



“Working to improve our own future”: Strengthening networks of women with disabilities in humanitarian action

Summary

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While humanitarian organizations are increasingly recognizing women and girls with disabilities in policies and guidelines, there are still significant gaps in operationalizing this. Their needs and capacities are often under-represented in gender, protection and disability forums. Furthermore, organizations of women with disabilities, which can play a critical role in bridging the development/humanitarian divide, are not meaningfully included in humanitarian coordination and decision-making.

Key Findings

- There is no globally endorsed operational guidance to foster inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in a systematic way in every response.
- Advocacy and technical support provided by organizations of women with disabilities and positioning of women with disabilities in leadership roles in humanitarian organizations, programs, and activities have been demonstrated to support inclusion.
- The expertise of organizations of women with disabilities, however, remains largely untapped in all phases of a humanitarian crisis, as they face a vicious cycle of lack of funding and reduced organizational capacity.

Recommendations

Effective inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in humanitarian action requires collective action by States, UN agencies, humanitarian, development, and disability actors.

Strengthen accountability

Inter-agency guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities are needed, with indicators against which humanitarian agencies and organizations must report. These guidelines should:

- mainstream access and outreach to women and girls with disabilities in all sectors;
- promote the formation of support networks of women and girls with disabilities in communities affected by crisis and conflict;
- ensure equal representation of women and men with disabilities in community committees and leadership structures.

Increase support to organizations of women with disabilities in crisis-affected countries

They can play a critical role in monitoring protection concerns, raising awareness on these issues, and providing technical support for humanitarian actors.

- Donor governments and grant-makers should

set targets on disability inclusion and funding and monitor funding.

- Humanitarian actors should *provide sub-grants* that cover operational costs and activities.
- Disability and women’s rights organizations should *prioritize organizations of women with disabilities* from crisis-affected countries for *capacity-building programs and support*.

Advance gender equality through humanitarian and development programs

While commitments on protection and empowerment of affected populations apply to persons with disabilities, they often lack specific reference to women and girls.

- Humanitarian and development actors should *set targets and monitor the number of women and girls with disabilities participating in programs and activities*.
- Organizations should *commit to and monitor progress on gender equality across their programs*.

Promote the leadership of women and girls with disabilities in humanitarian action

Critical awareness is built when women with disabilities and their organizations take a leadership role among stakeholders.

- Humanitarian actors should *provide capacity building and mentoring to organizations of women with disabilities*, and in turn benefit from their technical expertise.
- UN agencies and humanitarian and development actors should *recruit women with disabilities* as community volunteers and staff.



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Neema Namadamu, Founder of SAFECO, DRC

“What we are fighting for—respect and inclusion—are important. We have started to get international attention and key people started to think about our needs in a whole new way. They get to know us, not just as victims, but as women working to improve our own futures.”

Neema Namadamu
Founder of SAFECO, DRC

Read the full report:

<http://wrc.ms/strengthen-women-DPOs>

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