



Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

6 keys for inclusion in MSF missions

Around 15% of the world's population, an estimated 1 billion people live with disabilities.¹

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.²

Several sources acknowledge 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.”³

A 2014 report from Handicap International (now known as Humanity & Inclusion) and Help Age found that 22% of Syrian refugees in camps in Lebanon and Jordan had a disability. Moreover, 30% of the refugees in these camps had special needs related to age, disability, injuries or chronic disease.⁴

MSF does not have the intention to reach everyone, however as a humanitarian actor it does have the ambition to look out for the most vulnerable groups. Persons with disabilities are often among the most vulnerable in countries where we work. Inclusion is about asking ourselves; “Are there barriers which hamper persons with disabilities to access MSF services?”, and more generally, “Who are the patients that do not reach our services?”

With the goal to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to humanitarian response, the inclusion project suggests that we start with 6 keys for inclusion as a basis and as a guidance.

Turn the page to find the 6 keys for inclusion of persons with disabilities in MSF missions.

¹ Source 2011 WHO world report on Disability

² Definition source: UN convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

³ Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

⁴ Handicap International and HelpAge International: Hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees, 2014



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6 keys for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in MSF missions

Key 1 - Learn about the risk of exclusion of persons with disabilities and raise awareness; starting with your colleagues and your teams

The main barrier to inclusion are attitudes: negative attitudes often based on wrong assumptions, prejudices, beliefs and stigmas.

Key 2 - Use “Universal Design” when building facilities, make them friendly for wheelchair-users

It is cheaper to make facilities accessible in the design phase than to adapt them afterwards. Think about this when launching a new construction project. Take reconstruction after a natural catastrophe as an **opportunity to re-build in a more accessible way**. Think about wheelchair users and promote slopes, adapted toilets, large enough doors and free passages.

Key 3 - Use two ways of communication (Audio & Visual) in your awareness campaigns

To reach a broader audience, think **accessible communication**. During an awareness-raising campaign, think two-ways of communicating: visual and audio – text and sound.

Key 4 – Contact and collaborate with Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs)

Contact and collaborate with Disabled People’s Organizations. They can give great insights to how MSF supported facilities and services can be made more accessible for persons with disabilities. They offer a channel to reach persons with disabilities and to spread information and job offers.

Key 5 – Open your recruitment to persons with disabilities

Why not recruit persons with disabilities to your staff? We often have a lot of prejudice about what persons with disabilities can and cannot do. More-over, they may help us better understand the needs of persons with disabilities. They may have practical additional skills, like knowing sign language. It is as easy as stating **“persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply”**

Key 6 – Include concerns of and for persons with disabilities in your needs assessment and overall project process

At every stage of the project and particularly during the assessment phase, keep inclusion in mind and include persons with disabilities throughout the overall process. Having partner DPO or/and persons with disabilities in the team can be very helpful!

Inclusion of persons with disabilities is not that difficult, we can do something, let’s just do it!