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# **Disability Equality in the Media**

Representation | Accessibility | Management

**Practical Manual**

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# Short Summary

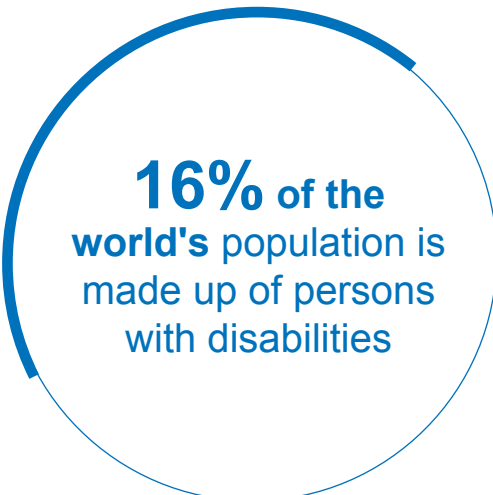
## Promoting Disability Equality in the Media

Despite all the positive changes happening in newsrooms and leadership roles, diversity in the media remains a challenge.

When certain groups are left out, the media fails to present all angles of a story, missing diverse perspectives and innovative ideas. Consequently, audiences do not receive the full picture, and promises of fair and accurate representation often fall short, affecting our perceptions of each other in society. It is the case of persons with disabilities, who make up 16 percent of the global population but remain one of the most marginalized groups. Media coverage frequently overlooks them, and when their stories are told, they are often framed through stereotypes. This not only creates barriers but also denies them their rights. To address this, media organizations should enhance editorial policies and representation, improve employment conditions, and foster a more inclusive environment for professionals with disabilities.

The Practical Manual and Master Class provide hands-on advice to editorial teams on how to ensure fair and unbiased coverage of disability. For content producers, it details how to make media content and services accessible. To managers and decision makers, the material inspires change, demonstrating how disability equality can contribute to media industry growth and create new revenue streams.

This work contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and promotes freedom of expression, media development, and access to information for the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in public debate.



**16% of the  
world's population is  
made up of persons  
with disabilities**

# **Disability Equality in the Media**

Representation | Accessibility | Management





# UNESCO Master Class

## Disability Equality in the Media

### Representation | Accessibility | Management

Together with this Practical Manual, UNESCO has developed a Master Class Video Series on Disability Equality in the Media. It is designed for all media professionals, from editors, reporters, and presenters to designers, content managers, and technical staff, as well as human resources officers and managers. The videos promote professional standards in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Master Class Video Series is hosted by Ms Sophie Morgan, journalist, and disability rights activist, with an introduction by Mr Tawfik Jelassi, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, and the participation of Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, Ms Christiane Amanpour, journalist and television presenter, and Ms Jane Constance, UNESCO Artist for Peace. The Series was produced by UNESCO in collaboration with Beyond Borders Media.

#### Playlist

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- 1 Trailer
- 2 UNESCO Message
- 3 Introduction
- 4 Media Representation of Persons with Disabilities
- 5 Streamlining Diversity in Media Coverage
- 6 Eliminating Discrimination through Media Coverage
- 7 Inclusive Media Coverage in Times of Crises
- 8 Making Video Content Accessible
- 9 Making Audio Content Accessible
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- 13 Inclusive Management Practices in the Media



SCAN TO WATCH





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# Introduction

Embracing diversity in the media unlocks the potential of a vast and growing audience: persons with disabilities. By increasing their market share and purchasing power, they become empowered consumers, while ensuring their fundamental human rights and freedoms are met.

Despite ongoing changes in newsrooms and management boards, a growing body of academic evidence and business strategies, reports, and public debates acknowledge that diversity in the media remains a challenge. Exclusion of certain groups, notably persons with disabilities, results in untapped potential for new narratives and perspectives, unexplored creativity, unquantifiable benefits, and unfulfilled promises to target audiences. Citizens' opinions and views in society are undoubtedly affected by the media's failure to reach diverse audiences.<sup>1</sup>

As one of the most marginalized social groups in the world, persons with disabilities represent 16 per cent of the world population, according to the World Health Organization. Yet they are often ignored and systematically excluded from media coverage. In the rare occasions when they are included, their portrayal is often stereotypical. This negatively affects public perception and, in the long run, not only affects the daily lives of persons with disabilities but also denies them access to their rights.

Persons with disabilities are a vast and underserved audience. As valuable sources and active participants in the media, their contribution to content consumption, public debate, revenue generation and media industry growth is undeniable. Their inclusion ensures increasing their market share leading to a loyal customer base.

The current state of the world requires media organizations to reprogramme their practices, reclaim their role and functions in society, as well as to regain credibility and relevance with their audiences. This is especially important given the growing impact of technological advances that lead to greater diversification

of information sources and information providers. Market shifts mean that previously effective business models no longer ensure long-term viability of media organizations. Radical changes in the demographic, social and political environment, as well as the increasing polarization of views, habits and expectations of audiences, also require the adoption of new management practices and the revision of processes in the media industry.

There is an urgent need to respond to the increase in media concentration, as the audience will have fewer information and media sources from which to form their views and opinions. The growing flow of misinformation and disinformation in society will only further increase the risk that audiences will consume and rely on inaccurate information. It is therefore necessary to review existing media policies and practices to ensure that the media remains pluralistic, diverse, transparent, and accountable as a source of information and open platform for public dialogue that gives a voice to all social groups.

Ensuring greater diversity in the media presents an opportunity to better understand audiences with disabilities, allowing for better production of and access to content, as well as increased creativity and innovation through better representation of staff in media organizations. On a societal level, strengthening the media's capacity to address diversity through accurate, fair, and inclusive reporting will also help to combat stigma and discrimination as well as change societal attitudes. The media has its role to play in removing barriers so that all citizens – including persons with disabilities – can fully exercise their rights and freedoms, and ultimately, contribute to a more inclusive society.

# About

UNESCO, in collaboration with a large group of contributors, has developed this Practical Manual (hereinafter “the Manual”) and a Master Class series of thirteen videos to encourage media organizations to improve disability equality in the following areas:

**Part 1: Editorial content and equitable media programming.** The Manual invites reflection on key principles and approaches in media framing, and explores how disability intersects with age, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and sociocultural, economic and political status. It also provides practical recommendations (to-do lists) for assessing how the media represents the views, needs and behaviours of persons with disabilities. Specific advice is given on using inclusive language and interviewing techniques for sources with disabilities. Special attention is given to the investigation of disability issues and the importance of the media responding effectively when covering crises and natural disasters.

**Part 2: Making media content and operations accessible.** The Manual presents the legal obligations and technical standards to make media content accessible to persons with disabilities. Practical tips are offered on how to make media content in print media, radio, television and digital formats more accessible.

**Part 3: Inclusive management practices.** The Manual is designed to help media professionals (editors, reporters, journalists, producers, managers, human resources professionals and technical teams) implement policies and practices that promote diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace. Practical recommendations are offered to create an inclusive workplace and demonstrate the benefits of improved internal representation. Suggestions are also made on how to make operational and management practices more inclusive for media professionals with disabilities.

**Parts 4 and 5: Technical tables** allow the reader to grasp a complex concept, structured process or procedure and understand its sequence and expected outcomes. Throughout the text, short **case studies** provide information on existing good practices in the media, civil society, the public and private sector and international organizations. A comprehensive **list of resources and references**, a **glossary** and **endnotes** provide useful information for practitioners to develop new policies and practices.

Furthermore, the Manual and Master Class are intended to provide practical advice to **editors and reporters, broadcasters, programme makers and presenters** on how to provide fair and impartial coverage of persons with disabilities. It is also useful for **web editors, content managers, designers and IT staff** responsible for producing media content and ensuring that it is produced in accordance with technical standards and assistive and artificial intelligence (AI) powered technologies and digital platforms. The Manual also aims to stimulate change at the **leadership and management levels by demonstrating to managers, administrators, finance and human resources officers, professional associations, and decision-makers in media organizations** that disability equality can be beneficial to media industry growth and create new revenue streams.

Finally, the Manual and the Master Class contributes to raising awareness of existing international normative instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which calls upon **States Parties and other relevant public, academic, civil society and private actors** to adopt policies and practices that promote freedom of expression, access to information, and respect, inclusion, equality and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in public debate.





# Part I

# Editorial content and equitable media programming

By adopting inclusive editorial policies and providing equitable media programming, the media will improve their ability to serve diverse audiences, especially those who are still underserved and underrepresented.

## Editorial policies towards equitable media programming

The media can improve their capacity to serve diverse audiences, including persons with disabilities, by adopting inclusive editorial policies and providing equitable media programming. This can be done by applying the principles of **diversity, equality and inclusion** in story selection, media framing, language and visual choices, as well as in newsroom representation.

This allows the media to provide enhanced services and quality content to under-represented audiences. They will reduce the social ignorance that these audiences face and promote **equity** for all. The media will also gain a deeper understanding of their users, subscribers and customers, helping to diversify revenue streams. As a result, they will also help deliver greater value to stakeholders (and shareholders) through increased public trust, **inclusiveness** in the workplace and the creation of **pluralistic** societies.

## Defining disability

Awareness of key definitions and facts will help media professionals to provide in-depth analysis in their stories, build a common understanding, communicate clearly and get audiences on the same page. Increased knowledge about disability will also be useful in choosing the most appropriate frame (or approach) for each audience, while addressing societal concerns in a representative way.

The choice and application of a particular **approach** will determine how persons with disabilities are presented to the public and **framed** in the public sphere. Even if the media consider persons with disabilities as part of



## Chart 1. Key principles and outcomes

### KEY PRINCIPLES

#### Diversity



Diversity refers to the uniqueness of each person, genuine **respect** for and appreciation of people's differences and a practice to include all social groups regardless of their beliefs, abilities, backgrounds, values, and identities. The media reflects the diversity of society by giving a voice to all social groups.

#### Equality



Equality is a state of being equal, entitled to the same rights and having **access** to opportunities on an equal basis as others.

The media acts as a watchdog, reminding the duty bearers and the rights holders of their rights and their obligations.

#### Inclusion



Inclusion refers to a **process** of creating an environment where everyone is welcomed, valued, and has a sense of belonging.

The media make conscious efforts to include all groups equally in media programming, content production, workplaces and operations.

### OUTCOMES

#### Pluralism

**Acceptance and respect** for the existence of different types of people within the same society and the presence of different views and opinions enabled through a variety of media (public, private and community) which provide the public with a **choice**.

#### Equity

Long-term efforts to overcome historical and systemic barriers by addressing individual circumstances and inequalities, and making adjustments that lead to greater **fairness and justice** for all citizens. Media can reduce bias and promote equity at an institutional level and ensure that all content is accessible and respectful to all populations.

#### Inclusiveness

Outcome of the process of inclusion and **gained quality or capacity** to include all members of a community or society. Media can **create inclusive workplaces** for all media professionals, including those with disabilities.

a larger audience, it is important for media professionals to be informed and aware of their needs, experiences and rights within a broader societal context. This is necessary because, in fulfilling its role, the media will

**raise awareness** and **remind** duty bearers of their obligations and duties to make the target audience (rights holders) aware of their rights and **encourage** them to seek redress when their rights are violated. (See Chart 1)

## Notion of disability

The notion of disability is an evolving concept resulting from attitudinal and environmental barriers hindering the participation of persons with disabilities in society. Disability covers a wide range of different physical, sensory, or intellectual impairments which may or may not affect a person's ability to carry out their day-to-day activities, including their jobs.

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does not provide a definition of "disability" or "persons with disabilities" per se. It does, however, provide some guidance on its application in the context of the Convention. "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others".

## Facts about persons with disabilities

- About **16 per cent** of the world's population (1.3 billion people) have some form of disability, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). This number is growing as the population ages and becomes injured, and as conflicts and natural disasters escalate.<sup>2</sup>
- About **80 per cent** of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).<sup>3</sup>
- Approximately **20 per cent** of the world's poorest individuals have some form of disability, according to the World Bank.<sup>4</sup>
- Globally, **seven in ten persons** with disabilities are inactive, that is, neither in employment nor unemployed, compared with four in ten persons without disabilities according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).<sup>5</sup>
- It is estimated that **one in five women** live with a disability. Most women with disabilities face limitations and barriers in society related to the multiple and intersecting identities across all contexts, such as ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds, as well as their location and related status, age or marital status, and living with or being affected by HIV (UN-Women).<sup>6</sup>
- Girls and boys with sensory, physical or learning disabilities are **two-and-a-half times** more likely than their peers to never go to school (UNESCO).<sup>7</sup>

### Media frames

Media teams make choices on what to report on, and how a particular reality is represented, interpreted, processed and told as a news story. When it comes to storytelling about disability issues, it often falls into the following two categories:

- disability is framed as something to be **pitied or fixed**, as well as subject to miserabilism and infantilization.
- persons with disabilities are depicted as being **inspirational simply because of their disability**, placing them on a pedestal as superheroes and therefore denying them access to their rights and impacting their lives in the long-term.

The latter category typically consists of stories where the public does something nice for persons with disabilities, with the purpose of making those without a disability feel good about themselves or grateful for not having a disability. These stories are exploitive, discriminatory and create assumptions about what it means to be a person with disabilities. Both categories address individuals with disabilities as a collective entity and generalize their identity.

When considering how to cover disability in the media, it is helpful to refer to the following four models (also named as approaches) and to become familiar with the evolution of thinking about disability

issues.<sup>8</sup> This is especially important given that the public's understanding, attitudes and approaches are influenced by how media professionals define and express disability:

Another harmful and discriminatory approach used in relation to the medical and charity models is **ableism**, which is when people think that persons with disabilities are less important than other people in society. In general terms, ableism is a set of beliefs, practices, structures and discourses that express feelings of anxiety, fear, hostility and antipathy. It devalues persons with disabilities, sees them as less worthy of life, and discriminates against them. (See Chart 2)

Media organizations are strongly encouraged to frame their stories in a way that recognizes the social and human rights models for the representation of persons with disabilities. By ensuring **human dignity, diversity and respect**, the media can contribute towards the elimination of stigma and discriminatory barriers in society and instead empower their audiences.



**See Table 1.** Mainstreaming the human rights-based approach in storytelling

Throughout the Manual, references are made to technical tables (see Part 4) that provide an overview of the methodological approach used to analyse key concepts, processes, and procedures. These are intended to help the reader understand the sequence and expected results.

## Chart 2. Media frames



### Medical model

Illness or disability is the result of a physical condition that is different from non-disabled people and requires care. Such a condition can be corrected by medical needs of persons with disabilities, other social, economic and political needs and rights could be neglected and become insoluble.



### Charity model

Persons with disabilities are seen as victims or objects of pity, their impairment is the main identifier and therefore they should receive regular charity, constant care or motivation to overcome barriers rather than equal rights.



### Social model

The environment is filled with physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers - social constructs that do not accommodate differences and needs. It therefore implies that the environment must change to enable persons with impairments and disabilities to participate in society on an equal basis with others.



### Human rights-based model

Persons with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else, including to education, employment, health care and social status as any other social group. Disability is recognized as part of human diversity and humanity, and persons with disabilities have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity.

## Human rights-based approach

While a deeper understanding of and empathy for the under-represented target groups is beneficial for quality journalism, it cannot empower and engage them as active citizens contributing to the richness of society. Applying a human rights-based approach would encourage and empower persons with disabilities to know and claim their rights. Accurate, fair and balanced coverage of disability issues begins with full recognition of international standards and systematic integration of a human rights-based approach into editorial policies and programming. Five guiding principles, namely **participation, accountability, non-discrimination, equality, empowerment and legality**, should be mainstreamed across editorial policies and practices.

By applying a human rights-based approach, the media would contribute towards increasing people's recognition of their rights and freedoms to make informed choices about their lives. They would also contribute to changing customer behaviour and experiences, and potentially increasing their demand for media products and services. This approach would demonstrate that **all human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated** – as they are fundamentally cross-cutting with a broader impact. In the long term, it would stimulate growth and investment in the media sector through subscription models, revenue from public service announcements, content syndication, marketing, events, sponsored content, partnerships and data monetization.

## ***Towards inclusive editorial policies and equitable media programming***

While individual media professionals can improve disability coverage by following good practices or being driven by empathy, true excellence requires the **adoption of comprehensive editorial policies, practices and programming processes** that guide the entire team in the media organization. The technical tables in Part 4 of the Manual include two “to-do lists” that present some of the implementation modalities that could be used by the editorial team to make editorial content more inclusive, relevant and accurate, as well as ensuring that media programming is more equitable for persons with disabilities.



**See Table 2.** Disability-inclusive editorial policies



**See Table 3.** Equitable media programming

## ***Portraying and representing persons with disabilities***

*The media often portrays persons with disabilities as one-dimensional characters, defined solely by their disability.*

When creating a new story, it is important to remember that disability is a social construct, and that media coverage reflects different contexts and environments. Persons with disabilities are often portrayed as helpless victims, as a burden on society, or as heroes who have achieved despite their disability. Such characterizations or representations fail to recognize the full humanity of the individual and create misleading perceptions about what it means to have a disability.

**Portrayal and representation** are closely linked in the construction of a narrative and what it stands for, symbolizes or describes, or how it presents people, places, events or ideas that are real and exist outside the text. It can also refer to the relationship between real places, people, events, ideas and content. Media stories should reflect the multiple roles and different sociocultural factors that influence the living and working conditions of persons with disabilities.

The concept of **intersectionality** is used to understand the overlapping systems and practices that either discriminate and disadvantage people or, on the contrary, empower them.<sup>9</sup> When reporting on disability, it is important to consider intersectionality and reflect multiple aspects of an individual's or group's experience. Disability, as one of many intersecting forms of discrimination, can go a long way in raising awareness as well as challenging stereotypes and conventional thinking about gender for example. Ignoring intersectionality would lead to a simplistic portrayal of persons with disabilities and an underrepresentation of the diversity of issues surrounding them, making media content disconnected from reality and therefore irrelevant and inappropriate for audiences.




Stories applying a human rights-based approach usually present persons with disabilities as **active citizens** who make their own decisions, are empowered to claim their rights, participate and contribute to the wealth of society. Such an approach would ensure that notions of **non-discrimination, equality and citizenship** are incorporated. In the media, persons with disabilities are considered part of the target audience as **consumers** of media content and services. However, such an approach does not fully address social inequalities, as access to media (content and services) can be challenging for audiences with disabilities due to the law of supply and demand, depending on their purchasing power, capacity and market conditions.

