



Global Shelter Cluster
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter

Disability inclusion in shelter and settlements programming

**BASELINE MAPPING REPORT
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

JULY 2019



Acknowledgements

The Baseline Mapping on Disability Inclusion in Shelter and Settlement Programming was commissioned by Australian Red Cross on behalf of the Global Shelter Cluster Working Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Shelter and Settlements. This report was researched and written by Emma Pearce (Gender and Inclusion Consultant) with support and contributions from Victoria Bannon (Humanitarian Consulting Pty Ltd), Leeanne Marshall (Australian Red Cross), Mina Mojtahedi (IFRC), Kavita Brahmhatt (IOM), Kirstie Farmer (NRC) and Boshra Khoshnevis (IOM). The complementary Literature Review on Disability Inclusion in Shelter and Settlement Programming was led by Victoria Bannon (Humanitarian Consulting Pty Ltd) and is referenced throughout this report.

The consultants and Working Group thank all the individuals and organizations who contributed their time, expertise and recommendations to this research. Special thanks to staff from Habitat for Humanity Fiji, Solidarite International Lebanon and IOM South Sudan who supported the development of the accompanying case studies on disability inclusion in shelter and settlement programming

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) Working Group on *Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in shelter and settlements programming* was set up to build on existing work addressing vulnerability factors to integrate a wider and more systematic approach to disability inclusion in the sector. It also aims to support more general inclusion mainstreaming as prioritized by the GSC Strategy 2018 – 2022. To begin this process in 2019, the Working Group undertook a Baseline Mapping of how disability mainstreaming and inclusion is currently addressed within the sector. The Baseline Mapping included review of published literature and project documents, key informant interviews and an online questionnaire.

Over 100 relevant documents were reviewed, with a focus on an in-depth analysis of the key literature. A total of 20 key informant interviews (KII) were conducted with members of the GSC representing largely global technical advisors and (co)chairs of working groups and communities of practice. Forty questionnaire responses were received (40% female, 55% male, 5% no answer). Almost 70% (27 out of 40) of respondents worked for organizations with dedicated shelter and settlement programming at country (60%), regional (22%) and global levels (18%). Sixty percent of these respondents were a member of a country coordination mechanism or working group at the time of completing the questionnaire. Among these respondents, 23 had previous experience working on shelter and settlement programming in humanitarian contexts with four respondents acting as a focal point on disability within their organization.

Findings

Nearly all key informants reported that high-level organizational policies and strategies articulate commitments to non-discrimination and reaching “vulnerable groups”, occasionally with explicit references to persons with disabilities and their households. **Very few shelter and settlement organizations and agencies have dedicated policies or strategies relating to disability inclusion.**

Where these do exist, there is a gap in organizational monitoring and reporting in implementing disability policies in the shelter and settlement sectors.

The literature review revealed that the majority of shelter sector guidance and tools addressing disability inclusion relate to technical designs for shelters and other physical adaptations, with comparatively few addressing the broader program considerations around targeting, information and communication, consultation and other aspects of inclusiveness. **The literature tended to focus on issues of physical mobility rather than a broader understanding of disability.**

Across all data sources – that is, literature reviewed, key informants and questionnaire respondents – persons with disabilities are considered a vulnerable group for targeting of shelter and settlement programming, with 95% of questionnaire respondents reporting that disability is one of the criteria used for targeting services and assistance in their programs.

However, key informants also report that the generic assumption of vulnerability presents challenges to prioritization in resource limited settings. **There is a need to better recognize the shelter and settlement risk factors, as well as skills and capacities, which may make persons with disabilities more or less vulnerable to protection concerns.** As such, vulnerability assessments could be a strategic entry point for strengthening analysis of protection risks, linkages to shelter and settlement programming, and prioritized targeting of persons with disabilities in emergencies.



