



disability inclusion annual report

2018

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About UNRWA

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of over 5.4 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

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Cover photo: A refugee works with his disability. ©2018 UNRWA

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table of contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Disability inclusion at UNRWA	2
Chapter 2 - Main actions undertaken in 2018	4
2.1 Direct specialized services for persons with disabilities	4
2.2 Disability inclusion through programmes	5
2.3 International cooperation	7
Chapter 3 - Conclusion	8
3.1 Challenges	8
3.2 Opportunities	9
Footnotes	10

chapter 1: introduction

1.1 Background

There are currently 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in its five fields of operation (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip), and it is estimated that 15 per cent¹ or 795,000 of them have a disability. Despite being a significant part of the registered population, there is a lot of stigma related to persons with disabilities and families often hide family members with disabilities from the community or stop them from fully participating in the community's social activities. Even when there is no shame projected in this way, a commonly held perception is that persons with disabilities are not capable of living a normal life or performing expected social roles. As independence is valued in many societies, those who are highly dependent on family members are seen as incapable and end up being marginalized from society.²

In prolonged conflicts or displacement such as that faced by Palestine refugees, this situation is aggravated since physical structures are often destroyed, public services have been disrupted and the economy is usually deeply affected. In this sense, Palestine refugees with disabilities can be disproportionately affected by their protracted displacement, facing additional protection concerns as well as barriers to live independently and to be included in their communities.

In addition to facing more barriers to access services and being more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, Palestine refugees with disabilities also face additional protection concerns, being exposed to different types of abuse, exploitation, neglect, physical violence and psychological distress. Simultaneously, conflicts can increase the incidence of these protection concerns for Palestine refugees and these factors, may lead to an increase of disability within the affected population. This is particularly in contexts of Syria, Gaza and the West Bank which have seen on-going conflict and armed violence during 2018.

In Syria, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Humanity and Inclusion,³ it was estimated that 1.5 million people have a permanent disability due to the conflict, "including 86,000 people whose injuries have led to amputations" as of December 2017. A similar study⁴ carried out with Syrian refugees in Lebanon found out that 22.4 per cent had a disability; which is expected to be an analogous reference point for Palestine refugees from Syria, who themselves also generally experience higher poverty rates. Another aggravating fact is that one third of those injured in the conflict are children. Although UNRWA does not have exact figures, many Palestine refugees have acquired a disability as a result of the conflict which the Agency has addressed through

its programmes.

In Gaza, in addition to the violence faced by Palestine refugees during the hostilities in 2014, the 'Great March of Return' which started in March 2018 has led to an alarming increase of persons with injuries, including Palestine refugees, resulting from the use of force including live ammunition by Israeli Security Forces (ISF) during the demonstrations which has increased the risk of people developing a permanent disability. According to WHO's⁵ figures, from March 30 to November 3, 227 people have been killed and 24,516 people have been injured as a result of the violence –including more than 7,200 of limb related injuries and some 460 injured people who will be in need of limb reconstruction and will require surgeries and extensive rehabilitation and treatment for up to two years. In addition, there have been 94 cases of amputation, 18 cases of paralysis due to spinal cord injuries. Out of the 24,516 people injured, 4,619 cases have been treated in UNRWA health clinics.



UNRWA staff participate in a disability inclusion workshop in Amman.
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WHO and UNRWA have also reported that many patients are being discharged early due to the intense flow of incoming patients, which might lead to post-operative complications, including the development of permanent disabilities. An increase in the number of persons with disabilities has also had several programming implications for UNRWA which will require better planning to ensure: availability of skilled staff, different equipment and specialized services, and adaptation of schools and other UNRWA services.

1.2 Disability inclusion at UNRWA

Ensuring that Palestine refugees with disabilities are protected and can access services is an essential part of UNRWA's mandate. The UN General Assembly "has repeatedly encouraged the Agency to work towards addressing the needs, rights and protection of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)". With this in mind, and in view of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by persons with disabilities, in 2018 UNRWA took further actions to ensure that its programming and services are disability inclusive and in line with the CRPD.⁶

In particular, the Agency has taken important steps towards ensuring that Palestine refugees with disabilities have equal and meaningful access to its services in line with the Agency's Disability Policy from 2010 and further to the roll-out and implementation of the Disability Inclusion Guidelines⁷ that were finalised in 2017. The Guidelines aim to operationalize the Disability Policy's commitments as well as to build the capacity of different staff on key inclusion principles and on how to promote disability inclusion in different programmes. They have also reinforced the importance of working simultaneously at the individual level, supporting persons with disabilities with specialised services – which is carried out since 1989 by the Disability Programme of the Department of Relief and Social Services (RSS).

