THEORY OF CHANGE TO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AGENDA ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Introduction

The EuroMed Disability Agenda is an evolving initiative co-designed by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and ONCE Social Group (OSG) that has grown through successive conferences and stakeholder inputs. The 2022 Conference in Barcelona, Spain, laid the groundwork for a comprehensive approach, highlighting the region's challenges and opportunities for fostering socio-economic inclusion. The 2024 Conference in Amman, Jordan, furthered these discussions, serving as a launch pad for the Euro-Med Agenda on the Socioeconomic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. The recently completed Preliminary Assessment on the Socio-Economic Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Mediterranean Region further illuminates key barriers and suggests potential pathways forward. These efforts collectively inform the Theory of Change (ToC), setting the stage for an inclusive, evidence-based disability agenda in the region.

The Mediterranean region is uniquely positioned at the crossroads of three continents, witnessing significant migratory flows, dynamic cultural exchanges, and pressing challenges related to climate change, conflict, and economic fluctuations. While global mechanisms (including, but not limited to, treaty bodies under the UN system, the International Labor Organization's standards, and the World Bank's Inclusive Education and Social Protection agendas) offer guidance for disability inclusion, regional collaboration remains essential to adapt these frameworks to the specific socio-cultural, political, and economic realities of the Mediterranean (Al-Azwani & Bylund, 2021; Neira et al., 2023).

In the spirit of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (CRPD) Article 32 on international cooperation, this Agenda contributes to fostering partnership across government bodies, development agencies, and civil society, ensuring shared learning, resource mobilization, and replication of best practices. It builds upon the synergies among global and regional instruments, including the Barcelona Process, the UfM Ministerial Conferences, and other intergovernmental platforms, thus leveraging the comparative advantages and mandates of different international stakeholders.

The ToC aims at developing a strategy with realistic objectives that focuses on socio-economic inclusion, gender equality, and emerging issues such as climate change and the inclusion of refugees and migrants with disabilities. These challenges are framed within the broader goals of fostering regional collaboration and aligning with international frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The ToC will be instrumental in driving policy, institutional strengthening, and regional collaboration in these focus areas. The geographic and socio-political diversity of the Mediterranean region, coupled with the limited timeframe of this consultancy, presents challenges to a fully-fledged analysis that can cover all countries with equal depth. Therefore, while striving for a comprehensive framework, certain assumptions (e.g., data availability, political stability, stakeholder engagement) play a critical role in shaping the ToC. The complexity and diversity of the Mediterranean region imply several challenges that must be addressed when developing a fully-fledged ToC. While the ToC is clear about the overall objectives and expected results, careful consideration must be given to the nuances of each country within the scope of this analysis. Important considerations include the varying levels of political stability, economic development, and existing legal frameworks for disability rights. The region encompasses countries with different levels of commitment and capacity to implement CRPD-aligned policies. Thus, while the ToC will offer a structured framework, it will need to be adaptable to the varying contexts of Mediterranean countries, and some approximations will be necessary to reply adequately to the research constraints.

The ToC builds on the above-mentioned Preliminary Assessment and on the expanded desk research (including data from Algeria, France, Germany, Greece, Tunisia, and Türkyie) as well as on the consultations with the main Organizations for persons with Disabilities from the Euro—Mediterranean region. This document contains:

A) **A problem tree,** i.e. a tool that helps break down complex issues into their root causes, underlying factors, and immediate consequences.

B) **A solution tree,** i.e. a tool which outlines the necessary actions and interventions that can address the identified root causes. This step helps determine not only the expected impact, but also the specific outcomes and outputs needed to achieve these changes. The solution tree represents a pathway from the current state of exclusion to the desired future, where persons with disabilities have full access to socio-economic opportunities and enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others.

C) **The Theory of Change,** with the following structure:
   a. Situational assessment and problem statement(s).
   b. Expected impact.
   c. Expected outcomes per pillar.
   d. Expected outputs and typology of actions to achieve results per pillar.
   e. Assumptions and risk analysis.
   f. Potential indicators of success and baselines.
   g. Stakeholder mapping.
   h. Sequencing (define timeline, priorities, resources).
   i. Governance.

Problem Tree

Challenges in Disability Inclusion in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

The preliminary analysis clearly demonstrates that the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean region stem from deeply rooted issues. At the heart of these challenges are policy and legislative gaps, which include a lack of comprehensive CRPD-aligned policies across all countries. This results in inconsistent legal frameworks that fail to provide adequate protection or support for persons with disabilities in accordance with the requirements arising from the Convention. Furthermore, insufficient data collection practices lead to fragmented and unreliable statistics, making evidence-based policymaking extremely difficult. For example, while countries like France, Italy, or Spain have more advanced, yet perfectible, data systems, others, such as Lebanon or Algeria, rely on outdated methodologies, highlighting significant disparities in disability data collection across the region. For example, a 2014 study by the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency found a complete absence of reliable disability statistics in several MENA countries and in the course of the preliminary analysis, several data gaps and inconsistencies were identified. Without robust data, it becomes nearly impossible for governments to design evidence-based policies or measure progress effectively, although this should not be considered an excuse for inaction.

Cultural and social barriers, including entrenched stigma and discrimination, further exacerbate the exclusion of persons with disabilities. This is particularly evident in employment, where high unemployment rates of persons with disabilities (e.g., 86.6% in Morocco and over 70% in Lebanon) reveal systemic exclusion. Economic inequalities, coupled with limited budget allocations for disability programs, create additional barriers, leaving many individuals without essential resources or support. Infrastructure gaps, such as inaccessible public buildings, transportation systems, and digital platforms, further hinder the full participation of persons with disabilities in social, economic, and cultural life.

Though the scenario may appear aligned with those of other regions of the world, the heterogeneity of the Mediterranean region and the significant socio-economic disparities between the two shores of the Basin add further complexity to the implementation of CRPD- and human rights-oriented interventions.

Underlying these root causes are several critical factors. lack of awareness on disability rights perpetuates stigma and misunderstanding, undermining inclusion efforts. Even where disability laws exist, weak implementation mechanisms need to be strengthened for their effective enforcement. Gender disparities create additional layers of exclusion, particularly for women and girls with disabilities, who face compounded discrimination. Resource constraints, including insufficient funding for disability-related programs and services, significantly limit progress.

The immediate consequences of these issues are stark and widespread. High unemployment rates among persons with disabilities reflect their exclusion from the labor market, leading to economic vulnerability and poverty. Social isolation is another significant consequence, as persons with disabilities face barriers to education, healthcare, and cultural activities. Furthermore, the lack of political representation means that disability rights are often underrepresented in policy discussions, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion and inequality.