Finally, the transition from analogue to digital media has enhanced functions for **users with disabilities to utilize assistive and AI-powered solutions** to access, distribute, receive, entertain, and use content and services, particularly in digital formats. (See Chart 3)



### Chart 3. Disability mainstreaming in programming

In programming, disability mainstreaming could be enhanced by reflecting diversity in society and offering different types of programmes including general and specific audiences as follows:

	<b>Diversity of genres</b>	Incorporating disability issues in the news, information, educational, cultural, sports and entertainment programmes, in story genres such as documentaries, films and talk shows, as well as in journalism through investigative, celebrity, science, sports and other genres.
	<b>Diversity of audiences</b>	Recognizing the different needs, concerns and expectations of individual members of different social groups, including those with disabilities, depending on their age, gender, literacy, occupation, location or other category (e.g. parents, youth, men and women, among others).
	<b>Diversity of subjects</b>	Addressing the interests of persons with disabilities and reflecting a full range of their issues in society to include them in public debate (e.g. politics and upcoming elections, business, leisure and growth of accessible tourism, social reforms and accessibility in cities, climate change and the green economy, among others)

## Chart 4. Assessment factors

In assessing whether the **portrayal and representation** of persons with disabilities in the media is **fair, balanced and impartial**, the following five factors should be considered, with the green box highlighting what needs to be encouraged and the grey boxes outlining what should be avoided:

	<b>Sensitive reporting and representation</b>	It recognizes that persons with disabilities have equal rights to others, are active citizens who make informed decisions and engage in the public debate and wealth creation in society. The media ensures disability-sensitive reporting and equitable on-screen representation.
	<b>Offensive language and hate speech</b>	Communication and language that incites hostility, discrimination or violence against persons with disabilities because of their collective and distinct characteristics.
	<b>Negative portrayal</b>	A description of persons with disabilities, their families or related organizations and issues in negative or damaging terms, leading to an unbalanced public perception, behaviour and attitudes, while reinforcing stereotypes, stigma and discrimination.
	<b>Limited or under-representation</b>	A state whereby persons with disabilities and related issues are under-represented or inadequately represented in the media. It is also linked to <i>tokenism</i> , where inclusion of the underrepresented group is a symbolic effort to make a story appear equal or diverse.
	<b>Absence</b>	A state whereby persons with disabilities and issues related to them are invisible in the media.

Sensitive and inclusive editorial policies and practices include appropriate **planning, monitoring and reporting mechanisms** that systematically review and critically represent persons with disabilities in the media. Such monitoring mechanisms should be able to address both positive and negative media representations and related complaints. A diverse team of storytellers, including staff with disabilities who are aware of the negative portrayal and underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in the media, should be able to identify the "blind spots" and address biases. (See Chart 3)

Another important step towards the sensitive portrayal and fair representation of persons with disabilities is to carry out **consultations with civil society organizations**, especially those dedicated to persons with disabilities. This is particularly recommended when planning and implementing public information campaigns to raise public awareness of people's rights and freedoms, which can have an impact on changing attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disabilities.



**See Table 4.** Portraying persons with disabilities

## International Standards and Guidelines

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- Article 8, paragraph 2(c) of the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** encourages “all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the present Convention”. This article focuses on the importance of raising awareness about persons with disabilities. It is linked to other articles such as Article 9 on accessibility, Article 21 on freedom of expression, and Article 29 on participation in political and public life. The normative instrument also invites the States Parties that ratified it to adopt “immediate, effective and appropriate measures” to raise awareness and to combat stereotypes and prejudices.
- In 2019, UNESCO published a document in partnership with the ILO on the capacity building of media professionals in China. **The document aims to increase awareness and understanding among media and communications professionals about disability issues** and the diversity of persons with disabilities and their situations. This updated version incorporates two additional chapters on: 1) barrier-free access to information and communication and issues related to media reporting, and 2) reporting of public emergency and disability equality in response to the most pressing issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>10</sup>
- **ILO Media Guidelines for the Portrayal of Disability** provide practical advice to the media on how to promote positive, inclusive images of women and men with disabilities and stimulate a climate of non-discrimination and equal opportunity for disabled persons at all levels of the economy and society.<sup>11</sup>
- The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has published **Editorial Standards and Editorial Guidelines** which acknowledge the importance of protecting freedom of expression and vulnerable groups, increasing visibility and representation, and providing them with a high-quality service. This demonstrates the BBC’s commitment to being inclusive and accessible to all audiences and making “reasonable accommodation” to the content.<sup>12</sup>
- Al Jazeera Media Network has introduced a **set of guidelines in its editorial standards** to maintain the highest standards in news, current affairs and programmes. Article 9.2 of the document provides information on disability-inclusive reporting, the use of appropriate terminology, reference to normative instruments and practical information on conducting interviews with persons with disabilities.
- Based on data collected from more than 15,000 people aged 13–49 years in 15 countries around the world, the Viacom/CBS study, **"Global Audiences Want Better Representation on Screen"** revealed that there is a responsibility and urgency to ensure that all groups and identities are represented in television and film. The study examined multiple aspects of diversity, including race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, disability and more.<sup>13</sup>

## Gender and disability equality in the media

*Disability is an important dimension of a person's experience, but it is not all-encompassing. Gender is key to defining the power, privilege and opportunities that some people have, and others do not have in society.*

As a social construct and as a biological underpinning, gender influences the way women and men are expected to behave, the way they are perceived and valued by others, the types of roles they play, and the opportunities they value. Due to other sociocultural factors including race, ethnicity, culture and language, persons with disabilities face many barriers in terms of access to education, occupational background, geographic location and more. Although men and women face many challenges, girls and women with disabilities are more likely to encounter multiple forms of discrimination, exclusion, violence, abuse and disrespectful marginalization than their male counterparts due to their sociocultural roles and gender.

Given the low levels of **participation, access and representation** of women in the media, there is a high risk that girls and women with disabilities may be unfairly portrayed and further stereotyped, victimized, commodified, sexualized and/or objectified as inspirational rather than academically and professionally competent, with equal employment opportunities and pay. The media should also be aware that when reporting on disability, the portrayal of boys and men with disabilities and their roles, behaviours and expectations in society should be considered in relation to sensitivities about the portrayal of "masculine" characteristics and attributes, as this may lead to misconceptions in society. Fair, balanced, sensitive and inclusive reporting and representative narratives should therefore take into account the diversity of experiences and needs of girls and women, boys and men with disabilities from different backgrounds. They should also recognize that different identities and social and cultural factors may create different patterns of disadvantage and exclusion.

A **gender mainstreaming approach** would typically be part of human rights-

based reporting. Gender mainstreaming and greater gender equality in the media can be done in two ways:

- by sensitizing media professionals to the importance of **gender-sensitive reporting**, and
- by depicting and stimulating **gender-transformative actions** in the workplace, and at the national level, the adoption of gender-responsive policies and practices.

Whether the interventions are gender-sensitive or gender-transformative, this would require integrating gender equality into newsroom policies and practices and nuance through **intersectionality** (e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, class, ability, culture, religion and status) in storytelling. This would capture the different life experiences of women and men, while investigative work would hold perpetrators and authorities accountable for marginalization.

Part 1 of the Manual introduces key aspects of applying gender-sensitive reporting in relation to persons with disabilities, while the gender-transformative approach is discussed in Part 3. The disability-inclusive language aspects will also be introduced in the next section.

**Gender-sensitive reporting** is the practice of producing media content in a way which is sensitive to gender inequalities and portrays women and men fairly. In the media, gender-sensitive reporting is considered as a key principle of professional media production, similarly to values of accuracy, relevance, balance and impartiality.<sup>14</sup>

A more holistic picture of persons with disabilities could emerge through different:

- Forms of news and current affairs media (periodicals).
- Types of coverage (reportage, commentary, analysis, features, documentaries).
- Segments of the media (special focus pages or programmes on a variety of topics).
- Reflecting the views of girls and women, including those with disabilities.

Currently, there are several tools, assessment instruments and practices available to media professionals to ensure gender-



sensitive reporting. These have certain commonalities that could be applied to reporting on women and men with disabilities. Further details are provided in the technical tables in Part 4 of the Manual.

While the issues of disability-inclusive language will be discussed below, it is also important to note that gender equality in portrayal and representation depends largely on the **choice of language**. Since many languages

are gendered, the use of inclusive, gender-sensitive language, along with attention to expressions and sentence construction about disability, is essential to avoiding exclusion.



**See Table 5.** Gender-inclusive reporting of disabilities

## Handbooks and Toolkits on Gender Equality

- UN-Women's **"Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit"** reflects upon the failure to address complex social systems and identities that can obscure or deny human rights protections. It raises awareness of the need to design programmes and policies that effectively address discrimination based on disability as well as those affected by all forms of compounded and intersecting discrimination.<sup>15</sup>
- UNESCO's publication **"Reporting on Violence against Women and Girls. A Handbook for Journalists"** supports media professionals in reporting on the different types of violence against girls and women, which can lead to long-term impairment and disability. The document also provides a set of recommendations, benchmarks and resources for improved quality reporting<sup>16</sup> and contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993).
- UNESCO's publication **"Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media"** (GSIM) provides a comprehensive framework of indicators to measure gender sensitivity in media operations and content. It also addresses the intersection of women's empowerment and media development, with a focus on the equality and gender dimensions of social diversity in the media.<sup>17</sup>
- UNESCO's and UN-Women's **"The Big Conversation. Handbook to Address Violence against Women in and through the Media"** not only goes beyond gender portrayals in the media, but also encourages media organizations to strengthen the enabling environment, promote positive institutional approaches and engage with the media in transforming social norms.<sup>18</sup>
- In 2019, the Independent National Electoral Commission in Nigeria issued a **Code of Ethics** that establishes principles for journalists to promote democratic processes by reflecting the opinions of marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities. The code also urges the media to "refrain from publishing or airing abusive editorial comments or opinions that denigrate individuals or groups on account of disability, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender or belief".
- Gender equality is increasingly being applied and mainstreamed by various stakeholders. Some gender equality guides, such as the **UNDP's ten principles of gender-responsive communications** for development invite everyone to acquire gender-responsive communication skills and use them in every communication.<sup>19</sup>
- The Online News Association's (ONA) **Information Equity Database** (2023)<sup>20</sup> helps media professionals to reach and engage with communities that have been historically underrepresented or misrepresented in journalism. Through this database, media professionals can progress in their investigative activities including identifying gaps in information access, gaining a community's trust and making the case for audience engagement to newsroom leadership.

Disability-inclusive language

*Writing about disability is challenging because not everyone agrees on what language is appropriate. Even within the community of persons with disabilities, there are heated debates about the use of some words and phrases.*

Language about disability, just like any other language, is constantly evolving.

Some words and terms that were acceptable just a few years ago are now widely considered offensive. It is equally important to use terminology that is appropriate within the context and aligned with international normative instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Media professionals face the additional challenge of using language that can be easily understood by broad audiences.

Disability-inclusive language in stories should be nuanced and used in conjunction with other language guides that address other types of discrimination that may not be reflected in disability language guides alone. Language can **also convey deeply historical and culturally persistent negative stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes** towards persons with certain conditions and differences, which in turn perpetuate the negative image of persons with disabilities in society. Similarly, language used in the media can create harmful and damaging preconceptions.

Some terms that are clearly outdated and almost universally considered offensive should be avoided. Media professionals should consult **disability language guides** published by relevant organizations. Interviewers should also be informed about any unintentionally self-discriminatory behaviour and/or terminology. Editorial teams may consider developing their own guides to serve linguistically large and diverse audiences and to cover highly technical subjects.

Media professionals can also ask the subject(s) of a story how they would like themselves and their disability to be described and, if necessary, to suggest some more acceptable alternatives. For example, some people may prefer to be referred to as a deaf person, while others may prefer to be referred to as someone who lives with deafness or has hearing loss. When using a sign language interpreter to translate media

content, it is best to prioritize the language of your audience (national), unless your content is intended for a more international audience, in which case the use of International Sign Language would be preferable.

Disability-inclusive language guides may be comprehensive in some languages, but translating content, especially when using authorized translation tools including those that are AI-driven, can be challenging. Special attention should be paid when **translating terms and stories into other languages** that are lesser used such as Indigenous languages. For instance, Indigenous audiences may require specific sociocultural and linguistic adaptations or the involvement of language specialists and members of the language community to verify terms used. Some commonly used terms such as disability and impairment may have a completely different meaning in Indigenous languages and cultures, and/or even contradict Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, traditional beliefs and practices.

Tables 6 and 7 in Part 4 of the Manual provide information about key considerations when choosing language for stories and a list of words, terms and phrases, including those that should be avoided and those that should be used as suggested alternatives. It is important to choose the most appropriate language for the context and purpose. The glossary provided at the end of the Manual can also be used as a reference.

As the terminology in the field of disability continues to evolve, choice of language may also depend on the national context or individual and organizational preferences. For example, reporting on health issues may require the use of medical terms, or certain terms may be culturally less acceptable and therefore misleading in other media frameworks, particularly those dealing with social or human rights issues.



**See Table 6.** Key considerations when choosing language



**See Table 7.** List of words, terms and phrases

## Disability-Inclusive Languages Guides

- The United Nations Inclusive Communications Guidelines: “**A Guide for Communicating with, about and for People with Disabilities**” provides a practical tool for United Nations staff on how to communicate with persons with disabilities.<sup>21</sup> As a part of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy issues in 2019, this easy-to-read document explains key terms, presents positive stories and provides evidence of accessible information online.
- The United Nations Office in Geneva provides access to the online tool on **guidelines for the inclusion of persons with disabilities**, which includes a list of terms grouped by category, and those recommended and to be avoided which could serve as a reference document.<sup>22</sup>
- The National Center on Disability and Journalism at Arizona State University has released an updated version of its **disability language style guide** in both English and Spanish for journalists and professionals who report or write about people living with disabilities. The guide offers information and advice on nearly 100 commonly used words or terms — from “able-bodied” to “wheelchair-bound”.<sup>23</sup>

## Translation of Disability-Inclusive Language

- The National Centre of Mental Health Research, Information and Workforce Development in New Zealand has published “**Te Reo Hāpai - The Language of Enrichment**”, which contains more than 200 Māori words, terms and whakataukī – proverbs that play an important role in Māori culture. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been translated into Te Reo Māori, and these efforts represent an important step forward in recognizing political participation and enabling meaningful engagement with Indigenous worldviews concerning impairment and disability.<sup>24</sup>
- Deaf communities are diverse with people identifying as Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened. There are variations in how a person becomes deaf, the level of hearing, age of onset, educational background, communication methods and cultural identity. How people identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with deaf communities, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset. The National Association of the Deaf in the United States of America provides answers to some frequently asked questions (community and culture), including the use of appropriate language and terms. When in doubt, ask the individual how they identify themselves.<sup>25</sup>

### *Harmful content regulations*

Article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires all States Parties to **encourage all media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Convention**. The prohibition of discrimination is fundamental to the protection of human rights and permeates all international human rights instruments.

The media are fundamental in facilitating free and open dialogue and debate. They **give voice to divergent perspectives and**

**viewpoints**, promoting the values of tolerance, respect and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world, cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human. However, the media, especially social media as a public platform, can also be a domain of indifference towards spreading intolerant ideologies, extreme views and “hate speech” both online and offline.

**Media regulatory frameworks** can protect the interests of persons with disabilities with respect to broadcast content as well as content distributed through their digital platforms, provided that regulatory bodies and their appointment is independent of government and commercial sectors. In addition, various jurisdictions and court systems provide protection under policies and laws that address extreme speech without infringing upon the standard regulation of media content and advertising, or the interests of persons with disabilities and their right to freedom of expression and opinion.

One of the common arguments for restricting extreme language against persons with disabilities is the **psychological or even physical injuries**, also referred to as hate crime, inflicted upon members of the disability community. Non-discriminatory language should be applied in the media, and dissemination of content that is likely to **foster intolerance and violence** should be avoided. Intersectionality related aspects of disabilities should also be considered, such as **discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age**, or other features which might lead to intolerance and discrimination.

In dealing with extreme or hate speech, and knowing that persons with disabilities might have limited access and barriers to participate in political, cultural, social and economic life, the media should **offer a place for open dialogue** and give a platform and means for persons with disabilities to express their views and opinions. The media are tasked to **provide impartial information** and ideas in society about persons with disabilities while considering their dignity, privacy, ethical considerations and other sociocultural aspects. Therefore, the **conventional accessibility** of media services and content should be ensured to create equal conditions for persons with disabilities to participate in the political and cultural life of society. This would also ensure that persons with disabilities can examine their **right to reply in case of unfair misrepresentation and disinformation**. This is particularly important because persons with disabilities do not have equal access to the media due to their **underrepresentation or even absence in media programming**, as well as incomplete or non-compliance with technical standards for making media **content and services accessible, universal and affordable** to all target audiences.

There are several **tools and techniques for measuring and monitoring extreme and hate speech**, which can vary by context, actor and platform, that are useful in countering discrimination against persons with disabilities both offline and online.

It is also important to note that across countries, most broadcasting legislation sets out the regulatory framework for broadcasting services and typically includes rules on programme content and advertising. These rules, built on international normative instruments and principles, **demand media organizations to investigate complaints of alleged breaches of the provisions contained in the broadcasting codes**. Extreme and hate speech in the media against persons with disabilities should be closely monitored and subject to necessary revisions of codes and guidelines, particularly with regard to audience feedback as part of any broadcast, whether analogue, satellite or digital.



**See Table 8.** Some techniques for detecting and preventing extreme and hate speech against persons with disabilities.



**See Table 9.** Types of complaints and how to handle them.

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One of the common arguments for restricting extreme language against persons with disabilities is the **psychological or even physical injuries**, also referred to as hate crime, inflicted upon members of the disability community.

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## Standards on Hate Speech

- The 2021 UNESCO paper “**Addressing hate speech on social media: contemporary challenges**” points out how online hate speech can be produced and spread at low cost. It does not go through an editing process like other written work, and experiences vastly different levels of exposure depending on the popularity of the post. It can also be posted cross-nationally as platform servers and headquarters do not need to be in the same country as the user and their intended audience. The paper introduces some tools for detecting hate speech and recommendations for its prevention online.<sup>26</sup>
- The **Facebook Community Standards** refers to its practices addressing hate speech online. Facebook’s terms and conditions forbid content that is harmful, threatening or which has the potential to stir hatred and incite violence. In its community standards, Facebook elaborates that it removes hate speech, which includes content that directly attacks people based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender or gender identity, serious disabilities or diseases<sup>27</sup>.
- The European Disability Forum (EDF) published a position paper entitled “**EDF position and recommendation on hate speech and hate crime**”, which acknowledges that persons with disabilities are more likely to be victims of hate speech and hate crime. This is particularly the case for girls and women with disabilities and persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities who are at higher risks of harassment, violence and crime, including growing cases within the digital world.<sup>28</sup>

## Investigating disability issues

*Investigative reporting should include disability as a subject worthy of investigation and public interest. By investigating disability, the media contributes to social justice and accountability.*

Investigative reporting on disability-related issues can be conducted at different levels, addressing the actions taken by duty bearers, at international, regional, national and local levels, as well as from various angles (e.g. family affairs and support, educational institutions and compliance with inclusive education requirements, municipality and accessible city development or public spending, universal design for products and services, among others).

First and foremost, when addressing disability issues, it is important to be aware that the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has a monitoring component, procedures and mechanisms** established at national, regional and international levels, as do all legally binding international human rights treaties and normative instruments.

The Convention requires States Parties to designate one or more **focal points** within the government for matters relating

to implementation. It also gives due consideration to the establishment of a coordination mechanism to facilitate action across sectors and levels and to provide a space for corrective actions.

At the international level, the **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and the **Conference of States Parties** are involved in monitoring. The Committee is the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention, while the States Parties are obliged to submit **periodic reports** to the Committee on measures taken and progress made within two years of accepting the Convention and every four years thereafter based on the guidelines issued.

The media **contribute to the implementation** of the Convention through their ability to mobilize public support and ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in public discourse. They raise awareness of persons with disabilities as rights holders and both prevent and combat discrimination. Within their mandate as a watchdog, they also **investigate measures taken and progress made** in the implementation of the Convention.

Table 10 in Part 4 of the Manual offers practical tips and can be useful when conducting



investigative journalism that requires a more systematic and in-depth look on certain issues. This includes gathering much more evidence, doing additional fact-checking and using relevant data analysis tools to make the story more appealing to the audience.



**See Table10.** Investigative reporting on disability issues

## Normative instruments and monitoring mechanisms

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires States Parties to establish a **national monitoring mechanism** independent of the government, usually in the form of an independent human rights institution with a mandate to promote, protect and monitor the implementation of the Convention (Article 33).