Approximately 58% and 39% of questionnaire respondents reported adapting shelter and settlement activities and community decision-making processes respectively to include persons with disabilities and care-givers. Across both the KIIs and questionnaires, the adaptations described most commonly addressed environmental barriers. Such examples were ramps and hand-rails on infrastructure, positioning homes close to facilities, and engaging committees to support non-food item distributions to persons with disabilities and their families. **Far fewer examples are available on inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making.** However, KII brought forth isolated examples of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) being engaged in the design of context-specific guidance for shelter clusters, and construction staff directly consulting with persons with disabilities on the prototype design and testing for latrines, bridges and other infrastructure.

Questionnaire responses indicate that **shelter and settlement actors perceive the biggest barriers to inclusion are the attitudes of family and community members, and not being linked to community decision-making processes, particularly for women and girls with disabilities.** The vast majority (over 90%) of shelter and settlement actors recognize that persons with intellectual disabilities have specific shelter and settlement needs, with stigma being the most significant barrier to including this group in their work. This was aligned with information from key informants who consistently reported that **reaching this group and addressing their needs was a significant gap across the sector, most commonly due to a lack of staff time and resources for tailored interventions** with linkages to protection. The literature also revealed a general absence of policy or technical measures to address the full range of disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, and also reflected limited engagement with care-givers and representative organizations.

Across all types of programming questionnaire respondents perceive that cash and voucher assistance activities have very low levels of inclusion. The literature also reflected limited guidance and tools on this topic. One key informant elaborated that providing cash and vouchers, particularly for housing reconstruction, may disadvantage persons with disabilities who require added adaptations to their homes and / or more technical support than is currently available in these programs. Over half (57%) of respondents that completed the question on different types of settlement programming perceive that upgrading infrastructure is somewhat inclusive. This was reinforced by key informants who frequently reported adapting infrastructure in later phases of responses for persons with disabilities.

While many actors are integrating questions on disability into assessments and evaluations (78% of questionnaire respondents), also reflected in the literature review, only 50% of questionnaire respondents reported using disability-disaggregated data at activity levels for monitoring and reporting purposes. Only one organization shared evaluations that explored the intersection between disability and household vulnerability in their shelter program, by disaggregating and analyzing shelter data by disability, and conducting specific group discussions with persons with disabilities. **It is not clear from the Baseline Mapping how shelter and settlement actors are using disability-disaggregated activity data and / or findings from evaluations to adapt their programs and activities.**

While the literature encourages the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability for data disaggregation purposes, the KII and questionnaire responses indicated limited experience in using it. However, these same actors expressed concern about the time, cost and utility of these questions in emergency contexts. There are examples of adapting these questions to integrate them into household surveys, for example, by asking only the head-of-household rather than each individual in the household.

The literature review offered limited guidance on inclusiveness for different types of disabilities. Indeed, **shelter and settlement actors, in both questionnaires and KIIs, requested more information on types of disabilities and their related needs and approaches to foster participation and engagement of persons with disabilities in decision-making.** A small number of key informants highlighted that there is no consistent approach to data disaggregation and analysis between organizations and agencies, presenting challenges for global tracking of progress on disability inclusion across the sector. However, shelter and settlement

actors are already using a range of strategies to identify persons with disabilities in the community. As such, questionnaire respondents perceive that capacity development on data disaggregation and analysis is less important to affect change in their programming, with them instead wanting more information on the topics mentioned above. **Shelter and settlement actors would also like guidance, tools and resources, which is contextually appropriate and tailored to their country of operation, as well as technical advice to support at field levels** to promote greater disability inclusion in their work.

Shelter and settlement actors report a range of challenges to tailoring activities to the specific needs of persons with disabilities in the emergency phases:

- Standardization of non-food item distribution lists and shelter designs;
- Size and rapid nature of shelter and settlement responses;
- Funding is largely tied to number of structures and / or items distributed in short time period; and,
- Limited community consultation in general; and,
- The wide range of actors involved in activities, including temporary contractors, which limits sustainable capacity development opportunities.

