



# **OIC ACTION PLAN FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

*A Guiding Document*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of disability has evolved over time, encompassing both social and medical aspects. Currently, about 1.3 billion people worldwide experience some form of disability, with an estimated 80% residing in developing countries, including OIC member countries.

Since the early 2000s, OIC countries and their societies have been experiencing a demographic transition in which the share of the old age population has been increasing thanks to developments in the healthcare sector and effective health policies. On the other hand, the number of conflicts, wars and disasters also continue to stay relatively higher in OIC countries. Because of these factors, the number of persons with disabilities in OIC countries tend to go up over time and have started to put a growing pressure on societies.

Persons with disabilities face persistent inequalities in social, economic, cultural, environmental, and political spheres in many developing countries as well as OIC countries. Discrimination against them just makes the situation worse for them. In particular, a country's economic, legislative, physical, and social environment may create or maintain barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in economic, civic, and social life. Barriers may include from inaccessible buildings to inadequate standards of rehabilitation services.

Because of inequalities and challenges faced by persons with disabilities, they are more likely to experience adverse socioeconomic outcomes than people without disabilities, such as less education, worse health outcomes, less employment, and higher poverty rates. All these factors also limit their contribution to the development process of their respective countries.

Against this background, it is timely for OIC countries to come up with a comprehensive plan of action in order to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities in socio-economic life and increase their participation in the development of their societies. Policies and initiatives implemented towards this direction would also help to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities and lead to more inclusive societies in which all people can enjoy their rights with dignity.

## **Overview of the OIC Plan of Action**

Given the common challenges faced by persons with disabilities, this draft OIC Plan of Action is a step forward in creating a much needed conversation on improving the state of disabilities through enhancing intra-OIC cooperation. The draft OIC Plan of Action aims to urge policy-makers to pay specific attention to the demographic transitions in the coming years and to guide them in improving the state of persons with disabilities. Moreover, it aims to constitute a roadmap and basis for policy-makers to share knowledge, information and experiences among OIC countries on how to improve the state of persons with disabilities.

It is important for OIC member countries to actively involve and follow up other international initiatives on disability such as the World Health Organisation's Global Disability Action Plan and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN that include several targets on persons with disabilities. Over the last decade, the OIC also successfully developed some key documents including the OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action 2014-2023 (OIC-SHPA) in the domain of health and OIC Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) in the domain of gender equality and women rights with the involvement of member countries and other international stakeholders. In the light of international initiatives on disability, and by considering SDGs, OIC-2025 Programme of Action, and experiences of the OIC in developing action plans (e.g. OPAAW, OIC-SHPA), the OIC Plan of Action on Persons with Disabilities would be instrumental to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

To enable the realization of the mentioned objectives, the draft Plan of Action identified seven main areas of action by reviewing the immediate problems, existing policies and the possible implementation actions to resolve them. These areas are identified as follows: (i) education, (ii) health, care, and rehabilitation, (iii) economic integration, (iv) governance, (v) enabling a supportive environment, (vi) culture and Islam, and (vii) disasters and humanitarian emergencies. Under each main area, several strategic goals are identified and a set of action points were listed for the consideration of policy makers in order to provide proper guidance to achieve these strategic goals.

In summary, this Plan of Action aims to stimulate cooperation among member states in addressing the common issues faced by persons with disabilities. The proposed outline, seven main areas of action, strategic goals and action points are aimed to provide guidance for policy makers on how to incorporate persons with disabilities into the labour market, improve their education and health outcomes, better their standards of living without neglecting national experiences, cultural and Islamic values, and international developments in this important area.

This document adopts the UN definition of persons with disabilities including four main types of disabilities namely physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that are defined in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Article 1 states that ‘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’.

## **2. OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES**

There are various crosscutting issues and concepts that form the basis of overarching principles that guide each strategic goal and its implementation mentioned in this document. Discussing such issues and concepts before proceeding to present the main areas of action is important to avoid repetition and to be able to present a methodological approach on the issue of disability. This document suggests the following all-inclusive principles which are applicable to all the main areas of action discussed in Section 4.

### **2.1. Diversity**

This action plan uses ‘disability’ as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions which may hinder persons with disabilities’ full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Contrary to popular belief, not all disabilities are same or similar. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. There is limited data on the various forms of disabilities that affect people in OIC countries. This leads to a gap in policies and programmes aimed at addressing challenges faced by persons with various types of disabilities. Therefore, OIC countries should collect accurate information on various types of disabilities to engage with people affected by different types of disabilities.

### **2.2. Women and Girls**

Women and girls with disabilities are the most disadvantaged group on multiple levels. They are mainly under-represented and often excluded from certain initiatives targeting persons with disabilities because they face a set of obstacles in participating in socio-economic life. Consequently, women with disabilities are at a higher risk to be exposed to poverty, violence, and abuse. On the other hand, women are also the main caregivers for persons with disabilities in many societies. Given the life-long and extensive nature of care for persons with disabilities, women need to spend most of their time on care

that affects their quality of life. In particular, working women feel such a heavy burden burdened on their shoulders. In this respect, the specific situation of women needs to be taken into account in the development of disability policies and programmes at all levels. This requires OIC countries to adopt an approach that gives priority to women and girls in developing health and social services for persons with disabilities to eradicate power imbalances and to promote their rights.

### **2.3. Life Course Approach**

The quality of life of persons with disabilities is heavily dependent on the delivery of extensive life-long care. Disabled persons require different types of care and support for each stage of their lifespan. For instance, during the childhood period they require socially inclusive activities and at older ages they are in need of more specific medical attention. Therefore, a life-course approach should be adopted in order to ensure the effective provision of life-long care and services for persons with disabilities. This requires OIC countries to take account of health and social needs at all stages of the life course, including infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and older age, and produce innovative solutions to meet the age-related changes in the needs of persons with disabilities.

### **2.4. Inclusiveness**

Persons with disabilities are a quite heterogeneous group and the severity of disabilities varies among different segments. On the other hand, factors like age, gender, race, ethnicity, rural versus urban settings, socioeconomic status, income level, employment status, education level, residing with family or at institutions, violations of human rights and exposure to adverse life events (e.g. violence, abuse and neglect) determine the needs and problems of persons with disabilities. In particular, children, women, elderly people, minority groups, indigenous populations, immigrants, asylum seekers, persons deprived of liberty, prisoners, people exposed to conflict, natural disasters or other humanitarian emergencies are more vulnerable and marginalized due to disabilities. This requires OIC countries to come up with inclusive disability policies that can address the needs of various segments including vulnerable or marginalized groups.

### **2.5. Human Dignity**

Persons with disabilities independent of their background, race, age, or gender have the right to have a dignified life. Given the widespread human rights violations and discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities, a human rights perspective is essential in developing policies for persons with disabilities. This plan of action emphasizes the need for services, policies, legislation, plans, strategies and programmes to protect, promote and respect the inherent dignity and individual autonomy of persons with disabilities, including the freedom to make one's own choices. This requires OIC countries to develop smart policies that respect individual autonomy and the protection of people's dignity.

### **2.6. Multi-sectoral Approach**

In order to address the problems faced by the disabled population, not only a multi-disciplinary but also a multi-sectoral approach is needed. Partnership with multiple public sectors such as health, education, employment, judicial, housing, social and other relevant sectors is required. Furthermore, engaging with the private sector, development agencies, academic and research institutions, civil society, faith-based associations, community-based organizations, associations of health care professionals and service providers and persons with disabilities themselves will not only assist policy makers to better understanding the problems on the ground but also come up with innovative, fast-track, and cost-efficient solutions. This requires OIC countries to develop mechanisms and avenues to ensure

collaboration with various stakeholders in designing and implementing policies for persons with disabilities.

### **3. MAIN CHALLENGES AND ISSUES**

Persons with disabilities face numerous challenges around the world. Nevertheless, the problems they face in the developing world are more significant due to a number of reasons from weak institutional arrangements to limited financial sources allocated for them. OIC countries, as a group, host millions of persons with disabilities who have been confronted with a variety of issues ranging from underinvestment in care systems to physical and cultural barriers. Identifying these challenges and devising effective policies will enable OIC countries to take specific actions to enhance the integration, productivity and well-being of persons with disabilities. This section provides a brief account of the main challenges and issues faced by persons with disabilities in OIC countries. The section groups and discusses the main challenges and issues under three categories: social and economic, health and well-being, and culture and values.

#### **3.1 Social and Economic**

In many parts of the developing world, including many OIC countries, persons with disabilities experience a higher level of unemployment and are more likely to live in poverty compared with people without disabilities. Even when persons with disabilities are employed their earnings typically tend to be less than those without disabilities. Due to their impairments, persons with disabilities face a number of different forms of economic discrimination in the labour market. Employers are hesitant to employ persons with disabilities because of the widespread stereotype that they cannot accomplish the requirements of the job.

In other cases, persons with disabilities are overworked, not formally registered or severely mistreated by their employers. Due to the lack of employment or underemployment along with the prevalent economic discrimination toward persons with disabilities, social protection systems become ever more important for the social inclusion and active participation of persons with disabilities. In many OIC countries, social protection networks and economic opportunities are not well developed and equipped to cater fully to the needs of persons with disabilities.

