

The Humanitarian Reset and Disability Inclusion

Disability Reference Group key messages - July 2025

In the context of substantial funding cuts and policy shifts, there is a risk that the stated objective of the humanitarian reset, to ‘save as many lives as possible’ dilutes a focus on quality, inclusive and accountable humanitarian action. As decisions that have been made are implemented, and as new decisions are made, it is essential that the commitment of IASC Principals to respond to those in greatest need is upheld, this includes persons with disabilities.

As the humanitarian reset aims to safeguard the core of the humanitarian system so that it can build back, decision makers must remain committed to the humanitarian principle of impartiality which requires prioritizing on the basis of most urgent need. This paper sets out how this principle can be applied across the 4 elements of the current phase of the humanitarian reset.

Define

- In continuing prioritization of lifesaving humanitarian response for those in greatest need, persons with disabilities must be recognized as being among the most severely impacted, across all contexts¹. Together with age and gender, disability is a universal determinant of risk; and should be considered central in identification of priorities, across sectors.

Deliver

- In the face of global pushback to diversity, equity and inclusion, the IASC commitment to coordinated, principled humanitarian action, with protection and women and girls at its centre, must be expanded to encompass all groups facing heightened risk, including persons with disabilities. Reflecting this, the commitment of IASC Principals to maintaining gender and GBV expertise at global, country and local levels should be expanded also to expertise on disability inclusion.
- Protection and participation of women and girls has already been recognized as lifesaving work. Disability inclusion must be considered in the same terms, as households with persons with disabilities are facing heightened severity of needs, and disability inclusive humanitarian action is ultimately about ensuring that persons with disabilities can access lifesaving humanitarian assistance, equitably.

¹ [Measuring disability in humanitarian contexts](#), a comprehensive cross-crisis analysis of disability data in humanitarian settings, drawing on representative, individual-level data collected across 26 Multi-Sector Needs Assessments (MSNAs) in 17 countries between 2022 and 2024 reveals stark and consistent disparities: households with members with disabilities face significantly more severe and complex humanitarian needs across nearly all contexts.

- In identifying communities' priorities in simplified planning and appeals processes, consultations must be deliberately inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
- In efforts to design a reinvigorated, simplified and more inclusive IASC to support collective action, maintaining DRG association with the IASC will contribute to integrating disability inclusion into all humanitarian reset and IASC processes, ensuring that local voices are represented².

Devolve

- Without dedicated efforts to include local organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and to ensure inclusion as a guiding principle of all locally-led action, efforts to establish more equitable partnerships with local and national actors efforts risk further entrenching the exclusion of groups already marginalized within their own communities (such as persons with disabilities). Conversations on the reset need to recognize that existing community leaders, who have power within their communities and often have established linkages with humanitarian actors, are not those who are in the best position to reach marginalized community members. Rather, change will be driven by identifying and empowering those groups that remain consistently marginalized and most severely impacted, such as OPDs. In this way, humanitarian response will succeed in shifting power dynamics rather than further entrenching already existing patterns of exclusion.
- As significantly greater funding is directed to local actors, including through pooled funds, a particular focus should be on OPDs in addition to the already- agreed commitment to prioritize women-led organizations.
- Context-specific coordination models must be inclusive of local OPDs and other disability actors, and dedicated mechanisms for coordination on disability inclusion should be considered given their proven effectiveness of making responses more disability-inclusive. This requires increased attention to accessibility of coordination processes and capacity strengthening of OPDs and other local actors, in order to meet localization commitments.
- Humanitarian Country Teams led by Humanitarian Coordinators must be held accountable, through clear benchmarks, for a humanitarian response that consults with and reaches those facing the highest severity of need, including persons with disabilities.

² The [DRG](#), which has now grown to over 600 members, is the key global forum for bringing together local, national and global actors for disability inclusive humanitarian action, including UN, NGOs and civil society.

Defend

- In defending humanitarian principles and the consistent application of International Humanitarian Law, collective work on disability inclusion must continue to be at the core, alongside work on gender, and against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.