

# CLOSING THE ACCESSIBILITY GAP.

## Progress & Learning Report

Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development Programme 2020-2023

**World Blind Union**

March 2024



IMPLEMENTING  
THE NEW  
URBAN AGENDA

# Acronyms

<b>ABC</b>	Accessible Books Consortium
<b>AFUB</b>	African Union of the Blind
<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence
<b>BAE</b>	Bilateral Associate Expert
<b>CIF</b>	Climate Investment Fund
<b>CNIB</b>	Canadian National Institute of the Blind
<b>COP</b>	UN Climate Change Conference of Parties
<b>COSP</b>	The Conference of the States Parties
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>COVID-19</b>	Corona Virus pandemic
<b>DID</b>	Disability Inclusive Development
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>EBU</b>	European Blind Union
<b>EDF</b>	European Disability Forum
<b>EGM</b>	Expert Group Meeting
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (United Kingdom)
<b>G3ICT</b>	The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs
<b>GAP</b>	The General Assembly of Partners
<b>GDI Hub</b>	Global Disability Innovation Hub
<b>GTF</b>	Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments
<b>HLM</b>	High Level Meeting
<b>HLPF</b>	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
<b>IAAP</b>	International Association of Accessibility Professionals
<b>IAUD</b>	Global Programme for Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development
<b>ICSC</b>	International Civil Society Centre
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and Communication Technologies
<b>IDA</b>	International Disability Alliance
<b>IDDC</b>	International Disability and Development Consortium
<b>IEC</b>	Information, Education, Communication
<b>IEH</b>	Inclusive Eye Health
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of the Red Cross
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>ISO</b>	International Organisation for Standardisation
<b>ITF</b>	International Transportation Forum
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>LRGs</b>	Local and Regional Governments
<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning

<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>NUA</b>	New Urban Agenda
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OHCHR</b>	The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OPD</b>	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
<b>PCG</b>	Partner Constituent Group
<b>RIADIS</b>	Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families
<b>SAGE</b>	Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise [UN-Habitat]
<b>SDC</b>	Swiss Development and Cooperation
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UCLG</b>	United Cities and Local Governments
<b>UDPK</b>	United Disabled Persons of Kenya
<b>ULAC</b>	Latin American Union of the Blind
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNGA</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UNHA</b>	United Nations Habitat Assembly
<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>WIPO</b>	World Intellectual Property Organization
<b>WBU</b>	World Blind Union
<b>WBU-AP</b>	World Blind Union - Asia Pacific
<b>WUF</b>	World Urban Forum

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# About the World Blind Union

**The World Blind Union (WBU), founding member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA), is the leading global voice for an estimated 253 million persons worldwide who are blind or partially sighted.** Its members consist of over 250 organisations in more than 190 countries. WBU's work is driven by a vision of a world in which persons who are blind or partially sighted can participate fully in any aspect of life they choose. WBU advocates for equal opportunities, and the protection and promotion of the fundamental human rights of all.

## Purpose and use of this report

**This report shares WBU's journey, accomplishments, challenges, and learnings from its Global programme on inclusive and accessible urban development (IAUD) between 2020 and 2023.** It aims to provide key insights, lessons learned, and recommendations to support the next phase of WBU's accessibility work towards inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and communities. This report is intended for WBU, its members, partners, and all allies engaged in the implementation of the programme.

## Methodology

**An external evaluator began with a desk review and methodological input, providing WBU with an inception report. The WBU and its IAUD team took charge of the next phase, undertaking interviews, collecting information, analysing findings, and crafting the final report.** While the initial plan aimed for an external evaluation, unforeseen circumstances compelled the team to adjust, working within their limited capacity and shifting the focus from an external evaluation to an internal learning and progress report exercise. This report builds upon a mid-term review conducted internally in 2021 to provide insights and reflections on the programme's achievements and areas of improvement. For this report, guiding questions were developed to facilitate gathering, analysing, and organising findings against each evaluation criteria (**See Annex 2**). Additionally, an interview matrix was developed to guide discussion with key informants (**See Annex 3**).

## Acknowledgements

**We extend our sincere appreciation to all individuals and organisations who shared our journey and whose contributions were instrumental in the completion of this report.** Special thanks to our dedicated team at WBU, our members, and partners, including AFUB, CBM Global, CNIB, CSA, EBU, FCDO, G3ICT, GAP, GDI Hub, GTF, IAAP, IDA, NORAD, OHANA, ONCE, RIADIS, Sida, UCLG, ULAC, UNDESA, UN-Habitat, WBU-AP, WIPO, World Enabled, and our invaluable allies. Your unwavering support and collaboration played a key role in the successful implementation of our work. Your contributions in celebrating successes, sharing key learnings, and providing insights for improvement have been invaluable. Thank you for being integral to our journey.

# Executive Summary

The WBU's Global Programme for Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development (IAUD) Progress and Learning Report summarises the journey towards cities for all, highlighting the strides made in promoting accessibility, fostering meaningful engagement, and ensuring multi-stakeholder collaboration. By aligning with the Global Agendas, promoting the New Urban Agenda and the CRPD obligations, the programme has played an important role in advocating for the localization and effective implementation of CRPD Article 9 within cities and communities worldwide.

The report underscores key lessons learned throughout the programme, emphasising the critical need to amplify the voices of marginalised communities, to bridge existing capacity gaps, and to ensure meaningful engagement of WBU members and OPD partners. The report emphasises the crucial role of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in shaping urbanisation efforts and advocates for their recognition as central stakeholders in decision-making processes.

Looking ahead, sustained investments and commitments to making accessibility a standard practice are identified as essential components for advancing inclusive urban development and effectively addressing today's most pressing issues including climate change. By embracing CRPD principles, supporting OPD engagement and prioritising inclusion, accessibility and universal design, governments and organisations can pave the way for a more equitable and resilient future for all.

This report has identified 19 key recommendations across the IAUD Programme's areas of work, including advocacy, capacity building, partnerships, as well as on programme management and operations. These recommendations serve as guidance for future actions by the WBU, its partners and allies, and should not be viewed as a blueprint, but rather as a means to inform future investments, strategies, and initiatives.

# Introduction

The initiation of the IAUD programme in 2020 stemmed from a proactive response to the global trends of urbanization, climate change, growing vulnerability, increasing barriers, and heightened discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities, especially those who are blind or partially sighted within urban environments. Urgent action is needed to accelerate CRPD implementation, particularly Article 9, ensuring comprehensive accessibility across physical environments, transportation, and information and communication technologies. Global aspirations to ‘leave no one behind’ and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be translated into local actions to genuinely ensure that the obligations set down by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are met.

Over half of the global population currently lives in cities, with a projected 70% by 2050, including one billion persons with disabilities<sup>i</sup>. Global trends show that:

- Urban growth will have significant impact in lower income regions where persons who are blind and partially sighted face increasing risks and exposure to hazards, disasters and climate related events – including threats to their health, food security, water, sanitation, and livelihoods.
- An estimated 200 million individuals may face displacement from climatic events by 2050, including approximately 30 million persons with disabilities seeking refuge in cities and refugee settlements<sup>ii</sup>.
- The pace of population aging is accelerating, surpassing the rate seen in previous eras. Presently, there are more individuals aged 60 and above than children under the age of five<sup>iii</sup>. Over 46% of older persons, aged 60 years and above, experience disabilities<sup>iv</sup>. Projections indicate that by 2050, older persons will constitute 21% of the total population, with the majority residing in low- and middle-income countries.
- The rapid urbanisation is expected to result in the addition of approximately 1.2 million square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>) of newly developed urban areas worldwide by 2030<sup>v</sup>. The significant upcoming urban expansion presents a critical chance to prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and sustainability, avoiding past errors and preventing further inequality.



**It is not only relevant but also extremely urgent. I need that to be done today. African governments and local municipalities have never thought about the accessibility of cities for blind people. People have become accustomed to assisting blind people, but they do not consider our right to live independently and be included in the community. Transport is not affordable; streets are not accessible. From home to work, I face daily challenges. If I am not with a visual guide, I cannot live independently. Abraham Mateta, AFUB.**

**Inclusive and accessible infrastructure is a precondition for persons with disabilities, including persons who are blind and partially sighted, to lead safe, independent, and dignified lives and fully participate in society.** However, evidence indicates a widening inequality gap globally:

- The recent digitalisation of cities shows a growing digital divide for persons with disabilities and older persons globally as urbanisation continues to grow and cities become less and less accessible<sup>vi</sup>.
- Disability-inclusion, accessibility and Universal Design are often disregarded in "Build Back Better" strategies and climate policies, leading to the construction of new, inaccessible infrastructure that perpetuates discrimination and inequalities. Research shows that only 39 out of 195 Parties to the Paris Agreement make some reference to persons with disabilities in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)<sup>vii</sup>.
- Lack of accessibility is a fundamental barrier that causes persons with disabilities to be excluded. Inaccessible infrastructure compromises the realisation and equal enjoyment of all other rights<sup>viii</sup>.
- Barriers to accessing adequate housing hinder the enjoyment of the right to an adequate standard of living, independent life, and inclusion in the community - particularly for persons with disabilities, older individuals, women, and those experiencing homelessness or residing in institutions<sup>x</sup>.
- Inaccessibility of transport and public spaces, coupled with stigma and attitudes, presents significant barriers in everyday life and emergencies in urban and rural areas<sup>x</sup>.

**In the face of unprecedented urbanisation and the escalating impacts of climate change, the urgency to address issues of inclusion and accessibility has become critical. Recent examples of global crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, reminded us that much remains to be done to address persisting and emerging accessibility barriers which sustain inequalities and exclusion of persons with disabilities.** During the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence emerged indicating increased discrimination and accessibility challenges for individuals who are blind or partially sighted when trying to access urban services, transportation, and information technologies<sup>xi</sup>. The crisis highlighted the profound impact of inaccessible environments on individuals' lives, emphasising the critical role that urban infrastructure plays in ensuring well-being, safety, and access to essential services. With the rapid deployment of technologies in cities such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), implementing and monitoring accessibility standards, policies, programmes, and practices becomes more and more critical.



**It is more difficult to get on or off a taxi, and sometimes to pay for the journey if the terminal used is not accessible and the driver does not agree to help us. Danger of catching the virus in public transport. Difficulty respecting the rule of physical distance in public transport. To walk, difficulties caused by new types of urban space development that are developing rapidly in cities. Difficulty obtaining help to cross a more dangerous intersection because the other pedestrians do not wish to guide us.** (Anonymous testimony, Covid-19 Amplifying voices, our lives, our say).

# Programme Overview

At the time of the adoption of the [New Urban Agenda](#) in 2016, there was limited engagement of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in urban advocacy spaces at the global level. When WBU stepped in to fill this gap, it did so throughout the IAUD programme. The IAUD programme embarked on its journey in 2019, commencing with a pilot initiative around accessible Smart Cities informed by a 2018 WBU workshop on Smart Cities, in Guatemala City. This pilot laid the foundation for the programme's expansion since 2020, evolving in tandem with WBU's growing role and expertise.



When we initiated this programme, it was a demand from the sector. From what we heard from WBU members, from what WBU members were working on, it was clear that WBU should lead. Jose Viera, IDA.

## Objective and main areas of work

The IAUD Programme was set up to influence dialogues, policies, frameworks, and practices guiding urban development at all levels, making sure that WBU, its members and OPD partners have a seat at the table and that considerations for disability-inclusion, accessibility and Universal Design are accounted for. Towards achieving this, WBU wanted to increase visibility and influence of WBU, its members and OPD partners, across advocacy platforms and mechanisms guiding urban development at all levels to promote disability inclusion and accessibility in line with the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda.

The programme's areas of work are interconnected and included:



**ADVOCACY “Amplifying Voices”:** Activities included coordinating engagement/participation of WBU, its staff, members and OPD partners in relevant processes, forums and discussions guiding urban development at all levels including technical expertise delivery on disability inclusion, accessibility, and universal design as well as information sharing and learning.



**CAPACITY BUILDING “Tools for Action”:** Activities included co-development, roll-out and sharing of tools and resources to support WBU staff, members, OPD partners and mainstream stakeholders in advocacy efforts and delivering of expertise on inclusive and accessible practices including how to implement accessibility standards and Universal Design.



**PARTNERSHIPS “Partnering for Change”:** Activities included strengthening WBU's engagement with key mainstream stakeholders through meaningful partnerships to promote CRPD compliance, accessibility, and Universal Design and to leverage WBU's expertise, impact, and visibility.

## Core frameworks

The IAUD Programme is anchored in the CRPD and focuses on accelerating the localization and the implementation of CRPD Article 9 on accessibility. It addresses a critical challenge highlighted in [CRPD General Comment no. 2](#) which is the lack of implementation of accessibility at local levels and the need for engagement of local authorities and OPDs in ensuring access to the physical environment, transportation, information, and communication. It prioritizes the active and meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in line with [CRPD General comment No.7](#), recognising them as experts and advocating for their central role in decision-making processes. Such engagement is crucial for ensuring government accountability, addressing discrimination, and removing accessibility barriers that perpetuate inequalities and exclusion.

The IAUD programme fosters synergies between the CRPD and the global agendas, serving as mutually reinforcing tools to realise human rights. This includes the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, including [SDG 11](#) on inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities which focuses on access to adequate housing, basic services, public transport, green spaces, resilience and inclusive urban planning and management. The [New Urban Agenda](#) is key to CRPD Article 9 because it provides a comprehensive framework for achieving inclusive and accessible urban development, ensuring that persons with disabilities can live independently and fully participate in all aspects of urban life. Other key frameworks include the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [Paris Agreement](#) which are indispensable to address disability-inclusion and accessibility within the context of climate action, resilience, and disaster risk reduction.

**Figure 1** The CRPD and the Global Agendas including the New Urban Agenda working as mutually reinforcing tool for localization and implementation of accessibility.



## Alignment with WBU Strategic plans

The WBU's IAUD Programme is aligned with the broader vision of the WBU's strategic plan, which envisions a future where individuals who are blind or partially sighted enjoy full participation, autonomy, and freedom. In particular, the programme contributed towards the implementation of the CRPD and the localization of the global agendas. The programme was conceived as a strategic initiative within the WBU mandate, framework, and context to address accessibility barriers and discrimination faced by persons who are blind or partially sighted.

The programme originated with a dedicated commitment to furthering the objectives set forth in the WBU Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021, and closely aligns with the strategic goals outlined in the [WBU Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025](#), across advocacy, capacity building, and organisational excellence. Through the IAUD Programme, WBU members have had opportunities to actively engage in international events, contribute to decision-making processes, share and gain access to key resources and publications. Such involvement provides networking opportunities, access to training and learning, and avenues to influence global policies with relevance to accessibility and disability inclusion.

## Alignment with the CBM Switzerland/Global Grant

The IAUD programme is strategically aligned with the primary objective of the CBM Switzerland/Global Grant, underscoring the leading role of OPDs, like the WBU, in advising on and supporting CRPD implementation across various development and humanitarian agendas. These agendas notably include those related to urban development, climate action and disaster risk reduction, including the New Urban Agenda, 2030 Agenda, Sendai, and the Paris Agreement. The specific objective of the CBM Switzerland/Global Grant is to enhance the leadership and capacity of WBU in promoting CRPD compliance. Key indicators for success as outlined in the Grant's log frame include the strengthening of collaborations between WBU members, OPD partners, and other allies across levels, as well as enhancing capacity of WBU staff and members to effectively engage and influence policy at national, regional, and global levels. The IAUD programme, in collaboration with WBU members, OPD allies and partners, actively worked to influence legislation, policies and practices impacting the lives of WBU's constituency.

