

Global Progress by CRPD States Parties

This report, based on the 2017 - 2018 2018 DARE Index data collection and analysis, is designed to provide an overall assessment of the progress made by States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in implementing its provisions on the accessibility of information and communication technologies – also referred to as digital accessibility.

An effort is made in each section to point out to steps that countries may take to accelerate their progress in making digital products and services available to Persons with Disabilities.

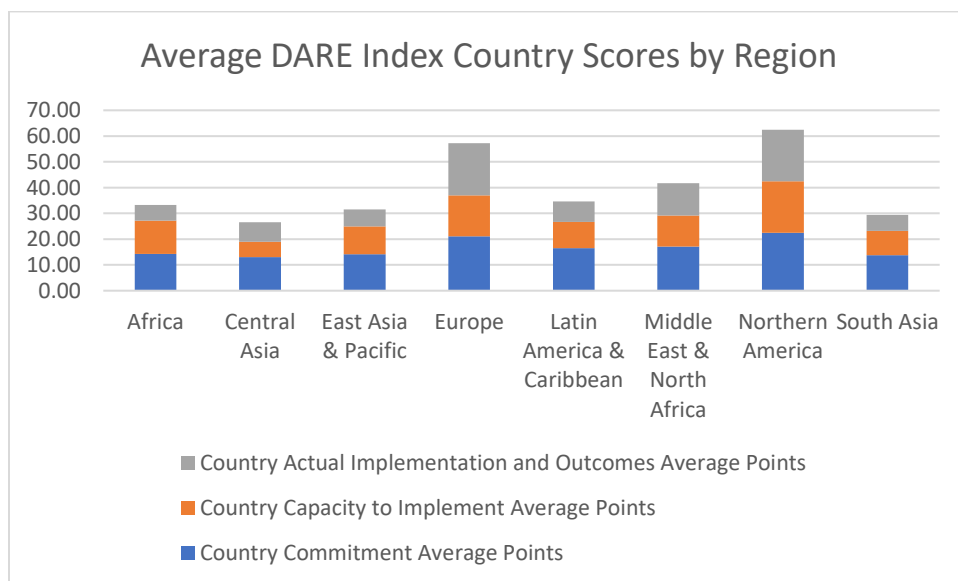
Regional Results

Progress by regions covers a variety of situations related to penetration of digital technologies and services, level of economic development and period when efforts to implement digital accessibility started.

To assess the global progress accomplished, it is worth noting the significant level of commitments made by countries around the world. However, for a vast majority of countries, capacity to implement is lagging.

The net result is a weak level of outcomes across the board, with Northern America and Europe outperforming the rest of the world both in terms of actual outcomes for persons with disabilities and their overall DARE Index score.

Figure 1 - Average DARE Index Country Scores by Region



Across all regions, capacity to implement scores are lower than commitment scores while levels of implementation and outcomes vary significantly. The Middle East and North Africa scores are the next best after Northern America and Europe due to the good performance of Oman, Qatar, Israel and Egypt.

Results by Levels of Income per Capita

Progress of digital accessibility in countries is clearly correlated to their level of economic development as indicated by the cross tabulation of the DARE Index data by level of income per capita.

It is important while interpreting those results to factor in the lesser penetration of information technologies in relation to lower levels of income per capita, hence making digital accessibility a lower priority – at least for now – for local decision makers. In fact, in areas such as television, mobile and ICTs in education, which are widespread in all countries, progresses are achieved in countries with low levels of income per capita.

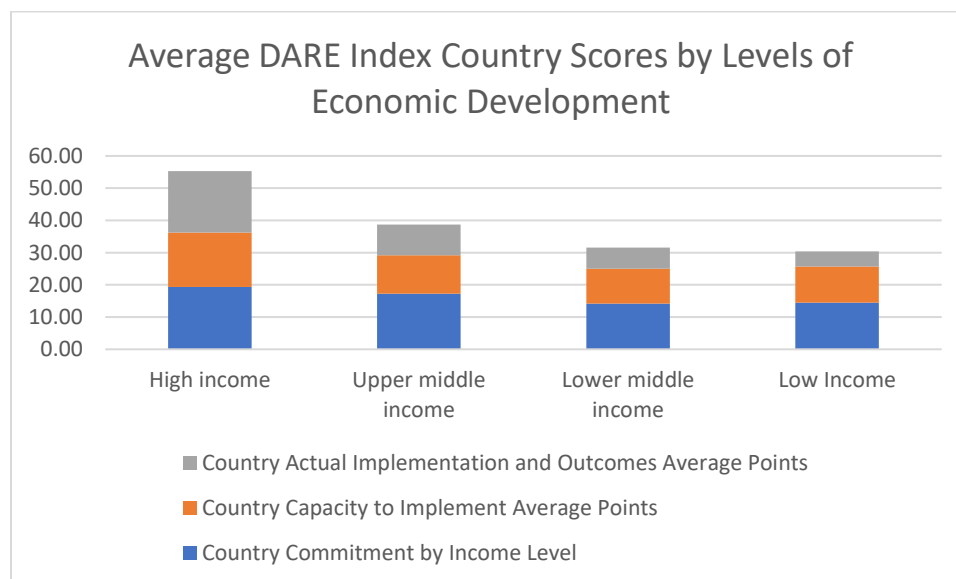
Detailed results also show that countries commitments and capacity to implement scores are less influenced by levels of income than outcomes. This points out to the relative readiness of many countries to develop digital accessibility policies and programs including by enrolling the support of civil society stakeholders involved in digital products and services.

