

ADVANCING DISABILITY AND GENDER INCLUSION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND RECOVERY



INTRODUCTION

This tip sheet is derived from the insights shared during the capacity strengthening webinar on “**Disability Inclusive Practices for Women’s Rights Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**” celebrated in April 2025¹. This webinar was part of the [United Nations Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund \(WPHF\) Global Learning Hub \(L-HUB\)](#) and held in collaboration with UN Women’s Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality Portfolio (DIIP/UNSCD). The L-HUB promotes knowledge sharing and capacity development opportunities for WPHF-supported women’s rights CSOs and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) operating in conflict affected settings across the world. The DIIP and its Knowledge and Innovation Forum support cross-regional exchange of lessons learned and good practices on accessibility, disability inclusion work and innovative practices across UN System. The joint webinar **showcased various approaches to enhance the leadership of persons with disabilities (PWDs), especially women with disabilities, in crisis response planning and management.** The tipsheet builds on the inputs of **Monjurul Kabir, Ph.D**, Senior Global Advisor and Team Leader [on gender equality, disability inclusion and intersectionality at UN Women](#), and **Tatiana Herasimova**, Executive Director of [Fight for Right](#), a WPHF-supported CSO from Ukraine, and on discussions with the audience. The webinar was held on 23 April 2025 and the recording is available in [English](#) and other languages.

BACKGROUND

According to the World Health Organization, **16% of the population lives with a disability² and women are more likely to live with a disability than men** (19.2% versus 12%, representing about one of five women³). This is due to factors such as a longer life expectancy and a gender biased exclusion from some services. People with disabilities are more prevalent in conflict-affected countries as they are often disproportionately impacted by war and humanitarian crises. In addition, in crisis affected areas, people with disabilities face increased risks of death, violence, abuse and human trafficking and diminished access to healthcare and education due to disruption of services and infrastructure. Children with disabilities may be forcibly transported and separated from their families. Women with disabilities are at greater risk of being subject of stigma, discrimination, abuse and sexual exploitation. Due to intersection of gender inequalities and disability, in crisis contexts, women with disabilities’ rights to education, access to justice, sexual and reproductive health, meaningful political participation and decision making are often curtailed.

While the person’s gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, displacement, socioeconomic, and another status compounds vulnerability, the lack of prioritization of those left furthest behind is often exacerbated during emergencies. As an example, in Afghanistan many women and girls with disabilities could not reach Kabul airport during the

1. The webinar was held on 23 April 2025 and the recording is available in [English](#) and other languages.

2. Global report on health equity. World Health Organization (WHO), (2022) available in [English](#).

3. World Report on Disability. WHO, 2011. Available in [English](#).

evacuation operations in 2022. Conflict also often generates severe trauma for conflict-related sexual violence survivors, mothers and pregnant women, and lifelong trauma for children with disabilities and ex-combatants with disabilities whose care is predominately provided by women. Furthermore, all these challenges are expected to worsen due to current funding gaps in humanitarian aid.

Including women with disabilities in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes ensures their voices and realities shape decisions that affect all of society including after a conflict. This approach also strengthens democracy and fosters inclusive political participation.

INTERNATIONAL NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR CSOS' ADVOCACY AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Since the 2000s, there has been a growing prioritization of disability inclusion and accessibility in the United Nations (UN) and international development agenda:

- The [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCPRD\)](#) and its Optional Protocol were adopted by resolution 61/106 of the General Assembly in 2006. It is the first legally binding instrument setting minimum standards for rights of PWDs. The agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development also recognized the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities, especially in areas such as health, education, employment, and protection from violence.
- The [UN Security Council Resolution 2475](#) (2019) was adopted unanimously in June 2019, marking a historic step as the first resolution to address the rights and protection of persons with disabilities in armed conflict, reinforcing the principle of leaving no one behind in peace and security efforts. While the resolution represents important recognition at the highest level, its implementation remains an area where further attention and consistent follow-up are needed.
- UN Women adopted a [Global Strategy on Disability Inclusion](#) 2018 committing to systematically integrating gender, age, and disability perspectives across its work, while also launching targeted initiatives to empower women and girls with disabilities in areas such as economic empowerment, women, peace and security (WPS), governance, and artificial intelligence (AI). The strategy promotes reasonable accommodation and the use of disability inclusion markers in reporting systems (starting 2026) to track inclusive financing⁴. As part of the strategy, UN Women engages women and girls with disabilities in data collection and policy design to address structural barriers and intersectional discrimination. The organization aims to expand long-term partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and encourages CSOs to connect with UN Women country offices for collaboration.
- In 2019, UN launched the **UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)**⁵ to embrace disability inclusion as part of the UN system. This created an accountability framework requesting, for example, UN agencies to make intergovernmental meetings accessible and procure services produced by women and girls with disabilities.
- The [Feminist Accessibility Protocol](#) developed in December 2022 aimed to recognize that feminist movements and disability movements should be more coordinated and nurture each other. The Protocol asks States, feminist civil society, UN entities, and other feminist actors to ensure that gender equality meetings and decision-making spaces are fully accessible to and inclusive of women, girls, trans, intersex, and non-binary PWDs. A disability inclusion lens should be considered across all feminist events' planning, execution, and follow-up.
- The review of progress since the adoption of the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) showed that national governments can and should do more to protect civilian lives and the dignity and integrity of women and girls with disabilities during past conflicts.
- The [Amman-Berlin-Declaration](#) was adopted at the Global Disability Summit (GDS) in April 2025. The Declaration **contains strong commitments for disability-inclusive international development cooperation and humanitarian action**. The declaration also emphasizes the importance of meaningful engagement of OPDs. It established a **15% for 15% target** to ensure that at least 15 percent of international development programs being implemented at the country level pursue disability inclusion as an objective by 2028 (when the next GDS will be held).

4. According to [UN Women's brief](#) (2022), disability inclusion markers allow international cooperation actors to give each of their interventions a score, based on whether that intervention seeks to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

5. The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) is available in [English](#).

TIP

CSOs and OPDs can leverage Member states and UN agencies' commitments towards disability inclusion to partner with UN Women, other UN agencies and decision makers to address women and girls with disabilities' needs and demands. In addition, even if many countries have signed and ratified the UNCRPD, several countries did not update their national legislation accordingly, or when national policies exist, they are not implemented. CSOs can engage with their national government to hold them accountable for meeting their international obligations.

BRINGING WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES' PERSPECTIVES AND SKILLS IN EMERGENCY AND RECOVERY PROCESSES FROM PLANNING TO COORDINATION AND MONITORING

Ukraine counted 2.7 million people who had registered as people with disabilities as of 2022. Most of these people were unable to exercise their basic human rights and this has worsened since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In addition, there is a martial law impeding Ukrainian men to cross the border, except if they marry with a woman with disability and become their care giver. This has led to an increase in fake marriages and women with disabilities were left alone or without support. Beyond Ukraine, there are lessons learned from CSOs working in Haiti, Palestine and other countries:

1

Conduct comprehensive needs and risks'

assessments: Disaggregate data on persons with disabilities by sex, type of disability, age etc. to design support services which meet their needs.

2

Promote engagement of women and girls with disabilities in all their diversity in all stages of emergency response.

Disability is not a monolithic concept; some types of disabilities are underrepresented. For example, there has been more prioritization on physical disability and less on learning disabilities, psychosocial disabilities, and stigma. Trauma cannot always be touched or measured, but it is very present in humanitarian contexts. Trauma impacts more acutely women and girls with disabilities and their caregivers because of multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. CSOs can challenge stigma surrounding girls and boys with disabilities and promote integration through working in schools and with families, including in remote areas. Awareness campaigns, educational reforms and mandatory courses on disability rights can be pathways to shift societal narratives and help prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) with disabilities before and after emergencies occur.

3

Plan and invest in accessibility measures. Good intentions are not enough. Inclusive preparedness and planning entail that infrastructure as well as healthcare, transportation and other community facilities should be accessible to all. To ensure a disability inclusive humanitarian response, shelters should be made accessible, and evacuation plans should be adapted to PWD. For example, alarm sirens and other alert systems in case of bombing, attack, or disaster settlements should be made accessible to deaf people. Information materials on early warning systems should be made available to persons with visual impairment and easy read information

concerning the rights of PWDs should be communicated widely through the media. If PWDs are aware that evacuation routes and systems are inclusive, they will be more inclined to evacuate in case of emergency. Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps and communities hosting high numbers of refugees should be prioritized in terms of accessibility (installing ramps, providing walkers, canes, etc.). Accessibility measures also need to be taken in reconstruction processes (housing, public roads, town planning etc.), establishing standards for building and renovating hospitals, trains, rehabilitation centers. Public buildings may become a temporary residence for IDPs including PWDs.

4

Allocate resources at the beginning of interventions.