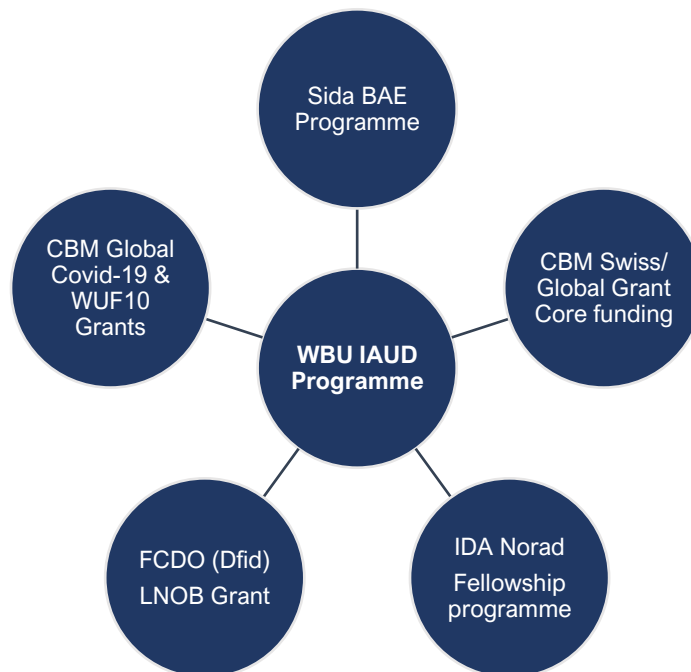
The IAUD Programme served as a crucial instrument to advance such objectives, specifically in ensuring that the principles of the CRPD are not only maintained but also progressed and integral across various dimensions and levels of urban development.

## Success factors in launching the IAUD Programme

The combination of diverse funding sources, strategic partnerships, organisational support and a well-established core team has been instrumental for the IAUD programme's successful launch and ongoing progress. The financial commitments from international donors, along with the administrative support provided by our members, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and the African Union of the Blind (AFUB), were key for WBU. CNIB and AFUB played essential roles by hosting and facilitating human resources. Additionally, CNIB provided administrative support to the WBU Secretariat, assisting with finance and auditing tasks.

The programme's inception was facilitated by a combination of funding modalities and through different sources, including:

- **The LNOB Disability Catalyst Grant from UK's FCDO** which supported the one-year pilot on Accessible Smart Cities in 2019.
- **Sida's BAE Programme** which provided three-year funding for the IAUD Programme Officer position (2019-2021). This position was instrumental in coordinating partnerships with key urban stakeholders and enhancing the representation of WBU, WBU members, and OPD partners across advocacy platforms guiding urban development. A contributing success factor was the location of the position in Nairobi, Kenya, with strong UN presence.
- **IDA NORAD's fellowship programme** which helped recruiting a new NORAD Fellow in late 2020, partially supporting the programme.
- **CBM Switzerland/Global Grant**, with the Swiss Development and Cooperation (SDC) as the back funder, which provided core funding, enabling the scaling up of the pilot initiative on Accessible Smart Cities in 2019 to the expanded urban programme. This grant also facilitated the inclusion of a part-time Senior Advisor in 2019, who was later integrated into the WBU urban programme team on a full-time basis, and enabled retainment of the Programme Officer from 2022.
- **Additional CBM Global Grants** provided catalyst funding to support COVID-19 response activities and to enhance the participation of a cross-disability caucus at World Urban Forum 10 (WUF10).



**Figure 2** Financial commitments that supported the WBU IAUD Programme.

**WBU's journey around inclusive and accessible urban development is a collaborative effort. The groundwork laid down by the Disability-Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development (DIAUD) Network was critical to WBU's engagement in this field.**

The DIAUD network was initiated in 2016 with support from many organisations like IDA and UNDESA, World Enabled, Nippon Foundation, OHANA Indonesia and CBM amongst others. The DIAUD network emerged out of the need to include the voices of the global disability community in the processes leading up to and during [Habitat III the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development](#) in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016<sup>xii</sup>, where the New Urban Agenda was crafted and adopted. These advocacy efforts led to the initiation of the [Cities for All Initiative](#), led by World Enabled, who played a crucial part in creating a collaborative space for OPDs and accessibility professionals, allowing WBU to actively engage and lead incrementally on advocacy and advisory. In addition, the collaborative relationship between WBU and IDA, the latter with its offices in Geneva, New York, and its network of IDDC IDA Bridge Alumni further facilitated and enhanced the programme effectiveness and advocacy outcomes right from the start.



### **CBM Switzerland/Global Grant & Core funding as a catalyst.**

The renewed agreement between WBU and CBM Global (2020) has been key to propel the IAUD programme. The foundation of this agreement is the joint commitment of CBM Global and WBU to the rights of persons with disabilities and their families and the recognition of the role of organisations representing persons with disabilities (OPDs) in leading systemic change.

This unique agreement has laid down the foundations and provided the resources needed through the CBM Switzerland/Global Grant, for WBU to lead on the accessibility work. Core funding provided WBU with crucial flexibility, enabling investments in areas that would otherwise be challenging to address and finance. Applying for and managing donor funding demands a certain level of capacity that many Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), including organisation like the WBU, often lack. When available, these opportunities rarely offer possibilities for OPDs to lead and set their own goals.

The CBM Switzerland/Global Grant provided resources to build capacities internally, enabling innovative work, while positioning WBU in an increasing leadership role. This has also helped building legitimacy, credibility, and expertise, challenging the unjust perception that OPDs lack expertise or cannot be agents of change—a misconception often rooted in their historical exclusion from development or humanitarian efforts.

Collaboration with CBM Global has led to significant outcomes notably the co-development, launch, and roll-out of Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action and it has opened doors for WBU to leverage innovative partnerships with key urban stakeholders and agencies engaged in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

# Key achievements at a glance

Over the last four years, through the IAUD programme, WBU and its members have been working in close collaboration with different partners including more than 20 OPDs, several UN agencies, NGOs/INGOS, networks and stakeholder groups. WBU's work on urban development has led to significant achievements. The programme has made important strides in advocacy, capacity building, and partnerships opening new avenues for member engagement, leadership, and expertise.

The sections below provide a summary of the key achievements and successes across the different domains related to the IAUD programme.

## Overall Impact



- **Increased commitments and investments on inclusion and accessibility** by cities and local governments, UN Agencies, I/NGOs, academia, and other marginalised groups.
- **Increased leadership and capacity of WBU** to influence decisions, policies, and dialogues on different dimensions of inclusive and accessible urban development in line with the CRPD.
- **Increased recognition of WBU and OPD partners as key stakeholders** within urban development, and in implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11.
- **Enhanced technical expertise on accessibility and universal design** through development and roll-out of key resources supporting WBU members, OPD partners, and mainstream stakeholders.
- **Strengthened organisational excellence** through the establishment of a designated and effective global team leading on engagement around inclusive and accessible urban development.

## Pioneering partnerships



- **WBU became the first global OPD to officially partner with United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).**
- **WBU became the first global OPD to officially partner with the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)** representing over 240 000 local and regional governments worldwide.

## Amplifying voices



- **WBU co-led efforts towards the Cities for All Campaign**, leveraging commitments from various cities and organisations, and was among the pioneering signatories of the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities, a framework WBU helped develop.
- **WBU led cross-disability delegations at the World Urban Forum (WUF) 10 and 11**, also supporting the development of outcome declarations - Abu Dhabi Declared Actions and the Katowice Declared Actions.
- **WBU advocated at the highest level, and uniquely addressed the United Nations General Assembly** with more than 90 member states and 700 mayors during the High-Level Meeting (HLM) on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA).
- **WBU actively engaged in research and shaping global policies for cities**, forming alliances with other advocacy groups including GAP Older Persons PCG to promote inclusion and access for all - UCLG Policy Paper on Inclusive and Accessible Cities (Easy-Read), Policy Brief on Localization and Accessibility, Global survey on Accessibility and OPD Engagement.
- **WBU influenced UN-Habitat Assembly resolutions** by collaborating with representatives from UN member states, notably contributing to the inclusion of accessibility in the Smart Cities Resolution.

## Leadership and expertise



- **WBU earned a seat in key advisory groups** including UN-Habitat's Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE) and the Smart Cities for All Advisory Committee of the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ICT).
- **WBU became the co-chair of the Persons with Disabilities Partner Constituency Group in the General Assembly of Partners** which is the formally recognized stakeholder engagement mechanism for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, creating space for WBU members and OPD partners including International Disability Alliance to engage.
- **WBU participated as an expert and advisor in the production of UN's 2023 SDG 11 Synthesis Report** ensuring that accessibility is addressed in the report, its recommendations, and at the heart of SDG 11.

## Sharing knowledge



- **WBU co-developed and co-implemented Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action**, assisting two UN Agencies (WIPO & UN-Habitat) and supporting CBM Global across three thematic teams, headquarters, and eleven country offices across four regions in implementing their accessibility policy.
- **WBU & City Space Architecture co-developed a special issue of The Journal of Public Space on Universally Public Spaces for All**. The publication, launched at WUF 11, has reached 16 900 readers. It includes 8 academic articles, 7 non-academic articles and case studies, and 2 viewpoints from various cities, universities, organisations, and experts, showcasing methods and learnings from implementing accessibility.

# Amplifying voices



## Results in advocacy

The IAUD Programme has established WBU as a prominent advocate in an arena where many other Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) had limited global engagement. By bridging crucial development issues related to urbanisation, with disability rights, the programme has unlocked opportunities, raised awareness, and leveraged key global commitments on disability-inclusion and accessibility. Enhancing communication channels and ensuring improved access to information are essential for strengthening WBU members' and OPDs' participation in advocacy at global, regional, national, and local levels.

## Overview of the advocacy roadmap

Building upon past efforts, the IAUD Programme is rooted in an ongoing commitment to advocacy, constructing its roadmap by aligning with global agenda priorities. The advocacy roadmap serves as the heartbeat of the Programme, combining two critical tracks. The **first track** revolves around advocacy related to CRPD and SDG implementation and monitoring, including engagement across key events such as COSP, HLPF for example. The **second track** focuses on advocacy related to the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda, entailing participation in events like WUFs, Habitat Assemblies, UCLG Congresses, among others.

The following table shows some of the key highlights of the IAUD Advocacy journey since its inception, including milestones taken prior to 2020.

Year	Milestones
2018	<b>Launch of the Cities for All Campaign and signing of the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities</b> led by World Enabled in collaboration with the DIAUD Network, GIZ/BMZ, GAP Older Persons and the cities of New York, Chicago, São Paulo, Laayoune, Curitiba, and Amman.
2019	<b>Launch of the UCLG Policy Paper on Inclusive and Accessible Cities</b> during the UCLG Congress' World Summit of Local & Regional Leaders in partnership with GAP Older Persons, World Enabled and UCLG.
2020	<b>Signature of a historic agreement between WBU and UN Habitat</b> , fostering collaboration around CRPD Article 9, SDG11 and the NUA. <b>Participation at the World Urban Forum 10</b> , including coordination of a cross-disability caucus and the elaboration of the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions.

Year	Milestones
	<p><b>Co-organisation of Expert Group Meetings on inclusive cities with UN Habitat.</b></p> <p><b>Launch of the WBU Covid-19 Global Report &amp; Its Call for Actions.</b></p> <p><b><a href="#">Official launch</a> of Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action</b> at ICSC event with CBM Global.</p>
2021	<p><b>WBU is appointed to the UN-Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE).</b></p> <p><b>Co-organising sessions with ONCE at the World Blindness Summit</b> on urban development and Accessibility GO! with key partners including UN-Habitat, UCLG, G3ICT, CBM Global, EDF, RIADIS.</p> <p><b>Roll-out of Accessibility GO! within CBM Global and <a href="#">WIPO</a>.</b></p>
2022	<p>Participation of WBU in the Global Disability Summit and International Transportation Forum 2022.</p> <p><b>Active involvement in the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda</b> underscoring the programme's commitment to shaping global urban policies.</p> <p><b>Participation in the World Urban Forum 11 and the development of the Katowice Declared Actions</b> demonstrating the programme's impact on global urban development agendas.</p> <p><b>Participation in UCLG Congress' World Summit of Local &amp; Regional Leaders</b> and in the elaboration of the Pact for the Future of Humanity which recognize accessibility as precondition for inclusion.</p> <p>Keynote address at <b>Development Policy Symposium by City of Vienna</b>, focusing on SDG 11.</p>
2023	<p><b><a href="#">WBU and UCLG enter into a historic agreement</a></b> at the UCLG Retreat.</p> <p>Participation in the 2<sup>ND</sup> <b>UN-Habitat Assembly with AFUB and UDPK</b> and convenes event with ministers and OPDs.</p> <p>Launching of WBU and UCLG <b>Policy Brief on Localization to Solve the Accessibility Crisis</b>, during COSP 16.</p> <p>Supporting <b>launch of the 2023 UN SDG11 Synthesis Report</b> at HLPF following WBU's expert advisory role in the development of the report.</p> <p><b>SDG Summit &amp; launch of UCLG Global Survey on Accessibility and Engagement of Persons with Disabilities</b> (for Local and Regional Governments).</p> <p>Roll-out of Accessibility GO! in Lao PDR as part of CBM Global IEH Initiative.</p> <p><b>Participation in Expert Group Meetings:</b> 2024 World Cities Report on Cities and Climate Action, and on Status and Review of Housing Indicators</p> <p><b>WBU delegation's participation in COP 28 Disability Caucus</b> bridging the gap between urbanisation and climate action issues.</p>



**Lots of the work around accessibility has been quite functional in a sense but not looking at the overall ecosystem piece. The New Urban Agenda is about creating the ecosystem for comprehensive accessibility and addressing barriers in the travel chain.** Mary Keogh, CBM Global.

## **Reflections on the advocacy journey, its strategic alliances and impact**

**The IAUD Programme has strategically formed alliances with influential organisations and partners**, including the International Disability Alliance (IDA), UN-Habitat, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), CBM Global Disability Inclusion, G3ICT, Cities for All Network, Global Disability Innovation Hub, City Space Architecture, and the General Assembly of Partners. These collaborations have been pivotal in fostering “coherence of voice” in advocacy efforts, contributing to the development and launch of crucial policy papers, tools, resources, and milestone agreements supporting efforts towards localization.

**Advocacy events have served as crucial meeting points, connecting diverse actors and agendas over the years.** From the signing of the agreement with UN-Habitat to active participation at COP28, the IAUD Programme has gradually built its network of alliances, leveraging the advocacy roadmap as a platform for dialogue and as a mechanism to implement and monitor actions in alignment with partnership agreements (e.g. MOUs with UN-Habitat and UCLG). The collaboration with OPD partners, as well as the Older Persons constituency group, has proven indispensable on this advocacy journey. It involved building on and mutually supporting each other's agendas united by the common goal of advancing universal design. It also involved creating spaces for WBU members and OPD partners to actively engage, while increasing their confidence to advocate as experts in their own rights. The GAP-PCG on Persons with Disabilities (co-chaired by WBU), has played a pivotal role in ensuring the meaningful and effective participation of Disability Caucuses and delegations in key events including WUFs and UCLG congresses, along numerous Expert Group Meetings.



