Practice 6

Inclusive Humanitarian Cycle through a strong disability inclusion working group

Afghanistan

- Ensuring Sustainability
- Persons with disabilities are equal partners
- Active engagement with persons with disabilities

→ Participate in training
→ Identify their needs
→ Improve collaboration and leadership

Innovation

Harmonizations

Impact

Mutual learning promoted and active engagement improved

Replicability

Sharing technical tools

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drg Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

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Inclusive Humanitarian Cycle Through a Strong Disability Inclusion Working Group in Afghanistan

Humanity & Inclusion

Timeframe:
12 months

Thematic Area:
Capacity development of humanitarian actors, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

Summary

In 2021, the humanitarian coordination system in Afghanistan identified critical gaps in disability inclusion. These gaps included a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities related to disability inclusion, limited capacities among organisations to integrate disability considerations into their work, an absence of coherent strategies, and a lack of disability-inclusive data.

To bridge these gaps, the Disability Inclusion Working Group (DIWG) was established and led by Humanity & Inclusion. Members included the United Nations Population Fund, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Save the Children, Concern Worldwide, UNICEF, and UNHCR, alongside local organisations such as the Labor Spring Organisation and Logar Disabled Women's Social Association.

The group prioritised collecting reliable and inclusive data, capacity building, and operationalising inclusive guidelines to mainstream disability in humanitarian actions. A key aim was to increase the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in all processes, ensuring their voices were heard, and their requirements were addressed in immediate and long-term responses.

What challenges did the practice address?

Before the group's formation, several key issues were identified in including persons with disabilities in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) process.

There was no specialised system in place to ensure full integration of disability inclusion in the HPC process, resulting in challenges in incorporating disability perspectives effectively in humanitarian efforts. This required a greater understanding of roles and responsibilities Within the humanitarian country team, which led to challenges in effectively integrating a rights-based approach per the IASC guidelines.

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The absence of a focused working group resulted in poor collection and utilisation of disability-specific data, which is crucial for informed planning and implementation of responses. There was also a lack of comprehensive knowledge regarding the extent and nature of disability issues in Afghanistan, which is essential for effective program design and implementation.

Many humanitarian actors lacked proper knowledge and skills in disability-inclusive programming, making it challenging to develop and implement programs that effectively address the requirements of persons with disabilities.

There was a notable absence of simplified guidelines, tools, and fact sheets specifically geared towards disability inclusion, which are essential for guiding humanitarian actors.

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities were minimally involved in coordination mechanisms and HPC processes despite being critical actors in the humanitarian response.

A comprehensive disability-focused review and engagement in the HPC process had yet to be completed. This was particularly evident during the review of the 2022 Humanitarian Needs[2] Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) Afghanistan documents.

Members of the Working Group highlighted a general requirement for more awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding disability-inclusive engagement in the HPC process.

How were the challenges addressed?

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The Disability Inclusion Working Group (DIWG) was established to address the identified challenges and strengthen disability inclusion within humanitarian coordination and response. The group targeted several key areas:
To address the lack of knowledge and skills in disability-inclusive programming, the DIWG focused on educating its members about the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

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Humanity & Inclusion led this initiative by providing a two-day training, engaging 25 members, including persons with disabilities from organisations of persons with disabilities, international non-government organisations, and United Nations Agencies. The training aimed to embed the '4 Must Do Actions' of the IASC guideline across all stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.[1]

1. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (2019) set out four 'must-do' actions to identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. They are: 1) promote meaningful participation; 2) remove barriers; 3) empower persons with disabilities and support them, as well as development and humanitarian actors, to develop their capacities; and 4) disaggregate data for monitoring inclusion.

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3. Recognising the requirement for practical and accessible resources, the DIWG developed simple guidelines, fact sheets, and tools to support a rights-based approach to disability. These materials were designed to assist humanitarian actors in integrating disability considerations into their programs effectively.

4. HI facilitated the inclusion of 15 organisations of persons with disabilities as members of the DIWG to enhance local representation. The process was so impactful that an organisation of persons with disabilities was elected to co-chair the group in 2023, alongside HI and the World Food Programme, signalling a significant step towards inclusive leadership.

5. The DIWG also aimed to guide and support its engagement with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, improving the group's technical expertise to support other humanitarian actors. They achieved this by training members on the HPC process, reviewing critical documents like the HNO and HRP with a disability lens, and providing actionable improvement recommendations.

6. To widen its influence, the DIWG engaged with other key groups like the Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) and Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working groups. This engagement focused on advocating for disability inclusion in the health, nutrition, protection, food, and security clusters for the 2023 HPC process.

7. To improve the representation of persons with disabilities, HI enlisted organisations of persons with disabilities into the working group. This move, supported by the co-chairs, led to a more diverse and representative DIWG, ensuring that the voices and concerns of persons with disabilities were heard and addressed.

What were the results?

1. The Group ensured that people with disabilities were recognised in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) with specific objectives and necessary disability data for targeted aid.

2. Guides, fact sheets and training were created to adopt inclusive practices and 'Must Do Actions,' particularly during emergencies.

3. Technical support was provided to organisations to improve the inclusivity of programs, and over ten organisations were assisted in integrating disability considerations into their funding proposals.

4. The DIWG increased engagement with Oorganisations of Persons with Disabilities and non-government organisations, leading to more inclusive decision-making processes and the

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election of a local organisation as a co-chair for 2023, amplifying diverse voices within the DIWG.

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The Group proactively collaborated with various clusters during the HRP planning phase. It produced qualitative review reports on HNO and HRP documents, marking a significant shift towards a more inclusive humanitarian response framework.

What could others learn from this?

To successfully integrate disability inclusion in humanitarian efforts, consider these key recommendations:

Embed disability inclusion groups within existing humanitarian coordination systems, like the OCHA's Inter-Cluster Coordination Team, to ensure they have the necessary influence and legitimacy.

Collaborate with technical experts and organisations such as Humanity & Inclusion and the Global Disability Reference Group for essential support and resources like the IASC guidelines.

Obtain backing from donors, like the ECHO Afghanistan Office, for crucial resources and operational capacity essential for the formation and success of disability inclusion initiatives.

Contact information

To find out more about this practice, please contact:

Godwin Kudzotsa

Inclusive Humanitarian Action Specialist - **Humanity & Inclusion**

g.kudzotsa@hi.org

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