Solution tree

Pathways to Disability Inclusion in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

To address these deeply rooted challenges, a multifaceted and coordinated approach is necessary. Policy and legislative reform must be prioritized to establish and enforce CRPD-aligned national policies. This includes strengthening legal frameworks to combat discrimination and ensure equitable access to opportunities for persons with disabilities. For example, Malta's model for transposing Articles 33 and 4(3) of the CRPD, Italy's efforts to implement targeted placement methodologies and Spain's inclusive employment strategies can serve as models for other countries in the region.

Enhanced data collection mechanisms are also critical. A unified regional approach to disability data collection, adopting international methodologies such as the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) and Washington Group Short Set (WGSS), would provide the evidence base needed for informed decision-making. While often associated with the medical model of disability, the ICF can still promote disability rights by providing a standardized framework to assess and understand an individual's functioning and disability across a variety of domains. This approach aligns with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by recognizing the diverse nature of disability and ensuring a cross-disability perspective in data collection at national and regional levels. In practice, the ICF helps identify

barriers to participation in society and informs policies and practices that foster the inclusion of people with disabilities, thereby supporting CRPD implementation. As recognized by the United Nations, the ICF functions as a social classification tool, enabling a more nuanced evaluation of disability beyond strictly medical diagnoses and advancing the CRPD's emphasis on social participation and human rights.

Countries like Jordan have demonstrated the potential of integrating disability data into broader national systems, offering valuable lessons for others. By drawing on both the ICF and WGSS frameworks, stakeholders can gather robust data that reflects the lived experiences of people with disabilities, paving the way for evidence-based policies that uphold their rights and autonomy.

Raising awareness and advocating for disability rights is another essential pillar of action. Public awareness campaigns should aim to challenge stigma and promote understanding of disability as a social and human rights issue. Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) must be enabled to actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices are central to the development of policies and programs. Infrastructure development is equally vital. Investments are needed to create accessible public spaces, transportation systems, and digital platforms. Inclusive education and healthcare systems must be established to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. For example, the development of inclusive school curricula and the training of educators in disa-

bility-sensitive practices can significantly improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

Economic inclusion programs must also be prioritized. These programs should include the establishment of vocational training initiatives, the implementation of inclusive employment policies, and the provision of incentives for businesses to hire persons with disabilities. For instance, Morocco's efforts to introduce employment quotas in the public sector highlight the importance of targeted policies to start addressing employment gaps.

These actions aim to produce tangible outcomes, including improved CRPD-aligned legislative and policy frameworks, increased employment opportunities, reduced stigma and discrimination, and enhanced accessibility across all sectors. By addressing the root causes of exclusion, these interventions can pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable Euro-Mediterranean region.

Note that the development of a fully-fledged solution tree shall imply considering integrating specific baseline data and metrics to better frame the starting point for interventions outlined in this section and further below. While the preliminary reports and the data sources cited in them provide for an essential yet not comprehensive dataset, it is advisable to include a complete baseline study as part of the inception phase of the Euro-Mediterranean Disability Agenda.

Problem and Solution Tree (Table)

Identified Problems	Root Causes	Underlying Factors	Immediate Consequences	Solution Action (UfM)	Expected General Outcomes
Policy and Legislative Gaps.	Absence of comprehensive CRPD-aligned policies across countries.	Weak enforcement mechanisms and lack of consistency.	Inconsistent legal protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities.	Support policy dialogue to establish and enforce CRPD-aligned policies, and design and delivery of comprehensive training to ex. police and law enforcement.	Improved legislative frameworks and rights-based protection mechanisms.
Insufficient Data Collection	Fragmented, non-comparable and unreliable statistics hinder evidence-based policymaking.	Outdated methodologies and disparities in data systems.	Inability and/or inefficiency to design targeted interventions.	Develop unified disability data collection mechanisms based on international standards and drawing on innovations such as citizen-generated data (CGD).	Comprehensive, comparable, and actionable disability statistics applicable across the Mediterranean region.
Cultural and Social Stigma	Entrenched societal attitudes exclude persons with disabilities.	Low societal awareness about disability rights.	Exclusion, social isolation, perpetuation of a model of dependency, lack of autonomy and independent living, etc.	Develop public awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives, together with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.	Reduced stigma and increased societal inclusion in line with the principles of independent living and inclusion in the society.

Identified Problems	Root Causes	Underlying Factors	Immediate Consequences	Solution Action (UfM)	Expected General Outcomes
Employment barriers	Persistent discrimination and stigma against persons with disabilities, considered unable to contribute to the workplace.	Inaccessible workplaces, lack of reasonable accommodation mechanisms.	Widespread economic vulnerability and poverty, as well as stalling broader economic growth.	Political platform to modernize labor law and practices, collaboration with employers to build on existing and/or developing inclusive HR practices	Enhanced employment and self-employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, as well as inclusive vocational training, mentorship programs, and career services specifically tailored to persons with disabilities.
Social protection shortcomings	Fragmented social insurance and cash transfer programs that often overlook disability-related extra costs.	Insufficient funding for assistive devices, personal support, or accessible infrastructure. Complex or bureaucratic procedures that deter persons with disabilities from applying for benefits.	Persons with disabilities incur in tangible and hidden extra costs that hinder their full and meaningful participation in the society	Complete a comprehensive policy review of disability benefit schemes, support the design of disability-inclusive public budgeting, and promote reforms in line with Article 28 CRPD.	Reinforced and more uniform social protection mechanisms based on data-driven analysis of extra costs and more disability-sensitive, effectively responding to the unique economic pressures placed on persons with disabilities.
Gender inequalities	Intersectional discrimination intensifies exclusion of women and girls with disabilities. Lack of targeted education, leadership, and economic empowerment programs for women with disabilities.	Inadequate protection against gender-based violence, especially for those with high support needs.	Women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression, resulting in insufficient access to protection mechanisms, education, employment, and societal participation.	Mainstream disability in current regional initiatives for socio-economic empowerment of women and girls, embedding explicit considerations of women and girls with disabilities and introducing specific opportunities to boost women with disabilities' economic participation and representation.	Women and girls with disabilities benefit from enhanced access to education, healthcare, livelihood, and leadership opportunities, thereby reducing multiple and intersectional discrimination and oppression, and closing gender gaps.
Insufficient OPD participation	OPDs are not systematically included in policy-making processes *(nothing without us)*	Under-resourced OPDs with limited capacity to influence national or regional agendas. Ad-hoc consultation, in juxtaposition with mainstreamed participation, undermine sustained collaboration and policy relevance	Disability-specific and general policies lack sufficient insights from a disability-rights, CRPD-oriented and person-centered, perspective.	Establish UfM-wide permanent/regular consultation and participation mechanisms in legislative committees and ministerial working groups, in line with CRPD art. 4.3 and CRPD Committee's General Comment No. 7 Support to OPD strengthening (Euro-Mediterranean OPD network) and to the co-creation of policies with OPDs, ensuring that persons with disabilities shape the decisions that affect them.	Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in UfM policies and initiatives is ensured, mostly via representative organizations.