The lack of economic impartiality and opportunity along with the social challenges further exacerbates the well-being of persons with disabilities. Economically or socially, excluding persons with disabilities is not only detrimental to their own development and integration but it is also harmful for the cohesiveness of societies. The different skills, perspectives and contributions persons with disabilities can bring to society are invaluable. It is therefore in the interest of OIC countries to exert more efforts in order to be more inclusive in their practices, policies and systems by paying specific attention to persons with disabilities.

Across many OIC countries, persons with disabilities are not fully integrated into the social life. This is due to a number of reasons ranging from the lack of physical structures to the limited social integration policies for persons with disabilities. As the physical and the social factors mutually reinforce each other, for a successful and inclusive approach both aspects should be addressed conjointly.

Physical barriers such as housing, steps, curbs, transportation and communication, to name a few, seriously hinder persons with disabilities' ability to participate in normal day-to-day activities. The surrounding physical environment needs to be enabling for persons with disabilities so that they can become active and productive members of their respective societies. Along with this, the social context also needs to be more inclusive in terms of economic integration, access to education and social protection networks to assist persons with disabilities. Although some OIC countries have started to address such challenges, many of them have been still lacking effective, well-functioning and practical policies to support an inclusive social and physical environment for persons with disabilities in which they can be economically productive.

### **3.2 Health and Well-being**

It is often a misconception that persons with disabilities (mental and physical) are equated with a lack of health, incapacity and dependence. In fact, the reality is that with the appropriate access to health care and other forms of well-being services persons with disabilities, they can maintain a long, productive and healthy life. However, the World Health Survey indicates that persons with disabilities in comparison to people without disabilities are twice as likely to find that health care facilities and providers' skills are inadequate, three times more likely to be denied health care and four times more likely to be mistreated within the health care system. Persons with disabilities are also more likely to face financial challenges to cover their required health care.

In many OIC countries quality and affordable health care is a common concern, and when it comes to persons with disabilities such a concern emerges as a greater challenge. The insufficient number of trained health professionals along with misconceptions and prejudices harboured within the health care system, persons with disabilities tend to face extreme hardship in access to healthcare and rehabilitation services. As a result, individuals with disabilities in OIC countries usually encounter professionals unwilling or unfit to identify and treat their primary and secondary conditions, and any other health and wellness concerns. The design and construction of medical facilities also pose as a serious barrier for persons with disabilities in many cases as the physical structure of many medical facilities is unfit to accommodate them.

The cost of health care for persons with disabilities can be much higher than for those without disabilities; and with the lack of economic opportunities, many of these people face financial difficulties. A comprehensive social health care network for persons with disabilities is needed in OIC countries to assist them to cover these large medical expenditures (i.e. out-of-pocket expenditures). In terms of the well-being of persons with disabilities, both primary care and secondary care are important. In particular, designing complimentary health care systems that have a holistic approach, which includes primary medical treatment as well as community care settings, can be critical to address such challenges.

Overall, it is important to establish a strong health care system in which the treatment is affordable and accessible as well as services are provided by well-trained care professionals to support the health and well-being of persons with disabilities. In such a setting, medical discrimination and all prejudices toward individuals with disabilities need to be eradicated so that they can enjoy provided extensive care services with comfort as well as dignity.

### **3.3 Culture and Values**

A major challenge for persons with disabilities is the cultural codes and values ingrained in society regarding their competency, mobility and capacity. In different parts of the world, persons with disabilities are sometimes viewed as either intellectually inferior or physically less capable. Even some people may consider them abnormal due to the cultural setting or misbeliefs. The cultural norms and values serve as an overarching factor that affects how individuals, families, society and policymakers perceive and treat persons with disabilities. The negative stereotypes and certain myths that revolve around “disabilities” reinforce the discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities. For example, myths about persons with disabilities being punished by God or declaring them evil or satanic are common in some cultures.

Consequently, culture and values in society draw the framework that normalizes other actions and processes. A culture of exclusion combined with misconceptions inherently justifies mistreatment, underemployment, lack of an enabling environment and limited government response or societal support.

In Islam, persons with disabilities are seen as proud members of society and should be treated with respect. Throughout the early history of Islamic civilization, some individuals with certain disabilities assumed important roles in their respective societies both in the public and private sector. However, today in many OIC countries, many members of the society are not fully informed about the true messages of Islam on persons with disabilities and their rights. Even some persons with disabilities are not aware of their rights. Local cultural codes sometimes are being reflected as part of the religion and therefore persons with disabilities face discrimination, maltreatment and disrespect. In this picture, OIC countries should design policies from education to media strategies to upgrade the level of knowledge of people about the rights of individuals with disabilities. In this way, misperceptions and misbeliefs on persons with disabilities can be eradicated and they can acquire the communal support needed to help them to become productive members of the society. As long as the cultural misperceptions and prejudices towards persons with disabilities continue, this will have spill over effects into the realm of health care, policy response, community, employment, education and all other aspects of life. Within this context, OIC countries need to explore all ways and means to create an inclusive cultural atmosphere independent from prejudices and stereotypes with a view to integrating persons with disabilities into socio-economic life.

## 4. MAIN AREAS OF ACTION

Based on the major challenges and issues discussed in the previous section, this section presents seven main areas of action: (i) education, (ii) health, (iii) economic integration, (iv) governance, (v) enabling a supportive environment, (vi) culture and Islam, and (vii) disasters and humanitarian emergencies. In order to improve the well-being of persons with disabilities living in OIC countries. These areas have been identified through analysing relevant qualitative and quantitative indicators on persons with disabilities in OIC countries, evaluating international datasets, and reviewing national, regional as well as international plans of action and strategies on the topic. Following the brief discussion on the key challenges under each main area of action, a set of strategic goals are listed for the consideration of policymakers. Moreover, a set of policy actions under each specific strategic goal has been proposed in order to provide a concrete roadmap on how to achieve the relevant strategic goal.

### 4.1 Education

Many individuals with disabilities are out of school and in comparison with persons without disabilities; they are less likely to complete primary, secondary and tertiary education in developing countries including many OIC countries. As a result, the majority of OIC countries need to review their education systems in order to meet the growing educational needs of persons with disabilities. It is important to equip these persons with basic skills as well as to upgrade their existing skills. These efforts would require training human capital in the education sector, allocating additional financial sources for investments, and mainstreaming the disability perspective into the education curricula. A relatively higher share of the rural population characterizes several of the OIC countries. As rural conditions reduce the accessibility of education services for persons with disabilities, it is important to develop special programmes and make necessary arrangements to have more inclusive education systems that can serve persons with disabilities living in both rural and urban areas. It is also essential to develop education programmes not only for persons with disabilities and but also for their families and communities in order to create a more enabling environment in the education sector for persons with disabilities.

The following strategic goals (SGs) are identified for the improvement of education of persons with disabilities in OIC countries:

- **SG 1.1:** Improve accessibility and affordability of education institutions and programmes
- **SG 1.2:** Train service providers and families regarding special needs of persons with disabilities in education institutions
- **SG 1.3:** Raise awareness about the importance of education services for persons with disabilities
- **SG 1.4:** Invest into rehabilitation and special care services in education institutions
- **SG 1.5:** Ensure access to quality education for persons with disabilities in rural and urban areas and security-challenged areas
- **SG 1.6:** Promote intra-OIC cooperation

**STRATEGIC GOAL 1.1:** Improve accessibility and affordability of education institutions and programmes

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OIC countries need to take strategic actions to improve the accessibility and affordability of educational institutions and programmes in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. When families of persons with disabilities have concerns regarding the physical accessibility of schools and educational institutions, they tend to keep their members of family with disabilities at home. The affordability of educational institutions for persons with disabilities is another key factor that affects the decisions of

persons with disabilities to continue or quit education. In this picture, social security systems should be able to provide the necessary financial support to encourage persons with disabilities to begin and continue their education. It is also important to underline that new policies and initiatives on the education of persons with disabilities should not harm their psychological situation and social safety.

### **Actions**

**1.1.1** Improve accessibility of education institutions and programmes in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities by making necessary physical investments at schools

**1.1.2** Better accessibility of education institutions and programmes by making transport services available and affordable for persons with disabilities

**1.1.3** Remove physical barriers that reduces accessibility of persons with disabilities at education institutions

**1.1.4** Increase affordability of education institutions and programmes for persons with disabilities by making special arrangements in social security systems

**1.1.5** Collaborate with stakeholders to encourage persons with disabilities to take part in education programmes including training, vocational education and life-learning programmes

**STRATEGIC GOAL 1.2:** Train service providers and families regarding special needs of persons with disabilities in education institutions

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As persons with disabilities have some special needs in education institutions, service providers as well as families should be trained with a view to facilitating access to education institutions of persons with disabilities. This requires designing special courses and programmes for service providers including teachers, school administrators, care-givers as well as families of persons with disabilities. It is also essential to equip persons with disabilities with the necessary knowledge to increase their level of cooperation at educational institutions. Non-physical barriers for persons with disabilities such as discrimination and harassment may discourage them to continue their studies at educational institutions, and therefore such barriers should also be removed.

