

Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms

Strategic Plan 2022-2024

Contents

Aims and Methodology of Strategic Planning	2
The Context of the Coalition's Activity	2
Background of the Coalition	2
Assessment of the External Environment. Developments and Trends	4
SWOT analysis of the Coalition	5
Mapping the Issues, Faced by Persons with Disabilities	6
The Strategic Framework of the Coalition's Activity in 2022-2024	4
Vision of the Coalition	4
Mission of the Coalition	4
Values and Principles of the Coalition	4

Aims and Methodology of Strategic Planning

This document summarizes the results of strategic planning process by the Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms. The process aimed to shape a clear and agreed strategic framework for the activity of the Coalition, based on the country-specific context, the capabilities and experience of its member organizations, and a common understanding of the issues, shared by persons with disabilities.

The strategic planning process took place between December 2021 and February 2022. It included the following actions:

- A Coalition staff meeting was held to agree on the parameters of the strategic planning process. As a result of the meeting, the principles of strategic planning, the expected outcomes, and the structure of the strategic plan were specified.
- A review of documents related to the Coalition's activity. The proposal of the project currently implemented by the Coalition was reviewed, and the sectoral issues voiced by its member organizations were summarized.
- A working session, aimed at strategic planning, with the participation of the Coalition staff and member organizations. The environment – both internal and external – the Coalition acts in was assessed, the needs of the beneficiaries were mapped, the key strategic directions for 2020-2022 were highlighted, and the 2020-2022 strategic framework was shaped in the course of the three-day event. During this workshop, issues, related to the institutional development and enhancement of the Coalition, were also discussed in the light of the new strategy.

This document is the 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan of the Coalition's activity. It portrays the context of the Coalition's activity and the strategic goals set for the upcoming three years, based on the discussions and decisions made in the course of the strategic planning workshop. The model template of the Coalition's statute is attached as an appendix and covers the key issues on the institutional development of the Coalition, as discussed in the course of the workshop.

The Strategic Plan shall be regularly reviewed and revised in response to the context of the Coalition's activity and the changing needs. The review and revision of the Strategic Plan are defined by the General Assembly of the Coalition.

The Context of the Coalition's Activity

Background of the Coalition

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms was formed by Agate Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities NGO in 2017, aiming at the consolidation of the efforts of the civil society towards advocacy for the adoption of legislation on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Since 2017, the activity of the Coalition has not been defined by any strategic document. In recent years, the Coalition has mainly conducted advocacy and public awareness raising projects, aimed at the promotion of the participation of persons with disabilities in election processes.

The Coalition also contributed to documents and strategies on human rights, developed by diplomatic representations accredited in Armenia and international organizations.

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms is the largest coalition of organizations, dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities and is composed of 14 member organizations and 5 individual members.

Member	Type of Organization	Town
Agate Rights Defense Center for Women with Disabilities NGO	A disability rights organization	Gyumri
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadsor	CSO	Vanadsor
Full Life	A disability rights organization	Stepanavan
Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities NGO	A disability rights organization	Vanadsor
We Can NGO	A disability rights organization	Yerevan
The Voice of Silence NGO	A disability rights organization	Yerevan
Sipan Asatryan	Individual	Yerevan
Armine Ghazaryan	Individual	Yerevan
Prkutyun Salvation Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities	NGO	Yerevan
Caritas Aregak Foundation	Foundation	Gyumri
Skarp NGO	A disability rights organization	Yerevan
Astghatsolk NGO	NGO	Chambarak
Armenian Camp NGO	NGO	Yerevan
White Hawk	A disability rights organization	Spitak
Nare Alaverdyan	Individual	Abovyan
EasyLife NGO	A disability rights organization	Gyumri
Disability-Inclusive Development NGO	A disability rights organization	Yerevan
Mushegh Hovsepyan	Individual	Yerevan
Anahit Chilingaryan	Individual	Yerevan

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms is not registered as a legal person and is a non-formal union of organizations and individuals.

The ongoing operations of the Coalition are conducted by the staff, recruited within the framework of the EU-funded “Towards Inclusive Armenia” project, consisting of the coordinator of the Coalition, a communications coordinator, an advocacy coordinator, a legal coordinator, two lawyers,

and a community empowerment coordinator. The General Assembly, composed of the Coalition member organizations and individual members, is the supreme decision-making body of the Coalition.

