World Urban Forum 10:

A critical milestone for engaging persons with disabilities to achieve cities for all

The Tenth World Urban Forum ([WUF 10](https://wuf.unhabitat.org/)), focused on the theme ‘Cities of Opportunities: Connecting Culture and Innovation,’ and called for united action to ensure a better future for cities and towns. WBU, DPO partners and the DIAUD Network contributed to the outcome document, known as [The Abu Dhabi Declared Actions](https://wuf.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/WUF10_final_declared_actions.pdf), which includes actions and commitments towards achieving inclusive and accessible cities. It sets a road map for the next two years and beyond to support realization of the [New Urban Agenda](http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/) and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/)) in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)).

**Main Photo: Group Photo WUF10 roundtable on Persons with Disabilities**



**Captioning/explanation:** *WUF10 Roundtable on Persons with Disabilities. WBU coordinated the delegation of persons with disabilities under the auspice of the General Assembly of Partners PCG of Persons with Disabilities. World Enabled coordinated the presence of the Global Network for Disability-Inclusive & Accessible Urban Development (DIAUD) and signatory cities & organisations to the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities.*

# The New Urban Agenda, a key to making the future inclusive and accessible to all

Adopted in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016, the New Urban Agenda comes in at a critical moment, when the first time in history over half of the world’s population is residing in cities. Over the next 35 years, cities will shape virtually every aspect of global development, including the way fundamental human rights are promoted, protected and realized.

Today, 15% of the world’s population experience some form of disability and 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries facing barriers to their effective and equal participation in cities, such as lack of access to transport, housing and public spaces, information and communication technologies, employment, and education. By 2050 it is estimated that nearly 1 billion persons with disabilities will live in cities. Simultaneously, the world’s population is ageing and will represent around 20% by 2050.

Recognizing these trends in and opportunities of urban transformation, including the implications made by climate change, cities around the world must decide how to adapt their structures and services to be inclusive & accessible of all. By breaking down unnecessary barriers and adopting inclusive urban development policies, investments and programs, cities can improve the social and economic outcomes for all women, men, girls and boys with disabilities, their families, and the larger communities they participate in.

***“Good urban planning, one that considers culture, will need to embrace innovation to make the future accessible to all” Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Habitat Executive Director.***

Many governments which have ratified the CRPD and cities that have adopted the [World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-friendly Cities framework](https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework/) are responsible and committed to create inclusive and accessible societies. Accessibility is recognized as a human right and a precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. The New Urban Agenda along with the SDGs, the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](https://www.undrr.org/), with a clear mandate of leaving no one and no place behind, provide a critical opportunity and a road map for cities to shape a more inclusive and accessible urban future for all.

# Why WUF10 is a critical milestone?

The World Urban Forums, convened by [UN-HABITAT](https://unhabitat.org/) every two years, is the global follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and is setting the scene for the years to come. These forums provide critical opportunities for the disability community to raise their voices and use their collective knowledge and expertise to support urban stakeholders and decision makers with key steps towards inclusion and accessibility in cities.

Building upon the historic milestones achieved by the DIAUD Network and DPO members during [Habitat 3](http://www.idppglobal.org/news/idpp-at-un-habitat-iii) (2016) and [WUF9](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wuf9.html) (2018), the World Blind Union has joined the global movement towards [Cities for All](http://www.cities4all.org/), taking leadership and significant steps forward to ensure meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities in decision making guiding urban development at all levels.

WUF10 in Abu Dhabi gathered around 18.000 participants representing national, regional, and local governments, urban development professionals, private sector, academia, civil society and numerous constituency groups. Under the auspice of the GAP-PCG Persons with disabilities co-chaired by WBU, and in coordination with the DIAUD Network led by World Enabled, WBU has successfully ensured the participation of a delegation of experts from DPOs and secured actions and commitments towards achieving inclusive and accessible cities in the WUF10 outcome document, known as [The Abu Dhabi Declared Actions](https://wuf.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/WUF10_final_declared_actions.pdf).

This is a critical and historical milestone as, for the first time at WUF, a Declaration with practical actions and joint commitments has been agreed between DPOs, cities and urban stakeholders. It sets the road map for the Decade of Actions to support realization of the [New Urban Agenda](http://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/) and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/)) in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)).

