



# THE VOICE OF REFUGEES WITH DISABILITIES

Recommendations for  
Development Cooperation in Jordan



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The views in this report represent the views of the author alone.





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# Introduction

Around the world, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by forced displacement, facing heightened risks and systemic barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance, protection, and long-term solutions. Whether due to conflict, climate change, or economic crises, displacement exacerbates existing inequalities, leaving many without essential services, assistive devices, caregivers, or accessible information.

Yet, despite these challenges, refugees with disabilities are often forgotten – there is limited research and attention to this group, they are rarely connected to local advocacy networks, and their concerns are insufficiently integrated and mainstreamed into development programming.

In the lead-up to the Global Disability Summit 2025, displacement and refugee-specific concerns have received limited attention. A global consultation with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) revealed that these topics were largely absent, suggesting that refugees were not adequately consulted in the discussions shaping global disability policy.

To bridge this gap, the HEROES project, in collaboration with local consultants on disability inclusion, conducted participatory consultations with refugees with disabilities and caregivers across Central and Northern Jordan between January and March 2025. Overall, 60 refugees with disabilities and 5 caregivers participated in the consultations. Participants represented caregivers of children with physical disabilities and children with

intellectual disabilities, and persons with disabilities of different age groups between 18 – 60 years old, with different impairments (visual, hearing, physical) and living in different regions of Jordan; Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, and Jerash Camp.

These discussions provided valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by refugees with disabilities and generated a set of actionable recommendations for stakeholders in the host communities. Below these challenges and recommendations are presented, concluding with 11 key actions that development cooperation actors can adopt to enhance disability inclusion in Jordan.





# Challenges that Face Refugees with Disabilities & Recommendations:

## Access to Information

Access to information is a fundamental right that enables persons with disabilities to make informed decisions, claim their rights, and participate in the community through obtaining, understanding, and using relevant information in a timely and accessible format. For refugees with disabilities, access to information is crucial for navigating available services, understanding their rights, and engaging with the community.



### Challenges

- Information is not sufficiently provided in accessible formats, and there is limited awareness about services, particularly for refugees with hearing disabilities. Communication often relies solely on phone calls or text messages, which are not always accessible.
- Social media communication does not account for accessibility for all persons, including illiterate persons.
- The networks between refugees with disabilities and the local associations and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are limited and informal and rely on individual efforts. This reduces the chances of refugees with disabilities accessing information and reaching community-based services.
- Many organizations provide services, but access to information remains inconsistent and fragmented since there is no specific platform to ensure consistent access. That makes participation in disability-related

projects depend on the implementing organization, leading to unequal access to opportunities.



### Recommendations

- Establish an inclusive, accessible reporting and information system, considering accessible formats such as audio-visual messages with sign language interpretation.
- Develop a WhatsApp channel with all service providers, including sub-groups categorized by service type, taking accessibility into consideration.
- Strengthen networking among refugee groups across governorates to share information and experiences and connect with local Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).
- Train refugees with disabilities on how to access information and approach service providers independently.
- Activate the role of local committees to disseminate information and ensure they are trained on disability issues and accessibility.





## Quality of Life & Independence

Quality of life and independence refer to the ability of persons with disabilities to live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in the community. This includes access to all services such as healthcare, education, employment, community life, and the right to receive the necessary support to achieve self-reliance. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes independent living as a fundamental right (Article 19), emphasizing the need for accessible services, assistive devices, and equal opportunities.



### Challenges

- Limited access to specialized healthcare, particularly for refugees who require specialized one.
- Inadequate rehabilitation programs that enhance independent living.
- Lack of training for refugees with disabilities and their caregivers on using and maintaining assistive devices.
- Parents with disabilities face difficulties accessing services, with limited support programs for both parents and children.
- Lack of training for mothers with disabilities to help them interact with their children and help their children to be independent and ready to participate in the community.
- Families face challenges in enrolling their children with disabilities in schools due to the unavailability of inclusive schools nearby and the inability to afford private education.

- Most training programs fail to consider accessibility requirements, such as sign language interpretation.
- Training venues are often inaccessible for persons who use wheelchairs.
- Lack of vocational training and job opportunities for refugees with disabilities.
- Refugees with disabilities, even those with significant skills, face unfair wages and high work permit costs in the private sector.



### Recommendations

- Establish an accessible system for informing refugees with disabilities about medical services and rehabilitation programs.
- Ensure equal participation in training programs by considering conducting the training/sessions in accessible venues.
- Focus on training for daily life skills, including essential skills like eating, drinking, and personal hygiene.
- Emphasize the quality and proper use of assistive devices through training and maintenance programs.
- Include psychological support and awareness services for all family members and working to gain support and advocacy among family members, as it helps the family overcome social barriers and contributes in particular to supporting women with disabilities to engage in awareness and training programs.
- Train mothers on child protection, independence, and avoiding overprotection.
- Provide specialized programs on sexual and

reproductive health and self-care, and programs such as bladder management.

