European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

Disability Inclusion

What is it?

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society. As stated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability is an evolving concept which “results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. People with disabilities often face barriers that prevent their full access to humanitarian assistance and protection. Disability inclusion therefore aims to take into account the specific needs of persons with disabilities in order to ensure their full participation in humanitarian action.

Why is this important?

Despite gaining prominence over recent years, disability inclusion in humanitarian action remains insufficient. It is estimated that 15% of the global population have a disability, a proportion which is likely to sharply rise in humanitarian crises. Yet, manners of delivering assistance and protection to persons with disabilities in humanitarian settings continue to be insufficiently adapted.

Due to discrimination and environmental, physical, economic and social barriers, people with disabilities are more likely to be excluded in emergency responses and humanitarian services. People with disabilities also face additional threats and vulnerabilities.

In order to ensure their full inclusion and participation in humanitarian action, the specific needs of persons with disabilities need to be taken into account. The barriers they face need to be removed, reduced and their impact mitigated through protective factors and enablers permitting access to and participation in humanitarian assistance and protection.
How are we helping?

Policy

In order to take into account the needs of people with disabilities in all EU-funded humanitarian projects, the European Union’s Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department (ECHO) has developed an Operational Guidance titled “The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations”. The objectives of the guidance are to foster disability inclusion, to ensure the mainstreaming of disability as well as to provide the EU’s staff and humanitarian partners with the tools to ensure the above in the design, implementation, and monitoring of EU-funded humanitarian projects.

By focusing on the overall programming level, the guidance gives tools to assess and remove the barriers preventing meaningful access and full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in humanitarian assistance and protection. The objective is to lead to better programme quality and better, safer and more accessible services, assistance and protection for persons with disabilities in humanitarian operations.


Funding

In 2019, the EU provided over €30 million to projects targeting the needs of persons with disabilities. In addition, it also funded 74 projects where disability inclusion was mainstreamed as an important consideration of the action.” In 2018, the EU provided €40 million for projects supporting persons with disabilities. Projects have been funded in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Tanzania, Ukraine, Jordan, and Palestine. A variety of sectors have been targeted including healthcare, protection, shelter, water, sanitation, and education.

Actions

Recent examples funded by the European Union include:

- Rehabilitation services, including physical and functional care, prosthesis and orthotics services as well as mental health and psychosocial support for people with disabilities in Syria;
- Improving inclusive lifesaving and protection interventions for persons with specific needs among Burundian refugees and asylum seekers in Tanzania;
- Improving the infrastructure of education facilities to increase accessibility for disabled children in Iraq and Jordan;
- Home-based care to disabled people living on the contact-line in Ukraine;
- Providing access to functional rehabilitation services for survivors of conventional weapons and improvised explosive devices, and other persons with physical impairments in Afghanistan;
- Disability-accessible child friendly spaces with latrine blocks, washing points and hand washing stands for South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia;
- Strengthening access to specialised healthcare services for refugees in Turkey.