

# Sport for All

## Factsheet on Disability Inclusion in Sport

### Key Facts

- ▶ 15% of the world's population has a form of disability. Sport can improve physical and mental health and empowers persons with disabilities to realise their full potential.
- ▶ Positive sport experiences impact the quality of all aspects of life – improving health, education, social and psychological well-being and success.
- ▶ The unique ability of sport to transcend linguistic, cultural and social barriers and its universal popularity make it an ideal way of fostering disability-inclusion and achieving 11 out of 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals established by UN's Agenda 2030.
- ▶ The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) gives persons with disabilities the right to participate in sport and physical activities. Yet, persons with disabilities, especially women, face various barriers to participation.
- ▶ The strong link between sport and development programmes is well acknowledged. To achieve sport for all, disability inclusion needs to be further strengthened by all actors involved.

### Barriers to Equal Participation

Not all persons with disabilities face the same barriers to participation in sport. While some forms of discrimination are produced by social and cultural behaviour, others originate from individual experiences. Additionally, there is a widening gap between lower- and higher-income countries. Common barriers to sport include:<sup>1</sup>

- Prevailing stigma and discriminating attitudes towards disability in society
- Limited opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in training and competition
- Lack of accessible facilities and transportation
- Limited access to information and resources

### The Power of Sport

#### Self-Confidence

Sport can empower persons with and without disabilities to realise their full potential and advocate for change. Persons with disabilities who participate in sport have higher self-esteem and social awareness. Sport also helps in reducing dependence by supporting persons with disabilities to become physically and mentally stronger.<sup>2</sup>

#### Health

Sport and physical activity can help to reduce the risk for chronic illnesses for everybody. Additionally, it is an important tool to foster rehabilitation and has positive effects on mental well-being.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> sportanddev.org (n.d.). *Barriers to participation*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disability/sport-and-adapted-physical-activity-apa/barriers-participation>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011). *Disability and Sports*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/disability-and-sports.html>.

<sup>3</sup> ECORYS (2018). *Mapping on Access to Sport for People with Disabilities (A report to the European Commission)*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01abf617-04d6-11e9-adde-01aa75ed71a1>.

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## Social Inclusion

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Sport connects people across age, gender, income level, culture and disability. Inclusion in sport cuts down stigma and discrimination by highlighting the abilities of a person instead of one's disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

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## Poverty Alleviation

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Sport can play an important indirect role in poverty elimination by promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities, reducing social vulnerability and supporting the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Physical education in school, for example, support children and young people in acquiring fundamental skills, such as teamwork and problem-solving, and thus adds to their economic empowerment.<sup>5,6</sup>

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## Gender Equality

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Women and girls with disabilities often experience multiple discrimination. It is reported that 93% of women with disabilities are not involved in sport. Providing them with the opportunity to compete and demonstrate their physical ability can help to reduce gender and disability stereotypes.<sup>7</sup> Sport empowers women and girls with disabilities to acquire health information, skills, social networks, and leadership experience.<sup>8</sup>

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## Snapshot of the Current Situation

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Since the 1970s, the opportunities for participation in sport for persons with disabilities has increased in many ways. Physical activities and sports are recognised as important parts of development cooperation. However, disability mainstreaming and targeted activities for persons with disabilities still receive too little attention.

At community level, local sports associations and development actors, Light for the World, support the empowerment of persons with disabilities through targeted inclusive sports programmes. These are open to as many persons as possible, aiming at a wide outreach. Competitive sports at international level, as everywhere around the world, have gained in participation and interest.

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## Paralympic Games, Special Olympics and Deaflympics

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The Paralympic Games, the Special Olympics World Games and the Deaflympics are the three largest international sport competitions for athletes with disabilities and are recognised by the International Olympic Committee.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011). *Disability and Sports*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/disability-and-sports.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities (2015). *Thematic Paper: Disability Inclusive Physical Activity and Sport in the Post 2015 Development Agenda and Development Goals*. [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/disability\\_inclusive\\_physical\\_activity\\_and\\_sport\\_in\\_the\\_post\\_2015\\_development\\_agenda\\_.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/disability_inclusive_physical_activity_and_sport_in_the_post_2015_development_agenda_.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations (2003). *Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millenium Development Goals, pages 3, 8 and 10*. <https://www.unicef.org/sports/reportE.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011). *Disability and Sports*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/disability-and-sports.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities (2015). *Thematic Paper: Disability Inclusive Physical Activity and Sport in the Post 2015 Development Agenda and Development Goals*. [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/disability\\_inclusive\\_physical\\_activity\\_and\\_sport\\_in\\_the\\_post\\_2015\\_development\\_agenda\\_.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/disability_inclusive_physical_activity_and_sport_in_the_post_2015_development_agenda_.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> sportanddev.org (n.d.). *Opportunities for participation*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disability/sport-and-adapted-physical-activity-apa/opportunities-participation>.

The Winter and Summer Paralympics take place every four years and provide an opportunity for athletes with a diverse range of disabilities to showcase their athletic talent, compete with others and celebrate diversity and equality in sport.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the Deaflympics represent the most popular international sports competition for deaf athletes.<sup>11</sup> The Special Olympics offer year-round training and competitions for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.<sup>12</sup>

## Best Practices in Development Cooperation

Successful collaboration between sports organisations, development actors and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) contribute to the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities in sport. While some initiatives focus on research or public awareness, others aim to increase opportunities for participation or use sport in rehabilitation and emergency relief. The online platform [sportanddev.org](http://sportanddev.org) is a best practice example for knowledge sharing and awareness-raising in the field of sport and development within the international community.<sup>13</sup>

### Our Work

Light for the World is a global disability and development organisation. We advocate and support disability inclusion in sport in our partner countries and on an international level.

**Bolivia:** We work together with the local organisation EIFODEC to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Bolivia. Through innovative sports programs, EIFODEC strengthens the abilities of children, youths and adults with disabilities.

**Mozambique:** Light for the World partners with sports associations in Sofala, Manica and Niassa. We foster both the Paralympic Committee of Mozambique as well as the National Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities. With our work, we support the training of 250 persons with disabilities in various sports, like wheelchair basketball.



**South Sudan:** Light for the World supports refugees with disabilities in two Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps close to Juba. The sports initiative, named "Sports for Peace", promotes peaceful coexistence and unity among persons with disabilities of different ethnic groups. Nowadays the Mahad camp is the most peaceful in Juba town.

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<sup>10</sup> International Paralympic Committee (n.d.). *About the International Paralympic Committee*. <https://www.paralympic.org/ipc/who-we-are>.

<sup>11</sup> sportanddev.org (n.d.). *Opportunities for participation*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disability/sport-and-adapted-physical-activity-apa/opportunities-participation>.

<sup>12</sup> Special Olympics (n.d.). *About: Our mission*. <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/our-mission?locale=en>.

<sup>13</sup> sportanddev.org (n.d.). *Current initiatives*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more/disability/actors-involved-sport-disability/current-initiatives>.