



RECOMMENDATION NOTE for HUMANITARIAN ACTORS on INCLUSION of REFUGEES with DISABILITIES in the UKRAINE REFUGEE RESPONSE | HUNGARY

Introduction.

Forced displacement disproportionately affects persons with disabilities, as they are often at higher risk of violence and exploitation, face barriers in accessing basic services, and risk exclusion from education and livelihood opportunities. The inclusion of refugees with disabilities is, therefore, an essential part of humanitarian programming and a joint responsibility of humanitarian actors, working closely with government departments.

Within the framework of the United Nations, key terms are defined as follows:

Persons with disabilities: individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. [[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Art. 1](#)]

Disability inclusion: meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work of the Organization, the development of disability-specific programs, and the consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [[UN Disability Strategy](#)].

This note compiles recommendations, insights, and selected tools and resource material gathered from various sources, such as Hungarian organizations of persons with disabilities and UNHCR inclusion experts; it also includes results of monitoring activities with refugees conducted by partners of the Refugee Coordination Forum in 2022 and 2023. It was reviewed by the Disability Department of the Hungarian Ministry of Interior, organizations of persons with disabilities, working groups, and other stakeholders.

Snapshot of Vulnerabilities of Refugees with Disabilities in Hungary.

Based on [UNHCR Protection Analysis #2](#) (April 2023), at the regional level across five countries in Europe including Hungary, refugee households with individuals having specific needs face socio-economic vulnerability and increased protection risks.

Extended displacement increases the vulnerability of refugees with disabilities, impacting their resilience and resources to cope during the displacement and exposing them to further protection risks. The lack of systematic identification procedures in host countries also hinders their access to rights under the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).

Approximately 22% of households surveyed reported having family members with disabilities or serious medical conditions. These households face obstacles in accessing healthcare, with 39% reporting difficulties primarily due to long waiting times.

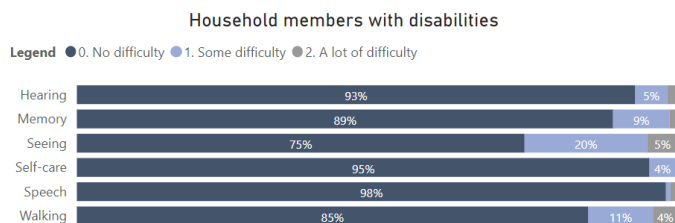
A higher proportion of households with a person with a disability lack their biometric passport (27%) compared to other households surveyed. Persons with disabilities may encounter difficulties replacing missing documentation due to various factors, such as limited access to relevant services.

Households with a person with a disability tend to live in collective sites (24%) or government hostels (12%) rather than rented accommodation, indicating limited financial resources. Accessing suitable, long-term housing adapted to their needs is challenging due to prejudice against individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Households having a member/s with a disability have lower employment rates (21%) compared to others (34%), indicating a lack of suitable job options accommodating their circumstances and caregiving duties. This limited labor market access contributes to difficulties in meeting basic needs, with a substantial proportion (94%) requiring immediate healthcare, material assistance, and food support.

In addition, according to the [Hungary Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment 2022](#), interviewed refugees reported mobility and sensorial difficulties as follows:

For households with one or more members with a disability, the need for medicines in Hungary was higher (fourth place) compared to other refugee households. Disability, older age, or serious medical conditions were also mentioned by respondents as the third most common reason for family separation from Ukraine, which affects more than half of the households interviewed.



Recommendations on Inclusion of Refugees with Disabilities.

The following recommendations for humanitarian actors center around (1) Enhancing access to information, services, and facilities; (2) Collaborating with organizations led by persons with disabilities (OPD); (3) Fostering an inclusive organizational culture; and (4) Improving data collection. This list represents a selected set of recommendations and is not meant to be comprehensive.

R1. ACCESSIBILITY: Enhancing access to information, services, and facilities.

