

TOOLKIT ON ACCESSIBILITY

Tools to apply universal design across premises
and programmes and promote access for all



SECTION A



ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBILITY

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SECTION B



PROGRAMME- RELATED BUILDINGS

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SECTION C



ACCESSIBILITY IN EMERGENCIES

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SECTION D



UNICEF AND UNITED NATIONS PREMISES

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SECTION E



ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENTS

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SECTION F



ORGANIZATION OF ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

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SECTION G



ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLISTS

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SECTION G



ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLISTS

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Hanaa, 8, who was paralysed by an exploding bomb and lost the use of her legs, sits in her wheelchair near her home in Sakhoor neighborhood, east Aleppo city, Syrian Arab Republic.

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SECTION D: Accessibility in emergencies



Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by war, natural disasters and other crises, during which they are likely to experience discrimination and exclusion, despite the increasing efforts of humanitarian actors to adopt inclusive approaches.

Even though frameworks and guidelines take diversity more and more into consideration, disaster management and humanitarian assistance are often designed to provide standardized solutions to an affected community without sufficient regard for the needs of diverse populations, such as persons with disabilities and older people, among other groups. This gap must be filled to ensure assistance to all, without discrimination and on an equal basis. As a condition for inclusion, accessibility needs to be addressed as a core component of disaster risk management and humanitarian action.

SECTION D of this accessibility toolkit provides guidance for UNICEF's teams and partner organizations on how to ensure that accessibility and disability inclusion are taken into account in emergencies, and not only in development contexts.

Part 1 addresses the overarching aspects of accessibility in emergencies, such as the general principles and frameworks to be followed, the main stakeholders to be involved, data and approaches.

Part 2 focuses on the identification of barriers and the main recommendations for typical humanitarian facilities inside and outside camp settings: shelters; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure; community buildings; distribution sites; etc. It also provides recommendations pertaining to communication-related accessibility measures, for example during hygiene promotion sessions.

Part 3 provides an overview of how to address accessibility and participation during common activities and phases of humanitarian interventions.



Safa, 10 years, does her homework with the help of Abed Elmajeed Noaimi, UNICEF, and her father and siblings in Azraq Refugee Camp where she lives with her family and goes to school.

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Part 1: Concepts, data and frameworks

Accessibility vs inclusion

Promoting more inclusive humanitarian action is a complex, multifold and ambitious objective that cannot be achieved without addressing all the general principles listed in article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and, in particular, non-discrimination, full and effective participation, equality of opportunities and accessibility.

Inclusion in humanitarian action is therefore a larger concept than accessibility. It concerns, for example:

- ✓ Ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their families in all phases of humanitarian programmes
- ✓ Coordinating with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)
- ✓ Ensuring equal access to services to everyone, no matter their abilities
- ✓ Taking into account the carers and family members of persons with disabilities
- ✓ Including persons with disabilities in emergency and contingency plans
- ✓ Assessing and removing all types of barriers: physical, attitudinal, institutional

- ✓ Providing feedback and satisfaction mechanisms to persons with disabilities
- ✓ Ensuring support and services are adapted to all people (health, psychosocial, education, basic needs, etc.)
- ✓ Strengthening the capacity of humanitarian workers to design and implement inclusive humanitarian programmes
- ✓ Collecting and using disaggregated data about disability to ensure the inclusive design and implementation of humanitarian actions

This section does not address the whole topic of inclusion in humanitarian action (and disaster risk reduction) but focuses specifically on how accessibility should be taken into account in all the phases of the programming and in various emergency contexts.

Accessibility in emergency contexts

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in 2021, 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection. This number has risen to 1 in 33 people worldwide – a significant increase from 1 in 45 at the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, which at that time was already the highest figure in decades.¹

Extending World Health Organization (WHO) estimates,² approximately 15 per cent of this population lives with some form of disability. They “face higher risks in conflict situations and natural disasters. Research shows that the mortality rate among persons with disabilities tends



1 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Global Humanitarian Overview 2021', <<https://gho.unocha.org>>, accessed 6 August 2021.