- Implement programs for empowering women with disabilities.
- Promote literacy, computer, English language, and sign language training.
- Share information about inclusive education and accessible schools for refugee children with disabilities.
- Develop vocational training based on individual interests, supporting refugees' financial independence.
- Promote vocational programs for women with disabilities, particularly home-based work and small businesses.
- Provide training on developing home-based businesses, including marketing, technology use, feasibility studies, and business planning.
- Create opportunities for recreational and sports activities to promote social inclusion beyond medical and psychological support.
- Develop mechanisms to gather feedback and suggestions from refugees with disabilities to enhance their quality of life.
- Establish an identification card system for refugees with disabilities to facilitate access to services and accurate data collection.





## Active Participation in the community

Active participation, as ensured in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), highlights the right of persons with disabilities to be actively involved in decision-making processes and community life on an equal basis with others.

Participation fosters inclusion, self-development, and empowerment, enabling persons to contribute to the community and advocate for their rights.



### Challenges

- Limited awareness among refugees with disabilities about available training programs and difficulties accessing them.
- Registration forms (e.g., Kobo) are not disability-friendly or accessible for all individuals.
- Refugees with hearing disabilities face exclusion due to the lack of sign language interpreters.
- Refugees with disabilities often lack awareness of their rights and how to claim them.
- Refugees with disabilities require support programs to obtain family advocacy for community participation.
- Refugee families often do not provide adequate support for persons with disabilities to participate in community activities.
- Cultural and family barriers hinder women with disabilities from participating in programs.



### Recommendations

- Develop an accessible information and reporting system, including audio-visual messages with sign language interpretation and a disability-friendly hotline for feedback and complaints.
- Promote awareness through social media campaigns highlighting the value of participation of refugees with disabilities.
- Ensure psychosocial support programs for refugees with disabilities to emphasize the importance of participation to challenge stereotypes.
- Engage activists with disabilities from host communities to encourage the participation of refugees with disabilities.
- Foster family support networks to build confidence and promote active participation.
- Implement comprehensive empowerment programs for women with disabilities, covering daily life independence, sexual and reproductive health education, self-advocacy, and family support.
- Provide specialized training on empowering refugees with disabilities, focusing on the legal aspect and the rights of persons with disabilities, and motivating them to take responsibility, and develop their capabilities by attending training, participating in community activities, and working to gain advocacy from the surrounding community.
- Facilitate regular dialogue between organizations supporting disability inclusion and refugees with disabilities to identify challenges, evaluate programs, and discuss suggestions.
- Promote self-learning programs and access to educational resources for capacity building.







## Empowerment & Leadership Roles

Empowerment and leadership enable refugees with disabilities to take control of their lives, advocate for their rights, and actively contribute to their communities. True inclusion goes beyond receiving services—it requires meaningful participation in decision-making processes and leadership roles.



### Challenges

- Refugees with disabilities lack awareness about available services related to independence programs and empowerment opportunities, relying solely on service providers.
- Refugees with disabilities have limited opportunities to build on the experiences of persons with disabilities in the host community as peers and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).
- Lack of empowerment and leadership training programs for refugees with disabilities.
- There are limited leadership development initiatives encouraging active community engagement.
- Women with disabilities face significant challenges in assuming leadership roles.
- Capacity-building programs depend on organizations' (service providers) projects and often refugees with disabilities are not consulted.



### Recommendations

- Promote inspirational stories of activists with disabilities to motivate refugees and highlight successful advocacy efforts.

- Develop awareness programs emphasizing the role of refugees with disabilities as partners, not just service recipients, enhancing ownership and partnership.
- Share information about local Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) with refugee communities.
- Establish collaboration mechanisms between refugee and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).
- Engage host community members with disabilities in training programs to inspire refugee peers' participation and build confidence.
- Form peer support groups to exchange experiences and encourage leadership among refugees with disabilities.
- Provide training that enhances the personal strength of refugees with disabilities and training programs on leadership roles and the importance of refugees with disabilities having a leadership role in raising awareness among refugees without disabilities so that they can be advocates and supporters of the disability issue.
- Organize peer and family support groups to promote problem-solving and mutual encouragement.
- Ensure raising awareness among women with disabilities and involving them in training that enables them to demonstrate their ability to support the family and the community, and that women with disabilities need to be consulted on the provided programs and training.
- Train refugees with disabilities, including women with disabilities, as trainers on topics such as effective communication and rights-based approaches aligned with the CRPD.

These recommendations aim to create an inclusive environment where refugees with disabilities can access information, services, and opportunities while promoting independence, participation, and having a leadership role within the communities.

# Key Actions & Commitments for Development Cooperation Actors



Based on the challenges and recommendations shared by refugees with disabilities in the various focus group discussions, the authors have identified key actionable recommendations. The recommendations below outline concrete steps that development cooperation can commit to and implement to create a more equitable and just environment for all.



