

Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

Final version

1.1) We, the signatories of this Charter¹, reaffirm our determination to make humanitarian action inclusive of persons with disabilities and to take all steps to meet their essential needs and promote the protection, safety and respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

1.2) We shall strive to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to humanitarian response, both in terms of protection and assistance, without discrimination, and allowing them to fully enjoy their rights. By this Charter, we reaffirm our collective will to place persons with disabilities at the centre of humanitarian response.

1.3) For the purpose of this charter, persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, psychosocial, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in, and access to, humanitarian programmes.

1.4) This Charter refers to all persons with disabilities, applies to all situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and at all phases of a humanitarian response, from preparedness and crisis onset through transition into recovery.

1.5) We recognize that further progress towards principled and effective humanitarian action will only be realized if humanitarian preparedness and response becomes inclusive of persons with disabilities, in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality, and the human rights principles of inherent dignity, equality and non-discrimination. We recall the obligations of States under international human rights law, in particular the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, international refugee law and further stress the obligations of States and all parties to armed conflict under international humanitarian law, including their obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the obligations applicable to them under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, to respect and protect persons with disabilities and pay attention to their specific needs during armed conflicts.

1.6) With the intention of leaving no one behind, we reiterate our commitment to fully support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a core element in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities. We highlight our will to translate into action the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and stress the necessity to support its implementation as an essential instrument to empower persons with disabilities and promote universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

1.7) We recall that persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, and face multiple barriers in accessing protection and humanitarian assistance, including relief and recovery support. They are also particularly exposed to targeted violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence.

¹ This document expresses our common political intention and intended course of action, however, it does not establish legally binding obligations to the States and other actors and does not affect the signatories' existing obligations under applicable international and domestic law.

1.8) We recognize the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that further exacerbate the exclusion of all persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and whether they are living in urban, rural or remote areas, in poverty, in isolation or in institutions, and regardless of their status, including migrants, refugees or other displaced persons, and that crisis often leads to further impairment.

1.9) We stress the importance of improving capacity building of national and local authorities and the broader humanitarian community on issues related to persons with disabilities, including through increased awareness and adequate resourcing. We recognize that existing policies, procedures and practices on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian programs need to be strengthened and systematized. We further stress the importance of collection and analysis of disability data disaggregated by age and sex, as an important element in the design and monitoring of States' obligations, humanitarian programming and policy as a whole.

1.10) We recall that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have untapped capacity and are not sufficiently consulted nor actively involved in decision-making processes concerning their lives, including in crisis preparedness and response coordination mechanisms.

We commit to:

2.1) Non-discrimination

- a. Condemn and eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities in humanitarian programming and policy, including by guaranteeing protection and equal access to assistance for all persons with disabilities.
- b. Facilitate the protection and safety of all children and adults with disabilities, recognising that multiple and intersecting factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, minority status, as well as other diversity and context-specific factors necessitate distinct responses and measures.
- c. Pay specific attention to the situation of women and girls of all ages with disabilities in the context of situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and further take all necessary action to empower and protect them from physical, sexual and other forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and harassment.

2.2) Participation

- a. Promote meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the needs assessment, design, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian preparedness and response programs and draw from their leadership, skills, experience and other capabilities to ensure their active participation in decision making and planning processes including in appropriate coordination mechanisms.
- b. Work to foster inclusive community-based protection mechanisms so as to better provide tailored and context specific response and strengthen the resilience of persons with disabilities, their communities, their families and caregivers.

2.3) Inclusive policy

- a. Engage with all relevant States, and other stakeholders and partners to ensure protection for persons with disabilities as required by international law.
- b. Develop, endorse and implement policies and guidelines based on existing frameworks and standards, supporting humanitarian actors to improve inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness and responses.
- c. Adopt policies and processes to improve quantitative and qualitative data collection on persons with disabilities that delivers comparable and reliable evidence and is ethically collected, respectful of confidentiality and privacy. Ensure that data collected on persons with disabilities is

disaggregated by age and sex, and analysed and used on an ongoing basis to assess and advance accessibility of humanitarian services and assistance, as well as participation in policy and program design, implementation and evaluation.

2.4) Inclusive response and services

- a. Ensure that emergency and preparedness planning are designed to take into account the diverse needs of persons with disabilities
- b. Strive to ensure that services and humanitarian assistance are equally available for and accessible to all persons with disabilities, and guarantee the availability, affordability and access to specialized services, including assistive technology in the short, medium and long term.
- c. Work towards the elimination of physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers including through systematic provision of information for all in planning, preparedness and response, and strive to ensure the accessibility of services including through universal design in programming, policies and in all post-emergency reconstruction.

2.5) Cooperation and coordination

- a. Foster technical cooperation and coordination among national and local authorities and all humanitarian actors, including international and national civil society, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and representative organisations of persons with disabilities, to facilitate cross-learning—and sharing of information, practices, tools and resources inclusive of persons with disabilities.
- b. Foster coordination between development and humanitarian actors with a view to strengthening local and national service systems inclusive of persons with disabilities and capitalizing on opportunities to rebuild more inclusive societies and communities.
- c. Sensitize all international and national humanitarian staff, local and national authorities on the rights, protection and safety of persons with disabilities and further strengthen their capacity and skills to identify and include persons with disabilities in humanitarian preparedness and response mechanisms.