# WBU participation at a glance

WBU’s efforts at WUF10 including coordination of the disability Caucus were made possible by technical and financial support from CBM, technical support from IDA with members, Sida’s Bilateral Associate Expert Programme and the DFID Disability Catalyst Programme.

These collaborative efforts contributed to:

* Ensure participation of all persons with disabilities, allowing for impactful contributions and cooperation with urban stakeholders such as UN-HABITAT and cities;
* Strengthen leadership role of the GAP-PCG Persons with Disabilities in advocating for inclusion and accessibility in line with the CRPD;
* Increase knowledge and expertise of DPO representatives by facilitating exposure, sharing of learnings, practices and solutions on how to implement the New Urban Agenda.

## About the disability Caucus

The Disability Caucus consisted of a delegation of experts from DPOs, mainly of IDA member organisations and IDA-IDDC BRIDGE CRPD-SDG Alumni and Fellows from Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Latin America representing various disability constituents, including blind and partially sighted persons, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities, persons with physical disabilities, and Deaf persons.

Snapshot learnings from some of the delegates can be found [here](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/world-urban-forum-feb2020).

***“The New Urban Agenda is a way to implement the CRPD, and it is really critical for many other persons with disabilities through their organisations to deepen their understanding on the New Urban Agenda”, Shivani Gupta, AccessAbility India.***

## Key Achievements at WUF10

* **Pre-Forum Training**

On Feb 6-7th, WBU delivered a preparatory interactive training for the delegation to support their meaningful and impactful engagement during the forum. The training elaborated on accessibility, Universal Design, the New Urban Agenda, timeline and milestones for disability-inclusion and accessibility in urban development, along its interrelatedness with the CRPD. The delegates also engaged around the main theme of the Forum, “Connecting Culture and Innovation”, to understand how culture and innovations can drive or hinder inclusion, and how intersectionality can be grasped in times of rapid urban change.

“**Investing in Universal Design in making cities more accessible to all is critical. By designing for this human diversity from the start, we can create things that will be cost effective, sustainable and easier for all people to use without need for adaptation, specialised design or multiple separate solutions” – Hannes Juhlin Lagrelius, WBU Program Officer and WUF10 Coordinator .**

***“We are all different but have the inherent right to a good quality of life in the communities we choose”. – Katherine Kline, GAP PCG Older Persons and Facilitator***

* [**WUF10 Roundtable on Persons with Disabilities**](http://webtv.un.org/search/persons-with-disabilities-roundtable-wuf10-8-13-february-2020-abu-dhabi-uae/6131273148001/?term=&lan=english&page=16)

The co-chairs of the Partner Constituent Group of Persons with Disabilities, World Blind Union and World Enabled, executed this official first-of-its-kind event with the support from UN-HABITAT. The roundtable consisted of two panels: data & finance, and engagement of DPOs in urban transformation.

Speakers included DPO members, and representatives from the Government of the Republic of Poland, New York City, Abu Dhabi, Mastercard, Saudi Arabi Special Olympics, and UN-HABITAT. Stakeholders were encouraged to declare their actions and commitments for the years to come. In addition, [Abu Dhabi](https://web.facebook.com/plugins/post.php?href=https%3A%2F%2Fweb.facebook.com%2FWorldEnabled%2Fposts%2F10157765606059799%3A0), Barcelona, Almaty, [Helsinki](https://vimeo.com/389295907?fbclid=IwAR36xJIRo2daTdpTSlY-m1-QABPzi9XzuL3pIjtXHOvkudlmaTLk7JOX3ec), Banjul, Special Olympics Saudi Arabia, DPOs and various civil society stakeholders signed the [Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities](http://www.cities4all.org/) and committed to implement actions to achieve Cities for All.

“***We need to be bolder and better in making cities serve all of its citizens”, Ms Emilia Saiz, Secretary General for United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).***

* [**Training on the Effective engagement of persons with disabilities**](https://web.facebook.com/pg/BlindUnion/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2635964936499097&ref=page_internal)

As part of the official WUF10 programme the delegates conducted a training titled “*Cities Celebrating Diversity: Effective Engagement of Persons with Disabilities in the New Urban Agenda Implementation*” which invited mainstream stakeholders to an interactive session on disability inclusion, universal design and accessibility. The training yielded action-oriented recommendations related to stronger legislation, capacity building of government and non-government stakeholders, mechanisms for DPO engagement, and enforcement of standards on the built environment and digital accessibility (ISO).