## Raising awareness about disability in society

As per **Article 8** of the Convention, on awareness raising, the States Parties should report on the following:

- Public awareness campaigns directed towards the general public, within the education system and actions undertaken through mainstream media (in the press and on television, radio, billboards, public places etc.).
- Actions undertaken to raise awareness and inform persons with disabilities and other parties of society on the Convention and the rights it includes.

## Accessibility

**Article 21** of the Convention relates to freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information, requiring States Parties to report on the following:

- Accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a time manner and without additional cost.
- Use of sign languages, Braille, augmented and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions.
- Private entities providing services to the general public, including through the Internet, to information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities.
- Mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Recognition and promotion of the use of sign languages.

## Participation in political and public life

Other articles, such as **Article 9** of the Convention, on accessibility, also contain several provisions to ensure access to information for persons with disabilities, as does **Article 29**, on participation in political and public life.

## Disability-Inclusive Data

- UNICEF. A guide to “**Producing Disability-Inclusive Data: Why it Matters and What it Takes**” which explains, from a statistical point of view, the absence of persons with disabilities from official statistics. Addressing discrimination and promoting inclusion is an issue of concern in all sectors and can be accomplished through quality data and evidence-based advocacy and policy. The production of inclusive data demands the involvement of persons with disabilities in all data collection processes and outcomes. This will help ensure that their experiences and needs are adequately reflected in the evidence being generated.<sup>29</sup>
- OHCHR. All States Parties that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to submit **periodic reports to the Committee**, the body of independent experts, on how the rights of persons with disabilities are being implemented. States Parties must report within two years of ratifying the Convention and every four years thereafter (Article 35). There is a separate procedure for complaints and inquiries, and a repository of independent monitoring mechanisms.<sup>30</sup>
- The Washington Group on **Disability Statistics** promotes health statistics focusing on the development of disability measures suitable for census and national surveys. The aim is to provide information on disability that is comparable throughout the world.
- Statistics Canada in collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) provides **government data and analysis on accessibility** and disability, gender, diversity and inclusion-related statistics.<sup>31</sup>
- The Dart Center Style Guide for **Trauma-Informed Journalism** is designed as a quick, authoritative reference for reporters, editors and producers working on tight deadlines. It includes brief evidence-informed guidance on news choices, language usage and ethics in reporting on the impact of trauma on individuals, families and communities. It also includes recommendations for appropriate use of relevant psychological and scientific terminology and special considerations when reporting on consequential trauma-laden issues such as racism and sexual violence.<sup>32</sup>
- The Global Investigative Journalism Network has released a **reporting guide** on how to investigate issues impacting persons with disabilities, limited actions to remove barriers, as well as the means provided to not leave them behind as one of the largest intersectional minority groups.<sup>33</sup>
- **Deaf Journalism Europe (DJE)** aims to strengthen deaf journalism in Europe by creating a collaborative network of Deaf-led media organizations. With a focus on innovation, collaboration, diversity, impartiality, and quality, the EU-funded project seeks to address the significant gap in Deaf journalism and media accessibility and explore business models for Deaf-led media organizations to improve their financial sustainability. The DJE builds the capacity building of Deaf media professionals to produce news content in national sign languages, tailored to the relevant audiences and other stakeholders across Europe.<sup>34</sup>
- Exposing the Invisible’s “The Kit” is a collaborative, self-learning resource that makes **investigative techniques and tools** used by experienced investigators more accessible to people and communities who feel motivated to start their own investigations, collect and verify information, build evidence, and create a better understanding of issues without losing sight of ethical or safety considerations.<sup>35</sup>

## Interviewing and interacting with a person with a disability

*To ensure that reporting is fair, accurate and relevant for all audiences, media professionals may need to improve their capacity to communicate, interact or interview a person with a disability.*

Media professionals may not know how to put the person at ease, how to ask about the person's disability or what accommodation they might need. They may also worry they lack the expertise to ask good questions, that they may embarrass themselves or cause offense. These concerns could help explain why there is a lack of reporting on disability.

When interviewing a person with a disability, it is helpful to remember that there are misconceptions about disability due to a lack of awareness, information, and limited representation of persons with disabilities. Before conducting an interview, it is important to check whether the person is **comfortable talking about disability**. If not, be respectful and do not insist on disclosing more during the interview itself. Camera operators and photographers, who capture the lives of persons with disabilities, are also encouraged to treat the interviewee normally and equally, but with environmental and sensory awareness. Camera operators need to be careful not to “dehumanize” a person using assistive devices. Zooming in on a wheelchair or hearing aid removes the person from the shot. Conversely, there is also a tendency to cut out or visually eliminate signs of disability from a shot. It is recommended to consult experts or colleagues with disabilities or simply ask the interviewee for advice.

When interviewing a deaf person, make sure they have a **sign language** interpreter in the national sign language they understand. For example, some deaf immigrants may understand International Sign Language better than the national sign language of the country they now live in, while not all deaf people can easily understand International Sign Language.

Media professionals, who are also involved in the production of **commercial messages** and **social announcements**, should be aware of the need for fair representation of

women and men with disabilities. Fairness should be ensured in advertising (voice and images, voice-overs, an assertive rather than passive role, opinion holder/expert position and other external or societal orientation such as independent living or parenting) and active citizenship (e.g. participation in elections). In advertising, traditional “disability” characteristics are expected to be balanced and include multi-dimensional representations of children, women and men with disabilities.

In addition, some licensing agreements with broadcast regulators may require broadcasters to pre-examine and **clear advertisements before they are aired**. Such clearance may require evidence that persons with disabilities were actively involved in the creation of the storyline and consulted in the development and production of the content and in the design of a campaign.

Media professionals can begin by asking basic questions to the person they are interviewing, filming or photographing. Table 12 provides a short list of frequently asked questions which can be used for conducting interviews with a person with a disability.



**See Table 11.** Interviewing a person with a disability



**See Table 12.** Basic questions

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**Media professionals, who are also involved in the production of media content, including commercial messages and social announcements, should be aware of the need for fair representation of women and men with disabilities.**

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## Covering crisis, displacement, natural disasters and environmental situations

*In times of crisis, it can be particularly challenging for persons with disabilities to receive information and express their views and opinions in an emergency response due to existing discriminatory barriers in everyday life.*

Among the many thematic issues and events covered by the media, special attention should be given to times of crisis, terrorism, forced displacement, natural disasters, environmental situations, or other important public events or periods such as elections.

Often, the rights of persons with disabilities are **not prioritized in these situations**. **Life-saving content focuses primarily on issues that affect the general population.** In addition, the media may not be prepared to deal with needs of people who have just acquired new disabilities, both on a physical and psychosocial basis. It can also be challenging to report on the rapid escalation of violence and discrimination against women and girls, including those with disabilities.

**Reliable information may be even more difficult to obtain** because emergency rescue personnel may not be aware of or equipped to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Information about evacuation plans, accessible shelters, humanitarian assistance or dissemination of emergency items such as food and medical supplies and other public services may not be easily accessible. Communication can also be compromised, information channels can be used to spread disinformation or misinformation, access to credible sources of information can be restricted and editorial decisions can be influenced by those in power.

At such times, the **public relies heavily on the media**. Therefore, the media should be prepared and ready to provide credible reporting to all populations, including persons with disabilities. This can be achieved by **building the capacity of the media in advance to act independently, impartially and in a coordinated manner**.

Responding effectively may require creating new news segments, conducting sensitive interviews, dealing with one's own trauma,

applying strict or more rigorous technical standards for producing and disseminating accessible content, and using news tools and technology to report on the actions or inactions of other actors. **Leaving persons with disabilities out of a crisis or other important public events or periods makes them even more vulnerable and can literally mean the difference between life and death.** Sensitivity to disability issues in reporting is critical to the minimization of harm and the promotion of resilience in society.

In times of crisis and other important public events or periods, the media should account for the challenges that vulnerable populations face and their needs. They should also strive to represent those populations in a respectful manner. Content should be produced and disseminated in compliance with technical standards. Some tips are presented in Table 13 and in Part 2.



**See Table 13.** Inclusive coverage in times of crisis

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**When covering crises, the media should be prepared and ready to provide credible reporting to all populations, including persons with disabilities.**

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## Humanitarian Emergencies

- The 2019 United Nations Security Council resolution 2475 on the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of **armed conflict** fosters the rights of persons with disabilities to have equal access to basic services provided in the context of armed conflict, including information and communication.
- In 2020, the United Nations released the “**Policy Brief: A Disability-Inclusive Response to COVID-19**” which highlighted how the pandemic affected the world’s 1 billion persons with disabilities and recommends a disability-inclusive response and recovery for everyone. The brief stated that “if public health information, the built environment, communications and technologies, and goods and services are not accessible, people with disabilities cannot take necessary decisions, live independently and isolate or quarantine safely, or access health and public services on an equal basis with others”.<sup>36</sup>
- Signed by over 70 stakeholders from different countries, United Nations system entities, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action agreed on the key principles to make **humanitarian action** inclusive for persons with disabilities.<sup>37</sup>
- The Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology in the United States of America published “Media Scripts for **Post-Earthquake** Public Safety Information”. This resource can be useful for covering other emergency situations in an inclusive manner.<sup>38</sup>
- Al Jazeera Journalism Review published good practices for collecting data during an **earthquake**. Editors expect reporters to produce a data-driven report on earthquakes that have struck Arab States over the past decade. The document includes information about existing international databases that continuously monitor and record earthquakes and can be treated as a reliable source for checking facts and adjustment of methodologies.<sup>39</sup>
- The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES) provides services in universal design and accessibility of the built environment. Several resources have been developed to help ensure that the information and communication technologies used to communicate, develop, disseminate and manage information are accessible to all. For example, the “**Guideline on Inclusive Disaster Reduction: Disabilities and Disasters**” is designed to address the lack of appropriate information and practices on inclusive policies and practices on disaster preparedness, accessible early warnings, accessible transportation, and life safety and evacuation of persons with disabilities. It focuses on inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies, from working with the community of persons with disabilities, to the design of a variety of accessible early warning systems that reach all citizens, disaster preparedness and technical specifications for designing accessible shelters, housing, and transportation.<sup>40</sup>
- Radio was found to be the most effective and operational medium when infrastructure is destroyed. Radio receivers are inexpensive and do not require access fees. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Emergency Radiocommunications webpage provides information on broadcast radio for **public warning, disaster mitigation and relief**.<sup>41</sup>
- In times of crisis and other important public events or periods, **the media should account for the challenges that vulnerable populations face and their needs**. They should also strive to represent those populations in a respectful manner. Content should be produced and disseminated in compliance with technical standards. Some tips are presented in Table 13 and in Part 2.





# Part II

Selasie Sikanku

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# Making media content and operations accessible

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Producing quality content for and about persons with disabilities in a fair, non-discriminatory, and impartial manner is only half of the road — **media content also needs to be accessible to them.**

## **Legal obligations to make content accessible**

In a democratic and pluralistic society, citizens should have opportunities to contribute and participate on an equal basis in the decision-making processes that affect them. The content and services offered by the media have social consequences. **Conventional access to the media therefore should not be a barrier that excludes any social groups** (e.g. physical, informational, attitudinal, economic [affordability] and institutional).

The digital evolution of the media has made media even more accessible by providing a wider range of means to access services and content. However, not all citizens or consumers are able to access media services and content on an equal basis with others due to their purchasing power, geographical location, and sociocultural and political factors.

This is even more challenging for persons with disabilities and their families. Access to media services, especially those provided by commercial media through subscription systems, poses additional challenges. Viewers with disabilities are often forced to purchase relatively expensive assistive technology to access such services and content. Furthermore, due to their underrepresentation in the media, persons with disabilities might have to consume content that is homogeneous and tailored to the general public and its interests, tastes and linguistic and cultural preferences, leading to marginalization in society.

Many countries around the world, especially those that have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, have begun to introduce legal measures to ensure that media content and services are more accessible to persons with disabilities. Professionals in media organizations, especially

those responsible for content production and distribution, will likely need to revise their content production and distribution workflows and develop new skills to provide accessible content and services to all audiences. In doing so, **media organizations will demonstrate fairness and impartiality and facilitate their transition to the digital age to generate new revenues from digital audiences.**

### ***Access and accessibility***

**Access** is defined as the ability, right or permission to approach, enter or use media content and services, while **accessibility** is a measure (a benchmark or a precondition to access and to participate in society) to assess the extent or degree to which the media service or content is available to as many users as possible, particularly to persons with disabilities through assistive technology or access services such as captioning, audio description or visual signing.

Another closely related term is “**universal design**”, also known as “design for all”, which calls for all environments, products, programmes and services to be designed to be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible. This eliminates the need to adapt products and services or create specialized ones for those with disabilities. Media organizations, technology companies and digital information service providers apply the universal design principles in the creation and distribution of their content.

### ***Compliance and usability standards***

There are currently several international instruments and standards that provide a solid foundation for media regulation in different countries. They also require that media services and content apply a principle of **universality**. This requires media services and content, especially those provided by public service broadcasters, to be designed and produced in such a way that they are accessible to all (this is also linked to the concept of universal design for all).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obligates the mass media, including Internet information providers, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities. There are several important features that are important to consider when

making media content accessible, including universal design, alternative communication methods, technical standards, advanced technology and tools, licensing regimes and resources that are used to improve access, usability, navigation, testing or interactivity.

Laws in some countries and regions mandate accessibility for persons with disabilities. For instance, the Americans with Disability Act in the United States of America and the European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882) require organizations to provide **alternative communication methods** for people with visual, hearing or speech disabilities. Media organizations are responsible for providing audio-visual content in accessible formats for these audiences in the EU.

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), published by the World Wide Web Consortium, provide **technical standards** that media organizations can use to ensure that web content is fully accessible. They address the use of hyperlinks, text design, video, audio, alternative text (alt text), closed captioning and transcriptions. Media organizations around the world are making their content more accessible and ensuring that accessibility is maintained throughout their operations. The EU introduced the Web Accessibility Directive (WAD) (EU 2016/2102) on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies, obliging all public sector in the EU to make their online websites and mobile apps accessible.<sup>42</sup>

According to these normative instruments, persons with disabilities have the right, on an equal basis to other citizens, to access information in print, audio, video and digital formats that is produced and disseminated in an accessible manner by newspapers, magazines or other printed media, as well as by radio, television and digital media.

### ***Built-in accessibility in technology solutions***

Many countries entail legal requirements on media organizations, regardless of their revenue and content distribution model, requiring them to produce content and make media operations accessible to persons with disabilities. This accommodation often includes, but is not limited to, captioning, signing, audio description and easily understandable menu navigation for audiences with disabilities.

In recent years, some normative instruments have called for a gradual approach to ensure that media services and content are accessible by a certain date. Such an approach requires other producers and providers of services, content and products to apply accessibility in their design process. As a result, a growing number of technological solutions, including those used for the production and distribution of media content, now have **built-in accessibility features**.

Among those solutions with built-in accessibility features are technology-based AI-powered solutions. It is often said that AI could be a game-changer for persons with disabilities, with the potential to improve quality of life and facilitate education and employment, as well as help with everyday life. If AI is designed inclusively and with a human-centred approach, it opens up new opportunities to enhance access to information and media content, as well as increase the engagement of persons with disabilities. One of the few recent examples is the new feature introduced by Apple for cognitive accessibility, along with Live Speech, Personal Voice and Point and Speak in Magnifier.<sup>43</sup> Microsoft's Seeing AI Talking Camera for the Blind, currently available in more than seventy countries, also includes the launch of a talking camera app that uses AI to produce increasingly accurate audio descriptions for persons with visual impairments.<sup>44</sup> Another useful tool is Google Lookout, which is aligned to WCAG standards and uses AI techniques to describe visuals in cameras, identify objects, read pages of text, and help with everyday activities like managing email.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Samsung announced a new way to help people who are hard of hearing with its Galaxy Buds2 earphones.<sup>46</sup>

Media-related AI tools can also help identify under-reported stories, misinformation (fact-checking, reverse image search, source tracing, etc.), improve distribution for and engagement with audiences with disabilities, facilitate back-office operations, and more.

Furthermore, AI innovations are also transforming jobs and organizational structures in the media sector, which can provide an opportunity to increase hiring of media professionals with disabilities.

Media organizations should therefore not only know the main parameters of AI tools and algorithmic systems they use ethically but also inform audiences about their use of AI.

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Accommodation often includes, but is not limited to, **captioning, signing, audio description and easily understandable menu navigation** for audiences with disabilities.

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### *Open licensing schemes*

Open licensing schemes facilitate access to media content and services for persons with disabilities. Typically, content licensing schemes apply standards and recommendations related to the concept of releasing accessible content under **open licensing** terms.

Open licensing provides users with the rights to access, reuse, repurpose, adapt or distribute media resources. In this regard, it is recommended that the media, in particular public service broadcasters (as beneficiaries of public funding serving the public interest), consider developing, applying and implementing open content policies or legal frameworks. Among such normative instruments is the 2013 Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. This Treaty, administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) invites actors to make it easier to **produce and internationally transfer** specially adapted books for people with blindness or visual impairments.

UNESCO's 2019 Recommendation on **Open Educational Resources** reflects upon policies and programmes for the creation, access, reuse, adaptation and redistribution of educational content, which could also be produced by the media for the information, education and entertainment of persons with disabilities. Such content produced with public funds should be openly licensed or placed in the public domain, and financial and human resources should be allocated to the implementation and evaluation of such open access policies. In this context, open licences would refer to licences that respect the intellectual property rights of copyright holders and provide permissions that give the public the right to access, reuse, repurpose, adapt and redistribute educational materials.



## Accessibility Standards

- Accessibility Standards Canada creates accessibility standards for federally regulated entities and federal organizations. Canada aims to achieve barrier-free access for persons with disabilities by 2040. All activities are aligned with priority areas in the Accessible Canada Act and the standards are designed on the basis of good practices and research. Once adopted by the relevant ministry, the standards become mandatory and then apply to federally regulated organizations and federal government departments and agencies.<sup>47</sup>
- The Washington Post used the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and feedback from the audience to increase availability of content on its digital platforms for persons with disabilities. Some of the key features are that: (i) content is navigable without a mouse, (ii) alt text is used to describe images, (iii) audio and video are captioned and transcribed, (iv) high-contrast colours are used to accommodate colour-blindness, (v) there is flexibility to increase text size and fonts to achieve maximum readability, (vi) writing is clear and inclusive, and (vii) automated testing tools are used to confirm the accessibility of web pages.

## Practical tips for integrating accessibility into media operations

*As accessibility requirements become more legally binding, media organizations should consider developing an organizational policy on the accessibility of content and services. Whether stand-alone or integrated into other policies – **accessibility in media operations is part of a proactive and non-discriminatory manifesto based on equality of opportunity.***

There are many types and degrees of disability, so making media services and content accessible requires thoughtful **planning, commitment and technical expertise**. It also requires the participation of staff at all levels – managers, editors, reporters, visual journalists, technicians, designers and producers – and the involvement of end users, namely persons with disabilities. In other words, the removal of existing barriers to media is primarily an organizational, technical, economic, competency-based, managerial and perceptual/attitudinal issue.

By integrating accessibility solutions in a comprehensive manner, media organizations will remove many barriers and obstacles for persons with disabilities, make assets inclusive and/or accessible to all audiences and contribute to social inclusion. It goes without saying that improved access to audiovisual content will attract new customers, generate additional revenue streams and open new market segments for media organizations.

