

Technical Working Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Brief guidance note

Disability-inclusive project design – incorporating inclusion in all phases of projects

In line with the [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action \(2019\)](#) organisations delivering humanitarian services in northwest Syria must consider the needs of persons with disabilities when designing and implementing humanitarian projects. To understand specific needs and respond accordingly, humanitarian organisations must make all efforts to identify barriers faced by persons with disabilities when accessing humanitarian assistance and services in northwest Syria and take proactive measures to mitigate these barriers with the ultimate goal of enabling equal access and participation of all individuals regardless of disability. Access, participation, and actions taken should also be captured in indicators to facilitate measurement, ensure accountability, and stimulate learning.

The IASC Guidelines set out four ‘**must do actions**’ which should be implemented in each project in every sector.

1. [Promote meaningful participation](#) - engage persons with disabilities in all phases of the project cycle in a meaningful way, ensuring that input and feedback from persons with disabilities is acted upon.



Promote

2. [Remove barriers](#) - identify attitudinal, physical and institutional barriers to accessing assistance and services which exist in the community, the general context, and within your organisation and take measurable actions to remove these.



Remove

3. [Empower persons with disabilities](#) - provide persons with disabilities the opportunity to engage in the project in various capacities e.g. monitoring committees, as staff, local liaisons etc; and enable them an opportunity to develop their skills.



Empower

4. [Disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion](#) - ensure that all data collected in assessments and implementation monitoring is disaggregated at a minimum by gender, age, and disability to better understand the extent to which persons with disabilities are reached and engaged in projects, and to provide information on gaps and needs to facilitate project adjustment.



Disaggregate

*Inclusive humanitarian action aims to ensure the **protection of rights** of groups at risk of discrimination, with a specific focus on persons with disabilities in line with International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, in particular the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.*

Definition of disability inclusion

Disability inclusion is achieved when persons with disabilities meaningfully participate in all their diversity, when their rights are promoted, and when disability-related concerns are addressed in compliance with the UNCRPD. It is related to the concept of ‘social inclusion’, which has been defined as “the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities – that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizen’s participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.”

Definition of barriers

Barriers are factors in a person’s environment that hamper participation and create disability. For persons with disabilities, they limit access to and inclusion in society. Barriers may be attitudinal, environmental or institutional.

- *Attitudinal barriers are negative attitudes that may be rooted in cultural or religious beliefs, hatred, unequal distribution of power, discrimination, prejudice, ignorance, stigma and bias, among other reasons. Family members or people in the close network of persons with disabilities may also face ‘discrimination by association’. Attitudinal barriers are at the root of discrimination and exclusion.*
- *Environmental barriers include physical obstacles in the natural or built environment that “prevent access and affect opportunities for participation”, and inaccessible communication systems. The latter do not allow persons with disabilities to access information or knowledge and thereby restrict their opportunities to participate. Lack of services or problems with service delivery are also environmental barriers.*
- *Institutional barriers include laws, policies, strategies or institutionalized practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities or prevent them from participating in society.*

Barriers may be classified as a threat if they are put in place intentionally. They are described as a vulnerability if their occurrence is inadvertent. In both cases, barriers lead to exclusion, making it likely that persons with disabilities will face more or worse threats and vulnerabilities than others affected by a crisis.

Practical guidance for disability-inclusive project design

The below points of guidance aim to facilitate rapid adoption and incorporation of the core 'must do actions' in all phases of the project cycle by presenting practical actions on inclusion to humanitarian staff in all sectors. The guidance can be treated as a checklist. The points listed below are not fully comprehensive and should be considered the bare minimum of inclusion related actions.

The Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey hub) recommends that project managers and other humanitarian staff consult the full IASC Guidelines¹ when designing, implementing, and monitoring their projects. The guidelines also include sector specific guidelines to strengthen inclusion.

<i>Organizational general / preparedness</i>	<i>Relates to 'must do actions'</i>
✓ Review and/or develop organizational policies, guidelines, and tools (including indicators, assessment and focus group discussion forms, etc.) to ensure that they clearly affirm the rights of persons with disabilities to access and inclusion; ensure to include related actions into organizational procedures throughout the project cycle.	 Promote
✓ Ensure feedback and complaints mechanisms are designed to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.	 Remove
✓ Staff is trained on inclusion of persons with disabilities, is familiar with the IASC Guidelines and specifically the 'must do actions', and – as a consequence – can identify persons with disabilities, involve them in implementation, and propose measures to overcome barriers to organisational management.	 Empower
✓ Engage regularly with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities to increase understanding of the general situation of persons with disabilities, barriers to accessing services and assistance, capacities and existing coping mechanisms, and actions that humanitarian organisations can take to strengthen inclusion.	 Disaggregate
✓ Where required, seek advice, guidance, and support from organisations and coordination platforms specialized in working with persons with disabilities and mainstreaming inclusion.	