Attendees represented UN-HABITAT, Khalifa University (UAE), Department of Transport Western Australia, Light of the World, RADIUS Global, Private consultants and individuals. A reflection by [Risnawati Utami, OHANA Indonesia,](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/world-urban-forum-feb2020)  was that: **“trainings on accessibility and universal design in partnership between persons with disabilities and urban stakeholders (urban planners, architects, government stakeholders, and other institutions and organizations) are key to a successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda.”**

* [**Side event on Accessible Public Spaces and Smart Cities**](https://web.facebook.com/pg/BlindUnion/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2634039790024945&ref=page_internal)

WBU in partnership with [G3ICT](https://g3ict.org/) together with the GAP-PCG Persons with Disabilities, PCG Older Persons, PCG Business & Industry, OHANA Indonesia hosted a side event titled “*Inclusive and Accessible Cities: How well-planned public space and Smart City technologies can bridge the inclusion divide for persons with disabilities and older persons”.* The event elaborated on principles of universal design and accessibility and deployment of smart city technologies to build accessible spaces and services that benefit everyone. As accentuated in the panel, Mr. Ricardo Wagner, Accessibility Lead Canada, Microsoft, said that “If we do not intentionally include, we unintentionally exclude”.

* **Meaningful participation in partners’ events**

WBU’s Treasurer Ms. Martine Abel-Williamson participated in the high-level segment on [*Frontier Technologies and Innovation for Inclusive, Sustainable & Resilient Smart Cities*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0PBL-3lLjE&feature=youtu.be)where she delivered a strong presentation on the critical importance of smart city technologies and innovations guided by accessibility principles to improve the quality of life for all, including persons with disabilities.

The delegation was highly active during the Forum and made numerous presentations in events on Public Spaces, Urban Mobility, and Public Transport hosted by UN-HABITAT, GIZ, NGEC, UITP among others.

**“Accessible technology without accessible physical environments will lead to people being connected, yet isolated from peers in terms of face-to-face contact and ability to enjoy outdoor public spaces” – Ms. Martine Abel-Williamson, WBU’s Treasurer**

* **DPO’s statement during the WUF10 Closing Ceremony**

The IDA-IDDC BRIDGE Alumni delegate Mr. Henry Murillo Salazar representing RIADIS was the first DPO representative in the history of global urban forums to deliver closing remarks during the closing ceremony, wherein he focused on global challenges, opportunities, and on inclusion and accessibility as key drivers for inclusive development. Find the speech [HERE](file:///C:\Users\DardBenjamin\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\XI1TDA62\Closing%20Cermony%20Remarks-WUF10.%20Henry%20Murillo%20Salazar.pdf).

**“Cities are not only buildings, cities are the people. People have the power to decide what cities we want to see, and for whom they should be” – Henry Murillo Salazar, RIADIS**

# Next steps and way forward

WUF10 has opened new opportunities for partnerships between DPOs, cities and urban stakeholders with a clear road map for years to come. The increased participation of persons with disabilities during WUF10 is mobilising a stronger disability caucus around the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at global, regional, national and local levels. Building on these achievements, the next steps and efforts will be focusing on moving the different commitments forward while ensuring the agenda for inclusive and accessible cities is effectively used to inform sustainable change at the local level.

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

***“I am grateful for the opportunity to amplify the voices of persons with intellectual disabilities while at the Forum; therefore, ensuring a meaningful seat at the table and speaking about inclusive, accessible cities. I made linkages that I will follow up especially on inclusive transportation in Kenya” – Jenipher Akinyi, Inclusion Africa / Kenya Association of the Intellectually Handicapped***

The GAP PCG Persons with Disabilities will continue to support DPO engagement, with mechanisms for peer-to-peer learning and advocacy coordination, and to serve as a springboard for dialogues and partnerships between the disability community, UN-HABITAT, other UN entities, the DIAUD Network and its relevant stakeholders.

WBU will continue its collaborative efforts in promoting inclusive and accessible urban development, including through WBU’s [agreement with UN-HABITAT](http://worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/UN-Habitat-and-the-World-Blind-Union-sign-a-milestone-agreement-to-work-together-to-make-cities-accessible-for-all.aspx), and in collaboration with the DIAUD Network to advance towards development that is inclusive of all, using the CRPD and the SDGs as mutually reinforcing tools.