The removal of existing barriers for audiences with disabilities to media is primarily an **organizational issue**.



**See Table 14.** Insights into integrating accessibility into media operations

## Accessible Products and Services

- The 2019 **European Accessibility Act (EAA)** is a directive that is aimed at improving the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services by removing barriers created by divergent rules in European Union Member States. Businesses will benefit from common rules on accessibility in the European Union, leading to cost reductions.
- **EAA** covers products and services that have been identified as being the most important for persons with disabilities while also being the most likely to have diverging accessibility requirements across European Union countries. These products and services include computers and operating systems, ATMs, ticketing and check-in machines, smartphones, television equipment related to digital television services, telephony services and related equipment, access to audiovisual media services such as television broadcasts and related consumer equipment, services related to air, bus, rail and waterborne passenger transport, banking services, e-books, and e-commerce.<sup>48</sup>
- **EAA** is a call to action for businesses to be more inclusive. It imposes new obligations on businesses, from web accessibility to product design, and non-compliance is not an option. It is a groundbreaking directive aimed at levelling the playing field for the 135 million persons with disabilities in the European Union. Originating from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, **EAA** is aimed at harmonizing accessibility laws across all European Union Member States. **EAA** came into effect in April 2019, and every Member State had to pass the necessary implementation laws by 28 June 2022. The implementation of each country's laws will have to be ensured by June 2025.<sup>49</sup>
- The **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC)/Radio-Canada** has released a comprehensive Accessibility Plan 2023–2025, entitled *Breaking Barriers*, that promotes a vision of an accessible public media organization. The plan outlines seven strategic goals that touch every aspect of the corporation's work: content, recruitment, retention and promotion efforts, as well as technology and infrastructure. It is a comprehensive plan for transformative change in the media organization.
- The **Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK)** is exploring the use of AI technologies in production and distribution systems to automate audio transcription with higher quality descriptions. One experiment involves automatically extracting live statistics from sports events and incorporating them into audio descriptions. NHK applies automated systems for generating descriptive text.
- The **Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK)** applies inclusive design to everything it does, NRK has developed a streaming service that enables everyone to enjoy its programme catalogue. NRK offers a high-quality user experience on most devices and platforms with high levels of accessibility support. NRK also integrates inclusive design into its organization and development process and has hired an accessibility manager and various experts in the field, including the head of the NRK sign language editorial staff, who is deaf, and a digital accessibility expert who is blind.<sup>50</sup>
- **Making Accessible Media**, designed by the Faculty of Media and Creative Arts at Humber College in Toronto, Canada, with support received from the Broadcasting Accessibility Fund, is an open online course designed to teach how to incorporate accessibility features into media content with the understanding that accessibility should not be an afterthought but part of the initial development process.<sup>51</sup>


Dos for print, television, radio and digital media

Print media

There are a few simple ways to make print media, such as newspapers, brochures, flyers, magazines and books more accessible for persons with disabilities. Text size, font selection, colour choices, spacing, contrast and the way in which complex information is presented, all make a great difference.

Visual Journalism

Print media is becoming more accessible. This is especially true of visual journalism, with the goal of removing barriers for readers with disabilities. Changes are being made at the organizational level to address accessibility within an entire system. The New York Times, for example, reports that it is taking steps to ensure that visuals are accessible through publishing tools.<sup>52</sup>

 See Table 15. Accessible print content


Television broadcasts

Television is an important channel of communication for many persons with disabilities. Moving images are sometimes better at telling stories, and some people can grasp information better through body language, expressions and other visual cues. Television also provides access to critical information for persons with disabilities who could be isolated during crises, displacement and natural disasters. Closed captioning, audio descriptions and sign language interpretation can help to ensure that such content is accessible.

Most broadcasters also provide content on digital platforms, offering on-demand content, interactive programme guides and innovative forms of multimedia storytelling. Tips for making digital content accessible can be found in “Digital Media” later in this section.

Accessibility of Public Information

- News programmes, interviews and statements made by the Brazilian Federal Executive are broadcast live on the open channels of the Federal Government (TV Brasil 2) and TV Brasil, with guaranteed accessibility for deaf persons. There is translation of audiovisual content (films) and Repórter Brasil into Libras (Brazilian Sign Language). All interviews with the President of Brazil are also broadcast with translation into Libras on TV Brasil 2, through the Brasil Agora newsletters and on TV Brasil 1.<sup>53</sup>
- In 2022, the Government of France introduced a new Accessibility Charter for State Communication. The Charter sets out how content issued and distributed by public services can be made accessible to persons with disabilities. Members of the government should ensure that their speeches, press conferences and interviews are accessible, including the interpretation of French sign language for the hearing impaired.<sup>54</sup>

 See Table 16. Accessible video content

Radio broadcasts

Radio is a medium that is relatively easy and inexpensive to access, and it is particularly useful for those with visual disabilities. Transcripts and captions, as well as attention to pacing and the clarity of speech, can make radio content more accessible. New AI-based technology is being developed to improve automated speech-to-text capabilities and to develop caption-enabled services and transcripts for radio receivers, which can be especially important in emergencies. Other solutions can scan media sources, pull relevant topics, produce scripts and read them using AI-generated speech. Radio programming is increasingly available on the web, which also calls for adherence to digital accessibility guidelines.



See Table 17. Accessible audio content

## Accessible Content

- The **Argentine Broadcasting Corporation** (RTA), in its Code of Ethics for Public Television (Article 9), guarantees that the incorporation of audiovisual and digital accessibility mechanisms will be ensured for all persons with disabilities to enable them to understand and participate in programming on an equal basis. It is considered an absolute obligation to recognize viewers with disabilities as full subjects of the law, and all necessary measures will be taken to achieve this, considering the guide included and jointly prepared for this Code.<sup>55</sup>
- The **Australian Broadcasting Corporation** (ABC) produced a broadcast featuring a disability affairs reporter who shares her experience working as a media professional with a disability in radio and television and provides information on adaptations made at her workplace. As a reporter and newscaster for a radio station, she did live broadcasts using screen-reading software that scanned text on the screen and played it through her headphones, along with other audio streams such as the timer.<sup>56</sup>
- **CBC/Radio-Canada** has been making audio content more accessible and provides full episode transcripts free of charge for three English-language programmes, and two French-language radio programmes. The CBC Help Centre provides information about written transcripts of radio programmes and podcasts for deaf and hard of hearing audiences.<sup>57</sup>
- On 13 February 2024, UNESCO, the **European Broadcasting Union** (EBU), and radio stations across Europe expressed their concern about plans by a number of car manufacturers to remove AM radios from their new electric vehicles because of static (which could be remedied). This increases the risk that both AM and FM devices will be removed from all types of new cars shortly thereafter, based on the controversial premise that terrestrial radio is on the verge of obsolescence like CDs, cassettes and 8-tracks. This could be a hardship for the millions of people around the world without access to WiFi, as well as those who depend on AM radio as a lifeline for their communities, religious services and basic news, traffic, sports and weather. It also reduces access to information and media content for listeners with disabilities.<sup>58</sup>
- **Radio France** has taken several steps to produce content for persons with disabilities and has established collaborations with civil society organizations and companies that provide accessible solutions for persons who are blind or visually impaired. These include audio offerings on its websites, adapted content and graphics, and cultural events such as concerts that are translated into sign language.<sup>59</sup>
- The **Talking News Federation** (TNF) helps over 300 UK-based local Talking Newspapers to deliver local news and information in audio and print to visually impaired disabled people.<sup>60</sup>



## Digital media

Traditional media outlets distribute much of their content via the Internet, reflecting the reality that many people around the world now access most of their information on desktop and laptop computers, tablets and mobile phones.

Countries are increasingly mandating that media organizations make their web content accessible to persons with disabilities. Even without such a legal requirement, media organizations have an obligation to serve all members of their communities, including those with disabilities. Online accessibility can be as simple as choosing readable fonts and labelling buttons and icons. It can be more complicated to ensure that multimedia sources, such as audio and video, are optimized for everyone's use.

There is a wealth of information on how to maximize web accessibility, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines developed by the World Wide Web Consortium. In addition, media organizations can encourage their staff to seek a web accessibility certification. The International Association of Accessibility Professionals is one of the main providers of web accessibility certification training.



**See Table 18.** Production of accessible digital content

## Accessible Digital Content

- Published by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with support from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “How to use **social media** to better engage people affected by crises. A brief guide for those using social media in humanitarian organizations” provides practical tips and advice on how to use social media effectively to engage with the people affected and be accountable to them. It is aimed primarily at the staff responsible for their organization's official social media channels and encourages the use of different content formats.<sup>61</sup>
- The UNESCO publication “Accessible **digital documentary heritage**: guidelines for the preparation of documentary heritage in accessible formats for persons with disabilities” is another useful document. Aimed at parties involved in the digitization of heritage documents, such as the media, information and memory organizations such as librarians, archivists, museum workers, curators, conservators and concerned stakeholders, the guidelines help those parties to carefully plan digital platforms and contents with a view to incorporating aspects of disability and accessibility. By following certain standards for accessibility and incorporating assistive software and hardware tools into the development phase, digital documentary heritage repositories will allow those with visual, hearing, motor or cognitive impairments to access and participate in culture.<sup>62</sup>
- CBC offers a low-bandwidth website for English-language news. The **HTML code** is optimized for low-bandwidth connections. This means that the website reduces the size and complexity of web pages, uses responsive design and makes the pages load faster and more smoothly, which is useful for the website's visitors with disabilities.<sup>63</sup>





# Part III

**Sophie Morgan**

Journalist, presenter and disability rights advocate (UK)



# Inclusive management practices

Media organizations, like any other employer, have a legal obligation to provide decent working conditions and apply non-discriminatory practices according to existing laws and conventions, including those relating to the rights of workers with disabilities.

## Diversity, equity and inclusion in the media

All media professionals or employees in the media sector – managers, editors, reporters, visual journalists, technicians, designers and producers – have different roles and responsibilities. There are also applicants, employees, hiring managers, supervisors, human resources officers, disability focal points for organizations, medical personnel, or staff delegates. All of them may be involved in **Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI)** or Leadership and Inclusion Programmes.

Media organizations can greatly benefit from robust workplace policies and programmes that adapt, promote and mainstream the principles of DEI of different groups of people (considering their age, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, religion, culture, language and different backgrounds, experiences, skills and expertise). Ultimately, such actions will attract and inspire new talent, raise awareness about target audiences and increase creativity and innovation in the media industry.

Often these efforts are grouped under a DEI programme to provide an overarching framework for a specific set of workplace behavioural standards that staff are required to follow over the long term with a wide range of activities to be implemented. DEI programmes can also endorse the core values of an organization, and often overlap or intersect with various other policies, procedures and activities that promote equal access to opportunities, employment and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

DEI policies typically cover strategic planning and decision-making, leadership support, recruitment, awareness-raising, human resources management, training and capacity-building programmes, as well as other issues relating to the physical accessibility of office space and technical infrastructure. In general, these policies and actions should both help to overcome unconscious biases, discrimination and stigma in the workplace, as well as build trust among staff, audiences, public media organizations and other stakeholders.



In the context of persons with disabilities, it is equally important to emphasize that DEI addresses intersectionality in the workplace, that is, connections to other policies, procedures and practices. Persons with disabilities may also belong to different social groups and may be marginalized based on their gender, race, ethnicity and other factors. A comprehensive understanding of intersectionality helps to address the unique challenges associated with different situations and requires more holistic policies and inclusive workplace practices.

The following examples show how media organizations have moved from a sensitizing or awareness-raising approach to a more transformative approach towards diverse, equitable and inclusive organizations.

## DEI Implementation and Monitoring

- The CBC/Radio-Canada Accessibility Plan 2023–2025 integrates a **results-based management** approach, which defines desired outcomes, measurements and data sources. The plan also includes practical provisions for creating a supportive technical environment, including physical provisions, technological provisions, communications, procurement of goods, services and facilities, and the design and delivery of programmes and services.
- Radio France signed its fifth three-year agreement for the **professional integration and employment of persons with disabilities**. The agreement includes a framework for daily actions to be taken by Radio France employees, both in-house and on air, to continue raising awareness among their audiences, including the celebration of relevant international days.
- The Brazilian Communication Company (EBC), in its **Code of Conduct and Integrity** (Articles 4.2 (III) and (IV)), states that EBC promotes the improvement of the quality of life of its employees, ensuring well-being, health, hygiene and safety in the work environment, including the treatment of physical spaces and the availability of work equipment that allow free access to EBC facilities and better working conditions for persons with disabilities. It also calls for respect and appreciation of social and cultural diversity and individual differences, providing equal treatment to all people without prejudice based on their social, cultural or ethnic origin, or related to their gender, age, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation, physical condition, mental and psychosocial condition or any other form of discrimination.
- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) International Development and Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) released a study that contributes to the **evidence-based approach** towards disability inclusion in Pacific media. The study includes experiences and challenges with information on accessibility for persons with disabilities, disability-sensitive reporting and on-screen representation, as well as on ensuring employment pathways and enabling environments for persons with disabilities working in the media. The study found that there are practical opportunities in workplace culture, policy and technology to ensure the full and equal inclusion of persons with disabilities in the media and to achieve information accessibility for communities.<sup>64</sup>

## Deploying DEI programmes in media operations, leadership and management practices

*The way media organizations implement DEI varies from one organization to another. Many tend to take supportive action at a top level by introducing an overall strategy or programme to provide a solid framework for DEI actions and to demonstrate the organization's commitment and desire for cultural change. Others are guided by a disability equality policy which is mainstreamed and introduced into manuals, guidelines and procedures.*

While DEI programmes are integrated in different ways, it is common for them to be integrated in a **scalable fashion** to ensure that policies, procedures and initiatives are sound, sustainable and well-considered. Ultimately, it is the media regulators who promote diversity in the workforce and require media organizations to consider equal opportunities for professionals with disabilities in the media sector. In some countries, media outlets are legislatively required to develop corporate diversity plans and submit annual reports outlining their progress towards meeting diversity obligations with regard to persons with disabilities, including employees. (see Chart 4)

There are two common ways of implementing DEI policies that media organizations can consider when planning to implement disability equality policies:

**Chart 5. DEI framework**



While it is important for everyone in a media organization to promote DEI, it is recommended that a specific **DEI officer, team or focal point be appointed**. This helps ensure greater transparency and accountability, as well as a timely response to emerging demands and the needs of staff with disabilities. The dedicated staff is also responsible for planning, coordination, budgeting and knowledge-sharing between teams. The DEI unit, whether a designated officer, team, focal point or committee, would normally report to the board of senior managers.

To monitor progress and returns on investment, it is advisable to establish an **implementation road map**. A consistent and organization-wide road map to measure progress can be helpful for senior managers, staff, external partners and stakeholders. Such a strategic document would build on the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) objectives mentioned in Part 1, establish benchmarks, identify means of verification, define a timetable and plan key activities to be supported by the necessary human and financial resources. This could lead to the development of **self-assessment and diagnostic tools to measure progress**.

In addition, **reasonable accommodation** is required to make workplaces accessible and inclusive for staff with disabilities. There is a need to take practical steps to modify the workplace, including machinery and equipment, to provide accessible job-related materials and content, implement flexible work schedules, modify organizational procedures and make other adjustments in order to facilitate the employment of employees with disabilities. This includes the installation of ramps, accessible washrooms, ergonomic equipment and furniture, handrails, tactile paving for guidance, sign language interpretation and the purchase of necessary auxiliary aids. However, reasonable accommodation should not impose a disproportionate or undue burden on the organization. All

requests for reasonable accommodation should be considered carefully and an open dialogue should be maintained between employees with disabilities and supervisors.

In addition, an **anonymous and confidential reporting system** to collect complaints, concerns or feedback from employees and target audiences is another way to identify and address disability-related barriers in the workplace. In this regard, the **existing self-regulatory mechanisms** in media organizations can be also linked to DEI programmes.

In general, these mechanisms are to monitor, support and promote the ethical, balanced and diverse representation of staff, including those with disabilities. DEI-related efforts can also be linked to the work of **ombudsmen, staff unions or professional associations**, which offer media organizations the opportunity to improve their work through a process of reflection and dialogue.

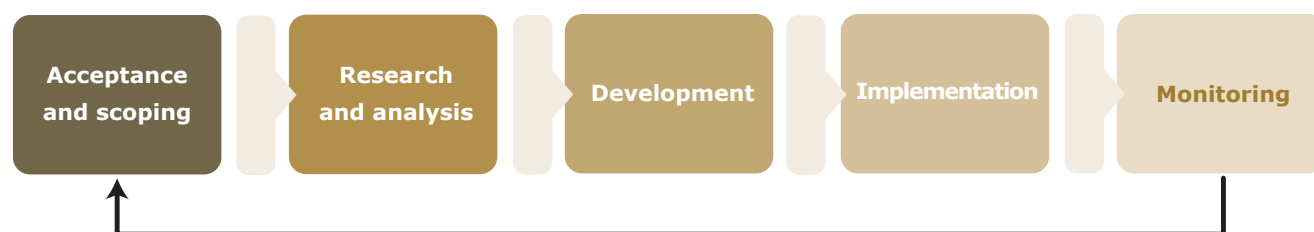
The Manual presents a road map for the implementation of DEI programmes, which includes five phases (see Chart 6) and key issues that are described in Table 19.



**See Table 19.** Getting started with the DEI programme

Deployment of the DEI programme is a process that is aimed at **creating an inclusive culture** in media organizations by fostering open communication between management and employees with disabilities, implementing mentoring and training programmes, establishing employee support groups, providing reasonable accommodation and building new partnerships.

**Chart 6. Key phases in the deployment of the DEI programme**



## Implementation Strategies

- In 2017, Al Jazeera officially launched its comprehensive **Network Brand Strategy** – “Clarity by Contrast”. The strategy was presented at a landmark meeting of senior management in Doha, Qatar. A network-wide education campaign was rolled out to ensure that all Al Jazeera employees become familiar with the four brand pillars: diversity, depth, courage and agility.<sup>65</sup>
- Under the Accessibility Canada Act (2019), all federally regulated broadcasters in Canada are requested to have **accessibility plans and feedback mechanisms**, which allow public and staff to raise accessibility issues. Existing self-monitoring mechanisms to collect feedback contribute to continuous improvement of accessibility efforts in media. There are several ways for members of the public to provide feedback, while maintaining their anonymity and confidentiality. Persons with disabilities are regularly consulted on the improvements needed.<sup>66</sup>

### Creating an inclusive workplace for staff with disabilities

*Recruiting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce that includes media professionals with disabilities can be challenging for media organizations.*

Creating a diverse and inclusive workforce that includes media professionals with disabilities can be challenging for media organizations. Qualified media professionals with disabilities may be reluctant to apply or unaware of the importance of doing so due to concerns about discriminatory barriers in the recruitment process and limitations in the work environment. The fast-paced work environment of the media and assumptions about what it takes to be a successful media professional may discourage persons with disabilities from even applying. Such a process typically involves reviewing processes for the **recruitment, onboarding and accommodation, retention, career development and training, and management** of a diverse workforce.

These challenges should be addressed through human resources policies and practices that reflect a commitment to inclusion, the protection of rights, reasonable accommodation and

zero tolerance for discrimination. Inclusive operations and management practices in media organizations should address unconscious and conscious bias in recruitment, onboarding, accommodation, performance evaluation and management of a diverse workforce. These are closely linked to other processes related to editorial and programming concerns examined in Part 1. Accessibility should also be built into the production and distribution processes of media content and services as discussed in Part 3.