The Disability Policy and Disability Inclusion Guidelines - along with international commitments such as the Agency's endorsement of the Charter of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action⁸ - have laid the ground for a number of actions taken in 2018 to continue to improve disability inclusion across the Agency. A Disability Task Force has continued to bring together HQ programme departments and field office colleagues to promote sharing and exchanging technical knowledge and expertise and improving practices around disability inclusion.

As a result of the Task Force, in June 2018, a Disability Workshop was held in Amman, Jordan for two days. The workshop was co-hosted by the Department of Relief and Social Services (RSS) and the Protection Division, reflecting the complementary work on disability done by the two offices. The Workshop took stock of the progress on disability inclusion to date and helped define the next phase of activities. The main outcomes of the workshop were the development of a short lessons learned report from the Disability Inclusion Guidelines trainings; identifying gaps, challenges and constraints as well as solutions; the importance of improving disability



A nurse treats a patient at an UNRWA rehabilitation centre in Nur Shams camp, West Bank. ©2018 UNRWA photo by: Nehaya Al Jundi

disaggregated data collection; identifying entry points for disability inclusion in each programme department to support activities in 2018/19; and discuss ideas for good practices and for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2018. Following the launch of the Disability Inclusion Guidelines, accompanying Disability Inclusion Trainings were delivered to UNRWA staff in its five field offices to ensure a consistent Agency-wide understanding of key disability inclusion principles and practices. After 33 focal points across the Agency were trained in 2017 to become trainers on the implementation of the Guidelines, from January to October 2018, they replicated the trainings to more than 300 staff members in the field offices.

The staff who had been part of the trainings recognised its importance for awareness and capacity building of UNRWA staff as well as for promoting disability inclusion at field level.

Furthermore, the results of the pre and post training scores highlight the positive impact of the trainings on staff's capacity. In Syria, for instance, until October 2018, 120 staff were trained on Disability Inclusion and 221 families of persons with disabilities and volunteers benefited from capacity building activities.

Another Agency-wide initiative in 2018 was the development of a Data Assessment Report to advance the improvement of disability disaggregated data collected by UNRWA. Improving identification of persons with disabilities and their needs will help inform planning and design of programmes. Adequate identification reduces "invisibility" of persons with disabilities, allowing the Agency to identify and address diverse needs among the affected population.

The assessment was conducted with each Programme (Education, Health, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement, Microfinance and RSS) to understand if and how disability disaggregated data is collected as well as entry points to improve or set up disability disaggregated data collection mechanisms. One of the main findings was that agreeing on common definitions of types of disabilities would help gathering information on the prevalence rates of disability as each programme have their own definitions. This difference results from the different nature of services provided –as data is collected with the purpose of service delivery. Moreover, all departments emphasized the importance of adequate training to staff on collecting disability disaggregated data.

Overall there were two broad conclusions that arose from the assessment: 1) there is need to gather better data on the prevalence and needs of persons with disabilities amongst Palestine refugees; 2) there is the need to ensure that programmes are disaggregating their data according to international recognized definitions so as to improve programming and referrals. Finally, the overwhelming majority of staff preferred the use of the Washington Group Questions for obtaining better prevalence rates of persons with disabilities and further work is ongoing to achieve that.

chapter 2: main actions undertaken in 2018

In accordance with the Disability Policy and Disability Inclusion Guidelines, UNRWA has adopted a twin-track approach to disability firstly by improving targeted disability-specific initiatives (such as specialised services as rehabilitation, assistive devices distribution and targeted actions to the individual) while secondly also ensuring that all services and programmes are inclusive to persons with disabilities. The first type of interventions (targeted and specialised services) are mainly led by RSS, through the Disability Programme as mentioned above, while the second is a joint responsibility of the Agency's programmes. In 2018, the following were the main actions to address the needs of persons with disability in 2018.