**“We are claiming the space as a movement and our collective achievements at WUF10 shows that we are increasingly recognised as a united voice in the promotion of accessibility, universal design and inclusion in urban transformation” – Hannes Juhlin Lagrelius, WBU Program Officer and WUF10 Coordinator**

# Acknowledgements

* WBU would like to acknowledge the critical financial and technical support from CBM, and technical support from the International Disability Alliance and its members.
* WBU would like to acknowledge the vibrant partnership with UN-HABITAT and extend our gratitude for excellent on-site coordination and communication during WUF10.
* WBU also likes to acknowledge with appreciation the collaboration within the Global Network for Disability-Inclusive & Accessible Urban Network, in particular with World Enabled, for planning, on-site and communications coordination for WUF10 allowing us to advance the rights of persons with disabilities across the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

# Image result for dfid logoImage result for sida logo

# The coordinating role of WBU was made possible through a grant from the DFID Disability Catalyst Programme, channelled through the International Disability Alliance, and Sida – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency’s Programme for Bilateral Associate Experts (BAE).

**WUF10: Summary of actions and commitments pertaining to inclusive and accessible cities**

**The Abu Dhabi Declared Actions includes:**

**World Blind Union (WBU)** in partnership with **UN-Habitat** agrees to implement an agreement to accelerate UN-Habitat’s work towards mainstreaming disability inclusion, universal design and accessibility within its strategies, policies, programs and operations in line with the Agenda 2030, the New Urban Agenda, United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. WBU commits to contribute to awareness raising and learning on universal design by publishing a special issue of the Journal on Public space in partnership with City Space Architecture prior to World Urban Forum 11.

**The Special Olympic Saudi Arabia** will implement inclusive sports across major cities through partnerships between a minimum of one major university in each of the big cities and all facilities by 2021.

**Abu Dhabi, Helsinki, Barcelona, Banjul, and Almaty** sign & implement the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities.

Supporting the development of an Inclusive City Index 2030 in partnership with public and private sector to measure inclusion and accessibility in cities (**World Enabled**)

Engaging in dialogue with a network of cities to ensure technology is accessible to all (**Mastercard**).

Raising awareness around accessible and inclusive urbanization in Nairobi through writing blogs and articles in newspapers and public campaign including sharing knowledge, guidelines and other resource materials (**Ombati Elizabeth Nyabiage** commits herself as a journalist with disability and through her organization Users and Survivors of Psychiatry).

To advocate for capacity building of Government Agencies in the city of Abuja (Nigeria) to enable its staff have essential skills on embracing innovation with inclusiveness policies and programs on Universal Design (**Joint Association of Persons with Disabilities Nigeria**, *slightly* *rephrased for communication purposes*).

**OHANA Indonesia** commits to continue partnering with five government municipalities to achieve JOGJA Accessible 2024 and take concrete actions to 1) develop action plans, including conduct of trainings for government officials who work for infrastructures, advocacy for inclusive budgeting and realization of accessibility audits in 5 districts and municipalities; 2) monitor and evaluate actions including budget related to maintenance and improvement of accessibility in public spaces including government offices.

**Additional voluntary actions and commitments formulated during the Roundtable on Persons with Disabilities:**

The **Government of the Republic of Poland** will ensure that WUF11 is the most accessible forum in the world and ensure that rights of persons with disabilities are a central pillar of the WUF11 towards achieving Poland without barriers by 2022. They also commit to remove barriers to improve the quality of life for all.

**Abu Dhabi’s Department of Community Development** commits to launch of the comprehensive Abu Dhabi People of Determination Strategy to transform the city to be more inclusive and accessible,

**World Enabled** commits to support development of the DIAUD network to advance community of practice. World Enabled commits to create a global council on inclusive and accessible cities together with private sector engaged.

**GAP PCG Older persons** commits to continue supporting the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities including the WHO Age Friendly Cities initiative as way of ensuring access for all.

**WBU** commits to support engagement of its member organisations and DPO partners in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at global, regional and local level ahead of World Urban Forum 11 and beyond.

**RIADIS** commits to the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities and promoting the New Urban Agenda in Latin America with organizations of persons with disabilities and their families.