

Concept Note

DSPD/ DESA Forum on Disability-Inclusive Humanitarian Action

22 May, 2016, Istanbul

Background

The global community is facing an increasing number of protracted humanitarian crises, which have a significant impact on persons with disabilities. Armed conflicts and emergency situations increase the number of disabling barriers on a larger scale, and also heighten the risks and vulnerabilities that persons with disabilities face as they seek out assistance, support and protection.

Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalised and excluded groups in emergency situations, experiencing widespread violations of their rights. In crises, persons with disabilities have the same basic needs common to all those affected, in addition to specific needs related to disability. However, they are often not counted in needs assessments and experience environmental, cultural and attitudinal barriers to accessing essential services in emergency and humanitarian responses.

The World Humanitarian Summit offers opportunities to strengthen the visibility of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises and to advance appropriate actions to close existing gaps and ensure humanitarian efforts are truly inclusive.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides an international human rights and development framework for persons with disabilities and contains specific provisions for humanitarian crises and emergencies. Since the adoption of the Convention, the global community has demonstrated increased attention and commitment to addressing the specific needs and interests of persons with disabilities in disaster and crisis situations.

The following commitments have been made at the international level in recent years:

- The Outcome Document of the General Assembly's High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development (A/RES/68/3) in September 2013 reaffirms the commitment of the international community to taking actions "to continue to strengthen the inclusion of and focus on the needs of persons with disabilities in humanitarian programming and response, and include accessibility and rehabilitation as essential components in all aspects and stages of humanitarian response."¹
- In March 2015, the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Sendai, Japan and, as an outcome of the Conference, new focus was given to the concept "inclusion saves life". Disability was included as a key priority in the Sendai Declaration and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Importantly, the Sendai Framework recognises persons with disabilities as resources and agents of change in disaster preparedness and responses. It also recognises the convergence of disability issues in development and situations of emergency and crises and efforts to rebuild communities.

¹ RES/A/68/3

- Recent resolutions of the Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have further noted the critical importance of addressing the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities in crises and situations of emergencies.²

Despite these advances, there remains a challenge to translate international commitments to action that is systematically inclusive of persons with disabilities at the operational level. Progress has been made among humanitarian actors to develop and apply inclusive tools and guidelines in humanitarian responses.³ Nonetheless, experience has shown that a significant number of barriers persist in terms of involving persons with disabilities and their organisations in decision making processes and at all stages of humanitarian action.

In response to existing challenges, a proposal for the development of a Charter on disability inclusive humanitarian action and global standards and guidelines are being developed for endorsement at the World Humanitarian Summit. The Charter will provide overarching principles representing a commitment to disability-inclusive humanitarian action. The system-wide standards will seek to support States' obligations set under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and would facilitate the implementation of other inclusive frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognising and addressing the capacities, rights and diversity of persons with disabilities affected by crisis and conflict.

This Forum will take place in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit as a technical contribution to the special event on disability during the Summit.

Objectives of the Forum

The Forum will provide a timely opportunity for decision-makers, experts, civil society and actors in humanitarian work to have an open and in-depth discussion on challenges and opportunities in advancing disability inclusive humanitarian action. The Forum will also facilitate sharing of experiences and good practices, including by reviewing and building on lessons learned from the Sendai process and experiences in DiDRR, as well as existing disability-inclusive efforts at local, national and international levels. The Forum will also offer an opportunity to discuss next steps in strengthening disability-inclusive humanitarian action, including the adoption of a Charter on disability inclusion, and to validate a road-map for the development of system-wide standards and guidelines.

Provisional Programme

(13:00 – 13:30)

² See, for example, SC Resolution 2217/2015, para 32(e)(2), and GA Resolution 69/142, para 11.

³ See The Sphere Project (2011); the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2012); the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies Minimum Standards (2010); Guidance Note on Disability and Emergency Risk Management for Health (2013); ADCAP Minimum Standards for Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action: Pilot Version (2015); UNHCR, Working with persons with disabilities in forced displacement (2011).

Opening Session:

Opening remarks

List of speakers

(13.30 – 14.30)

Session I: An Overview of Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Crises: Challenges and Obstacles

This session will be chaired by the Director of DSPD. The Opening segment will discuss the status of disability-responsiveness in the context of on-going humanitarian crises and relief operations. It will include an overview of the current normative framework for persons with disabilities in situations of crises, and progress, challenges and obstacles in disability-inclusion in humanitarian responses at the institutional, policy and programme levels.

- List of speakers and moderator

(14.30 – 15.30)

Session II: Experiences and lessons learned in the advancement of disability-inclusive humanitarian responses

This session will consist of sharing experiences and lessons learned from humanitarian actors in the advancement of disability-inclusive humanitarian actions, in particular, looking at issues affecting women and girls with disabilities, and invisible disabilities. This session will involve presentations from a few speakers followed by interactive dialogue.

- List of speakers and moderator

(15.30 – 17.00)

Session III: Present and future of disability-inclusive humanitarian response

This session will discuss how to successfully advance disability-inclusive humanitarian policies and their implementation in the global, regional, national and local contexts. The discussion will focus on the 'next steps' in the preparation for the follow up to the WHS, including the development of global guidelines and standards for disability inclusion. It will examine the role of governments, the UN system, organisations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders in achieving the goal of disability-inclusive humanitarian action.

- List of speakers and moderator

Issues for consideration

Participants in the Forum are encouraged to share their experiences, expertise and ideas at the Forum. The following questions will guide discussions and contribute to the four established themes of the WHS:

- What good practices, standards and guidelines currently exist that can inform future work to strengthen *humanitarian effectiveness* in responses to persons with crises, including persons with disabilities?
- How can we *reduce marginalisation and manage risks* associated with disability? How can the convergence of disability issues within international cooperative agreements and development policies and programmes be improved?
- From the disability perspective what types of innovation are needed in current responses?
- How can multi-stakeholder partnerships including organisations of persons with disabilities fast-track and improve responsiveness to persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises?
- What process and key steps should be pursued to develop global guidelines on disability inclusion in humanitarian action?