### **Actions**

**1.2.1** Organize training programmes for service providers as well as families on special needs of persons with disabilities at education institutions

**1.2.2** Design courses and programmes for persons with disabilities to increase their level of cooperation at education institutions

**1.2.3** Collaborate with all stakeholders to eliminate non-physical barriers for persons with disabilities at education institutions such as discrimination and harassment

**STRATEGIC GOAL 1.3:** Raise awareness about the importance of education services for persons with disabilities

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In order to equip persons with disabilities with the necessary skills and train them as members of societies, it is critical to raise awareness about the importance of education services for persons with disabilities at all levels. Therefore, such awareness raising campaigns should not only target persons with disabilities and their families but also should be inclusive for service providers and representatives of the private as well as public sectors. Such comprehensive efforts are likely to encourage persons with disabilities to be part of educational institutions.

## Actions

1.3.1 Organize awareness raising campaigns for persons with disabilities, their families and service providers on the importance of education for persons with disabilities

1.3.2 Design awareness raising campaigns targeting both the private and public sector on the importance of education for persons with disabilities

1.3.3 Collaborate with stakeholders including media to equip society about the contributions of persons with disabilities

1.3.4 Develop policies and strategies with a view to promoting inclusive learning for persons with disabilities

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1.4:** Invest in rehabilitation and special care services in education institutions

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Persons with disabilities may need some special services throughout their stay in educational institutions. Therefore, education institutions should be equipped with some basic facilities such as a rehabilitation room, first-aid kits in classrooms, and restrooms designed for persons with special needs etc. It is also important to have some people who can assist individuals with disabilities at schools. These people may include teachers, family members and trained caregivers. In this regard, OIC countries need to make some investments into rehabilitation and special care services in educational institutions in order to provide a more enabling environment for persons with disabilities and serve their needs in educational institutions.

## Actions

1.4.1 Provide rehabilitation and special care services in educational institutions

1.4.2 Identify minimum standards at educational institutions regarding basic services and arrangements available for persons with disabilities

1.4.3 Train service providers, families and caregivers to facilitate access of persons with special needs to rehabilitation and special care services in educational institutions

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1.5:** Ensure access to quality education for persons with disabilities in rural and urban areas and security-challenged areas

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Access to education services in rural areas in a number of OIC countries stays a challenge for many people without disabilities. In particular, for persons with disabilities it emerges as a greater challenge in rural areas such as due to the limited connectivity and lack of a proper transport infrastructure. Therefore, access to education should be improved in rural areas, especially for persons with disabilities. On the other hand, some persons with disabilities especially those living in slums in urban areas also face difficulties in accessing educational institutions. In this context, OIC countries should develop effective policies to improve access to education for persons with disabilities in rural and urban areas as well as security-challenged areas.

## Actions

1.5.1 Ensure the accessibility of educational institutions in rural areas for persons with disabilities by improving infrastructure

1.5.2 Improve the accessibility of educational institutions by making transport services available for persons with disabilities both in rural and urban areas

1.5.3 Coordinate with local and regional governments as well as city managements to improve the accessibility of educational institutions for persons with disabilities

1.5.4 Offer virtual learning opportunities to ensure and increase participation of persons with disabilities in education and rehabilitation.

1.5.5 Improve psycho-educational support for internally displaced learners with disabilities and in areas with high security challenges

1.5.6 Provide more assistive technology services and devices for persons with disabilities

#### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1.6: Promote intra-OIC cooperation**

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Improving access to education services for persons with disabilities would help many OIC countries to increase the well-being of persons with disabilities. As many OIC countries have successful initiatives, national programmes, and best practices, promoting intra-OIC cooperation on this matter would be important. In this regard, OIC countries need to be encouraged to share their practices and success stories with other OIC countries on ways and means of improving access to education services for persons with disabilities.

#### **Actions**

1.6.1 Promote intra-OIC experience sharing and transfer of knowledge and technology in the domain of education for persons with disabilities, and consider developing a knowledge-sharing platform to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise in this context

1.6.2 Facilitate establishment of a network among training institutions, service providers and professional associations for joint planning to address the educational needs of professionals and persons with disabilities

1.6.3 Organize capacity building, experience sharing and sensitizing activities to enhance intra-OIC cooperation in the domain of education for persons with disabilities

#### **4.2 Health, Care and Rehabilitation**

OIC countries need to scale up their health care and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities in terms of both human capital as well as financial resources. In some OIC countries, rural population represents a relatively higher share compared to the urban population. In such cases, making health and rehabilitation services accessible for persons with disabilities is a daunting task. On the other hand, the cost of treatment and rehabilitation services is not affordable for many people in a number of OIC countries. Ineffective social security systems also limit the access of persons with disabilities to such services. In fact, the prevention of diseases and disabilities is the least costly intervention that can be taken. In this regard, coping with risk factors, increasing awareness of diseases and injuries, and improving access to basic healthcare services without discrimination would prevent many people to become disabled. On the other hand, extending the scope of rehabilitation and healthcare services without any discrimination would help to improve the well-being of persons with disabilities living in OIC countries. Establishing medical facilities that are friendly for persons with disabilities is another solution that needs to be considered by policy makers in OIC countries.

The following strategic goals (SGs) are identified for the improvement of health, care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities in OIC countries:

- **SG 2.1:** Improve disease and disability prevention
- **SG 2.2:** Invest into rehabilitation and long-term care services
- **SG 2.3:** Improve public mechanisms including social security systems
- **SG 2.4:** Ensure access to health services, care and rehabilitation
- **SG 2.5:** Promote development, production and use of assistive devices

- **SG 2.6:** Promote inter-sectoral and intra-OIC cooperation

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2.1:** Improve disease and disability prevention

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OIC countries need to take strategic actions to prevent or limit the exposure of people to various diseases as well as disabilities that are preventable. It is also essential to provide schemes in order to provide guidance and improve disease prevention for persons with disabilities. On a large scale, persons with disabilities that are exposed to the use of tobacco, alcohol and follow unhealthy diets are more vulnerable and face usually a greater risk. Persons with disabilities need to be educated on the impacts of their unhealthy decisions. Awareness-raising campaigns and incentives need to be provided to make healthier choices that are convenient and affordable. Such strategic actions will decrease the burden on the healthcare systems and improve the health and well-being of persons with disabilities.

#### **Actions**

**2.1.1** Reduce the level of exposure of individuals and populations including persons with disabilities to the common risk factors namely, use of tobacco and alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity for non-communicable diseases

**2.1.2** Strengthen the capacity of persons with disabilities to make healthier choices and follow lifestyle patterns that foster health preservation and lead them to have a healthier ageing process

**2.1.3** Provide education and training programmes to persons with disabilities on healthy lifestyle and coping with addictions

**2.1.4** Design and implement policies with a view to reducing risk factors contributing to disabilities during old ages both for persons with disabilities and without disabilities

**2.1.5** Collaborate with stakeholders and families with a view to preventing dementia and other mental diseases that are progressive over time as well as provide guidance to identify them at their early stages

**2.1.6** Invest in early detection systems for chronic diseases that has the potential of reducing long-term well-being of people through leading to certain disabilities and improve the network of screening, diagnostic and treatment facilities for the most prevalent communicable and non-communicable diseases in terms of accessibility, affordability and quality

**2.1.7** Consider developing mechanisms to move persons with disabilities that are more vulnerable out of the crisis region and provide protected shelters during the outbreak of communicable diseases

**2.1.8** Increase access to quality health care services of persons with disabilities especially for early detection through organizing public awareness raising campaigns

**2.1.9** Invest in early detection and intervention for all especially for children under 5-year old

**2.1.10** Develop special health services related programmes and interventions for persons with disabilities especially for those affected from crises, epidemics, disasters and conflicts

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2.2:** Invest in rehabilitation and long-term care services

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The number of persons with disabilities in OIC countries is forecasted to go up rapidly in the coming years. Policies and strategic decisions need to be responsive to such demographic changes and should take systematic approaches to the possible challenges that may affect OIC countries. Institutional services for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities need to be improved to address major issues and challenges. Along with the institutional arrangements, community-based care and

rehabilitation services can be considered as complimentary support systems for the well-being of persons with disabilities.

### **Actions**

**2.2.1** Invest in health care and rehabilitation facilities to provide rehabilitation services and proper long-term care services by health professionals for persons with disabilities

**2.2.2** Review best-practices across the globe and OIC on care and rehabilitation facilities for persons with disabilities to improve their effectiveness and strengthen capacities at the national level

**2.2.3** Make rehabilitation and long-term care services affordable and inclusive in the social security systems with a view to minimizing out-of-pocket expenditures of persons with disabilities and improving their accessibility and coverage

**2.2.4** Consider implementing community-based rehabilitation programmes to better understand persons with disabilities given their special needs and provide them necessary care services in this way

**2.2.5** Improve delivery of quality health care and long-term care services for persons with disabilities through an integrated network comprising of health care facilities, community health workers, NGOs and volunteers

**2.2.6** Cooperate with community and religious leaders to train and equip generations on the importance of care of persons with disabilities in Islam and organize public campaigns to raise awareness in the society in this respect

**2.2.7** Promote community-based initiatives to deliver more assistive devices for persons with disabilities those in need of such devices

**2.2.8** Provide more autonomy to persons with disabilities in their decisions related to their treatment and rehabilitation programmes

**2.2.9** Develop manufacturing structures for specific equipment and mobility for persons with disabilities

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2.3: Improve public mechanisms including social security systems**

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Allocation of sufficient resources and investment into the rehabilitation and care services for persons with disabilities are important ways to improve the public mechanisms for the effective delivery of such services. It is also critical to incorporate available services for persons with disabilities into the social security mechanisms. Budgetary allocations for the health sector need to be increased in order to provide quality yet up-to-date technological services for persons with disabilities in many OIC countries. Health workers need to be equipped with the right skills by offering them training programmes that would enhance their capacities to provide effective and high quality services for persons with disabilities. Other communal mechanisms (e.g. volunteering) and Islamic instruments (e.g. Zakat and Waqf institutions) should also be used to provide a sense of security for persons with disabilities. It is also important to enhance intra-OIC cooperation to encourage knowledge and experience sharing activities among social security institutions of OIC countries.

