

Language Dos and Don'ts

Use	Don't use
Person with an impairment, person with disabilities ¹	The disabled, handicapped (person), PWD, persons with special needs/abilities, differently abled
Person without disabilities	Normal person
Person with disabilities, person living with a disability, person having acquired a disability	Person suffering from an impairment/disability
Fight against preventable diseases ²	Fight against/ eradicate disability
Person with psycho-social disabilities	Person of unsound mind, person with a psychiatric impairment, lunatic, crazy person, person suffering from mental infirmity/derangement, mental, mad, schizo
Person with intellectual disabilities	Mental handicap, mentally retarded, retarded, feeble-minded, not intelligent.
Person with a physical disability, person who had polio, person with cerebral palsy, person who was amputated	Invalid, crippled, handicapped, lame
Person with a hearing impairment, person who is deaf, person who is hard of hearing, person who is deafblind	(Deaf and) dumb person, deaf-mute person, person suffering from hearing loss
Person with a visual impairment, person who is blind, person with low vision	Visually impaired, visionless, the blind
Person of short stature, little people, person with Dwarfism	Dwarf, midget, lilliputian
Person with Down Syndrome	Mongoloid

¹ While there is a difference between disability and impairment, the terms are often used interchangeably. You shouldn't worry too much about whether to choose one or the other term. If you want to dive in deeper to understand the difference, check out the section on '[Why participation is important](#)'.

² Each one of us must be very careful to use this kind of terminology. While it works fine in some cases, e.g. fighting eye diseases to eliminate preventable blindness, in other cases it suggests the total opposite. Fighting against the causes of Down Syndrome or Autism is not in line with the idea of disability as a part of human variation.

Use	Don't use
Person with a congenital impairment, person born with an impairment	Birth defect
Person who uses a wheelchair, wheel-chair user	Person who is wheelchair- bound
Person using synthetic speech or Sign Language, person with a speech impairment	Mute, dumb
Autistic, person with epilepsy, person with haemophilia, person affected by Leprosy	Epileptic, haemophiliac, leper
(Wheelchair-) accessible toilet, accessible parking, parking for persons with disabilities	Disabled toilet, handicapped parking
Underrepresented groups, groups of persons who often experience discrimination, marginalised groups, persons living in situations of vulnerability, persons who are disproportionately impacted or affected	The vulnerable, vulnerable groups (though this term is often used by the UN)
Persons living in (situations of) poverty	The poor, poor person(s)
Low-income countries	Developing countries, Third World countries, underdeveloped countries
Going on a project visit, working in the project at the local level	Going to the field, at field level
Rights-holder	Beneficiary