THE CHALLENGE

A billion people—including one in every five women globally—live with some form of disability. They are more likely to face poverty; experience violence; be denied health care, education, and employment. Excluded from participating in and contributing to their communities, many disabled people have little or no voice in the personal, social, and political decisions that directly affect their lives. Development programs routinely overlook them, widening what *The Lancet* has called a ‘disability and development gap.’

- **80%** of disabled people live in developing countries
- **8.3%** of disabled children attend school (vs. **71%** of all Ethiopian children)
- **45%** of disabled people live in poverty (vs. **11%** of the total population)
- **60%** of disabled adults are literate (vs. **94%** of adults without disabilities)

Disabled women and girls are **3X** likelier than disabled men to be illiterate or have unmet health needs. Fewer are employed or married; more are subject to violence and abuse.

A global movement, led by people with disabilities themselves, is driving change. All 193 UN member states agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals, and more than 180 countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Together they demand a shift from treating disabled people as ‘objects’ of charity and social protection to recognizing them as ‘subjects’ whose voices, rights, and dignity must be at the heart of inclusive social change. But many governments lack the political will and expertise to translate these commitments into concrete legislation, policies, and programs: they must be held accountable for keeping their promises.

Local disabled people’s organizations (DPOs)—essential engines of change—are poised to lead, but some lack critical leadership and advocacy capacities:

- Practical knowledge on legislative processes, human rights law, and best practices in inclusion
- Effective, efficient organizational governance, management, and leadership
- Skills in building powerful alliances and networks
- Funding to support advocacy, pilot innovations, and bring programs to scale

Without investment in strengthening DPOs, disabled people will continue to be left behind on the journey to sustainable development.

**DPOs are led by disabled people:**

- Single- and cross-disability organizations
- Disabled women’s associations
- School disabled-students clubs
- Disabled professionals’ associations
- Centers for Independent Living

**Consortium for Building Inclusive Societies**

A GLOBAL CONSORTIUM OF DISABILITY & HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

**IMAGINE…**

- People with disabilities doing meaningful work and receiving fair wages
- Disabled women with equal access to quality, respectful sexual and reproductive health services
- Disabled parents and teachers serving on school boards
- Young people with intellectual disabilities building lasting friendships with non-disabled peers in inclusive classrooms
- Disabled people holding elected office at all levels of government
THE SOLUTION

Now is the time to invest in disabled people’s organizations, equipping them with the skills, resources, and networks they need to confront exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization and mobilize one billion voices for inclusion, participation, and equity.

THE ONE BILLION VOICES PROJECT will support disabled people and their organizations to address the laws, policies, and programs that are failing them. Starting with selected DPOs in three developing countries across three regions, CBIS and MSH will deliver an innovative, comprehensive program for capacity building and advocacy, connecting trained leaders across countries and regions and spreading the seeds of a global movement.

A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE FOCUS ON WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ RIGHTS

Disabled women and girls bear a double burden of discrimination. To address these inequities and unleash enormous untapped potential, the One Billion Voices Project will specifically address barriers and discrimination experienced by disabled women and girls, prioritize disabled women’s organizations, and support disabled women in building local, national, and regional leadership networks.

WORK WITH US

Additional investments of $1-10 million in the One Billion Voices Project can support disabled people’s leadership and build a global movement by:

- Strengthening DPOs in one or more countries
- Conducting leadership programs for disabled women
- Supporting a regional or national disability-rights alliance
- Connecting DPOs with existing development programs
- Advancing an advocacy campaign on a priority issue
- Building a global platform to exchange successes and best practices

We welcome opportunities to co-design activities based on investors’ geographic and programmatic priorities. Contact us at onebillionvoices@msh.org.

The Consortium for Building Inclusive Societies (CBIS) is a community of disability-rights activists and organizations with unmatched expertise and experience in policy leadership, capacity development, and advocacy for disability inclusion. Management Sciences for Health (MSH) has, across five decades and 150 countries, supported local partners in imagining and realizing transformative change. Together, CBIS and MSH have built constructive relationships with more than 600 DPOs across 120 countries.


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