

# Disability inclusion in Accountability to Affected Populations

## Short guide

The purpose of this guide is to help UNICEF humanitarian staff and partners ensure that all mechanisms for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

The guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the UNICEF [AAP Handbook](#) and [Toolkit](#) and consulted during critical processes such as when:

- Recruiting AAP specialists
- Conducting situational analyses
- Developing programme strategies
- Developing community engagement or communication with communities' strategies
- Designing complaints and feedback mechanisms
- Informing people of their rights and entitlements
- Monitoring AAP

## Take deliberate action to include persons with disabilities in AAP mechanisms

UNICEF Core Commitments for Children (CCC) in Humanitarian Action include a commitment to “Ensure that children and adults with disabilities and their caregivers participate in decisions that affect their lives and have access to safe and confidential complaints mechanisms. Using safe and confidential feedback and reporting mechanisms based on their preferred methods of communication, systematically use their views to review, inform, and correct interventions.”<sup>1</sup>

UNICEF follows a rights-based, inclusive, and active approach to AAP in recognition that the persons we serve are rights-holders rather than passive “aid recipients”.

Persons with disabilities face physical, communication and attitudinal barriers. They are at higher risk of violence and abuse and may be the “harder to reach” population in terms of AAP, especially in meaningful community engagement endeavours or efforts to inform communities of their rights, entitlements, and channels to report any fraud, mistreatment, or misbehavior. It is necessary to pay specific attention to the social and environmental barriers facing persons with disabilities and take deliberate action to address them when implementing measures relating to AAP.

The systematic engagement of persons with disabilities not only contributes to their dignity and resilience but also to the effectiveness of UNICEF’s programmes, as their lived experience provides valuable insights to improve response planning and delivery for all.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/cc-2-4-2>

# Key considerations for disability inclusion in AAP

## Participation

Women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities should have safe, appropriate and equitable opportunities to take part in decision making and, in all processes, and activities across the programme cycle.

### Example actions

- Conduct disability sensitization for staff and community members to reduce attitudinal barriers.
- Address physical barriers by applying [universal design principles](#) to make participation processes [accessible](#).
- Provide [reasonable accommodations](#) to meet individual access requirements.
- Collect disability-disaggregated monitoring data on participation.
- Go the “extra mile” to reach out to persons with disabilities. This could be through engaging local organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to support outreach efforts.

## Information and communication

Women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities should have [equal access to appropriate life-saving information, including information](#) on how to exercise their rights and on two-way communication channels with aid providers.

### Example actions

- Consult persons with disabilities about their [communication preferences](#), including persons with physical, hearing, visual, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities.
- Use multiple [accessible](#) formats and channels of communication.
- Monitor whether persons with disabilities benefit from information and communication campaigns.

## Feedback and complaints

Women, men girls, and boys with disabilities should have safe and appropriate means to provide feedback and to complain about their experiences and perspectives on UNICEF’s programmes and responses, including on sensitive issues.

### Example actions

- Involve persons with different types of disabilities in the design of these mechanisms
- Ensure that feedback and complaints mechanisms are safe and available in multiple accessible formats, including for persons with hearing, visual, intellectual, and physical impairments, and those who are isolated in the home or rely on others for communication.
- Collect disability-disaggregated user data, where demographic data such as age and sex are collected.
- Pay particular attention to the experiences of persons who face multiple, intersectional, or heightened access barriers due to their impairment, gender, age, or social status.

## Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)

Women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities should have equal access to safe and reliable mechanisms to report, access assistance and to raise concerns about sexual exploitation and abuse issues.

### Example actions

- Sensitize all staff on heightened risks of SEA due to the intersection of gender and disability.
- Train PSEA focal points to consult with persons with disabilities about their experiences.
- Ensure that persons with disabilities are depicted as part of the community in all general community information campaigns about SEA.
- Provide information about SEA and reporting mechanisms in accessible formats.
- Ensure mechanisms for reporting SEA are available in accessible formats.

## Strengthening local capacity

OPDs should have the opportunity to participate in capacity building for humanitarian response before, during and after a crisis.

### Example actions

- Reach out to local OPDs to understand their roles and priorities.
- Exchange knowledge on a reciprocal basis (i.e., invite OPDs to share information about the situation of persons with disabilities, and provide information to OPDs about humanitarian processes and systems).
- Ensure that all training for local partners is inclusive and accessible to OPDs.
- Support OPDs' organizational resilience and capacity through institutional capacity building.

## Coordination and partnership

OPDs should be supported to partner with UNICEF and participate in coordination mechanisms to maximize the coverage, reach, and relevance of UNICEF's humanitarian programming and responses.