Assessment of the External Environment. Developments and Trends

Currently, Armenia is in a post-crisis situation, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the catastrophic consequences of the 44-day war. The pandemic which broke out in 2020 and has had more drastic impacts on the vulnerable groups of the society, including persons with disabilities, does not offer any predictable prospect at the time of the strategic planning. The pandemic has led to an overload of the social and healthcare systems, which will continue to cause obstacles from the perspective of the accessibility of services. The transition to distant education during the pandemic aggravated the inequality in the education sector. The 44-day war in 2020 – the second Artsakh war – has brought about a humanitarian crisis which cannot be considered settled yet. The issues of those displaced from Artsakh, those of persons who acquired a disability during their military services, war veterans and their families will be topical during the upcoming years.

An economic crisis could be observed during the pandemic and post-war period, too. It was manifested by the vividly expressed inflation and an increase in unemployment.

The 2021 snap Parliamentary elections mitigated the post-war political instability. However, the extremely polarized political climate was still sustaining in the country. Security and economic issues which are perceived as a priority by the majority of the public continued to be central on the political agenda. At the same time, mutual accusations and populism have prevailed in the discourse of political forces and the media outlets, servicing their interests, whereas in-depth discussions of the issues have remained in the margins.

From the perspective of public participation and civil society's activity, the discourse targeting the civil society and disinformation proved to be a key factor. Trying to discredit the role of the civil society and weaken public trust in civil society organizations, political forces (mainly, the present opposition) and the groups adhering to them, have regularly targeted civil society actors, disseminating disinformation about their activities.

In May 2021, the RA Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted. The new law is the result of the years-long advocacy of disability rights organizations. It mainly reflects the positions and recommendations of the civil society. Particularly, the law defines the safeguards of accessibility, independent living, access to courts, and reasonable accommodations. The law prohibits disability-based discrimination, including the failure to ensure reasonable accommodations. The law also allows non-governmental organizations to file a lawsuit on behalf of persons with disabilities in case of discrimination. The adoption of the law attests to the political will of the incumbent government for providing rights-based solutions to the issues of persons with disabilities, even though there is a need for creating mechanisms for the implementation of the law and raising public awareness on the law. In particular, it is problematic that the law does not provide for the creation of an independent state entity for the control of accessibility and the enhancement thereof.

The development and implementation of strategic plans, designed by the Government for the sectors of education, healthcare and employment, the implementation of reforms under the RA – EU Common and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, and the reports of the UN treaty bodies (CRPD, CRC, CEDAW) for the upcoming years are key for the further development of the legislation and policy on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. At the same time, the instable

human rights policy of the incumbent government and the low level of public trust in state institutions create obstacles for the effective implementation of reforms.

At the local governance level, the growth of subvention programs for the development of the economic and social infrastructure of the communities is significant. The nature of the development and implementation of projects enables to promote the demand for ensuring accessibility.

In the private sector, the continuous development of information technologies and social entrepreneurship sectors is noteworthy. The development of the IT sector enables the attraction of resources and capacity of sectoral organizations in the events aimed at ensuring the accessibility of information and communication. The increase in the social entrepreneurship assistance projects, which is very much due to the enhanced engagement of international donor organizations, enables a higher involvement of persons with disabilities in those projects.

SWOT analysis of the Coalition

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organizations, led by persons with disabilities, constitute a majority within the Coalition ● The geographic coverage and representation of the Coalition in the capital and the marzes through its member organizations ● The sectoral diversity of the Coalition member organizations ● The maturity of the Coalition from the perspective of its backgrounds, experience with advocacy and visibility and recognition ● Partnership relations with some NA MPs, the HRD, and some members of the government ● Cooperation with local CSOs, Coalitions, resident missions of international organizations (UN, EU, USAID) and some embassies ● Representation at the community level and connections with member organizations ● Involvement of sectoral experts in the Coalition ● Logistics and resources of members organizations ● Presence of human rights NGOs in the Coalition ● Mutual trust among the members of the Coalition ● Ensuring the apolitical nature of the Coalition's activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The structure of the Coalition needs to be finalized. ● The lack of clarity in the relations between the Staff and Coalition members ● Lack of an office and logistic resources for the Coalition ● Lack of a procedure for membership to the Coalition ● Lack of a procedure for making decisions by the Coalition ● The instability of Coalition's finances ● The sectoral committees/groups of the Coalition are not established. ● Lack of a communication strategy for the Coalition ● The insufficiency of public visibility of the Coalition ● The Coalition is not sufficiently known by decision makers. ● Insufficient cooperation with NA fractions ● Embassies in foreign countries do not have adequate knowledge about the Coalition. ● Overload of member organizations ● Disproportional development of member organizations' capacity ● Represented not in all marzes ● Enrolment of persons, not from all disability categories in the Coalition ● Challenges in coordination of advocacy efforts among member organizations ● Lack of a joint advocacy strategy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The transparency of the Coalition's activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Misaligned political views among members ● Lack of a procedure for emergency response (COVID, war)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhancement of cooperation and partnership with decision makers ● Cooperation with media ● Engaging new members and adding new sectoral/professional directions ● Recruiting war veterans with disabilities to join the common disability rights campaign ● Opportunities for new grants ● Coalition's participation in legislative and policy reforms ● Opportunities, created by international advocacy mechanisms (CRPD, CEDAW, CRC, UPR, CEPA) ● Expansion of the Coalition's activity to include awareness-raising and capacity building projects ● Exchange of knowledge and resources among Coalition members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A change in the Government's position and priorities ● Emergency situations ● Member organizations may be busy, leading to a decrease in their involvement in the Coalition's activity. ● The risk of failure to ensure diversity of funding sources and dependence on a donor ● Competition for funding sources ● Competing organizations may promote ideas, different from the position of the Coalition. ● Corruption risks in the public sector ● Instability of the political arena ● A gap between beneficiaries' needs and the Coalition's activity