2.1 Direct specialized services for persons with disabilities

More than 25,000 Palestine refugees with disabilities benefit annually from the services provided by the RSS Disability Programme, either directly by UNRWA or in partnership with Community Based Rehabilitation Centres (CBRCs) and national and international NGOs. These services have been provided in particular by 1) Provision of direct or indirect assistive devices to increase refugee with disabilities access to services; 3) Support to Community Based Rehabilitation services for people with visual and hearing impairments, children with cerebral palsy and intellectual disabilities as well as refugees requiring speech and physical therapy; 4) Community awareness raising activities to promote positive attitudes within the community towards persons with disabilities.

In **Syria**, for instance, in the first six months of 2018, 928 Palestine refugees received assistive devices that enhanced their access to services as well as their wellbeing in 2018. In addition, 492 people benefitted from physiotherapy sessions, 541 children under the age of 10 benefitted from speech evaluation, behavioural therapy, and intellectual development sessions. In 2018, the Disability Programme was reactivated in Sbeineh camp in Syria after the return of displaced Palestine refugees to the camp area to support children with disabilities and build the capacity of their families to support them. More than 740 community members took part in awareness-raising sessions on the rights of persons with disabilities and recreational activities were conducted for 1,140 persons with disabilities, including 950 children under 10 to help relieve stress.

stories from the field

In Syria, RSS support ensured a bright future for Mo'tassem Saqer Saleh, a 19-year-old with multiple disabilities from Khan Eshieh camp in Rif Damascus. After completing his UNRWA education in 9th grade, he went on to study at a government school, but dropped out at the start of 12th grade after being bullied by his classmates.

As his family had no money for private lessons, a social worker from UNRWA convinced a language institute in Khan Eshieh camp to enroll Mo'tassem in a preparatory course for the 12th grade national exam, free of charge. He is now studying Information Technology at the Agency's Damascus Training Centre. "My ultimate goal after I complete my studies is to find a job," Mo'tassem says.

In **Lebanon**, UNRWA is the only large service provider of assistive devices for Palestine refugees with disabilities, due to their limited access to Lebanese public services. For other specialised services, UNRWA and the Palestinian Disability Forum (a network of the organizations addressing needs of persons with disabilities in Lebanon) are the main providers. In 2018, RSS has supported 1,702 persons with disabilities (835 women and girls and 867 men and boys) through the Disability Programme. In addition to its core activities, the Programme also sponsored children with disabilities to access specialized institutions, provided prosthetic devices in coordination or partnership with local NGOs and organised series of awareness raising sessions targeting persons with disabilities, their families and the community at large (for parents, children and youth on house personal safety, Life skills, adolescents etc.) in partnership with local NGOs.

In the **West Bank**, RSS has partnered with BASR- Community-Based Rehabilitation Centre (CBRCs) specialized team, comprised of occupational therapist, speech therapist, audiologist and an ophthalmologist to conduct a thorough assessment on cases referred from Arroub and Jalazoun refugee camps to Community Based Rehabilitation Centres. This team provided recommendations and followed up supporting these cases with speech and occupational therapy sessions, assistive devices such as spectacles, medical boots, hearing aids and referred some for rehabilitation centres and external expertise.

RSS has worked on the inclusion aspect, raising awareness about disability issues during summer with the higher national committee for summer camps. This led to the organization of eight summer camp activities for 1,650 children with and without disabilities (ages 6-13) from Tulkarm, NourShams, Askar 1+2, camp no1, Far'ah, Am'ry, Fawwar camps.

Activities in the protection summer camps paid attention to include children with disabilities in sport activities with siblings and peers inside their houses and communities, allowing participants to exchange experiences and stories to learn from each other. Other activities such as psychosocial support, self-advocacy, life skills, short trips and handicraft training workshops were also conducted. The protection summer and winter camps take place in the West Bank, bringing educational and recreational activities to Palestine refugee youth and children, targeting communities most vulnerable to protection threats.

