Module 4 – Activity 2.

Handout 10 - Overview of strategies to foster disability inclusion

- This handout includes an introduction to key strategies to foster disability inclusion. These strategies are inspired by the principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and reflected in UNHCR's policies and guidance introduced in Module 3. (Page 86)

- **Participation**.
  - Participation is both an outcome and a process. It is key for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and it contributes addressing a historic situation of inequality, where persons with disabilities have been often objects of decisions made by others.
  - Participation can take many forms, for example by engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities and with women, girls, men and boys with disabilities living in forced displacement as individuals or in Focus Group Discussions.
  - Participation is not only about asking the opinions of persons with disabilities. It can take many forms, and it should aim at the highest level of ownership possible in both the decision-making process and implementation. The following degrees or modalities of participation can be used to help identify optimal levels of participation at different stages:
    - **Informing**: Information is shared with communities, but they have no authority on decisions and actions taken. E.g. refugees may be told by UNHCR when and where an event or a service takes place, and this information can be provided using accessible ways of communication, like in the first illustration on the left, where a group of persons with a without disabilities access information provided verbally and in sign language. Sometimes, an intermediate degree can include what is called "information transfer": Information on preferences is gathered from communities, but they are not taking part in discussions leading to informed decisions
    - **Consulting**: Communities are asked for their opinions, which may or may not be taken into account. For example, dedicated consultations with persons with disabilities, as the one represented in the top left part of the slide, can be organized, or consultations where persons with disabilities are enabled to participate, ensuring their full and meaningful access (e.g. providing for their accessibility, briefing them in advance when required).
    - **Involving**: Communities are involved in one or more activities, but they have limited decision-making power and other partners continue to have a part to play. For example, persons with disabilities can help to collect information on their communities as peer volunteers, as in the illustration at the center

of the slide, where a young man with a disability asks questions to the members of a household.

- o **Collaborating**: Communities are completely involved in decision-making with other partners. For example, persons with disabilities can be part of workshops where decisions are taken, and make part of community committees on a regular basis, like in the top right illustration, where a group of persons with disabilities use cards to assess the information collected from the community and engage in a discussion.
- o **Empowering**: Communities control decision-making and other partners facilitate their ability to utilize resources. There is therefore greater ownership and a stronger sense of belonging and responsibility. For example, in the last illustration on the right side of the slide, a workshop to repair assistive devices was chosen as an income generating activity by refugees with disabilities, the activity would support their community by providing a service required, and allow for more autonomy from specialized services, difficult to access in that location.

- **Accessibility of information and communication.**
  - Accessibility is not only about ramps, handrails and other appliances to facilitate access to the physical space. The concept of accessibility applies as well to means of providing information and facilitating communication, and it follows the principles of Universal Design, where products and services are designed to be usable by the widest part of the population possible, without the need for specialized design.
  - For example, in the illustration, we see that using captioning / subtitles and audio in a video is, in itself, a way of promoting accessibility, as this video will be easier to access for many more people than if it did not have those features: for example, non-native speakers of a language can benefit from subtitles, and having audio as well can help people with visual impairments to still access the messages provided.
  - In addition, there are other ways of extending even more the accessibility of a message; this can be done by using languages and formats particularly accessible for persons with disabilities, such as sign language or Braille.
  - When these solutions are planned and provided in advance without a previous request from persons with disabilities, they are part of accessibility solutions. When these are provided in reaction to a request or a situation of inaccessibility, as in the example reviewed with Maryam, these solutions are called adjustments or "reasonable accommodations", as they are temporary and provided on an individual basis.

- **Accessibility of information and communication** (continued)
  - Other formats include easy-to-read text, with simplified messages and pictures, as in slide 24, and communication boards in slide 25, which includes key words and illustrations to communicate basic situations and feelings.
  - These formats are also more accessible to people with low literacy, people with intellectual disabilities and people who use other languages.