Mapping the Issues, Faced by Persons with Disabilities

Equality before the Law

- The lack of comprehensive legislation on non-discrimination. Existing legal provisions are not implemented,
- The lack of mechanisms to implement the adopted law on the rights of persons with disabilities,
- The need for synchronizing the law with other sectoral laws,
- Lack of effective legislation for the recognition, exercising and implementation of the capability right of the person with a disability on the same footing as others,
- The need for the elimination of the institution for recognizing a person with mental health issues incapable and making decisions for this person (guardianship),
- Lack of the requirement for the accessibility of processes and documents in civil and legal, including contractual relations,
- Need for structured training and awareness raising for state bodies and service providers on the decision-making right.

Accessibility

- Physical inaccessibility, lack of control, misperceptions among the community of practice and decision makers on physical accessibility,
- Physical inaccessibility of community infrastructure, at all tiers of education, housing, public spaces, children's playgrounds, cultural centers, resorts, sports centers, transportation means,
- Lack of awareness on information accessibility at various levels, also among decision-makers, supervising state bodies, and others,
- Lack of accessibility of legal documents, websites, materials for public use and public awareness raising, educational materials,
- Inaccessibility of communication to ensure communication with persons of various categories of disabilities,
- Lack of projects for teaching sign language, lack of qualified sign language interpreters,
- Lack of TV programs, broadcasted with Armenian sign language interpretation,
- Lack of a screen reading software for the visually impaired.

Deinstitutionalization

- Lack of a comprehensive program for the activities, aiming at the transformation of care services,
- Lack of independent living services, which will be based on needs and efficiency assessment. The impossibility of direct provision of services for persons living in institutions,
- The practice of institutionalization continues,
- Persons with disabilities, living in 24/7 care institutions, cannot make use of the state program for buying an apartment.

Social services and social rehabilitation

- Lack of clarity in terms of the availability of rehabilitation and psycho-social services, issues with sustainability, lack of clarity in content,
- Lack of methodological guidelines for the implementation of social inclusion programs,
- Lack of a social assistant/patronage/personal assistant's service,
- Lack of specialized advice on physical accommodations,
- The training of persons working with persons with disabilities are not properly prioritized, demanded or implemented,
- Poor inter-agency cooperation in the education, healthcare and social sectors,
- Duplication of paramedical services in the healthcare, education and social sectors,
- Uncertainty of legal mechanisms for the implementation of social programs, uncertainty in terms of their implementers,
- Uncertainty in the mechanism of control over the activity of qualified organizations, providing accredited social services and supplying assistive devices,
- The lack of specialized organizations and resource centers, providing services or the limited number thereof,
- Temporary and short-term solutions are often provided in the social sector at LSGs, and support projects are not translated into services that would change the quality of a person's life,
- The services are not provided, based on the needs assessment of an individual,
- Duplication of services.

Mental Health

- Lack of a law or strategy on mental health,

- Lack of community-based integrated and flexible services for mental health and social care,
- Need for a structured public awareness campaign on mental health,
- Lack of a concept on the elimination of non-voluntary forms of psychiatric treatment,
- Hospital-based psychiatric services lead to violations of a person's fundamental rights, namely deprivation of liberty, ill treatment, discrimination,
- The integration of psychiatric ward services is low in the context of general healthcare services.

