



G3ict The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs
A Flagship Advocacy Initiative of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development

ICT ACCESSIBILITY SELF-ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

**Evaluation of Country Compliance
With the Dispositions of the
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
On Accessibility of Information and Communication Technologies**

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Purpose of the Country ICT Accessibility Self-Assessment Framework

This Booklet for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) Accessibility Self-Assessment Framework is based on the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly those provisions that deal with ICT matters. The overall purpose of the Framework is to help countries and their citizens look across all components and facets of their States' public (and private) operations in an effort to ascertain 'compliance' with the ICT mandates of the CRPD.

How this Booklet and the ICT Accessibility Self-assessment can be useful

The Booklet is designed to encourage government policymakers and citizen leaders to engage their countries in striving for laws, policies, programs and practices that when implemented result in more: (a) accessible ICT infrastructure, (b) affordable ICT, and (c) available and effective assistive technology.

What the CRPD is, and what it says about ICT

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 13, 2006. A major milestone for all persons living with disabilities around the world, it is the 8th Universal Convention on Human Rights and the first of this millennium. 139 countries have signed it as of March 2009 and 50 have ratified it, making it an enforceable legal instrument since May 5, 2008 when the 20th ratification occurred.

The Convention defines for the first time in the context of a comprehensive international legal instrument the rights of more than 600 million people with life-altering disabilities, two thirds of which live in developing countries.

A very innovative component of the CRPD relates to dispositions concerning ICTs – Information and Communications Technologies - both from a digital accessibility and assistive technologies standpoint. Indeed, for the first time, ICT accessibility is defined as an integral part of Accessibility Rights, on par with accessibility to the physical environment and transportation: « *To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems... » [\(article 9\)](#).*

As a result of this definition of Accessibility, all the dispositions of the Convention defining the rights of persons with disabilities in specific areas of activity and which include the terms « accessible » or « accessibility » apply to all ICT products and ICT

based applications and services, a far reaching implication for industry, governments and civil society.

Meanwhile, affordability is stated as an important underlying objective across the text of the CRPD to ensure that accessible and assistive technologies are not priced out of reach for persons living with disabilities, who are often economically disadvantaged, especially in developing nations.

There are three main types of mandates which States have to consider as they align their local legislation, regulations and programs with the dispositions of the CRPD:

1 – Accessibility mandates for: E-Government, Employment, Education, Media & Internet, Consumer Services, Freedom of Expression, Emergency Response, Personal Mobility, Independent Living, Culture & Leisure.

2 – Facilitating Assistive Technologies for Education, Emergency Response, Personal, Mobility and Independent Living.

3 – Supporting ICT Vendors R & D via public-private partnerships for assistive technologies applications.

In addition, a far reaching disposition of the CRPD is that accessibility mandates cover private sector services, including ICT-based services. It is the responsibility of States, in cooperation with civil society and industry to define the required solutions in their respective jurisdictions.

What a Self-assessment is and why a country should conduct one

One fundamental goal of States that have ratified the CRPD is to take ownership of their compliance obligations under the treaty that they have signed. Through the Self-assessment process, ratifying States -- as well as States planning to ratify the CRPD -- and local stakeholders, should take the initiative to evaluate their own progress toward domestic conformity with the CRPD's (ICT) treaty standards. Self-assessment can be the most constructive way to discover problem areas in extant methods of CRPD implementation. The gaps between the reality of the national situation and CRPD requirements should become clear when States scrutinize policy and practice to develop their self-assessment reports. After all, the practical effects of CRPD obligations depend on state actors as all roads lead back to State responsibility.

Self-assessment results and reports can be used to mobilize concerned actors within States to work together to promote the CRPD agenda, especially if various governmental agencies, disabled persons organizations (DPOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) contribute to the Self-assessment and reporting process. When working toward improved compliance with treaty provisions, concerned organizations should be involved in investigating and monitoring domestic situations. Self-assessment

may facilitate advocacy and needed improvement on many levels by encouraging cooperation among concerned actors within States.

Who is involved in conducting and participating in the Self-assessment

In collecting data for the Self-assessment, a State may wish to rely on in-country local assessment teams to complete a formal questionnaire review, in most cases with the assistance of a local lawyer or expert with a mastery of the country's laws, or preferably someone with experience working on issues involving persons with disabilities -- e.g., representative Disabled Persons Organizations leaders.

The Self-assessment team should be expected to justify its answers to specific questions during the completion of the questionnaire. Without a proper justification, the assignment of a score is largely meaningless. In some cases, for example, it will be clear from a simple reading of the excerpted language of the law/legislation/policy that a country's compliance with a particular article is poor or exemplary. But this may not always be the case, and in any event, it cannot be assumed that, based on the text alone, compliance (or non-compliance) will be apparent to a reader with little or no familiarity with a particular country or to someone from a country with a different legal tradition.

