



# Bridging the Gap: advancing on the path of inclusion

Overview of the activity report 2018



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## They say about Bridging the Gap:



**“Through Bridging the Gap, the European Union is not only promoting the rights and the potential of people with disabilities, but building a better world for all”**

**Neven Mimica**

*European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development*



**“It is only by joining forces with a wide, diverse range of partners that true change can happen. We very much look forward to moving together to bridge the gaps for the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities”**

**Birgit Van Hout**

*Regional Representative for Europe, UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)*



**“Bridging the Gap provides countries with advice in disability budgeting and influence development partners to clearly allocate resources for disability inclusion”**

**Yetnebersh Nigussie**

*Lawyer and disability rights activists,  
winner of the 2007 Right Livelihood Award*



**“We need to shorten the distances. On the one hand, we have the CRPD and the SDGs. On the other, we have the reality of persons with disabilities’ inclusion in low- and middle-income countries. Bridging the gap between these two sides is a difficult but fascinating challenge”**

**Germán García Da Rosa**

*Director of Social Affairs and Public Administration of FIIAPP*

## What is Bridging the Gap?

Bridging the Gap (BtG) is a project funded by the European Union (EU) under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), Thematic Programme “Global Public Goods and Challenges”.

The project aims at increasing the inclusion of persons with disabilities at both the international and country level through more inclusive and accessible public policies and services.

BtG is a targeted thematic response to the requirement to make development cooperation accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities. This demand is an obligation for the European Union (EU) and Member States as parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and can have a significant impact in improving the social inclusion and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The initiative rests on two mutually reinforcing parts:

### Bridging the Gap-I

The first component works at the global level and aims to develop tools to promote the rights, participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in line with the CRPD. This will be achieved through the development of:

- Human rights indicators for the CRPD
- Guidelines for policymakers on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) informed by the CRPD
- Guidelines on data sources to populate indicators
- Training material on the use of these tools, including a free e-learning course

This component is led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and includes consultation with experts, UN agencies, civil society and academia.

In addition, five countries, Ethiopia, Jordan, Moldova, Nepal and Paraguay, takes part directly in the consultations and validation of the tools. Within these countries, the government focal points on disabilities, national statistics offices, national human rights institutions and organisations representing persons with disabilities are all included in the process.