Healthcare

- An inadequate level of budgetary planning, sustainability and periodicity of medical treatment and rehabilitation,
- Lack of physical and information accessibility of sexual and reproductive health for women with disabilities,
- Lack of trust in services, paid for by the state,
- Inefficiency of provision of medications at preferential terms, unavailability of necessary medication, use of substituting medications,
- Problems with the accessibility of the physical environment of healthcare institutions and healthcare services,
- Lack of health resort vouchers for persons with mental health issues, and scarcity thereof for persons of other categories, uncertainty and lack of transparency of mechanisms for their provision,
- The issue of ensuring confidentiality/protection of personal data,
- Non-adherence to the principle of informed consent,
- Unavailability of palliative care,
- In case of low-quality medical services, lack of a mechanism for the protection of rights.

Labour and Employment

- Low involvement of persons with disabilities in business support projects,
- Barriers to access labour market, discrimination,
- Lack of professional rehabilitation services,
- Low effectiveness of projects for the promotion of employment,
- Effectiveness of projects, aimed at workplace accommodation (generally, provision of reasonable accommodation),
- Lack of employer awareness.
- Ineffective links between HEIs and employers,
- Ineffectiveness of the inspection body, in relation to discrimination against persons with disabilities in the labour market.

Education

- Insufficiency of necessary environmental conditions to organize the education of learners with special educational needs at all tiers of education,
- Issues with the education of home-schooled learners,
- Lack of educators in the sector, lack of knowledge and skills, a stereotypical approach. Insufficient number of behavioral therapists, working with learners with autism,
- Not enough work is done with the parents of children without disabilities which leads to psychological tension in schools,
- The issue of being left out of distant education,

- The issue of consistent use of individual learning plans by teachers,
- The issue of accessibility of teaching and learning materials,
- The issue of lack of accessible teaching aids,
- Inclusive education is considered apart from the issues, typical of the education system.

Sports, Culture, Pastime, Recreation

- Lack of activities for the development of parasports and no prioritization thereof by the state,
- Lack of parasports specialists,
- Insufficient number of organized inclusive sports and cultural events.

Assistive technologies and devices

- Lack of awareness on assistive technologies among the general public and beneficiary groups,
- Insufficient assortment of assistive technologies, provided by the state,
- Scarcity of necessary specialists for receiving adequate advice on the use of assistive technologies and devices,
- Unavailability of assistive technologies and devices in the marzes,
- Issues with the quality of assistive technologies and devices, lack of quality compliance standards,
- A small number of organizations, offering devices.

Emergency situations and civil defense

- The problem of the involvement of persons with disabilities in the processes of emergency planning, response and elimination of consequences,
- Inaccessibility of shelters and evacuation routes,
- Unavailability of the 911 or SOS application.

The Strategic Framework of the Coalition's Activity in 2022-2024

Vision of the Coalition

The vision of the Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms is to have an inclusive society where persons with disabilities have protected rights and equal opportunities to realize their potential.

Mission of the Coalition

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms is an association of disability rights organizations, human rights NGOs, and individuals that aims to advance the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities through advocacy and public awareness raising.

Values and Principles of the Coalition

- Inclusion,
- Rights-based approach,
- Non-discrimination,

- Equality and solidarity,
- Accountability and transparency.

The Coalition represents the interests of persons with disabilities without discrimination.

As an association of non-governmental organizations and individuals, the Coalition is guided by the principles of solidarity and partnership, respect for members' independence, as well as impartial and participatory management.

The Coalition bases its activity on the leadership of persons with disabilities as a principle and a final outcome.

Strategic Directions

Strategic goal 1. To contribute to the improvement of the legislation, protecting the rights of persons with disabilities

Objectives

- 1.1. Availability of a comprehensive non-discrimination legislation,
- 1.2. Alignment of sectoral laws and policies with the Law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”,
- 1.3. Existence of secondary legislation and law enforcement mechanisms arising from the Law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

Performance indicators

- The adopted legislation meets the international standards of human rights and provides for effective enforcement mechanisms.
- The improvement of the legislation has been carried out with the active participation of the Coalition.

Strategic goal 2. To empower persons with disabilities to exercise their right to independent living

Objectives

- 1.1. Availability of a policy for the introduction of a community-based service and the actual implementation of service delivery,
- 1.2. Availability of a comprehensive policy for deinstitutionalization,
- 1.3. Awareness of persons with disabilities and their families on the right to independent living.

Performance indicators

- The policy development process was carried out with the active participation of the Coalition.

- Community-based services for independent living have been introduced and are operating.
- Access to 24/7 care institutional facilities has decreased for persons with disabilities.
- Awareness of the right to independent living among persons with disabilities and their families has been improved.