Identified Problems	Root Causes	Underlying Factors	Immediate Consequences	Solution Action (UfM)	Expected General Outcomes
Unpreparedness for emerging risks in line with CRPD lenses.	Disability-inclusive strategies lacking in national disaster preparedness and crisis response.	Technological and digital transformations often exclude accessibility requirements. Climate change–related displacement and health emergencies (e.g., pandemics) exacerbate vulnerabilities.	Persons with disabilities are among those most at risk in situations of crisis and are more prone to exclusion in the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy.	Incorporate accessible alert systems, shelter designs, and emergency protocols in national contingency plans. Incentivize universal design in digital services, e-government platforms, and telehealth solutions. Integrate disability perspectives into climate resilience strategies, migration policies, and future pandemic preparedness.	More resilient and inclusive regional and national systems able to anticipate, adapt to, and respond to emerging challenges (e.g., climate change, pandemics, conflicts) in a disability-inclusive manner.

Draft Structure of the Theory of Change for the Euro-Mediterranean Disability Agenda

Building on the results of the preliminary analysis, on the elaboration of the problem and solution tree, and given the scope of the analysis, this section advances an initial proposal of ToC's structure. Ideally, the ToC will be fleshed out following a consultation phase with the UfM and its main stakeholders in the preparation of the Agenda, including, but not limited to, the European Commission, national governments of the Euro-Mediterranean region, OPDs, etc.

The ToC pivots around a general objective to promote socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities; two cross-cutting pillars to reinforce national disability data collection and ensure meaningful participation of OPDs; as well as four main pillars of focus in relation to employment, social protection, gender equality and addressing emerging issues. In its initial configuration, the ToC is structured as follows:

Mediterranean Disability Rights Agenda
Promotion of the socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Mediterranean

Cross-cutting pillar 1
Reinforcing national disability data collection and use

Cross-cutting pillar 2
Ensuring meaningful participation of OPDs in decision-making processes

Pillar 1	**Pillar 2**	**Pillar 3**	**Pillar 4**
Access to employment in equal conditions with others	Strengthening social protection mechanisms and covering disability extra costs	Achieving gender equality for women and girls with disabilities	Addressing emerging issues from a CRPD perspective

The following paragraphs elaborate on this scheme based on the proposed structure of the ToC.

Situational Assessment and Problem Statement(s)

As shown in the preliminary report, and in spite of noticeable advancements in critical areas for the rights of persons with disabilities, the exclusion of persons with disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean region is underpinned by systemic barriers in policy, data, culture, and infrastructure. These challenges are compounded by emerging issues such as climate change and migration, which disproportionately affect persons with disabilities. The lack of robust institutional frameworks and societal support undermines their ability to participate fully in economic, social, and political life.

A comprehensive Disability Rights Agenda for the Euro-Mediterranean Region shall tackle the root causes of exclusions with a holistic view, emphasizing the work on socio-economic inclusion, gender equality, and addressing emerging topics from a CRPD-oriented angle. Conversely, the ToC shall account for the diversity and heterogeneity of the region, addressing the limitedness of the Union for the Mediterranean's capacity as well as platform for political dialogue with relatively limited project and implementation functions.

In turn, the expected overall impact must encompass all these aspects facilitating a systemic overhaul of the disability rights and inclusion approach in the region yet adjusted to the mandate of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Key challenges noted in the preliminary reports

Data Gaps: Inconsistent or insufficient data on disability prevalence, disability-related expenditures, and service coverage. Employment Barriers: Persistent discrimination, lack of accessible environments and accommodation, and limited inclusive workplace policies.

Social Protection Weaknesses: Mechanisms do not always account for the extra costs of disability, and coverage is often fragmented.

Gender Inequalities: Women and girls with disabilities face compounded discrimination and are particularly vulnerable to socioeconomic exclusion.

Limited (OPD) Participation: Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations (Organizations of Persons with Disabilities) are not consistently involved in policymaking or implementation, limiting the relevance and ownership of interventions.

Emerging Issues: Technological changes, public health crises, climate-related displacement, and humanitarian settings all disproportionately affect persons with disabilities, and responses are not always disability-inclusive.

Problem Statement

Without targeted interventions and systemic reforms aligned with the CRPD, and undertaken in a participatory, person-cen-

tered manner, persons with disabilities in the Mediterranean will continue to experience exclusion. This hinders the region's overall social and economic development and contravenes international and domestic human rights obligations.

Expected Impact

The overarching goal is to create an inclusive Euro-Mediterranean region where persons with disabilities enjoy full socio-economic participation and their rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled. By aligning strategies and actions with the CRPD, the region aims to foster empowerment, equity, and sustainability, ensuring that all persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights and participate in society on an equal basis with others.

Expected Outcomes per Pillar

The ToC is organized around four main pillars (sectoral) plus two cross-cutting pillars.

Pillar 1 - Access to Employment in Equal Conditions with Others

Persons with disabilities face some of the highest unemployment rates in the Euro-Mediterranean region, with figures exceeding 70% in countries like Morocco and Lebanon (ILO, 2021). In the European Union, only 51.3% of active, working-age persons with disabilities are in paid employment (European Disability Forum, 2023). By prioritizing tailored vocational training programs and incentivizing inclusive hiring practices, this pillar envisions a measurable reduction in unemployment rates. For instance, targeted training initiatives in sectors such as digital technology and renewable energy could open new opportunities for persons with disabilities. Employers across the region must be engaged through awareness campaigns, showcasing the value of diversity and inclusive workplaces. Spain's example of incentivizing businesses to employ persons with disabilities highlights how financial support can play a transformative role.

However, while official unemployment rates of persons with disabilities show a clear issue linked to the access to the labor market for persons with disabilities, such figures only partly capture the reality of labor markets in the region (ILO, 2021). A substantial percentage of the population, including many persons with disabilities, works in the informal sector, which often lacks social protection, job security, and legal safeguards. According to recent ILO estimates, over 60% of total employment in MENA countries is informal, and persons with disabilities are significantly overrepresented in informal work (ILO, 2022). This reality underscores the diversity of employment contexts: from small-scale agricultural activities in rural Tunisia or Morocco, to unregulated services in Lebanon, Algeria, or Egypt.

Outcome statement: Increased employment rates among persons with disabilities, supported by inclusive labor market policies and practices, and upskilling of employers, candidates and support services.

Expected outcomes:
- Increased formal and decent work opportunities, accom-

panied by targeted efforts to reduce disability-based vulnerabilities in the informal economy.