### Bridging the Gap-II

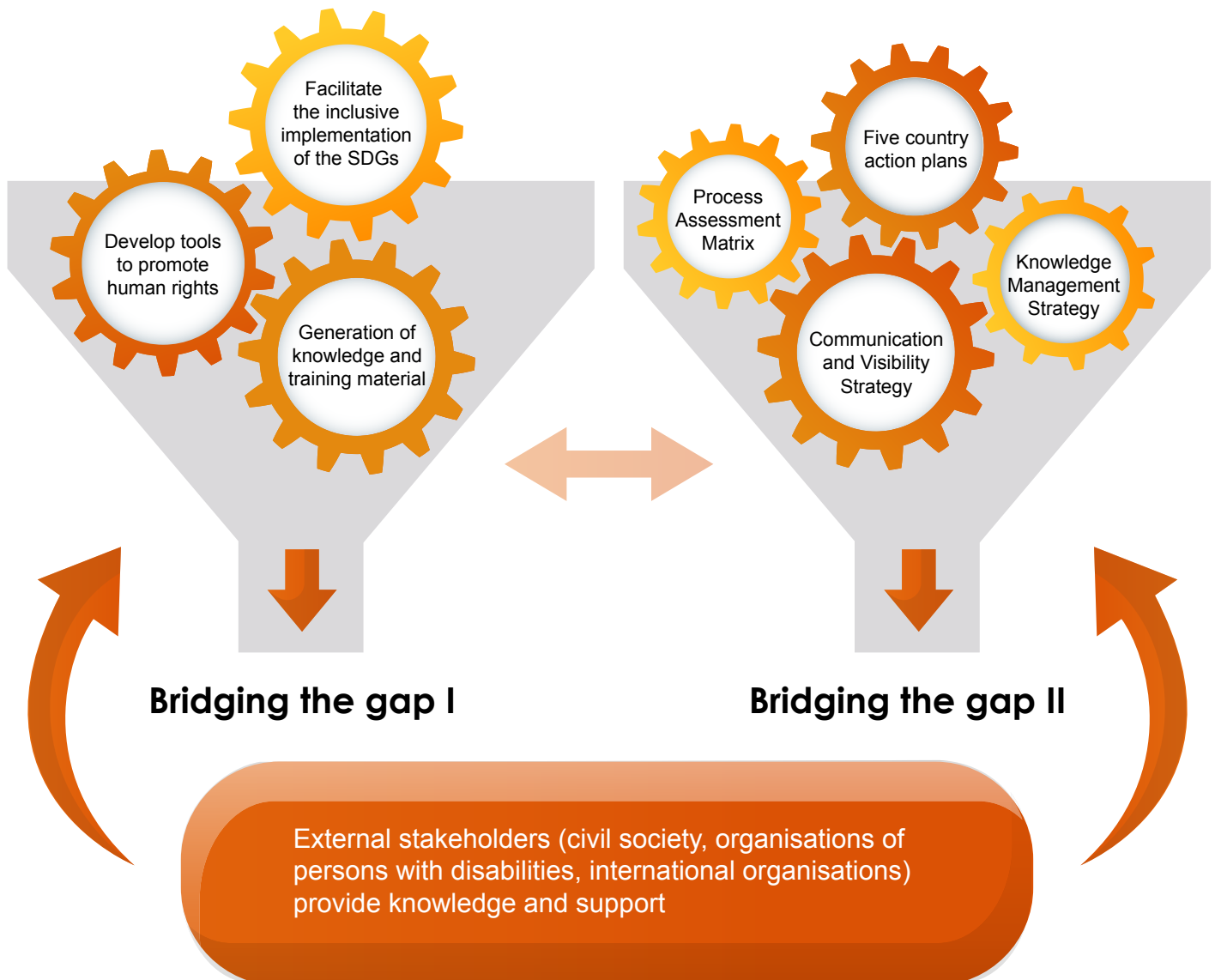
The second component focuses on strengthening the capacities of governments, national human rights institutions and organisations of persons with disabilities in five partner countries (Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Paraguay and Sudan), as well as mainstreaming disability in international cooperation.

Bridging the Gap-II supports the development, implementation and monitoring of disability-inclusive sector policies and services in a participatory manner and in line with the CRPD and the SDGs, namely in relation to: inclusive education, universal access to health and employment, livelihoods and social protection and data generation.

Based upon the country actions, the project advances a disability-inclusive development agenda by raising awareness and strengthening the capacities of development partners and civil society, in accordance with the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda. Critical issues such as the overall respect of human rights, universal accessibility, gender and social sustainable development are meaningfully incorporated into the project's work.

Bridging the Gap-II is implemented by a consortium led by the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP) and composed of the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (IADC), the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland also contribute to the initiative.

### Mutually reinforcing components



## What is this publication about?

After approximately two years of implementation of Component I and one of Component II, Bridging the Gap has managed to produce outputs and results which help advancing towards its objectives and setting the basis for future actions, initiatives and collaborations.

This publication is a non-exhaustive collection of the main results achieved by the project so far, intended at informing the public about Bridging the Gap and at raising awareness on its content and goals. The aim of this publication is to reach out a growing basis of interested stakeholders.



