

Field Accountability Briefing Two: Disaster Response & Disabled Access

This briefing outlines key issues, principals and practical guidelines to help NGOs mainstream and integrate disability within overseas development. Aimed at assisting the fulfilment of humanitarian obligations, the briefing follows the twin-track approach of mainstreaming disability into relief and development whilst also having with disability-specific projects for the active inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Key issue: Disaster responses and reconstruction efforts usually do not adequately meet the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Exclusion from basic services and facilities, such as safe water and sanitation, and lack of access to health centres, schools and other facilities results in reduced opportunities, further isolation, poor health and poverty. The Millennium Development Goals of poverty reduction, health and access to safe water and sanitation will be difficult to achieve without addressing access for the frail, elderly and persons with disability.

Access for persons with disability after a disaster

Inadequate infrastructure is major cause for ill health and disabling conditions. Inaccessible environments, technology, transport, products and services restrict equal participation to economic and social activities of many groups of people who have temporary or permanent limitations in their functional capacity. Emergencies only worsen this situation



Disability and Emergencies: Complex emergencies are frequent in the poorest countries. The poor are by far the largest victims of natural disasters, because they often only have access to low cost assets that are more vulnerable to the elements. People with disabilities who become refugees, and those who become disabled due to conflict, tend to be overlooked in humanitarian operations. Yet, they are amongst the most vulnerable, so there is growing awareness that disability should be actively taken into account when devising humanitarian responses. Unless people with disabilities can preserve or reconstruct their asset base during and after periods of natural disaster, the numbers in poverty will increase and their poverty will intensify, worsening the impact of disasters and emergencies.

Post-crisis reconstruction phase Planners of reconstruction often fail to meet accessibility requirements by not adapting the designs of built environments. By including disability considerations in reconstruction plans, disabilities can be prevented and the impact of impairments minimised (e.g. by incorporation of occupational health and safety measures, adequate health and rehabilitation services). It is also essential that disaster preparedness planning includes the needs of persons with disabilities.

Water, sanitation & hygiene promotion: Hand pumps, water carrying containers, toilet facilities should be designed or adapted for use by persons with disabilities. All users should be fully informed of when and where water and hygiene facilities are available.

Shelter, settlement & non-food items: Shelters, both emergency and long term, must meet minimal accessibility levels. Persons with disabilities will require additional protection from abuse, hence proximity to facilities and caregiving/protective services is important. Household items need to be adapted or may be required in additional quantities for persons with disabilities, in particular those with incontinence problems.



CBMI's Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation Project in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

Disability and Development:

One in ten people globally have a disability¹

In developing countries only 2% of people with disabilities have access to basic services¹

As a result of the Dec 26th 2004 Asian Tsunami, a 20% increase in disability is estimated

Depending on the type of building, the cost of providing accessibility can be as low as 0.5 - 1% of the total cost of a development project.

Universal Design

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent of the universal design concept is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by more people at little or no extra cost. The universal design concept targets all people of all ages, sizes, and abilities.

Principle one: Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to any group of users.

Guidelines:

- 1a. Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not.
- 1b. Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users.
- 1c. Provisions for privacy, security, and safety should be equally available to all users.

Principle two: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities. Guidelines:

- 2a. Provide choice in methods of use.
- 2b. Accommodate right- or left-handed access and use.
- 2c. Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision.
- 2d. Provide adaptability to the user's pace.

Principle Three: Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. Guidelines:

- 3a. Eliminate unnecessary complexity.
- 3b. Be consistent with user expectations and intuition.
- 3c. Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills.
- 3d. Arrange information consistent with its importance.
- 3e. Provide effective prompting for sequential actions.
- 3f. Provide timely feedback during and after task completion.

Principle four: Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities. Guidelines:

- 4a. Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information.
- 4b. Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings.
- 4c. Maximize "legibility" of essential information in all sensory modalities.
- 4d. Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e., make it easy to give instructions or directions).
- 4e. Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or

devices used by people with sensory limitations.

Principle five: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. Guidelines:

- 5a. Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded.
- 5b. Provide warnings of hazards and errors.
- 5c. Provide fail safe features.
- 5d. Discourage unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance.

Principle six: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue. Guidelines:

- 6a. Allow user to maintain a neutral body position.
- 6b. Use reasonable operating forces.
- 6c. Minimize repetitive actions.
- 6d. Minimize sustained physical effort.

Principle seven: Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility. Guidelines:

- 7a. Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.
- 7b. Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user.
- 7c. Accommodate variations in hand and grip size.
- 7d. Provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

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References & more information:

Australian Development Gateway
www.developmentgateway.com.au

Accessibility for the Disabled A Design Manual for a Barrier Free Environment www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/designm/