### **Actions**

**2.3.1** Strengthen national regulatory authority with adequate resources and staff to ensure quality, safety and efficacy, and widen its scope to cover all technologies for health care and well-being of persons with disabilities including medicines, vaccines, medical devices and diagnostics

2.3.2 Establish and strengthen national bodies to facilitate training, recruitment and management of health workforce across the country in providing health, rehabilitation and long-term care services for persons with disabilities

2.3.3 Develop mechanisms on the family practice approach for delivery of health care and long-term care services for persons with disabilities

2.3.4 Set up a mechanism for social protection of poor persons with disabilities by benefiting experiences of various OIC countries and other countries in the world, and consider benefiting from Islamic instruments such as Zakat, Sadaqah and Waqf as sources of funds to support social protection of these people

2.3.5 Increase the budgetary allocations for health sector and ensure that certain portion of the allocations are being dedicated to be used for health and well-being related needs of persons with disabilities

#### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2.4:** Ensure access to health services, care and rehabilitation

The high costs of healthcare services and the lack of a proper enabling healthcare enabling environment in various OIC countries limit the access of millions of persons with disabilities to such services. In this regard, the evolving needs of persons with disabilities need to be reformulated to ensure inclusive health care access for persons with disabilities. Regulations guiding the physical environments of hospitals and care houses need to be reviewed in line with the needs of persons with disabilities. It is essential to develop mechanisms at the national level to include persons with disabilities who are not registered within a social security system. In particular, persons with disabilities living in rural areas who have not had the chance to register also need to benefit from healthcare and rehabilitation services.

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#### **Actions**

2.4.1 Ensure physical accessibility to a range of services based on the needs of persons with disabilities and ensure continuity of health care services that are being delivered with an integrated approach by a well-trained multidisciplinary team

2.4.2 Involve persons with disabilities in needs assessment, priority setting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the public health care services to make health related interventions sustainable and impactful

2.4.3 Invest more on self-care capacity building through training with a view to reducing dependency of persons with disabilities to others

2.4.4 Develop mechanisms for sustainable health financing for persons with disabilities with a view to mitigating inequities in accessing health care throughout their lifespan

2.4.5 Develop national mechanisms and action plans for persons with disabilities without any social security registration and income with a view to providing them public health care services and including them into such systems

2.4.6 Enhance inter-sectoral cooperation among stakeholders in order to make health care and long-term care services more affordable and accessible for persons with disabilities

2.4.7 Improve the quality, accessibility and sustainability of health care services for persons with disabilities

2.4.8 Review and upgrade the current status of the national health information systems and its key elements by taking the evolving needs of persons with disabilities into consideration

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 2.5:** Promote development, production and use of assistive devices

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It is essential for OIC countries to work collaboratively in order to promote the development, production and use of assistive devices that are critical for the well-being of persons with disabilities. As, such devices help improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities and enable them to be part of socio-economic life, it is critical to devise policies and implement them to ease access to assistive devices for persons with disabilities. Development and production of these devices in OIC countries help to curb associated costs and have potential to increase their accessibility as well as affordability by persons with disabilities.

### **Actions**

- 2.5.1 Formulate policies and laws to support the development, production, distribution and servicing of assistive products
- 2.5.2 Ensure that assistive products are available and affordable for persons with disabilities
- 2.5.3 Develop incentive schemes regarding research on and the development of assistive technology and consider promoting intra-OIC cooperation in this respect
- 2.5.4 Enhance capacities of persons with disabilities and their families, public officials, and service providers on assistive technology
- 2.5.5 Invest in the physical environment to optimize the benefits of assistive technology
- 2.5.6 Support local manufacturers of essential medical products as well as assistive devices for persons with disabilities to make them more accessible and affordable

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 2.6:** Promote inter-sectoral and intra-OIC cooperation

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OIC countries need to work collaboratively to facilitate the exchange of policies and mechanisms that are successful in addressing the health and well-being needs of persons with disabilities. The promotion of experience sharing among OIC countries and developing structured programmes in this regard would help to facilitate such practices. Capacity building and training programmes offered by some OIC countries in specific areas would further ease the process and help to the implementation of health related interventions targeting persons with disabilities in other OIC countries. Mutual recognition of some certificates and diplomas in the area of healthcare can also ease cross-country mobility of experts. Collaborations with international and regional agencies that focus on persons with disabilities would also benefit in the attainment of expertise, knowledge and financial contributions.

### **Actions**

- 2.6.1 Encourage inter-sectoral cooperation at the national level for sustainable health development for persons with disabilities through strengthening cooperation between health, education, labour, and social services
- 2.6.2 Promote intra-OIC cooperation on experience sharing and transfer of knowledge and technology in the domain of health care and well-being of persons with disabilities, and develop a knowledge-sharing platform to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise in this context
- 2.6.3 Facilitate establishment of a network among training institutions, health services and professional associations for joint planning to address the needs and profiles of health professionals working in institutions providing care for persons with disabilities

2.6.4 Organize capacity building, experience sharing and sensitizing activities to enhance intra-OIC cooperation in the domain of health care and well-being of persons with disabilities

2.6.5 Follow up and actively participate into implementation of the OIC Strategic Health Programme of Action 2014-2023 (OIC-SHPA) with a view to improving health systems

2.6.6 Facilitate intra-OIC cooperation on knowledge exchange and coproduction of new technologies and devices with a view to improving health and well-being of persons with disabilities such as through developing joint capacity building programmes

2.6.7 Ensure mutual recognition of medical diplomas, healthcare providers' certificates and degrees across the member states especially specialized on care of persons with disabilities

2.6.8 Collaborate with international agencies active on persons with disabilities like WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and World Bank to benefit from their expertise and financial contributions to improve health infrastructure in member states for persons with disabilities

2.6.9 Consider supporting public-private partnerships to improve the availability of care houses, rehabilitation centres and specialized hospitals for persons with disabilities

### 4.3 Economic Integration

Stemming from the increased life expectancy and rapid population growth seen in OIC countries, the number of persons with disabilities tend to go up over time. In some OIC countries, such an upward trend has started to put financial pressure on their social security systems. On the other hand, persons with disabilities can make a meaningful contribution to the socio-economic development of their countries by being active in the labour market, if proper opportunities are provided to them. Therefore, their active participation in economic life is important both for their material and mental well-being. The active participation of persons with disabilities in labour market and their integration into economic life have become more important than ever. Nevertheless, persons with disabilities are less likely to be employed than people without disabilities. In this regard, OIC countries need to make some reforms and take policy-actions from labour market regulations to social security systems to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the work life with a view to enabling them to reach better standards of living as well as maximizing their contribution to the development of their societies.

OIC countries are specifically advised to consider the following six strategic goals (SGs):

- **SG 3.1:** Develop and adopt alternative working systems
- **SG 3.2:** Encourage economic integration of persons with disabilities
- **SG 3.3:** Enhance skills development of persons with disabilities according to labour market needs
- **SG 3.4:** Promote effective coordination among key stakeholders and enhance intra-OIC cooperation
- **SG 3.5:** Improve the scope and delivery of social security services
- **SG 3.6:** Cope with discrimination at work

#### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3.1: Develop and adopt alternative working systems**

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Labour market prospects and opportunities are important factors that affect the decisions of persons with disabilities to be active in the labour force. Their active participation does not only contribute to their lives but also reduces the burden on the social security systems, as they would be able to produce and earn for themselves. However, the existing working agreements and systems are strict enough to discourage many individuals with disabilities. Therefore, alternative working arrangements such as

flexible working are needed to accommodate the special conditions of persons with disabilities. Alternative arrangements need to be regulated and promoted in OIC countries to ensure that they are effectively considered and implemented by the public and private sectors.

### **Actions**

- 3.1.1 Consider devising alternative working systems including flexible working systems in the labour market with a view to easing transition of persons with disabilities from home to work
- 3.1.2 Make required legislative changes to encourage persons with disabilities to remain active in the labour market such as through promoting flexible work arrangements including consultative, temporary or part-time positions
- 3.1.3 Make necessary reforms to eliminate unnecessary steps and high-level of bureaucracy in hiring persons with disabilities
- 3.1.4 Develop new frameworks and regulations to benefit from the experience of persons with disabilities as consultants and advisors in both the public and private sector
- 3.1.5 Consider developing alternative working systems with a view to optimizing work-life balance that would allow persons with disabilities to fulfil their family responsibilities as well as meet their healthcare needs
- 3.1.6 Promote the supportive employment modality for persons with disabilities that means extending additional support to be able to find, secure and retain a job
- 3.1.7 Reformulate and stipulate that national legislation in the Member States include promoting work for persons with disabilities and creating an appropriate work environment.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3.2: Encourage economic integration of persons with disabilities**

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OIC countries need to encourage persons with disabilities to partake in economic productivity. Various forms of incentives and awareness campaigns aimed at attracting persons with disabilities into the labour force would lead to societies that are more inclusive. Encouraging persons with disabilities to integrate into the economic system would help to have socially healthier and economically less dependent populations. With the growing number of persons with disabilities in OIC countries and increasing pressure on social security systems, encouraging persons with disabilities to participate in the labour force would provide a foundation of self-sufficiency as well as help to increase the overall well-being in OIC countries.

