
Implementation of inclusive humanitarian assistance and safeguards for the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of current humanitarian reform processes

Issued by:

OHCHR

Deadline:

30 April 2026

Written by:

Ayla Qawas, Amman Center for Human Rights Studies

The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies thanks the United Nations and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the opportunity to provide an input for the preparation of the 2026 report on the implementation of inclusive humanitarian assistance and safeguards.

ACHRS welcomes this initiative and reaffirms the importance of ensuring that humanitarian action is grounded in international human rights standards, including the principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation, accessibility, and accountability. ACHRS further emphasizes that inclusive humanitarian assistance is not only a policy objective, but a legal obligation under international human rights law.

While the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) primarily focuses its advocacy and research within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the observations and recommendations articulated in this submission are intended to address global humanitarian reform processes and are applicable across diverse international contexts

I. General Observations

ACHRS notes that humanitarian crises, whether arising from armed conflict, climate change, natural disasters, or public health emergencies, continue to disproportionately affect individuals in situations of vulnerability. These include, *inter alia*, persons with disabilities, women and girls, older persons, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and marginalized communities.

ACHRS emphasizes that pre-existing inequalities are often exacerbated during crises, resulting in increased barriers to accessing essential services, protection mechanisms, and humanitarian assistance. Structural discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion significantly limit the ability of affected populations to respond to and recover from crises.

ACHRS further notes that while the humanitarian system has increasingly recognized the importance of inclusion, implementation remains inconsistent and fragmented. In many contexts, humanitarian responses continue to adopt a generalized approach that fails to adequately address diverse and intersectional needs.

ACHRS stresses that inclusive humanitarian assistance must move beyond commitments and be operationalized through concrete measures that ensure accessibility, meaningful participation, and effective accountability at all stages of humanitarian response, including preparedness, response, and recovery.

II. Legal and Policy Framework

ACHRS recalls that inclusive humanitarian assistance is firmly grounded in international human rights law.

ACHRS notes that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are enshrined in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). These principles are further elaborated in the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), which guarantee a broad range of rights applicable in humanitarian contexts.

ACHRS emphasizes the importance of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), particularly Article 11, which requires States Parties to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies.

ACHRS further notes the relevance of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), which obliges States to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas, including during crises.

In addition, ACHRS highlights the importance of the [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#), which provide a framework for the protection of IDPs, as well as the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [Global Compact on Refugees](#), both of which emphasize inclusive, rights-based approaches to humanitarian action.

ACHRS notes that despite the existence of these frameworks, their effective implementation remains limited. Gaps persist between normative commitments and practice, particularly in ensuring accessibility, participation, and accountability.

III. Key Challenges in Implementation

ACHRS identifies several persistent challenges that hinder the implementation of inclusive humanitarian assistance:

1. Lack of disaggregated data

ACHRS notes that the absence of reliable, timely, and disaggregated data remains a major barrier to inclusion. Without data disaggregated by age, gender, disability, and other relevant characteristics, humanitarian actors are unable to accurately identify needs or design targeted interventions. This often results in the exclusion of the most at-risk groups. Specifically, there is a lack of standardized tools, such as the Washington Group Short Set of Questions, being used during rapid assessments to identify persons with disabilities.

2. Barriers to accessibility

ACHRS emphasizes that persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance. These include physical inaccessibility of shelters and distribution points, lack of accessible information formats, and absence of assistive technologies. ACHRS stresses that accessibility must be systematically integrated into all aspects of humanitarian programming. For example, essential wash facilities (WASH) are often built without ramps or handrails, effectively excluding persons with physical disabilities from basic hygiene services, failing to meet the accessibility standards outlined in the [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#).

3. Limited participation of affected populations

ACHRS notes that affected populations are frequently treated as passive recipients of aid rather than active participants. Mechanisms for participation are often limited, tokenistic, or inaccessible to marginalized groups. ACHRS emphasizes that meaningful participation is critical to ensuring humanitarian responses are responsive and effective. Affected populations and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are often excluded from the Humanitarian Cluster System and decision-making 'tables', leading to aid that does not meet actual requirements. Funding should be specifically earmarked for OPDs to cover the overhead costs of participating in these coordination mechanisms.