Professional development should include training on disability-related issues. Where appropriate, meaningful training partnerships should be established with higher educational organizations that provide training for future media professionals and incorporate disability equality into training programmes.

Training on the accessibility of internal documents, which is related to accessible media content, is equally important in the workplace so that staff members with disabilities can perform their job and fully participate in the organization’s processes on an equal basis to their non-disabled peers. Technology often provides solutions, but fully accessible media operations should also ensure that all employees feel valued and respected.



## UN Disability Inclusion Strategy

- In Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “reasonable accommodation” is defined as measures that enable a person with a disability to have access to, participate in and advance in employment, while not imposing an undue burden on the employer. **Workplace accommodation** can include everything from physical changes to the workplace to the provision of accessible documents, sign language interpretation, flexible work schedules and remote working.
- For the implementation of the Convention, the UN **Disability Inclusion Strategy** that provides the foundation for sustained and transformative progress on disability inclusion. It also provides a good example of a policy and accountability framework with benchmarks to assess progress and accelerate change in disability inclusion.

## Recruitment

Efforts should be made to reach a broad pool of applicants by posting positions on job boards and websites that are inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. It is also a good practice to include a statement in **job postings** encouraging people with disabilities to apply and informing them that hiring, promotion and retention practices will be fair and unbiased. However, before any recruitment, it is important to review the **job description** and include only physical and/or mental requirements that are essential to the job.

Organizations should consider **reaching out to local disability services and programmes and contacting organizations** working with persons with disabilities. Hiring managers should be informed of the **full spectrum of reasonable accommodation** to enable candidates with disabilities to participate equally in the recruitment process.



See Table 20. Inclusive recruitment

Media organizations should consider **reaching out to local disability services and programmes and contacting organizations** working with persons with disabilities.

## Employment Initiatives

- The BBC has an **action employment programme** that ringfences certain roles varying in contract length and seniority that only persons with disabilities can apply for.
- The CBC AbiliCrew **Placements for Excellence Program** (CAPE) is a six-month programme targeted at professionals with disabilities who are early in their careers and have not yet worked at CBC. The programme helps to eliminate barriers to employment, showcases talent among this underrepresented group and generates more discussion, learning and content related to disability, accessibility and inclusion.<sup>67</sup>
- Dow Jones, a United States-based News Corp company, emphasizes the **hiring of individuals with disabilities** in its job advertisements and assists those who need help to submit a job application.
- The New York Times offers a **disability journalism fellowship**, which places early- and mid-career journalists in its newsroom for a year to help educate the newsroom on disability coverage

## Onboarding and accommodation

*If media professionals do not have safe working conditions or access to rehabilitation services, adequate accommodation and support after traumatic experiences, the public is also deprived of its right to access factual information.*

Once a hiring decision has been made, it is important to have an onboarding process that thoroughly covers the organization's DEI and accessibility policies. **Supervisors** should be informed about reasonable accommodation and

ensure that new employees have the necessary support to perform essential parts of their job and participate on an equal basis to persons without disabilities. Reasonable accommodation may include a set of actions to ensure that persons with disabilities receive all necessary onboarding support and accommodation



**See Table 21.** Onboarding and accommodation

## Inclusion in media organizations

- The **Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines** of the United Nations Secretariat provide a framework for the fair and consistent implementation of reasonable accommodation across the Secretariat.<sup>68</sup>
- In its **Code of Ethics** (Article 5.5.1.2), the Spanish Radio and Television Corporation (RTVE) promotes the professional and personal development of all its employees, ensuring equal opportunities through its policies. It does not tolerate any type of discrimination in the workplace or professional field on the grounds of age, race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national ancestry, social origin or disability.<sup>69</sup>
- The Council of Europe issued a document entitled "Journalism in situations of conflict and aggression: Principles extracted from the relevant Council of Europe and other international standards", which introduces several preventive measures contributing to the **protection of the physical safety of journalists** working in conflict zones.<sup>70</sup>
- The UNESCO publication "Intervention and interaction model protocol for security forces regarding journalists, communicators and the media" is aimed at serving as a reference for the development or updating of national protocols for law enforcement and their **interaction with the media** in accordance with international standards. It is also proposed as an advocacy tool for media and civil society organizations in the region to promote good practices between the police and the press, therefore contributing to improving the safety of journalists in the region, with an emphasis on the protection of women journalists.<sup>71</sup>

## Retention, career development and training

Career development and training programmes to foster a supportive workplace can help media professionals with disabilities to excel and reach top positions.



**See Table 22.** Inclusive career development and training

## Addressing disability in media organizations

- The International Journalists Network released the publication “**Journalism and Mental Health Toolkit**”. This online tool is composed of collected resources to address many different aspects of the issue, from post-traumatic stress disorder to digital wellness. Through reported resources and podcast interviews, the toolkit explores root causes, overlapping burdens and possible solutions to mental health issues that plague an already unstable industry.<sup>72</sup>
- Among the many aspects covered in the “UN Plan of Action on The **Safety of Journalists** and The Issue of Impunity”, a disability-sensitive approach is a part of the principles which forms the comprehensive, coherent, and action-oriented UN-wide approach for the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity.<sup>73</sup>
- There are two BBC **employee resource groups** (staff networks) called BBC Ability and BBC Enigma for disabled and neurodivergent colleagues.<sup>74</sup> The staff networks hold regular events and educational sessions across the corporation and provide a collective voice for disabled and neurodivergent staff.
- The ILO publication “Transforming enterprises through **diversity and inclusion**” presents the findings from one of the most comprehensive studies on equality, diversity and inclusion conducted during a period of immense disruption as the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was felt worldwide.<sup>75</sup>

## Managing a diverse workforce

The best workplaces do not just accommodate persons with disabilities, but actively work to ensure their success and contribute to the growth of the entire organization. In the long run, a diverse workplace improves the quality of journalism, increases the innovation of new ideas and competitiveness, and provides the means to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.



**See Table 23.** Managing a diverse workforce







# Part IV



# Technical Tables

**Table 1. Mainstreaming the human rights-based approach in storytelling**

To-do list	Mainstreaming the human rights-based approach
Action	Description
<b>Reflect on the five principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about how the five guiding principles of the human rights-based approach – participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality – could be applied to your stories, as well as in your policies and practices, with an emphasis on people's rights.</li> </ul>
<b>Expose discriminatory attitudes and barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, investigate, acknowledge and expose any form of discriminatory attitudes, legal and/or policy barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in society and therefore from actively, accessibly and meaningfully participating in decisions that affect them.</li> <li>• Ask how the story reflects and takes into account that rights holders (e.g. persons with disabilities) are affected and can meaningfully participate in the development of the story or any other activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Address myths and negative assumptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge the assumptions and myths that disability is something to be fixed or overcome, or that persons with disabilities are somehow “less” than other people.</li> <li>• Relate disability to other factors (e.g. poverty, geography, culture).</li> </ul>
<b>Respect dignity and recognize capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide reporting that upholds the dignity of persons with disabilities by giving them agency and prominence in stories and moving them beyond being “news figures” to being “information sources” who can provide timely information, contribute to news gathering and work in media organizations.</li> <li>• Raise awareness among rights holders of their rights, inform them about existing support mechanisms and show them how to claim their rights through your stories (e.g. policies or practices that could be applied, organizational structures that can provide services, and laws and legal standards adopted at the national and international levels).</li> </ul>
<b>Stimulate open dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage open dialogue and the participation and inclusion of different actors in policy and system-wide transformative changes that protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in society.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor and investigate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor, investigate or follow up on how people’s rights are being affected, and on the existence of remedies when policies, practices and interventions go wrong or are ineffective.</li> <li>• Identify duty bearers (e.g. public organizations, civil society, parents, educators) with human rights obligations.</li> <li>• Identify any meaningful accountability processes or mechanisms that concern the effectiveness of actions and meaningful accountability for them.</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Disability inclusive editorial policies**

To-do list	Disability inclusive editorial policies
Action	Description
<b>Develop inclusive editorial policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a new or revise editorial policy, guidelines and/or standards that include specific disability provisions and key principles.</li> <li>• Be specific and consistent. Such a step may require the further revision of existing codes of ethics, editorial standards, codes of conduct and other documents.</li> <li>• Think about core values and guiding principles and how the editorial policy would contribute to quality journalism.</li> <li>• Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based (SMART) targets to ensure equality for persons with disabilities in media coverage and programming.</li> </ul>
<b>Learn about the audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define your target audience taking into account factors such as gender, age, location, income, profession, language, status and lifestyle.</li> <li>• Map other information relevant to the target audience such as demographic information, topics of interest, background, roles, challenges and sources of information.</li> </ul>
<b>Adopt disability-inclusive language guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop or adopt existing disability-inclusive language guidelines for editorial and programming work.</li> <li>• Apply guidelines for mainstreaming disability across the media organization and use them for external and internal communication.</li> <li>• Remember that language evolves over time and terms that were commonly used some years ago are no longer acceptable.</li> <li>• Verify trustworthy and representative sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Raise awareness and train editorial teams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness about disability and provide tailored training for the whole newsroom on diversity, equality and inclusion.</li> <li>• Avoid ableism, which is based on an inaccurate, discriminatory and biased understanding of disability, harmful language and content.</li> <li>• Adjust your style and formatting guidelines, if necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Mainstream disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage each member of the editorial team to include disability issues in coverage and production and mainstream across different segments.</li> <li>• Link to other relevant policies and procedures such as information sources, content-length requirements, selection of images, re-posting policy and data protection, including sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Engage target audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that persons with disabilities, representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, experts and colleagues are involved and engaged in the development of new narratives, that they are seen as insightful sources, and that the stories about them reflect reality.</li> </ul>
<b>Set monitoring mechanisms to obtain feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish monitoring mechanisms to systematically and critically review media representations of persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for audiences with disabilities to reply to stories.</li> <li>• Regularly review both positive and negative media representations.</li> <li>• Get feedback on stories and identify gaps in coverage, regularly reach out to audiences with disabilities (e.g. regular data collection, customer research, focus groups, and surveys).</li> <li>• Feedback should be used to increase accountability, transparency and assessment of progress made against established targets.</li> </ul>

**Table 3. Equitable media programming**

To-do list	Equitable media programming
Action	Description
<b>Block programming (introduction of a broad perspective)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the perspectives of persons with disabilities in programmes that are not specifically about disability, but are of a high priority to the public (e.g. political debates, news or cultural programmes scheduled at important times or in prime time, such as election periods, special events of national, regional or global importance, song contests, telethons, sports events, weather forecasts).</li> <li>• Set up a disability beat by assigning one or more members of staff, including an on-air host or presenter with a disability, or a whole team, to focus specifically on disability coverage.</li> <li>• Increase the presence of disability in a variety of programmes. This can be done explicitly through specifically inserted storylines, and implicitly through extras (in TV programmes) or visible assistive technology, such as sign language interpretation for public announcements or closed captioning for film screenings.</li> </ul>
<b>Bridging (linking different segments)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where appropriate, use the “bridging” or “hammock” technique, whereby a disability-related segment is placed between two popular programmes where one programme ends and another begins.</li> <li>• During a high-profile sporting event, consider showing short documentaries that feature athletes with disabilities to encourage viewers not to change the channel.</li> </ul>
<b>Dayparting (complementarity)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programmes that target a specific demographic audience (e.g. children, young people, older people) and are relevant to the activities in which viewers are most likely to be involved at that time. This can be done by grouping together disability and age- or gender-related programmes that would complement other programmes (e.g. documentaries about young women in leadership or in science and technology, or about domestic violence against girls and women, including those with disabilities).</li> </ul>
<b>Counterprogramming (mainstreaming)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include disability-related storylines in a variety of programmes and genres, such as documentary series, soap operas, news, sporting events and culture or leisure programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Counterprogramming (specific)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include specific programmes scheduled for a particular day or occasion. This could be done using a theming technique when a temporary programme is broadcast to cover a specific theme over a short period (e.g. disaster situations and displaced populations).</li> <li>• Align programmes with the commemoration of international days (e.g. 13 February - World Radio Day, 21 February - Mother Language Day, 3 May - World Press Freedom Day, 28 September - International for Universal Access to Information, 5 October - World's Teachers' Day, 2 November - International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, 3 December - International Day of Persons with Disabilities).</li> </ul>



**Table 4. Portraying persons with disabilities**

To-do list	Portraying persons with disabilities
Action	Description
<b>Develop own guidelines and codes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizations should develop their own broadcast codes, including guidelines for inclusive language and terminology, as well as recommendations on how to avoid stereotypical portrayals. This helps to protect audiences and meet the journalism standards often required in media programming by broadcast regulatory frameworks.</li> <li>Make sure that those codes are co-regulatory or self-regulatory, and that they include specific or general provisions. They may even cover genres of programming (e.g. live television programmes, comedy, drama, soap operas, current affairs).</li> </ul>
<b>Present disability from a broader perspective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Portray persons with disabilities as equal members of society, with their disability (or disabilities) being only one of various parts of their identity.</li> <li>Establish a diverse group to create multidimensional stories.</li> </ul>
<b>Examine intersectionality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine intersectionality based on factors related to age, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion, education, occupation, and socioeconomic and political factors, as well as domains, such as education, health, housing, transportation, climate and culture. By doing so, the representation of persons with disabilities will be real, indicating the relationship between real places, people, events and ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>Emphasize achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the story about more than the disability or consider whether it is relevant to mention a person's disability at all.</li> <li>Depict the whole person, not just the disability, including the professional, academic, artistic and other achievements.</li> </ul>
<b>Remain realistic, and ensure fairness and impartiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize that persons with disabilities are equal members of society and can be high achievers.</li> <li>Remember that not everyone feels disadvantaged by their disability.</li> </ul>
<b>Respect privacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider carefully whether the disclosure of the person's medical condition or diagnosis is relevant to the story.</li> <li>If it is relevant, explain the disability in a broader context that includes other aspects of the person's identity (e.g. societal and attitudinal barriers that affect the person's everyday life instead of medical diagnoses).</li> </ul>
<b>Make wise visual choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whenever possible, choose visuals or video that capture persons with disabilities as active and multifaceted members of society.</li> </ul>
<b>Introduce reasonable accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If it is relevant to the story, share information about assistive devices, accessibility and accommodation used by a person with a disability (e.g. Braille displays, screen reading software, audio players).</li> <li>Provide information about benefits to everyone, including AI-powered solutions (e.g. user navigation to provide real-time guidance, image or facial recognition, language caption and translation, lip-reading technology).</li> </ul>
<b>Recall obligations and duties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise public awareness of normative instruments and technical standards, and the importance of compliance with them (e.g. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the provisions of complaints and monitoring mechanisms through which the on-screen and off-screen representation of persons with disabilities in the media can be systematically and regularly examined.</li> <li>Monitor progress made in the implementation of normative instruments and standards, particularly legally binding ones, and in the development and adaptation of innovative solutions for persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>

**Table 5. Gender-inclusive reporting of disabilities**

To-do list	Gender-inclusive reporting of disabilities
Action	Description
<b>Ensure balanced presence in programming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the presence of women and men with disabilities in programming is balanced and avoid underrepresentation or absence.</li> <li>• Prioritize the voices of the target audience – women and men with disabilities, as well as persons with disabilities with other gender identities – in the news and in current affairs, as well as in different types of coverage (e.g. reportage, comment/analysis, feature articles, documentaries) and different segments (e.g. special focus pages or programmes on sports, business, health).</li> <li>• Ensure a fair portrayal of disability in commercial messages.</li> <li>• Give prominence to stories on gender-based violence over other stories.</li> </ul>
<b>Select appropriate media frame and sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balanced presence of persons with disabilities reflecting the composition of society, and human experiences, actions, views and concerns.</li> <li>• Avoid victimizing, patronizing and diminishing the contributions of women and men with disabilities, as well as persons with disabilities with other gender identities, to their families, communities, organizations and society.</li> <li>• Prioritize a human rights-based media model (as opposed to a medical, charitable or social one) in the portrayal of women and men with disabilities. A story that is not carefully framed can contribute to stereotypes (e.g. depiction of traditional “feminine” or “masculine” characteristics).</li> <li>• Consider women and men with disabilities as valid, reliable and informed sources, including in the coverage of broader societal issues (e.g. politics, economics, conflict, science, sport, culture), and give a voice to women and men with disabilities who are experts in the relevant subject area.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure multidimensional representation and portrayal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent the diversity of individuals with disabilities across gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and other identity factors and in various contexts, such as domestic or online violence against women, and types of disability.</li> <li>• Portray women and men with disabilities, and persons with disabilities with other gender identities, as well as their caregivers and family members, with respect, recognizing their strengths and achievements in a multidimensional representation, as well as portraying independent living, employment, professionalism, decision-making and engagement in society.</li> <li>• Reflect the composition of society, and the human experiences, actions, views and concerns of children, young girls and boys, women and men with disabilities, as well as persons with disabilities with other gender identities.</li> </ul>
<b>Use sex-disaggregated data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect sex-disaggregated data.</li> <li>• Produce sex-disaggregated analysis.</li> <li>• Present facts and avoid judgments that may reinforce stereotypes about the roles and abilities of women and men with disabilities.</li> </ul>

<b>Apply gender-responsive language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the use of non-judgmental language, particularly in reporting on violence against women and girls with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Address gender-based violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect evidence about gender-based violence (e.g. statistics, direct sources and local sources, such as women's support organizations).</li> <li>• Apply the principles enshrined in internationally recognized normative instruments on human rights (e.g. United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women).</li> <li>• Consider that violence takes place both offline and online, as well as addressing differences across different languages, cultures and societal norms and workplaces.</li> </ul>
<b>Acknowledge legal instruments and standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of international normative standards on women and girls, and men and boys with disabilities, as well as persons with disabilities with other gender identities and position them as an affirmation of their human rights.</li> <li>• Apply the guideline principles inscribed in human rights instruments (e.g. free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous women and men included in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor progress and ensure a watchdog function</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor measures taken to implement normative instruments, policies, practices and programmes related to gender and disability equality.</li> <li>• Adopt existing indicators to assess gender-sensitive responsiveness, including measures to ensure balanced gender representation and to promote gender equality with media organizations.</li> <li>• Monitoring and analysis of news and current affairs content disaggregated by gender.</li> <li>• Assess evidence of gender consciousness in different types of editorial content and across the spectrum of subject areas, categories and segments.</li> </ul>

**Table 6. Key considerations when choosing language**

To-do list	Key considerations when choosing language
Action	Description
<b>Use person-first language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use person-first language, which puts the person before the disability.</li> <li>• Be aware that there are cases where other terms are used and/or requested to be used by the interviewees.</li> </ul>
<b>Determine individual preference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with individuals to determine how they prefer their disability to be addressed. For example, some people with deafness or autism prefer identity-first language, which puts the disability first (e.g. deaf person, when referring to a linguistic minority community, rather than a person with deafness).</li> </ul>
<b>Use plain language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use plain language that is both accurate and understandable to a wide audience.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflect on sensitive terms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sensitive when using words like “disorder”, “abnormality” and “special”, and many other terms to describe the nature of a disability.</li> <li>• Consult reputable disability-inclusive language guides.</li> <li>• Consult other related language guides, particularly those on gender equality.</li> </ul>
<b>Check latest developments in terminology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a checklist of references and keep up with changes in language preferences as terms evolve over time and might not be used any more or should be avoided, and new terms are introduced.</li> </ul>
<b>Adapt to linguistic cultural contexts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms may not be available in all languages, therefore, linguistic and cultural adaptations may be necessary, involving translation and interpretation specialists, members of language communities, as well as verification from other sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote disability-inclusive guidelines within the media organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage colleagues within the organization to communicate in a consistent manner by applying available disability-inclusive language guidelines.</li> <li>• Ensure that disability-inclusive language guidelines are used in other non-disability related contexts, such as those on gender equality.</li> </ul>