### **Actions**

- 3.2.1 Develop financial and non-financial incentive mechanisms and tax schemes to motivate persons with disabilities to stay active in the labour market
- 3.2.2 Find out major challenges faced by persons with disabilities that motivate them to be inactive in the labour market and prepare a roadmap to address such challenges faced by them
- 3.2.3 Identify among existing statistical indicators and develop new ones in order to measure and review the progress in dealing with factors that discourage persons with disabilities to be active in labour market
- 3.2.4 Organise awareness-raising and promotion programmes for persons with disabilities to equip them about the importance of labour force participation and encourage them to stay economically active in the market
- 3.2.5 Develop modalities for recognising and validating skills and competences acquired outside formal education

3.2.6 Consider introducing special employment quotas for job seekers with disabilities

3.2.7 Develop standards on reasonable accommodation, including assistive technology for persons with disabilities at the workplace

3.2.8 Include persons with disabilities into entrepreneurship development training programmes and microfinance schemes

3.2.9 Ease access of persons with disabilities microfinance schemes such as to support their self-employment and SMEs owned by them.

**STRATEGIC GOAL 3.3:** Enhance skills development of persons with disabilities according to labour market needs

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Many OIC countries suffer from skill mismatch, which translates into structural unemployment and lower economic growth and productivity. In order to contribute to the elimination of market inefficiencies and foster the employment of persons with disabilities in a productive manner, the skills of persons with disabilities should be developed to meet the needs of certain sectors of the economy. Different strategic actions as outlined below can serve to upgrade the skill-sets of persons with disabilities that could positively contribute to the public and private sectors.

### **Actions**

3.3.1 Empower persons with disabilities into economic activities through promoting life-long education and vocational training with a view to equipping them with necessary skills

3.3.2 Improve the employability of persons with disabilities by adjusting workplace environments to the physical and mental capacities of these people

3.3.3 Conduct diagnostic studies to assess the profile of the inactive persons with disabilities and understand the needs for skills development according to labour market needs

3.3.4 Strengthen the capacity of the social partners to contribute to dynamic life-long learning programmes

3.3.5 Upscale investments into the technical and vocational education and training system (TVET) for inactive persons with disabilities that are motivated for work

3.3.6 Improve the technical and vocational education and training system (TVET) and ensure that it caters to the needs of persons with disabilities as well as employers

3.3.7 Ensure good quality data on the respective employment possibilities and related gains associated with different qualification levels for persons with disabilities

3.3.8 Develop a Skill Recognition System (SRS) to identify and verify prior skills and experiences gained at work over years, which could enable the shift to new jobs easy and comfortable as well as facilitate the move from informal to formal economy

3.3.9 Improve dialogue with representatives of the private sector to provide persons with disabilities on-the-job training with a view to facilitating transfer of knowledge

3.3.10 Develop inclusive policies and mechanisms to ensure all interested persons with disabilities can reach labour market services provided by relevant public institutions both in rural and urban areas such as through easing their accessibility to employment agencies

3.3.11 Design and implement targeted education programmes to improve skills of persons with disabilities living especially in rural areas

3.3.12 Develop key performance indicators to better monitor inactivity rates among persons with disabilities especially living in rural areas

3.3.13 Develop mechanisms to monitor and assess the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in obtaining necessary skills and qualifications needed for their employment

3.3.14 Improve data and monitoring capacities with a view to regularly monitoring the education and employment status of persons with disabilities

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**STRATEGIC GOAL 3.4:** Promote effective coordination among key stakeholders and enhance intra-OIC cooperation

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To improve the labour market and economic integration of persons with disabilities in OIC countries various actors in the private and public sectors need to coordinate in an effective manner. Health care institutions, various ministries and the private sector stakeholders should work to create effective mechanisms that would contribute to the integration of persons with disabilities into the economy. The different experiences, good practices and knowledge of OIC countries can be shared amongst each other to improve the policies, skills and institutional arrangements for the well-being of persons with disabilities across member states.

**Actions**

3.4.1 Enhance coordination among key stakeholders (e.g. Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Health) to improve labour market prospects for persons with disabilities

3.4.2 Promote and ensure a successful cooperation between national employment centres and health institutions to improve employability of persons with disabilities by taking their healthcare needs into consideration

3.4.3 Raise awareness among employers about the potentials of persons with disabilities at work in coordination with representatives of the public and private sector

3.4.4 Review best-practices and policies implemented in OIC countries in encouraging persons with disabilities to be active in the labour market

3.4.5 Promote sharing and transferring country experiences regarding improving skills set of persons with disabilities among OIC countries

3.4.6 Encourage the coordination mechanisms among key stakeholders in enhancing local skill solutions and customized employment services for persons with disabilities

3.4.7 Ensure that labour market institutions develop and maintain a database and disseminate timely information on jobs, skills, learning and training opportunities for persons with disabilities

3.4.8 Monitor trends in indicators on workforce with disabilities to prepare better policy-responses in a timely manner

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**STRATEGIC GOAL 3.5:** Improve the scope and delivery of social security services

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Social security services need to go beyond providing some basic healthcare services for persons with disabilities where they should have schemes that are aimed at encouraging and supporting them to stay active in the job market. New regulations in social security services that enable privileges and awards designed for persons with disabilities could create new incentives for them to enter the work force; consequently, decreasing the burden on the social security system while giving opportunities for them to reach better standards of living.

## Actions

- 3.5.1 Enhance comprehensive social security schemes and other social protection mechanisms for persons with disabilities
- 3.5.2 Consider providing incentives for persons with disabilities in social security services to promote the idea of being active in the labour market
- 3.5.3 Devise and implement both online and offline job search assistance programmes with a view to improving match between employer and employee, and reducing time and cost for job search and providing training for persons with disabilities on these programmes
- 3.5.4 Promote community-based rehabilitation programmes to assist persons with disabilities in their inclusion and integration into work life
- 3.5.5 Take measures to address tax evasion and avoidance of social contributions, labour laws and regulations that lead to higher informality among work force with disabilities
- 3.5.6 Benefit from the potentials of unique instruments available in OIC countries such as Zakat, Sadaqah, Waqf and volunteerism to scale up scope and delivery of social security services particularly for persons with disabilities
- 3.5.7 Develop policies that facilitate job retention and return to work for persons who acquire a disability, including for persons with mental health conditions

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 3.6:** Cope with discrimination at work

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Many persons with disabilities have some concerns while going into the labour market due to disability based discrimination and unfair treatment. Such biases and maltreatment in the work atmosphere need to be addressed to create a safe, comfortable and discrimination-free workplace environment for persons with disabilities. Private and public sector employers need to be trained to overcome the preordained prejudices and biases against persons with disabilities. Rules and regulations of the labour market in many OIC countries need to be reviewed in a manner that prevents disability-based discrimination. Increasing cultural and social awareness that promotes social norms that are free of biases towards persons with disabilities would also help overcome such challenges.

## Actions

- 3.6.1 Respect, promote and realize equality of work opportunity and treatment for persons with disabilities without any discrimination
- 3.6.2 Combat discrimination, prejudice and hatred on the basis, disability, age, gender or any other grounds in the labour market
- 3.6.3 Encourage employers to be more inclusive by hiring persons with diverse backgrounds including persons with disabilities as long as they have basic skills to carry out their duties
- 3.6.4 Develop mechanisms to discourage employers for implementing any disability-based discrimination in hiring processes
- 3.6.5 Strengthen the national capacity of labour inspection systems and dispute resolution mechanisms to monitor and implement the legislations related to non-discrimination at work based on disability
- 3.6.6 Take all practicable measures to foster public understanding and acceptance of the principles of non-discrimination at work based on disability

3.6.7 Cooperate with civil society organisations that are specialized on skills development of persons with disabilities and employment issues

3.6.8 Review social security measures with a view to providing rights of persons with disabilities in labour markets at international standards

3.6.9 Review existing rules and regulations in labour markets from a disability-based discrimination perspective and revise them, if necessary, to fight with disability-based discrimination at workplace

3.6.10 Provide training to employers and employees to cope with disability-based discrimination at workplace

3.6.11 Raise awareness in the society and among employers to overcome some challenges such as social norms and misbeliefs that hinders employment of persons with disabilities

#### 4.4 Governance

Governance refers to different programs, policies and systems employed to deliver services to individuals at the local, national or international level. Governance structures play an important role to improve the well-being of persons with disabilities. With the effective programs and initiatives, it is also possible to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in socio-economic life. Although some OIC countries have in place various types of governance structures and programmes to assist individuals with disabilities, many are lacking specific and targeted services specially designed to cater to their needs. In this regard, OIC countries need to create inclusive and directed policies and programs that would improve the state of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. These initiatives need to enable persons with disabilities to reach a higher standard of living and maximize their productive role in their respective societies.