*Group photo at the 2nd project steering committee meeting in Madrid, Spain*

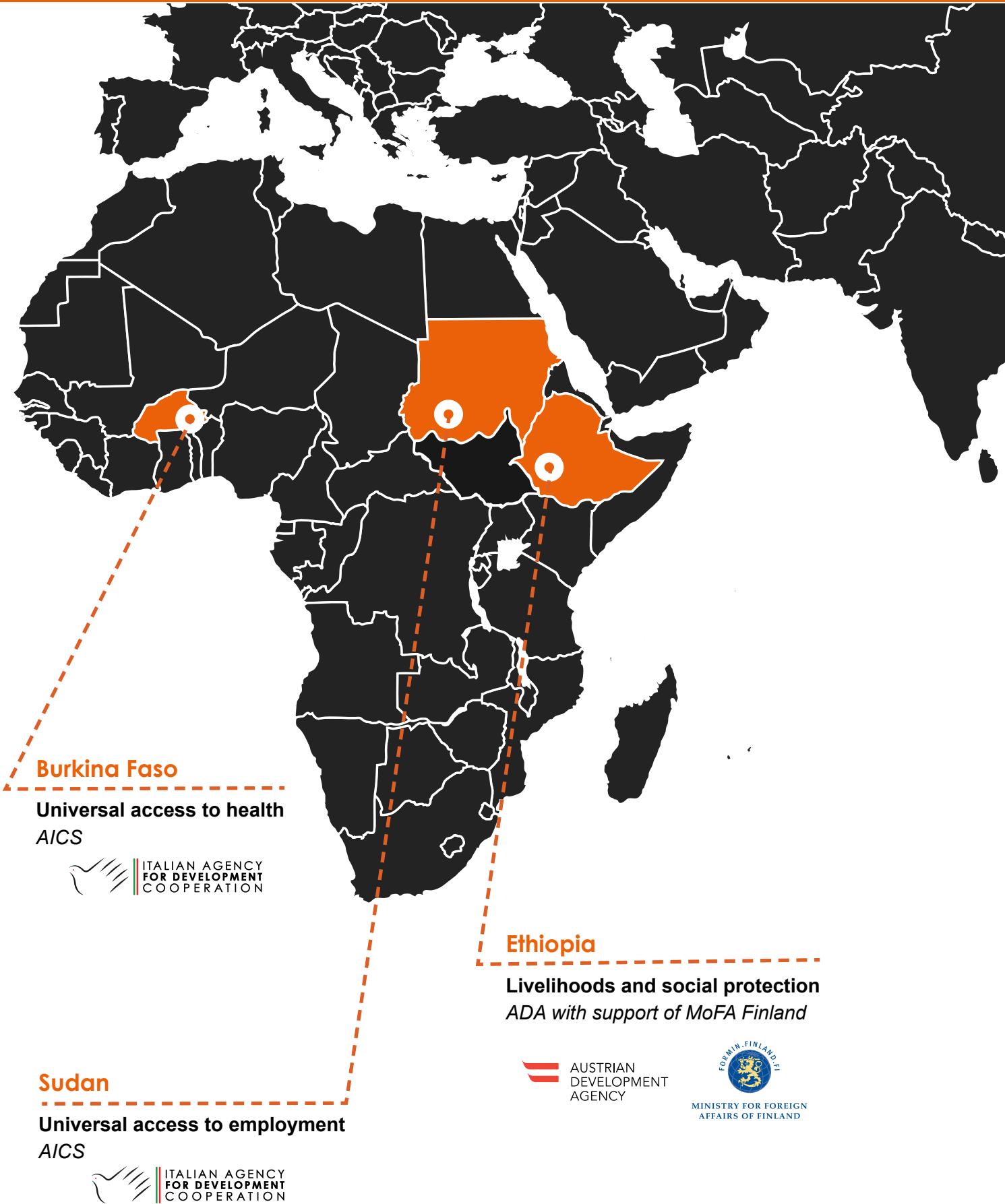


*Group photo at the 1st workshop of Bridging the Gap I in Geneva, Switzerland.*

## Beneficiary Countries







## Bridging the Gap I

During the second year of the Bridging the Gap I project (November 2017-November 2018), advances were made on developing human rights indicators on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Two meetings were held (19-20 October 2017, 19-20 April 2018) with participants from Ethiopia, Paraguay, Moldova, Jordan and Nepal, gathering representatives of the government disability focal point, national statistics office, national human rights institutions and organisations of persons with disabilities from those countries, as well as UN agencies and human rights experts. Following consultations, a first set of human rights indicators for roughly half of the Convention articles is being finalised.

Work has also commenced on drafting guidelines for policymakers concerning the implementation of the SDGs guided by the CRPD. These guidelines address each goal to highlight the steps policymakers need to take to achieve the targets of the goal as it relates to persons with disabilities, informed by the CRPD and other human rights standards and their elaboration by the CRPD Committee, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, other human rights mandates and UN agencies. Further, guidelines on data sources are currently being developed to inform the exercise of populating the indicators.



