**Overview of the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action**

**Overview of inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action at the**

**Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW)**

**6-10 February 2017, Geneva**

More than one billion people worldwide, approximately 15 percent of the global population, have disabilities, of whom 80% live in developing countries[[1]](#footnote-1). Persons with disabilities are over-represented among those living in absolute poverty, while an estimated 9.7 million persons with disabilities[[2]](#footnote-2) are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution and other human rights violations, conflict, and violence[[3]](#footnote-3). In some cases, morbidity of persons with disabilities in a disaster was estimated at a rate 4 times higher than those without disabilities[[4]](#footnote-4).

Persons with disabilities face significant exposure, degradation and protracted risk during conflicts, humanitarian disasters and emergencies, while entrenched discrimination and barriers often restrict access to available services, the physical environment, transportation and information and communication services. This in turn restricts access to, and participation in, humanitarian programming and response. In a conflict or natural disaster, persons with disabilities may be unable to flee. Many are dependent on assistive devices, caregivers or communication tools that are severely compromised in emergencies. When humanitarian assistance arrives, persons with disabilities face significant barriers to accessing even the most basic life-saving assistance. Furthermore, the collapse of support structures and social protection networks exacerbates the impact of crisis situations on this population as a whole. Within the population itself, multiple discrimination faced by persons with disabilities on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, location or disability status further exacerbates marginalization and increases the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation[[5]](#footnote-5).

Organizations of persons with disabilities, including those representing women with disabilities and other marginalized groups, can play a critical role in bridging the development-humanitarian divide in an emergency, and in strengthening community resilience in situations of crisis. These organizations are often not, however, meaningfully included in humanitarian coordination and decision-making processes.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW), which will be held in Geneva from 6-10 February 2017, is an opportunity to build on a growing awareness and consensus within the humanitarian community of the importance of inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. Two sessions will reflect on key developments in 2016 regarding the development of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, and present ways in which humanitarian actors can engage:

* **Public Session, Wednesday 8 February, 14:00 – 15:30, Room 16:** Making Humanitarian Action Inclusive: How to Engage in the Development of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.
* **Private Session, Tuesday 7February, 14:00 – 15:30, Room 18**: Advancing the Development of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. A smaller, private meeting for the further development of the future Guidelines will be held for interested donors and governments.

**PUBLIC SESSION*:* Making Humanitarian Action Inclusive: How to Engage in the Development of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action**

**Wednesday 8 February, 14:00 – 15:30, Room 16**

Description of the Session:

In 2016, the United Nations IASC Working Group agreed to the establishment of a Task Team (“Task Team”) on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. The Task Team is mandated to create inter-agency Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action between January 2017 – December 2018. The Guidelines will assist humanitarian actors, governments and affected communities to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions that foster the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action, resulting in the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and changing practice across all sectors and in all phases of humanitarian action.

The Session will provide an overview of the Task Team, work plan and work streams established to assist with the development of the Guidelines. Participants will have the opportunity to share best practices and discuss opportunities to contribute to different work streams in line with their expertise.

* **Objective of the Session**: To foster greater participation and sectorial expertise of relevant stakeholders into work streams of the IASC Task Team.
* **Participants:** The session is relevant for organizations interested on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action as well as those with sectorial expertise (e.g. in WASH, Education, Protection, etc.) and interest in contributing to development of the Guidelines, including potentially interested networks attending the HNPW, such as the Emergency Medical Teams (EMT), the Emergency Supplies Prepositioning Strategy (ESUPS) Working Group, the INSARAG Steering Group and the UNDAC Mission Support Partners / UNDAC Advisory Board, and private sector participants with an interest in inclusive humanitarian action for persons with disabilities.

**Expected Outcomes**: Increased awareness and knowledge of the IASC Guidelines’ development process, feedback on how to engage a wider range of stakeholders in the process, and identification of sectoral experts with interest to contribute to the guidelines development process.

**PRIVATE SESSION: Advancing the Development of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action**

**Tuesday 7February, 14:00 – 15:30, Room 18**

Description of the session:

This session will be an information sharing meeting with Member States and donors interested in the development of the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and possibilities for supporting the guidelines financially or technically. Participants will be updated on the work done by the Task Team in charge of the development of the Guidelines, including details regarding the Terms of Reference, work plan, initial outcomes, financial plan and next steps.

* **Objective of the Session:** Gather interest of Member States and other donor representatives to contribute to the development of the IASC Guidelines, either financially or by providing technical or other expertise.
* **Participants:** This session will be upon invitation only, designed for representatives of Member States, other potential donors and members of IASC Task Team.
* **Expected Outcome:** Strengthened relationships and generation of interest to fund and support the development of the IASC Guidelines.

**Reasonable Accommodation**

Reasonable accommodation and accessibility must be ensured for all the above sessions. Accessible rooms and documents, CART and ISL for these meetings are standard requirements. The IASC Task Team will request OCHA to ensure the minimum standard for the events relating to persons with disabilities are met.

1. http://ww.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs352/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Based on 65.3 million forcibly displaced persons in 2015 - UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015 http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/disabilities/disabilities-fact-sheet> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Technical%20paper-Overview%20of%20natural%20hazards%20and%20their%20impacts_final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Women’s Refugee Commission, *Disability inclusion: Translating policy into practice in humanitarian action* (New York, WRC 2014). Women’s Refugee Commission and International Rescue Committee, *“I see that it is possible”: Building capacity for disability inclusion in gender-based violence programming in humanitarian settings* (New York, WRC 2015). Human Rights Watch, *“As if we weren’t human”: Discrimination and violence against women with disabilities in Northern Uganda* (New York, HRW 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Women’s Refugee Commission, *“Working to improve our own futures”: Inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in humanitarian action* (New York, WRC 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)