**Participating in WUF10 has been eye-opening and an opportunity not only to highlight barriers faced by persons with disabilities from underrepresented groups in urban development; but it was an opportunity to also build solidarity in the cross-disability movement and together advocate for the inclusion of all voices of persons with disabilities in the New Urban Agenda.** Elizabeth Ombati, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, Kenya.

Read the full report: [WBU coordinates participation of IDA members' representatives and Bridge CRPD-SDGs Alumni in the 10th World Urban Forum.](#)

**The advocacy journey has included active participation in various events, where WBU, OPD partners and allies had opportunities to speak, lead, and co-organise side-events and share priorities and recommendations with a wide range of audiences.** Unique speaking opportunities were facilitated by partners. Significant moments encompass [WBU's impactful statement](#) delivered at the United Nations General Assembly, addressing more than 90 member states and 700 mayors, as well as active participation in large events like World Urban Forum (WUF) 10 and 11, leveraging key commitments from governments and UN Agencies around accessibility. The WUF 11 represented a significant milestone, notably in terms of accessibility, recognized as one of the most accessible WUF to date (**see Annex 1 Case studies**).

**Building on WUF 11's accessibility legacy, WBU supported engagement of AFUB and UDPK in the [second session of the UN-HABITAT Assembly](#),** leading discussions with Ministers (Poland and Egypt), UN-Habitat, and local government representatives around OPD engagement and accessibility priorities towards WUF 12 in 2024. Key advocacy moments also featured the engagement of urban stakeholders in WBU and OPD-related events, including the World Blindness Summit co-organised by WBU and ONCE, as well as across COSPs with the participation of UCLG, UN-Habitat, and diverse cities.

**During the challenging circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, advocacy was oriented towards generating evidence, sharing experiences and recommendations from the WBU community** including through a Call to Action, Facebook live sessions, and a Webinar with G3ICT on Smart Cities and Digital Accessibility. The [WBU Covid-19 Report Our lives, our say](#) deepened the understanding of accessibility barriers and key challenges within the WBU community, emphasizing the critical role of accessible urban environments in facilitating or hindering participation and independent living - both in physical and digital realms.

**The report served as a basis for advocacy, channelling recommendations for 'building back better', and actively supporting WBU voices in existing advocacy campaigns, such as the [Cities for All Campaign](#), which have been essential to amplify voices and to leverage commitments from cities around the globe.** In 2022, WBU coordinated the participation of a accessibility caucus made of practitioners from OPDs, older persons, youth, and accessibility professionals to support co-creation of the [Pact for the Future of Humanity](#) launched during the UCLG Congress in Daejeon. Joint advocacy efforts with cities were enhanced with the co-development of the global survey for accessibility and OPD engagement together with WBU members via WBU's Committee on the Built Environment and the UCLG Community of Practice on Inclusive and Accessible Cities and Territories including the cities of Mersin, Villa Carlos Paz, Lisbon, Banjarmasin, and Santa Fe.



**Urban work is an exemplification of “Nothing about us without us” and WBU should continue to walk the talk. If we stop advocacy, then we have no voice, and no systemic change is created.** Martine Abel-Williamson, WBU.

## Moving forward on advocacy priorities

The advocacy journey around the IAUD Programme demonstrated the importance of sustaining and amplifying the momentum gained through WBU's involvement in key advocacy events and milestones. It also emphasised the significance of enhancing collaboration in various development sectors and ensuring that WBU members and OPD partners are equipped to carry out advocacy efforts in their respective regions, countries, and cities.

Moving forward, key priorities have been identified. It includes the following:

- A. Localization and influencing systems, policies, and practices - across regional, national and local levels:** WBU has, through its advocacy efforts, established significant channels for OPD engagement and collaboration with mainstream stakeholders at the global level. While this offers opportunities to engage more WBU members and OPDs in discussions related to the New Urban Agenda, it is crucial for WBU to concurrently support advocacy efforts at regional, national, and local levels.
- B. Accelerated information sharing, support, and advocacy resources:** Developing advocacy packages with essential information, resources, data, and guidance on key messages can facilitate knowledge-sharing in support of effective advocacy around inclusive and accessible urban development, including by unpacking CRPD Article 9.
- C. Connecting and mapping advocacy initiatives within the WBU community:** WBU members have undertaken remarkable advocacy work around accessibility, and it is essential to increasingly facilitate engagement within the WBU community to make connections between such existing initiatives and support exchange of learnings between WBU members and regions. A mapping exercise of current advocacy initiatives could help supporting this.
- D. Sharing knowledge and practices through leveraging internal mechanisms:** WBU committees and working groups serve as valuable mechanisms to address emerging issues and gaps in accessibility in the built environment, mobility, transport, housing, Assistive Technologies and digital accessibility. Leveraging connections with key partners and cities globally could provide unique opportunities for WBU's community to share their examples and case studies, inspiring and encouraging the replication of best practices across WBU's network of allies.
- E. Urban and localization lens on climate action and disaster risk reduction:** It is imperative to enhance advocacy efforts around climate action and disaster risk reduction considering the disproportionate impact by disasters and climate change on WBU's constituency. The IAUD's urban lens and the "localization approach" to CRPD Article 9 aligns well with the work of our partners. It acknowledges the pivotal roles of local governments and cities in advancing inclusive and sustainable infrastructure, urban resilience, and fostering low-carbon, climate-resilient development. Inclusive resilience efforts and emergency response measures necessitates effective integration of accessibility to avoid reinforcement of accessibility barriers.

**Addressing these priorities in future advocacy endeavours necessitates dedicated resources, encompassing both financial and logistical support, to guarantee their successful implementation.** For instance, effective communication support is essential for disseminating key messages and engaging a diverse membership and audiences at different levels. Moreover, establishing adequate mechanisms for information sharing, monitoring and evaluation is equally vital to ensure continuous membership engagement and measuring progress of advocacy efforts across diverse contexts.

# Tools for Action



## Results in Capacity Building

The IAUD Programme has provided valuable tools and resources supporting practitioners and organisations in implementing, monitoring, and assessing accessibility. Tools like **Accessibility GO!** and resources like **The Journal of Public Space** have proved to be excellent for learning, capacity building and knowledge development. While champions and good practices have emerged, further efforts are required to strengthen capacity building initiatives and tailor strategic capacity development programmes. Finding adequate solutions to enhance the skills and knowledge of WBU members, OPDs and stakeholders has often been mentioned as the cornerstone to ensure effective implementation of accessibility.

## Overview of the tools and resources

The IAUD Programme co-developed, and assisted in reviews of, a comprehensive set of tools and resources to facilitate and support implementation of accessibility initiatives in line with CRPD article 9 and towards localization of the global agendas. These tools include:

- **The Policy Brief on Localization**; offering strategic insights into the importance of localizing accessibility efforts.
- **The Global Survey on Accessibility and OPD engagement**; supporting research and mapping of the status of accessibility implementation and OPD engagement from cities' perspective on a global scale.
- **Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action**; serving as a practical guide for individuals and organisations to take concrete steps toward fostering accessibility.
- **The Journal of Public Space**; contributing to knowledge-sharing and learnings on inclusive and accessible public spaces.
- **The Cities for All Global Compact**; outlining a collaborative framework for promoting accessibility in urban environments.
- **All Under One Roof**; for which WBU contributed to, providing guidance for disability-inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies in line with CRPD Article 11.

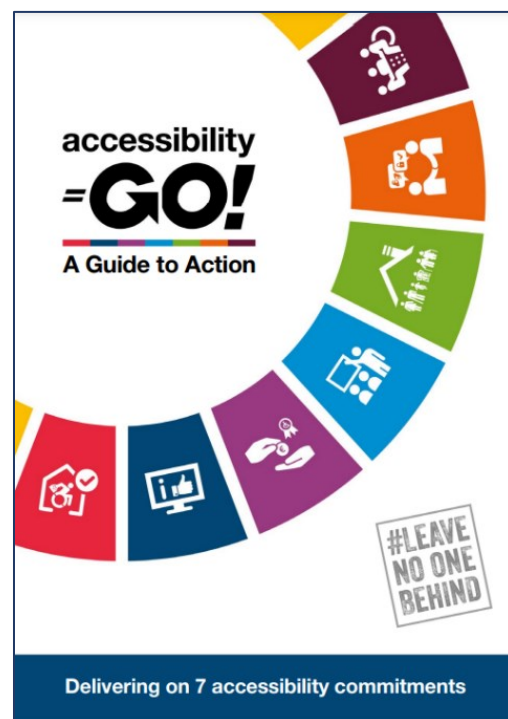
The subsequent sections offer deep dives across these 6 key tools and resources, with insights from their development, use, and reflections on priorities moving forward.

# Accessibility Go! A guide to Action

## How the guide was developed

**Accessibility GO! A Guide to Action is a flagship resource co-developed by WBU and CBM Global.**

It serves as a comprehensive guide for implementing a whole-of-organisation approach to accessibility and inclusion, aligning with CRPD principles and the core commitment of leaving no one behind. It was designed to bridge the gap between the aspirations of the CRPD and the practical realities of implementation. It provides process guidance, tools, and resources for organisations to meet their accessibility obligations and commitments. The guide encourages different entities within organisations to engage in reflective dialogues as they assess and prioritise actions – recognising accessibility as a precondition for inclusion. More importantly, it promotes the engagement of OPDs in expert roles as this is often missed in organisational initiatives pertaining to accessibility.



**The guide was developed over a three-year period.** It was the result of collaborative efforts between WBU staff and members, CBM DID Community of Practice and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) Bridge CRPD-SDGs Alumni. A participatory testing and validation process, including members of the National Federation of Disabled Nepal (NFDN) and CBM Nepal Country office helped developing the initial draft of this resource in June 2019<sup>1</sup>. Members of the VIVID consortia led by CBM Ireland played a critical role in the final field testing which has helped understanding how the resource can be adapted and be relevant for organisations working in humanitarian contexts<sup>2</sup>. The comprehensive peer-review process engaged key accessibility professionals both from WBU, BRIDGE Alumni/OPD partners, and key allies including G3ICT/IAAP, UCLG, World Enabled amongst others.

**WBU & CBM Global officially launched the guide in November 2020 at the International Civil Society Conference.** In June 2021, an [orientation session](#) for WBU members occurred during the World Blindness Summit in Madrid, held in collaboration with ONCE, European

<sup>1</sup> NFDN members include: NFDN Federal office, NFDN Province 1 office, NFDN Gandaki Province office, NFDN Karnali Province office, Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA), Nepal Haemophilia Society, Nepal Association of the Blind, National Deaf Federation, Parent Federation of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (PFPID) in Nepal, Autism Care Society Nepal, KOSHISH (National Mental Health Self-help Organization), Disabled Human Rights Center and Youth with Disabilities and Nepal Association of Hard of Hearing (NAHOH).

<sup>2</sup> Consortia members include: Abilis, ASPEm, CBM Global Emergency Response Unit, CBM Ireland, European Disability Forum, Tearfund Ireland and Viatores Christi.

Disability Forum, CBM Global, and RIADIS. WBU has promoted and made use of the guide across key processes and events, including the UCLG Congress in 2022. The guide has been translated into Spanish, French, Mandarin, and Laotian. In 2023, a condensed version in International Sign was developed with the assistance of the World Federation of the Deaf. Further preparations were taken for the creation of an easy-to-read version in collaboration with self-help groups in Nepal.

## How it has been used so far

**Accessibility GO! has been tested and implemented with success, not only to support implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) across UN agencies (WIPO, UN-HABITAT) but also in supporting assessing internal disability policies amongst INGOs like CBM Global.** Below is a summary of examples of how it has been used:

- **The WBU collaborated with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), as part of a consultancy team, to develop their [disability inclusion strategy](#), leveraging Accessibility GO! for a comprehensive desk review, survey assessments, interviews, and internal discussions.** The outcome included the strategy and actionable recommendations, showcasing WIPO's commitment to accountability in fostering inclusivity.
- **WBU provided ongoing technical support to UN-Habitat, using Accessibility GO! for agency-wide mapping to identify barriers and good practices.** The partnership involved advising on priorities, employing an adapted SWOT analysis, and contributing to the formulation of actionable steps for effective UNDIS implementation.
- **WBU supported CBM Global in implementing Accessibility GO! across its headquarters and 11 country offices.** This initiative facilitated a three-step process, including assessments, action plan development, and resource allocation through an accessibility fund. WBU fostered a community of practice through online sessions, enabling teams to share plans and learnings.
- **WBU collaborated with CBM Global Disability Inclusion's Inclusive Eye Health Initiative and the World Federation of the Deaf to address barriers in eye-health services in Lao PDR,** utilising a locally translated Accessibility GO! version. A workshop was held in person, involving WBU members, OPD partners, and health professionals to identify existing accessibility barriers and formulate action plans for improving access to health services at national, provincial, and community levels. This initiative aligns with the [WHO Global Health Equity Report](#) emphasizing a rights-based approach to enhance accessibility in inclusive eye-health services.

## Priorities moving Accessibility GO! forward

- A. **Support increased uptake and effective use through orientation sessions, advisory guidance, and enhanced dissemination:** The crucial next phase involves introducing Accessibility GO! to the wider WBU membership through orientation sessions, using quality informational, educational, and communication (IEC) materials for effective information sharing as an initial step. The focus is on leveraging Accessibility GO! as a key tool within the WBU community, encouraging members to utilise it in their advocacy

efforts. This involves providing advisory guidance to empower members in influencing positive change at various levels, be it regional, national, or within their local and community spheres. The development of orientation sessions is key to enhance members' proficiency to effectively use the guide to underscore advocacy.

- B. Co-lead accelerated and collaborative roll-out:** The partnership with CBM Global Disability Inclusion and its Inclusive Eye-Health Initiative has proven to be an excellent strategy for bringing the Accessibility GO! closer to the WBU membership and support capacity development at national and local levels around accessibility. This collaboration has also fostered strong ties with the World Federation of the Deaf and has also laid the foundation for expanding the roll-out to other countries. It is crucial to sustain these efforts and provide continued support for the next phase, drawing on the valuable experiences gained from the successful roll-out in Lao PDR to consolidate training packages. Moving forward, it is essential to not only continue supporting the roll-out of Accessibility GO! with different organisations, but also to assess existing capacities. Ensuring that WBU is well-positioned and equipped with adequate resources is crucial to respond effectively to various requests.
- C. Collection and sharing of key learnings to generate and monitor impact:** Moving forward, an essential progression involves disseminating the insights gathered so far, encompassing lessons from both the development phase (such as challenges related to translation consistency) and the subsequent roll-out and utilisation. This involves capturing how the guide operates in real-world scenarios and the transformative impact it induces, particularly in influencing and supporting the implementation of policies and practices. The creation of IEC materials, including videos and testimonials, will be instrumental to promote and monitor its use.
- D. Ensuring WBU and OPD partners are at the forefront:** Further reflection will have to be put on how to leverage Accessibility GO! as a resource ensuring that WBU and OPD remain at the forefront of its use and ensuring that it supports WBU and OPD partners in taking advisory and technical roles. This includes reflecting about ways of structuring, leveraging, and monetising advisory services based on the technical expertise delivered by OPDs through Accessibility GO!.



**How do we make sure OPDs, who are the most marginalised, are the ones leading on accessibility? Accessibility GO! is a tool for partnership with OPDs. It is about OPDs being in the room and starting the discussion. It is a tool that can be used anywhere and give OPDs the opportunity to support inclusive services and organisations.** Kathy Al Ju'beh, CBM Global.