In **Gaza**, until September 30, the Disability Programme has supported 7,733 persons with disabilities. This number includes, among other things the distribution of 91 hearing aids, 3 Wheel-chairs, 65 toilet wheelchairs, 118 air-mattresses 67 walkers and 43 crutches to persons with disabilities through the Community Development Social Workers. Furthermore, 1,523 children with disabilities aged 4 to 16 years have benefited from rehabilitation, integration and special education services provided by the Community Based Rehabilitation Centers-CBRCs and from the Rehabilitation Center for the Visually Impaired (RCVI) which operates with the support of RSS. An interesting activity was the Keep Kids Cool Project (KKC), which was implemented in seven CBRCs in cooperation with UNRWA Social Services Division. The project involved recreational activities, arts, handicraft and sports for 1093 children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

2.2 Disability inclusion through programmes

Education: UNRWA has worked to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in its in 711 schools through the implementation of its Inclusive Education Policy (2013). The Teacher's Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to Students' Diverse Needs has led to trainings for teachers to develop inclusive school and classroom practices.

Furthermore, the UNRWA Education in Emergencies (EiE) programme has further increased the focus on students who required targeted interventions, including those with disabilities. It builds on the UNRWA education system and

focuses on continuity of education through introducing innovations. UNRWA education systems also emphasised regular measurement and reporting on identification of children with additional needs.

success story

A teacher from Nuseirat School received guidance from the Special Education Needs Supervisor to make accessible school chairs and desks for children with disabilities. As there were no funds available, Hamdan used pieces of broken school chairs and desks, as well as unused office chairs, car seats and other recycled materials, to build new desks.

Each product costed around 50USD using recycled materials –rather than the 350-400 USD it would cost with new materials. Despite using recycled materials, end products are high quality. In 2018, around 60 of such desks and chairs were produced and distributed to students with disabilities in Gaza.

Finally, the Learning Support Programme has presented extremely positive results for children with disabilities. In this programme, special teachers are present in UNRWA schools to provide personalised support to students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Results from Lebanon and Gaza, have shown that children who are part of this initiative have improved performance in classroom, exams and in socialising with students without disabilities.



A bespoke desk, especially fitted for accessibility for students with disabilities. ©2018 UNRWA

As part of LFO efforts to ensure support for students with disabilities, 251 students with disabilities were referred to diagnosis and therapeutic consultations at specialized institutions. This effort has allowed these students achieve better communication, academic and psychosocial skills. Further, to improve the inclusiveness of UNRWA schools, specific support is provided to students with disabilities corresponding to their specific needs. For example, in the North, a shadow teacher was assigned for an autistic child. She assisted him in daily work at school. As a result, he is now being more attentive and is better able to concentrate in class and is better able to participate in the classroom.

Health: The Health programme has many initiatives to support persons with disabilities, including through the Family Health Team model, which aims at optimizing health care to Palestine refugees as well as awareness raising for staff on mainstreaming and accessibility in health facilities. Furthermore, the Health programmes work on early identification of disability on new-borns and for children at school age in UNRWA schools, prevention (through immunization, disease prevention and control); and delivers some rehabilitations services. In Gaza, health staff have worked with the families of persons with disabilities to ensure that the work led by the physiotherapists are also done at home to accelerate recovery. This was particularly important with those in need of physiotherapy as a result of the injuries from the Great March of return. The Health programme has also supported 320 students with hearing aids in 2018 and most health centres in Gaza have been rehabilitated by ICIP and are now accessible.

In **West Bank**, in addition to the core activities mentioned above, Health Programme worked at the Central Youth Summer and the Sub-Summer Camps to ensure necessary support to children with disabilities. Furthermore, the Programme has ongoing counselling groups for mothers of children with disabilities, focusing on community stigma, violence, family dynamics and mental health issues.

Infrastructure and camp improvement: In 2018 ICIP started the implementation of the Technical Standards and Guidelines for Physically Accessible Environment (PAE) (2017) which set standards to provide Physically Accessible Environment (PAE) at UNRWA premises. The PAE includes requirements for identification and elimination of physical obstacles and barriers to allow accessibility for persons with all types of disabilities in all of Agency's premises, including new UNRWA schools and health centres.