**Table 7. List of words, terms and phases**

To-do list	
Alternative terms/phrases	Terms/phrases to avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person without disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able-bodied</li> <li>• Normal</li> <li>• Non-disabled</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with disabilities</li> <li>• Person who has or lives with a disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afflicted with</li> <li>• Suffers from</li> <li>• Stricken with</li> <li>• Victim of</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differently abled</li> <li>• Special needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition or disability</li> <li>• Impairment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disorder</li> <li>• Abnormality</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comatose, non-responsive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetative state</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congenital disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth defect</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handicapped</li> <li>• Handicapable</li> <li>• Handi-capable</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who is blind</li> <li>• Low vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blind</li> <li>• Dumb</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who uses a wheelchair</li> <li>• Wheelchair user</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confined to a wheelchair</li> <li>• Wheelchair-bound</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a psychosocial disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crazy</li> <li>• Insane</li> <li>• Psycho</li> <li>• Mental</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with psychosocial disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentally ill</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a psychosocial disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insane, mentally deranged</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with an intellectual disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentally retarded</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with Down syndrome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mongoloid or Down syndrome</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with schizophrenia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schizophrenic</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, use physical disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crippled</li> <li>• Invalid</li> <li>• Physically challenged</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf person/people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf-mute</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard of hearing</li> <li>• Hearing loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf-mute</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person of short stature, little person</li> <li>• A person with dwarfism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dwarf</li> <li>• Midget</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special needs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handicap parking</li> </ul>

**Table 8. Some techniques for detecting and preventing extreme and hate speech against persons with disabilities**

To-do list	Some techniques for detecting and preventing extreme and hate speech against persons with disabilities
Action	Description
<b>Examine legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine existing legislation at the national and international levels. In most countries around the world, broadcasting legislation sets out the regulatory framework for broadcasting services and typically includes rules on programme content. These rules, built on the relevant international principles and normative instruments, deal with the right of reply to proceedings and the establishment of a complaints procedure that empowers regulatory bodies to investigate and make decisions on complaints of alleged breaches of the provisions contained in the broadcasting codes.</li> <li>• Examine whether there are other laws that address disability-based bias motivation in hate crime.</li> <li>• Identify official statistics on disability-related hate crime, including those disaggregated according to bias motivation, the type of crime, and the gender, age, ethnicity, migratory status, religion or race of the victim.</li> </ul>
<b>Establish own procedure and intervene</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw up and implement a code of practice for handling complaints.</li> <li>• Set a minimum standard for acceptable content in broadcasting and avoid discriminatory language in connection with the representation and portrayal of persons with disabilities, including on digital platforms (e.g. audience comments that use discriminatory and hate speech).</li> <li>• Collaborate with one or more audience councils of public service broadcasters that are tasked with representing the views and interests of the general public, including persons with disabilities, and include persons with disabilities or representatives of civil society among their members.</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement of regulators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadcasting regulators, in order to ensure a balance between freedom of expression and other legal rights and interests, perform functions prescribed by broadcasting legislation that are also relevant to persons with disabilities, including the protection of media pluralism and diversity issues and mechanisms for the handling of complaints. These functions have implications for the representation of persons with disabilities in the media.</li> </ul>
<b>Demonstrate accountability and respect for diversity in media content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote diversity in the media and meet the needs of diverse groups in society, including persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Ensure a diversity of views in programmes and the availability of content for persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Organize large-scale awareness-raising campaigns on extreme or hate speech on persons with disabilities and discussions with other stakeholders, such as advertisers or Internet intermediaries, that would contribute to an increase in civic education and the development of critical skills in media and information literacy.</li> </ul>

<b>Develop or revise existing codes and guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop codes and guidelines on how media organizations could address extreme and hate speech in their own content, including audience feedback that is publicly available on digital platforms, often in the form of comments.</li> <li>• Provide information on expected standards, such as protecting audiences, preventing extremist speech, dealing with sensitive issues and requiring balance and impartiality in reporting, as well as exceptions. Standards also help to ensure media transparency and accountability to their audiences.</li> <li>• Revise codes that only address diversity and disability equality in broad terms and make them more specific.</li> </ul>
<b>Conduct regular analysis and assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the implementation of codes and guidelines, initiate, organize, facilitate and promote research on broadcasting issues among representative audiences.</li> <li>• Carry out an analysis and research on offensive language and terminology used to describe disability in broadcast media, and an analysis of the participation of persons with disabilities in the media and other aspects.</li> <li>• Promote the diversity of the workforce, usually as a part of internal operations and management practices (presented in Part 3 of the Manual).</li> </ul>

**Table 9. Types of complaints and how to handle them**

To-do list	Types of complaints and how to handle them
Action	Description
<b>Offensive language and terminology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse complaints about the use of certain words, derogatory phrases and offensive comments that do not represent persons with disabilities. This is one of the most common complaints shared by persons with disabilities.</li> <li>Make careful use of the medical model and related approaches to describing conditions in the media coverage and ensure that specific medical terms and words are used to describe a medical condition.</li> <li>Adopt inclusive language guidelines in media organizations and apply them across different services.</li> </ul>
<b>Inappropriate material and segments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid broadcasting inappropriate material and segments or including questionable behaviour (e.g. jokes using verbal humour within a specific or well-defined narrative, as often used in entertainment, or sexist talks in science programmes), particularly when they are produced for specific target audiences, such as children.</li> </ul>
<b>Images and action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider that visual portrayals can also be an issue and a subject of complaints. Such images, dialogues and actions often include imitations or impersonations of stereotyped characteristics of persons with disabilities by non-disabled people (e.g. both mental and physical disabilities).</li> </ul>
<b>Significance of intent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the significance of the case. The complaints may relate to an incident that is unintentional or isolated, and that may result from a lack of awareness (e.g. satire intended to derive humour from society).</li> </ul>
<b>Examination and adjudication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define how the complaint will be handled and who will be involved, as per the established legislation (e.g. regulators and civil society representing persons with disabilities).</li> <li>If necessary, conduct an investigation applying a two-step review model to determine, firstly, whether the content is offensive, and secondly, whether the use, inclusion and distribution of the harmful content is justified, taking into account a number of issues (e.g. the level of harm, time of broadcast, programme schedule, pre-broadcast warnings, contextual factors and other editorial decisions).</li> <li>Once the findings are presented, ensure appropriate follow-up action (e.g. issuing a public apology).</li> </ul>



**Table 10. Investigative reporting on disability issues**

To-do list	Investigative reporting on disability issues
Action	Description
<b>Rationale for investigation and formulation of hypothesis</b>	
<b>Consider disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider disability as a social construct and persons with disabilities who have multiple roles in society.</li> <li>• Be aware that the contribution of persons with disabilities to the wealth of society depends largely on the wide range of demographic, sociocultural or political factors that facilitate or, in contrast, constrain their living and working conditions.</li> <li>• Establish relations between different and often unrelated actors and consider whether those issues deserve further investigation.</li> </ul>
<b>Address diversity of roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider intersectionality in any storytelling or deeper investigative work (e.g. different roles in society relating to domestic violence).</li> <li>• Identify, investigate and disclose gaps in disability rights.</li> <li>• Pay special attention to gender equality as many women and girls with disabilities face additional or multiple disadvantages.</li> </ul>
<b>Analyse interrelation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse other interrelated factors (e.g. context to find the angle of the story) related to existing barriers and accommodation strategies (e.g. low income, literacy, unemployment, exclusion, poverty, environmental policies, crime, public spending and corruption).</li> </ul>
<b>Redefine target audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the potential audience when producing a story. A more extensive definition of a story's audience can be useful in producing more inclusive stories, whether or not the story is about persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Consider a variety of sources</b>	
<b>Give preference to direct and primary sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let persons with disabilities tell their own stories, make their voices heard and suggest other sources for consideration.</li> <li>• Consider persons with disabilities to be direct, valid, reliable, trustworthy and primary sources of information.</li> <li>• This also applies to the investigation of non-disability issues. If an interpreter or caregiver provides the person with support for communication, ensure that the focus remains on the person with a disability rather than the support person.</li> </ul>

<b>Consider documents submitted to human rights bodies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the reports prepared and submitted by States Parties on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</li> <li>• Consider other documents, including the analysis of periodic reports, outcomes of public awareness-raising campaigns, national action plans and information about the commemoration of international days.</li> <li>• Be aware that there are other reports that could be prepared by human rights bodies that are based on the compilation of inputs and that usually include fact-checking processes (e.g. by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities or the Secretariat of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other United Nations entities or partnerships, such as the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy).</li> <li>• Consider periodic reports that include information about awareness-raising specific to broadcast media.</li> </ul>
<b>Consider indirect and alternative sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay attention to other alternative sources that are publicly available under national laws, often named “Freedom of Information Act” or “Access to Public Information Act” (e.g. States Parties’ report to human rights treaty bodies, such as the United Nations Treaty Body Database, court records and legal documents, public records databases, tax records, public spending reports, technical documents, business practices, reports from medical institutions and local open data portals).</li> </ul>
<b>Consider a variety of data sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider different data sources such as national censuses, household surveys, school-based surveys, screening studies, disability surveys, post-census surveys, and direct assessment and clinical diagnoses.</li> <li>• Access information in libraries, archives or online repositories.</li> </ul>
<b>Be aware of data gaps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of data gaps. There is a lack of disability-inclusive data in official, macroeconomic and general statistics, which makes persons with disabilities statistically underrepresented.</li> <li>• Identify and rely on disability-specific statistics.</li> </ul>
<b>Request access to public information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the provisions of the laws that give citizens the right to request official information from public bodies, including on disability-related issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Apply key principles and recognized standards</b>	
<b>Respect right to privacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the right to privacy of persons with disabilities and, in particular, the privacy of data relating to their health and well-being, as well as covering sensitive stories related to crime, violence and abuse against girls and women with disabilities.</li> <li>• Apply the free, prior and informed consent principle in disclosing information or using the resources of Indigenous peoples in particular.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure inclusive data collection and feedback process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop data collection practices, instruments and protocols that are disability inclusive, and that allow persons with disabilities to participate in surveys and interviews, and share their views and opinions, as well as provide feedback. This should not be limited to the sources, but also to the ways, means and tools being used. The failure to be inclusive in data collection and the usage of non-accessible tools (e.g. survey instruments) can result in the collection of inaccurate, incomplete, irrelevant or misleading results.</li> </ul>

<b>Apply universal design for all principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the principles of inclusion and accessibility at all stages of data collection, content production and publishing. This is why it is important to apply the principles of universal design – that resources, processes and environments are accessible, understood and used to the greatest possible extent by all (including all ages, sizes, disabilities and locations) for learning, working, leisure and other purposes. If applied, persons with disabilities will be able to participate in a way that is accessible to them (e.g. conclusions are often summarized in the infographics which are not designed in an accessible manner).</li> </ul>
<b>Check facts</b>	
<b>Ensure inclusive data collection and feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop data collection practices, instruments and protocols that are disability inclusive, and that allow persons with disabilities to participate in surveys and interviews, and to share their views and opinions, as well as provide feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>Check facts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stick to the facts about disability issues and avoid unrepresentative surveys.</li> <li>Verify the validity of produced content against facts and views shared by persons with disabilities, relevant experts and relevant organizations from across the disability sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Assess other unintended consequences</b>	
<b>Ensure accessibility of visuals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigative storytelling often includes interactive media, such as infographics, maps, comics, photos and other data visualization elements that are not easy to understand or access using assistive devices.</li> <li>Present content in easy-to-read formats – a way of making written or presented information in visuals easier to understand. Whenever relevant (e.g. for television), information contained in visuals displayed on the screen should be described by the presenter.</li> </ul>
<b>Avoid traumatic images</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the necessity of broadcasting or publishing traumatic images that can be damaging for everyone, including storytellers, especially in converging crisis situations. Media professionals can also be at risk of developing vicarious trauma, and repeated exposure to distressing or gruesome photos or videos could cause secondary and vicarious trauma.</li> <li>Do not hesitate to get professional help as and when required.</li> <li>Learn about trauma-informed reporting approaches for journalists interviewing persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Avoid traumatic audio</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess whether audio sources can be traumatic.</li> <li>Avoid presenting sensitive images and rely on audio, although this may also be a source of traumatic content. Media professionals and audiences with disabilities, such as persons who are blind, may therefore also be exposed to traumatic audio.</li> </ul>

**Table 11. Interviewing a person with a disability**

To-do list	Interviewing a person with a disability
Action	Description
<b>Ensure a proper interview setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow adequate time. Some persons with disabilities may require more time to communicate.</li> <li>• Ask interviewees where they would like to meet and whether they require any accommodation, such as wheelchair access, a quiet place in which to be interviewed, additional time or an interpreter. These aspects should be discussed before conducting an interview.</li> </ul>
<b>Present the person first</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat interviewees with disabilities as information sources and let them help to guide the interaction.</li> <li>• Focus on the subject and their social and professional experience, not their disability.</li> </ul>
<b>Keep eye contact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak directly to the interviewee. Position yourself and the camera, if one is employed, at eye level with the interviewee.</li> </ul>
<b>Sign language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sign language or oral interpreter may be present during the interview.</li> <li>• Communicate directly with the deaf person, and not with the interpreter.</li> <li>• Ensure that the person with a disability is the focus of attention, not the interpreter.</li> </ul>
<b>Present/describe yourself</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are meeting with a person who is blind, partially sighted or deafblind, identify yourself and any others with you.</li> <li>• If you are talking in a large group, remember to identify the person and name yourself before speaking so that non-sighted participants can follow the flow of the discussion.</li> <li>• If you meet a person with a visual disability, do not hesitate to describe yourself (e.g. height, gender, age, clothing, disability and other personal characteristics).</li> <li>• Ask subjects how they prefer to have their disability described and how to handle privacy matters.</li> </ul>
<b>Treat service animals appropriately</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service animals and guide dogs are working animals.</li> <li>• Do not make eye contact with the animal, praise it, talk to it or pet it as this is distracting for the animal and its owner.</li> </ul>
<b>Ask about a designated place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often, persons with disabilities at public events are seated in a designated place, and those who use interpreters are located near the front of the room in a designated area.</li> </ul>

**Table 12. Basic questions**

To-do list	Basic questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I make this interaction more comfortable for you?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a more appropriate location for the meeting in terms of time, physical access, a quiet place or other factors that contribute to reasonable accommodation?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you prefer our conversation to take place? Verbally or in writing?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you describe yourself? Is there a term you apply to yourself?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you want your disability explained? How does it affect your everyday life?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have any preference as to how you are depicted in photos or videos?</li> </ul>



**Table 13. Inclusive coverage in times of crisis**

To-do list	Inclusive coverage in times of crisis
Action	Description
<b>Ensure relevance, impartiality and representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the impact of the crisis on those with disabilities and include their perspectives, opinions and views in media coverage.</li> <li>• Avoid the absence of persons with disabilities in media coverage.</li> </ul>
<b>Tailor your messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailor messaging and highlight the resilience of the general population, including persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Pay attention to intersectionality.</li> </ul>
<b>Check facts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In times of crisis, when misinformation and disinformation tend to dominate, ensure that fact-checking is inclusive.</li> <li>• Consider persons with disabilities to be a reliable and valid source.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide accessible public information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make information available in multiple accessible formats and channels, including social media, to reach persons with different needs and in different situations.</li> <li>• Employ accessibility features, such as captioning, transcription, sign language, alt text, high-contrast text, easy-to-read pictograms, plain language and sign language interpreters, to ensure that information reaches those who need it.</li> </ul>
<b>Use sign language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide health and emergency information – the presence of qualified sign language interpreters is essential.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide warnings about sensitive language and images</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select images that are respectful towards persons with disabilities and that are gender-sensitive and free of gender stereotypes.</li> <li>• When sharing sensitive content, such as images, inform the audience in advance, especially children and persons with psychosocial disabilities.</li> <li>• Challenge hate speech and report important sources, and publicly question the meaning of indirect hate speech against persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide practical information, share scripts and repeat messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide practical information, such as where to find humanitarian assistance, safe shelters or transitional housing, food supplies, first aid and protection measures.</li> <li>• If available in advance, use scripts prepared by public authorities to assist the media and the population, for instance after an earthquake. These messages will have to be repeated for those who did not hear the advisory the first time or did not get all the information.</li> </ul>
<b>Investigate and ensure transparency and accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold public bodies, including those providing public information and accountable for actions to assist persons with disabilities during times of crisis.</li> </ul>
<b>Customize your content across the media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customize your content for use across the media. The broadcast infrastructure for radio is highly robust and usually remains operational even when other communications technologies do not.</li> <li>• If Internet connectivity is available, customize content for social media, which is another important tool for engagement with populations or communities affected by the crisis.</li> </ul>

**Table 14. Insights into integrating accessibility into media operations**

To-do list	Insights into integrating accessibility into media operations
Action	Description
<b>Adopt a new policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish policies, guidelines and processes to ensure accessibility across platforms, services and content, and adjust workflows and workplaces in the media sector.</li> <li>• Decide whether the policy is a stand-alone one or integrated into other broader strategies or programmes, and set clear goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Engage users with disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage and employ users or staff with disabilities, and seek their input when making decisions, including when testing the accessibility of media content. This might require developing new policies, or revising recruitment and onboard processes (presented in Part 3 of the Manual).</li> </ul>
<b>Mainstreaming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate universal design principles into all content production, programming and dissemination.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide reasonable accommodation, which could be done as adjustments to the rules, practices, conditions or requirements to take into account the specific needs of an individual with disabilities, in order to enable the person to participate fully and equally.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide budgetary allocations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide budgetary allocations for the acquisition of software and tools to build technical capacities and make allocations for staff training and monitoring.</li> </ul>
<b>Raise awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness of disability and the need to adopt technical standards, which may require new skills and training for staff, as well as inviting experts with disabilities as speakers.</li> </ul>
<b>Build capacities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train employees on appropriate tools and practices.</li> <li>• Organize capacity-building workshops, including short and long-term training sessions on matters relating to universal design and digital accessibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Integrate technological advances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore technological advancements and existing resources, such as AI-powered solutions and augmented and virtual reality, to deliver accessible content and improve operations.</li> </ul>
<b>Share good practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create chatrooms or use other digital forums for employees to discuss and share information about accessibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a feedback system to identify and fix accessibility issues and concerns quickly.</li> <li>• Monitor and update operations to comply with accessibility standards and laws.</li> </ul>

**Table 15. Accessible print content**

To-do list	Accessible print content
Action	Description
<b>Structure your content</b>	• Use navigational aids, such as tables of contents and page numbers.
	• Break down information with bullets, headers, subtopics and lists.
	• Break down complex information into charts and graphs.
	• Use navigational aids, such as tables of contents, topic descriptions and page numbers.
	• Keep tables simple, using bold headings for columns or rows, and include borders around cells.
	• Use plain language and avoid technical jargon or acronyms wherever possible.
<b>Adjust layouts</b>	• Use fonts such as Arial and Verdana, and consider Sans Serif typefaces in at least a 12-point format
	• Use wide line spacing (1.5 or double) and wide margins.
	• Use white space.
	• Keep contrast high, such as black text on a white background.
	• Align text on the left or right, depending on the language and script.
<b>Adjust printing settings</b>	• Use paper with a matte finish.
	• Avoid bindings that prevent publications from sitting flat.
<b>Provide various formats</b>	• Provide an accessible digital version of print documents, along with QR codes for easy access.
	• Provide accessible PDFs for digital distribution that include proper tagging, alt text for images and structured headings for screen readers.
	• Provide accessible PDFs, Braille or large-print formats on demand.