## Localization brief and global survey on accessibility

In 2023, WBU and UCLG developed the ‘Policy Brief on Localization to Solve the Accessibility Crisis: Recommendations to States Parties for Immediate Action’ ([EN](#), [SP](#), [FR](#)), in collaboration with UN-Habitat, the International Disability Alliance, the GAP PCG Older Persons Constituency Group and the Cities for All Network. The policy brief encompasses key recommendations emphasising the crucial role of local and regional governments (LRGs), persons with disabilities, older persons, and their representative organisations in realising accessible and inclusive infrastructure and services across the urban-rural continuum. It offers essential guidance for national governments and LRGs to collaborate, fostering localization efforts and eliminating accessibility barriers in alignment with the CRPD and the global agendas.

In direct response to the policy brief, WBU worked with UCLG to successfully launch a [Global Survey on Accessibility and Engagement of Persons with Disabilities](#) which is a tool to map how local and regional governments are addressing accessibility and engaging with persons with disabilities. The goal is to inform local practices.

To date, the survey has engaged 328 participants, including 25 completed surveys from local and regional governments. The aim is to expand city participation to 40 by the end of the second quarter of 2024. The survey process varies among cities, with some using it to foster interdepartmental collaboration, while others seek assistance to ensure comprehensive completion. Notably, the survey has sparked inspiration in some cities, leading to the exploration of universal guidelines for localizing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), exemplified by the Dutch Municipality Network (VNG). The positive reception of the survey as a valuable tool is evident, and its reach extends to the World Health Organization's Age-friendly Cities and Communities network.

Next steps for the survey and policy brief launched in 2023 include:

- A. **A catalyst for impactful advocacy within the WBU community and mainstream sectors globally:** Leveraging the Policy Brief extends beyond its role as a document. It can serve as a valuable tool for supporting advocacy initiatives both within and outside the WBU. Internally, the Policy Brief acts as a guiding framework, equipping WBU and its members with comprehensive insights and evidence-based recommendations to underscore their advocacy efforts. WBU can strategically support the implementation of the brief’s recommendations. It can also facilitate informed discussions, strategic planning, and collective actions within the WBU community, fostering a shared understanding of key issues related to accessible and inclusive infrastructure. Externally, the Policy Brief becomes an instrument for outreach and engagement, allowing WBU to collaborate with external stakeholders, governments, and diverse organisations. It provides a basis for dialogue, influencing policymakers, and advocating for positive changes in broader contexts related to disability rights, accessibility, and sustainable development.
- B. **Entering the second phase of the global survey initiative:** Building on the insights gained from the initial survey with UCLG, there is a strategic initiative to delve deeper into the experiences and engagements of WBU members and OPD partners with their

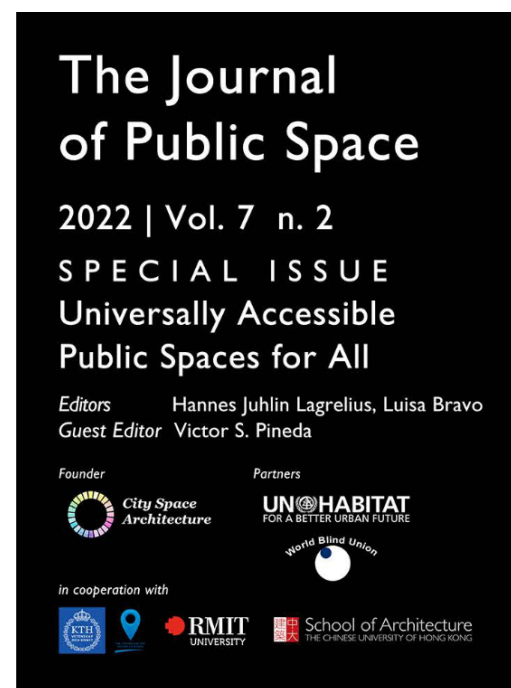
local governments and accessibility initiatives. This entails gathering best practices, identifying pilot initiatives and developing a second phase of the survey, specifically targeting WBU membership and OPD partners. The objective is to comprehensively map the status of their involvement in local governance and accessibility endeavours. By combining the findings from both survey phases, a nuanced and holistic overview of practices and needs will emerge. This will serve as a valuable resource for WBU and UCLG, providing actionable insights to support and foster collaboration between cities and WBU members. It lays the groundwork for fostering meaningful partnerships, informed by a thorough understanding of the existing landscape, ultimately contributing to more effective and targeted advocacy efforts and engagement.

## The Journal of Public Space: Special Issue on Universally Accessible Public Spaces for All

In February 2020, WBU and City Space Architecture made a public commitment to raise awareness about accessibility in public spaces captured in the [Abu Dhabi Declared Actions](#). In August 2021, a Call for Abstracts for a Special Issue of The Journal of Public Space, was launched. It was calling on a diverse range of stakeholders globally to contribute articles, case studies, and viewpoints on accessibility, universal design, and inclusion in public spaces. The call focused on capturing best practices and applied research in alignment with development frameworks and human rights instruments, emphasizing:

- Effective measures to identify and eliminate obstacles in public spaces.
- The role of inclusive spaces in human rights enjoyment and quality of life.
- Co-creation processes for meaningful engagement of marginalised groups.
- Implementation and monitoring of accessibility standards across various public spaces.
- Strategies addressing accessibility, universal design, and reasonable accommodation.
- Promotion of universal design in local policies, plans, budgets, and programmes.
- Capacities, data, and tools for assessing and addressing accessibility gaps.

Responding to the call, 89 proposals were received, with 18 selected for full paper submission. The selection aimed to deconstruct preconceived ideas, promoting an intersectional approach to accessibility. The peer review process engaged WBU alongside experts in urban planning and architecture. Support was provided by WBU team to WBU members and OPD expert during the development of their viewpoints.



### The Special Issue includes:

- **1 guest editorial**
- **8 academic articles, with research findings** from Hong Kong, India, United Kingdom, Ecuador, Mongolia, Indonesia, Sweden, Kenya, United States
- **7 non-academic articles, presenting case studies** from New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Spain, Indonesia, the Netherlands
- **2 viewpoints sharing reflections, experiences** from WBU's member in Zimbabwe, and an OPD expert in Kenya on mental health.

The Special Issue was launched at the [11th session of the World Urban Forum](#) in Katowice, Poland (June 2022), including through a [press conference on UN Web TV](#). The special issue has been promoted and presented across events like [HLPF 2023](#) and COSPs.

From June through December 2022, the full special issue had 6227 PDF downloads and 10672 abstract views. Overall, the publication has benefited 16900 readers. [The publication](#) is made accessible via PDF, EPUB and HTML formats.

Going forward, opportunities and strategies to further promote and unpack the learnings derived from across the publication should be explored. This can be done through:

- **Webinar series:** Article and text authors can share detailed insights into their respective projects, facilitating a deeper understanding of the practical implications and outcomes. This would allow better knowledge sharing within and outside the WBU membership.
- **Lecture series for the Public Space Academy:** City Space Architecture has launched a public space Academy and would welcome the WBU to develop and publish a set of lectures on accessibility in public spaces, to convey insights and increase understanding on accessibility.
- **Public space events and sessions:** There are various events of relevance in relation to public spaces where WBU can speak and present on the interlinkages between accessibility, participation and public spaces including safety and inclusion issues associated with “shared public spaces” projects in cities.

## Cities for All Global Compact

WBU contributed to the Cities for All Campaign by supporting the development of the Global Compact and providing inputs and reviewing content for the training modules. The [Global Compact on Inclusive & Accessible Cities](#) is a declaration that aligns key commitments to accessibility, universal design and inclusion within the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the CRPD and the WHO's Age Friendly Cities and Communities Framework. It affirms the rights of 1.3 billion persons with disabilities and the increasing share of the global population aged 60 or older that experience barriers to their equitable participation in society. Half of all persons with disabilities and older persons around the world now live in towns and cities, and these groups are estimated to number over 2 billion persons in cities worldwide by 2050. This global call for action lies at the core of the #Cities4All campaign.

The initiative has been led by World Enabled since its inception in 2018. A [Cities for All Knowledge Hub and Training Programme](#) was launched in 2023 to promote capacity building for local practitioners and city leaders. The learning programme has three modules. Module 1 covers Disability Rights and Justice, providing insights into legal frameworks. Module 2 explores Non-Discrimination, focusing on strategies for inclusivity. Module 3 is dedicated to Understanding Accessibility, examining principles for creating accessible environments. The initiative seeks to engage a broad range of stakeholders to help us incentivise and transform 100 cities to be more inclusive, accessible, and resilient by 2050. The goal is to foster peer-to-peer learning through the development of accessible online learning material and storytelling. Content aims at building awareness among city officials, donors, students, the private sector, and grassroots-organisations,

The IAUD Programme has primarily contributed to making the global compact actionable by establishing connections with partners such as UCLG, with limited involvement in directing the campaign. While strategizing for the campaign's future direction is essential, WBU's key focus revolves around utilising the Global Compact as a tool within its membership. This involves integrating it across advocacy packages and supporting sharing of learnings from its practical implementation in cities, including UCLG Community of Practice on Inclusive and Accessible Cities and Territories.

## **All Under one Roof**

In 2021, WBU actively participated as expert in the review process of the ["All Under One Roof" \(AUOR\) Guidelines](#), leveraging its expertise in accessibility and disability inclusion. Co-led by the Australian Red Cross, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and CBM Global, the review process involved provision of technical inputs and feedback from WBU's team. WBU's unique role included technical expertise delivery and coordinating consultations with other OPD partners. The project, funded by International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), involved a review, update, and translation process, followed by the development of a tutored online training course. The AUOR Guidelines play a crucial role in providing comprehensive guidance for inclusive humanitarian shelter and settlements. WBU emphasised the importance of collaboration, coordination, data collection, and the involvement of persons with disabilities in designing and implementing shelter programmes and settlements in line with the CRPD. The revised AUOR Guidelines aim to ensure a holistic and inclusive approach to humanitarian shelter and settlements, recognising the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. As a result, WBU Secretary General was invited to give introductory remarks in a session on AUOR during the UN Coordination Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week, presenting WBU's review contribution.

Expertise gained through the IAUD Programme meant WBU could take the technical lead role in the review process. Shelters and settlements are important aspects of urban development and the New Urban Agenda that is often overlooked. The engagement in the review process significantly contributed to WBU's own understanding and stance on [CRPD Article 11](#) about persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. This was successfully articulated in a [submission to the CRPD Committee \(2023\)](#) supporting the drafting process of a general comment for the article. Moving forward, "All Under One Roof" will serve as

a valuable resource supporting WBU's advocacy initiatives around Disaster Risk Reduction, climate action, and accessibility within humanitarian settings.

## **Additional key capacity development activities**

The team co-facilitated various webinars, community of practice meetings, workshops and networking events, addressing critical topics such as the Cities 4 All during the pandemic, [Accessible Smart Cities](#), [Digital Accessibility](#), professional training on the Accessibility of the Built Environment in collaboration with IAAP, and webinar on Inclusive and [Accessible Public Spaces](#).

WBU took part in important Webinar series on [Equity and Accessibility in Times of Pandemic: Building Cities for All Post-COVID-19](#) and contributed to the development and launch of [Recommendations for empowering local governments on inclusive pandemic response](#), initiatives led by World Enabled in collaboration with UCLG and UN-Habitat and other key partners.



**Information and training are needed in this topic. We should find a way to guarantee participation of regional members to form champions and support advocacy. We need to find local experts to contribute to advocacy at global levels. And we need these champions to support cities at local levels as well.** Dean Lermen, ULAC.



**Local community is key and direct users need to be better equipped. WBU can disseminate info and knowledge via a community of practice. Best practices would be useful: what other countries are doing and what's the thing we can apply and transfer in other countries.** Nantanoot "Apple" Suwannawut, WBU AP.

# Partnering for change



## Results in Partnerships

The programme has made significant progress in establishing partnerships with various stakeholders, enhancing its effectiveness and impact in promoting inclusive urban development. These collaborations have facilitated meaningful engagement and a broader reach, underscoring the importance of forming bridges between different organisations to achieve common accessibility goals. Furthermore, the partnerships highlight the need for a cross-disability approach and the critical intersection of aging, disability, and urbanization, emphasising the opportunities to strengthen connections and engagement of WBU members with respective urban stakeholders and partners to support local actions.

## Overview of the programme's network of partners

The multi-stakeholder partnership approach embraced by WBU has played a pivotal role in promoting the rights of its constituency, and persons with disabilities generally, in the realm of urban development. The following mapping provides an overview of the evolving network of partners cultivated throughout the programme. It visually represents the interconnections among these diverse partners, illustrating their collaborative efforts and mutual reinforcement.

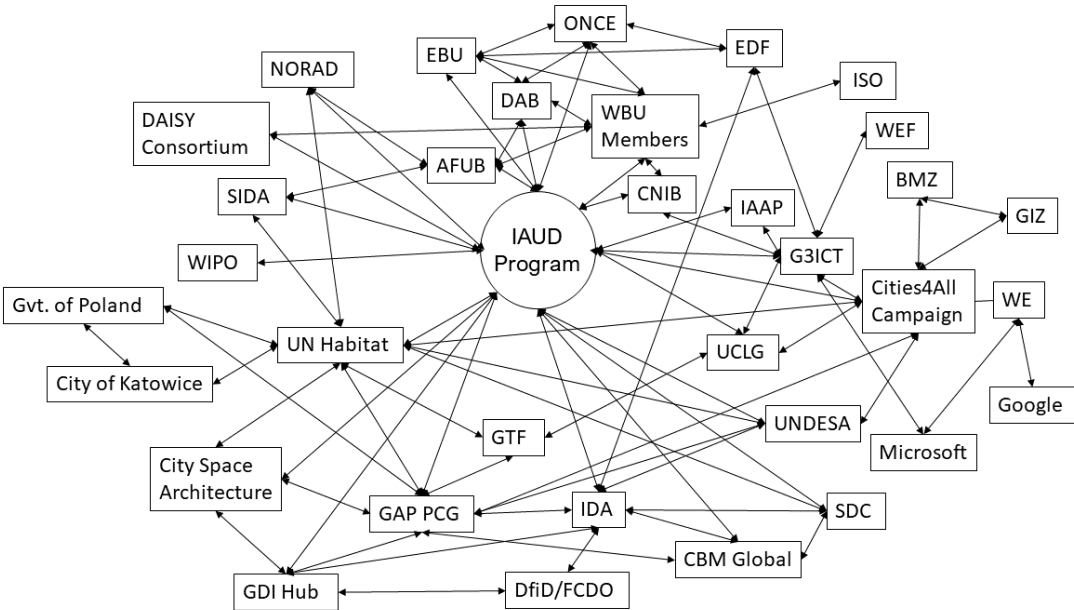


Figure 3 Overview of IAUD Programme's Network

The map serves to underscore the vital roles played by key partners and allies. It is an intricate web of how these are all connected in various ways. Below is a description of their connection with the IAUD Programme:

- **Funding partners**, including CBM Global, Sida, NORAD, and FCDO, have been instrumental in providing essential resources for the initiation and growth of the programme. CBM Global's support also extends to OPD engagement work at IDA, while SIDA, SDC, and NORAD are/have also been significant funding partner to UN Habitat. SIDA has also been a critical funding partner to UCLG. The work around Accessibility GO! greatly benefited WIPO in their UNDIS Implementation and is otherwise a major WBU partner on the ABC Consortium and the Marrakech Treaty. UN-Habitat and UNDESA have occasionally provided some cost-sharing support (e.g., WUFs, EGMs).
- **WBU members**, including CNIB, EBU, ONCE, AFUB, and DAB, have actively contributed to the programme by hosting positions (CNIB, AFUB) and participating in joint advocacy and capacity-building activities. Their involvement spans various initiatives such as COVID-19 awareness efforts, participation in the World Blindness Summit (ONCE), COP28 (DAB), engagement in WUF10 (AFUB), contributions to the Geneva Human Rights Platform (EBU). Despite varying engagement levels across regions, there is a recognized need for improved mechanisms within WBU to facilitate knowledge-sharing and learning among members and enhance participation in programmes and initiatives.
- **OPD Partners**, notably IDA, have been instrumental in supporting WBU's leadership in global advocacy for urban development and WBU's engagement in agendas on DRR and Climate Action building connections with key actors like UNFCCC. The IDA-IDDC BRIDGE programme, along with its global pool of professional alumni, has been instrumental in enhancing learning, engagement, and advocacy efforts for initiatives like Accessibility GO!. With IDA's support, WBU has spearheaded cross-disability delegations to both WUF10 and WUF11, involving WBU members and OPD partners, including RIADIS and OHANA. Additionally, other OPD partners like the EDF has engaged in learning sessions around Accessibility GO! at the World Blindness Summit in 2021.
- **UN-Habitat and UCLG** have forged milestone agreements with WBU and are pivotal to the IAUD Programme due to their strategic role in guiding and monitoring implementation of the New Urban Agenda and localization of SDG11 in line with CRPD Article 9. Both UCLG and UN-Habitat play integral roles within the Local 2030 Coalition, and the Global Taskforce on Local and Regional Governments (GTF).



