

TOOL:

SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities should participate in policy and programme formulation, implementation and monitoring processes in order to identify protection concerns and appropriate solutions. Consultation and participation through all phases of crises and protracted situations is essential. UNHCR should ensure that persons with disabilities are able to apply their skills and capacities to benefit themselves, their families and their communities, including representing their communities in leadership positions.¹

Understand that different groups may require different engagement approaches, and plan accordingly. Establish clear, contextually relevant guidelines and practices, for the appropriate engagement of marginalised groups and persons at heightened risk in decision making to influence programming.²

Making meetings accessible

Outreach about the event³

- Identify and invite relevant disability stakeholders that can support with the event (e.g. a disability association to identify and invite persons with disabilities).⁴

- Ensure that partners, refugee outreach volunteers, or the refugee associations who engage in outreach have appropriate information about the event.
- Information on the venue.
- Details of how to travel to the venue.
- Support that will be available (e.g. interpreters).
- Identify persons with disabilities who need transportation to the event and provide cash for taxis.
- Information materials should be simple and, if possible, available in alternative formats (e.g. easy-to-read language and pictures).

Consider venue physical accessibility

- Speak to the individual as you approach.
- If possible, invite persons with disabilities to identify accessibility barriers prior to the meeting.
- Depending on the context, consider the following checklist when determining accessibility.⁵
 - ▶ Entrances, exits, and pathways are barrier-free
 - ▶ Accessible toilets.
 - ▶ Good natural or artificial lighting.
 - ▶ Limited background noise.

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Handicap International, *Need to Know Guidance: Working with Persons with Disabilities in Forced Displacement* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2011).

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Accountability to Affected Populations Toolkit* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016).

³ These practical tips are intended to be used in low-resource settings and should be adapted to fit the context.

⁴ CBM, *Disability Inclusive Development Toolkit*, 2017

⁵ IFRC, *All Under One Roof: Disability inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies*, 2015.

- ▶ Entrance is wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs (90 cm).
- ▶ Surfaces inside the venue are level, free of debris, and slip-resistant.
- ▶ If there are stairs, there are ramps available or other entrances at street-level that can be accessed by individuals with mobility impairments.

Checklist for day of the meeting

- Place signs at the entrance and throughout travel path that direct attendees to the meeting room.
- Ensure the room is free of barriers and there is ample space at the front for those with mobility and assistive devices, and persons with visual and hearing impairments.
- In settings where meetings are usually held sitting on the floor, ensure that there are mats and a few chairs available for participants who have difficulty sitting on the floor.

INCLUDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES⁶

Key principles⁷

- Participation may vary depending on the individual; but, everyone has something to contribute and everyone can communicate, although through different channels.
- Persons with disabilities may be less vocal in meetings due to stigma and social exclusion. Ask persons with disabilities for their opinions and ideas; ensure that the opinions of diverse groups within persons with disabilities are represented (e.g. those with different disabilities, men, women, children, etc.).

- Carers may be present during the meeting; engage with them as their perspectives may be valuable and help identify communication methods.

PROVIDE DIFFERENT OPTIONS FOR PARTICIPATION⁸

- Invite participants to take photos of things that are important to them or that highlight their concerns and ideas. Using these photos as a basis for further discussion.
- Provide drawing material for participants to express their views using pictures.
- Have a range of pictures representing different topics. Participants can sort these pictures into categories, such as what they like or don't like about their community.
- Use tactile materials (e.g. Play-Do, Lego) to help participants to express their views.
- Invite participants to tell stories about a particular experience, rather than asking direct questions:
 - ▶ Have a guided walk through the location where participants live. This provides an opportunity to identify places where particular concerns may exist, including around issues of accessibility;
 - ▶ Work with participants to 'map' their community, which can identify places of particular importance or places where there are particular concerns.

⁶ For more information on making the participatory process inclusive of persons with disabilities, refer to UNHCR's *Community-based Protection in Action Brief: Guidance on Participatory Assessments for Persons with Disabilities*.

⁷ UNHCR, *The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations*, 2006.

⁸ Women's Refugee Commission, *Gender-based violence against children and youth with disabilities: A toolkit for Child Protection Actors*, Part 3: Child and youth-led participatory assessment, 2016.