**Table 16. Accessible video content**

To-do list	Accessible video content
Action	Description
<b>Offer description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer closed captioning, which displays audio as text on the screen. Ensure that any third-party channels or streaming platforms that broadcast your content also provide captioning.</li> <li>• Provide sign language interpretation for news programmes and live events of national interest.</li> <li>• Make programme guides available in print and online, and optimize them for mobile devices in an accessible format.</li> <li>• In the programme guide, specify which programmes include audio description for visually impaired users.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer audio description (i.e. spoken description of images or scenes for visually impaired audiences) for popular programmes.</li> <li>• Establish a minimum number of programmes per year that offer audio description.</li> <li>• Consider providing subtitling and voice-overs in multiple languages as a part of linguistic accessibility.</li> <li>• Speak clearly and at an understandable pace.</li> </ul>
<b>Include warnings on existing features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide different options for playback speed.</li> </ul>
<b>Adjust text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose text fonts and sizes that are clear and legible.</li> </ul>
<b>Keep things simple</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use high-contrast colour combinations and colour schemes.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize background sounds that could make dialogue more difficult to understand.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve stakeholders from disability organizations to ensure that the needs of viewers with disabilities are being met.</li> </ul>
<b>Test the accessibility of content and add accessibility features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For digital television platforms, it is helpful to offer a “favourites” option that allows users to bookmark their favourite programmes and return to them quickly.</li> <li>• The search function should also be accessible.</li> <li>• Offer closed captioning, which displays audio as text on the screen.</li> <li>• Ensure that any third-party channels or streaming platforms that broadcast your content also provide captioning.</li> </ul>



**Table 17. Accessible audio content**

To-do list	Accessible audio content
Action	Description
<b>Provide transcription</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transcription of radio programmes and podcasts, making sure that transcripts include not just raw dialogue but also speaker identification, sound effects and music description.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide captioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For audio content on digital platforms, consider using AI-based automated captioning tools.</li> </ul>
<b>Use plain language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use plain language and speak clearly.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speak slowly, especially at the beginning of a programme or segment.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend or insert silence periods in the dialogue to make the dialogue appear to be slower.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add context on-air by describing visual elements and background sounds when appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Share alternative guides</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make programme guides available in print and online and optimize them for mobile devices in an accessible format.</li> </ul>
<b>Test accessibility across multiple platforms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For web-based radio, ensure that playback buttons on web players can be activated by keyboard.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that buttons and arrows are labelled as such.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For digital radio, as for digital television, it is helpful to offer a “favourites” option that allows users to bookmark their favourite programmes and return to them quickly.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The search function should also be available.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that radio apps can be easily used and navigated by users of screen readers.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide different options for playback speed.</li> </ul>
<b>Test and consult users</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test the accessibility features of emergency messaging systems.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult the disability community as to whether listeners’ needs are being met.</li> </ul>

**Table 18. Production of accessible digital content**

To-do list	Production of accessible digital content
Action	Description
<b>Build in accessibility from the beginning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build websites with accessibility in mind from the beginning (including design, implementation and testing).</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure compatibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all functions are keyboard accessible for those with mobility limitations or who use assistive technologies.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide descriptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide alternative text for images, buttons and links. This is one of the simplest things you can do to make your website accessible.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide subtitles or closed captioning for videos and live streams.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide transcription</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transcripts for video and audio.</li> </ul>
<b>Simplify navigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design a consistent and simple user interface that makes navigation easy. For instance, the navigation bar or menu should appear in the same place on every page.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disable the autoplay function on videos.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure to provide options to adjust playback speed.</li> </ul>
<b>Adjust colour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the colour contrast standards of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use tools such as WebAIM Contrast Checker or Adobe Color Contrast Analyzer to determine if colour contrasts meet the required standards.</li> </ul>
<b>Adapt layout</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines standards for fonts, spacing and text size.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use tags for web elements, such as tables, headers and paragraphs, that are compatible with screen readers.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide tools for users to customize font size, colour and functionality.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt layout for mobile devices.</li> </ul>
<b>Adapt text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is also worth considering the implementation of a built-in “read aloud” function for longer texts, using high-quality synthesized human speech output. This makes it much easier and more pleasant for users with print impairments to access longer pieces of writing.</li> </ul>
<b>Test and audit accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test and audit the website’s accessibility and functionality using automated tools such as WAVE and Axe, as well as manual audits.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicit input from users with diverse disabilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate a digital accessibility expert within the organization.</li> </ul>

**Table 19. Getting started with the DEI programme**

To-do list	Getting started with the DEI programme
Phase	Actions
<b>Acceptance and scoping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision-making in accordance with the chosen implementation modality</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define what DEI means for your organization</li> <li>• Ensure that senior managers are committed and take an active role</li> <li>• Select an appropriate implementation modality, define the scope and clarify outcomes, deliverables and timelines.</li> <li>• Allocate resources (human, financial and technological).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designation and sharing of responsibilities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate a DEI officer, team or focal point (e.g. designated entity).</li> <li>• Define the job description and performance objectives, and delegate responsibilities.</li> <li>• Define a reporting flow and decision-making process.</li> </ul>
<b>Research, situation analysis and data gathering</b>	Review of existing policies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map existing policies, practices, tools and activities (internal and external) including in-house guidelines and procedures for the recruitment and deployment of both salaried and freelanced media professionals.</li> <li>• Identify existing barriers, challenges and areas that need improvement.</li> <li>• Collect input from staff at all levels (e.g. surveys, user experiences, complaints, cases of discrimination and harassment) to design relevant, comprehensive and representative policies, particularly for those who have disabilities.</li> <li>• Collect good practices (internally and externally).</li> </ul>
	Take stock of existing processes, procedures, resources and tools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspect, sort and record office equipment, facilities and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Analyse workflows to deliver programmes and services.</li> <li>• Identify relevant content creation tools and relevant resources.</li> <li>• Review existing procedures, including procurement, contracting and renewal in relation to accessibility requirements, particularly purchases from third parties (e.g. goods, services, facilities).</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	Drafting and consultations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft document based on the results of research and analysis.</li> <li>• Invite relevant staff, including those with disabilities, to assist with the peer review.</li> <li>• Seek feedback from staff associations, professional associations, internal working groups, committees relevant to the policy and other actors (e.g. stakeholders, organizations of persons with disabilities, authorities, experts).</li> <li>• Approve the document at the top management level.</li> </ul>

	<b>Planning of programme deployment</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an appropriate action plan (e.g. road maps, workplans) with specific targets, benchmarks, performance indicators and related milestones, activities and the necessary resources (e.g. human, financial, technology-related) to achieve the goals and objectives.</li> <li>• Define the roles and responsibilities of staff (e.g. cross-functional teams).</li> <li>• Identify change agents among staff, particularly staff with disabilities.</li> <li>• Develop a communications strategy (internal and expert targets).</li> </ul>
	<b>Adjust existing policies, procedures and practices</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and adjust existing policies (e.g. human resources, procurement, communications).</li> <li>• Adjust internal communications and materials (e.g. circular letters, memos, directives, policy briefs, easy-to-use formats).</li> <li>• Incorporate relevant DEI principles into other existing policies, procedures and practices.</li> <li>• Update or design new policies, tools and processes (e.g. data protection, privacy and security, access to information policy, health records, hotlines, safety protocols, digital security, and other training programmes).</li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Communicate and raise awareness about the DEI programme to staff</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize a launch event for staff and relevant stakeholders to inform them about policy and implementation measures (e.g. staff retreats, board meetings).</li> <li>• Establish clear policies and procedures for handling complaints of discrimination, harassment or reasonable accommodation.</li> <li>• Collect data on progress made (e.g. feedback).</li> <li>• Continue to raise staff awareness of the need for DEI.</li> <li>• Create recognition award schemes and communities of practice.</li> <li>• Embed DEI in staff performance evaluations.</li> <li>• Engage in meaningful partnerships with disability advocacy organizations, disability service providers and other actors.</li> <li>• Promote the DEI policy outcomes of outsider organizations (e.g. marketing and accountability to society).</li> </ul>
	<b>Develop new resources to support implementation</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new guidelines and supporting resources (e.g. inclusive language style guides, editorial, programming and production guidelines, and on media content accessibility).</li> <li>• Inform staff about the availability of those resources.</li> </ul>



	Build capacities and provide training for staff
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a training plan.</li> <li>• Define mandatory training programmes or courses for all staff.</li> <li>• Offer customized training (e.g. information and web accessibility).</li> <li>• Integrate aspects of the DEI programme into learning and career development plans.</li> <li>• Allocate financial resources for capacity-building.</li> </ul>
	Invest in accessible equipment, tools, transportation and infrastructure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish accessibility criteria before purchasing goods and services from third-party suppliers.</li> <li>• Ensure that these criteria are applied when purchasing and maintaining accessible software, hardware, accessibility and communication tools.</li> <li>• Create an accessible workplace and guarantee reasonable accommodation when required (e.g. ergonomic furniture, designated parking, provision of relevant transportation for work-related activities and events).</li> <li>• Make assistive technologies, such as screen readers and voice recognition software, available for employees who need them.</li> <li>• Improve the accessibility of digital platforms and content (e.g. intranet and Internet, and working level documents, such as memos and reports).</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	Establish a self-regulatory mechanism
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a monitoring plan using data-driven benchmarks and metrics.</li> <li>• Identify data sources and providers, data collection tools and timelines.</li> <li>• Establish a new self-regulatory mechanism and procedure or adjust existing ones to address internal and external complaints (e.g. those linked to editorial policies and programming, human resources policies related to hiring, promotion and retention metrics, as well as staff performance).</li> </ul>
	Conduct assessments and audits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular audits (e.g. staff surveys, quick polls, accessibility tests).</li> <li>• Regularly update the DEI policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective, and make changes to the national law if applicable.</li> <li>• Recruit auditors with disabilities.</li> <li>• Report to staff on a regular basis on the progress being made.</li> <li>• Celebrate success and recognize champions.</li> </ul>

**Table 20. Inclusive recruitment**

To-do list	Inclusive recruitment
Action	Description
<b>Review job descriptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before posting, review job descriptions for essential and non-essential requirements (such as lifting certain amounts of weight) that may discourage applicants with disabilities (e.g. consider the need for a driver's licence, which is a common requirement for media professionals and may discourage media professionals with disabilities from applying).</li> </ul>
<b>Adjust job announcements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use disability-inclusive language in job descriptions and advertisements that assures applicants of a non-discriminatory hiring process and the availability of reasonable accommodation for those that require them.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide accessible formats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make job application forms available in accessible formats, including audiovisual options, and in plain language.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical solutions and applications, particularly AI-based ones, should be easy to complete and include relevant information on how to communicate a request for a reasonable accommodation.</li> <li>• Check AI-based solutions against biases (e.g. make sure they are ethical, safe and trustworthy).</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure fairness and impartiality during recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When reviewing applications and interviewing candidates, focus on the candidate's abilities and skills, not their perceived limitations.</li> <li>• Recognize that the work experience of a potential employee with a disability may not fit easily with that of the general population (e.g. apprenticeships or non-graduate entrants to journalism).</li> </ul>
<b>Train and provide specialized support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give hiring managers, supervisors and managers training on disability inclusion, reasonable accommodation and legal compliance with related training, as well as practical information.</li> <li>• Continue to raise awareness about DEI among hiring staff.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform hiring staff about support services, including those with disabilities (e.g. employee assistance programmes, health plans, disability insurance schemes).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop alternative training programmes and tailored outreach that are integrated into the initiatives (e.g. apprenticeships, fellowships, internships).</li> </ul>

**Table 21. Onboarding and accommodation**

To-do list	Onboarding and accommodation
Action	Description
<b>Filling a request</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employees with disabilities may request reasonable accommodation at any time, directly or through a representative, as soon as the need for accommodation is known.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The request could be made by, inter alia, their manager or supervisor, hiring manager or event organizer.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once a decision has been made to grant, deny or provide an alternative solution to a request, the delegate should notify the requester.</li> </ul>
<b>Make plans to ensure reasonable accommodation and take preventive measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a regular inventory of the tools, resources and services that may be of assistance in responding to a request for reasonable accommodation.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate resources for the procurement of accessible tools and services, such as transcription, captioning and assistive technologies.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide assistive technologies, such as voice recorders, hearing aids, screen readers, adaptive keyboards and noise-cancelling headphones.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take appropriate preventive measures to contribute to the protection of the physical safety of media professionals working in conflict zones.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide protective equipment (helmet, life jacket, gas mask) visibly on the ground, particularly for those media professionals who work in hostile situations. In addition, provide multiple telephones or satellite phones and ensure that devices have backup power sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Review contractual arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different types of contracts, such as for self-employment in freelance journalism, are one of the means of accommodating flexible working hours, timelines and deadlines, but this does not always include training during onboarding or support schemes for staff with disabilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that working conditions include insurance that covers an employee with a disability in case of an accident (both on and off duty).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt in-house guidelines and procedures for the recruitment, deployment and support of both salaried and freelance journalists on difficult or dangerous assignments, such as in conflict zones.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide life insurance, as well as health and travel insurance, to media professionals deployed to conflict zones or covering natural disasters and environmental situations.</li> </ul>
<b>Allow flexible working arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow employees to work remotely, including with flexible work arrangements, as a basic accommodation for many disabilities.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt communications and workflows to meet employee needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure physical accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make workplaces physically accessible to all, including through the installation of ramps and automatic doors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase ergonomic office furniture and equipment.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove barriers to accessing tight workspaces, restrooms, parking, canteens and other physical spaces.</li> </ul>

<b>Consider interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide interpretation services in sign languages, use machine translation services and AI-powered solutions to create automatic <i>sign language</i> translation with a photo-realistic synthetic signer.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure access to work-related events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take appropriate measures to ensure the participation of staff and other participants with disabilities in any work-related meetings, conferences, services and resources, including electronic documents, website information and meeting documents, including those provided at the external premises (e.g. staff retreats).</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure rehabilitation, accommodation and assistance, particularly after traumatic experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that media professionals returning from war zones or those who have covered other vulnerable situations in which they were exposed to direct violence, threats and danger, receive specialized advice from an occupational health professional and that concrete provisions are made to accommodate for their needs.</li> <li>• Provide space and channels to share traumatic experiences, particularly to seek support from an occupational health professional when post-trauma effects are lasting for a long time.</li> <li>• Consider providing access to active and positive activities (e.g. access to sports, cultural events and entertainment, and psychosocial support) following the reporting of traumatic experiences.</li> <li>• Ensure institutional responsibilities and include, as relevant, the provision of legal support and representation and trauma counselling on return from assignments.</li> <li>• Explore existing insurance systems and schemes for freelance media professionals covering conflict situations.</li> <li>• Maintain helplines for consultation and for reporting the harassment of media professionals and other alleged violations of the right to freedom of expression.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide tailored training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify training programmes and include new support during onboarding on, inter alia, disability, data privacy, accessibility, safety protocols, digital security, first aid and the use of encrypted communication tools.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide alternative solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully consider all requests for disability accommodation. If a request seems impractical or impossible, discuss it with the employee to find an alternative.</li> </ul>



**Table 22. Inclusive career development and training**

To-do list	Inclusive career development and training
Action	Description
<b>Continue to raise awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an awareness of and appreciation for the values of inclusion using a human rights-based approach that considers factors such as disability, sex and gender.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide training, mentorship and support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide continuous training, mentorship and support, including but not limited to recent developments in web accessibility standards, assistive and digital technologies, legal provisions and universal design practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Adjust performance appraisals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation of the DEI programme depends on the entire staff of the media organization, including the inclusion of necessary elements in the performance evaluations of editors, journalists, reporters, technical staff, human resources and managers.</li> </ul>
<b>Share good practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address best practices for specific groups of employees, i.e. editors, reporters, photographers, videographers, designers and information technology staff to ensure that content is accessible and inclusive.</li> </ul>

**Table 23. Managing a diverse workforce**

To-do list	Managing a diverse workforce
Action	Description
<b>Refer to the person first</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the employee's ability, not their disability, and respect diversity.</li> </ul>
<b>Enquire about accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask employees with disabilities what accommodation they need.</li> <li>• Provide flexible working arrangements (e.g. telecommuting and adjustments to working schedules).</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitate participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that discussions on reasonable accommodation fully involve the employee with a disability, staff associations and supervisors, as well as staff responsible for other functions (e.g. procurement and maintenance).</li> </ul>
<b>Provide equal treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give employees with disabilities the same opportunities as other employees.</li> </ul>
<b>Ask for feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask employees with disabilities to share their experiences and talents with others in the organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure continuous training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide guidance, training, skills development and leadership training programmes for employees with disabilities, especially women with disabilities, to enable them to pursue careers in management.</li> </ul>
<b>Provide support programmes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create mentorship programmes, employee resource groups and other support mechanisms for employees with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a feedback system to identify and fix accessibility issues and concerns quickly and efficiently.</li> <li>• Monitor and update operations to comply with accessibility standards and international normative instruments and national law.</li> </ul>
<b>Share practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create chatrooms or other digital forums for employees to discuss and share information.</li> </ul>







**Part V**



# Resources and references

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## Regional stories covering persons with disabilities

### Africa

“ I was the child no one wanted to play with [...] I told myself there must be a different way to do this. I would be an advocate for fairness, to advocate for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

— Anne Wafula

A Kenyan newspaper, *The Standard*, published a story about Anne Wafula Strike, a woman in a wheelchair who had polio as a child and went on to participate in the Paralympic Games. The story uses disability-inclusive language and focuses on her achievements, including her advocacy for others with disabilities.

- ▶ *The Standard*, “Anne Wafula: I was the child no one wanted to play with” <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/evewoman/achieving-woman/article/2001446946/anne-wafula-i-was-the-child-no-one-wanted-to-play-with>
- ▶ BOnews, “Sexual Abuse: Road to justice fraught with hurdles for women with disabilities” <https://bonewssng.com/sexual-abuse-road-to-justice-fraught-with-hurdles-for-women-with-disabilities/>
- ▶ *Al Jazeera Journalism Review*, “I had to work for free” – life as a disabled journalist in Cameroon ” <https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/1971>

### Arab States

“ We owe it to our audiences to be more diverse, deep, courageous and agile than any other media outlet in the world.

— Mohamad Zaoud, Acting Manager of Al Jazeera Network Brand

- ▶ Al Jazeera, *The Stream*, “Why are people with disabilities left out of disaster planning?” <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/the-stream/2022/10/17/why-are-people-with-disabilities-left-out-of-disaster-planning>
- ▶ Al Jazeera, “Al Jazeera launches its network brand strategy” <https://network.aljazeera.net/en/pressroom/al-jazeera-launches-its-network-brand-strategy>

## Asia and the Pacific

“The portrayal of people with disability in the media is critical to ensuring people with disability are included in society now and in the future. People with disability are diverse and the nature of disability is diverse too.