In the **West Bank**, ICIP has created accessible outdoor spaces for children including playing areas and full shaded areas

for playgrounds with accessible toilets. These have helped increase the number of children with disabilities enrolled in UNRWA schools. Finally, in 2018, ICIP team has ensured that 10 out of 21 health centers and 18 out of 85 schools fully meet protection and mobility accessibility standards.

In **Lebanon** in 2018, ICIP has planned an inclusive leisure area and play space in Rashidieh camp with full participation from the community. The area is currently under implementation where men, women, boys and girls with disabilities of all age groups can spend their free time, without facing any physical barriers. In addition, according to the Programme in Lebanon, in 2018, 12 schools, 12 toilet blocks, a common classroom building, 2 relief offices, and 2 health centres have been built or rehabilitated according to protection and mobility accessibility standards.



A student uses a specially fitted accessibility elevator in an UNRWA school in Lebanon. © 2018 UNRWA

In **Gaza**, ICIP worked to improve accessibility in the camps (at least with accessible roads that connects schools, health centers and public spaces) and to improve overall accessibility in shelters (accessibility and adequacy of toilets using a participatory process to designing shelters). One of the examples was the work done in Khan Younis camp, where they laid concrete and interlock tiles for internal roads and alleys to facilitate mobility of persons with disabilities and older persons living at the streets. This has also benefitted other community members who use these spaces for activities such as sports, recreational activities for children, awareness sessions etc.

Furthermore, ICIP has conducted physical accessibility assessments of UNRWA facilities with the participation of persons with disabilities in schools, health centres, vocational training centers, community based centers, and other UNRWA premises.

In **Jordan**, 11 health centres and 11 schools were rehabilitated by ICIP for accessibility. Out of those, eleven health centres and ten schools were rehabilitated to meet the protection and mobility accessibility standards. Finally, one school (Talbieh school) was fully rehabilitated to meet ICIP PAE standards and guidelines, including the installment of elevators, ramps, signage, accessible toilet units and tactile tiles for the persons with visual impairments.

Microfinance: Operational in Gaza, West Bank, Jordan and Syria, the Microfinance Programme provides inclusive financial services for those with low income (including Palestine refugees, women, youths, persons with disabilities and micro-entrepreneurs working in the informal sector). Through a network of 24 branch offices, the programme delivers inclusive financial services through 9 loan products targeting business development, consumption needs and house improvements. The programme is dynamic and continuously develops products in line with global microfinance industry standards. While the proportion of loans for persons with disabilities is quite low (42 loans out of a total portfolio of 38,000 loans provided in 2017), it is expected that this percentage will improve after improving the data gathering process.

Protection: Recognizing that persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities, face additional protection risks in situations of displacement and protracted crisis, the Agency has worked to improve disability inclusiveness in protection services. This includes the elaboration of inclusive Protection Audits, which now allow for identifying protection concerns specific to persons with disabilities.

Important work has also been carried out to ensure intersectionality among disability, gender and age both on protection mainstreaming and protection services. For instance, the GBV training manual launched in early 2018 was elaborated using a disability inclusiveness approach as well as the GBV E-Learning Course launched in November 2018.

During the first two quarters of 2018, out of a total of 1,593 individuals identified by UNRWA and provided with assistance (which were 95.4 percent of cases) as experiencing a general protection risk, 9.1 per cent were persons with disabilities. Furthermore, out of a total of 2,367 GBV survivors identified by UNRWA and provided with assistance (97 per cent of total

cases identified), 3.3 per cent were persons with disabilities. Finally out of 1,153 children identified by UNRWA and provided with assistance experiencing a child protection risk (which were 81 per cent of the total identified), 2.9 per cent were children with disabilities.

In **Gaza**, the Protection team worked with ICIP and RSS to identify persons with disabilities in need of financial support for housing rehabilitation. They assisted families who have persons with disabilities to receive accessibility work on their homes to support mobility of these family members.

In **Jordan**, in an example of how to mainstream disability in child protection, a comprehensive assessment was conducted at the CBRCs to identify issues related to protection concerns of children with disabilities. Led by the Child Protection Officer, the Assessment examined the scope and capacity of the existing formal and informal child protection systems and their effectiveness in CBRCs to provide different services to at least 2,000 children with disabilities. It also looked at their capacity to respond to children with disabilities' protection risks and needs and to understand perceptions of society (staff and families) of children with disabilities.