Appropriate budget allocations are critical for the realization of the rights of PWDs and the successful implementation of public policies. For example, even if women with disabilities are more likely to face domestic violence, safe houses may not be accessible to them. This is why gender and disability inclusive budgeting should be integrated in all relevant ministries or departments (social inclusion, social affairs, social welfare, women and girls, finance, planning, etc.). A coordinated approach among ministries can ensure proper investments in accessible services and infrastructure in case of crisis. For example, resources should be devoted to evacuation systems for PWDs thinking of which devices may be needed during evacuation. Elected representatives and civil servants should be sensitized and develop their skills in intersectional analysis and gender and disability-inclusive budgeting.

5

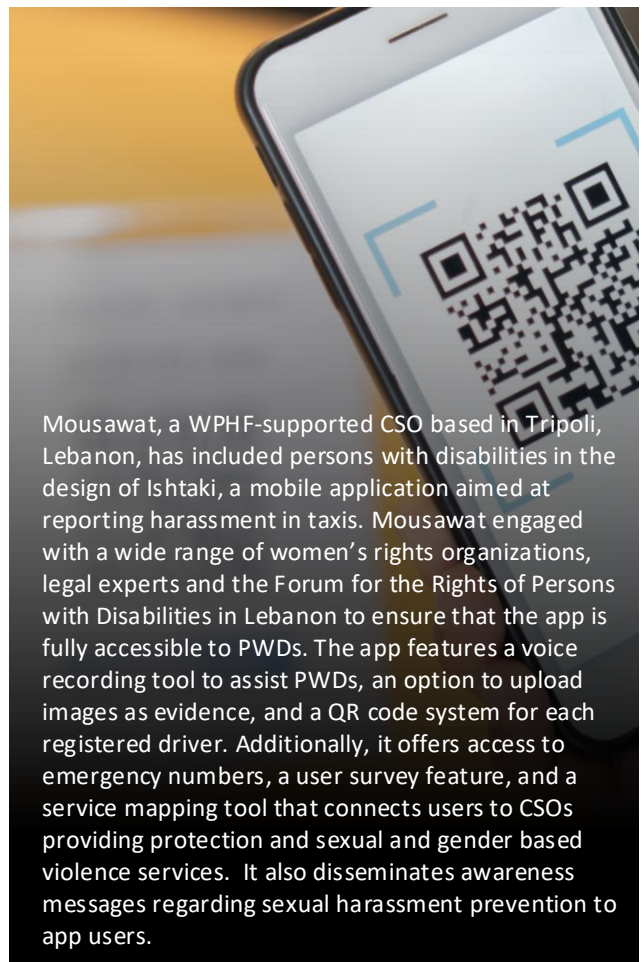
Support leadership of women with disabilities at national and international levels. While feminist movements are not necessarily inclusive, disability movements are not necessarily feminist. Women with disabilities are underrepresented in coordination mechanisms on disability matters and fewer women occupy decision-making positions in OPDs⁶. Increasing meaningful participation of women with disabilities of all ages and all forms of disability in leadership positions should be given attention in all humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives.

This should also go alongside opportunities for women with disabilities' leadership in education and political participation as a critical enabling factor before and after crises hit.

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018). "Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities."

6

Strengthen collaboration and partnerships between OPDs and VAWG actors. OPDs offer invaluable insights into the lived experiences of women with disabilities and solutions for meaningful change. Reciprocally, VAWG practitioners could provide support to OPDs to strengthen their capacities on preventing and responding to VAWG.



Mousawat, a WPHF-supported CSO based in Tripoli, Lebanon, has included persons with disabilities in the design of Ishtaki, a mobile application aimed at reporting harassment in taxis. Mousawat engaged with a wide range of women's rights organizations, legal experts and the Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon to ensure that the app is fully accessible to PWDs. The app features a voice recording tool to assist PWDs, an option to upload images as evidence, and a QR code system for each registered driver. Additionally, it offers access to emergency numbers, a user survey feature, and a service mapping tool that connects users to CSOs providing protection and sexual and gender based violence services. It also disseminates awareness messages regarding sexual harassment prevention to app users.

6.Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018). "Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities."

7

Co-design products, systems and services with OPDs and women with disabilities to ensure accessibility and mitigate risks of exacerbating existing inequalities. Consultation of women with disabilities is key to understand the gaps in emergency response, including in digital early warning system services and mobile applications.

8

Advocate for changes in law making: CSOs and humanitarian actors in general, play a critical role in influencing policy making, for example, ensuring that migration laws and refugee status procedures consider additional barriers faced by PWDs in terms of access to services, social attitudes and legal protection. In this regard, information on legal procedures and employment opportunities should be made accessible to refugees and IDPs with visual impairment or low levels of literacy.