2 World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, WHO, Geneva, 2011, <www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability>, accessed 6 August 2021.

to be two to four times higher than among the general population, as demonstrated in cases such as the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami and hurricane Katrina in the USA. [...] Persons with disabilities are disproportionately more likely to be left behind in emergency responses and to fail to benefit from humanitarian services due to ability range of environmental, physical and social barriers. A recent study has confirmed that three-quarters of persons with disabilities do not have adequate access to basic assistance, such as water, shelter or food, in a crisis situation. Half of the persons with disabilities being surveyed also reported no access to disability-specific services, such as rehabilitation or assistive devices.”³

A crisis often affects all four areas of accessibility (infrastructure, mobility, communication/information, and information and communications technology – ICT), severely impacting the lives of people with disabilities and their capacity to recover from the emergency:

LOSS/DAMAGE OF HOUSES, ASSETS AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- ✓ Less protection from discrimination-related violence
- ✓ Forced displacement to another location, potentially not adapted or far from needed medical/rehabilitation care, or distant from caretakers and family members
- ✓ Difficulty to move to a different place, and the risk of being left behind
- ✓ Loss of independence and a hindered capacity to perform basic activities (dressing, cooking, leaving the home, using the toilet) due to the loss or damage of assistive devices (lost/damaged canes, wheelchairs, crutches)

LOSS/DAMAGE OF BUILDINGS HOSTING COMMUNITY SERVICES (SCHOOLS, CLINICS, REHABILITATION CENTRES, ETC.)

- ✓ Greater difficulty in receiving the necessary services (no longer available or in damaged and non-accessible buildings)

DISRUPTION OF CIRCULATION AND TRANSPORTATION

- ✓ Impossibility to reach needed health care, psychological support or rehabilitation because of the lack of safety and accessibility in the streets
- ✓ Worsening of pre-existing exclusion and discrimination
- ✓ Abandonment, loneliness, need for psychological support, disruption of regular social support networks

INAPPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND INACCESSIBLE SUPPORTS

- ✓ Exclusion from life-saving alerts or recommendations before and during the crisis
- ✓ Unawareness of mitigation actions, recovery mechanisms, safety nets

³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Disability, ‘Disability-inclusive Humanitarian Action’, <www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/issues/whs.html>, accessed 6 August 2021.

In emergencies, it is possible to identify very specific risks related to a worsened lack of accessibility that persons with disabilities may be subject to:

EMERGENCY	EXAMPLES OF ACCESSIBILITY-RELATED RISKS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Earthquake, flood, tsunami	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Roads full of debris: difficulty circulating in the streets to seek food, help, etc. ✓ Difficulty and stressfulness in finding alternative itineraries to avoid debris ✓ Danger of staying in an affected building/house with impossibility/difficulty to evacuate quickly and without help ✓ Regarding displacement by boat: inaccessibility for persons with certain disabilities or using wheelchairs ✓ Impossibility/difficulty to reach or access temporary community shelters
Cold wave, storm, cyclone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Difficulty to adopt safety measures without help (due to blocked doors and windows, barriers to upper floors) ✓ Difficulty to perform winterization/summerization adaptations (external protections to shelters, etc.) ✓ Difficulty to prepare stocks of food and other items
Heat wave, draught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased distances to sources of water and increased difficulty to reach them by persons with mobility or visual impairments ✓ Fewer water sources and longer lines: increased difficulty for some persons with disabilities to wait long periods of time without sitting
Conflict-related crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Difficulty to identify remnants of explosives in the streets by sight and to avoid them ✓ Less access to information on dangerous areas to avoid ✓ Greater exposure to bullets (less agility and difficulty to quickly find refuge or crawl on the floor) ✓ Difficulty to identify minefields through visual signage, to understand symbols related to minefields, to move around new minefields (uneven/unknown paths) ✓ Difficulty to understand where an unexpected threat might come from (for hard-of-hearing persons) and how to react to it

Similarly, the lack of accessibility hinders the possibility of persons with disabilities to be included in emergency responses and the recovery and reconstruction phases:

Inaccessible emergency settings, camp layouts, locations of services and facilities related to shelters, registration and distribution activities, etc.

Inaccessible design and location of individual and community shelters, WASH facilities (latrines, water points, handwashing stations, etc.) and other community services (schools, health services, etc.)

Inadaptability of communication-related activities to all publics (hygiene promotion sessions, information on distribution schedules, registration procedures, etc.).

It is therefore of paramount importance to mainstream disability inclusion within humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction, and to not lose sight of the fact that accessibility is an essential part of it.



Framework and general principles

The CRPD provides the highest framework for inclusion in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies in article 11: “States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.”

The CRPD addresses accessibility specifically in article 9, and provides useful definitions in article 2 (universal design and reasonable accommodation).

The [Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#) specifically mentions the importance of eliminating barriers and adopting universal design in article 2.4: “[we commit to] (b) Strive to ensure that services and humanitarian assistance are equally available for and accessible to all persons with disabilities; (c) Work towards the elimination of physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers including through systematic provision of information for all in planning, preparedness and response, and strive to ensure the accessibility of services including through universal design in programming, policies and in all post-emergency reconstruction.”

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 recognizes that “disaster risk reduction practices need to be multi-hazard and multisectoral, inclusive and accessible in order to be efficient and effective” (art. 7), and that “disaster risk reduction [...] requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender,