Ensuring LIVELIHOODS Responses in Yemen are Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities

This tip sheet provides an overview of the factors that may put persons with disabilities at heightened risk in humanitarian settings, and proposes actions to address these risks within the livelihoods response. It draws on the IASC guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the UN policy brief on Disability-Inclusive Response and the practical field experience of HI and collaborating partners in Yemen. This document shares practical tips on how to identify and reduce the risk faced by persons with disabilities in order to design and deliver more inclusive livelihoods responses.

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WHY DOES DISABILITY INCLUSION MATTER IN THE LIVELIHOOD RESPONSE?

Armed conflict and the collapse of the economy remain the main drivers of food insecurity in Yemen, curtailing food access, disrupting livelihoods, reducing incomes, and significantly leading to high prices of food and non-food commodities. The conflict has destroyed people’s livelihoods and ability to purchase food, making it difficult for many Yemenis to meet minimal food needs. The collapse of livelihoods exacerbates challenges in accessing food, as incomes fall or even disappear. Households are increasingly turning to negative strategies to access food, which further compromises families’ ability to cope with food gaps in the future. The COVID-19-related movement restrictions and the global economic effects of the pandemic – particularly supply chain disruptions and reduced remittance inflows – are further exacerbating vulnerabilities across the country, especially for at risk groups. Among such at risk groups are IDPs and persons with disabilities. An estimated 3.65 million Yemenis have had to leave their homes to escape the violence, pushed into a life of displacement. Displaced and/or persons with disabilities describe arduous and repeated displacement journeys in pursuit of safety and better livelihood opportunities. The vast majority of those with limited mobility are compelled to flee without any assistive devices such as wheelchairs or crutches, and relying on family members and loved ones to carry them.¹

Non-discrimination is a core human rights principle. Humanitarian responses must ensure no one in need of assistance is discriminated, whether directly or indirectly (e.g. any criteria which could have a disproportionate impact on persons with disability) on the basis of disability. It is essential to understand the disadvantages that can be experienced by persons with disabilities and to take proactive steps to ensure they can equally access humanitarian programmes, including livelihood response measures. Persons with disabilities have the right to participate fully and effectively in decisions that affect their lives and livelihood. They are a diverse, non-homogenous population who possess unique knowledge and lived experience of disability that others do not. It is essential to ensure consultation with, and the active involvement of, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at all stages of humanitarian response, from planning and design to implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED RISKS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM AND FRONTLINE STAFF

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in livelihood activities can be advanced and ultimately achieved by following the minimum key steps to programming, with protection principles being at the forefront of all activities.

DATA DISAGGREGATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF BARRIERS:

Program staff
- Understand the specific ways in which persons with disabilities experience the impact of crisis and monitor their inclusion in all phases of livelihood response.
- Ensure collection of disaggregated data by disability as well as sex and age. Data should be collected using internationally recognized methods, such as the Washington group questions tools.
- Identify and analyse risks related to livelihoods for persons with different types of disability and then design and implement risk mitigation measures.
- Develop livelihood programmes that are suitable for persons with disabilities, support their needs, and capacities to perform livelihood activities.
- Ensure equal access for women and men with disabilities to livelihood opportunities, and to livelihood programs that promote family unity and community caring mechanisms.

Front line staff
- Identify and analyse the attitudinal, physical and institutional barriers that could impact the planned intervention.
  - Attitudinal barriers refer to negative attitudes, thoughts, perceptions and misconceptions existing within the communities in which we work and which we as staff members may hold. These attitudes are reported as one for the most significant barriers to participation for persons with disabilities.
  - Physical barriers are those that exist within infrastructure, transport and services which impede access for persons with physical, sensory, hearing, visual and intellectual or cognitive difficulties. Common examples include steps impeding wheelchair access, small spaces in toilet facilities, broken or uneven roads and

¹ Excluded. Living with disabilities in Armed Conflict of Yemen (Amnesty International, 2019). 2 'Reasonable accommodation' means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and
footpaths, lack of suitable transport options, poor lighting impeding vision, absence of sign language translation or visual descriptions for persons with hearing impairment and more.

- **Institutional barriers** can include a lack of policies and procedures in our own organisations. An example at the programmatic level would be the absence of a mechanism to identify persons with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodation\(^2\) in order to ensure equal access and participation.

  - Ensure services and assistance are reaching the most vulnerable among persons with disabilities.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION:**

**Program staff**

- Make sure that humanitarian actors understand that persons with disabilities are individuals with a variety of experience, knowledge and capacities. Make sure persons with disabilities are not stereotyped or placed in stereotypical roles. For instance, a woman with a hearing impairment may be able to do physically demanding work.
- Train staff on the rights of persons with disabilities and how best to support them.
  - For example train them on the use of the Washington Group Questions (WGOs) in livelihood activities; the rights of persons with disabilities and their diverse functional capacities in livelihood activities; how to complete an individualised functional assessment and provide safe means of diverse reasonable accommodation modalities, ensuring the principle of ‘Do no harm’ is respected.