Areas which can be acted upon to accelerate progress are:

- The consultation and participation of persons with disabilities in developing and monitoring policies and programs and
- Capacity building of local stakeholders in matters of digital accessibility.

While the first element can be addressed by governments at little if any cost, capacity building is a more complex challenge due to limited international cooperation resources and language barriers to access technical information.

Figure 2 - Average DARE Index Country Scores by Level of Economic Development



Country Commitments Analysis

The following results show the considerable impact of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the progress of countries legislations, policies and regulations. For instance, whereas a minority of countries had a general legislation protecting the rights of Persons with Disabilities prior to 2006, 84% today do, a remarkable progress achieved in a few years. Similarly, legal definitions such as “Reasonable Accommodation”, which merely existed in the legislation of five countries prior to the CRPD launch, is now present in almost two-third of the countries surveyed for the DARE Index.

Table 1 - Progress of countries in commitments supporting digital accessibility

| COUNTRY COMMITMENT | GLOBAL AVERAGE % OF COUNTRIES WITH LAW/REGULATION/POLICY IN PLACE |
|--|---|
| CRPD RATIFICATION | 93% |
| GENERAL LAW PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES | 84% |
| REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION DEFINED | 63% |
| DEFINITION OF ACCESSIBILITY INCLUDES ICTS | 48% |
| UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION INCLUDES PWDS | 35% |
| COUNTRY COMMITMENTS GLOBAL AVERAGE IN PERCENTAGE | <u>65%</u> |

Commitments specifically to digital accessibility (or Accessibility of Information and Communication Technologies - ICTs) are also progressing with 48% of countries formally including ICTs in their definition of accessibility requirements compared to a handful when the CRPD was launched back in 2006. Continuous efforts are applied by Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, G3ict and United Nations affiliated organizations to promote the adoption of such definition by more countries, consistent with art. 9 of the CRPD.

Finally, only 35% of countries follow the recommendation of the ITU-G3ict Model ICT Accessibility report to include Persons with Disabilities in their Universal Service Obligation (USO) legislation. USOs are meant to equalize access to telecommunication services among all citizens, initially addressing coverage gaps in rural areas. Rural areas coverage, however, is better today given the progress of wireless networks. Thus, Universal Service Funds setup by USO legislations can re-allocate funds towards programs in support of accessibility, serving as very powerful funding mechanisms to close the accessibility gap for millions of persons with disabilities. In most countries, Universal Service Funds are financed by taxes on calls levied by telecom service providers, creating a predictable recurring revenue stream rather than annual budget items, a more reliable mode of funding for critical ongoing services such as Relay Services for the Deaf or supporting mobile services for various types of disabilities.

Country Capacity to Implement Analysis

Table 2 - Countries capacity to implement digital accessibility

| COUNTRY CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT | GLOBAL AVERAGE OF COUNTRIES WITH KEY IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES OR PROCESSES |
|--|--|
| GOVERNMENT AGENCY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES | 84% |
| GOVERNMENT AGENCY FOR ICT | 69% |
| PROCESS TO INVOLVE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN POLICY MAKING ON ICT ACCESSIBILITY | 24% |
| PARTICIPATION IN STANDARD DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS | 39% |
| ICT ACCESSIBILITY COURSES AVAILABLE AT MAJOR UNIVERSITIES IN THE COUNTRY | 36% |
| COUNTRY CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT GLOBAL PROGRESS AVERAGE IN PERCENTAGE | <u>50%</u> |

The above indicators of progresses in capacity to implement reflect the main issues slowing down the implementation of digital accessibility in a majority of countries.

1. Lack of a process to involve Persons with Disabilities in policy making on ICT Accessibility

While many countries have government agencies overseeing Persons with Disabilities (84%) and Information and Communication Technologies (69%), less than a quarter (24%) involve persons with Disabilities in the policy making and monitoring for digital accessibility. This situation is inconsistent with CRPD article 4.3:

“In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.”

This situation is also inconsistent with the ITU-G3ict Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report which details processes that can be implemented to involve Persons with Disabilities.

Furthermore, statistical analysis and anecdotal evidence show that unless organizations of persons with disabilities are involved in the development of policies and programs, those are likely to fail addressing their requirements adequately. And without the involvement of Persons with Disabilities in monitoring progress, those programs and policies are likely to fail and be discontinued. As part of its strategy, G3ict promotes the participation of organization of persons with disabilities in developing policies and programs and organizes capacity building programs to facilitate such participation.