- A measurable reduction in unemployment rates among persons with disabilities.
- Enhanced employer capacities to adopt inclusive approach through employment processes including hiring practices.
- Upskilling of public employment services.
- A systematic approach to transitioning persons with disabilities from precarious, informal work arrangements to formalized employment, supported by vocational training, social protections, reasonable accommodation, and legislation that mandates inclusive labor practices.

Pillar 2 - Strengthening Social Protection Mechanisms and Covering Disability Extra Costs

The cost of disability, including assistive technologies and personal support services, places a disproportionate financial burden on individuals and families. Social protection frameworks must be expanded to provide comprehensive benefits tailored to cover these extra costs. Countries like Italy have experimented with cash transfer programs linked to disability support, ensuring that resources reach those most in need. This pillar envisions accessible services and benefits that are seamlessly integrated into broader social safety nets, reducing economic vulnerability for persons with disabilities.

Beyond traditional cash transfers and in-kind support, digital social assistance platforms (e.g., e-cards or mobile-money transfers) can provide more reliable and efficient delivery of social benefits. These systems, however, must be made accessible (technologically and administratively) to persons with diverse disabilities (Gooding & Marriott, 2009). When well-designed, digital platforms not only reduce administrative burdens and corruption risks but also facilitate real-time monitoring of social expenditure on disability-related services (UNESCO, 2021).

Malta focused not only on reforming existing disability assistance payment schemes under Article 28 of the CRPD, widening their reach through the application of ICF criteria, but focused on the paradigm shift from assistance to support for autonomy, by undertaking a reform leading to the creation of a personal budgets system, allowing financing for personal assistance and similar initiatives aligning with Article 19 of the CRPD.

Outcome statement: Expanded and more equitable social protection systems that address the extra costs of disability, reduce poverty, and promote independent living.

Expected outcomes:
- Comprehensive disability-sensitive social protection frameworks implemented across member states.
- Increased financial support to cover disability-related costs, including assistive technologies.
- Improved accessibility of social services and programs.
- Working towards a paradigm shift from social protection to support for autonomy and independent living.

Pillar 3 - Achieving Gender Equality for Women and Girls with Disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities experience multiple and intersectional layers of discrimination and oppression, often being excluded or marginalized from both gender and disability-focused policies and initiatives. Tailored leadership programs can empower women with disabilities, enabling them to take on decision-making roles in their communities. Education systems must address barriers faced by girls with disabilities, ensuring that inclusive curricula and adaptive teaching methods are the norm. For example, Jordan's efforts to improve educational access for excluded girls could serve as a model for the region. By focusing on gender-sensitive interventions, this pillar aims to reduce disparities and promote equity.

Across the Mediterranean, women and girls with disabilities experience a pronounced "lack of social elevator", that is, insufficient avenues for upward mobility in education, employment, and political representation (Ben Yahia, 2020). Social structures, often reinforced by patriarchal norms and certain religious or cultural practices, can restrict women's mobility, confine them to domestic roles, and deter them from seeking employment or higher education (El-Mernissi & Benaissa, 2019).

Scholars highlight that in many religiously conservative communities, stigma around disability compounds the gender-based constraints already faced by women, resulting in "invisible lives" that remain outside the purview of policymakers (Dessaive, 2021; Haj-Yahia, 2022). Family honor, societal reputation, or doctrinal misinterpretations can lead to isolation of women with disabilities, limiting their access to education, healthcare, and social support networks (Hamzeh & Metni, 2023).

Additionally, women and girls with disabilities remain more at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, and domestic violence (see, for example, EUCAP, 2023). The issue of forced sterilization has been raised several times by the CRPD Committee, and adoption of a CRPD-compliant framework such as Malta's can be promoted to address this practice.

Outcome statement: Improved socioeconomic status and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities, evidenced by enhanced and equitable access to education, health, employment, and leadership opportunities, and stronger protections against violence.

Expected outcomes:
- Development and enforcement of gender-sensitive policies addressing intersectional barriers.
- Increased participation of women with disabilities in leadership roles.
- Expanded access to education and healthcare services tailored to the needs of girls with disabilities.
- Stronger institutional frameworks that actively promote and protect the rights of women with disabilities, including legal safeguards against forced marriage, gender-based violence, and institutionalization.

- Creation of tailored "social elevator" pathways (e.g., scholarships, mentorship programs, leadership initiatives) that specifically address cultural and religious barriers restricting women and girls with disabilities' participation.
- Incorporation of sensitization campaigns involving religious and community leaders to challenge stigmatizing interpretations and encourage inclusive community norms, as recommended by the CRPD Committee (General Comment #3).

Pillar 4 - Addressing Emerging Issues (Migrants and Refugees, Climate Change) from a CRPD Perspective

The intersection of disability, migration, and climate change presents unique challenges and opportunities in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Migrants and refugees with disabilities are among those most at risk, often lacking access to even basic services.

Climate change is increasingly recognized as a major driver of human migration, with rising sea levels, intensifying weather events, and agricultural upheavals prompting significant population displacement (IOM, 2022; IPCC, 2022). In the Euro-Mediterranean region, a "hotspot" for climate impacts, heightened temperatures, droughts, and sea-level rise pose particularly urgent risks, with projections of climate-related migration varying from millions to hundreds of millions by mid-century (Ali et al., 2022).

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by these climate challenges. As noted by Buettgen et al. (2024), they experience higher mortality rates during extreme events and face systemic barriers in emergency preparedness and response (Stein & Stein, 2023; Gaskin et al., 2017). Post-disaster recovery is also more difficult for persons with disabilities, often due to inaccessible infrastructure, limited resources, and pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities (Kosanic et al., 2022). Slow-onset climate impacts (like fluctuating rainfall and water salinization) threaten livelihoods (Jodoin et al., 2020), further jeopardizing the right to work and other fundamental rights for persons with disabilities. Yet, reliable data on climate change impacts for disabled communities remains scarce, underlining the need for stronger inclusion in research, policy, and public programming.

In response, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2022) advocates for disability inclusion across diverse policy areas, ranging from macroeconomic and industrial strategies to skills development and social protection, within the "just transition" to sustainable economies. Illustrative cases in Spain show how inclusive business models can create both environmental and social benefits. For example, Recycling4all employs a majority-disabled workforce to recycle electronic waste, reflecting an innovative approach to profitable, socially equitable, and ecologically responsible operations. Similarly, accessibility considerations in sustainable tourism can broaden the economic base for hotels while catering to an aging population with diverse needs (Sanz et al., 2012).

