



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid



Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

Content

○ Forword	3
○ Basics	5
○ Facts and figures on persons with disabilities in partner countries and in the context of humanitarian disasters	5
○ Legal basis and political framework	5
○ Measures and recommendations for implementing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid	7
○ Annex	9
○ 1. Tips for the concrete implementation of inclusion in international projects?	9
○ 2. Collection of resources: What tools and documents are already available?	10
○ 3. Project examples	11
○ Bibliography	13

Imprint

GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY is the umbrella organization of 38 Austrian non-governmental organizations in the fields of international development, humanitarian aid, and global citizenship education. Our member organizations conduct 1,000 projects a year in over 120 countries around the world and contribute to a humane life for all on a healthy planet.

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Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

A **briefing paper** is a document that gives important information to people who make decisions, like a board or a politician. It explains a current issue clearly and briefly. It also suggests ways to solve a problem.



In this easy to read document, difficult words are in bold. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are blue and underlined. These are links that will take you to another website with more information.

Forward

In 2012, Global Responsibility created a briefing paper to help organizations to include people with disabilities in their work. Global Responsibility is an Austrian umbrella organization. Its members help people in need in poor countries and in crisis situations as flood, war, and others. Since 2012, more people have been asking for **inclusion**, as seen in the Global Disability Summit in 2022.

In recent years, inclusion has become important in international aid and in dealing with the climate crisis. This paper updates the 2012 paper, adding new ideas for inclusion in these areas.



Definitions and explanations of terms

Social model of disability and human rights-based approach

The "social model" of disability says that disabilities arise from both a person's individual condition and from the barriers present in society. This means people with disabilities are often excluded from activities and their rights are restricted. This could be due to unfair attitudes, discrimination, and physical or communication barriers.

The human rights approach says that everyone, including people with disabilities, should have the same rights. Therefore, we need to remove these barriers so that people with disabilities can take part in society just like everyone else. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) applies to all people with disabilities, not just those who fit in easily with others. (sources 1-3, bibliography)

Inclusion

Inclusion means making sure that all people, including those with disabilities, have the same rights and opportunities. They should be able to participate in society equally and make their own decisions. (source 4, bibliography)

Intersectionality

Intersectionality means understanding that people can experience discrimination based on multiple factors, such as gender, race, disability, and more. For example, an older woman with a disability might face challenges not only because of her age but also because of her gender and disability. It is important to consider all these factors to create fair and inclusive programmes. (sources 5-6, bibliography) Further practical tips can be found in the section on intersectionality (p. 8) in this document.



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

Basics

Facts and figures on persons with disabilities in partner countries and in the context of humanitarian disasters

- 16 percent the world's population, about 1.3 billion people, have disabilities. This is nearly one out of five.
- In crisis situations, the number of people with disabilities often increases. It is estimated that approximately 41 million people with disabilities are affected by war, floods or other crises.
- People with disabilities face a higher risk during crises because they may not be able to escape easily. More people with disabilities than people without disabilities die during disasters.
- More women and girls have disabilities than men and boys. However, they often receive less help.
- Women and girls with disabilities face more violence, especially during crises.
- Four out of five people with disabilities live in poorer countries. Many live in poverty due to barriers like discrimination and lack of access to education and jobs.
- Children with disabilities are less likely to attend school. Half of the children with disabilities never attend school.
- People with disabilities are especially at risk from climate crisis. They are more likely to suffer during natural disasters and find it harder to access basic needs like food and water. It's important to include them in climate change plans.

Legal basis and political framework

International

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) set goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a key principle of "Leave no one behind." This means including everyone in society, especially people with disabilities.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD) also emphasizes that all people, including those with disabilities, have the right to fully participate in society. Two important articles of the Convention, Article 11 and Article 32, focus on protecting the rights of people with disabilities in emergencies and international cooperation. (source 7, bibliography)

Two important parts of the Convention are especially relevant for international projects, programmes, and humanitarian aid. First, Article 11 focuses on protecting the rights of people with disabilities in emergencies and during humanitarian aid efforts, ensuring they are included and supported. Second, Article 32 ensures that these rights are also protected in international cooperation and development work.



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

According to the Convention, including people with disabilities should be treated as a key issue. All programmes and projects need to be designed to be accessible to everyone. This means removing physical barriers, making communication easier, and ensuring that everyone can participate fully.