Strategic goal 3. To contribute to the provision of physical and information accessibility in the RA capital and marzes

Objectives

- 2.1.To define the standards of physical and information accessibility and enshrine the functions of the control mechanism in the legislative framework.
- 2.2.To build the capacity of state, local self-government and regional bodies dealing with disability issues, related to physical and information accessibility.
- 2.3.To develop the knowledge and capacity of bodies, involved in community infrastructure development projects targeting at physical and information accessibility.
- 2.4.To promote the participation of persons with disabilities in electoral and political processes.

Performance indicators

- Information accessibility standards have been developed and adopted.
- Physical accessibility standards and control functions are developed and adopted.
- Capacity building and awareness raising activities have been carried out with the participation of the staff of relevant institutions.
- Physical and information accessibility has been ensured in the already implemented 2022 – 2024 infrastructure development projects.
- The accessibility of the official websites of LSGs is ensured through the use of visual images, soundbites and video clips.

Strategic goal 4. To promote inclusive education at all tiers of education

Objectives

- 3.1.To revise the legislation and ensure alignment with international standards.
- 3.2.To develop the legal basis and protection mechanisms for the provision of assistive technologies at all tiers of education.
- 3.3.To assess the need for and implementation of educational support services (vocational and non-vocational).
- 3.4.To develop and use educational materials in an accessible format.
- 3.5.Physical accessibility of educational institutions.

Performance indicators

- The Law on General Education complies with the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Rights of the Child.

- The improvement of the legislative framework was carried out with the active participation of the Coalition.
- Mechanisms for providing quality inclusive education and assistive technology are in place.
- The inspection body has an effective mechanism to control accessibility of education for persons with disabilities.
- A needs assessment report for education support services and a package of service implementation recommendations are available.
- Making up an annual budget according to the estimated need.
- Accessible educational materials are available and in use.
- Renovated and newly developed educational infrastructure meets accessibility standards.

Strategic goal 5. To contribute to the elimination of disability-based discrimination in the field of employment and the reduction of barriers to entry into the labor market

Objectives

- 4.1. To increase the level of awareness and knowledge of persons with disabilities regarding state employment programs and professional orientation services,
- 4.2. To raise employers' awareness on the work with persons with disabilities, non-discrimination approaches and reasonable accommodations,
- 4.3. To assess the situation over the involvement of persons with disabilities in the labor market and removal of obstacles thereto,
- 4.4. To ensure accommodations in the environment,
- 4.5. To improve the effectiveness of employment programs, implemented by the government.

Performance indicators

- There has been an increase in the awareness on employment programs among persons with disabilities.
- There has been an increase in the awareness on work with persons with disabilities, non-discriminatory approaches and reasonable accommodations among employers.
- The problems related to the access of persons with disabilities to the labor market have been identified, and a set of recommendations has been developed (state employment programs, labor inspection body functions, provision of environmental adaptations, etc.).

Strategic goal 6. To ensure the right of physical and mental health

Objectives

- 5.1. To ensure comprehensive health insurance coverage,
- 5.2. To increase accessibility of services provided by medical institutions,
- 5.3. To change the medication provision system,
- 5.4. To develop and adopt a strategic document for regenerative medicine,
- 5.5. To adopt the concept of mental health,
- 5.6. To ensure public awareness on mental health,

- 5.7. To design an informed consent system,
- 5.8 To adopt a palliative care strategy document.

Performance indicators

- A study has been conducted on the inclusiveness of comprehensive health insurance. The system has been shaped, taking into account the recommendations made by the Coalition.
- Awareness on accessibility among medical center management has been raised. Access to medical centers has been ensured.
- A draft on changes to the medication distribution system has been adopted, taking into account the recommendations made by the Coalition.
- A strategic document on rehabilitation medicine was adopted, taking into account the recommendations made by the Coalition.
- The concept paper on mental health has been adopted, taking into account the recommendations made by the Coalition.
- Public awareness of mental health has been raised.
- Legal acts on informed consent have been amended, taking into account the recommendations made by the Coalition.
- A palliative care strategy document has been adopted, taking into account the recommendations made by the Coalition.

Strategic goal 7. Institutional Development of the Coalition

Objectives

- 6.1. To approve the structure of the Coalition and the decision-making procedure,
- 6.2. To adopt the Coalition membership procedure,
- 6.3. To adopt the Coalition communication strategy,
- 6.4. To adopt the Coalition advocacy strategy,
- 6.5. To adopt an emergency response procedure,
- 6.6. To ensure financial sustainability,
- 6.7. To ensure the geographical and sectoral expansion of the Coalition.

Performance indicators

- Key strategies and procedures for the Coalition's activities have been developed jointly and have been approved.
- The diversity of the Coalition's financial sources has been ensured.
- The coalition has expanded to include new members, representing various regions of the RA and diverse groups of persons with disabilities.