



**The Marrakesh Treaty –  
Helping to end the  
global book famine**

2016



**WIPO**  
WORLD  
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY  
ORGANIZATION

**285 million people worldwide are blind or visually impaired.**

**90% of them live on low incomes in developing and least developed countries.**

**Only 1–7% of books are published in a format they can read.**

There is a **global book famine**. It is a huge problem. Without books, journals and magazines, people are cut off from life. They cannot gain an education or participate fully in society. They cannot realize their full potential.

That is not just a loss to them – it is also a serious loss to the economies and societies they live in.

But the international community has created a way to help: the Marrakesh Treaty.

The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled was adopted by the Member States of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2013.

The Treaty has a single objective: to increase access to books, magazines and other printed materials for people with print disabilities. It aims to achieve this by making it easier for accessible copies to be created and shared across international borders.

**By implementing the Marrakesh Treaty, countries can:**

- **improve the education and life-chances of many of their citizens**
- **implement the principles of international human rights law**
- **stimulate economic development and social progress.**

## How it works

Each country that adopts the Marrakesh Treaty is required to create one or more limitations or exceptions to copyright law.

These limitations and exceptions mean that a range of acts are permitted without infringing copyright. The permitted acts serve the interests of people called **beneficiaries** in the Treaty. Beneficiaries include anyone who is print disabled – including anyone who has difficulty reading printed material because they are blind or visually impaired, or because of another physical disability that doesn't allow them to read (for example, if they can't hold a book or turn the pages).

Under such limitations or exceptions, any **work** can be copied to convert it into an **accessible format**. Like the term “beneficiary”,

the terms “work” and “accessible format” are defined quite broadly in the Treaty. Works include audiobooks as well as text, notation and related illustration, while an accessible format is any format (including digital) that enables a beneficiary to read or access the content as feasibly and comfortably as someone who is not print disabled.

Accessible format works may only be used by beneficiaries under the Treaty. However, governments can allow non-profit **authorized entities** to create accessible copies and make them available to beneficiaries.

Contracting Parties to the Marrakesh Treaty must also allow the **exchange across international borders** of accessible format works produced in line with the Treaty or other law. Exchanging works across borders means that each

accessible format work need only be created once. So in effect, countries can pool their efforts, greatly increasing the overall number of accessible works.

## The Marrakesh Treaty and other treaties

The Marrakesh Treaty has no formal relationship with any other international agreement, and there is **no requirement for countries to join other copyright treaties** in order to ratify or accede to it.

However, the new Treaty is **wholly compatible with other international agreements** on copyright and intellectual property. The copyright limitations or exceptions that Marrakesh Treaty Contracting Parties are required to introduce meet all the criteria for copyright limitations and exceptions under other treaties, including the so-called “three-step test”.

And the Marrakesh Treaty is also a “good fit” with international human rights law. It **embodies fundamental human rights principles** found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## Entry into force

The Marrakesh Treaty was formally adopted on June 27, 2013, and reached the goal of ratification or accession by 20 eligible parties on June 30, 2016. It entered into force for those 20 parties on September 30, 2016.

The first parties to ratify or accede to it were (in order of ratification/accession): India, El Salvador, the United Arab Emirates, Mali, Uruguay, Paraguay, Singapore, Argentina, Mexico, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Brazil, Peru, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Israel, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala and Canada.

The Treaty has attracted strong support, and many other countries are interested in joining.

## WIPO and the Marrakesh Treaty

As the UN specialized agency for intellectual property issues, WIPO **administers the Marrakesh Treaty**. It provides Member States with information about Marrakesh and other copyright treaties.

It also **offers extensive support** to countries interested in joining the Treaty, including advice on drafting legislation to implement Treaty provisions.

But WIPO's work in support of the Marrakesh Treaty goals goes further than that. To end the global book famine, practical action is necessary as well as changes to copyright law. Recognizing this, WIPO launched the **Accessible Books Consortium (ABC)** in June 2014.

The ABC is an alliance led by WIPO, and includes organizations that represent people with print disabilities such as the World Blind Union; libraries; and organizations that represent authors and publishers. It:

- provides training in how to produce and distribute works in accessible formats
- promotes inclusive publishing standards
- offers an international online catalogue of accessible titles for libraries serving people who are print disabled, the ABC Book Service (TIGAR).

For more information, visit the ABC website: [www.accessiblebooksconsortium.org](http://www.accessiblebooksconsortium.org)



World Intellectual Property Organization  
34, chemin des Colombettes  
P.O. Box 18  
CH-1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 338 91 11  
Fax: +41 22 733 54 28

For contact details of WIPO's  
External Offices visit:  
[www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/offices/](http://www.wipo.int/about-wipo/en/offices/)