**The roadmap towards and investment in Daejeon World Congress was crucial to formally recognize the positive influence that WBU has had in UCLG's decision-making processes, through the signing of our MOU. This has led to a lasting change for our policy priorities, with the understanding of the importance of accessibility as a critical pillar to truly build cities and territories for all. This**

**progress would not have been possible without the engagement of the WBU.**  
Federico Batista Poitier, UCLG.

- **General Assembly of Partners (GAP)** includes the formally recognised Partner Constituency Group (PCG) on Persons with Disabilities in the New Urban Agenda. WBU is co-chairing this group and actively engages in policy development, forums, and OPD representation within the work of UN-Habitat and urban platforms. The PCG successfully led advocacy efforts during WUF10 and WUF11, working together with the Older Persons group in collective promotion of accessibility and universal design.



**The intersection of ageing and disability and urbanisation is absolutely critical and relevant and there was no connection before we entered in partnership. Without this collaboration, we would have been living in siloes. Ageing would not be on the agenda without the support from WBU.** Katherine Kline, Co-Chair Older Persons, Partner Constituency Group, General Assembly of Partners.

- **Cities for All Network:** UCLG, together with World Enabled and the Cities for All Network, has taken a leading role in promoting this campaign, working closely with UN-Habitat, the German National Development Agencies, the UN Special Envoy on Accessibility and the UN Special Rapporteur on Disability. Today, more than 20 cities are part of the campaign, including Barcelona, Rio de Janeiro, Puebla, Kisumu, Villa Carlos Paz, Dubai and Mersin, and many more. A key outcome of the coalition is the creation of the UCLG Community of Practice on Inclusive and Accessible Cities and Territories, which serves as a mechanism for implementation of the campaign. It has been instrumental in connecting and opening doors for WBU within the urban development landscape. WBU has played an important role as a key supporter, contributing the flagship product of the network—the Global Compact for Inclusive and Accessible Cities and the Cities 4 All campaign.
- **GDI Hub**, a research and practice centre for disability innovation based at the University College London, is a strategic and increasingly closer dialogue partner to WBU, actively engaging in joint advocacy events including WUF11 and COP28 sharing learnings and addressing issues around climate action, resilience and inclusive infrastructure. Their contribution extended to authoring an article in WBU’s special issue of The Journal of Public Space.



**Sustainable urban development, disability inclusion, and climate change are completely interdependent. If we, for instance, build something now, we need to consider that it should last. Making it inclusive from the beginning is the best use of a project’s resources compared to retrofitting accessibility later on, which is**

**more expensive and places greater demand on human, ecological and financial resources.** Mikaela Patrick, GDI Hub.

- **G3ICT and IAAP** have been instrumental in supporting WBU's engagement around Digital Accessibility and accessible Smart Cities globally including collaboration with IAAP on webinars series, joint advocacy during UCLG Congress and support on advocacy dialogue around new technology, AI and the Global Digital Compact together with other key stakeholders (Microsoft), and procurement in Smart Cities (WEF).
- **City Space Architecture (CSA)**, through its research and open-access Journal of Public Space, played a crucial role in close ally in raising awareness on the importance of universal design and public spaces. WBU and CSA partnered following our joint commitment captured in Abu Dhabi Declared Action to create more awareness accessibility in public spaces at WUF11 by publishing a special issue of the Journal of Public Space. The special issue was launched at WUF11 across various events and capture research, case studies, and viewpoints related to progress and learnings towards making public spaces more inclusive and accessible for all. Since 2020 we have engaged around numerous events relating to public space.
- **Other crucial allies** within the IAUD programme encompass a broad spectrum of stakeholders and individuals, fostering collaboration through established partnerships, networks, and stakeholder groups. This includes the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility. Other crucial allies, but with less frequent collaboration include the International Organisation for Standardisation, DAISY Consortium, and OECD.

## Reflections on partnerships

**Prior to WBU's involvement, it is fair to say that there was little dialogue between organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), UN-Habitat, municipalities, and local authorities globally.** By forging partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, including the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), WBU has been able to create new avenues for engagement between WBU members and OPD partners and key local actors. The Cities for All Network has been a crucial enabler which has effectively facilitated the convergence of urban stakeholders, providing a platform for WBU to actively engage and foster relationships.

**Engagement with UN-Habitat and UCLG serves as a strategic enabler, bringing national, local, and regional governments into the fold with limited initiatives enabling local governments into the area of accessibility globally, and very few initiatives bringing OPDs into the space of multi-level governance and mainstream urban development.** For instance, commitments made on accessibility by the Government of Poland and the City of Katowice for the organisation of WUF11 showcase the tangible outcomes of such partnerships. Partnerships create a network of support and expertise, enriching the IAUD programme's capacity to drive change at both global and local levels, including through community of practices (e.g. UCLG Community of Practice). The added value lies not only in the resources and knowledge shared but also in the collective influence that transforms principles into actionable measures. For

example, GDI Hub's comprehensive research on inclusive design practices and resilient infrastructure in various cities serves as a valuable resource for modelling and piloting local accessibility projects. Joint initiatives, such as the publication of a special issue of the Journal of Public Space with City Space Architecture, contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and best practices in making public spaces universally accessible. The roll-out of Accessibility GO in countries like Lao PDR, in collaboration with CBM Global, has emerged as a pivotal initiative, significantly contributing to the advancement of localization efforts, accessibility, and engagement with WBU members and OPDs at the local level.

**Partnerships have positioned WBU at the forefront of advocacy. This has resulted in increased opportunities for WBU, WBU members and OPD partners to engage as experts in their own right, in key policy processes, forums, community of practice events, expert group settings, ensuring voices and diverse expertise are accounted for.** WBU has been leading the GAP PCG Persons with Disabilities (formally recognized stakeholder platform for the New Urban Agenda). WBU has been increasingly represented in key advisory groups (WUF10 & WUF 11 Advisory Groups, UN-Habitat's SAGE, G3ICT Smart Cities 4 All), and enjoys a growing expert role in the urban development community (e.g., in UCLG, Cities 4 Network, regular contributor to EGMs including on SDG 11 monitoring, Cities and Climate Action, Housing etc). Collaboration with G3ICT for its Smart Cities for All Programme, enables WBU to contribute valuable insights and expertise, ensuring that the development and execution of smart city technologies prioritise accessibility and the needs of persons with disabilities, including WBU's constituency.

**Partnerships within the IAUD programme bring substantial added value to the localization of CRPD Article 9 since it enables the implementation of capacity-building initiatives, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts on a global scale, fostering a conducive environment for the localization of accessibility commitments across the built and digital environments.** The IAUD programme identifies specific areas for increased investment and focus, notably around climate action, Disaster Risk Reduction, transportation and adoption, review, monitor and implementation of accessibility standards. While the WBU maintains a role within the International Standards Organization (ISO), the IAUD programme acknowledges that more can be done to leverage this position to advocate and participate in the development, review, adoption, and promotion of accessibility standards.

## **From global to local: Priorities for partnerships**

**Having established partnerships on a global scale, it is imperative to shift focus towards translating global commitments into tangible local actions. The emphasis is now on activating and concretising these partnerships at regional, national, and local levels.** The IAUD programme, with its successful history of initiating dialogues and partnerships, can further enhance WBU member engagement and elevate collaboration amongst WBU members, OPD partners, and urban stakeholders. As partnerships are being initiated, renewed, or consolidated, it is crucial for the involved parties to conduct a thorough stocktaking exercise to identify key learnings and shape new priorities as well as raise awareness and share progress about these partnerships within organisations and their membership and structures. Moving forward towards localization of CRPD Article 9, it is important for partnership agreements to:

- A. **Support regional cooperation:** Encouraging collaboration and knowledge exchange among WBU members, OPD partners, and regional allies remains crucial for future endeavours. Regional forums, consultations, and events offer valuable platforms where diverse stakeholders can address challenges, share best practices, and coordinate advocacy initiatives. Notably, strategic partners such as UCLG and UN-Habitat have a presence in regions like WBU, creating opportunities for effective collaboration. Recognising the unique contexts, languages, and realities of each region is vital for success, necessitating the translation of accessibility into regional priorities, frameworks, and strategies. As agendas cascade down through regional levels, stakeholders must prioritize fostering regional partnerships to ensure the retention of global gains when adopting regional frameworks. This is particularly crucial for overseeing the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, or other frameworks related to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) or Climate Action. WBU's Asia Pacific region has already taken proactive steps by establishing connections with the Regional UN Habitat office in Bangkok, a strategic move to strengthen regional collaboration and ensure the resonance of global achievements at the regional level.
- B. **Supporting engagement with local municipalities:** Facilitating engagement between WBU members and local municipalities is a critical step in the ongoing journey. Leveraging UCLG's network presents a valuable opportunity, and active exploration is underway to showcase practical engagement models between local authorities, WBU members, and OPD partners. Initiating pilot initiatives, building on the UCLG network, and drawing insights from research and projects conducted by partners like GDI Hub or G3ICT are key components. The UCLG Community of Practice, with its work on the Global Compact for Inclusive and Accessible Cities and the Global Survey on Accessibility, emerges as a vital platform for engagement. It provides an avenue to further involve WBU members in regions and cities who are committed to accessibility. The second phase of the WBU-UCLG global survey, focusing on WBU members and OPD partners, can help evidence the current status of their engagement with municipalities. It can provide a deeper understanding of the barriers and enablers that can facilitate their engagement in local policies, programmes, and policies across WBU regions.



**There is a need for WBU to empower its membership to be able to engage the relevant national and local authorities so that when they put in place accessibility there is buy in and engagement of users and the policy maker and the policy implementer.** Lucas Amoda, AFUB.



**Partnering with local government is key as we have many disasters in Japan. The National Committee of Welfare for the Blind in Japan addresses numerous disasters with programs that emphasise the importance of a domestic network**

involving local governments and the national government, blind individuals, and volunteers to aid and support people during and after such events. Chuji Sashida, WBU-AP.

## Deviation in activity implementation

During the COVID-19 pandemic, WBU adapted its activities by shifting to virtual platforms to continue engaging with stakeholders and advancing its mission. Examples of activities supported by the IAUD Programme in the context of COVID-19 through online work include:

- **WBU Covid-19 Survey and its Call for action**, compiling voices from over 853 respondents who are blind or partially sighted.
- **Facebook Live Sessions** in English, Spanish and French for WBU members on a variety of topics around inclusive COVID-19 response.
- **Webinar series on [Equity and Accessibility in Times of Pandemic: Building Cities for All Post-COVID-19 including recommendations for empowering local governments on inclusive pandemic response.](#)**
- **Workshop and orientations sessions on urban development and Accessibility GO, during the World Blindness Summit together with ONCE.**
- **Developing the Special Issue of the Journal on Public Spaces** and providing support to the Zimbabwe Association of Visually Handicapped to develop an article “[Sharing Views and Experiences of Blind and Partially Sighted Persons Living in the City of Bulawayo](#)”.
- **Co-organising Expert Group Meetings** (e.g., with UN-Habitat, Geneva Cities Hub, GAP, OHCHR on inclusive cities), ensuring participation of OPD partners/PCG members as experts in their own right, ensuring quality of inputs to preparation (e.g., concept notes, policy papers) and outcome documents to align with the CRPD.

Additional key activities were interrupted due to the Covid 19 pandemic including the following:

- **The 2020 Humanitarian Innovation Fund (ELHRA) "Challenge Fund Award on Meaningful Participation"** project, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and London Metropolitan University, aimed to enhance inclusivity and accessibility in the Kakuma-Kalobeyei settlement in northern Kenya through participatory spatial planning. Despite being among the top three out of 160 proposals, the project was cancelled in April 2021 due to pandemic-related limitations and budget redirection.
- **Training sessions on the IAUD Programme for WBU members and regional officers**, including participation in the Pre-Global Disability Summit (GDS) in Kenya, were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Participation in the Transportation Forum in Australia** was cancelled by organisers, reflecting broader challenges in maintaining planned events and engagements during the ongoing pandemic.

# Challenges and lessons learned

## Our 6 Challenges and Strategies

### Challenge 1: Closing the communication gaps

WBU's limited communication capacity during the period has posed significant obstacles to the impact, information sharing, and advocacy efforts of the IAUD programme. While attempts were made to establish a dedicated WBU urban website section for programme details, publication sharing, and policy statements, sustaining the initiative without continuous communication support proved challenging. Maintaining content that is up-to-date, user-friendly, and accessible to a broader audience unfamiliar with our work became increasingly difficult, leading to a gap between our global activities and our ability to effectively communicate them.

To address this, the IAUD Programme and WBU Secretariat invested in recording equipment, utilising social media channels and YouTube to share experiences and learning. Collaborative efforts with CNIB provided additional communication support. Looking forward, WBU will initiate a rebranding process, including the development of a new website and the recruitment of a communications professional to lead and support strategic communications, crucial for leveraging advocacy efforts and amplifying voices and engagement across all levels.



**Try to target communication as best as you can as it is the lifeblood of the organisation.** Lars Bosselmann, EBU.

### Challenge 2: Fostering membership engagement

The IAUD programme encountered challenges in engaging and collaborating with WBU members, particularly in promoting joint advocacy and expertise-sharing efforts at regional and local levels. The WBU's Knowledge and Learning Platform (KLP) intended to serve as a platform for sharing resources and facilitating practitioner collaboration, was put on hold, also impeding efforts to build a community of practice around urban development.