<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Relates to 'must do actions'</i>
✓ Ensure that all data collected is disaggregated at a minimum by gender, age, and disability, and analyse data accordingly.	 Disaggregate
✓ Ensure that persons with a range of disabilities participate in key informant interviews and focus group discussions, and ideally include persons with disabilities in needs assessment teams. To guarantee representation of persons with disabilities, include male and female adults (including people over 60 years) and children, with physical, hearing, visual, sensory and intellectual and/or cognitive difficulties.	  Promote Empower
✓ Through assessments (including key informant interviews and focus group discussions), ensure to understand in relation to your assessment focus area (and in general): ○ Needs of persons with disabilities and their caregivers, including those that are specific to their situation ○ Types of difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities ○ Capacities of persons with disabilities and their caregivers	  Promote Remove   Empower Disaggregate

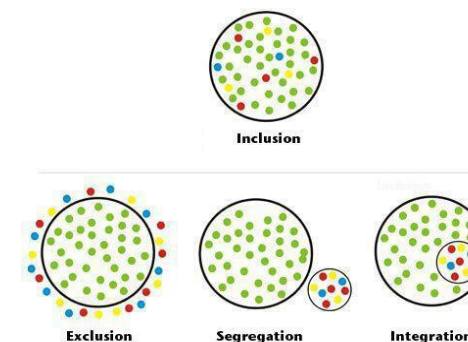
¹ Accessible via: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines>

<i>Project design</i>	<i>Relates to 'must do actions'</i>
✓ Organise consultations on the planned project and activities with persons with disabilities in the project areas, ensuring diversity of the consulted group. Ensure all individuals are able to express their views. Through this consultation (in addition to the factors mentioned above), ensure to understand: ○ Specific barriers which exist to accessing and benefiting from the planned assistance and services on an equal basis with others	   Promote Remove Empower
✓ Carry out an organisational or planned project self-assessment, and use information collected in assessments and consultations, to understand the barriers to inclusion specific to the organisation/project and its services and assistance.	 Remove
✓ Take action to include measures in the project plan to mitigate and/or remove the identified barriers and to strengthen capacities to ensure meaningful and equitable access for all persons. ○ Validate these measures with persons with disabilities. ○ Budget for these measures. Some practical examples of these measure include: ○ Public communication towards the affected population and project beneficiaries is accessible. ○ Project and distribution locations, centres, and activities are physically accessible to all people, regardless of impairment, (see universal design principles and references on page 8 of the IASC Guidelines).	   Promote Remove Empower
✓ Integrate inclusion of persons with disabilities, preferably through consultations with persons with disabilities, into relevant project tools. For example: ○ integrating disability into vulnerability criteria ○ beneficiary selection mechanisms ○ complaints and feedback mechanisms (ensure accessibility) ○ consent forms and processes (where applicable) ○ monitoring frameworks ▪ It is recommended to – at a minimum – include an indicator measuring the number of consultations on the project plan, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, with persons with disabilities to ensure demonstrable accountability, please see specific	  Promote Disaggregate

guidance on pages 43 to 48 as well as Annexes 6 and 7 on pages 198 to 203. ▪ For sector specific recommended output indicators please see the IASC Guidelines sector specific chapters, as well as Annex 5 on page 197. Based on the assessments and consultations, as well as the type of planned interventions, set an inclusion target for the project; the recommended minimum target in Northwest Syria is 15% of people reached by the project given the current disability prevalence rate.	
✓ Develop practical mechanisms to provide individualised supports to persons with disabilities in need of services and assistance provided through the project, based on their individual need (see reasonable accommodation on page 9 of the IASC Guidelines and all sector specific chapters) and put in place resources/mechanisms to ensure the ongoing support to persons with disabilities over the project cycle e.g. consider case management-based support and/or a disability focal point in the field, and ensure entry-points to referral pathways are mapped	 Remove

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Relates to 'must do actions'</i>
✓ Staff is provided with project tools and training to identify persons with disabilities and barriers to accessing services and assistance.	  Promote Disaggregate
✓ Staff engages regularly with persons with disabilities to disseminate information in an accessible manner on organizational feedback mechanisms and to directly receive feedback on the project, aiming to identify barriers as well as risks of harm and discrimination, and to seek proposed solutions / corrective measures. Feedback mechanisms are designed to adequately record issues faced by persons with disabilities and staff is empowered to act on these suggestions.	 Promote
✓ Informed consent procedures (where relevant) are accessible to all persons with disabilities in various formats. Relevant information is communicated in an accessible manner.	 Remove
✓ Staff has mapped local specialised services to which persons with disabilities can be referred for further support when required.	 Remove

✓ Document good practices of inclusion as well as identified challenges and barriers, and communicate these to the broader inter-agency community through established coordination platforms (notably the Protection Cluster).	  Promote Remove   Empower aggregate
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Monitoring	Relates to 'must do actions'
✓ Capture data on the numbers of persons with disabilities (and their difficulties where possible) who are accessing and assisted through the project.	 Disaggregate
✓ Analyse complaints and feedback received from an inclusion perspective.	  Promote Remove
✓ Monitor the quality of engagement through self-assessed performance and satisfaction surveys, do not solely focus on numbers. To this end, ensure proactive engagement and consultations with persons with disabilities and act on suggestions.	  Promote Disaggregate  Empower



Evaluation	Relates to 'must do actions'
✓ Understand what percentage of the project beneficiaries persons with disabilities were and to what extent they were able to access and participate in services on an equitable basis with others. Use disability baseline figures, in addition to project targets, to understand how the project performs.	 Disaggregate
✓ Understand what type of barrier reduction measures were taken and whether this was effective in removing or mitigating barriers.	  Promote Remove
✓ Evaluate the project, including on the information collected through monitoring, with persons with disabilities in project locations as well as with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.	  Promote Empower
✓ Understand the gaps that existed in the project and identify mechanisms required to improve inclusion in subsequent projects and project continuation.	  Promote Remove   Empower Disaggregate

Further resources on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, as well as on age, gender, and other diversity factors, can be accessed via the dedicated page of the Global Protection Cluster:
<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/tools-and-guidance/essential-protection-guidance-and-tools/age-gender-diversity-essential-guidance-and-tools/>

For Northwest Syria specific resources, please see the Protection Cluster (Turkey hub) website: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/stima/protection>