



European  
Commission



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## European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

# Disability inclusion

### What is it?

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society.

As stated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability is an evolving concept which “results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

People with disabilities often face barriers that prevent their full access to humanitarian assistance and protection. Disability can also intersect with other barriers linked to gender, age or ethnic origin.

Disability inclusion, therefore, aims to consider the specific needs of persons with disabilities to ensure their full participation in humanitarian action.

### Why is this important?

Despite gaining prominence over recent years, disability inclusion in humanitarian action remains insufficient.

It is estimated that 15% of the global population has a disability. This proportion is likely to sharply increase in humanitarian crises. Yet, ways of delivering assistance and protection to persons with disabilities in humanitarian settings remain insufficiently adapted.

Due to discrimination and environmental, physical, economic and social barriers, people with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from emergency responses and humanitarian services.

They also face additional threats and vulnerabilities. For example, not everyone can hear the warning or has a chance to flee. Therefore, persons with disabilities are often forgotten at the onset of emergencies.

To ensure their full inclusion and participation in humanitarian action, the specific needs of people with disabilities must be considered. The barriers they face need to be removed, reduced and their impact mitigated through protective factors and enablers permitting access to and participation in humanitarian assistance.

### How are we helping?

#### Policy

Making humanitarian aid inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities remains our priority. The EU is party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010) and has endorsed the World Humanitarian Summit’s Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (2016).

In 2019, the EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department published operational guidelines on disability inclusion. Their purpose is to ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into consideration in all projects supported by EU humanitarian aid.

The guidelines provide tools to assess and remove the barriers preventing meaningful access and full and effective participation of disabled people in humanitarian assistance and protection. The aim is to lead to better programme quality and improved, safer and more accessible services, assistance and protection for persons with disabilities in humanitarian operations. The guidance recognises persons with disabilities as rights-holders able to claim their rights.

In 2021, the EU published a new European Disability Strategy. The Strategy commits to ensuring that the needs of persons with disabilities are adequately addressed in EU-funded humanitarian aid by involving persons with disabilities, cooperating with civil society, and supporting capacity building.

The EU committed to strengthening its data collection on persons with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian aid, for example, by promoting the use of the Washington Short Set of Questions, a set of questions designed to identify people with functional limitations.

The Strategy states that attention must be paid to children and young people with disabilities, especially in conflict and post-conflict societies or developing countries, where protection, access to school and basic services are often lacking. That is why inclusive education in crises remains a priority, as children with disabilities are among the most marginalised and vulnerable.

Finally, the EU is committed to pursuing dialogue with the Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

## Funding

Since 2019, the EU has applied the disability marker established by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee. It allows us to track projects specifically targeting the needs of persons with disabilities or mainstreaming disability throughout the response.

In 2022, the EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department funded 259 projects that took into consideration and mainstreamed the needs of persons with disabilities. The projects covered shelter, water and sanitation, cash assistance, protection, education, or disaster risk reduction, among other areas.

Last year, we also funded 35 humanitarian aid projects specifically targeted at persons with disabilities.

## Actions

Recent examples of EU-funded actions with disability inclusion as one of the focus areas include:

- **inclusive education and accessible learning environments** in various areas, e.g., the Philippines, Pakistan, Kenya, Niger, Uganda, Mozambique, Lebanon and Ukraine
- **rehabilitation services and provision of assistive devices** in Syria and Lebanon
- making **temporary reception centres accessible** for persons with disabilities in Ukraine
- construction of **accessible water and sanitation infrastructure** for persons with disabilities in Somalia and Nigeria
- inclusive disaster risk reduction and specific emergency shelter repairs for persons with disabilities in Bangladesh
- provision of protection assistance, including mental health and psychosocial support
- advocacy and capacity building on disability inclusion.

## Facts & figures

It is estimated that **15%** of the global population have a disability.

In 2022, as many as **70.8%** of all projects mainstreamed disability to various extent.

**10.8%** of all projects included specific activities targeting persons with disabilities.