The following strategic goals (SGs) are identified to improve governance initiatives for persons with disabilities:

- **SG 4.1:** Review social security schemes
- **SG 4.2:** Increase participation of persons with disabilities in political processes
- **SG 4.3:** Strengthen and create organizations operated by and for persons with disabilities
- **SG 4.4:** Increase budgetary allocations specifically for initiatives and programs aimed at persons with disabilities
- **SG 4.5:** Develop framework legislation, coordination and monitoring mechanisms

#### **STRATEGIC GOAL 4.1:** Review social security schemes

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Having strong social security networks would protect persons with disabilities and help them to meet their basic needs. Many persons with disabilities also have a difficult time meeting their extensive medical costs and other possible equipment that may be required for them to function normally. Comprehensive social security arrangements would decrease the burden on persons with disabilities and help them to become productive members of the society. Across OIC countries, social security networks are underdeveloped when compared to developed countries and do not specifically target persons with disabilities who require different provisions compared to people without disabilities. Therefore, it is vital to review existing social security schemes with a view to improving their scope, effectiveness and outcomes.

## **Actions**

- 4.1.1 Undertake all-inclusive research to identify the specific needs of persons with disabilities to restructure the foundation of social security structures
- 4.1.2 Make necessary legislative changes that will allow for the creation of effective and inclusive social security networks for persons with disabilities that will enable them access to services free of charge and in a manner consistent with the human rights approach
- 4.1.3 Consider reviewing the necessary and feasible budgeting requirements for developing new social security schemes for persons with disabilities
- 4.1.4 Raise awareness on the existence of a social security programme for persons with disabilities
- 4.1.5 Ease application and registration processes for persons with disabilities to benefit from social security schemes
- 4.1.5 Monitor and evaluate the impact of existing social security schemes targeting persons with disabilities in order to alter or continue with such schemes
- 4.1.6 Organize knowledge and experience sharing programmes among OIC countries to find out best practices and learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses regarding social security schemes

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 4.2: Increase participation of persons with disabilities in political processes**

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Persons with disabilities tend to be excluded from political processes that also have an impact on their lives. Across OIC countries, some prevailing stereotypes serve as barriers to persons with disabilities' right to vote, right to partake in political action or other political practices such as to assume political leadership. To strengthen inclusiveness and increase the level of participation, the involvement of persons with disabilities in the political processes would play a key role. This would also help persons with disabilities to feel more incorporated and integrated into political and social life.

## **Actions**

- 4.2.1 Ensure accessibility in political processes and elections by providing physical, linguistic, informational and infrastructural arrangements for persons with disabilities
- 4.2.2 Remove legal and administrative barriers (such as restriction on legal capacity) to become more inclusive
- 4.2.3 Increase representation of persons with disabilities at the local and national level and consider implementing quota schemes allocated for persons with disabilities
- 4.2.4 Provide funding to accommodate the participation of persons with disabilities into political and public life
- 4.2.5 Raise awareness in the society to combat against stereotypes and prejudices that restrict persons with disabilities participation in political processes and electoral processes
- 4.2.6 Provide education to persons with disabilities on their rights and processes of participation into political processes and electoral processes
- 4.2.7 Develop supportive policies, systems, and programs within the governance system to provide services to persons with disabilities at the local, national, or international level to enhance their role of at the economic, social, and political life

**STRATEGIC GOAL 4.3:** Strengthen and create organizations operated by and for persons with disabilities

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Although there are organizations in various OIC countries that work for persons with disabilities, there is a need to increase the number of organizations that are operated by and for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group and different organizations that work various types of disabilities play critical roles in many OIC countries. Not only these types of organizations do provide employment, productivity and self-satisfaction for persons with disabilities, but also, they bring individuals together that have common experiences and help them to find solutions to issues they mutually face. As part of the governance, organizations in OIC countries need to consider and create local and national establishments that are run by and for persons with disabilities.

**Actions**

4.3.1 Provide incentives and monetary support for the establishment organizations by and for persons with disabilities

4.3.2 Provide training to various groups (physical, mental, emotional etc.) of persons with disabilities in organizational operations

4.3.3 Create cooperation links between local/national NGOs and persons with disabilities to share knowledge and expertise

4.3.4 Ease establishment processes for organizations serving to persons with disabilities

4.3.5 Provide infrastructural support in the form of office allocation for organizations established by persons with disabilities

4.3.6 Facilitate intra-OIC cooperation to enable interaction of organizations located in various OIC countries that are targeting persons with disabilities

**STRATEGIC GOAL 4.4:** Increase budgetary allocations specifically for initiatives and programs aimed at persons with disabilities

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Governance structures, programs and incentives that are targeting persons with disabilities all require budgetary allocations in their execution phases. Moreover, in order to provide such services in good quality the required budgetary allocations need to be scaled up. For example, many OIC countries are lagging behind the world average in terms of the share of the allocated budget on health spending. As a result, many persons with disabilities are not able to fully benefit from provided health services. In this respect, OIC countries need to review their budgeting practices to make them more aligned with the needs of persons with disabilities.

**Actions**

4.4.1 Increase budgetary allocations on persons with disabilities

4.4.2 Consider having private sector partnerships to fund programs and initiatives that will serve both persons with disabilities and the private sector

4.4.3 Utilize possible funding opportunities from international organizations in support of persons with disabilities.

4.4.4 Employ Islamic funding mechanisms such as Sadaqah, Waqf and charitable volunteerism to ensure financial support for different programme for persons with disabilities

4.4.5 Develop intra-OIC funding mechanisms to enhance financial assistance to relatively underdeveloped OIC countries with a view to supporting their programs regarding individuals with disabilities

4.4.6 Consider establishing an OIC-level Waqf and/or dedicated Fund to support programmes and initiatives for persons with disabilities with the support of member countries and relevant OIC institutions including the Islamic Development Bank

#### **STRATEGIC GOAL 4.5: Develop framework legislation, coordination and monitoring mechanisms**

Developing legislation, coordination and monitoring mechanisms are critical in order to create a functioning and sustainable governance system. In this context, the enactment of legislation on the issue of governance would strengthen the legal basis for the efforts related to the rights of persons with disabilities. Besides, developing mechanisms for coordination and monitoring would be beneficial in terms of the sustainability of such efforts.

#### **Actions**

4.5.1 Identify the national focal point for coordinating the strategies and policies in the disability field and ensure cooperation and coordination among relevant institutions and organizations including those for/ of persons with disabilities

4.5.2 Promote the implementation of the Plan of Action through a national focal point in the government and a coordination mechanism in which all line ministries and civil society organization of/for persons with disabilities are represented could be constituted

4.5.3 Develop a framework for disability law to protect, promote and strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities

#### **4.5 Supportive Environment**

Environments – physical, social and attitudinal – play an important role in either disabling persons with impairments or fostering their productive potential, participation and inclusion. Enabling a supportive environment includes important interventions in the area of roads, buildings, transportation, and other indoor and outdoor facilities, information and communication, including information and communications technologies and systems. These different domains are interconnected and without the proper infrastructural adjustments, accommodating persons with disabilities becomes extremely difficult. Many OIC countries are lacking the physical and social infrastructure to enable an accessible environment for all including persons with disabilities.

The following set of strategic goals has been identified to enhance both the physical and social conditions that are important for persons with disabilities in OIC countries.

- **SG 5.1:** Develop effective policies and regulations to ensure an enabling environment for persons with disabilities
- **SG 5.2:** Address barriers in the physical environment including buildings and roads to ease the mobility of persons with disabilities
- **SG 5.3:** Promote the use of technologies and methods that are accommodating to the needs of persons with disabilities in public and private settings
- **SG 5.4:** Support a socially enabling environment for persons with disabilities to function in their daily lives without stereotypes, discrimination or prejudices

**STRATEGIC GOAL 5.1:** Develop effective policies and regulations to ensure an enabling environment for the persons with disabilities

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Persons with disabilities require various forms of particular arrangements for their surrounding environment to become enabling. An important aspect of this is the development of policies and regulations that reinforce an environment where persons with disabilities can function normally without hardships in their daily lives. The below action points would be important to build the policy and regulative framework in OIC countries to develop an enabling supportive environment for persons with disabilities.

### **Actions**

**5.1.1** Develop regulatory frameworks that set minimum standards for the incorporation of physical structure that are accommodating to persons with various disabilities

**5.1.2** Enact and implement legislative policy that protects the rights of persons with disabilities in terms of their mobility rights, access rights and information rights including ICTs

**5.1.3** Ensure that regulations and policies target not only persons with disabilities in cities but also ones in rural areas

**5.1.4** Develop policies and regulations that support the housing and health needs of persons with disabilities and other basic social services

**5.1.5** Enact strong regulatory frameworks that prohibit all forms of discrimination and mistreatment of individuals who have any form of impairment

**5.1.6** Develop alternative policies and regulations that support the access of persons with disabilities to transportation system such as by providing tax exemptions for their cars and offering free public transportation certificates for them

**STRATEGIC GOAL 5.2:** Address barriers in the physical environment including buildings and roads to ease the mobility of persons with disabilities

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The physical infrastructure is very friendly for many persons with disabilities in the developing world. Many OIC countries also face the challenge that limits the mobility of persons with disabilities. Due to the weak planning and the lack of a disability approach in the construction phases, most often infrastructures are not able to meet the expectations of persons with disabilities. In order to build an enabling environment for persons with disabilities certain critical gaps between policies and enforcement mechanisms in OIC countries need to be addressed.

### **Actions**

**5.2.1** Develop follow-up and enforcement mechanisms that adhere to regulations that support of individuals with disabilities infrastructural necessities

**5.2.2** Raise awareness by providing training for engineers and technical persons regarding the needs and expectations of persons with disabilities in physical environments

**5.2.3** Device policies that enhance accessibility of transportation facilities including roads and sidewalks for persons with disabilities such as visual impairment sidewalk guides, voice-recognition crosses at traffic lights and other assistive tools to make the life of persons with disabilities easier

**5.2.4** Set the standards for releasing budget allocations for infrastructure projects in order to ensure that they are also capable of serving the needs of persons with disabilities

**STRATEGIC GOAL 5.3:** Promote the use of technologies and methods that are accommodating to the needs of persons with disabilities in public and private settings

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In many OIC countries, persons with disabilities face various challenges in their daily lives. It is not only stemming from the lack of proper infrastructure but also due to a lack of proper knowledge and technologies to benefit from existing arrangements. In many OIC countries, persons with and without disabilities need to be provided basic training and information on how persons with disabilities can benefit from public and private services including banking, government, and education.

#### **Actions**

**5.3.1** Provide training programmes on technological and other tools that can facilitate lives of persons with disabilities in their daily lives

**5.3.2** Make sure that certain important institutions for daily use are accommodative to persons with disabilities such as banking and transportation

**5.3.3** Provide platforms in government services need to specifically address the needs of persons with disabilities. These may include advisory staff who are trained to deal with persons with disabilities and/or automated technological platforms that will assist persons with various impairments.

**5.3.4** Benefit from technological tools to assist persons with disabilities participate in different public events, campaigns and community level participation

**5.3.5** Create an electronic platform for pioneering ideas about services and legislation for persons with disabilities

**5.3.6** Ease access of persons with disabilities to ICT such as by providing incentives for services providers

**STRATEGIC GOAL 5.4:** Support a socially enabling environment for persons with disabilities to function in their daily lives without stereotypes, discrimination or prejudices

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The physical structures and policies are crucial to have an enabling environment for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, it is also essential to create a socially enabling environment to compliment these structures. Raising awareness amongst the public along with professionals, employers, schools and other institutions is important to provide a socially enabling environment. Due to stereotypes and prejudices about persons with disabilities, the social environment sometimes can become a barrier for individuals with impairments. In this picture, OIC countries need to take action to transform the social context to be more welcoming and neutral towards persons with disabilities so that they can practice their rights in a safe and secure environment with comfort.

#### **Actions**

**5.4.1** Organize public awareness campaigns that provide information on persons with disabilities to increase public knowledge on them and their needs

**5.4.2** Organize awareness raising campaigns and training for specific sectors such as health officials, families, employers, government social workers

**5.4.3** Provide counselling to persons with disabilities facing hardships (emotional distress, depression, feelings of exclusion), and to the other members of society living or working with individuals with impairments

## 4.6 Culture and Islam

A critical dimension that needs to be included in the policy agenda to provide a better quality of life for persons with disabilities is culture and Islam. The policies in this area can play an important role to fight against discrimination towards persons with disabilities and to promote solidarity in society to empower persons with disabilities. In this context, policies on how to combat negative stereotypes and violence directed at persons with disabilities, strengthen and promote caregivers and, promote and facilitate the spirit of solidarity and mutually beneficial relations would help to improve the state of persons with disabilities in OIC countries.

The following strategic goals (SG) can be used to address the challenges faced at the cultural front for persons with disabilities in OIC countries:

- **SG 6.1:** Combat stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities in society at large and promote positive images of persons with disabilities
- **SG 6.2:** Strengthen the spirit of solidarity in society
- **SG 6.3:** Eliminate violence and abuse against persons with disabilities
- **SG 6.4:** Support and strengthen caregiving families and institutions
- **SG 6.5:** Increase the participation of persons with disabilities and their organisations in cultural and recreational life, sports and leisure activities

**STRATEGIC GOAL 6.1:** Combat stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities in society at large and promote positive images of persons with disabilities

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Exposure to negative attitudes in social life has serious impacts on the mental health and well-being of persons with disabilities such as by leading to less economic participation, higher rates of poverty, restricted participation and exclusion. Organizing widespread campaigns about persons with disabilities will be useful in not only changing the perspective towards persons with disabilities but also promoting respect for them. Moreover, carrying out research would help policy makers to identify perceptions of society and reveal the areas that need greater awareness raising and promotion to combat discrimination and stigmatization towards persons with disabilities.

### Actions

**6.1.1** Raise awareness about disability and promote respect for persons with disabilities through media, public opinion makers, information programmes and campaigns to change cultural attitudes

**6.1.2** Cope with misbeliefs and prejudices on disability and encourage full participation of persons with disabilities in society especially through promoting cultural events and festivals

**6.1.3** Promote and inform the society at large about Islam's positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities and specific injunctions regarding how they should be treated through mobilizing religious leaders, mosques, and faith-based organizations

**6.1.4** Reinforce Islamic values and teachings of charity, respect, care and tolerance in society through campaigns and different platforms

**6.1.5** Encourage the use of favorable traditional practices for embracing persons with disabilities

**6.1.6** Conduct research on how disability has been perceived in OIC countries and identify cultural practices

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 6.2: Strengthen the spirit of solidarity in society**

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Strengthening solidarity and cohesiveness in society would not only benefit persons with disabilities but also society at large. In this respect, the capacities of local and national institutions can be improved, and different platforms for easing communication and fighting against discrimination may be employed to increase the spirit of solidarity. Greater solidarity, mutual respect, and effective communication will function to decrease the negative impact and biases aimed at persons with disabilities while allowing different segments of society to learn and communicate with each other.

### **Actions**

**6.2.1** Raise through public education an awareness on contributions of persons with disabilities to family and communities

**6.2.2** Promote examples of disabled men and women who have significantly contributed to society, development, or community from different sectors (private sector, civil activism, politics, religion, etc.) to fight against negative stereotypes through media and cultural events

**6.2.3** Benefit from prominent cultural leaders to foster greater knowledge among persons with disabilities of their rights and how to exercise them

**6.2.4** Train and sensitize policymakers on disability and stereotyping to enable them to recognize prejudicial cultural attitudes in existing disability related policies and institutional practices

**6.2.5** Develop public platforms and cultural spaces to facilitate communication, connection, and activities in all walks of life for persons with disabilities, and fight against segregation or exclusion based on disabilities

**6.2.6** Establish alliances between public institutions and civil society to strengthen the family institution that is an important to caregiver institution for persons with disabilities

**6.2.7** Take appropriate measures to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural activities and associations to develop and utilise their intellectual, spiritual and creative potential for their own benefit and that of their communities

**6.2.8** Promote an environment where persons with disabilities could participate on an equal footing in civil society

**6.2.9** Support the creation and strengthening of associations and organizations of persons with disabilities as well as families and caregivers, and their integration into existing disability organizations, and facilitate dialogue among such groups

**6.2.10** Involve persons with disabilities in all stages of the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of disability policies and programs at the cultural front

**6.2.11** Improve data and monitoring capacities of public institutions such as municipalities to regularly monitor the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in social life

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 6.3: Eliminate violence and abuse against persons with disabilities**

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In many societies, violence and neglect against persons with disabilities, whether it be at home, work or in a public area, is a growing concern. In order to eliminate violence and neglect against persons with disabilities, OIC countries should introduce policies that penalize all forms of violence, neglect, exploitation, and abuse of persons with disabilities. Role models in society along with community and religious leaders must advocate for the eradication of violence against persons with disabilities. Islamic

values and teaching on respect and care for persons with disabilities must be disseminated to the public. Professionals should have proper training and awareness of the special attention that persons with disabilities might require.

### **Actions**

6.3.1 Eliminate all forms of neglect, abuse and violence of persons with disabilities in social life.

6.3.2 Implement programmes with community leaders to prevent and address domestic violence towards persons with disabilities

6.3.3 Carry out nation-wide campaigns in collaboration with religious leaders against abuse and neglect towards persons with disabilities and raise awareness in society to work together to prevent abuse and neglect

6.3.4 Improve coordination among different public institutions to prevent harmful traditional practices particularly in rural areas aimed at persons with disabilities

6.3.5 Provide services (legal assistance, counselling and psychological support) and programmes to persons with disabilities who have experienced violence, abuse and neglect to promote recovery and avoid trauma

6.3.6 Develop policies specific to women with disabilities since they face greater risk of physical and psychological abuse

6.3.7 Establish monitoring mechanisms to undertake investigations and issue reports on violence against persons with disabilities, especially women with disabilities

6.3.8 Improve data collection and monitoring mechanisms at the intra-OIC level on the various forms of violence and their impact on persons with disabilities

6.3.9 Develop training programs for medical personnel and informal caregivers on how to recognize and deal with victims of domestic violence effectively

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 6.4: Support and strengthen caregiving families and institutions**

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Considering the vital role they play, caregiving families and institutions need to be supported and strengthened for a better life for both persons with disabilities and their caregivers. Families need to be educated about family-oriented values and the need to benefit from Islamic values and teachings with a view to promoting the idea of caregiving for persons with disabilities. The importance of caregiving to persons with disabilities needs to be widely recognized **in society**. Campaigns and training programmes on volunteer caregiving would play a key role **in** widespread this practice.

### **Actions**

6.4.1 Empower parents, family members, and caregivers of persons with disabilities through information, training and mobilizing financial, legislative, and cultural means

6.4.2 Implement policies and programs that strengthen families that are inclusive of persons with disabilities

6.4.3 Enhance the caregiving abilities of families through the provision of long-term support and services

6.4.4 Consider the views and experiences of caregivers while developing policies for persons with disabilities

- 6.4.5 Learn from traditional values and norms to inform legislation about family values and the care of persons with disabilities
- 6.4.6 Identify, support and strengthen traditional support systems to enhance the ability of families and communities to care for disabled family members
- 6.4.7 Support the creation and strengthening of associations and organizations of caregivers to strengthen solidarity among them
- 6.4.8 Develop community-based health and social care services for the continuity of care between different care providers and layers of the care system
- 6.4.9 Encourage effective collaboration between formal and informal caregivers such as families, religious leaders, school teachers, public officers and local organizations
- 6.4.10 Collaborate with the public and private sectors to ensure appropriate support is provided for informal caregivers, especially for women
- 6.4.11 Carry out research and identify best practices to reduce deficiencies in the care system for persons with disabilities
- 6.4.12 Implement interventions to address family crises in which persons with disabilities exist, and provide counselling and support to families and care providers under such circumstances
- 6.4.13 Provide services and other facilities (e.g. day centres, cultural centres, self-expression groups) to provide support for persons with disabilities and their families
- 6.4.14 Benefit from Islamic values and teachings with a view to promoting and encouraging people and families on the importance of caregiving for persons with disabilities
- 6.4.15 Take steps to ensure the provision of assistance to persons with disabilities in cases where informal support is unavailable, has been lost, or is not desired
- 6.4.16 Develop a human resource strategy for disability, including the identification of gaps, specification of needs, training requirements and core competencies for families, care givers and officials

**STRATEGIC GOAL 6.5:** Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural, recreational, sports and leisure activities

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Active participation in cultural, recreational, sports and leisure activities could help persons with disabilities to socialize and improve their mental and physical wellbeing. In this context, there is a need to pay more attention to organizing such activities with a disability-inclusive perspective to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities and improve their quality of life.

### **Actions**

- 6.5.1 Develop sports, recreational and leisure activities for persons with disabilities
- 6.5.2 Provide training on organizing disability-inclusive sports, recreational and leisure activities as well raise awareness on the importance of organizing such activities
- 6.5.3 Promote inclusive socio-cultural activities with a view to improving the social integration and participation of persons with disabilities

## 4.7 Disasters and Humanitarian Emergencies

Persons with disabilities face a number of challenges in their daily lives, which could be further exacerbated by extraordinary circumstances such as the natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. During such difficult times, availability and access to critical services such as healthcare, rehabilitation transport and education become even more difficult for this group of people. In addition, the risk of exploitation and violence also goes up as social protection mechanisms may not work as in normal times. To this end, the following strategic goals can be proposed to design and implement comprehensive policies and programmes to increase preparedness and response capacities.

- **SG 7.1:** Increase awareness about disasters and humanitarian emergencies
- **SG 7.2:** Develop disaster and humanitarian emergencies plan with an inclusive approach
- **SG 7.3** Develop policies and programmes on reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation keeping in view the accessibility of persons with disabilities
- **SG 7.4:** Improve the care services for persons with disabilities in situations of disaster and humanitarian emergencies

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 7.1:** Increase awareness about disasters and humanitarian emergencies

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Raising awareness about disasters and humanitarian emergencies is an important step forward to increasing resilience and preparedness before the outbreak of any crisis. In addition, such activities help stakeholders to be more responsive and effective when disasters and humanitarian emergencies occur.

#### **Actions**

**7.1.1** Increase the awareness of persons with disabilities before, during and after disasters and humanitarian emergencies, in line with the principle of “self-help”

**7.1.2** Raise the awareness of policymakers about special needs of persons with disabilities before, during and after disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**7.1.3** Prepare special evacuation, rescue and resettlement guides for persons with disabilities

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 7.2:** Develop disaster and humanitarian emergencies plan with an inclusive approach

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Planning for services during disasters and humanitarian emergencies is essential to develop timely responses and cater to the needs of persons with disabilities. Such plans should be developed in an inclusive way and carefully frame how persons with disabilities can be included in the planning and implementation phases.

#### **Actions**

**7.2.1** Research and report on good practices on the measures to be taken for persons with disabilities by considering their disability in case of disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**7.2.2** Conduct impact and gap analysis of exiting national plan vis-a-vis international standards and share and discuss the results with the relevant stakeholders

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 7.3:** Develop policies and programmes on reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation keeping in view the accessibility of persons with disabilities

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Persons with disabilities need special services in many walks of life. In particular, specially designed buildings or facilities that ease their access is very important. In this respect, policymakers need to draw policies on reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation works with a view to making them more accessible for persons with disabilities.

### **Actions**

**7.3.1** Conduct needs analysis to identify disability-inclusive practices in reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation after disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**7.3.2** Raise awareness and provide guidance for relevant stakeholders on disability-inclusive practices in reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation after disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**STRATEGIC GOAL 7.4:** Improve the care services for persons with disabilities in situations of disaster and humanitarian emergencies

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Persons with disabilities tend to face an increased number of challenges in situations of disaster and humanitarian emergencies. In particular, care services for them need to be provided in a way to make them accessible to all. New solutions and services depending on the situation and intensity of crises could also be developed to cater to the specific needs that arise during such difficult times.

### **Actions**

**7.4.1** Improve the identification and targeting of persons with disabilities in situations of disaster and humanitarian emergencies

**7.4.2** Strengthen the response to the needs of persons with disabilities in situations of disaster and humanitarian emergencies

**7.4.3** Build the resilience of persons with disabilities and their respective families in areas of disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**7.4.4** Improve access of persons with disabilities to priority goods and services like food, shelter, hygiene and health and rehabilitation services in areas of disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**7.4.5** Strengthen the partnership between humanitarian actors and organizations working for the persons with disabilities

**7.4.6** Establish monitoring and coordination mechanisms for the care of persons with disabilities in situations of disasters and humanitarian emergencies

**7.4.7** Ensure adequate provision of financial resources to assist persons with disabilities in situations of disasters and humanitarian emergencies in OIC Member States

## **5. THE WAY FORWARD**

Persons with disabilities have made great contributions to the development of their countries in various forms throughout their life span. Given their potential, the prevailing level of their contributions and participation in socio-economic life is very limited in OIC countries due to a number of reasons from weak institutional arrangements to underinvested physical infrastructure. As a result, the untapped potentials of persons with disabilities in developing countries including OIC countries emerge as an important developmental challenge.

On the other hand, as the official statistics reveal, the number of persons with disabilities in OIC countries has been on the rise over the last decades. This upward trend has started to put pressure on policymakers on how to best address this daunting task and continue to provide good quality services for the growing number of persons with disabilities so that they can sustain their life in comfort. In order to ensure the best living standards and improve the well-being of persons with disabilities, OIC countries need to take action and implement a set of policies both at the national as well as intra-OIC cooperation levels.

This requires OIC countries to make a commitment by taking significant steps in policymaking on persons with disabilities. Such commitment should involve utilization of concerted action frameworks including experience sharing and transfer of knowledge that would lead to the development of constructive cooperation among the relevant fields of capacity building, education, rehabilitation and care services. Moreover, national strategies on persons with disabilities need to be aligned with contemporary needs and developments to enhance their strategic capabilities and capacities both for the short- and long-terms.

While developing and implementing such a Plan of Action, it is highly important to benefit from the experiences, instruments, and mechanisms of regional and international institutions (e.g. UN, WHO, World Bank) as well as national-level initiatives of OIC member countries. In this picture, it is also imperative to benefit from the experiences of civil society organizations active in this domain.

On the other hand, improving the state of persons with disabilities in OIC countries requires the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms among stakeholders at the national level. It is also critical to develop such coordination mechanisms at the intra-OIC level with the participation of relevant OIC institutions as well as OIC Member States under the coordination of the OIC General Secretariat for the betterment of persons with disabilities.

The concerted efforts need to be formulated in a way to implement policy-actions on persons with disabilities in a timely and coordinated manner. The coordination mechanism should be coupled with a reporting system in order to collect up-to-date information about planned and completed activities/policies undertaken by OIC countries as well as relevant OIC institutions. OIC countries should also develop their capacities to collect, collate and report disaggregated data on persons with disabilities that would allow to monitor discrepancies such as female versus male, rural versus urban, and youth versus elderly populations.

Persons with disabilities have great potential to help achieve sustainable development in OIC countries given their stock of knowledge, experience and skillset. By neglecting such a significant segment of a society and without addressing the challenges faced by them, it is not likely that member countries will achieve sustainable development. It is therefore essential to design strategies and take policy actions immediately to improve their status. The OIC General Secretariat, relevant OIC Institutions and member countries need to develop, adopt and implement a Plan of Action at the OIC level in order to provide proper guidance and list action points with a view to improving the well-being of persons with disabilities living in OIC countries as quickly as possible. It is hoped that adoption of the OIC Plan of Action on Persons with Disabilities would be instrumental in addressing the current and emerging challenges related to persons with disabilities in OIC countries.