*Participants at the 2nd Bridging the Gap I's workshop in Geneva*

The project has triggered much interest by all stakeholders and confirmed a demand for such tools to facilitate the mission to leave no one behind. During the second year, the project was presented and discussed with various organisations of persons with disabilities and national human rights institutions visiting Geneva as well as at the following fora:

- Leave no one behind! International development cooperation and inclusion organised by the City of Vienna, Association Südwind, Vienna, 3 December 2017
- Bridging the Gap Launch, Brussels, 5 December 2017

- Annual meeting of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, Geneva, 23 February 2018
- Launch of Finland's first CRPD National Action Plan of Finland, Helsinki, 13 March 2018
- Disability Human Rights – Future concepts and research organised by Ruhr University Bochum, 6 April 2018
- Global Child meeting with Indicators Development Team, Geneva, 7 June 2018
- European commitment to data collection and use for the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, 11th Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, New York, 14 June 2018
- Geneva Summer School, Children at the Heart of Human Rights, Geneva, 22 June 2018
- Inaugural Open Ended Working Group Meeting on Model Indicators on Sport and the SDGs, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 13 September 2018
- Exploratory Meeting of Experts on CRPD & SDGs organised by the International Paralympic Committee Governing Board, London, 15 September 2018
- Joint meeting between the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 20th session of the CRPD Committee, Geneva, 25 September 2018
- European Network of National Human Rights Institutions 15th meeting of CRPD Working Group, Riga, 2 October 2018

## Bridging the Gap II

### Outcome 1: Mainstreaming disability in development cooperation

Article 32 of the CRPD requires the States Parties to undertake “appropriate and effective measures” for the promotion and support of the objectives of the Convention via international cooperation, “in partnership with relevant international and regional organizations and civil society”.

Leveraging on article 32’s provisions, as well as on the European Union’s commitment to disability mainstreaming claimed in the 2017 European Consensus on Development, Bridging the Gap works to support the EU’s and its member States’ efforts to make their international cooperation’s policies and initiatives more inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

During the first year of implementation Bridging the Gap has facilitated the organization of five workshops and seminars on disability mainstreaming in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Paraguay; has mainstreamed the disability component into existing international cooperation initiatives and has worked along with the Delegations of the European Union (EUDs) in the five participating countries.



CRPD training in Burkina Faso



Capacity building in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, Bridging the Gap has contributed to a human right-specific training addressed at the EUD’s staff by bringing in the disability component and reinforcing the knowledge of practical tools for embedding the “human rights-based approach” in the daily activities of the Delegation.

Likewise, in Sudan, the project has provided technical support to the EU Delegation by assessing the universal accessibility to the EU Day celebrations in May 2018. Such support has contributed to a renovated attention and engagement towards accessibility and inclusion and has paved the way for a thorough assessment of the disability component in the EUD’s activities.

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*Bridging the Gap is a ground-breaking project with important potential to improving together our best practices for inclusion*

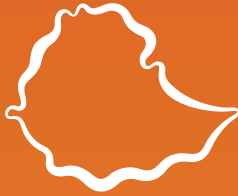
**Jannik Vaa**

*Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation in Sudan*

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In addition, Bridging the Gap has partnered up with several international initiatives to ensure the highest possible consideration of the disability dimension in their activities and goals:

## ETHIOPIA



Bridging the Gap's strategy in the country brought to the involvement of already existing programmes, such as the "Water for Food Security, Women's Empowerment and Environmental Protection" (SWEEP) Programme implemented by CARE Ethiopia, the "RESilience building and creation of economic opportunities in Ethiopia" (RESET PLUS) implemented by the EU through a consortium of actors from the civil society, as well as to strengthen ties with UN agencies and programmes, with particular attention to the gender dimension.

Among its most relevant achievements, BtG in Ethiopia has managed to mainstream the disability component within the research concept note and Terms of Reference for a joint UNICEF/Minister of Labour and Social Affairs' study on the situation analysis on urban destitute populations and their access to services and safety net programmes.

## ECUADOR



With the support of international organisations of persons with disabilities, the project has established links with the EU-funded initiative EVALUA to support the full consideration of the disability dimension in the evaluation of national policies for the post-earthquake reconstruction. The activity, currently ongoing, is supposed to offer the country with a solid basis for inclusive disaster risk reduction plans.

## GLOBAL LEVEL



Bridging the Gap has actively engaged in a number of international forums and events to reach out a greater number of interested stakeholders and raise further awareness on the importance of disability mainstreaming. The collaboration with the Global Action on Disability (GLAD Network) and the organization of a joint event on gender and disability at the European Development Days (EDD) with the EU Social Protection System Programme (EU-SPS) and Light for the World (LftW) are just two examples of the global effort of Bridging the Gap.

