

FINAL
Disability Inclusion Working Group, Afghanistan
Terms of Reference
May 2021

Background

Protecting the rights and equality of vulnerable and marginalised groups must be central to humanitarian and development assistance. The needs of people living with disability are different, and often these differences are amplified during crises. Despite an increased awareness within the aid unity about the issues facing people with disability, there is growing evidence that indicates that inclusion measures are still inconsistently integrated within response and organisational make-up and increased work is needed to improve outcomes.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹: 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. Similarly, according to the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action², people with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in, and access to, humanitarian programmes.

Already, Afghanistan is making significant efforts to ensure that people with disabilities including war-wounded survivors have access to resources and services they need to live in dignity. The State Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) is charged with the responsibility to ensure that needs and rights of people with disabilities are addressed. To this effect, the MMD through the Directorate of Mine Action Authority (DMAC), and with support from UNMAS, has developed a National Disability Strategy (NDS) for 2020-2030. This is expected to be endorsed by the Office of the President and Cabinet soon. The national strategy aims to provide guidance to all sectors on the necessary steps to reach out to persons with disabilities and protect their rights, so they can access the services they need on an equal basis with others. The current document includes a situation analysis of achievements, gaps and needs, policy directions and a strategic action plan. In addition, the strategy considers how people with disabilities are included in humanitarian responses and disaster risk management.

Similarly, while lessons learnt exercises have shown the work around disability inclusion in the humanitarian programme cycle in Afghanistan as best practice, further work is required on disability inclusion in humanitarian response programming and monitoring. On the development side, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) has, at its core, an agenda to systematically imbed the rights of persons with disabilities into its work, both externally, through programming, and internally, to mainstream disability inclusion throughout all facets of UN entities' work and workplace.

Mandate and scope of the Disability Inclusion Working Group for Afghanistan (DIWG)

The aim of creating a Disability Inclusion Working Group is to ensure more streamlined and coordinated responses by humanitarian and development actors in Afghanistan that better meet the needs of affected people. It is proposed that the DIWG will be an inter-agency and inter-cluster technical working group established to support the humanitarian and development system in advancing disability issues in Afghanistan. The goal is to bring together a range of actors working in this space including UN agencies, national and international NGOs to address the full spectrum of factors that impact people living with disabilities in Afghanistan. While some may work directly with individuals in terms of services and assistance, there is a significant amount of normative and advocacy work to be done to ensure these issues are mainstreamed across all programming and are high on the national agenda. The three broad areas of work by the group are below and members may decide on a range of tasks and projects within these:

1. Improved disability inclusion within the staff of our own organisations
2. Improved response to people with a disability within our programming, data collection and monitoring
3. Support to the Government on implementation of the National Disability Strategy once approved

Existing technical working groups on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), Accountability to Affected People (AAP), Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA), and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), as well as the Protection and Health Clusters already have existing responsibilities that include disability inclusion and support. On the development side, the Technical Working Groups also have responsibilities to mainstream disability in

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

² <https://humanitarianitydisabilitycharter.org/wp-content/themes/humanitarian-disability-charter.org/pdf/charter-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action.pdf>

their work. It is critical that new efforts on disability inclusion are well connected with this work to avoid duplication of efforts.

Membership

The DIWG membership will be open to all humanitarian and development UN and NGO partners (both national and international) interested in contributing to this area of work. Additional presenters and interested parties may be invited on an ad hoc basis to present or join discussions as relevant. Separate work streams / sub-groups may be established as needed to focus on specific themes or projects. Participating organisations should nominate a focal point for communications on these topics. Membership implies active participation in projects initiated by the Working Group.

Leadership

Initially, there will be four co-chairs, two from the UN (covering a humanitarian and development focus) and two representing the NGO community. A fifth national NGO co-lead may be added if a willing and suitable organization is identified. The incumbents will rotate every 12 months. They will not represent their respective entity while serving as co-chairs but rather act as impartial moderators and coordinators of the group. Co-leads are expected to convene and moderate meetings, arrange agendas and speakers, take meeting notes and coordinate projects. They will be the focal points for disability issues that arise across the response. They will also maintain the Working group mailing list.

Frequency of meetings and reporting arrangements

The DIWG will meet at least every month, with additional ad hoc meetings to be called as and when needed, as determined by the co-chairs. The DIWG is accountable to and reports to the ICCT on operational issues. A representative of the WG will also be expected to present regularly (once every 6-8 weeks) at the HCT as one of its mandatory areas of responsibility and to attend fortnightly ICCT meetings. Presentations to the UNCT may also be required, as well as other relevant fora.

Expected outputs

The DIWG aims to serve as an inter-agency and inter-cluster coordination mechanism that offers technical, advisory and operational support to the ICCT and HCT to ensure full and effective implementation of disability inclusion in humanitarian response. In particular, it is proposed that the DIWG focuses on:

- **Coordination:** Convene regular meetings for information sharing and joint action that bring practical guidance to the ICCT on disability issues. Raise strategic issues with the HCT and donor community. Strengthen participation of national organisations working on disability.
- **Work Plan:** The first task of the Working Group will be to devise and agree on a work plan for the remainder of 2021, identifying priority projects that are achievable over the coming months.
- **Technical advice, guidance and capacity development in assessments, analyses and monitoring of disability in response:** Liaise with clusters, thematic groups, Technical Working Groups and the wider Inter-Cluster Coordination Team to provide inputs to and guidance around disability assessments and analyses. This may include drafting or providing guidance on disability inclusion in assessments and advice on best practice around use of the Washington Group questions, or workplace checklists on disability accessibility. The Group will produce and review technical inputs to a range of official documents including the HNO, HRP and UN Cooperation Framework. The group will also utilise global and local resources to organise capacity building on best practice for disability response and do no harm approaches.
- **Advocacy:** Produce and contribute to advocacy briefs and recommendations for the HCT, ICCT, the media and relevant government partners, including MMD, on a range of disability topics that are tailored to the local context and local language. Organise advocacy campaigns and events - for example, International Day of Disabled Persons.
- **Information Management:** Map and maintain a database of partners providing specialised disability response across the country. Identify and analyse important developments, including needs, response and gaps in disability-inclusive response for sharing and discussion with working group members. Routinely share information on disability. Ensure linkages and information sharing with other established coordination mechanisms for joint humanitarian and development response.

The Terms of References, including co-leadership and membership of the WG and modes of operation, will be reviewed, and revised on a regular basis, taking into account evolving programming across the humanitarian and development spectrum.