The Sphere Standards are the most widely recognized guidelines in humanitarian aid. They inspired the creation of the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards. They focus specifically on ensuring that older people and persons with disabilities are included and their needs, abilities, and rights are addressed in humanitarian efforts. (source 8, bibliography)

The **IASC Guidelines on Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action** outline key steps for including persons with disabilities in all stages of humanitarian aid. (source 9, bibliography)

Regarding climate crisis, the 2019 **UN Resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change** urges governments to protect human rights. It also ensures that those most affected, including persons with disabilities, are involved in climate action. The Paris Agreement also highlights the need to focus on vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, in combating climate change. (source 10, bibliography)

Additionally, the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** (2015–2030) is a global agreement. This standard helps countries prepare for disasters and include people with disabilities. (source 11, bibliography)

Europe

In 2021, the European Commission passed **a strategy for the rights of people with disabilities** for 2021–2030. The goal of the strategy is to reduce risks for people with disabilities, including women, children, and refugees. (source 12, bibliography)

Austria

The **Austrian Monitoring Committee** checks if the government is following the rights of people with disabilities. In July 2022, they showed problems in how humanitarian aid supports people with disabilities. (source 13, bibliography)

The Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and other programmes aim to help people with disabilities by promoting their participation in public life, education, and work. In October 2023, the Austrian Development Cooperation wrote a strategy for supporting vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities. However, it still needs clear goals to ensure aid reaches people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. (source 14, bibliography)

Many Austrian organizations have promised to make their humanitarian efforts inclusive by signing a charter to remove barriers and involve people with disabilities in their programmes. (source 15, bibliography)



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

Measures and recommendations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

To include people with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, all actors need to follow specific steps.

- **Understanding disability:** Everyone must understand that everyone has the same rights. The aim must be a society where people with disabilities have equal rights and opportunities. Empowerment, self-advocacy and accessible communication are important for removing barriers and prejudice.
- **Inclusion strategy:** Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and humanitarian aid need a clear inclusion strategy involving people with disabilities in decision-making. This strategy should be developed with input from organizations representing people with disabilities.
- **Participation and empowerment:** People with disabilities and their organizations should be actively involved in all stages of projects that affect them. This means more than just asking for opinions; they should have a real say in decisions. Full accessibility must be ensured for effective participation.
- **Climate crisis:** People with disabilities must be included in all climate-related processes to ensure solutions are accessible and beneficial for everyone. Their involvement should start early and be consistent.
- **Women with disabilities:** The needs and expertise of women with disabilities, who may face multiple forms of discrimination, must be included in all processes. Long-term representation and strong networks are important.

Twin-track approach

The twin-track approach means that development and humanitarian aid programmes are working in two ways. There are special programmes for people with disabilities and all other programmes are also planned inclusively without barriers. (source 16, bibliography)



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

Comprehensive accessibility

To ensure everything is accessible to everyone, consider these points:

- **Buildings and spaces:** Make public spaces, entrances, paths, toilets, and transport easy to use for all.
- **Communication:** Provide information in simple language, sign language, Braille, and offer visuals and info in sound form.
- **Digital access:** Ensure websites and online services are easy to use for everyone.
- **Awareness:** Encourage actions to remove prejudice against people with disabilities.
- **Gender equality:** Make sure accessibility efforts are fair for all genders and help prevent gender-based violence.

Disaggregated data and reports

To plan and carry out inclusive projects, it's important to collect detailed data about who uses these programmes, including their gender, age, and disability. This helps to identify people who are often left out or face discrimination. The more detailed the data, the clearer we can understand why some people are excluded. It's also crucial to measure how well excluded groups, like women, people with disabilities, and minorities, can access and take part in these programmes.

OECD-DAC Inclusion and Empowerment Marker

Austria is part of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which requires the country to report how much money it spends on development aid each year. The *Inclusion and Empowerment Marker* shows how much of this money is spent on projects specifically for inclusion but also in all other projects and actions. Austria uses this marker. There are also targets for how much money should be spent on inclusion in projects. To achieve the goals of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), it is necessary that all programmes meet at least the basic inclusion standard, called Marker 1.

Intersectionality

It is important to see how gender, age, and disability affect people, especially women and girls with disabilities. All these reasons can lead to unfair treatment. We need to collect detailed information about people to understand their different experiences, skills, and needs. Not all women, girls, and people with disabilities are vulnerable; we need to look at their situation carefully and try to remove discrimination.

Training and capacity development of involved people

Training and educating everyone involved is important for successfully including people with disabilities in projects. This takes time and effort both in Austria and in partner countries. In partner countries, it's also important to help organizations of people with disabilities so they can fully take part. Other aid organizations should also be trained to better include people with disabilities in their work.



Annex

1. Tips for the concrete implementation of inclusion in international projects?

Making programmes and projects inclusive needs time. Like gender equality or climate protection, it requires commitment, knowledge, and resources. Important steps include:

a. People and awareness

- **Raise awareness:** Share information and involve people with disabilities in discussions.
- **Inclusive hiring:** Provide accessible job postings, encourage applications from people with disabilities, and offer support as needed.
- **Training:** Use training from self-advocates and experts, like the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), on inclusive project management.

b. Organization and structures

- **Assess current inclusion levels:** Identify what's already inclusive and where improvements are needed.
- **Create a focal point:** Assign a person or team to lead inclusion efforts, coordinate internally, and connect with working groups.

c. Projects and programmes

- **Plan inclusively:** Involve disability organizations from the start, use tools like the Washington Group Questionnaire, and follow ADA's online training.
- **Twin-track approach:** Offer targeted support for people with disabilities while making all projects—health, education, infrastructure—fully inclusive.
- **Follow key actions in humanitarian aid:**
 - Ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities.
 - Remove barriers.
 - Empower people with disabilities.
 - Collect and share important data for the inclusion of people with disabilities

d. Partnerships and collaboration

- **Use expert advice:** Work with consultants and inclusion specialists.
- **Cooperate with disability organizations:** Apply inclusive practices in partner countries and within your own organization.
- **Join networks:** Engage in exchanges through groups like the umbrella organization Global Responsibility.



