



## Barriers preventing the full inclusion of people with disabilities, including wheelchair users, into society

To include wheelchair users and other people with disabilities in the WSTP, WSTP trainers must understand what might prevent people with disabilities from being included in society.

### Perceptions

People are often not familiar with disability and have incorrect assumptions about people with disabilities.

- Many people think that persons with disabilities do not have, or are not able to achieve the same goals and dreams related to family, work, leisure, social and personal lives.
- They think that because someone has a physical disability they also have a cognitive impairment and treat the person like a child, talking slowly and loudly, or they address the person accompanying the person with a disability.

### Attitudes

Negative attitudes towards people with disabilities can include:

- A view that people with disabilities have less value in society because of their impairments.
- Patronizing people with disabilities as objects of charity.
- Avoidance of people with disabilities because they are unfamiliar with them, or because they are afraid to say the wrong thing.
- Low value put on educating children with disabilities by families, community leaders and institutions such as schools. People with disabilities have limited opportunities without an education.

### Beliefs

Beliefs are closely related to attitudes and can also create barriers. For instance, believing that someone's impairment will prevent them from accomplishing tasks that they are in fact able to do.

## Culture

Cultural beliefs, norms and values may also create barriers. In some cultures, it is believed that people with disabilities are cursed so they are excluded from their families and communities; sometimes they will isolate themselves and hide away.

## Stereotypes

These are negative views that do not recognize people with disabilities as individuals with their own interests and skills who can contribute to society.

## Legislation and policies

Legislation and policies protecting the rights of people with disabilities often exist but are not enforced. For example, some countries have employment legislation that includes a requirement to employ a quota of people with disabilities, or that stipulates reasonable accommodation be provided to employees. Without enforcement, such laws and policies are ineffective.

## Environmental barriers

Physical barriers can limit the participation and integration of people with disabilities. In outdoor life these include gradients, sand, grass and rivers; while mobility and independence indoors can be hampered by stairs, narrow doorways, furniture and carpets.

## Lack of assistive devices

This is a major barrier to inclusion and the WSTP is one initiative to help improve the availability of appropriate wheelchairs in line with the *CRPD*.