International Protection Advocacy

In 2018, UNRWA engaged with over 10 international human rights mechanism reviews and inquiries through oral and written confidential submissions in accordance with the Agency's Framework for Effective Engagement with the International Human Rights System (2011). Many of these engaged in particular with situations of violence and possible violations of international law resulting in physical injury and psychological trauma potentially causing long term disabilities, as well as the rights of Palestine refugees with disabilities. Engagements have included contributing information on Agency programmes for Palestine refugees to draft initial reports of the State of Palestine under applicable international human rights treaties.

Public and private advocacy on the impact of injuries (including long-term) during the 'Great March of Return' including use of live ammunition, and the consequences of the use of live ammunition in the West Bank has been among the core protection work done that also related to persons with disabilities in 2018. Finally, there has been active engagement in the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as outlined below.

2.3 International cooperation

In 2018 UNRWA has continued to actively engage in international mechanisms working towards disability inclusion. As an endorser of the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action¹⁰ (2016) UNRWA has also worked to ensure that good practices are documented, shared and used for cross-learning regionally and internationally. In 2018, the Agency has actively engaged in different inter-agency coordination mechanisms as well as contributed to a number of documents being elaborated globally related to disability inclusion. This includes participation in the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) Task Team on Disability Inclusion.

The IASC Task Team has been working on developing IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and UNRWA has had a very active engagement in the process. The Agency has participated in monthly telephone conference calls, reviewed draft versions, engaged in different sub-working groups (Protection and Education), elaborated a case study for Education and participated in the MENA consultation workshop in March 2018.

chapter 3: conclusion

3.1 Challenges

Despite the visible achievements mentioned above, 2018 has presented a number of challenges to further the work on disability inclusion in the Agency. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the challenges listed below need to be interpreted as opportunities for UNRWA to improve its programmes and services so they become more inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Lack of financial and human resources are mentioned by all fields and programmes as a main challenge to implement activities related to disability inclusion. These impacted activities such as development of communication materials on ICIP guidelines and tools related to accessibility; construction work related to accessibility at UNRWA facilities; awareness sessions to staff at field level as well as community members on disability inclusion and disability rights; training for contractors (ICIP); support CBOs and CBRCs to conduct community-based work for persons with disabilities; provision of specialized services for persons with disabilities (including distribution of assistive devices and different rehabilitation services); reprioritizing services and activities, leaving very low budget allocated to disability inclusion etc.

The unprecedented financial crisis faced by UNRWA in 2018 has presented a major challenge to advance disability inclusion activities in the Agency in the 2018. In addition to reduction of financial resources to implementation of activities initially planned for the year, there was also reduction of relevant staff

or reduction of staff's availability to implement disability inclusion related activities. Another issue stemming from this was the setback in improving disability inclusion in recruitment of UNRWA staff.

Skills and attitudes of staff are challenges to achieve disability inclusion in the Agency. Issues identified include negative perceptions towards capacities of persons with disabilities and lack of understanding about their rights to access mainstream services on an equal and meaningful way. Furthermore, there is a need to improve staff's knowledge and skills on dealing with persons with disabilities. This is particularly important when it comes to staff ensuring inclusiveness in all UNRWA activities to ensure that referral to external service providers is done only when strictly necessary.

Identification of persons with disabilities and their needs was also mentioned by many as a major challenge. ICIP staff in Lebanon, stated that it was important to continue, expand, or setup mechanisms for identification of persons with disabilities, such as the Socio-Economic Survey to ensure a participatory approach when assessing the needs of the communities. Other fields also mentioned that important to strengthen community participation mechanisms as way of consulting persons with disabilities in design, planning, implementation and programming of projects and services.

Lack of available specialised services for Palestine refugees with disabilities. Specialised services such as distribution of assistive and mobility devices led by UNRWA are not enough to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and there are few other external actors doing similar work. Being one of the interventions of the twin-track approach, absence or shortage of these services represent a massive challenge for disability inclusion. For instance, this contributes to the vulnerability of Palestine refugees with disabilities, leading to their increasing exclusion from different services and participation in society.