Concerns were raised about being able to effectively respond to the wide range of cross-cutting issues emerging across the sector, highlighting the **need for more detailed analysis of the skill sets** (e.g. communication, case management, community consultation) **and composition** (e.g. social workers, gender and inclusion advisors) **of shelter and settlement teams required to deliver tailored and integrated approaches**. Many actors consulted see protection mainstreaming or safe programming frameworks as a vehicle for strengthening disability inclusion in emergency phases, with support from protection colleagues in field-level implementation.





KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages seek to strengthen disability inclusion across the sector globally and are aligned with the priorities raised by shelter and settlement actors in the Baseline Mapping.

SHELTER CLUSTERS

Strengthen Vulnerability Assessment Tools – Vulnerability assessments should identify the different needs of women, men, girls and boys with different types of disabilities, as well as the skills, capacities and resources of individuals and households when targeting of shelter services and assistance.

Support the Development of Context-Specific Guidance and Tools – Bring ministry staff, shelter actors, disability organizations and even communities together to develop contextually adapted guidance, complete with infrastructure designs and risk analysis tools, at field levels.

Strengthen national shelter systems – Explore opportunities to institutionalize universal design within government regulations and accredited training programs during preparedness and recovery phases.

Advocate to Donors to Invest in Disability Inclusion – Meeting the needs of persons with disabilities in large-scale emergency responses requires very tailored and integrated approaches, which takes added staff time and resources to deliver. As such, donors should be called upon to match their commitments to disability inclusion across all sectors with adequate support to shelter and settlement programs, so that they can deliver a quality response that reflects the diversity of the affected community.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Strengthen monitoring and reporting on disability inclusion – to identify who is and is not getting reached, and the strengths and weaknesses of programs – a critical step in accountability.

- Include technical support on disability inclusion in response plans and proposals and at cluster-levels in appeals.
- Include questions on disability and consult with persons with disabilities in shelter evaluations, so that over time we can learn more about effective strategies and approaches in disability inclusion in shelter and settlement programming.
- Integrate approaches for consultation with and questions about persons with disabilities into standardized post-distribution monitoring and reporting processes and tools.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT ACTORS

Disability inclusion is a component of good shelter programming, and helps us to address the needs of a wider community, while ensuring that we “do no harm”.

In preparedness and recovery phases, work with other sectors (most commonly the WASH,



communicating with communities and protection sectors), local OPDS and disability service providers, as well as government partners to:

- Outreach to and consult with OPDs at country levels to build an understanding of their specific skills, capacities and priorities in humanitarian response. Such organizations can play a role in sensitizing staff on disability inclusion, contribute to development of context-specific approaches and designs, and act as an information hub for persons with disabilities in an emergency.
- Establish criteria for inclusion of persons with disabilities and their care-givers community-decision making structures and processes, including training which enhances capacities (and in turn reduces risk).
- Adapt standardized non-food item (NFI) catalogues and infrastructure designs in partnership with persons with disabilities to ensure that context-appropriate options are available in an emergency.

In the emergency phase, shelter and settlement actors can:

- Adapt risk analysis and mitigation tools (e.g. contextual analysis, post-distribution and quality assurance monitoring) to include questions and actions with a particular focus on breaking down isolation and ensuring the dignity of persons with disabilities and their care-givers.
- Integrate case studies on persons with disabilities into standard training packages relating to core shelter & settlement programming, highlighting the intersection with quality programming and risk mitigation.
- Seek technical support for disability inclusion, through protection colleagues, operational partnerships with disability-specific organizations and / or deployed experts.
- Plan for inclusive recovery by integrating disability into needs assessments and engaging OPDs in planning processes.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT DONORS

Effectively responding to the shelter and settlement needs of women, men, girls and boys with disabilities, their care-givers and family members requires tailored interventions – The diversity of persons with disabilities and their families requires integrated and individualized approaches.

- Invest in the shelter and settlement staff required to deliver this type of tailored response.
- Support integrated shelter and settlement activities, particularly those that have a coherent model for identifying and responding to protection and WASH needs of persons with disabilities and their families.
- Ask shelter and settlement partners to report on the quality of interventions, including how they consulted with persons with disabilities about their needs and adapted their activities.



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