Experts emphasize that regional collaboration in the Euro-Mediterranean is crucial to bolster inclusive adaptation measures (Lineares et al., 2020; Neira et al., 2023). Additionally, disability-led research and advocacy have called for a rights-based, co-generated approach in which persons with disabilities directly inform and shape policy priorities (International Disability Alliance, 2021; Pacific Disability Forum, 2022; Jodoin et al., 2023). Such collaboration ensures that climate solutions address the unique barriers persons with disabilities encounter, ultimately promoting resilience and equity across borders. Thus, this pillar calls for the integration of disability considerations into climate adaptation plans and humanitarian responses. For instance, inclusive research, data collection, and the development of accessible shelters and early warning systems can ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind in climate actions and during climate emergencies. Regional cooperation will be critical, to advance sustainable local, national and regional economies; and to effectively address the needs of people who are forced to flee their home countries. A regional approach will allow states to work together to build resilient and inclusive systems that address these intersecting challenges for countries of origin and destination.

Outcome statement: More inclusive and resilient regional and national climate adaptation action plans to anticipate, adapt to, and respond to emerging challenges (e.g., climate change, pandemics, conflicts) in a disability-inclusive manner.
Expected outcomes:
- Integration of disability issues and considerations into climate adaptation and disaster response policies. Policy makers, humanitarian agencies, and governments work in collaboration with OPDs to address the climate-related vulnerabilities that persons with disabilities encounter during acute events and in the course of more creeping forms of climate change; as well as in the development of environmentally sustainable economies and societies.
- Development of accessible shelters, transportation, health care services and social protection supports for refugees and migrants with disabilities.
- Strengthened regional cooperation to address the shared challenges at the intersection of disability, migration, and climate change.

Cross-Cutting Pillars

Cross-Cutting Pillar A - Reinforcing National Disability Data Collection and Use

Data collection is one of the most pressing foundational challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Fragmented systems and outdated methodologies have resulted in significant gaps in disability-related statistics. For example, the WHO estimates that 15% of the global population has a disability, but regional variations and inconsistent reporting mean that accurate figures for MENA countries remain elusive. This pillar envisions a transformation in the way disability data is collected, processed, and utilized.

Emerging digital technologies offer new avenues for comprehensive and comparable disability data. Mobile-based surveys,

cloud-based management information systems, and data analytics platforms can enhance the reliability and reach of disability statistics (Groce, Kett, & Lang, 2021; UNESCWA, 2022). For instance, in Egypt and Jordan, the use of digital data-gathering tools during national surveys has streamlined the collection of disaggregated disability data, improving the accuracy of results (UNICEF MENA, 2020).

However, a "digital divide" persists in many parts of the Mediterranean, where persons with disabilities, especially in rural or impoverished areas, lack internet access or assistive devices (Saenz & Jusu, 2022). Addressing connectivity gaps, investing in accessible digital infrastructure, and collaborating with tech companies to adopt universal design principles are crucial to ensure that digitalization becomes a catalyst (rather than a barrier) for robust data collection.

A key step is adopting standardized international methodologies, such as the Washington Group Short Set (WGSS) or the International Classification of Functioning (ICF, see above). These tools allow for the integration of disability-related questions into national censuses and household surveys, as demonstrated in Jordan's 2020 survey, which revealed critical insights into employment and education disparities. The aim is to build robust, CRPD-compliant data frameworks that enable policymakers to track progress and design targeted interventions. Moreover, regular publication of this data will ensure accountability and drive regional cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

Support could also be obtained through partnership with the Global Partnership on SDG Data, and accession to the linked Inclusive Data Charter.

Expected outcomes:
- Establishment of standardized data collection methodologies, such as WGSS.
- Utilization of disability data to inform policy decisions and monitor progress.
- Bridging the digital divide gap in an accessible and equitable manner.
- Considering and harnessing the power of citizen-generated data (CGD) to address data gaps in a participatory and disability-inclusive manner.

Cross-Cutting Pillar B - Ensuring Meaningful Participation of OPDs in Decision-Making Processes

As acknowledged in CRPD's article 4.3 and CRPD Committee's General Comment #7, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities are central to the disability rights movement, yet their voices are often underrepresented in policymaking processes and in the implementation of projects and programs addressed at the inclusion of their represented constituencies. Ensuring meaningful participation involves institutionalizing mechanisms for OPDs to contribute at every level of decision-making, from local governance to regional platforms like the UfM.

While OPDs play a central role in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, certain groups (such as persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, deafblind persons, and individuals from rural or nomadic communities) are often underrepresented in mainstream disability movements (Disability Rights Fund, 2022). Ensuring genuine representativeness requires outreach and capacity development targeted to these communities, along with inclusive communication methods (e.g., sign language, Braille, Easy-to-Read formats, and accessible digital tools).

In contexts influenced by varied cultural and religious norms, OPDs can also serve as cultural mediators, working with local faith-based organizations and traditional authorities to shift perceptions around disability. Studies have shown that empowering marginalized OPDs through micro-grant funding, technical assistance, and leadership training can substantially improve their ability to influence national policy (Holland, 2020; Disability Rights Advocacy Fund, 2021).

Thus, this pillar envisions a proactive and participative approach to capacity-building, where OPDs are equipped with the technical and advocacy skills necessary to influence policy effectively. For instance, training initiatives in Tunisia and Algeria have shown promise in empowering OPDs to engage with government bodies and small grants provided directly to OPDs have been showing positive results for over a decade (see the experience of the Disability Rights Fund and of the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund). Additionally, creating formal advisory roles for OPDs within government agencies, as well as in the governance structure of the Euro-Mediterranean Agenda, can bridge the gap between advocacy and implementation.

There are some successful examples of such a collaboration. The success of Spain's disability council, which includes OPD representatives, illustrates the potential of collaborative governance in driving inclusive policies. In Türkyie, OPDs actively participate in key decision-making and monitoring mechanisms. In line with Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2005, the participation of persons with disabilities in policy-making, decision-making, and service delivery processes is defined as one of the main priciples. The Monitoring and Evaluation Board on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, restructured in 2021 to strengthen the OPD representation, functions as the coordination mechanism and comprises high-level representatives of public institutions alongside two OPDs with the highest national representation. At the provincial level, Accessibility Monitoring and Auditing Commissions, established pursuant to the 2013 regulation in all provincesinclude representatives from relevant public bodies and OPDs, ensuring the systematic inspection of built environments and public spaces.

Expected outcomes:
- Formal mechanisms for OPD involvement in governance and policymaking.
- Capacity-building and small grant schemes that specifically target underrepresented OPDs, ensuring that the

voices of all persons with disabilities (especially those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion) to enhance OPD advocacy and leadership.
- Grantmaking schemes for OPDs are developed and launched.
- Establishment of a regional "Diversity & Inclusion" platform under the UfM to connect smaller, community-based OPDs (particularly those representing people with intellectual, psychosocial, deafblind, or multiple disabilities) with larger umbrella organizations.
- Formal recognition of OPDs in legislative processes, with mandatory consultation mechanisms for policy proposals relating to labor law, social protection, gender, climate action, migration, and other relevant fields.