Bridging the Gap, alongside several international organisations of persons with disabilities, is also supporting the efforts of the EDD's organisers to make the event fully inclusive and accessible.



Joint Bridging the Gap, EU-SPS and LftW event at the 2018 EDD

## Outcome 2: Supporting inclusive public policies in the five partner countries

The CRPD and the SDGs, alongside national legislations, are the key pillars on which to build inclusive public policies and services. Nevertheless, public strategies and policies need concrete adaptation to ensure advancing towards equality for persons with disabilities. Our project aims to support the efforts of the beneficiary countries in “bridging the gap” between policies and actions, tackling specific sectoral policies in each and one of the participating countries.

Achieving this ambitious objective is a long way to go, but Bridging the Gap has already established some benchmarks for future action. During its first months of implementation, the project has focused on touching base with all the relevant national, regional and local public stakeholders, thoroughly analyzing the baseline situation and implementing some initial activities to raise awareness on the CRPD, the SDGs and on concrete means and examples for their implementation in the partner countries.

In Burkina Faso and Sudan, two four-day training sessions on the CRPD and on inclusive SDGs were organized with the contribution of international experts to the benefit of national civil servants and local disability focal points, gathering over 80 participants in total. The activity was not only a moment of knowledge generation and capacity building, but also the occasion to brainstorm on what improvements and transformations the national institutions require in order to provide inclusive public services to their respective populations.



*CRPD training in Sudan*



*Workshop on disability data and indicators in Paraguay, June 2018*

In Paraguay, over 90 persons attended a high-level international workshop organized by Bridging the Gap to present theories and techniques for the collection, analysis and usage of disaggregated data, in line with article 31 CRPD. The seminar helped connecting the dots between already existing tools and database in the country, facilitating the design of a project strategy for the generation and use of disability data.

In Ethiopia, Bridging the Gap has established a path of contribution to the national government flagship programme on “Productive Safety Net Program” (PSNP) and has organized three disability inclusion sensitization trainings for government officials in the country, paying particular attention to the specific sector tackled in the country – i.e. livelihoods and social protection.

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*The strength of this approach is in that it reaches out to mainstream programmes and the actors implementing them and provides them with support to become better aware of the challenges people with disabilities face and to become more inclusive in their programmes.*

**Pia Korpinen**

*Country Coordinator Bridging the Gap – Ethiopia*

**Tesfu Equbeyonas,**

*Capacity Building Coordinator Bridging the Gap – Ethiopia*

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*Discussion at a BtG workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

These and other project activities have initiated a path Bridging the Gap is fully committed to follow for the rest of the project implementation: a path of contribution to more inclusive public policies and services, in line with the provisions of the CRPD and towards a fully inclusive SDG agenda.

### Outcome 3: Reinforcing the National Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

“Nothing about us, without us”. The motto of the CRPD is crystal clear: the road of inclusion passes unequivocally by the full and constant involvement of persons with disabilities and their organisations. Bridging the Gap adheres to this principle and aims at strengthening the advocacy capacity of the organizations of persons with disabilities in the participating countries.

Extensive participative processes took place for the definition of the country action plans and, in the first phase of the project implementation, trainings and technical workshops have been organized in Burkina Faso and Sudan with the objective of strengthening not only the theoretical knowledge on the CRPD and the SDGs, but also project management capacities.

In Ecuador, the project has supported peer exchanges between the national organisations of persons with disabilities and their correspondent counterparts in Spain, in order to learn from experience and share theirs. The activity, in line with national country action plan, follows up the concession of subgrants for the preparation of learning material for persons with disabilities. This activity is aimed at supporting the national process of reinforcement of inclusive education in the country.



*Preparation of learning material for children with disabilities in Ecuador*

Women have been the centerpiece of Bridging the Gap's activities in all participating countries. Notably in Sudan, dedicated vocational trainings and stages in agricultural sector and self-employment for women and girls with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities in the rural State of Gedaref were organized and later showcased as good practice at the 2018 European Development Days. A follow-up of the activity is currently under planning.

“

*Persons with disabilities account for around 6% of all Sudanese citizens. Although there are specific policies and laws aimed to enhance our inclusion, we are discriminated within our communities in relation to access to services and enjoyment of our rights. The main challenge we face is the lack of awareness of our specific rights. (This is why) we value very highly the work we are developing together with Bridging the Gap*

**Akhyar Omar**

*President of the Organization of Women with Disabilities in Sudan*

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*Akhyar Omar speaking at the 2018 European Development Days*

Moreover, in Ethiopia Bridging the Gap has organised and facilitated the participation of 40 government staffs from of the Amhara and Somali regions in gender responsive trainings on disability mainstreaming in the livelihood and social protection sectors.

