



Behinderung und Internationale Entwicklung
Disability and International Development
Institute for Inclusive Development
Moltkeplatz 1, D-45138 Essen, Germany

2023-3 CALL FOR PAPERS

Digital Inclusion

At least since the COVID 19 pandemic, the option of participating in society via digital technologies and the internet has been used more frequently. More than that, its use is now considered a matter of course and is becoming ubiquitous. This development is accompanied by a dilemma for some individuals and groups.

Digitalisation can offer a range of benefits and opportunities for health, education, work, political life, cultural activities and simply staying in contact with each other. While digital technologies have the potential for making significant improvements in the lives of people in the Global South, it also needs to be taken into account that the digital development comes with the risk of inaccessibility, which can lead to further exclusion – especially for marginalised groups, such as persons with disabilities. On the one hand, they experience digital exclusion, inequalities in their access to technology and disadvantages in learning digital skills. Although data on the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities in low and middle-income countries is often scarce and unreliable, it can be assumed that people with disabilities are less likely to have the necessary digital knowledge and/or digital devices compared to people without disabilities. On the other hand, digital platforms and services too rarely take into account the specific needs of people with disabilities and thus limit their equal participation. This demonstrates how digitalisation can lead to the construction of further barriers for persons with disabilities in accessing information, communication and essential public services as well as living an independent life.

Hence, in an age where digitalisation is spilling into all aspects of daily life, it is crucial to include the needs of persons with disabilities and to enable them to equally use and benefit from digital technologies. This also includes the access to assistive technologies, which can be a key component in removing barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Digital inclusion needs to be an integral part of a disability-inclusive development agenda. By adopting the Agenda 2030, Member States committed to achieving sustainable development for everyone and to leaving no one behind. However, as long as people with disabilities, especially in the Global South, are left behind in digitalisation, these efforts will be undermined. There is a need for initiatives that build awareness, expand digital literacy and skills, improve the access to technology and devices, and provide technical support for the use of digital tools.

Against this background, issue 2023-3 of the Journal “Disability and International Development” is intended to review the gaps in digital access, infrastructure, skills and attitudes as well as the current state of digital inclusion. The issue takes a closer look at opportunities, challenges, good practices, and lessons learned regarding digital developments. We invite researchers and experts with a practical background to contribute to any of the following topics:

- scientific studies on the impact of digital inequalities on the living conditions of persons with disabilities,
- models, programmes, concepts, and practices that promote disability-inclusion and sustainability in the digitalisation process, e.g. in information and communication (ICT) services,
- opportunities, needs and ways forward for the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Global South,
- data, reports, and concepts on the situation of people with disabilities in the context of digitalisation as well as possible disadvantaging factors, e.g., refugees with disabilities or rural dwellers with disabilities.

Before you send us your suggestion, please read the “Information for Authors”¹ and then contact the coordinating editor via e-mail:

Judith Langensiepen (langensiepen@bezev.de)

Deadline for submission of papers: 1st September 2023

¹ Information for Authors (Englisch): https://www.bezev.de/media/zbdw_author_info_engl_1_.pdf; Informationen für Autoren*innen (Deutsch): https://www.bezev.de/media/zbie_autoreninfo_dt_1_.pdf