Expected Outputs and Typology of Actions
Pillar 1 - Access to Employment in Equal Conditions with Others
Creating equitable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is critical to fostering independence and socio-economic integration. The focus must be on comprehensive strategies that align vocational training with market demands while ensuring that workplace environments are accessible and inclusive. For instance, countries like Italy and Spain have demonstrated how public-private partnerships can successfully integrate persons with disabilities into the workforce. In the context of the Euro-Mediterranean region, efforts should also address barriers to traditional employment by leveraging remote work technologies and inclusive entrepreneurship.

To achieve this, governments can establish partnerships with industry leaders to identify high-demand sectors, such as technology, renewable energy, and tourism, that can provide sustainable jobs for persons with disabilities. Building on models from European neighbors, regional certification programs can ensure that persons with disabilities gain skills that are formally recognized across borders, enhancing mobility and opportunities.

Upskilling should also be extended to employers, and public agencies such as public employment services and disability service providers working in the field. Malta's model of co-ordinating such multi-stakeholder trainings, at national and multi-national level, can be replicated.

Actions to reinforce self-employment and support paths out of unregulated labor which proliferates in several Mediterranean countries are as well critical to ensure a comprehensive approach to access to employment in line with article 27 CRPD.

Potential Outputs:
- Creation of vocational training programs focusing on high-growth sectors, such as digital skills, renewable energy, and creative industries.
- Undertaking a multi-stakeholder approach to upskilling, involving employers, potential employees, and support services, at national and UfM levels.
- Development of inclusive job placement platforms that link

trained candidates with inclusive employers.
- Implementation of tax incentives and grants for businesses led by or hiring persons with disabilities and adopting inclusive practices.
- Establishment of mentorship programs pairing persons with disabilities with industry leaders.
- Regional campaigns to increase employer awareness about workplace inclusivity and the value of diverse teams.

Proposed output structure:
Output 1.1: National labor laws and regulations reviewed and updated to align with CRPD standards and inclusive employment guidelines.

- **Actions:**
  - Legislative reviews and policy dialogues.
  - Advocacy campaigns for inclusive hiring.
  - Technical assistance for ministries of labor and social affairs.

Output 1.2: Employers (public and private) and support services (e.g., public employment services, PES) equipped with practical knowledge and tools for reasonable accommodation and inclusive workplace practices.

- **Actions:**
  - Training programs for HR managers, SMEs, and government agencies.
  - Development of toolkits/guidelines on workplace inclusion and reasonable accommodation and/or implementation of existing guidelines and good practices.
  - Public-private and public-social partnerships to expand inclusive vocational training.

Output 1.3: Persons with disabilities have greater access to inclusive vocational and skills training.

- **Actions:**
  - Scholarship and apprenticeship programs.
  - Involvement of employees with disabilities in training programs for employers and support services.
  - Linkages with local and multinational businesses for internship placements and mentorship programs.
  - Career services and coaching tailored to persons with disabilities.

Pillar 2 - Social Protection Mechanisms and Addressing Disability Extra Costs
Persons with disabilities face significant economic vulnerabilities due to additional living costs related to healthcare, assistive technologies, and transportation. Social protection systems in the Euro-Mediterranean region must be expanded to meet these needs, ensuring that no individual is excluded from the support they require. Programs like Morocco's pilot disability cash transfer initiative provide a blueprint for creating scalable, impactful social safety nets. These efforts should also include access to community-based services that

promote rehabilitation and empowerment. Malta's ongoing personal budgets reform (Agenzija Sapport, 2023) can likewise be used a good practice model that seeks to build upon and extend previous disability assistance reforms.

Governments must invest in a centralized, accessible database to streamline service delivery and reduce administrative barriers for beneficiaries. Additionally, public awareness campaigns can educate communities about available benefits and how to access them, while the concept of universal design, mainstreamed into infrastructural reforms and efforts, can lead to not only narrowing gaps, but to long-term economic savings.

Potential Outputs:
- Social protection schemes include streams for universal access to disability-sensitive healthcare and subsidized assistive devices.
- Community rehabilitation programs that empower individuals to participate in economic and social activities.
- Disability-sensitive transport subsidies to improve mobility and access to public services.
- Establishment of a regional framework for disability benefits harmonization across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Proposed output structure:
Output 2.1: Harmonized social protection frameworks that account for disability-related costs and livelihood support.

- **Actions:**
  - Policy reviews of social protection schemes (cash transfers, social insurance) for disability inclusion.
  - Technical support to governments for integrated data management of beneficiaries.
  - Awareness-raising on rights and entitlements.

Output 2.2: Disability-sensitive budgeting in public expenditure plans and better inter-ministerial coordination.

- **Actions:**
  - Training officials on disability-inclusive budgeting.
  - Establish or strengthen inter-ministerial working groups.
  - Resource mobilization and alignment with international funding initiatives.

Pillar 3 - Gender Equality
Women and girls with disabilities often face compounded discrimination that limits their access to education, healthcare, and leadership opportunities. Addressing these systemic inequities requires a gender-sensitive approach. Programs must focus on creating pathways for women to participate in decision-making processes, receive education, and access safe work environments.

For example, scholarships targeting girls with disabilities in rural areas can reduce dropout rates and build a foundation for future success. Similarly, mentorship networks and leadership training programs can empower women with disabilities to take on prominent roles in governance and advocacy.

In parallel, violence against women and girls with disabilities must be tackled with both people at risk, and society at large.

Potential Outputs:
- Scholarships and bursaries for girls with disabilities to attend secondary and tertiary education.
- Leadership programs focused on women with disabilities, fostering skills in governance and advocacy.
- Participatory awareness campaigns addressing gender-based violence and workplace discrimination.
- Creation of women-only vocational training initiatives that account for unique barriers faced by women with disabilities.

Proposed output structure:
Output 3.1: Strengthened capacity of government and civil society to address multiple and intersectional discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities.

- **Actions:**
  - Inclusion of intersectionality in national gender strategies and legislation.
  - Collaboration with women's rights organizations and OPDs on joint advocacy.
  - Data collection and research on gender-based violence prevention strategies.

Output 3.2: Enhanced educational and leadership opportunities for women with disabilities.

- **Actions:**
  - Mentorship programs in leadership development.
  - Scholarships and bursaries specifically targeting women with disabilities.
  - Inclusive teacher training and curriculum reforms to prevent gender-based stigma.

Pillar 4 - Emerging Issues: Intersecting migrations and fight and adaptation to climate change
The intersection of disability, climate change, and migration presents unique challenges that require proactive and inclusive solutions. For persons with disabilities, the impacts of disasters and displacement are often magnified, as shelters, evacuation plans, and humanitarian services are rarely designed with accessibility in mind.