**Front line staff**

- Identify from within the communities in which you work and within your own organization facilitators and other resources (human, financial) to support efforts to ensure participation of persons with disabilities in your activities.
  - For example, can you connect with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) or informal networks to consult on and strengthen your project? In the absence of OPD’s or informal networks, have you consulted with individuals with disabilities and their families? Do you have financial resources to support the provision of reasonable accommodation in your project?
- To address negative perceptions, raise awareness within the community of the rights and capacities of persons with disabilities and the contributions that they make to the community.
- Monitor and refer to specialized actors (e.g. HI or Protection Cluster) any cases of discrimination or exploitative practices/abuse of power.

**PARTICIPATION:**

**Program staff**

- Conduct an **individual functional assessment** of the abilities of each person with disabilities, understand how these abilities interact with livelihoods activity and identify where the adaptations or modifications must be made to ‘bridge the gap’.
  - Examples from the field include: adapting a shovel with a shoulder strap and additional forearm support to ensure that a person with one arm can dig with stability and reduced risk of lower back pain. Another example is placing tactile tape and high contrast markings along a cash boxes’ edges to enable a person with low vision to identify where the notes (money) should be placed in the cash till.
  - To avoid causing harm, training in the provision of diverse types of accommodations for persons with difficulties in all livelihood activities is recommended.

**Front line staff**

- Raise awareness of the rights and capacities of persons with disabilities, including their right and capacity to work.
- Ensure livelihoods and economic security assessments are inclusive of persons with disabilities, cooperate with local organizations of people with disabilities-OPDs and other actors in this regard. These assessments should identify barriers to access as well as barriers to the implementation of programmes for persons with disabilities.
- Provide training on inclusive livelihoods for INGO staff and other stakeholders. Include vocational trainers, farmers’ associations, women’s groups, business persons, local councils, private companies, third-party monitors, etc.

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\(^2\)‘Reasonable accommodation’ means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. (UNCRPD, Article 2.)
ACCESSIBILITY:

Program staff:
• Ensure persons with disabilities can access facilities, services and information regarding livelihood response and recovery. If public health information, buildings, transport, communications, technologies, goods and services are not accessible, persons with disabilities cannot take necessary decisions, live independently and isolate or quarantine safely, or access health and public services on an equal basis with others. Such measures do not need to add greatly to overall cost especially if the needs of the maximum number of users are considered in the initial design. Research shows that if considered from the design stage, ensuring accessibility can cost as little as 1% more.
• Encourage and, as possible, assist, financial service providers (e.g. rehabilitation fund credit unions or social protection institutes) to adapt their services to the requirements of persons with disabilities.
• Set up feedback and complaint mechanisms e.g. hotlines, suggestion/feedback box to report abuse, exploitation etc.

Front line staff
• Ensure the safety and access to services for all. This should be done by close follow up of the individual when working in order to adapt the access to services where needed. It also includes working with families and caregivers (when indicated) to ensure that they can provide on-going safe support after the activity is complete.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

Program staff
• Ensure that information, dissemination modalities, and complaint and feedback mechanisms concerning livelihood programmes systematically are accessible to persons with disabilities, who should be consulted on the accessibility of such mechanisms.
• Ensure persons with disabilities have equal access to participate in decision-making and planning processes of livelihood programs, with measures taken, as required, to enable this.

Front line staff
• Ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities should be supported to actively engage in the activity on an equal basis with others. Ways of measuring meaningful participation could be a qualitative based survey like beneficiary satisfaction surveys and accessible complaints and feedback mechanisms.

Annex: Guidance on online training for the application of Washington Group Questions
2. Scroll down to this section:

Learning Toolkit
This 2-hour course has been designed to support humanitarian programme staff understand, plan for and use the WGs to identify persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. With case studies, practical examples and a wealth of supporting resources, the e-learning is an essential entry point for all programme staff interested in understanding more about how to use the WGs.

The e-learning is available on:
► disasterready.org (you first need to sign up for an account)
  French (French) | Arabic (Arabic) | Spanish (Spanish)
► kayaconnect.org (accessible for mobile phones and tablets)
  French (French) | Arabic (Arabic)

3. Select ‘Arabic’ (or other language of preference)
4. Follow the prompts which includes setting up a Disaster Ready or Kaya connect account
5. Field workers should complete the first two modules (1 hour maximum). Project officers, program managers and senior staff should complete all 4 modules (2 hours maximum).

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