4. Gender inequality and protection risks

ACHRS highlights that women and girls face disproportionate risks during humanitarian crises, including gender-based violence, exploitation, and limited access to essential services. ACHRS notes that humanitarian responses often fail to adequately integrate gender-sensitive and protection-focused approaches. Issues observed include the lack of private, accessible distribution lines for women with disabilities, which increases their exposure to protection risks and harassment, contravening the safety and dignity standards established under the [IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action](#).

5. Weak accountability mechanisms

ACHRS notes that accountability mechanisms remain insufficient in many humanitarian contexts. Complaint and feedback systems are often inaccessible, poorly communicated, or ineffective. This limits the ability of affected populations to raise concerns and seek remedies. ACHRS has noted that feedback boxes are often placed at heights unreachable for wheelchair users, or instructions are provided only in written text, representing a failure to implement Commitment 4 of the [Core Humanitarian Standard \(CHS\) on Quality and Accountability](#) regarding accessible communication.

6. Insufficient funding for inclusive approaches

ACHRS emphasizes that inclusive programming is frequently underfunded. Donor priorities do not consistently reflect the importance of inclusion, and dedicated resources for accessibility and targeted interventions remain limited.

IV. Good practices

ACHRS notes that despite these challenges, several good practices have emerged:

ACHRS highlights the importance of community-based approaches, which involve local communities and representative organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, in the design and implementation of humanitarian responses.

ACHRS further notes the effectiveness of the twin-track approach, which combines targeted interventions for specific groups with broader efforts to mainstream inclusion across all programming. A successful application of this includes providing specific assistive devices (targeted) while simultaneously ensuring all distribution centers are built using Universal Design (mainstreaming).

ACHRS emphasizes the value of capacity-building initiatives for humanitarian actors, which enhance understanding of inclusion and strengthen implementation of rights-based approaches.

ACHRS also notes the role of accessible technologies in improving communication and service delivery, particularly when designed with inclusivity in mind.

ACHRS highlights the importance of localization, including strengthening the role of local and grassroots actors, which contributes to more sustainable and context-specific responses.

V. Recommendations

ACHRS respectfully submits the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen implementation of international human rights obligations

ACHRS calls on States and humanitarian actors to ensure the full and effective implementation of existing legal frameworks, particularly those related to equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion.

2. Ensure meaningful participation

ACHRS emphasizes that affected populations, particularly marginalized groups, must be actively involved in all stages of humanitarian response, including planning, implementation, and evaluation.

3. Improve data collection and analysis

ACHRS calls for increased investment in the collection and use of disaggregated data to inform inclusive humanitarian programming.

4. Promote accessibility

ACHRS stresses that all humanitarian services, infrastructure, and information must be accessible to all individuals, including through the application of universal design principles.

5. Integrate gender-responsive and protection approaches

ACHRS calls for the systematic integration of gender-sensitive and protection-focused measures, including safeguards against gender-based violence.

6. Strengthen accountability mechanisms

ACHRS emphasizes the need for accessible, transparent, and effective complaint and monitoring systems.

7. Increase funding for inclusive humanitarian action

ACHRS calls on donors to allocate dedicated resources for inclusive programming and to require reporting on inclusion outcomes.

8. Support local and grassroots organizations

ACHRS emphasizes the importance of providing financial and technical support to local actors, particularly those representing marginalized communities.

9. Adopt IASC guidelines

Call on all humanitarian actors to fully adopt and monitor the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action to move from policy to practice.

VI. Conclusion

ACHRS reiterates that inclusive humanitarian assistance is essential to ensuring the protection and promotion of human rights in situations of crisis. While progress has been made at the normative level, significant gaps remain in implementation.

ACHRS calls on States, international organizations, and humanitarian actors to take concrete, sustained, and measurable steps to ensure that humanitarian responses are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all individuals, without discrimination.