Throughout this period, WBU experienced the common challenge of most global, member-based organisations, in discerning and implementing effective methods to engage its membership across diverse regions. In the initial stages of the IAUD programme, insufficient strategies had been put in place to engage regional and national member organisations effectively, hindering the phase of translating global achievements to regional, national, and local levels. Specific challenges in this regard included the lack of effective and efficient communication channels, adequate mechanisms for capacity development, knowledge sharing and peer-learning efforts, limited awareness raising, and measures to ensure consistent buy-in across the WBU - including the board, the Executive Committee, and the membership. While the WBU higher-level strategic planning efforts, including the development of a membership

strategy, focused on the overall enhancement of WBU's membership engagement, it did not explicitly address the objectives, specific and unique needs of the IAUD programme.

In response, WBU reactivated committees and working groups following the adoption of the 2022 – 2025 strategic plan, providing effective mechanisms for the IAUD team and WBU Secretariat to connect with WBU leadership, WBU members and practitioners globally. Following the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the IAUD programme proactively undertook measures to reestablish in-person connections with WBU members. Collaborations emerged, such as participation in the M-Enabling Summit with the co-chair of the Assistive Technology and Digital Committee and collaboration with the Built Environment Working Group, leading to WBU staff attending the WBU Regional Asia-Pacific meeting in Thailand alongside the Regional UN-Habitat office, participation of WBU Secretary General at COP28, and WBU Treasurer at COSP15. Notably, the programme facilitated the participation of members in key global meetings, including engagements with regional unions. This has helped strengthening collaboration and ensuring meaningful contributions in key gatherings, fostering a sense of community and engagement between WBU members, OPD partners, and our partners and stakeholders (See Annex 1 Case Studies).



**Membership engagement is critical, but it needs dedicated staff position. There is also a challenge of engaging without a structure. At EBU, we created a group with directors or peers within the different organisations to discuss issues across the organisations. Examples of the areas that the groups focus on include advocacy, resource mobilisation, communication. This helps take work forward work within meetings.** Lars Bosselmann, EBU.

### Challenge 3: Breaking advocacy silos

Establishing linkages and complementarity between inclusion, accessibility, urban development, and broader issues like climate action, health, and employment posed significant challenges. Advocacy silos hindered the integration of cross-cutting topics like urban development and accessibility, which serve as enablers for all other rights. Notable disconnects existed between global advocacy initiatives and local realities, making it difficult to ensure that UN discussions are informed by local voices, needs, and realities. Disconnects within and between advocacy groups, particularly between disability and ageing, further exacerbated challenges in effectively addressing accessibility issues.

Despite the interconnectedness of global agendas, organisations often consider these separate from each other, and entities tend to work in isolation. Adopting an urban lens globally was new, lacking inherent connections to other advocacy efforts such as climate action or Disaster Risk Reduction, despite specific SDG11 targets, and evidenced urban growth globally. Organisations in the disability field, including donors, often prioritize "traditional" but critical advocacy areas like education, employment, and health. Incorporating an urban perspective across all advocacy domains can pose challenges, demanding evidence and data. Additional challenges emerged in bridging the gap between practitioners in the urban development community and the disability

field, as well as other advocacy groups such as older persons, who play a key role in accessibility and have supported the development of frameworks to support local actions, like WHO Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.

To address these challenges, the IAUD programme focused on providing evidence (the "why") by contributing to the WBU COVID-19 survey initiative, drawing insights and recommendations from the diverse voices of the WBU community and across different advocacy areas. Collaboration with CBM Global, IDA, GAP Older Persons, City Space Architecture and academia/research partners like the GDI Hub enabled evidence-generation and knowledge sharing (the "how to") crucial for advocacy and policymaking, supporting the case for prioritizing efforts on inclusive and resilient urban environments. Collaboration with UCLG, GAP Older Persons, World Enabled, and the Cities for All Network through the UCLG Accessibility Caucus facilitated the integration of accessibility considerations across various thematic issues addressed in the Pact for the Future of Humanity, including ensuring the adoption of rights-based approaches to care within the broader framework of urban development and inclusivity (Read more [about Accessibility in cities: Highlighting voices from civil society](#)). While the programme successfully gathered and generated evidence, more efforts were required to support members and OPDs in utilising such evidence effectively. The IAUD programme also endeavoured to break advocacy silos by more closely collaborating with IDA and IDDC, particularly the IDA-IDDC CRPD-SDG Bridge Alumni, bringing diverse experiences and expertise on Disability Inclusive Development into the urban development community. Further collaboration with IDA supported advocacy efforts around Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action, culminating in WBU's participation at COP28 as part of the broader Disability Caucus.



**In Latin America, in our organisation, accessibility has been considered but with a different view, mostly focus on accessible ICT but not necessarily making the link with urban development. Organisations of persons with physical disabilities became the one working and leading while organisations of the blind and partially sighted have been focused on ICT accessibility. So, there is a disconnect between advocacy agendas.** Dean Lerman, ULAC.

#### **Challenge 4: Managing expectations as part of the advisory process**

Navigating expectations as a large membership-based organisation becomes complex when collaborating with multiple partners and stakeholders. Engaging in discussions with partners has, at times, raised expectations, amplifying the risk of not meeting them and placing additional pressure on WBU's team. Challenges included finding sufficient time for comprehensive follow-ups on activities covered by collaborative frameworks and agreements.

Before 2019, WBU had not systematically delved into urban development, and the programme evolved incrementally as WBU's role expanded, gaining recognition as an expert-organisation in disability inclusion, accessibility, and universal design within an urban context.

Activities and the IAUD team's size increased after transitioning from project-based to core funding. This structural change allowed for the allocation of human resources to enhance the urban team's in-house technical expertise. As advisory roles increased, reflecting strengthened relationships and expertise, it was not always accompanied by corresponding budget adjustments, leading to instances of providing substantial uncompensated advice. In response, the IAUD programme has taken measures to secure financial returns, considering the scope and nature of technical requests. This involves ensuring compensation, either as fees or cost coverage for participating in events as speakers and technical experts, aligning efforts with sustainable financial practices.

## **Challenge 5: Ensuring meaningful and effective participation**

A persistent challenge revolves around clarifying representation, as instances arise where it is unclear who speaks on behalf of whom. The IAUD programme identified a lack of familiarity among many partners with the concept of an OPD (Organisation of Persons with Disabilities), making it challenging to secure OPD representation alongside other accessibility professionals as well as ensuring OPD voices are at the forefront. Meaningful involvement also requires a preparatory process to ensure speakers feel confident participating in high-level forums and dialogues, necessitating time and in-house expertise to support delegations. Diversity in representation is crucial, and there are challenges in ensuring the inclusion of those with less voice and power around the table. When successful, sustaining this engagement over time and building continuity pose additional challenges.

Creating structured and “safe spaces” for WBU members and OPD Partners alongside mainstream stakeholders to engage has been a guiding principle of the IAUD programme. The programme's strategy included coordinating participation through disability caucuses with terms of reference that emphasise cross-disability, gender, age, and regional representation. Notable examples include WUF10 and the UCLG Congress. Emphasis on increasing representation from women, underrepresented groups, and diverse regions aligns with insights from the WBU Covid-19 survey, reinforcing the commitment to recognize and celebrate the diversity within the WBU membership. The IAUD programme also played a crucial role in clarifying roles and responsibilities within different networks, fostering OPD leadership using CRPD General Comment 7 as core reference and tool underscoring advocacy and provision of technical advice.

## **Challenge 6: Ensuring programme sustainability**

During the period, the IAUD programme faced sustainability limitations. This was mainly attributed to uncertainties regarding the programme's continuation in 2022, human resource allocations, and its role and positioning within the WBU strategic planning processes. The programme's long-term viability was further affected by uncertainties, reflecting the lack of a robust staff retention strategy and clear career development opportunities.

Addressing uncertainties in human resourcing could include alignment of staff contracting with project and funding timelines. This would create clearer perspectives, planning horizons and facilitate timely contract renewals, especially for staff residing abroad. With limited Human

Resources capacities at WBU Secretariat, the team relied on internal support for growth and learning opportunities.



**Sustainability is important. Often, we go from project funding to project funding. We want the urban work to fall under our core business and have core activities funded instead of different projects. When we get funding and with donors, we should talk about the importance of multi-year funding and investments, not only specific projects or events.** Martine Abel-Williamson, WBU.

## Our 4 Key Learnings

### Learning 1: The imperative of urgent, localized actions to address the accessibility gap

Through the IAUD programme, we have gained a critical insight into the urgency of closing the accessibility gap before 2030. The expanding challenges in accessibility, particularly in the context of growing cities and the lingering impact of climate change, heighten the need for immediate and decisive action. Our experience underscores the necessity for localization efforts to be intensified, focusing on harmonizing policies and standards with the CRPD, especially Article 9 on accessibility and [Article 19](#) on living independently and being included in the community.

While accessibility plays a central role within the global disability movement, the IAUD Programme observed a significant lag in efforts to address accessibility barriers and intended to accelerate and support actions. As urbanisation and climate-related challenges intensify, it becomes imperative to position accessibility at the heart and centre of policies and initiatives. As a considerable portion of infrastructure will be constructed or adapted in the coming years, we learnt that infrastructure development requires an unrelentless focus on accessibility.

Our learning underscores the pivotal role of immediate, localized engagement in preventing the accessibility gap from widening further before and beyond 2030, and the imperative of empowering WBU members and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to collaborate with cities and local governments in actively shaping the future of our communities.



**Long history of improving accessibility in cities for blind people. In Japan, it is more than half a century and WBU picked up that topic during the last 6 years.** Chuji Sashida, WBU AP.

## Learning 2: Meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities for inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities and communities

During the programme, a pivotal learning emerged: meaningful engagement and participation of persons with disabilities are indispensable for shaping inclusive urban development, including around climate action and urban resilience. This aspect stands out as one of the most critical elements in building cities that are inclusive and resilient for everyone.

Our experience reveals that persons with disabilities are often left out of crucial discussions and decision-making processes concerning urban communities across all levels. Although, globally, organisations are increasingly engaging OPDs but often such engagement is unbudgeted and considered tick-the-box exercises without clear strategies on how to cultivate results of such engagements. To truly create inclusive and resilient cities, it is not just about securing seats at the table; it's about having the space in the “kitchen”, where collaborative solutions are crafted.

For meaningful engagement to yield tangible actions, involvement of both Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and diverse Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as recognised stakeholders, is paramount. While LRGs play a crucial role in implementing the CRPD in practice, OPDs must not only engage actively but also be engaged proactively. This recognition positions OPDs to work collaboratively with local and regional governments, contributing their experiences and expertise to identify barriers and co-create effective solutions. This dynamic engagement is essential for informing urban planning and design, ensuring they authentically meet the requirements and needs of all persons with disabilities. For OPDs, this may entail investing in cross-OPD collaboration, aligning agendas, and approach accessibility holistically which would make it easier to find entry points, and collaborate with LRGs. In turn, LRGs must endeavour to provide constructive avenues for dialogue, exchange, and collaboration, from policy processes to implementation of specific projects.



**The big challenge is I have no available information. This impacts me as the measures the government takes are not inclusive of persons with disabilities; when they decide to do something for the community we are not consulted. We are only consulted to check on something that was decided without our consideration.** Anonymous testimony, WBU Covid 19 survey.

## Learning 3: Enhancing awareness and skills for accessibility in urban development

A significant learning generated during the programme is the prevalent confusion amongst urban practitioners who often equate “accessibility” with the “proximity” or “affordability” of services. Simultaneously, within the WBU network and wider disability community, there exists a limited understanding of urban development, its components, related concepts, and how it relates to community life. This calls for the urgent need to further invest in efforts to clarify and unpack these notions and components, and foster peer-learning and set ups for inter-sectoral

exchanges extending beyond the WBU and OPD communities, to include other accessibility professionals, urban practitioners, and local decision-makers.

Based on this, a key takeaway is the imperative for comprehensive capacity development initiatives. It is not just about formal training sessions; it extends to mentoring, support, and knowledge-sharing among all stakeholders. Fostering an increased collective understanding requires the progressive construct of a community of practice across diverse groups and sectors to cultivate a knowledgeable community capable of sustaining progress. This crucial lesson underscores the necessity for a well-structured plan that not only disseminates information but also ensures that everyone contributing to urban development possesses essential skills and knowledge around accessibility. The Accessibility GO! Guide to Action stands out as a valuable tool, adaptable for local municipalities, and can play a pivotal role in facilitating this. It positions WBU members and OPD partners in leadership roles, aligning with our commitment to co-create tools and resources for informed urban policy and practice.



**Accessibility is often overlooked as a requirement, and even when it is considered, it is not well understood by those involved in the planning and design process. For instance, the design of shared spaces, such as those with cycle lanes placed between bus stops and sidewalks, may claim to be inclusive, but they are neither safe nor accessible. Similar examples of this issue can be found in other sectors such as housing. Therefore, WBU's work in this area is crucial to ensuring that innovative solutions in urban development are also inclusive and accessible for all.** Thomas Bryan, WBU AP.

#### **Learning 4: The crucial role of multi-stakeholder collaboration**

Through the IAUD programme, we have learnt a key lesson: partnerships are essential for advancing the accessibility agenda. We observed a genuine collaborative spirit among our partners, demonstrating a real willingness to engage with OPDs, address challenges heads-on, and actively work towards resolving accessibility issues. The adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach emerged as a best practice, going beyond governance structures, and becoming intrinsic to seamlessly integrating accessibility into urban planning and design.

Our learnings emphasises that effective accessibility initiatives require not just multi-stakeholder partnerships but also a comprehensive perspective, covering both vertical (from global to local) and horizontal (across all domains of urban development) approaches. WBU has actively showcased this commitment approach by collaborating with key mainstream urban development stakeholders, like UN-Habitat and the United Cities and Local Governments, highlighting our belief that each stakeholder brings unique expertise to the collaborative effort. Looking forward, we recognize that the journey towards accessibility demands active involvement from diverse OPDs, multilateral partners, national and local governments, academia, the private sector, planners, and urban practitioners. Their collective engagement remains crucial for transformative urban development, particularly as we aim to dismantle accessibility barriers

# Budget overview

Annual programmatic work planning (see “MEAL”) comprised budget forecasting to inform strategic decision-making on approaches for activity implementation. From late 2019 through the end of 2023, total IAUD programme expenditure reached USD 640 000. During this period, an average of 43% of the expenditure was allocated to activities, while the remaining 57% was dedicated to staffing costs. Reasonable accommodation allocations made up around 10 % of total spending.

## Overall spending estimates

The table below presents the estimated yearly programme spending during the implementation period:

YEAR	BUDGET SPENT
2018-19	48 257
2020	58 545
2021	106 880
2022	225 428
2023	199 784
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>638 894</b>

The spending progression mirrors the incremental expansion and progression of programming. While 2018-2019 focused on piloting, planning, and scoping; 2020-2021 focused on programme expansion including building internal capacities, development of resources, coordination of OPD partners, and COVID-related activities; 2022-2023 included comprehensive participation across key events and processes (e.g., WUF 11, HLPF, COP 28) and investments towards consolidating partnerships (e.g., UCLG) and piloting initiatives (e.g., Accessibility GO Lao PDR Pilot).

Several success factors contributed to the operations and achievements of the IAUD Programming. This encompassed a combination of financing modalities and funding sources, including for staffing and staff secondments (see p.12 “success factors”). Following the rapidly increasing demand of WBU’s technical advisory work in IAUD areas, the WBU absorbed technical staff previously covered directly by partners. For instance, with the funding from the CBM Switzerland/Global Grant, WBU retained the Programme Officer/Bilateral Associate Expert after the Sida 2019-2021 secondment programme period, and the Senior Advisor after CBM’s 2019-2020 direct cost coverage.