Mainstreaming gender is about tackling the multiple forms of discrimination women with disabilities have to face. Although women with disabilities represent 19.2% of the global female population and often live in precarious conditions, they receive too little attention. (source: Reliefweb.int). This is why Bridging the Gap considers the gender dimension as a cross-cutting priority within all its activities.

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*Indigenous women mainly face the chauvinistic structures of our autonomous governments, educational backwardness and scant support from other indigenous women. These limitations are multiplied in the case of indigenous women with disabilities because the negotiations regarding their participation in society are initiated in their family environment, where our right to autonomy is often not understood.*

**Olga Montúfar**

*President of the Paso a Paso Foundation and of the Global Network of Indigenous Persons with Disabilities, attending BtG's Inception Workshop*

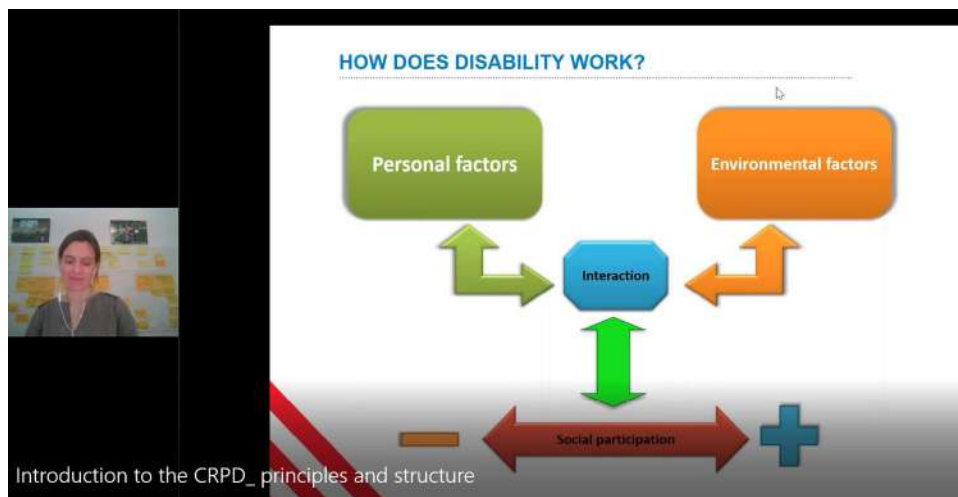
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## Bridging the Gap, a global initiative

Bridging the Gap is not only about country activities. A wide, global dimension supporting the current momentum for disability inclusion and mainstreaming is developed through workshops, trainings and events.

Since the beginning of the implementation phase Bridging the Gap has:

- Organized four technical workshops, two in Geneva under Bridging the Gap-I on data and indicators, one in Vienna and one in Asunción under Bridging the Gap-II on social protection and data generation and use respectively.
- Organized two communication events at the European Development Days in Brussels and at the 11th Session of the Conference of the State Parties of the CRPD in New York.
- Launched a 12-session webinar cycle on disability and development in three languages (English, French and Spanish). Four sessions have already been organized and a few more are planned over the next months. So far, an average of 60 persons has attended each session.
- Launched a project newsletter and published two issues distributed among over 800 registered readers.
- Launched a project website, four social networks account (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr), published four blog posts and over 10 news on the project website.



*A session of the webinar cycle organised by Bridging the Gap*

## Who are we? Our contact details

**Bridging the Gap-I** is implemented by the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

The contact person is:

### Ms. Victoria Lee

Human Rights & Disability Advisor (a.i.)  
Human Rights and Economic and Social Issues  
Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
E-mail: vlee@ohchr.org  
Tel: +41 22 9179217

**Bridging the Gap-II** is implemented by a consortium led by the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP) and composed of the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (IADC), the European Disability Forum (EDF) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland also contribute to the initiative.

The contact person is:

### Mr. Federico Martire

Director  
Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas, F.S.P.  
FIIAPP - Spanish Cooperation  
Email: federico.martire@fiiapp.es  
Tel: +34 911 81 33 13

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