Accessibility, defined as the right to access information, communications, facilities, and services on an equal basis with others (Article 9 of the UN Convention on Disability), is a fundamental right. Collaboration between the government, Refugee Coordination Forum partners, and disability organizations is crucial to ensure accessibility. Prioritizing accessibility not only upholds broader rights but also prevents unfair barriers and discrimination, as every refugee, regardless of their disability, should have equal access to rights, protection, and services. To better understand the accessibility needs of refugees with disabilities and make necessary improvements, it is important to seek feedback from them directly. By designing programs with accessibility in mind, all refugees benefit, not just those with disabilities.

- **Consider different/alternative formats of information material**, such as sufficient color contrast, large font and spacing, plain language, easy-to-read versions, use of pictograms, documents in accessible formats like plain text, captions for video content, audio versions of written material, braille, sign language interpretation, relay interpreting channel, and transcript/audio captioning of online meetings. Consider running the Accessibility function in Microsoft Office.
- **Use inclusive language** in all communication and avoid stigmatizing or discriminatory language. Also, language should be clear, concise and plain, to make the content easily understandable and avoid jargon, technical terms, and complex sentence structures. Use bullet points, headings, and subheadings to organize information and make it easier to navigate or screen readers software for people with intellectual disabilities or neurodivergent people (differing in mental or neurological function from what is considered typical or normal; frequently used with reference to autistic spectrum disorders).
- **Ensure digital accessibility of websites and online media content**, providing alternative text for images, transcripts, or video captions, using proper heading structures, and ensuring keyboard accessibility. Consider assistive technology, such as screen readers or communication devices, like proper smartphones to help persons with disabilities access services and prioritize accessible document formats, when creating digital documents.
- Provide – where needed and feasible - **assistance services tailored to the need of the person** to access services, including support in activities of daily living or medication management, to complement national services and consider local personal assistance, accessible through the municipality’s social service at the place of residence or contact specialized organizations, e.g. the NGO [Freekey](#) to find possible solutions.

- **Offer flexible scheduling** of services, including outside of regular business hours or providing longer appointment times; plan transportation for refugees with disabilities, to complement public transport, especially in rural or less serviced areas.
- Make sure your **physical spaces are accessible** or can be adapted to individuals with different impairments: install (mobile) ramps, accessible elevators, and handrails, and ensure doorways and pathways are wide enough for wheelchair users, avoid thresholds at doors, consider [FM radios or induction loop](#) for refugees with hearing aids, provide at least one multilingual application for refugees with visual impairments so they can listen to the map of the building and services of the facility. Provide accessible parking spaces and contrast painting on the pavement, use tactile signs, and ensure that restroom facilities for persons with disabilities are operational. Plan for a quiet room for individuals with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.
- Plan for **reasonable accommodations (RA)**: RA implies making all necessary/appropriate modifications/adjustments to ensure that persons with disabilities exercise their human and fundamental rights on an equal basis with others. It requires engaging with refugees with disabilities through an interactive dialogue to identify possible solutions on architectural, information and technological barriers to services. Solutions should be achievable given the available resources, including financial, human resources, skills, time, etc. For more information: [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019](#).
- **Contingency planning and disaster risk reduction**: in preparation for large refugee influx or emergency evacuations, ensure that your planning considers the needs of persons with disabilities. This may include providing evacuation chairs or other devices for persons who cannot use stairs, and information on what will happen next with them. Ensure that early warning and preparedness systems, reception and admission processes, registration and documentation procedures, and other related measures are accessible and inclusive for all persons with disabilities.

Links to tools to improve information accessibility:

English: [Accessible Communications – Introduction \[EDF\] | ISO standard on plain language | Accessibility Checker - Microsoft Support | W3 Guidelines for digital accessibility | Handout 0 - Organizing accessible workshops UNHCR](#).

Hungarian: [NYOLC | EFOESZ | Sign language | Braille translation | Efiportal.hu](#).

Ukrainian: [The Strong People League | National Assembly of People with Disabilities of Ukraine](#).

Links to tools to improve facility accessibility in English: [FSZK](#).