Spending on activities was lower between March 2020 throughout 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic as events and processes were conducted mostly online and that the IAUD team contributed and participated in processes or events at no-cost or less cost compared with other years. Cost-sharing approaches were also taken in resources production and event organisation. Worth noting is the additional grant from CBM Global for WBU’s participation in WUF 10, for which we coordinated and funded a cross-disability delegation of OPD experts (See **Annex 1 Case Studies**).

The IAUD Programme spending estimates does not include costs incurred in relation to the development of WBU's Knowledge and Learning (KLP) Platform which was later put on hold. However, during 2021 the IAUD team allocated time towards actively supporting the KLP process.

## **Spending synergies across IAUD programme areas of work**

The IAUD Programme areas of work are heavily interrelated and works in synergy. The flexibility provided during the period, primarily as a result of core funding, has fostered the IAUD programme's adaptability in planning and budgeting. This has enabled a holistic approach towards advancing outcomes while avoiding compartmentalisation often experienced in project management. Considering the interrelatedness of the programme areas (e.g., partnerships result in capacity building, learning, resource development, and underscores advocacy, while advocacy often builds and nurtures partnerships etc.), a rigid breakdown of spending towards each area is challenging. However, rough estimates indicate that advocacy activities made up 58 %, capacity building 30 %, and partnerships 12 % in activity spending.

## **Integrating accessibility and reasonable accommodation**

During the reporting period, prioritizing accessibility and reasonable accommodation has been central to the IAUD programme efforts. Budgets for accessibility and reasonable accommodation were integrated across specific activity planning, and not separated. Reasonable accommodations were provided following assessments of individual requests.

It is estimated that reasonable accommodation (RA) costs made up roughly 10 % of total IAUD Programme expenditure during the reporting period. This included the RA costs covered by Sida for the PO/BAE Position 2019-2021. Reasonable accommodation spending was often higher during travel-intense periods (e.g., 2019) and when WBU coordinated larger delegations to key forums (e.g., WUF 10).



### **Learnings from visual guiding practices**

Visual guiding, one component of reasonable accommodation, plays a crucial role in facilitating effective participation, contribution, and networking within the WBU community. WBU has made efforts to efficiently utilise existing staff resources to support other staff or representatives with visual guiding in combination with participating and supporting events based on their areas of expertise and staff role. Additionally, in certain cases, the organisation has proactively identified and contracted local visual guides, or arranged for temporarily contracted support staff to be flown in,

Experience drawn from these practices highlight several learnings:

- Finding available and suitable visual guides in event locations can be difficult, particularly if they are not readily available, can provide full-time support, or can seamlessly assist with networking or with co-facilitation techniques during workshops.
- Balancing dual roles can be challenging for existing staff members, as they must simultaneously serve as visual guides while actively participating and contributing to events and meetings.
- External conferences and forums, particularly those where the WBU holds coordinator or co-organiser roles, can be highly demanding for visual guides. These situations necessitate finding individuals who are the 'right fit,' capable of handling intense demands. This may involve ensuring adequate remuneration opportunities, particularly for those who are sacrificing income to provide support.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning

Annual programme workplans and budget forecasting are part of the programme's regular activities. The IAUD programme contributes to WBU's overall financial and narrative reporting, actively engaging with the WBU Secretariat in short-term and annual planning, and through SWOT-analyses and stakeholder mappings. In addition, the programme contributes to the WBU operational plan, supported by the CEO and secretariat, serving as a tool for accountability and monitoring for the WBU leadership.

The programme conducted a mid-term review in 2021, and ongoing processes such as after-action reviews and the learning from the roll-out of developed tools and resources were integral to the improvement of programming over time. There is a recognised lack of capacity within the overall WBU Secretariat to manage Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) mechanisms which also impacted the programme. Addressing this would entail further efforts to standardise practices for the collection, documentation and communication of learnings, results, and overarching impact of WBU's work. This is particularly important as WBU seeks to scale up operations while exploring diverse sources of funding from across traditional and non-traditional donors.

## Conclusion

**The IAUD Programme stands as a testament to the power of collective action in driving positive change. By prioritising accessibility, inclusion, and the rights of persons with disabilities, the IAUD Programme has laid the foundation for a more equitable and sustainable urban future. As WBU and its partners continue their efforts, it is important to remain steadfast in the commitment to leaving no one behind and building cities that truly belong to all.**

WBU has witnessed the transformative power of collaboration and partnership. By bringing together stakeholders from government, multilateral system, civil society, academia, and the disability community, the IAUD programme has fostered dialogue, knowledge exchange, and

collective action towards common goals. This collaborative spirit has not only led to the identification of key challenges but has also paved the way for innovative solutions and promising practices. Through its multifaceted approach, the IAUD programme has addressed critical gaps in policy, practice, and stakeholder engagement, contributing to localization and realisation of the CRPD and the Global Agendas.

One of the programme's key achievements has been its emphasis on the rights-based approach, grounded in the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). By aligning with CRPD Article 9, the IAUD programme has advocated for the removal of barriers, the promotion of accessibility, and the recognition of disability rights as integral components of urban development agendas, strategies, and practices.

Moreover, the programme's commitment to meaningful engagement has contributed to position WBU and OPD partners as active participants and leaders in decision and processes related to urban development. Through participatory approaches, WBU has supported persons who are blind or partially sighted and persons with disabilities more generally to contribute their expertise and perspectives in the design and implementation of urban initiatives.

Looking ahead, the IAUD programme recognises that the journey towards truly inclusive and accessible cities is ongoing. While significant progress has been made, challenges persist, and there is much work to be done to foster localization of CRPD Article 9 and ensure WBU member and OPD engagement across all levels of sustainable development. As we move forward, it is essential to build upon the momentum generated by the programme, leveraging lessons learned and best practices to inform future policies, programmes, and investments.



**The benefit of this (IAUD) work is that it covers many areas, it might have started with smart cities but since it looks at LRGs and urban environments we talk about jobs, physical environment, education, climate change and DRR. This has helped us to strongly profile, and many areas fall under this, making it fluid and inclusive and not just about single topics or areas. So, the question is how we can make most out of this. It is great for the WBU profile, and great for WBU's own capacity building, training, and scaling up of staff and members. Hope this is the way forward as well. Martine Abel-Williamson, WBU.**

# Recommendations for future action



**Humanity is going through a set of convulsions, and it is going to reshape the way cities work. If we are not engaged, then we will be left out. This is an existential threat for Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons.** Victor Santiago Pineda, World Enabled.

The following section presents key recommendations for WBU's future action across advocacy, capacity building, partnerships, programme management and operations.

## ADVOCACY

- 1. Future advocacy initiatives should build on the approach jointly developed by WBU and Local and Regional governments (UCLG) which emphasise the critical need for localization and for an urban-accessibility lens across climate action and disaster risk reduction efforts.** Additionally, it is important to work across advocacy sectors and promote coordinated strategies at regional levels to ensure that inclusive resilience efforts and emergency response measures effectively address accessibility barriers and enhance overall community resilience.
- 2. Advocacy priorities should be informed by the evidence and the gaps observed in the implementation of the CRPD in tandem with the global humanitarian and development agendas:** To retain relevance of WBU's work and advocacy around accessibility, WBU should continuously map progress and shortcomings in the implementation of New Urban Agenda, SDG 11, Sendai, and Paris Framework to identify priorities, as well as opportunities for influencing policies effectively.
- 3. Amplify accessibility practices and sharing of existing accessibility advocacy initiatives:** This by conducting a mapping of accessibility advocacy initiatives and practices undertaken by WBU's membership, to support exchange of good practices, peer-learning, making connections, and identification of case studies to underscore advocacy across global, regional, national, and local levels.
- 4. Synchronise advocacy agendas towards inclusive and accessible cities across WBU's global, regional, and national structures:** Translating global achievements to all levels of WBU's community will require that advocacy agendas across the organisational structure is synchronized, including by enabling support to effective participation in regional platforms and mechanisms (e.g., regional urban forums, regional platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction etc.).
- 5. Champion the cross-disability approach in the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda and related regional frameworks:** WBU's leadership on urban development within the global disability movement comes with the responsibility of promoting a cross-disability approach and ensuring representation of diverse voices in

the organisation's urban advocacy. Moving forward, this should entail strengthening the participation of underrepresented groups within WBU's membership (e.g., youth, older persons, Indigenous communities, LGBTQI+ etc.) throughout advocacy efforts, while providing space for the wider OPD collective joining efforts.

## **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

- 1. Increase WBU member and OPD capacities for engagement on the New Urban Agenda and climate- and inclusive resilient cities together with key partners:** Together with key partners, the WBU should invest in creating training modules (e.g., IDA-IDDC BRIDGE Module 3) on the New Urban Agenda, climate- and disability inclusive and resilient cities. This would lay foundation for accelerated engagement of intersecting communities across all levels, help break advocacy siloes, enable synergies and interlinkages between stakeholders and advocacy agendas, while building the global pool of representative experts to undertake advisory and stakeholder coordination roles at regional and national levels.
- 2. Increase impact and uptake of Accessibility GO! amongst WBU membership and OPD partners to lead on advisory roles:** This should include WBU develop and provide orientation, training, and guidance resources, WBU co-lead roll-out of the guide across sectors with key partners, collect and disseminate learning, design a business model approach to generate advisory service incomes, and adapt the guide to municipal contexts supporting local action.
- 3. Strengthen tailoring of specific capacity building and learning initiatives informed by accelerated research and mapping initiatives with the WBU community:** This should include undertaking a global mapping of the needs and accessibility priorities of the WBU community, including how WBU members and OPD partners are working on accessibility at local level, and engage with regional and local governments on accessibility, urban planning and design, climate action, and disaster risk reduction.
- 4. Strengthen linkages between WBU's operational planning processes with its working groups and committees of champions and experts to foster our communities of practice:** This should include co-developing operational actions and activities with matching working groups and committees supporting their operations, co-ownership, strengthened mechanisms for engagement and ultimately providing enhanced engagement in programme implementation.
- 5. Promote WBU's tools and resources within our community and amongst practitioners, along with learnings and practices from across our membership towards enhancing skills and knowledge sharing:** This could include creating spaces for dialogues across the WBU and urban development communities to increase area understandings, creation of resource library on WBU's new website, and creation of case studies building on existing initiatives (e.g., Journal of Public Space, Cities for All Campaign, Policy Brief on Localization, Global Survey on Accessibility and OPD engagement etc.).

## PARTNERSHIPS

1. **“Localizing” programme partnerships and collaboration to WBU’s regional, national, and local membership levels:** This will entail taking steps to support the regional, national, and local membership of WBU to engage and partner with corresponding structures of key partners to foster participation, collaboration, and learning, including with UN-Habitat regional and national offices, and UCLG’s regional sections and municipality members, in relation to existing collaboration frameworks.
2. **Accelerate WBU’s engagement with partners on accessibility standards:** Re-activate and accelerate WBU’s engagement and partnerships with key organisations and institutions in the development and implementation of accessibility standards and certification processes, e.g., ISO on Usability and Accessibility of the Built Environment, Resiliency standards, and IAAP on training certification programmes. This would strengthen WBU’s role in the area, while foster “know-how” on international standards amongst WBU’s community and key agreement partners having key roles in implementation, also enabling closer cooperation with local and regional governments when WBU members may take on technical advisory roles.
3. **Further expand partnerships around Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Action, resilience:** Explore and expand on partnerships considering the cross-cutting nature of the IAUD Programme in relation to resilience, disaster risk reduction and climate action (e.g., adaptation, risk-mitigation, smart cities, energy transitions, just transition, nature-based solutions). This may entail re-recalibrating existing activities while increasingly strengthening connections with organisations like the UNDRR and Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030), UNCCC, UN Environment Programme, engaging in the Global Platform for DRR and support participation of WBU regional members in regional DRR and climate action platforms.
4. **Modelling WBU member engagement in urban planning practices by supporting piloting initiatives through partner consortia:** Explore opportunities for WBU to engage in supporting practical piloting initiatives on accessibility and urban planning in select cities, including assisting involvement of WBU’s membership in the projects. This would entail working with WBU’s partners (e.g., UN-Habitat, GDI Hub, UCLG, G3ICT, Cities 4 All network) to identify synergies around specific cities where often several of them have worked across separate projects. This offers a great entry points to form consortiums for supporting identified cities in implementing accessibility practices and recommendations, including by ensuring the active involvement of WBU’s membership.
5. **Expand collaboration with international financial institutions, leading technology, and innovation, and key consultancy stakeholders:** This may entail exploring how collaborative efforts with entities including the World Bank, CIF, IMF, regional development banks, major consultancy firms, and big tech can be nurtured. This with the aim to ensure that infrastructure support provided to national, regional, and local governments embed accessibility across resilience, post-disaster, and reconstruction while also lessening need for retrofitting.

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

- 1. Foster synergies, engagement, communications, and peer-learning with WBU regions:** Structured reflections should be made on how to enhance operational synergies and linkages with regions, including identify ways to ramp up information sharing (e.g., joint communications committee), building on existing communications practices across regions (e.g., newsletters, WhatsApp groups, regional working groups). This would support increased information sharing and provide insights into challenges and opportunities the union together can help address. A draft Membership Engagement Strategy was developed to identify strategies and tactics to assist the WBU to maximize its engagement with members. This strategy includes the retention of current members, re-engagement of lapsed or inactive members and recruitment of new members. The strategy highlights various actions to remove barriers hindering member engagement within the WBU, including communication gaps, structural complexities, and specific challenges faced by members.
- 2. Strengthen MEAL capacities and standardisation of practices:** To further improve programme effectiveness and impact, WBU should prioritise capacity-building efforts aimed at enhancing staff skills and expertise in monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (e.g., through workshops) while standardising practices for the collection, documentation, and communication of learnings, results, and overarching impacts (e.g., guidelines, templates, procedures for After-Action Reviews, Mid-Term Reviews, internal reporting etc.).
- 3. Manage expectations and strengthen capacities for technical advisory provision:** Establish clear terms, conditions, and parameters for provision of technical expertise (ranging in scope and nature depending on requests), including by drawing up sample ToR. Explore opportunities for advice compensation, subcontracting and consultancy options to efficiently deliver, while also fostering engagement opportunities for our community through expert involvement.
- 4. Strengthen predictability, sustainability, and programme funding:** WBU should advocate for core funding opportunities while exploring opportunities to “hook on” onto existing agreements (e.g., UN-Habitat, UCLG) to accelerate impact. WBU could also explore joint city-specific pilot projects with partners and seek to ensure WBU member engagement in such. WBU could also encourage inter-member collaboration projects across IAUD areas, taking inspiration from existing practices (e.g., ONCE Foundation, Nordic countries). For events and forum participation activities, specifically where WBU take a coordinating role, co-sponsoring and cost-sharing possibilities should be explored with key partners and donors towards ensuring increased engagement opportunities for a diversity of the WBU community and OPD partners. In addition to recommendations on MEAL and financial returns, programme predictability and sustainability would benefit from alignment of staff contracts with funding and project timelines.