Integrating disability considerations into national disaster preparedness and climate adaptation strategies is critical. This includes building accessible shelters, ensuring emergency warning systems are inclusive, and training humanitarian workers on disability-sensitive responses. Regional collaboration, driven by initiatives like the UfM's sustainable development programs, can ensure consistency and scalability.

Potential Outputs:
- Disability-inclusive disaster prevention, management, and

response frameworks adopted at the national level.
- Construction of accessible emergency shelters with dedicated resources for persons with disabilities and organization of accessible materials to respond to crisis.
- Incorporation of disability standards into urban planning and climate adaptation projects.
- Development of guidelines for humanitarian agencies to prioritize accessibility in crisis settings.

Proposed output structure:
Output 4.1: National and regional emergency response frameworks incorporate disability-inclusive standards and protocols.

- **Actions:**
  - Development of accessible early-warning systems and evacuation plans.
  - Training emergency and humanitarian personnel on disability inclusion.
  - Policy briefs and simulations on climate resilience and public health crises.

Output 4.2: Disability-inclusive technology and innovation solutions for new or emerging challenges.

- **Actions:**
  - Supporting start-ups or pilot projects that address assistive technology.
  - Regional knowledge-sharing forums on inclusive digitalization.
  - Partnerships with research institutes to ensure universal design in tech solutions.

Cross-Cutting Pillar A - Reinforcing National Disability Data Collection and Use
Objective: Improve the availability, quality, and utilization of disaggregated disability data to inform evidence-based policy decisions.

Potential Actions:
- Capacity-building for national statistical offices and ministries on data disaggregation methodologies.
- Development of standardized indicators aligned with the Washington Group Questions.
- Launch of integrated, region-wide disability data platforms.
- Exploring the potential and use of citizen-generated data (CGD) as a tool for addressing data gaps in a participatory, disability-inclusive manner.

Cross-Cutting Pillar B - Ensuring Meaningful Participation of OPDs in Decision-Making
Objective: Guarantee that persons with disabilities, including through their representative organizations, are systematically involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of all UfM policies and initiatives.

Potential Actions:
- Formalizing mechanisms for OPD consultation and participation in committees and ministerial task forces.
- Funding and technical support for OPDs to strengthen their leadership, governance, and advocacy capacities.
- Inclusive public consultations and budgeting processes.

Assumptions and Risk Analysis

Key Assumptions
Steadfast Political Commitment to CRPD Implementation
Governments across the Mediterranean have ratified the CRPD, and many have already enshrined disability rights in national legislation. However, sustaining this commitment requires consistent political will across multiple election cycles and in the face of competing priorities (e.g., economic downturns, security issues, or public health emergencies). A stable and proactive political environment lays the groundwork for enacting reforms, investing resources, and institutionalizing new programs and policies. Without firm government backing, disability-inclusive initiatives risk being deprioritized or stalled.

Availability of Sufficient and Predictable Funding
Transformative disability inclusion requires financial investments—ranging from specialized training and data systems to infrastructure upgrades and public awareness campaigns. Funding may come from national budgets, international development partners, philanthropic foundations, and private-sector contributions. Predictable funding ensures the continuity and scalability of initiatives. If budgets are cut or donors divert

funds elsewhere, inclusive programs may falter before reaching full maturity or impact.

Willingness and Capacity of Civil Society and OPDs to Collaborate
Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and other civil society actors bring invaluable lived experience, community reach, and technical expertise. Their active participation enriches policy design, promotes local ownership, and enhances accountability mechanisms. When OPDs are recognized as full partners, interventions are more likely to be relevant, sustainable, and rights-based. A strong and organized civil society sector can also maintain pressure on governments and the private sector to follow through on commitments.

Favorable Socio-Cultural Environment for Disability Inclusion
Beyond formal laws and policies, social norms and cultural attitudes significantly affect the daily lives of persons with disabilities. If societal stigma remains entrenched, even well-designed policies may not translate into real-world gains. Positive shifts

in public perception pave the way for inclusive hiring practices, equitable school environments, and community-level acceptance of disability as part of human diversity.

Regional and International Cooperation

Many Mediterranean countries share similar disability-related challenges, such as inadequate data collection systems and fragmented service delivery, making regional cooperation beneficial. International bodies and donors can offer technical support, knowledge exchange, and financing. Collaboration at a regional level (notably through the Union for the Mediterranean) fosters consistency in data standards, resource mobilization, and mutual learning. Without such synergy, duplication of efforts and lack of economies of scale could diminish impact.

Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Changing Political Priorities or Instability
- **Description:** Elections, governmental reshuffles, or unforeseen national crises can shift policy agendas and budget allocations. In some cases, heightened security concerns or sudden economic downturns may overshadow disability inclusion.
- **Impact:** Key reforms, infrastructure improvements, and funding streams may be halted, delayed, or scaled back, adversely affecting momentum.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
  - **Legislative and Policy Anchors:** Seek to codify reforms into binding legislation or regulations, and multi-annual strategies, ensuring longer-term protection beyond specific political terms.
  - **Multi-Stakeholder Coalitions:** Build broad-based support that transcends political parties by engaging parliamentarians, civil society, and the private sector to sustain pressure and interest.
  - **Advocacy and Media Engagement:** Maintain visibility of disability issues in the public domain through media campaigns and regular stakeholder dialogue, making it harder for political leaders to disregard these commitments.

Weak Administrative and Institutional Capacity
- **Description:** Even when laws and policies are in place, weak institutional frameworks and under-resourced public agencies can struggle to implement them effectively. Civil service staff may lack the training or technical tools needed to operationalize inclusive programs.
- **Impact:** Policies remain "on paper" without tangible results, undermining trust and leading to disillusionment among persons with disabilities.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
  - **Capacity-Building:** Invest in training programs, technical assistance, and peer-learning initiatives for frontline officials, educators, healthcare workers, and other relevant personnel.
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Set up robust, participatory M&E systems to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and deliver feedback loops that continuously improve implementation.

- **Cross-Ministerial Coordination:** Encourage creation of inter-ministerial or inter-departmental task forces, ensuring collective responsibility and resource sharing.

Social Stigma and Cultural Barriers
- **Description:** Discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes toward persons with disabilities remain entrenched in many communities, potentially leading to exclusion in education, the labor market, and public life.
- **Impact:** Even well-funded and technically sound initiatives may see low uptake or acceptance if families, employers, or institutions do not embrace inclusive values.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
  - **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch targeted communication campaigns that showcase the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities, including positive media stories.
  - **Community Involvement:** Engage local leaders, religious authorities, and grassroots organizations to shift norms and champion inclusion from the ground up.
  - **Role Models and Peer Learning:** Feature success stories of persons with disabilities who have excelled in various fields, creating a ripple effect of changed mindsets.
  - **Nothing Without Us:** Ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are front and center in such initiatives.

