

# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Respect**



**donated by:**

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## Why a Convention?

Why do we need a special convention for persons with disabilities? Don't they have the same rights as everyone else?

The rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in a perfect world, would be enough to protect everyone. But in practice certain groups, such as women, children and refugees have fared far worse than other groups and international conventions are in place to protect and promote the human rights of these groups. Similarly, the 650 million people in the world living with disabilities about 10 per cent of the world's population lack the opportunities of the mainstream population. They encounter a myriad of physical and social obstacles that:

- Prevent them from receiving an education;
- Prevent them from getting jobs, even when they are well qualified;
- Prevent them from accessing information;
- Prevent them from obtaining proper health care;
- Prevent them from getting around;
- Prevent them from "fitting in" and being accepted.

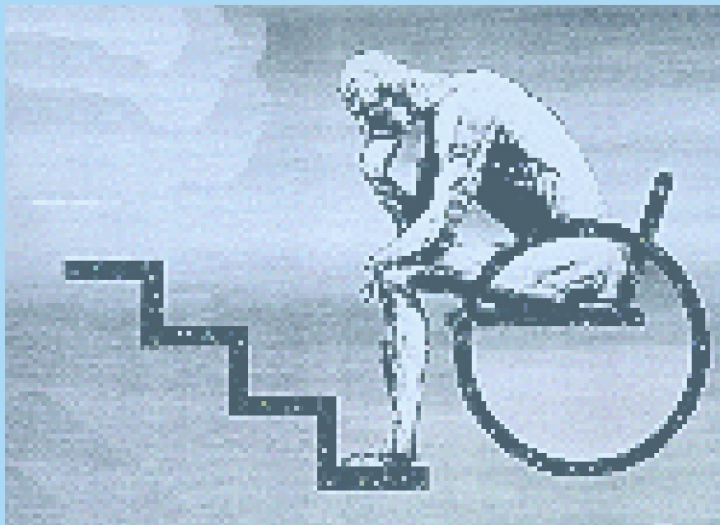


## **What does the convention cover?**

The purpose of the convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. It covers a number of key areas such as accessibility, personal mobility, health, education, employment, habilitation and rehabilitation, participation in political life, and equality and non-discrimination. The convention marks a shift in thinking about disability from a social welfare concern to a human rights issue, which acknowledges that societal barriers and prejudices are themselves disabling.

## **Does this convention create new rights?**

No. The convention does not create any new rights or entitlements. What the convention does, however, is express existing rights in a manner that addresses the needs and situation of persons with disabilities.



# Accessibility

## **What about existing legislation? Is it not working?**

Some countries have enacted comprehensive legislation in this regard, but many have not. Because of discriminatory practices, persons with disabilities tend to live in the shadows and margins of society, and as a result their rights are overlooked. A universal, legally binding standard is needed to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are guaranteed everywhere.

The UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons (1993) have served as model legislation for a number of countries. They provide policy guidelines on promoting the same opportunities to persons with disabilities that others enjoy. However, the Standard Rules are not a legally binding instrument, and disability advocates note that there are no enforceable obligations without a convention.

### **What exactly would this convention do?**

By ratifying the convention, a country accepts its legal obligations under the treaty by adopting implementing legislation once the convention enters into force.

Other human rights treaties, such as conventions on the rights of children and women, have had a major effect in addressing rights violations.



# **Development of capacity**

## **Is it realistic to think that a convention will improve the lives of persons with disabilities?**

Throughout history, persons with disabilities have been viewed as individuals who require societal protection and evoke sympathy rather than respect. This convention would be a major step toward changing the perception of disability and ensure that societies recognize that all people must be provided with the opportunities to live life to their fullest potential, whatever that may be.

## **How will this convention be monitored at the international level?**

Advocates for persons with disabilities hope that the convention can also help build a global network of activists to monitor the progress of human rights.

## **Who is a person with disability?**

Disabilities include physical, mental and sensory impairments such as blindness, deafness, impaired mobility, developmental and intellectual impairments. Some people suffer from more than one form of disability and many, if not most people, will suffer from a disability at some time in their life due to physical injury, disease or aging.



## **Will this convention create obligations for States?**

Yes. States will be obligated to introduce measures that promote the human rights of persons with disabilities without discrimination. These measures include enacting anti-discrimination legislation, eliminating laws and practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities, and considering persons with disabilities when adopting new policies and programmes. Other measures include making services, goods and facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.

## **Does it make economic sense for countries to adopt the convention?**

Yes. Although it is impossible to put a price tag on basic human rights, it turns out that it is actually good economics to ensure that disabled persons are able to live up to their potential.

## **What will it cost to implement?**

The convention calls for the “progressive realization” of most of its provisions, in line with the resources of individual countries. Some steps will require money and, for countries where resources are scarce, it is hoped that international assistance which has neglected the needs of persons with disabilities will help.



**YOURS RIGHTS = MY RIGHTS**

**INTEGRITY**

**DIGNITY**

**NON DISCRIMINATION**

**Kosovo Week on the Rights of Persons  
with Disabilities April 23 - 27, 2007**

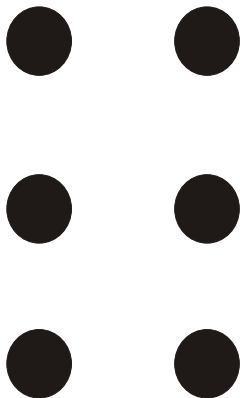
Making changes in line with the convention benefits not only persons with disabilities, but other people as well. Elevators and ramps, for example, provide more options for everyone. Design changes that are needed to accommodate the convention will, over time, generate new ideas and innovations that will improve life for all people, not only persons with disabilities.

### **Isn't it expensive to make buildings accessible?**

Over time, new construction should incorporate designs that take into account the needs of persons with disabilities. In studies, the World Bank found that the cost of building in these features at the time of construction is minimal. It has been shown that making buildings accessible adds less than one per cent to construction costs.

### **What is society missing out on?**

A larger talent pool. Persons with disabilities can contribute a wide array of expertise, skills and talents. While persons with disabilities face higher unemployment rates than the rest of the population in virtually every country, studies show that the job performance of persons with disabilities is as good, if not better, than the general population.



## Braille signs for blind persons



High retention rates and less absenteeism have more than offset fears that it is too costly to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace. Furthermore, fears that hiring persons with disabilities adds significant costs to employers are overblown. A 2003 survey in the United States found that almost three-quarters of employers reported that employees with disabilities did not require any special accommodations.

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# Education