

# Building Capacity for Disability Inclusion in Gender-Based Violence Programming in Humanitarian Settings

## Guidance for case managers: Identifying skills and capacities of survivors with disabilities

### Purpose of this tool

This tool has been developed to support GBV practitioners to **identify the skills and capacities of persons with disabilities** that may be useful in both case management with survivors and supporting participation in empowerment activities. It is designed to be used when meeting with survivors with more profound functional limitations in both communication and movement. It complements existing protocols for assessments, action planning and monitoring of survivors and/or those who are at risk of GBV. It is not intended to replace these steps or processes. More guidance for case managers working with survivors with disabilities is available in the Toolkit for GBV Practitioners, developed by the Women's Refugee Commission and International Rescue Committee, at: [http://wrc.ms/disability\\_GBV](http://wrc.ms/disability_GBV)

### Some general principles

- Focus on the person first, not their disability or health condition.
- Assume capacity. Look at what they can do, not just at what they can't do. This gives us many more options for communication and participation.
- Treat adults with disabilities as you would other adults, paying particular attention to gender issues. For example, it is best practice for women staff to work with women around issues of GBV.
- Take time, watch and listen. This is a process, not a one-time event. Each time you meet the person, you will learn something new about them and understand better how they communicate and what they mean.
- Conduct open conversations with caregivers in which the individual can hear what is being said and participate in any way possible. Remember that people who can't speak or move may still understand what is happening around them and what other people are saying about them.
- Pay attention to any way in which the individual wishes to communicate. This could be through gestures and sometimes their emotions. It is OK, however, to say "I don't understand."
- When you understand, acknowledge this with the individual. In the past, they may have been dismissed by others when trying to communicate their feeling and experiences. Reassure them that you believe them, validating any experiences and emotions that they share with you.
- Some persons with intellectual and mental disabilities can exhibit a wide range of behaviors. This is sometimes the way they communicate with others.

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- Watch for signs of agitation, anger or distress that may indicate the individual is not happy to proceed at this time, and respect this, even if you are talking with the caregiver. Come back another day to see if they are more comfortable and want to continue.
- Choose quiet times and familiar places for early discussions as this will help both you and the person with disabilities to concentrate on communication.
- Give the person time to respond to your question or instruction before you repeat it. Family members may try to encourage them to answer you, but different instructions from different people can be confusing. Try to have just one person talking at a time.
- Some people may be able to speak and communicate with you, but they would like the support of a trusted person to make decisions. Ask them if they would like this type of support, and encourage them to pick the person they trust the most.

Remember that you have many skills that you can use with persons with disabilities. Every day you are listening to, communicating with and supporting women, girls, boys and men who are all different in their own ways. All of us use speech, writing, pictures and posters, and activities, as well as emotions and gestures, to both convey and understand information. Different approaches may work better with each individual. Ask persons with disabilities and their caregivers for advice about their preferred communication method, and then try different things.

### Key questions to ask the individual and/or their caregiver

These questions are currently written to be used with an individual, but can also be helpful with caregiver if there is no communication method directly with the individual. These questions are not designed to gather information about the survivor's experience of violence, but rather to establish how you and they might communicate most effectively, as well as to identify skills and capacities that can be used when engaging them in activities.

Approach the person with disabilities and introduce yourself. Greet them as is appropriate for their age and gender (e.g., shaking hands). Talk to the person directly and try to establish a method of communication. Even when it is not possible to communicate directly with the individual, continue to engage with them while talking to caregivers, so that they can hear the discussion and contribute in any way possible. Try to maintain eye contact so they know you are connected with them. Be sensitive to any negative language being used by family members and present a positive example, rephrasing in positive language as appropriate. Watch for signs that the individual may not want to participate (e.g., becoming distressed, agitated or crying) and respect this, even if you are mostly asking questions of the caregiver.

For people with limited communication, ask caregivers: ***How does [state the name of the person] tell you that she/he is unhappy or uncomfortable with something? What makes her/him happy or sad?*** Use this information to facilitate the interview if verbal communication is not possible and respect any indications that the participant is not comfortable or willing to continue.

1. Tell me a little about yourself. How old are you? What do you do during the day? Who lives here with you?

*This introductory question will help you to understand the situation of the survivor with disabilities and their family. It can give indications of support networks and interests that we can gather more information about.*

2. What kind of community activities do you participate in? What are some of things that make it hard to participate in these activities? What are some of the things that help you to participate in these activities?