Inclusion of persons with disabilities

in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

2. Collection of resources: What tools and documents are already available?

Overview and toolkits

- WHO (2022): [Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities](#) ↑
- United Nations: [Implementing the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy: Tools and Resources](#) ↑
- UNGA/OHCHR (2021): [Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change](#) ↑
- CBM (2018): [The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Climate Change Plans: Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political](#) ↑
- CBM (2017): [Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit](#) ↑
- IGLYO (2014): [Intersectionality Toolkit](#) ↑
- IASC (2019): [Guidelines: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#) ↑
- DG ECHO (2019): [Operational Guidance – The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Operations](#) ↑
- IFRC (2022): [Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies](#) ↑
- ADCAP (2018): [Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities](#) ↑
- ADA (n.d.): [Tipsheet Inclusion in Humanitarian Aid](#) ↑

Disaggregated data and reports

- [Washington Group on Disability Statistics](#) ↑
- WHO (2015): [Capturing the difference we make. Community-based Rehabilitation Indicators Manual](#) ↑
- University of Notre Dame (n.d.): [Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative \(ND-GAIN\) Country Index](#) ↑
Summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience.

Trainings

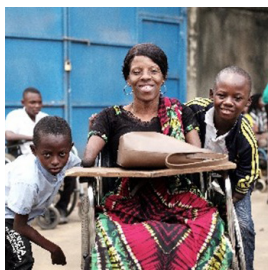
- ADA: [Online Training Course for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Project Cycle Management](#) ↑
- DG ECHO Partner's Website (n.d.): [Learning and Training](#) ↑



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

3. Project examples

The following project examples show how the member organizations of the umbrella organization Global Responsibility deal with different areas of inclusion as part of their work.



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General inclusion

The project **Inclusive Sofala** is promoting an inclusive society for all in the province of Sofala, Mozambique. The programme is promoting access to specially adapted services for persons with disabilities (with a focus on education, rehabilitation and health, the labour market and social benefits). At the same time, the project strives to strengthen the Mozambican government's commitment to inclusive development in the long term and consolidate the role of disability organizations as a reliable voice for persons with disabilities in the country.



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Employment

Officially, 12.4% of Uganda's population are persons with disabilities. The programme **Make 12.4% Work** is driven by young persons with disabilities and self-advocacy organizations. Young persons with disabilities are supported in getting a job.



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Education

The goal of the project **My Right** is inclusion for children with multiple disabilities and learning difficulties in schools and to improve the education system in Armenia and Kosovo to make it more inclusive. Teachers are trained in teaching in integrative classes. Parents can see, that their children can learn. And all children can go to school, learn and have fun.



Copyright: Light for the World

Health

The aim of the project **Eye Care for All** is to establish eye care for all, in hospitals and mobile operations in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Mozambique. Poor women and girls often do not have the possibility to get the operation needed, so that they can see and read again.



Inclusion of persons with disabilities in development cooperation and humanitarian aid



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Participation

ACTIVE—Accessible Communication Towards Inclusion of Vulnerable and Excluded People on Western Balkans—is a programme for accessible communication in five countries in the Western Balkans. The aim is to develop guidelines in the local languages for translations, education, training and awareness-raising and to publish accessible information for various target groups.



Copyright: Austrian Red Cross

Humanitarian aid

The aim of the project **ACROSS Ethiopia** is to increase the resilience and self-reliance of institutions, communities and vulnerable people in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resilience means that people can cope better in difficult situations. A resilient group can handle crises, such as natural disasters or economic problems, and rebuild stronger. The focus is on the areas of access to clean water and toilets, psychological social assistance and livelihoods.



Copyright: Light for the World

Climate crisis

As part of the project **EPIC Nepal**, processes were established to make persons with disabilities more resilient to the effects of natural disasters. At the beginning of the project, the work has concentrated on the perception of people with disabilities in their communities and their integration into social life. In addition, people were supported in becoming more economically independent.



Copyright: Light for the World

Supported organizations of persons with disabilities living in poor countries

The **Disability Inclusion Academy** supports and trains young persons with disabilities in poor countries to become Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs, inclusion counsellors and experts). DIFs support inclusion in mainstream programmes, services and the workplace. They build networks, mobilize, train themselves, offer technical support and are role models and change makers.



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