Limited participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream services. Although all Programmes already include persons with disabilities in consultation mechanisms of services which are related to them, their participation is rather limited when it comes to mainstream services. Issues observed include lack of expertise and resources to ensure accessibility in these consultation mechanisms –i.e. sign language interpreters, invitation done in accessible formats, physical accessibility of meeting venues, support with transport etc.

3.2 Opportunities

Disability inclusion is an open-ended process, not a static target. As disability is an evolving concept, ensuring inclusive programming and services requires constant research, capacity building, identification and sharing of innovative and good practices. At UNRWA, the policy level work and the emphasis on capacity building in the previous years have been laying the foundation for systematic promotion of disability inclusion in the Agency. The achievements, coupled with the challenges mentioned above, have opened opportunities for improvement on disability inclusion in the coming year.

Attitudes and skills of staff and attitudes from communities. Working to reduce stigma and improving skills and attitudes of UNRWA staff as well as from the Palestine refugee communities towards persons with disabilities is one of the most important focuses of disability inclusion work for the coming months and years. It is worth noting that changing attitudes is a long process and improving skills require not only time, but also resources. Therefore, it is important for programmes to work on capacity building of its staff to ensure their ability to identify the needs of persons with disabilities and support them accordingly.

Working with communities to reduce stigma is also key to disability inclusion and can be done through awareness sessions as well as community based activities such as participatory assessments, consultations, community

participation mechanisms etc. In addition, increasing livelihood opportunities can also be a sustainable way to ensure economic and social empowerment of persons with disabilities. Many studies have shown that perceptions attitudes about capacities of persons with disabilities, and consequently attitudes, are linked to positive examples of persons with disabilities.

Identification of persons with disabilities and their needs. The work that has been done so far on disability disaggregated data is just the first step into ensuring Agency-wide improvement in better targeting of assistance. For instance, work will be done to agree on a common definition of types of impairments, which are aligned with international definitions of disability to become additional guidance for Programmes to improve their ability to compare data and do referrals. Other important work to be done is to include disability disaggregated data issues on trainings conducted to Programmes' staff on the topic, mapping and adaptation of upcoming surveys to ensure they use the Washington Group Questions.

Quality assurance of services provided by external actors. It is important to develop quality standards for rehabilitation and other specialised services provided by partners, especially the CRBCs linked to UNRWA. This will help UNRWA ensure that strict criteria for referral to are being observed, which will ultimately result in better services for Palestine refugees with disabilities. In addition, staff need to comply with child protection and gender related standards to ensure protection of men, women, boys and girls with disabilities in services provided by external actors.

Visibility and Learning. It is important to focus on identifying and sharing good practices as well as on increasing visibility of the disability inclusion work led by UNRWA. These can be key to ensure learning and exchange of experiences (internally and externally) as well as an opportunity to secure resources to continue advancing disability inclusion in the Agency.

Participation of persons with disabilities. While different Programmes already work on ensuring participation of persons with disabilities in our activities, it would be important to ensure that this is done in a coordinated manner throughout the Agency. Establishing mechanisms that ensure participation of persons with disabilities in all consultation mechanisms, including for mainstream (non-specialised) services.

footnotes

1 Based on the World Health Organization and World Bank (2011), World Report on Disability.

2 Mark Priestly, Disability and Life Course. More information at <https://www.cambridge.org/br/academic/subjects/sociology/political-sociology/disability-and-life-course-global-perspectives>

3 Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/who-and-hi-draw-attention-needs-people-inside-syria-living-injuries-and>

4 Source: <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/removing-barriers-the-path-towards-inclusive-access-lebanon-report.pdf>

5 Source: <http://healthclusteropt.org/news-and-stories/124/%22gaza-post-operative-care-and-rehabilitation-effort%22--30th-march---6th-october-2018>

6 UNCRPD (2006) <http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

7 https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/disability_inclusion_guidelines.pdf

8 Charter on Disability Inclusion(2016): <http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org>

9 Source: <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-restores-its-services-sbeineh-camp>

10 <http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org>



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