Fragmented or Insufficient Funding
- **Description:** Disability-inclusive programs often require sustained investments (e.g., accessible infrastructure, specialized staff training, assistive technology). Funding might be short-term, project-specific, or prone to cuts if economic conditions worsen.
- **Impact:** Disruptions in program financing can lead to incomplete projects, resource duplication, and loss of skilled personnel.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
  - **Dedicated Budget Lines:** Advocate for ring-fenced disability inclusion budgets within national and local government allocations.
  - **Multi-Donor Trust Funds:** Encourage pooled funding arrangements that can stabilize financing and reduce competition or duplication among donors.
  - **Private Sector Engagement:** Attract private investment and partnerships through social impact bonds, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and incentives for inclusive business practices.

OPDs Lacking Resources or Unity
- **Description:** While OPDs are crucial partners, they sometimes face internal challenges—such as leadership turnover, limited strategic planning, or fragmented representation across disability types.
- **Impact:** Inconsistent advocacy efforts and difficulties in engaging policy dialogues can weaken the overall disabil-

ity movement and lead to piecemeal solutions that do not cover diverse needs.

- **Mitigation Strategies:**
  - **Organizational Strengthening:** Provide training on governance, financial management, and advocacy skills to OPDs.
  - **Inclusive Coalitions:** Encourage broad alliances among OPDs representing different impairments, ensuring unified messaging and stronger negotiating power.
  - **Funding Mechanisms:** Establish small grants or capacity-building funds that specifically target OPD organizational development.

Non-Inclusive Responses to New and Emerging Crises
- **Description:** Crises such as public health emergencies, conflict, climate-induced disasters, and rapid technological changes can exacerbate inequalities if disability-inclusive measures are not proactively built into contingency plans.
- **Impact:** Persons with disabilities may face disproportionate harm or be left behind in prevention, relief, and recovery efforts, and inaccessible technology can widen the digital divide.
- **Mitigation Strategies**:
  - **Proactive Planning:** Mandate disability inclusion in all national and regional risk assessments and emergency frameworks.
  - **Rapid Response Funding:** Allocate contingency funds for inclusive emergency measures (e.g., accessible shelters, healthcare, and communication channels).
  - **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Engage humanitarian actors, telecom providers, and technology companies in pre-crisis planning for universal design and accessible services.

Data Collection and Monitoring
To ensure the reliability of the indicators and address inconsistencies in disability-related information, robust data collection mechanisms must be established. This includes leveraging tools like the Washington Group Short Set for harmonized disability statistics and incorporating disability-focused modules into national household surveys. Baselines should be updated periodically to reflect changes in regional contexts and evolving priorities, while CGD could be explored and harnessed.

Stakeholder Mapping
An effective stakeholder mapping ensures the engagement of all relevant actors, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and promotes coordinated action to achieve disability inclusion across the Euro-Mediterranean region in line with CRPD's art. 4.3 and 33.3, and General Comment No. 7 This mapping builds on existing networks and identifies key contributors across various levels.

Primary Stakeholders
Persons with disabilities and their families and support networks are at the heart of this agenda. Their lived experiences and insights are invaluable for shaping policies and programs. In addition, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities play a pivotal role as advocates and implementers of disability rights, in particular when supporting the empowerment of advocates and self-advocates. For instance, in Tunisia, OPDs have been instrumental in advocating for legislative reforms aligned with the CRPD. Their inclusion in decision-making ensures that initiatives are grounded in the realities of those they aim to serve.

Primary stakeholders' involvement can occur via umbrella organizations such as ONCE Social Group, the International Disability Alliance, the European Disability Forum, and the Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities, without prejudice of direct engagement with national and local OPDs in line with the principles of subsidiarity, inclusion in the community, and meaningful participation.

Secondary Stakeholders
It goes without saying that governments and policymakers at the national and regional levels are critical for driving systemic change. Ministries of labor, social protection, and education are particularly relevant, given their mandates. For example, the Ministry of Labor in Morocco has partnered with international organizations to introduce quotas for hiring persons with disabilities in the public sector, a model that could be replicated elsewhere while in respect of the principles established by the Convention under art. 28 and the CRPD Committee in its General Comment No. 8.

In line with the CRPD, national authorities should strive to partner with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, further to General Comment No. 7. Malta's legislative and practical framework can serve as inspiration in this respect.

Regional organizations, such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), provide a platform for collaboration and policy alignment across countries. International entities, including the European Commission, the United Nations and the World Bank, bring technical expertise and funding to support disability-inclusive programs.

Employers and private sector actors are essential for creating inclusive workplaces and investing in accessibility. Their engagement can be fostered through awareness campaigns, incentives, and partnerships.

Tertiary Stakeholders
Academic and research institutions contribute by generating evidence and evaluating the impact of disability-inclusive interventions. For instance, universities in Italy and Spain have conducted studies on employment barriers faced by persons with disabilities, providing valuable data for policymakers.

Media outlets play a crucial role in raising awareness and shaping public perceptions. Campaigns highlighting success stories of disability inclusion can help challenge stereotypes and promote acceptance.

Donor agencies and development partners, such as the European Union and international NGOs, provide financial resources and technical support to implement large-scale programs. Their investments in pilot projects, such as cash transfer schemes in Morocco, have demonstrated the feasibility and impact of targeted interventions.

Collaboration Mechanisms

To ensure coordinated action, a regional steering committee comprising representatives from all stakeholder groups should be established (see below, Governance Framework). This committee would oversee the implementation of disability-inclusive policies, facilitate knowledge sharing, and monitor progress. Regular consultations with OPDs and grassroots organizations will ensure that initiatives remain responsive to local needs.

By engaging a diverse range of stakeholders and fostering collaboration, the Euro-Mediterranean region can build a robust ecosystem for disability inclusion, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Sequencing and Timeline

This section will be reviewed and expanded following the Euro-Mediterranean High-Level Dialogue on Disability that will expand the consultation with stakeholders on the structure and content of the ToC.

- Year 1: Establish governance frameworks.
- Years 2-3: Pilot inclusive initiatives in each pillar.
- Years 4-5: Scale up successful initiatives and integrate lessons learned.

Governance Framework

A regional steering committee, comprising UfM representatives, persons with disabilities and their representatives OPDs, governments, and technical experts, will oversee implementation. The governance model will emphasize accountability, inclusivity, and adaptability, ensuring alignment with CRPD principles and responsiveness to regional needs. Ultimately, the Governance Framework will be significantly impacted by the role and responsibilities of the Union for the Mediterranean and its member states. Therefore, it is impossible at this stage to advance precise proposals to ensure a consistent and robust governance mechanism.