### Example actions

- Identify local OPDs and understand their individual mandates.
- Ensure that coordination meetings and meetings with partners are [accessible](#).
- Establish flexible partnership modalities.
- Support OPDs to engage as partners in coordination mechanisms, such as by providing reasonable accommodations.
- Ensure that collective or inter-agency AAP activities are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

## Evidence-based advocacy and decision making

Decision making and advocacy should be based on evidence on the situation of women, men, girls, and boys with disabilities affected by crises.

### Example actions


- Collect primary and secondary data about the situation of persons with disabilities and their access to the response.
- Ensure that a diverse representation of persons with disabilities are included in all community consultation processes.

# How to deliver disability-inclusive AAP


(Please refer to [UNICEF Accountability to Affected Populations Handbook](#))

## Leadership and shared responsibility


Senior managers can play a role to ensure that deliberate steps are taken to ensure accountability to marginalized persons affected by a crisis, including persons with disabilities.

 Encourage your manager to draw attention to disability inclusion whenever they speak about AAP in regular meetings (e.g., monthly EMT meeting). Or ask them to chair a meeting to discuss practical measures to improve disability inclusion in a specific aspect of AAP (e.g., community engagement activities). Invite OPD representatives to the meeting.  
Support the country office (CO) AAP focal point to integrate messages about disability inclusion into routine AAP training or to deliver specific training on disability-inclusive AAP.  
Coordinate with the AAP focal point to identify key areas for improvement with respect to disability-inclusive AAP and the resources required, and allocate responsibilities.

---

 All staff need to understand the basics of disability inclusion to fulfil their responsibilities with respect to AAP (see [AAP tool 3.3](#)).


---

 The CO AAP focal point has a role to ensure disability inclusion is a component of strategies to improve CO AAP interventions and processes (see [AAP tool 3.1](#)).


---

## Preparedness and risk reduction

Disability-inclusive AAP requires preparation and the Emergency Preparedness Plan is a crucial opportunity to identify potential barriers to participation, information, and communication; risks relating to exclusion and SEA; and strategies for engaging with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations (see [AAP tool 5.5](#)).

 Seek support from OPDs to consult persons with disabilities about their experiences of participating in community engagement initiatives and their preferences for two-way communication channels.

---

 Use this information to estimate the costs of [improving accessibility of information materials](#) or complaints and feedback channels, and for providing reasonable accommodations to meet individual requirements for accessing community engagement activities (see pp. 11 of IRC [Inclusive Client Responsiveness guide](#) for more detail on how to provide reasonable accommodations).

---


## Programme cycle stages

### Understand the context


The Situation Analysis (SitAn) and the Needs Assessment are important opportunities to understand how AAP actions can respond to increased risk and barriers for persons with disabilities.

 Seek support from OPDs to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in any consultations to inform the SitAn (see [AAP tool 5.1](#)).

---

 Use [the Washington Group Short Set of Questions](#) to disaggregate AAP-related data collected through the needs assessment (see [AAP tool 5.2](#)) and include specific questions on barriers. Train staff in how to provide reasonable accommodation to ensure persons with disabilities can participate in the data collection.


---

 Consult the [IRC guide](#) which includes tools for collecting disability-disaggregated data, questions to collect data on barriers, and guidance for conducting inclusive focus group discussions.


---

## Design


Inclusion can only be achieved if built into programme design. This applies to AAP as much as any other aspect of the programme. This is the opportunity to make use of all the information collected during the preparedness phase and the context analysis.

-  Use the Strategy Note (see [AAP tool 5.3](#)) to describe the proactive measures that will be taken to engage with persons with disabilities, improve accessibility of communication channels and address barriers and risks identified in the SitAn and needs assessment.


---

-  Use the Theory of Change (see [AAP tool 5.4](#)) to explain how these measures will improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the effectiveness of the programme.

---


-  Use the HRP (see [AAP tool 5.5](#)) to describe any additional resources required to deliver accountability to persons with disabilities and stipulate that individual-level AAP-related indicators will be disaggregated by disability.

---


-  Conduct an accessibility audit on any existing feedback and complaints mechanisms to identify any barriers restricting access for persons with disabilities. See detailed guidance on p. 18 of the [IRC Guide](#).

## Implementation


An inclusive approach must be reflected in all aspects of implementing AAP in programmes.

-  As summarized in Chapter 6 of the AAP Handbook, inclusion requires:
  - An understanding of disability-related protection risks and barriers which result in under-representation, isolation and marginalization.
  - Consideration of which persons with disabilities are more exposed to these risks (e.g., women and girls with disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities).
  - Diverse engagement strategies and communication channels to ensure accessibility for persons with different disabilities, as well as targeted support to ensure safety, mitigate risks, and empower.
  - Diverse representation within teams implementing AAP activities, including men and women with disabilities.


