



Global Disability Summit

Explained

What is the Global Disability Summit?

The Global Disability Summit (GDS) is an event and a process that takes place every three years, bringing together governments, international institutions like the World Bank, UN agencies, the private sector, civil society organisations, and organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs).

The GDS is a space for high-level discussions around disability inclusion, how to monitor and track the inclusion of persons with disabilities worldwide, and how to work with governments towards disability inclusion.



Why does the Global Disability Summit matter?

Governments around the world use the Global Disability Summit (GDS) to announce their plans to make change in their countries for people with disabilities through “commitments.”

These commitments are often focused on making things like schools, workplaces, and public spaces more accessible, ensuring that people with disabilities get the support they need, and promoting their rights. While the Global Disability Summit may have some specific topics to focus on, the commitments could be on any topic related to disability inclusion.

With governments paying attention to disability inclusion in the lead-up to the GDS, this is an important advocacy moment for organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to push their governments for inclusive policies and programmes.

A commitment is a promise made by governments, organisations, or other stakeholders to address key issues for people with intellectual disabilities. Commitments are promises to take clear actions that help support the big goals of including people with disabilities and ensuring their rights.



A Shared Voice for Inclusion at GDS

How Inclusion International Members Can Push for a Global Agenda for Inclusion

When organisations of persons with intellectual disabilities from different regions unite and advocate for the same key issues, it creates a stronger, more coordinated push for change. By speaking with a collective voice, the network can create a bigger impact, with global commitments making real change for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

In the lead-up to the Global Disability Summit, the Inclusion International network is working together to call on their governments around the world to:

Commit to...	By...
Access to living in the community for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing institutions • Supporting people with intellectual disabilities and family caregivers with services and support, including respite services • Ensuring all community-based services - such as health services, employment services, and other community supports - are fully inclusive and accessible to all
Providing quality inclusive education in mainstream schools for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving away from segregated classrooms and schools • Introducing policies that ensure no child with a disability can be turned away from school • Investing in teacher training to ensure all teachers are able to teach all learners
Ensuring the right to decision-making for all people with intellectual disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolishing guardianship systems • Making supported decision-making mechanisms available • Support OPDs to ensure resources and training is available for supporters to help them understand how to give good support
Delivering inclusive social protection systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing income supports to ensure people with intellectual disabilities and their families are meeting their specific needs • Addressing disability extra costs as distinct payments on top of basic income supports • Making systems to apply for social protection programmes accessible and easy to navigate
No one left behind in humanitarian response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including people with intellectual disabilities and their families in designing disaster preparedness and response plans • Ensuring emergency information is available in easy to understand and accessible formats



Building Inclusive Commitments

How to Use the GDS Commitments Process to Advocate for Inclusion

Organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) can use the GDS commitments process as a strategy to advocate for real change, working with different allies and partners. You can find [examples of past commitments on the GDS Portal](#) for inspiration!

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Influencing your Government's Commitments

Governments around the world will have teams working on designing their commitments, and OPDs can connect with those government officials to encourage and support them to make policy commitments that are most needed for people with intellectual disabilities.

To influence your government's commitments:

Identify specific changes

Identify changes that would improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities. For example, if you notice that people with intellectual disabilities struggle to access healthcare services, you might want to advocate for better inclusive healthcare.

Share your ideas with government officials

This could involve meeting with policymakers, writing letters, presenting examples from other countries, or sharing sets of recommendations. Remember that it helps to be able to back up your suggestion with a plan - if you can also offer guidance on how this commitment could be implemented, your government is more likely to agree!

Think about the policy solution

What do you want your government to do to solve this problem? For instance, if the issue is health care, you might think about a law that guarantees people with intellectual disabilities the right to accessible healthcare, or propose a government scheme to train healthcare professionals on inclusive communication.

Monitor

To follow up on how these commitments are being put into action, regularly check in with the government to see if they are making the promised changes. You can ask for updates, review progress reports, and keep track of whether the changes are actually happening. It's also helpful to stay in touch with other organisations or groups working on similar goals to share information and support each other.



Building Inclusive Commitments

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Supporting Civil Society Organisations to make Commitments

Other civil society organisations can also make commitments ahead of the Global Disability Summit - whether they are disability focused organisations or not. This is an opportunity for OPDs to encourage their allies or partners to commit to better inclusion in their organisations.

Identify allies

Cross-disability organisations will likely already be considering making commitments, but other civil society organisations outside of the disability space may not be familiar with the Global Disability Summit. Identify which partner organisations would be receptive to a conversation about how to be more inclusive, and decide who to approach about making a commitment.

Share your idea

Open a conversation with the organisation about how they can use the GDS commitments process to be a better ally to people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Remember that it helps to be able to back up your suggestion with a plan - including how your organisation can support them or be a partner in helping them implement this commitment.

Find your ask

How could this organisation be a better ally? For example, if you are approaching a cross-disability organisation, you might want to ask them to commit to focus on a key issue for people with intellectual disabilities that isn't getting enough attention in their advocacy work. For a non-disability organisation, you might want to ask them to think about commitments to more inclusive ways of working, like producing more easy to understand materials or running inclusive meetings in line with the [Listen Include Respect guidelines](#).

Support

Once the commitment is made, stay in touch! Support the organisation - that might look like sharing context on issues impacting people with intellectual disabilities and their families, giving training, or something else!





Building Inclusive Commitments

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Making your own Commitment

Organisations representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families can also make commitments ahead of the Global Disability Summit. These commitments can be about policy change you want to push for, direct support for people with intellectual disabilities you want to deliver, or ways of working in your organisation such as projects you are working on.

Making a commitment is an important opportunity to reflect on how you want to grow as an organisation. For example you could think about:

- How can we make sure people with intellectual disabilities are better represented in our governance?
- What can we do to make our programmes or work more inclusive and accessible?

The [Listen Include Respect Guidelines](#) can be a helpful resource for thinking through inclusive ways of working to commit to!



Engagement of People with Intellectual Disabilities in GDS Processes

Remember that the commitments process is just one part of the Global Disability Summit process - there are regional consultations and engagements with people with disabilities and their organisations in the lead up to the event, such as the civil society forum and there is the Summit event itself.

Historically, people with intellectual disabilities have not been meaningfully included in Global Disability Summit (GDS) processes - consultations and events are not inclusive, lacking easy to understand materials, clear communication, or appropriate timelines for preparation. As a result, people with intellectual disabilities are left behind.

The Inclusion International network is advocating for:

- Consultation with people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Global Disability Summit processes
- Easy to understand and other accessible materials that explain the GDS process
- Full inclusion at all GDS events - in line with the [Listen Include Respect Guidelines](#)