## Ensuring inclusive & equitable access to information

Emphasize the importance of inclusive and accessible information for refugees with disabilities, ensuring that information is available in accessible formats that consider all persons with disabilities, older persons, and illiterate individuals.



## Enhancing the well-being & inclusion activities for refugees with disabilities

Promote programs aimed at improving the quality of life of refugees with disabilities, particularly those focused on independence in performing daily life activities, home-based rehabilitation, and intervention programs that mitigate the secondary effects of disability, especially for recent disabilities resulting from wars or accidents, for whom or their families have no prior experience with disability.

Furthermore, since most intervention programs for refugees focus on medical rehabilitation and psychosocial support, it is recommended that recreational programs or activities, such as sports activities, be implemented to help refugees with disabilities break the daily routine and spend time outside rehabilitation centers or homes.



## Strengthening protection, reproductive Health, & empowerment programs for refugee women with disabilities

It is essential to implement comprehensive protection measures, reproductive health services, and empowerment programs tailored for refugee women with disabilities. Refugee women with disabilities face many challenges, including barriers to accessing healthcare, risks of gender-based violence, and social exclusion. Therefore, efforts should focus on ensuring safe and inclusive healthcare services, specialized sexual and reproductive health support, and accessible education and vocational training opportunities. Strengthening legal protections, providing psychosocial support, and fostering community engagement are also crucial in promoting their rights, well-being, and independence.



## Enhancing long-term intervention of healthcare & therapeutic services

Healthcare and therapeutic services need to be prioritized to improve the quality of life for refugees with disabilities, ensuring they receive essential medical care, rehabilitation, and support to lead independent and dignified lives. Many refugees face significant health challenges, particularly those who have acquired disabilities due to war, trauma, or accidents, making immediate medical care and rehabilitation crucial. Efforts should focus on providing accessible healthcare facilities, long-term therapeutic and health services, and inclusive support systems to effectively address physical and mental health needs through coordination between healthcare providers, OPDs, and organizations to ensure sustainability.



## Ensuring comprehensive psychosocial support for families

Ensure that psychosocial support services include parents, siblings, especially for recent disabilities resulting from wars or accidents, who or their families have no prior experience about disability to help them overcome psychological trauma, navigate social situations, and adopt proactive measures to ensure the empowerment and active participation of refugees with disabilities in all aspects of life. Priority should be given to psychological intervention programs that

empower women with disabilities, ensuring their active and equal participation.



## Building community-based inclusive support networks of refugees with disabilities & persons with disabilities at host the community

Establish groups of refugees with disabilities and their families to create safe spaces for psychosocial support, information sharing, and experience exchange. These groups can serve as the foundation for future OPDs. Additionally, include persons with disabilities from the host community in training programs targeting refugees with disabilities. Involving persons with disabilities as service providers fosters trust, safety, and self-advocacy among refugee persons with disabilities.



## Strengthening the advocacy & empowerment programs for refugees with disabilities

Provide diverse, high-quality programs that promote advocacy among refugees with disabilities, ensuring the participation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), such as developing impactful success stories that emphasize the role of refugees with disabilities as agents of change. Besides providing training in





leadership skills, computer literacy, teamwork, and support for self-learning. As well as providing specialized training of trainers for refugees with disabilities on rights-based approaches, peer counseling, accessibility and reasonable accommodations, and sports programs.



### **Strengthening educational, vocational training, & employment services/ opportunities**

Emphasize academic programs, vocational training, home-based projects, and employment-related skills (such as CV writing, negotiation skills, developing business plans etc.) to reinforce the ability factor. Additionally, raise awareness about accessibility and necessary accommodations. Regarding employment, the available opportunities based on the specific allocated sector for refugees, such as construction work and agriculture, should be based on an inclusive approach that includes refugees with disabilities, taking the necessary accommodation into account.



### **Establishing an identification card system for refugees with disabilities**

Following the Jordanian experience with the Disability Card, it is recommended that relevant entities provide a similar identification card for refugees with disabilities. This card can provide

an accessible mechanism for all refugees with disabilities to access service-related information. The absence of an identification platform deprives many individuals of knowing about available services and programs. Since projects by organizations and service providers may vary in duration, it is proposed that a responsible entity be designated to update the platform or card's services. Partner organizations promote the service while service providers register their services on this platform.



### **Holding regular participatory meetings with refugees with disabilities**

Conduct regular meetings between organizations and refugees with disabilities to consult with them, identify challenges, and determine ways to address them. Additionally, ensure the representation of refugees with disabilities in project planning meetings.



### **Implementing awareness training for children of parents with disabilities**

Implement specialized training programs for children of parents with disabilities to raise their awareness about disability, promote positive attitudes, and challenge societal misconceptions. These programs should emphasize the importance of inclusion, respect for diversity, and the rights of persons with disabilities, fostering a supportive family and community environment.







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