



Taking part in decision-making: a guide for inclusion

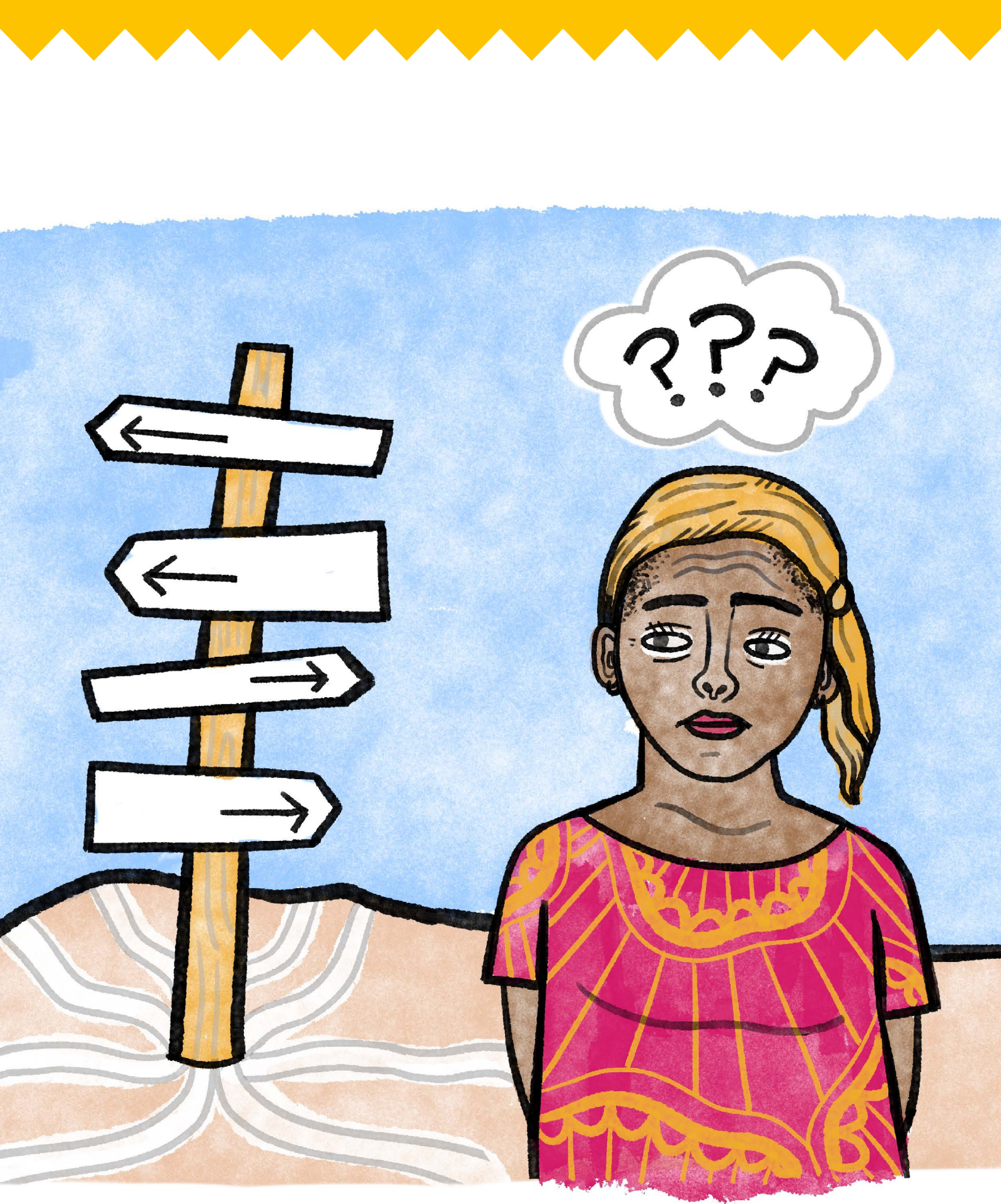


Irish Aid
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Inclusion
international



Sightsavers



Making choices

Like everyone, I have rights. Everyone has the right to make their own choices. This is important because you know what is best for you and it allows you to have control over your life.

For example, people make choices about:

- When to sleep
- What they wear
- Where they live
- Their school
- What they want to eat
- What activities they can do
- Who their friends are

Sometimes, you have different options, and making choices can be difficult. Sometimes you can be required to make a choice.

Sometimes, you might need help making choices.



What does help with making choices look like?

If you've never had the opportunity to make many decisions before, it can be difficult. It may take time and help for you to think about what you want. Supported decision-making is when someone helps you think through all your possibilities. This person is called a "support person."

It can be a family member, a friend, or someone whose role is to help you.

It can be one person or a group of people.

This should be someone:

- You trust
- Who can support you calmly without getting angry
- Who knows and respects your rights
- Who is kind and patient
- Who listens to you and knows you well
- Who is available when you need them

This person can help you:

- Understand the choices available to you
- Make your own decision
- Think about what you like and don't like
- Consider what might happen if you make a certain decision
- Communicate your decision to others

This person helps you think through your options, but it's always you who makes the final choice.

Your support person might not agree with what you choose, but it's your decision.

You might sometimes make the wrong choice – that's okay! Everyone makes the wrong choice sometimes. It helps us learn what we should do differently next time.

You have the right to choose who supports you in making decisions.

If you feel that the person supporting you isn't helping you, you can choose someone else to support you. It's your choice!



What happens if someone doesn't respect my decisions?

Sometimes, you might make a choice, but someone else may disagree with what you decided. For example, if your doctor wants your parents to make decisions about your health for you. Sometimes, other people make decisions for people with intellectual disabilities.

When a person feels excluded because their decisions are not respected, it can affect them in different ways, such as:

- Loss of self-esteem
- Lack of personal fulfilment
- Outbursts of anger and aggression
- A feeling of social rejection

If this happens to you, you can:

1. Talk to your family – make sure they know you have the right to make your own choices.

Even if the law says that someone in your family can make decisions for you, they still need to ask you what you want. You should be involved in the decisions about your life.

Ask your family to support your choices and respect the things you like.

2. Try to change the law – when laws are unfair, and prevent us from making our own choices, we can try to change them.

You can ask for help from a disabled persons' organization to do this.

You can gather with other people with intellectual disabilities to ask the government to change something.

Other people may make decisions for individuals with intellectual disabilities because these people believe that you cannot make good and fair decisions for yourselves.

They may think they know better than you or that they are protecting you.

They may think you are not capable.

Some people might force you to make a decision that you don't agree with or that makes you uncomfortable.

If this happens, you should ask for help from someone you trust and who knows your rights.

This could be a family member, a friend, a organisation of people with disabilities, or even the police.



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