*Ask about education, women's groups and livelihoods activities as appropriate. How did they learn about it? How do they get there? This will give us ideas of how to support them to access our services and activities.*

3. What makes you happy? What things do you enjoy doing the most?

*People with intellectual disabilities sometimes respond better to real-life examples.*

4. Tell me one thing that you are good at. One thing that you can do on your own, or that you are really proud of.

*If you have identified that there are things the person likes, then you may be able to direct this question towards that.*

5. What makes you sad or angry? What things do you not like doing?

*You may also consider asking: How do other people treat you? Does that ever make you sad or angry?*

6. Do you have contact with other women/men/children your age? If so, who and where? If not, what makes it difficult for you to meet with others?

*If they don't answer or say that they don't have any contact with others, then probe with questions like: Do you know other women/men/children living near here? Have you ever talked with them? It is also good to ask about siblings and cousins.*

7. Do you have contact with other persons with disabilities? If so, who and where? If not, what makes it difficult for you to meet other persons with disabilities?

*As above, you can ask: Do you know other people who use a wheelchair like you? Or do you know other families who have family members with disabilities? Have you ever talked with them?*

8. Who do you talk to when you have a problem or concern? Where do you go if you or your family has problems and concerns?

*This may indicate other people that they trust and may want to have involved in different activities. Ask about other family members, and what their relationships are like.*

9. Is there a particular organization that you have regular contact with? How do you usually have contact with them? What do you do when you want to talk to them?

10. Are there any activities or programs that you have heard about and would like to participate in? What kinds of things make it difficult to participate in these activities? How could we help you to participate in this activity?

## Checklist

The following checklist can help to identify potential communication methods, as well as strategies that promote participation of the individual with disabilities. Sometimes it can be helpful to have some paper, pens and pictures with you, as they can be used to test out different communication methods.

| Communication   |
|---|
| <p>Is the person with disabilities able to tell you their name?</p> <p>How do family members and caregivers communicate with them? Be sure to also ask siblings and children in the household – they can be very creative and may have their own way of communicating with the individual.</p> <p>Can they answer simple yes/no questions? Maybe using head or hand gestures?</p> <p>How do they express if they are happy or sad? Watch for facial expressions that may indicate that they are happy or sad during your meeting.</p> <p>Can they write or draw? Have some paper and a pen to draw pictures yourself, and let them have a try as well.</p> <p>How do the caregivers and family members engage them? Do they talk to them directly? Do they use signs and gestures?</p>  |
| Physical  |
| <p>Are they dressed in an appropriate way compared with other men and women in the household or community? (e.g., Are they naked or partially clothed when others are fully clothed?) If not, ask caregivers for a blanket and/or clothing before continuing with the interview.</p> <p>Is the person with disabilities excluded from household activities (e.g., are they inside a room on their own, or near the other family members)? Are they physically restrained in some way?</p> <p>How are they moving around the room? By themselves? With assistance from caregivers? If being assisted by caregivers, is the individual or the caregiver at risk of an injury?</p> <p>Watch for hitting and other forms of physical violence between family members (especially between children). Are there any obvious signs of injury or illness (e.g., bruises, bandages, or scabies)?</p> |
| Behavior  |
| <p>Has there been any recent change in their behavior (e.g., mood swings; agitation; fear of other people; sleep or eating disturbances; withdrawal; changes in their usual communication; self-injury or inappropriate sexual behaviors)?</p> <p>How are they interacting with you and with other family members? For example, maybe they are watching you closely, or trying to play with a brother or sister? Look for things that interest them and ask about these.</p>  |

Environmental

What is the current state of the individual's home? Is the home of the same quality and/or standard as nearby homes?

Toilet and bathing space: Does this space provide for privacy for the person with disabilities?

How close are they to important facilities (e.g., health centers, schools and community meeting points)?

Do they have any equipment that might help them to reach these places (e.g., a wheelchair)? What is the current state of the equipment?

Is there any transportation available near to their home? What types of transportation are available?

Are there any places nearby where other women and girls/men and boys seem to be meeting to discuss different things? Could the individual with disabilities get to this space?

## Summary

This page can help you to summarize the findings from your meeting – Complete it after the meeting and continually update as you learn more about the individual.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Things she/he can do...</b><br><b>Communication</b><br><br><b>Day-to-day activities</b> | <b>How can I use this in case management planning?</b> |
| <b>Things she/he enjoys ...</b>  | <b>How can I use this in case management planning?</b> |
| <b>Things she/he doesn't enjoy ..</b>  | <b>How can I use this in case management planning?</b> |
| <b>Other opportunities</b>   | <b>How can I use this in case management planning?</b> |

To download the complete *Toolkit for GBV Practitioners*, the report *"I See That It Is Possible": Building Capacity for Disability Inclusion in Gender-based Violence Programming in Humanitarian Settings*, and *Stories of Change*, visit [http://wrc.ms/disability\\_GBV](http://wrc.ms/disability_GBV)