



Global Protection Cluster

Global Protection Cluster commitments and recommendations for humanitarian partners ahead of the Global Disability Summit (GDS)

16-17 February 2022

Key Protection Issues

Persons with disabilities experiencing a humanitarian crisis are at elevated risk of rights violations due to attitudinal, institutional, physical and communication barriers to safety and life-saving services during times of socio-economic breakdown and suspended or dismantled services. Therefore, the promotion and protection of fundamental rights and safety from social exclusion, discrimination and persecution based on disability status is essential to reducing vulnerability and increasing capacities to cope. In 2022, over 41 million persons with disabilities are expected to need humanitarian assistance.¹ However, despite a few isolated examples of advancements in disability disaggregated data in humanitarian contexts, a crucial gap in consistent data persists and therefore, the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) anticipates that this figure could be higher.²

In 2022, some of the most pressing concerns reported by field Protection Clusters and Areas of Responsibilities (AoRs) include violations of the rights to life; liberty, and the security of person; safety from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse; equality before the law; freedom of movement; and the right to living independently and being included in the community.³

Specific issues impacting those residing in situations of humanitarian crisis include:

- **Persons with disabilities** are less likely to survive in times of acute emergency. For those with physical disabilities, they may need assistance and assistive devices to mobilise; for those with hearing, visual and/or intellectual impairments, they may experience difficulties hearing or seeing a threat and/or difficulties understanding what is happening.
- **Persons with disabilities** experience exclusion from all types of humanitarian services due to attitudinal, institutional, physical and communication barriers in their environment.
- **Women and girls with disabilities**, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, are significantly more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence than those without disabilities.
- **Children with disabilities** are at greater risk of abuse and neglect and of being victims of discrimination and violence compared to their peers without disabilities, having life-long implications on development.
- **Survivors of Explosive Ordnance (EO)** accidents are at risk of severe deterioration of mental and physical health and associated denial of their rights in the absence of laws and public policies that promote effective treatment, care and respect for their rights.

¹ Based on 15% of the total number of persons expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022, according the OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2022

² Recent studies have shown higher numbers among conflict affected populations (e.g. 27 per cent of the adult population and 19 per cent of children aged between 2-17 years are persons with disabilities in Syria), Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme Syria, 2021; retrieved from: <https://www.hi-deutschland-projekte.de/lnob/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/09/hnap-disability-in-syria-investigation-on-intersectional-impacts-2021.pdf>

³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006); retrieved from:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

- **Persons with intellectual disabilities and mental health conditions** experience chaining and shackling.
- **Persons with disabilities** face excessive isolation, invisibility, and segregation, including those who are residing in formal institutions.
- **Individuals with Albinism** are targeted, maimed and/or murdered for their body parts in some parts of East Africa, due to beliefs related to their perceived value.
- Past reports indicated an increased risk of targeted coercion **for men and women with disabilities** by extremist groups for participation in front lines and suicide bombing acts in Iraq and some parts of Africa.

GPC Commitments

In light of the criticality of ensuring persons with disabilities are accessing supports and able to exercise their rights, the GPC commits to strengthening disability inclusion in all areas of their work. This includes embedding disability inclusive efforts across information and analysis, advocacy, learning and capacity building and operational field support to the 32 National and Subnational Field Clusters, by:

1. Supporting Field Clusters to build strong partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in field operations and support leadership and participation by persons with disabilities in protection coordination, needs assessments and service implementation.
2. Deploying a disability inclusion technical specialist to field operations to provide training and support within the core functions of National and Subnational Clusters.
3. Strengthening gender, age and disability disaggregated data, protection analysis and reporting by ensuring monitoring of the rights of persons with disabilities including the existing barriers to humanitarian services in field operations.
4. Supporting Field Clusters to ensure protection risks for persons with disabilities are included in briefings of senior decision makers such as Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups (ICCGs) and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) to strengthen disability visibility in country level Centrality of Protection (CoP) and HCT protection strategies.
5. Supporting Field Clusters to strengthen linkages between GBV, Child Protection, Mine Action, Education and Health.
6. Advocating at global and country levels for strengthened disability inclusion in other key sectors such as WASH, Education, Food Security and Livelihoods, Health, Shelter and Camp Coordination.

Recommendations

Humanitarian stakeholders of the [Global Disability Summit 2022](#) can support the safety, protection and enjoyment of rights for persons with disabilities experiencing a humanitarian crisis by joining efforts to scale up investment in disability inclusive emergency response, prioritising the operationalisation of inclusion mechanisms in the humanitarian project cycle and ensuring they are fully implemented in all sectors. These commitments should be sustained and extended to ensure disability inclusion during the nexus phase and within development and peacebuilding based interventions. Therefore, the GPC advocates for specific results-based actions, including:

Humanitarian actors

- To prioritise building strong partnerships with OPDs and particularly support leadership and participation by persons with disabilities, including children, youth, women and men from

more marginalised groups, in coordination mechanisms and in all phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, including assessment, planning, resource mobilisation, implementation and monitoring.

- To ensure that quantitative (utilising the [Washington Group Questions](#)) and qualitative data related to barriers to services and safety, for boys, girls, women and men with disabilities are routinely collected.
- To prioritise inter-sectoral referral pathways to promote safe access to protection, rehabilitation and assistive technology including products and services.
- To use strategically relevant Human Rights Mechanisms (e.g., Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Universal Periodic Review, Special Procedures Mandate Holders) as well as meetings of Humanitarian Disarmament treaties establishing Victim Assistance obligations (e.g, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Convention on Cluster Munitions, Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocols) in advocacy efforts.
- To engage duty bearers and armed parties on the key legal frameworks of protection of persons with disabilities.

UN system, including OCHA and Cluster Lead Agencies

- To align country level support with the UN global disability inclusion strategy. This can be supported through the deployment of dedicated technical resources with disability inclusion expertise to field operations and support capacity building of local and national OPDs.
- To advocate for the full implementation of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#), including the practical implementation of the [IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#).

Donors

- To prioritise sustained multi-year funding for specific services, such as protection and disability empowerment programs to support leadership; functional rehabilitation, and the provision of contextually appropriate assistive technology (AT).
- To support training and capacity building related to disability inclusion in humanitarian action for local and national implementing partners.
- To set mandatory components in program proposals ensuring that [barrier and facilitator assessments](#)⁴ are carried out as part of wider needs assessment processes; gender age and disability vulnerability analysis is conducted; detailed evidence of planned adaptations to programs on the ground is submitted.

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) is a network of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations and United Nations (UN) agencies, engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises including armed conflict and climate change-related disasters. The GPC is mandated by the IASC and led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The GPC unites members, partners and communities working on the full gamut of protection activities, including in four specialised Areas of Responsibility: Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, Housing, Land and Property and Mine Action.

⁴ IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019