---

-  Consult Chapter 7 of the AAP Handbook for advice on how to select the most appropriate information channels for persons with disabilities, using data on communication preferences collected during needs assessments, and considering the strengths and weaknesses of each channel. For further guidance see p. 15 of the [IRC Guide](#).


---

-  Consult Chapter 8 of the AAP Handbook for guidance on how to overcome barriers to participation for persons with disabilities. There are further resources in the last chapter from UNICEF AAP Handbook on the participation of children and youth with disabilities.


---

-  Chapter 9 of the AAP Handbook explains how complaints and feedback mechanisms can be made accessible to everyone. Persons with disabilities may also require specific support to overcome any internalized beliefs about the value of their opinions or fears of negative repercussions to their complaints.

---





-  Chapter 10 of the AAP Handbook, on PSEA, is particularly important for persons with disabilities as they face heightened risks of SEA. Ensure that all information about SEA, including on reporting mechanisms, is available in accessible formats. In addition, depict persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities, in any communication related to PSEA.

---

-  Chapter 11 of the AAP Handbook addresses the pros and cons of digital technology for AAP. Many persons with disabilities rely on technology to access information and to communicate. However, access to technology is unequal with barriers relating to gender, age, and disability. This digital divide means that we cannot rely solely on digital solutions. If meaningfully engaged, persons with disabilities will direct UNICEF to the alternative solutions that meet their user preferences, and which can be applied in their context. For example, Easy Read formatting can improve the accessibility of written information for a wide range of people, including persons with low literacy, persons with intellectual disabilities and persons who use minority languages. It can also be used in both digital and analogue systems. For further guidance on Easy Read see p. 45 of the [IRC Guide](#).


## Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

As well as ensuring that persons with disabilities have access to community-based monitoring activities (see Implementation tips above), it is necessary to include their perspectives in evaluations, and collect data on their inclusion in AAP activities. See p. 21 of the [IRC Guide](#) for detailed guidance on monitoring access to feedback mechanisms.



-  Seek support from OPDs to conduct specific consultations with persons with disabilities about their experiences of receiving information, participating in decision-making, and providing feedback or complaints. For further guidance on measuring levels of participation see p. 39 of [UNICEF Take Us Seriously! Engaging children with disabilities in decisions which affect their lives](#).
-  Use the Washington Group Short Set of Questions to disaggregate by disability the quantitative monitoring data collected for AAP indicators (see [AAP tool 5.8](#)).
-  Identify specific indicators for measuring progress on inclusion in AAP (e.g., # of feedback mechanisms that have scored satisfactory or higher in an accessibility audit).
-  Annual reports and Situation Reports provide an opportunity to describe progress, challenges, and lessons learned with respect to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in AAP efforts.

## Coordination and partnership

OPDs play a critical role in representing the viewpoints of persons with disabilities throughout the humanitarian project cycle and should be considered as important actors in the localization of aid.

-  Before starting to engage with OPDs it is important to reflect with colleagues on the purpose of the engagement and to identify common objectives and available resources. For further guidance see the UNICEF Tipsheet on OPD engagement in humanitarian action.

Inclusive AAP should be reflected in all mechanisms for humanitarian coordination.

-  Advocate for disability inclusion to be reflected throughout cluster and inter-cluster AAP action plans. For further guidance see UNICEF key actions on disability inclusion in cluster coordination and Annex 2 of the [UNDIS guidelines on consulting persons with disabilities](#) (UNCT Accountability Scorecard on Disability Inclusion with annotation on which consultation is most appropriate for each indicator).
-  Ensure that disability inclusion is reflected in the HCT AAP strategy and the HRP. See AAP [tool 5.5](#) and [Guidance on strengthening disability inclusion in Humanitarian Response Plans](#).



## Further resources

- [Engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action: Tip sheet](#)
- [Cluster coordination - essential actions on disability inclusion: short guide](#)
- [IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action](#)
- [UNDIS Guidelines, Consulting persons with disabilities](#)
- [UNICEF booklets on including children with disabilities in humanitarian action](#)
- [UNICEF APP Handbook and Toolkit](#)
- [IRC guidance and toolkit on inclusive client responsiveness](#)
- [Plan International, Guidelines on consulting children and young persons with disabilities](#)
- [UNICEF, Take Us Seriously! Engaging children with disabilities in decisions affecting their lives](#)
- [UNICEF inclusive communication module](#)
- [UNICEF Accessibility Toolkit](#)