9

Involve local authorities who are powerful changemakers at community level: OPDs and women's rights CSOs should participate in budget making to advice decision makers, so they put themselves in women and girls with disabilities' shoes and ensure that inclusion is factored in financial planning. It is especially important to connect women and girls with local decision-making processes to improve accessibility during and after conflicts. For example, women's rights CSOs can collaborate with local councils for the reintegration of PWDs into public life to offer physical and psychological rehabilitation and provide prosthetics, housing assistance and vocational training. Municipal childcare programmes providing care to children with disabilities for internally displaced parents are another example.



Fight for Right NGO developed a crowdfunding campaign on [GoFundMe](#) to support the evacuation of persons with disabilities from war-affected areas of Ukraine and elaborated inclusive evacuation protocols based on research and collecting testimonies and stories. These protocols were shared with other NGOs in Ukraine to enhance the transfer of knowledge and skill on how to provide disability inclusive emergency response.

RESOURCES

(by alphabetical order in English)

- **Accepting the challenge. Women with disabilities: for a life free of violence.** Montevideo. UN Women (2020). Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- **Addressing exclusion through intersectionality in rule of law, peace, and security context.** UN Women (2020). Available in [English](#).
- **Addressing stigma and discrimination to eliminate violence against women with disabilities: Lessons from Pakistan, Palestine, Republic of Moldova and Samoa.** UN Women (2024). Available in [English](#).
- **Amman-Berlin Declaration** (2025). Available in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- **Assessment of barriers and needs in receiving legal services by girls and women with disabilities Analytical report based on the research findings.** Fight for Right (2023). Available in [English](#).
- **Assessment of inclusive emergency response. Exploring the accessibility of temporary accommodation for internally displaced women with disabilities.** Fight for Right (2024), available in [English](#).
- **Assessment of Accessibility of Information and Notification during Crises and Humanitarian Response.** UNDP Ukraine, 2022. Available in [English](#) and [Ukrainian](#).
- **Disability and displacement, Ukraine's war impact on Moldova,** UNPRPD Fund, 2023. Available in [English](#).
- **Ending Sexual Harassment Against Women and Girls with Disabilities,** joint statement adopted by UN Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 2020. Available in [English](#).
- **Feminist Accessibility Protocol.** The Inclusive Generation Equality Collective (IGEC), 2022. Available in [English](#), [Spanish](#)
- **Gender and Disability Inclusive Budgeting: Issues and Policy Options.** UN Women, 2023. Available in [English](#).
- **Global Disability Inclusion Report: Accelerating Disability Inclusion in a Changing and Diverse World.** UNICEF (2025). Available in [English](#) and executive summary available in [Arabic](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) and [easy reading](#) version.
- **Knowledge compendium: Reflections on gender and disability inclusion in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.** UN Women (2025). Provides data on several crisis-affected countries such as Colombia, Haiti, Liberia, South Sudan, Ukraine. Available in [English](#).
- **Inclusive procurement checklist of the United Nations in Guatemala.** Available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- **Intersectionality resource guide and toolkit.** UN Women (2021). Available in [English](#).
- **Leadership potential of women with disabilities in Ukraine during the war.** Firght for right and Vox Populi (2025). Available in [English](#).
- **Manual for communication with deaf people.** Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) UN in Guatemala (2023). Available in [Spanish](#).
- **Meaningful Participation of Marginalized and Underrepresented Persons with Disabilities Guidance Note.** Global Disability Fund (2024). Available in [English](#). Includes an analysis of barriers to the participation of persons with intellectual disabilities and programme development checklists.
- **Rapid Assessment of the Experience of Evacuating People with Disabilities in Ukraine Due to the War: Study Report.** UNDP Ukraine (2022). Available in [English](#) and [Ukrainian](#).
- **Disability Inclusive Communications Guidelines.** United Nations (2021). Available in [English](#). Includes guidance to develop inclusive content for websites and social media and for respectful interactions in virtual and in person meetings, and for inclusive online data collection as well as a glossary with English, Arabic, French and Spanish terms.
- **Women with Disabilities Stigma Inventory.** UN Women Disability Inclusion and Intersectionality Portfolio and United Nations Development Programme (2024). Available in [English](#).
- **Working together to ensure the rights of girls with disabilities to live free from violence.** United Nations Children's Fund (2023). This inter-agency statement is available in [English](#).
- **30 years of Beijing Platform for Action: An intersectional approach to gender and disability inclusion.** UN Women (2025). Available in [English](#).