# Annex 1. Case studies

## Case study 1. From WUF10 to WUF11 Modelling UN accessibility of conferences

The journey from the 10th to the 11th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF) marked a significant advancement in terms of participation for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and the accessibility of conferences. It highlights the importance of collective advocacy efforts, acknowledging the crucial role and impact of OPDs' participation in fostering conference accessibility and promoting disability-inclusive urban development. It reflects a shared commitment to creating inclusive spaces for dialogue and decision-making, ensuring that all voices are heard, valued, and empowered to contribute to the advancement of inclusive cities in alignment with the CRPD and the principle of leaving no one behind.

The journey has been marked by critical steps and learnings which have been summarized in the following articles:

- [World Urban Forum 10: A critical milestone for engaging persons with disabilities to achieve cities for all](#)
- [WBU coordinates participation of IDA members' representatives and Bridge CRPD-SDGs Alumni in the 10th World Urban Forum](#)
- [Celebrating World Urban Forum 11: Setting a new standard for accessibility and engagement of persons with disabilities.](#)

The main highlights of this journey include the following:

- **Partnership development:** WUF10 acted as a catalyst for fostering partnerships between OPDs, urban stakeholders, and cities. At WUF10, the World Blind Union (WBU) led advocacy efforts with support from a grant provided by CBM Global. This facilitated coordination of the IDA IDDC BRIDGE Alumni Delegation, enhancing their impactful engagement. This collaboration laid a solid foundation for collective action in subsequent forums (WUF11), demonstrating the power of inclusive partnerships in driving urban development agendas forward.
- **Advocacy and momentum:** The advocacy efforts initiated at WUF10, particularly by the disability caucus, generated momentum for subsequent forums. The momentum generated at WUF10 propelled preparations for WUF11. Advocacy by the disability caucus, coupled with engagement with UN-Habitat, paved the way towards ensuring accessibility is mainstreamed in discussion and that it is a precondition for participation in dialogues and decisions. The commitments gathered during WUF10 guided subsequent efforts, emphasizing the crucial role of accessibility in urban development.
- **Meaningful participation:** The active involvement of OPDs in daily sessions, discussions, and decision-making processes during both WUF10 and WUF11 highlighted the importance of meaningful participation. Effective coordination, support mechanisms,

and pre-training initiatives facilitated diverse representation and ensured that the voices of persons with disabilities were heard and valued.

- **Setting a new benchmark for accessibility:** WUF11 emerged as a milestone event in setting a “new standard” for conference accessibility of UN Conference. Building upon commitments made at WUF10, the Government of Poland and the city of Katowice, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, WBU and the disability caucus, prioritised accessibility. WUF11 showcased comprehensive measures to ensure inclusivity, thereby setting a precedent for future forums and emphasizing accessibility as a precondition for full and effective participation. The goals for WUF11 were set to make accessibility a cross-cutting programme theme, mainstream it across post-WUF legacy activities with cities, and making the forum as accessible as possible.

**Examples of conference arrangements that spoke to accessibility included:**

- International Sign and Polish Sign interpretation and captioning in all main sessions and across many other events to a greater extent than ever before.
- Step-free-access and ramps to all stages and podiums.
- Accessible lifts and elevators inside and outside the venue.
- Venue maps and food menus in Braille.
- Wheelchair accessible washrooms including accessible showers.
- Tactile pathway in entrance hall.
- Relieving area for guide and assistance dogs with food and water.
- Hearing loops.
- Accessible event mobile application and website, and mobile application for venue navigation for persons who are blind and partially sighted.
- Accessible hotel rooms close to the venue.
- Accessible public transport to the venue.
- Regular accessibility checks and upgrades during the forum, and helpful staff to guide visitors.
- Mechanisms to provide feedback on accessibility.
- Welcoming green, accessible quiet public spaces in proximity to the venue.

**Read the full Report by the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy:**

[WELCOME How to ensure the accessibility of international events? Conclusions of the 11th session of the World Urban Forum – WUF11](#)

## Case Study 2. Learning from WBU and UN-Habitat's partnership

WBU became the first global OPD to officially partner with United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) which is the main UN agency responsible for the New Urban Agenda providing support to cities and territories across the globe. The [milestone agreement between the UN-Habitat and WBU towards accessible cities for all](#) has given WBU a unique position in the OPD movement and urban development community as this is the first time a global OPD formalise a collaboration with UN-Habitat. It has unlocked the possibility for the WBU to enjoy an advisory role on how the Programme's operations can be benchmarked against the CRPD while opening for WBU to support WBU members and other OPDs to collectively support UN-Habitat. The agreement models an innovative form of partnership which can help inspire other OPDs to forge concrete working relationships with other UN entities.

**In late 2023, the IAUD team led the work on a joint stocktaking with UN-Habitat to capture key achievements and learnings from the cooperation thus far, to inform next steps and the agreement for the upcoming agreement period.**

**Key achievements include advancing accessibility practices and advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in urban environments. These accomplishments include enhanced leadership in promoting accessibility, highlighted through participation in events like WUF 11, and the publication of joint policy and advocacy pieces.** Such efforts have garnered global recognition for WBU as a leader in urban accessibility, fostering increased engagement of persons with disabilities in sustainable urbanisation initiatives. Additionally, collaborative learning and capacity-building activities have been undertaken to address the technical challenges faced by UN-Habitat in advancing disability inclusion and accessibility.

**WBU and OPD partners increased engagement within UN-Habitat processes has been key, marked by increased participation across various forums and the attainment of significant accessibility milestones** (e.g., WUF 11). This heightened involvement has solidified WBU's position as a leading advocate for urban accessibility globally, enhancing its visibility, legitimacy, and credibility as an expert partner in this field. Moreover, the partnership has facilitated joint advocacy endeavours, including the publication of policy pieces, and the sharing of resources and expertise to bolster capacities around disability inclusion and accessibility. Through collaborative efforts, both organisations have contributed to building internal capacities within UN-Habitat while also shaping broader strategy action plans to advance sustainable urban development goals, exemplified by WBU's involvement in initiatives such as the global SDG 11 reporting, numerous Expert Group Meetings (EGMs), and communities of practice sessions.



**UN Habitat has been engaging around different public events and activities and WBU has helped UN-Habitat to be intentional about this. The EGMs in 2020 really**

helped kicking off this meaningful work. Given the context of urbanisation, engaging with an OPD is key to UN-Habitat and the partnership with WBU makes us walk the talk and being intentional about the engagement. Angela Mwai, UN-Habitat.

#### 4 of the key learnings from the period are:

- **Technical capacity and resourcing on disability inclusion and accessibility:** While the partnership has assisted in building internal capacities, sharing knowledge, and providing technical expertise there is a need to support steps towards creation of designated staff resources on accessibility and disability inclusion within UN-Habitat to accelerate mainstreaming and safeguarding of long-term outcomes.
- **Localizing the partnership:** Building on the partnership's global achievements will entail supporting regional, national and local actions by shaping interaction points between UN-Habitat's and WBU's regional and national structures for collaboration, peer-learning and capacity building.
- **Intra-organisational partnership awareness:** Both UN-Habitat and WBU needs to increasingly promote the partnership throughout their organisational structures. This will enhance making inter-organisational connections, spur participation in relevant activities and accelerate sharing of learnings and collection of case studies.
- **Building “know how” on accessibility and urban development:** A joint learning is the absence of internal guidance and resources on what disability inclusion and accessibility means in urban development, planning, and design practices – and how progress is monitored and measured. This is calling for sustained focus on indicator and guidance development.

**Moving the collaboration forward will include agreeing on a renewed MoU for the coming years. Such agreement is likely to prioritise enhancing technical capacities, increasing meaningful engagement and foster partnerships at regional and national levels, sharing of learnings and building “know how”, while jointly explore funding opportunities to sustain and scale up the partnership.** Engagement in the World Urban Forums and mainstreaming accessibility at the heart of UN-Habitat's upcoming strategic plan are envisioned key aspects of the new MoU.

## Case study 3. How to enhance membership engagement: learnings from the IAUD programme

There has been an incremental process of learning on how to work together with WBU members and leadership. The programme grew incrementally, and it has engaged with different members and individuals from the WBU leadership and community including AFUB, AP, CNIB, DAB, EBU, IDA, ONCE, RIADIS, the Laos Association of the Blind, the Nepal Association of the Blind, the School for the Blind (Laos), the Sudan Association of the Blind, the Swedish Association for the Visually Impaired, the Vocational Development for the Blind Association (Laos), the Zimbabwe Association of Visually Handicapped.

Engagement in the IAUD Programme encompass active engagement in global forums, amplification of diverse voices through surveys and webinars, and collaborative efforts in crafting and rolling out impactful resources such as the "Accessibility Go! A Guide to Action." However, like many membership-based organisations, maintaining engagement and effective communication requires dedicated resources and time. It also requires addressing barriers to engagement as highlighted in the draft membership engagement strategy.

Learnings for the IAUD Programme to enhance membership engagement effectively, include:

1. **Investing in capacity building:** The IAUD Programme's success is rooted in building in-house capacity and expertise. Investing in training and support for members ensures active participation and meaningful contributions.
2. **Diversifying communication channels:** Utilise diverse communication channels, including social media, webinars, and workshops, to engage members effectively. Tailoring communication to different regions and linguistic preferences enhances inclusivity.
3. **Collaborating locally:** Foster collaboration with local associations and organisations. The IAUD Programme's partnerships with diverse entities demonstrate the power of collaborative, community-driven initiatives.
4. **Supporting advocacy initiatives:** Actively support members in advocacy efforts. The IAUD Programme's involvement in global campaigns and statements showcases the impact of unified advocacy on critical issues.
5. **Ensuring accessibility:** Prioritize accessibility in all initiatives including translations. From surveys to resources, ensuring accessibility for all members is fundamental to fostering engagement and participation.
6. **Fostering cross-disability collaboration:** Adopt a cross-disability approach to engage a wider spectrum of voices. Collaborate with other marginalised groups, such as older persons, to address intersectional challenges.
7. **Providing ongoing support:** Offer ongoing training and support to members, addressing evolving needs and challenges. This helps members to actively contribute to the organisation's goals.

8. **Celebrating successes:** Recognise and celebrate achievements, both at the individual and organisational levels. Highlighting successes fosters a sense of pride and motivates continued engagement.
9. **Adapting to regional dynamics:** Understand and adapt to regional dynamics and complexities within a membership organisation. Navigating the intricacies of diverse memberships requires flexibility and cultural awareness.
10. **Creating spaces for collaboration:** Facilitate spaces for collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Committees, forums, and working groups provide platforms for members to contribute expertise and stay informed about developments in their specific domains.

# Annex 2. Evaluation questions

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COHERENCE

- How did the programme align with the respective principles, visions, and missions of WBU?
- How did the programme ensure synergies and complementation with OPD partners and allies? How did the programme support meaningful participation and representation across disability, gender, age groups, etc.?
- Was the programme able to adapt its actions to changing scenarios, in particular in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic?

## RELEVANCE AND QUALITY

- How relevant is the programme to support delivery of internal and external strategies and policies?
- How relevant are the areas/components of the program in particular regarding influencing change and building capacity and organisational excellence in WBU?
- How is the program increasing capacity of WBU and OPD partners to lead and advice on the implementation of the CRPD and the localization of humanitarian and development agendas?

## EFFECTIVENESS

- To what extent has WBU achieved the objectives at different levels set in the relevant results frameworks? What has not yet been achieved and what adjustments and priorities need to be considered for the next phase of the programme?
- Were the activities consistent and relevant to the expected results? How were deviations from the plan considered and managed?
- What system(s) have been put into place to monitor progress with various partners, allies, and stakeholders? Was this monitoring system effective and what could be done to improve it?

## EFFICIENCY

- How has the programme contributed to a more efficient way of working and collaboration within WBU including increasing capacity of staff?
- In how far have the resources provided for the programme been adequate and sufficient? How have they been used up-to-date?
- What resources are needed to support the next phase of the programme based on identified priorities and opportunities?

## IMPACT

- To what extend has the programme influenced change and transformed practices? What factors contributed to the success or failure of the programme's implementation?
- What are the key learning and examples of good practices? In the areas of advocacy, capacity development, networking and partnerships.

- How could the learning and evidence about impact of the program be disseminated to amplify change, model innovative practices and facilitate synchronization of collaborative approaches between partners and allies?

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

- What factors can influence/are influencing the sustainability of the programme and the lasting of the program's benefits? How can ownership of the results and synergy with OPD partners/IDA be enhanced and sustained over time?
- What key opportunities have been generated by the programme? Which most strategic opportunities WBU should seize and consider moving the programme forward?
- What are the recommendations towards funding partners to sustain and optimize their investment towards the programme and realising disability-inclusion and accessibility in our cities and communities?

# Annex 3. Key Informant Interviews

WBU extends sincere gratitude to the following individuals and their organisations for their valuable time and insightful contributions, which were essential to the development of this report. Please note that the information listed below represent the organisation and positions at the time of the interviews, which might not be the same currently.

Special thanks to:

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- **Dean Lermen**, Secretary General, ULAC.
- **Elizabeth Ombati**, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry.
- **Federico Batista Poitier**, Accessibility Policy Officer, UCLG.
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- **Thomas Bryan**, Chair of WBU Working Group on the Built Environment, Blind Citizens NZ, WBU AP.
- **Victor Santiago Pineda**, President and Founder of The Victor Pineda Foundation/World Enabled.

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- <sup>i</sup> UCLG, [Policy Paper on Inclusive and Accessible Cities](#), 2019
- <sup>ii</sup> CBM and World Enabled, [The Inclusion Imperative: Towards Inclusive and Accessible Urban Development](#), 2016, p.9
- <sup>iii</sup> WHO, [Ageing and Health key facts](#) (2022)
- <sup>iv</sup> United Nations, [Ageing and disability](#), Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- <sup>v</sup> UCLG and WBU, policy brief – [Localization to Solve the Accessibility Crisis: Recommendations to States Parties for Immediate Action](#) – to solve the accessibility crisis.
- <sup>vi</sup> [Discover How Accessible ICT Benefits Smart Cities \(smartcities4all.org\)](#) from the Smart Cities for All initiative.
- <sup>vii</sup> McGill Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism and the International Disability Alliance, [Disability Rights in National Climate Policies](#), November 2022.
- <sup>viii</sup> United Nations, [Accessibility and the status of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto: report of the Secretary-General](#), 2019. Accessibility underlies all articles of the CRPD to safeguard and promote the rights of all persons with disabilities to equally access all areas of social, economic, cultural, and political life. This covers all articles but is essential to ensure living independently and being included in the community (Article 19), to access health (Article 24), education (Article 25), work and employment, an adequate standard of living and social protection (Article 28), participation in political and public life (Article 29), and participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport (Article 30). The CRPD also obligates States Parties to address accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian and emergency responses (Article 11) and international cooperation (Article 32).
- <sup>ix</sup> United Nations, [Report Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities](#), Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability and Development, 2018.
- <sup>x</sup> United Nations, [Tracking Progress Towards Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements](#), SDG 11 Synthesis Report, High Level Political Forum, 2018.
- <sup>xi</sup> [IDA COVID-19 End-Discrimination Campaign](#) and WBU's Covid-19 Report “[Amplifying voices: our lives, our say](#)”, 2020.
- <sup>xii</sup> Global Accessibility News, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2017, available at <https://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2017/07/25/re-igniting-the-global-network-on-disability-inclusion-and-accessible-urban-development-diaud-2/>

Icons used in this report are taken from [www.flaticon.com](http://www.flaticon.com)

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