2. Lack of Country Participation in Standard Development Organizations

Countries involvement in Standards Development Organizations is often correlated to a country size and level of economic development. Accessibility standards are a critical foundation for any program or policy in support of ICT accessibility. Furthermore, given the global nature of the Information and Communication Technologies market place, it is in the best interest of countries to align themselves with well recognized international standards such as WCAG or EN 301 549. It should be a priority for all stakeholders promoting digital accessibility to promote those standards and ensure that they are referenced by national accessibility policies and programs.

3. Lack of availability in ICT accessibility courses at country level

The fifth DARE Index capacity to implement variable checks if ICT accessibility courses are available at major universities in the country. Only 36% of countries have those available. For the other 64%, the level of know-how in matters of ICT accessibility in the country is likely very limited. This means among various factors, that students in 2/3 of countries continue to graduate in computer sciences or any other related discipline without having ever heard of ICT accessibility. Furthermore, employers who need to implement ICT accessibility need to close the gap by ensuring themselves that their personnel are trained in ICT accessibility. This also affects schools of education preparing future teachers which have to create or use routinely digital education material without having acquired the basic knowledge of accessibility issues they should have to accommodate students with disabilities.

Several organizations are trying to close this gap at an academic level, such as TeachAccess which develops a college level accessibility curriculum, or the accessible AMAC MOOC in the United States. Meanwhile, in Europe, MOOCs have also been launched for university level students and cooperate in matters of curriculum.

For organizations and professionals seeking training and certification in ICT accessibility, G3ict promotes the programs of the International Association of Accessibility Professionals and its certification framework, now embraced by academia, public and private organizations in more than 30 countries.

Countries seeking to promote digital accessibility can explore those various sources to jump start their efforts in developing their ICT accessibility know-how.

Global Levels of Implementation and Outcomes Analysis

The following table shows the global levels of implementation by ICT accessibility area. Across the board, 60.4% of countries do not have any policy in place for implementation of ICT accessibility. However, interestingly, only 2.6% report that they have a policy but that it's not implemented. This is in fact an encouraging sign which seems to indicate that countries do try to implement ICT accessibility policies once they are adopted.

Levels of implementation are globally very low with 37.2% only of countries in the process of implementing policies at various stages. The vast majority of those are either at a minimum level of implementation such as pilot projects (18.4%) or are at a partial level of implementation only (15.9%) deployment program is proceeding, but with still limited impact.

Table 3 - Global Levels of Implementation and Outcomes

| COUNTRY LEVELS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES | NO POLICY % | POLICY BUT NO IMPLEMENTATION % | MINIMUM LEVEL % | PARTIAL LEVEL % | SUBSTANTIAL LEVEL % | FULL LEVEL % |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| WEB | 55% | 1% | 19% | 19% | 5% | 0% |
| TV | 51% | 3% | 22% | 21% | 4% | 0% |
| MOBILE | 67% | 4% | 12% | 14% | 2% | 2% |
| E-BOOKS | 58% | 2% | 25% | 14% | 1% | 0% |
| PROMOTION OF INTERNET USAGE BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES | 65% | 2% | 18% | 15% | 0% | 0% |
| INCLUSIVE ICTS IN EDUCATION | 53% | 5% | 21% | 19% | 2% | 1% |
| ENABLING ICTS FOR EMPLOYMENT | 60% | 3% | 21% | 12% | 4% | 1% |
| E-GOVERNMENT AND SMART CITIES | 62% | 4% | 14% | 15% | 5% | 0% |
| ATS AND ICTS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING | 66% | 1% | 17% | 13% | 2% | 1% |
| PUBLIC PROCUREMENT | 67% | 1% | 15% | 16% | 0% | 0% |
| GLOBAL AVERAGE ALL AREAS OF ICTS | <u>60.4%</u> | <u>2.6%</u> | <u>18.4%</u> | <u>15.9%</u> | <u>2.5%</u> | <u>.5%</u> |

By area of ICT accessibility, the most advanced sectors on a global basis are by decreasing order of progress measured as % countries in the process of implementing policies at various stages are:

1. TV 47%
2. WEB 43%
3. INCLUSIVE ICTS IN EDUCATION 43%
4. E-BOOKS 40%
5. ENABLING ICTS FOR EMPLOYMENT 38%
6. E-GOVERNMENT AND SMART CITIES 34%
7. ATS AND ICTS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING 33%
8. PROMOTION OF INTERNET USAGE 33%
9. PUBLIC PROCUREMENT 31%
10. MOBILE 30%

Those numbers show momentum and are encouraging. However, the reality is that across all sectors, substantial or full levels of implementation only average 3%. Over the next few years, G3ict, with the support of organizations of persons with disabilities in States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, will continue to promote good practices and benchmark those progress at country level. It is hoped that by showing comparative data and potential progress among peer groups of countries, levels of implementation will progress more rapidly.