

# HOW TO include persons with disabilities in disaster response

Cyclone Idai in 2019 was particularly devastating for persons with disabilities. As well as facing economic and social marginalization before the disaster, persons with disabilities were harder hit by its results.

This guide is based on lessons learned from the experience of the humanitarian response to the crisis.

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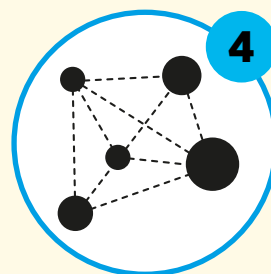
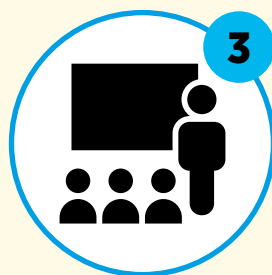
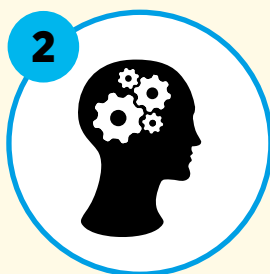
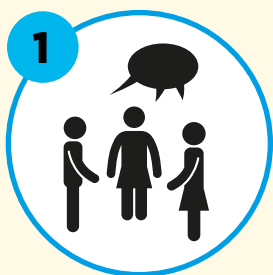
**THE FIRST LESSON** is that if direct attention is not given to persons with disabilities then they will be left behind by the response. Whether in information or distribution of food, persons with disabilities were not always reached; often they could not get to shelters or temporary accommodation, when they could then there were often inaccessible premises.

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**THE SECOND LESSON** is that it is possible to make response more inclusive. Persons with disabilities, disability and organizations and humanitarian organizations worked together in 2019 to remedy these gaps. Actions were taken to include disabled people in each part of humanitarian response, and to develop the ability of all stakeholders to respond.

**Based on these lessons, five key actions are identified. These are actions that will strengthen disability inclusion but also ensure that humanitarian action achieve its core principles.**

1. **Establish a working group.** A working group or sub-cluster is the forum for a joint approach, to ensure that inclusion can be developed in all parts of disaster response.
2. **Change opinions and attitudes.** Advocacy to show people why inclusion is important.
3. **Build capacity.** Humanitarian organizations need to know more about disability, and disability organizations more about humanitarian response.
4. **Act directly.** Alongside changes to the system of response, persons with disabilities need immediate support.
5. **Ensure participation of persons with disabilities.** Persons with disabilities should be meaningfully involved in planning, response, decision-making and consultations.



**Persons with disabilities are a diverse group, and present in every part of the population. Women and girls with disabilities face particular exclusions, and response needs to take this into account.**

To be able to include persons with disabilities in disaster response we need to understand the complex system of humanitarian response. The Humanitarian Programming Cycle are the stages of preparedness and response and at each stage measures need to be taken for inclusion.

**The Cluster System is a way of organizing work in different sectors and there are common measures to ensure that each cluster can include persons with disabilities.**

# The response to Idai showed ways that humanitarian response can be made more inclusive.

- ▶ **Disability Working Group.** A forum for organizations to come together in an organized way can strategically influence response, give technical support and ensure the representation of persons with disabilities.
- ▶ **Disability Inclusion Facilitators.** With training and support, persons with disabilities can facilitate inclusion through advocacy, trainings and other technical work.

**Every actor in the humanitarian response has a role in increasing inclusion of persons with disabilities.** Inclusion is a process and the answers to complex challenges are found in working to find solutions together.

## Humanitarian organizations.

(international and national, United Nations, government and civil society):



- ▶ Work with the disability sector.
- ▶ Make sure norms, standards and guidance are inclusive.
- ▶ Facilitate participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
- ▶ Ensure that their own actions are inclusive.
- ▶ Allocate resources for inclusion, and invest in capacity building in this area.

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## Organizations working on disability:



- ▶ Work together across the disability sector.
- ▶ Develop their own capacity on humanitarian issues.
- ▶ Identify and share the situation of persons with disabilities in the emergency.
- ▶ Voice the concerns of the sector as a whole.
- ▶ Partner with and invest in the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities.

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## Organizations of persons with disabilities.

These are organizations run for and by persons with disabilities.



- ▶ Gather information on the situation and experiences of disabled people;
- ▶ Develop understanding and technical advice on humanitarian response.
- ▶ Raise the issue of disability and communicate the situation with others.
- ▶ Often, organizations of persons with disabilities will also provide direct support.