How the ICT Accessibility Self-assessment was developed

There were three general steps used in the methodological approach relied on for the development of the Self-assessment:

1. The G3ict Research Committee reviewed the CRPD to identify all provisions that included the terms: communications, technology, information or information services, accommodation, and access, accessible, and accessibility since Article 9 includes ICTs in its definition of accessibility. Once identified, the Committee created an exhaustive listing which included these provisions redrafted as "self-assessment" items (N=50 items) and which also called for an evidentiary justification for the score given for every item. This has been referred to as the Module #1 self-assessment Framework (of a country's commitments to the CRPD).
2. Next, the Committee created a 2nd measurement scoring Framework (N=11 items), which the Committee perceived to represent the basic capacity of a country to implement the ICT provisions of the CRPD identified for the Module #1. This has been referred to as the Module # 2 self-assessment Framework.
3. Finally, the Committee created a 3rd measurement scoring Framework (N=10 items), which it perceived to represent the systemic and/or individual impact(s) of a country's fulfillment of the ICT provisions of the CRPD. This has been referred to as the Module #3 self-assessment Framework.

The stages or steps involved in the ICT Self-assessment

The basic activity for the Self-assessment includes the following tasks:

Identify the country commitments: This activity requires identifying the political commitments made with respect to: the national laws, policies, programs and plans of action that are relevant to the ICT provisions under analysis; and, the formal status of the country's government legal and policy regime in relation to those ICT commitments. [Module #1]

Identify the capacity/infrastructure for implementation: This involves examining the country's capacity to implement the ICT provisions under analysis, including the: digital/technology resources available, financial resources available, the human resources available and other factors – such as business, social, and cultural – that may limit or expand implementation capacity. [Module #2]

Assess the country's implementation and impact: This requires the development and application of institutional measures to ensure that legal and policy changes are implemented in actual practice. In particular, it looks at the (a) availability, accessibility, and affordability of ICTs and assistive technologies (ATs), (b) availability, accessibility and quality of information and information services, and (c) impact of 'a' and 'b' on the lives of persons with disabilities. [Module #3]

Draw links between commitment and implementation/impact: This activity involves comparing the country's commitments to the CRPD with the actual implementation and impact found by the self-assessment. The purpose of linking the implementation and impacts to specific legal and policy obligations is to identify the results which the country should focus on. This also involves linking the country's capacity to implement the CRPD obligations and identifying the main obstacles the country will have in meeting those obligations. What CRPD commitments have not been achieved by the country? What capacity factors are related to those unfulfilled gaps?

Generate recommendations and the action plan: This activity involves using the results of the above analysis to work with multiple stakeholders on developing proposals for legal, policy and program changes. It involves generating strategies and recommendations for preparing a plan of action to work with legislators, regulators and civil society for improvement of its public laws, policies and programs as well as for necessary private sector changes.

How the results of a Self-assessment can be interpreted

An in-country assessment team ensures a good deal of objectivity in the results by its reliance on an evidence-base to justify answer to the Self-assessment Framework's questions. For each CRPD ICT provision and related assessment question presented, the team may only score an answer of "Yes" if it can also provide a justifying source

document as evidence of the State's fulfillment of a CRPD-mandated commitment. Once all Self-assessment questions have been duly scored by the in-country assessment team it is then time for the team to meet with a designated State consensus planning group to discuss and interpret the results.

States that have conducted the Self-assessment for the first time should consider the scores as baseline results, and use a consensus group with key stakeholders to determine how specifically the findings need to be used.

How the results of a Self-assessment can be used

The ultimate focus of the Self-assessment is to identify improvement areas that will be developed into further action plans. It is important to keep in mind that the Self-assessment itself only gives a map of where the State stands right now in relation to the CRPD, driving the actions will be the next step. Integrating the results from Self-assessment into public (and private) sector planning is a prerequisite to make the efforts produce results.

Members of the in-country assessment team and key State leaders and stakeholders should be gathered to learn of, and then discuss, the results from the Self-assessment and agree on the strengths and areas for improvements of the State.

There are three main objectives for this consensus building process, namely, to:

- 1) Ensure that everyone views the State's Self-assessment results in an objective and holistic perspective
- 2) Agree on strengths and areas for improvement and
- 3) To prioritize areas for improvement that will be taken into further action planning.

The development of such consensus among stakeholders on gaps and opportunities will facilitate the development of policies or programs by government or voluntary initiatives by Civil Society and Industry which ultimately will align a country with the dispositions of the CRPD.

The following pages include fill-in forms for ease of use. If you wish to receive a text only version of this document, please contact:
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