technology. In many of these sectors, women with disabilities face intersectional discrimination and lag further behind men with disabilities and women without disabilities. Many barriers and challenges to achieving full inclusion remain, including those most often raised by members and associate members of the Commission: negative norms and perceptions regarding persons with disabilities, inaccessible environments and lack of institutional capacity.

44. The Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, guided by the Incheon Strategy, highlighted the significance of generating reliable and comparable data to measure the participation of persons with disabilities in various development opportunities and analysing these data to guide policy and programme implementation. According to the initial analysis of data from the responses of governments to the voluntary national survey and secondary data sources, data availability is still a key missing component in measuring disability-inclusive development. Furthermore, the available data indicate that the Asia-Pacific region is not on track to meet many Incheon Strategy goals and targets.

45. Based on the priorities and challenges identified by members and associate members of the Commission, advancing disability-inclusive development requires continued efforts to promote employment and social protection for persons with disabilities, enhance physical and digital accessibility, strengthen disability statistics and institutional capacity, and address negative social norms and perceptions about disability. In order to fulfil the obligation to “make the right real” for persons with disabilities, governments must continue to work with diverse disability groups and their representative organizations in a coordinated manner to create policies that guarantee inclusion and freedom from discrimination.

VI. Issues for consideration by the Committee

46. In view of the progress made and the challenges remaining with regard to implementing the Incheon Strategy and the upcoming High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, to be convened in October 2022, the Committee on Social Development may wish to do the following:

(a) Take note of the issues that will be discussed as part of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting and the preparatory work undertaken so far;

(b) Provide the secretariat with examples and good practices of effective measures for disability-inclusive development;

(c) Provide further guidance to the secretariat on the preparations for the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting.