- **Physical accessibility**
    - As it happens with the accessibility of communication and information, the accessibility of the physical environment is a precondition for the participation of persons with disabilities. If buildings and facilities within them are not accessible, persons with disabilities will not be able to fully access and use them, and the same applies to roads and transportation.
    - As discussed with information and communication , accessible spaces follow the principles of Universal Design, and should benefit all users in this regard: an accessible building is safer as it has less hazards, and it is easier to evacuate in an emergency as exits are adequately signed, doors are wide and without obstacles, etc.
    - Accessibility standards are developed and available at national and international level, and very often organizations of persons with disabilities are aware of the accessibility standards applicable in their country.
    - Building accessible new infrastructure does not require significant additional costs, it is estimated than only an additional 1% of the overall costs. However, retro-fitting or adding accessibility features in a non-accessible building is more expensive.
    - Accessibility features may need to be implemented; that is why the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) proposes an alternative solution, applicable in situations of inaccessibility: 'reasonable accommodation'.

- **Reasonable accommodation / Targeted adjustments**
    - When persons with disabilities find obstacles to participate or access services and situations on an equal basis with others, a process called "reasonable accommodation", outlined by the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD), should be put in place.
    - This process requires identifying what is needed so that the person can fully participate through an interactive dialogue and so that a solution can be provided relevant for the person. The solution should be achievable given the available resources (including time, skills, services, financial, etc.). If a solution is not found, a justification should be provided.
    - In the illustration, a process for the provision of reasonable accommodation is represented; for example, a woman with a physical disability finds a physical barrier to access a Sexual and Reproductive Health referral she requires, as the public transportation that connects her community with that hospital is not accessible. In discussions with the health service providers, a transportation allowance is provided to enable her to access the required services.
    - These solutions facilitate immediate access, but are less sustainable over time.

- **Bridging the gap between accessibility and individual adjustments**
    - While accessibility can be implemented over time, as it requires planning and resources. Reasonable accommodation should be provided within a shorter time period to avoid discrimination. This requires planning and flexible budgeting as well.
    - Accessibility benefits large portions of the population; reasonable accommodation is provided in response to individual solutions.

- Accessibility should be *always* planned and implemented, in all infrastructure, services or information, as persons with disabilities will be always accessing these places. Adjustments are implemented from the moment that a person requires access to a non-accessible situation, even if that place was made accessible: it is a way of accounting for the wide diversity of experiences that persons with disabilities have, and ensuring equal access.
- Accessibility is guided by Universal Design principles and national or international standards; reasonable accommodation is built through a dialogue with the person, and should be relevant and affordable for the project.

- **Awareness-raising**
  - Awareness-raising is one of the most important strategies outlined by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and should not be underestimated: information or spaces can be made accessible, but if there are no changes in the attitudes of families, communities and service providers, situations of discrimination will happen again and again.
  - Awareness-raising can take many forms, including informative sessions, sensitization campaigns, role-modelling (for example through teachers with disabilities, such as in the illustration on the right) radio messages, posters, theatre… or even the development of video campaigns.

- **Data collection**.
  - Not all disabilities are visible, and therefore data collection cannot rely on visual cues alone. The image on the slide represents this issue: "Not all disability looks like this (a person in a wheelchair); some look like this (a person standing up and not showing any characteristic usually employed to depict disability). Not all disabilities are visible; please don't be so quick to judge. There are available tools to support the identification of persons with disabilities in demographic data, which are explored below.
  - There are two types of data that would be important to collect:
    - **Individual / demographic data** (e.g. in school registers, in ProGres): The Washington Group Questions on Disability and the module on Child Functioning developed with UNICEF would be the most applicable tools.[1] This data can be used to monitor access, and sometimes, to identify strategies that could be useful for certain difficulties.
    - **Data on barriers**: Qualitative data efforts can collect information on which barriers persons with disabilities face. This type of data can help us to jointly identify solutions for these barriers.

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[1] All questions sets developed by the Washington Group are available here: https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/