— Dr Ben Gauntlett,  
Former Disability Discrimination  
Commissioner,  
2019-2023

### Employable me Australia

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) ran a television series that includes positive portrayals of persons with disabilities seeking employment. The realistic depictions focus on the skills and talents of those with disabilities and raise issues related to equal opportunities and rights. The episodes are closed captioned, and the series was nominated for the prestigious Rose d'Or Award.

- ▶ Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), “Employable me Australia” <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/employable-me-australia>
- ▶ Media Diversity Australia, Disability reporting handbook: <https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/disability-reporting-handbook/>
- ▶ Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *ABC Backstory*, “Why we need more people with disability appearing in the media and the ABC's IDPWD initiatives to be more inclusive” – An article featuring several journalists with disabilities who work at ABC, including a video segment on ABC journalist Nas Campanella, who is blind. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/redirects/backstory/2020-12-12/abc-people-with-disability-in-media-for-idpwd/12969496>

## North America and Europe

“ Social inclusion goes far beyond just being present in the community. It’s about the roles we take in civic life, who we love, and how we build fulfilling relationships with others.

— American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

- **The LIFT OUT – A series of articles concerning the lack of accessibility in public transport** <https://www.noteworthy.ie/lift-out/news/>

The Irish media organization Journal Media co-financed an investigative series on the lack of accessible infrastructure in public transport and motorways. The series discloses promises made but not kept by the Government of Ireland to improve accessibility, and it highlights the personal toll that these challenges take on individuals with disabilities. The series uses closed captions for audio and video and alternative text for images and infographics.

- **A Valid Podcast, season 3, episode 2: Adults with intellectual disabilities voice needs, seek support in relationships** <https://www.publicsource.org/adults-with-intellectual-disabilities-voice-needs-seek-support-in-relationships-s3-ep-2/>

All-Abilities Media, based in the United States of America, produced a podcast series about persons with a wide variety of disabilities, their everyday lives and the challenges they face. The podcast, which features audio interviews and retains background sounds to add context to the storytelling, includes audio transcripts to further increase its accessibility to all audiences.



## Latin America and the Caribbean

“ I have many dreams and goals to achieve, among them is having a family and drive my own car

— Carla Jimena Hurtado Vega

- ***La Nación*** dedicates a section to news related to disabilities <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/tema/discapacidad-tid62051/>

*La Nación*, a Spanish-language newspaper in Argentina, gives a voice to those with disabilities by offering them a platform to tell their own stories. Subjects have included a firefighter with Down syndrome, a woman with a robotic leg, and a business that employs persons with disabilities. The stories appear on the newspaper's website in a section called *Discapacidad*, which translates to “disability” in English.

- ***La Prensa***, a Spanish-language newspaper in Nicaragua, published a story about a married couple – a woman with Down syndrome and a man with a motor disability – and the challenges they faced in finding jobs and having a child. The subjects emerge as sympathetic and multidimensional characters whose experiences typify those of others with disabilities in Nicaragua. <https://www.laprensani.com/2020/02/23/nacionales/2643427-se-burlaban-de-ellos-por-sus-discapacidades-y-ahora-tienen-trabajo-y-familia-esta-es-la-historia-de-carla-y-alexis>

## Latin America and the Caribbean

“ For a long time  
I have loved  
watching modeling  
on TV everyday.  
I would often say  
"mom, I want to model".  
But she would always say  
"no, you are deaf". [...]   
I had to learn  
how to walk and  
model and so on.  
It was good.

— Lisa Ramansar, Model

- **Interview with model, make-up artist and costume designer Lisa Ramansar** <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=318495272133941>

Caribbean Deaf News, based in Barbados, conducted a video interview with the deaf model and fashion designer, Lisa Ramansar, using Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language, since Ms Ramansar is from Trinidad and Tobago. The video is presented entirely in captions, with the interviewer and the subject communicating in sign language. Ms Ramansar shared her experience of working in the fashion industry and mentioned that she had to use written communication and lip reading when accommodation was not provided at work. Caribbean Deaf News is a deaf-owned media organization that provides news for the deaf community in Barbados Sign Language (BSL) and has interviewed native signers from over 25 Caribbean countries.

- **Deaf students to harness the power of water and climate-smart agriculture with support from the Red Cross** <https://caribbeannewsservice.com/deaf-students-to-harness-the-power-of-water-and-climate-smart-agriculture-with-support-from-red-cross/>

This straightforward story from the Caribbean News Service spotlights efforts to educate deaf students about sustainable agriculture. Rather than focusing on the students' disabilities, however, the story celebrates their skills and talents.

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## Additional resources

### Writing guidelines

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) National Network, Guidelines for writing about people with disabilities: <https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing>
- Media Diversity Australia, Disability reporting handbook: <https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/disability-reporting-handbook/>
- The Open Notebook, "Eradicating ableist language yields more accurate and more humane journalism": <https://www.theopennotebook.com/2023/06/27/eradicating-ableist-language-yields-more-accurate-and-more-humane-journalism/>
- National Center on Disability and Journalism (NCDJ), Disability language style guide: <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>

### Accessibility guidelines

- W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG): <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>
- The Washington Post, web accessibility guidelines: [https://build.washingtonpost.com/resources/accessibility?itid=1k\\_inline\\_manual\\_2](https://build.washingtonpost.com/resources/accessibility?itid=1k_inline_manual_2)
- BBC Reframing Disability guidelines: <https://www.bbc.com/5050/reframingdisability>
- International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP), web accessibility certification training options: <https://www.accessibilityassociation.org/s/certification>
- World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), Guidelines on access to information in national sign languages during emergency broadcasts: [https://wfdeaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WFD-WASLI-Guidelines-on-Access-to-Information-in-SL-During-Emergency-Broadcasts\\_Final.pdf](https://wfdeaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WFD-WASLI-Guidelines-on-Access-to-Information-in-SL-During-Emergency-Broadcasts_Final.pdf)

### United Nations resources

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>
- United Nations Secretariat Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines: [https://policy.un.org/sites/policy.un.org/files/files/documents/2023/Aug/reasonable\\_accommodations\\_guidelines\\_english.pdf](https://policy.un.org/sites/policy.un.org/files/files/documents/2023/Aug/reasonable_accommodations_guidelines_english.pdf)
- United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy: <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>
- Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines: [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un\\_disability-inclusive\\_communication\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_disability-inclusive_communication_guidelines.pdf)
- United Nations Security Council resolution 2475 (2019) [on protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict]: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3810148?ln=en&v=pdf>

### Health resources

- World Health Organization (WHO) fact sheet on disability: <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

### Media portrayal guidelines

- Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), The Nigerian media code of election coverage: <https://inecnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/The-Nigerian-Media-Code-of-Election-Coverage-From-Toyin-G-2.pdf>
- Global Accessibility Reporting Initiative (GARI): <https://www.gari.info/>
- National Federation of the Blind, communication guidelines: <https://nfb.org/about-us/reference-guide-leaders/chapter-seven-communications>
- National Association of the Deaf, Guidelines for Media Portrayal of the Deaf Community: <https://www.nad.org/about-us/position-statements/guidelines-for-media-portrayal-of-the-deaf-community/>
- United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, ADA guidelines on communicating effectively with people with disabilities: <https://www.ada.gov/topics/effective-communication/>

### Accessibility resources

- UNESCO webpage with accessibility resources: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/access-persons-disabilities>
- UNESCO, Institute for Information Technology in Education (IITE) and W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), massive open online course "Introduction to web accessibility": <https://www.edx.org/course/web-accessibility-introduction>
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC accessibility guidelines): <https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/visually-and-hearing-impaired-audiences>

## Glossary

**Access:** An ability, right or permission to approach, enter or use media services and content.

**Accessibility:** The condition of a facility or service that ensures that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. It is also considered a benchmark for describing the extent or degree to which products, devices, services or environments, including any in media, are available to as many people, including those with disabilities, as possible.

**Accessibility of electronic services:** Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides that States Parties shall take measures to “promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet” and “to promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost”.

**Accessible formats:** Article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides that States Parties shall take measures including “providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost,” and “accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions”.

**Accommodation:** Modifications made in order for persons with disabilities to perform functions or have equal access and participation. Media accommodation includes assistive technology, flexible schedules and interpreters.

**Alternative text or Alt text:** An accessibility technique that provides a written transcription describing the idea and purpose of an image. It is read aloud to users by screen-reader software, and it is indexed by search engines. Alternative text provides a textual description of images to convey meaning to users who are blind or have low vision.

**Assistive technology:** Equipment that provides additional accessibility for individuals with disabilities, such as screen readers, magnifiers and hearing aids used by media professionals.

**Audio descriptions:** Audio narration added to describe essential visual details in video or televised media for users who are blind or have low vision.

**Braille:** A system of raised dots representing letters or words that persons who are blind or have low vision can read through touch. Media content can also be provided in Braille format.

**Broadcast media:** Video and audio content distributed

through mechanisms such as television, radio, and the Internet, which can be made accessible through captions, sign language, and audio descriptions.

**Captioning:** Text versions of speech and non-speech audio information required in order for the user to understand video or audio content. This is used to provide accessibility for audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Convention (the):** The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) is a human rights instrument with an explicit social-development dimension. It adopts a broad categorization of persons with disabilities and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities. It also identifies: areas where accommodation and adaptation have to be made for persons with disabilities so that they can effectively exercise their rights, areas where their rights have been violated, and where the protection of rights needs to be strengthened.

**Compliance:** The meeting of specific standards and regulations set by disability laws and policies.

**Crisis coverage:** Media coverage of crises, such as natural disasters and health epidemics, where persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected, should include their perspectives and be adapted to the corresponding international standards and normative instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Diversity, equity/equality and inclusion (DEI):** DEI is an overarching term that is used when describing a work environment that is impartial, equitable and supportive regardless of the employees' backgrounds and preferences. DEI policies and practices integrate and promote representation, participation, and equal rights and opportunities in organizations (including media organizations) for marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities.

**Digital accessibility:** The quality of having accessibility features and compliance with standards allowing persons with disabilities to effectively use digital tools and access online information.

**Disability:** Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

**Physical:** A disability that limits a person's motor and physical functioning. Examples include cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis.

**Mental:** A disability characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour. Examples include depression and bipolar disease.

**Intellectual:** A disability when there are limits to a person's ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life. Examples include autism and Down syndrome.

**Sensory:** A disability that affects the senses, including hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste. Examples include blindness, deafness or hearing impairments.



**Disability awareness:** Initiatives including education and training activities aimed at promoting understanding and inclusion of persons with disabilities, the use of appropriate terminology, social models of disability, accommodation and legal obligations regarding persons with disabilities, which media organizations should provide.

**Disability inclusion:** The meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work of the organization, the development of disability-specific programmes and consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Disability equality:** Equal rights, opportunities, accommodation and inclusivity for persons with disabilities in media operations, content and workforce.

**Disability rights:** Rights that promote dignity, equality, autonomy, non-discrimination and societal participation of persons with disabilities, for which media plays a role in advocating.

**Discrimination on the basis of disability:** Any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability that has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation.

**Diversity:** Genuine respect for and appreciation for difference – complementary to the idea of pluralism. Democratic societies or systems project and value diversity as part of human rights and respect for human dignity, including the inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities.

**Editorial independence and inclusive editorial policies:** The professional freedom entrusted to editors to make editorial decisions according to the institution's editorial policy and wider professional standards, including the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion within internal practices, published content and embedded in editorial activities, operations and management practices, without interference from the owner of the media outlet or any other State or non-State actors.

**Electronic programme guides:** These guides list programmes scheduled to broadcast or stream and listings of on-demand content.

**Equality:** The idea that everyone, irrespective of age, gender, religion, disability and ethnicity, is entitled to the same rights. It is a fundamental principle of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights captured in the words "recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

**Flexible working arrangements:** A policy on flexible working arrangements is a part of a broader well-being initiative to support employees, including those with disabilities, in managing the demands of working life. This includes modified work schedules, telecommuting or remote work options offered by an organization, including in the media, and reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities.

**Hiring and onboarding practices:** Recruiting and onboarding processes, tools, materials, training and other accommodation that is inclusive and encourages applicants with disabilities to apply for a job and receive onboarding support.

**Human rights:** A set of entitlements and protections regarded as necessary to protect the dignity and self-worth of human beings. Such rights are usually captured in national and international documentation that articulates these rights. The rights of groups or peoples, including persons with disabilities, also seek to protect especially poor and/or marginalized groups in society. The media highlight and address violations and abuses and respect human rights in their own operations and management practices.

**Inclusion:** Active, intentional efforts to equitably involve persons with disabilities in media content, workforce and operations. Inclusion also refers to creating an environment or space (e.g. an organization) where everyone feels welcomed, valued and has a sense of belonging.

**Inclusive language:** Words, phrases and terminology used to describe disability issues that empower, respect dignity and avoid stereotypes, which media organizations should use.

**Inclusive portrayals:** Stories that depict persons with disabilities as active, multifaceted individuals by highlighting capabilities and accomplishments while avoiding stereotypes.

**Intersectional reporting:** Media coverage recognizing individuals who have overlapping marginalized identities and experiences beyond disability alone.

**Involvement of persons with disabilities:** Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that "persons with disabilities should have the opportunity to be actively involved in decision-making processes about policies and programmes, including those directly concerning them".

**Job accommodation:** Workplace modifications enabling persons with disabilities to effectively perform jobs. Media organizations should provide reasonable job accommodation.

**Legal obligations:** Responsibilities under disability laws and policies requiring media organizations to provide accommodation and prohibit discrimination.

**Live assistance:** Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for appropriate measures to be taken to "provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides, readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public".

**Media:** This term is used at least two ways – to refer to social institutions and to technical vehicles of communication. As social institutions, for example, "the media" often refer to news producing institutions that should abide with norms and standards for credible information, based upon an editorial process determined by journalistic values and with editorial accountability attributed to an organization or a legal person. When referring to technology, the term media designates physical means used to communicate such as paper, broadcast, film and digital transmissions.



**Media diversity:** This term refers to the range of voices, opinions and analyses either within a media institution or within the media sector. The extent of diversity is often linked to the narrowness or breadth of ownership, staffing and target audience of media institutions. Diversity in media concerns also how social, cultural and political diversity are reflected in the media content, including issues related to disability equality.

**Media operations:** Processes, workflows, workforce development, tools and systems used by media organizations to produce, edit and publish content across broadcast, print and digital media, which should integrate accessibility practices.

**Media professionals:** Individuals such as journalists, editors, photographers and producers who work in media, some of whom may have disabilities themselves.

**Open licence:** It refers to a licence that respects the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, reuse, repurpose, adapt and redistribute content.

**People-first language:** People-first language is the most widely accepted language for referring to persons with disabilities. It is also the language used in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. People-first language emphasizes the person, not the disability, by placing a reference to the person or group before the reference to the disability. For example, we can use expressions such as “children with albinism”, “students with dyslexia”, “women with intellectual disabilities” and, of course, “persons with disabilities”. However, the people-first rule does not necessarily apply to all types of disabilities. There are some exceptions. For example, when referring to persons who are blind, we can say either “blind persons” or “persons who are blind”, and the same applies to deaf or deafblind persons.

**Person with disabilities:** Include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**Plain language:** A term that sets guidelines to use simple language, familiar words, short sentences and simple tenses to make content accessible.

**Respect privacy:** Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides that “no person with disabilities, regardless of place of residence or living arrangements, shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence or other types of communication or to unlawful attacks on his or her honour, and reputation. Persons with disabilities have the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks”.

**Reasonable accommodation:** Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities acknowledges the importance of “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”. This term also refers to the adjustments

and modifications initiated at the organization level to provide equal access and opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment.

**Regulation and self-regulatory mechanisms:** Refers to attempts to control or affect the behaviour of institutions and actors by developing and enforcing rules and codes. These regulations can be made by States, ideally following democratically decided policy and legal frameworks. An example is regulations about fair competition versus monopoly, or about spectrum allocation, privacy, copyright and hate speech, and so forth. Regulation that is made directly by the institutions concerned is known as self-regulation or peer-regulation and should entail arrangements that include civil society to allow for independent assessment and appeal such as press councils that include public representatives. These mechanisms may include other internal policies and processes where media organizations monitor and evaluate their own compliance with disability inclusion, equality and accessibility standards. An analogous institution in the space of digital communications companies is Facebook’s Oversight Board. The term “co-regulation” usually refers to systems that jointly involve State and private sector participation (e.g. on cyberspace issues, counter-terrorism and child-protection).

**Set of professional standards:** Guidelines that outline the principles of diversity, professionalism and fair treatment of employees and marginalized communities by media organizations. The set of professional standards or code of ethics also establishes rules for organizations regarding to the manner and content of reporting that may be subject to public complaints, including the concerns of media professionals and persons with disabilities.

**Sign language:** Sign languages are fully fledged natural languages, structurally distinct from the spoken languages. There is also an International Sign (IS) language, which is used by deaf people in international meetings and informally when travelling and socializing. It is considered a pidgin form of sign language that is not as complex as natural sign languages and has a limited lexicon. Some countries have their own national sign languages which are formally recognized by the government and are distinct from other sign languages. However, most sign languages are community languages without formal recognition at national level.

**Sign singing:** Singing using sign language. Typically, a song is played, and the performer expressively performs a sign language version of the lyrics. Sign singing relies on the performer’s hands, body and facial expressions.

**Short-term disability:** This is an impairment that is not expected to persist for longer than 12 months.

**Style guide:** A set of standards for the writing, formatting and design of documents, including the use of terms for reporting. It also establishes writing conventions and common practices and is used as a reference tool for all written work published by an organization to present a consistent approach.

**Universal design:** The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design”

shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 2).

**Workforce diversity:** Representation of marginalized groups including persons with disabilities at all levels in a media workplace.

**Workplace inclusion:** Environments, policies and cultures in media workplaces that welcome, support and provide accommodation for employees with disabilities.

## Top 20 frequently asked questions about disability equality in the media

1. What is disability equality in the media, and why is it important?
2. What are the key concepts, principles and types of language used in disability equality?
3. How can media organizations ensure disability equality?
4. What are the limitations of a specific approach to disability equality in media coverage and programming?
5. What are the legal obligations and international standards concerning media and disability equality?
6. How should the media ensure fair, balanced and equitable representation of persons with disabilities?
7. What are appropriate ways to portray persons with disabilities?
8. What terminology and language should media organizations use or avoid?
9. How should media professionals interview or interact with persons with disabilities?
10. How should the media report on violence against persons with disabilities?
11. Why are accessible media operations important?
12. How can media organizations produce accessible content?
13. How can broadcast, radio, print and online media be more accessible?
14. What are the tools for accessibility assessment in media content, tools and products?
15. How can media organizations ensure accessibility during crisis, displacement, natural disasters and environmental situations?
16. What is an inclusive culture in a media workplace?
17. How can media organizations recruit professionals with disabilities?
18. How can media organizations ensure reasonable accommodation in the workplace?
19. What reasonable accommodation and assistive technologies should be provided for staff with disabilities?
20. How can media organizations monitor disability equality, diversity and inclusion in their management practices?

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This Practical Manual advances Disability Equality in the Media. It offers handy recommendations for all industry professionals - from editors and reporters to content producers and technical teams, as well as human resources officers and managers. The manual supports the adoption of more inclusive and equitable editorial policies and programming, including in emergency response and investigations. It also offers recommendations to produce accessible media content, which is invaluable in the digital transition. Finally, it aims to inspire innovation and creativity in ensuring diversity, equality, and inclusion of media professionals with disabilities in media organizations.

UNESCO contributes to the promotion of professional standards in media in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, considering that they make up to 16 per cent of the world's population and are also media audiences, users, and professionals.