R2. PARTNERSHIP: Partnering with organizations of persons with disabilities

Collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPD) strengthens the inclusivity of the humanitarian response, by accessing expertise, promoting inclusivity, building trust, and enhancing their impact, in respect of protection principles, in particular do no harm and meaningful participation. OPDs can provide valuable feedback and resources to help you enhance your services for people with disabilities and support as an expert third-party to conduct accessibility audits.

APHASIA	Aphasia Association - Hungary
ÉFOÉSZ	Hungarian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability
KAOSZ	National Association of Autistic People – Hungary
MEOSZ	National Federation of Associations of People with Physical Disabilities
MVGYOSZ	Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted
SINOSZ	Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
SVOE	Hungarian Deafblind Association

Humanitarian actors are encouraged to contact these associations at the planning stage of your activities to ensure advice can be as impactful as possible. For assistance in contacting these organizations, please do not hesitate to reach out to the contacts inserted at the end of the note.

R3. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: Fostering an inclusive organizational culture.

To promote inclusivity and support refugees with disabilities, organizations need to foster a culture that values diversity and inclusivity. This involves sensitizing staff at all levels and promoting disability awareness and open communication. By prioritizing inclusion, organizations can attract and retain staff with disabilities, drive innovation and creativity, and achieve positive outcomes for both the organization and the refugee community.

- **Staff capacity development:** organizations should invest in strengthening staff competence regarding disability inclusion and effective communication, by planning for disability awareness training to promote staff understanding of different disabilities, respectful language, and effective communication techniques and enabling them to provide inclusive services to refugees. Comprehensive training should be provided to staff involved in program design, implementation, and technical advisory services, ensuring a consistent human rights-based approach to disability. Involve organizations led by people with disabilities in these training courses (see training package: [Strengthening protection of persons with disabilities in forced displacement | UNHCR](#)).
- **Ensuring accountability:** organizations should monitor and evaluate their effectiveness by incorporating disability-related indicators. This allows them to assess the impact of their interventions, track progress, and measure the effect on the lives of people with disabilities. By collecting this information, organizations can make evidence-based decisions, identify gaps, and improve future responses, ultimately enhancing outcomes for individuals with disabilities.
- **Plan for financial resources** for both resourcing the recommendations reflected in the document. Tip sheets for inclusive budgeting can be found here: [Handout 11 – Inclusive Budgeting Tip Sheet | UNHCR](#); also organizations can explore the [European Social Fund](#) for compensations of accessibility measures.

R4. DATA COLLECTION.

Improving data collection on refugees with disabilities through assessments, surveys, and community engagement modalities, such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) is crucial for planning and assisting refugees with disabilities. It helps identify challenges, provide tailored assistance, promote inclusion, and address discrimination while advocating for their rights. While identifying refugees with disabilities or collecting data in relation to access to services and related barriers, it is important to take into consideration ethical elements, such as privacy, confidentiality and informed consent (of the refugees with disabilities and/or the caretakers); if needed, use supported decision making instead of guardianship. More information: [Támogatott döntéshozatal.pdf \(kormanyhivatal.hu\)](#). Use secure data storage and management systems and adhere to ethical guidelines and data protection regulations.

Disaggregation of Data: Collected and analyze data by disaggregating based on difficulty/ease in functioning, as part of the demographics. Include questions allowing individuals to self-identify as having a disability to capture a wider range of disabilities and avoid underestimation. Several tools are available:

- [Washington Group Short Set](#) and [Washington Group-UNICEF Module on Child Functioning](#);
- UNHCR: [Specific Needs Codes – Disability Guidance](#) ; [Specific Needs Codes – Disability Interview Guide](#) ; [Strengthening protection of persons with disabilities in forced displacement \(Module 5\)](#).

Disability-Inclusive Sampling: Use appropriate sampling techniques to ensure the representation of refugees with disabilities in the data collection process. Collaborate with disability-focused organizations, community leaders, and local networks of organizations led by persons with disability to identify and engage individuals with disabilities and ensure their meaningful participation in the surveys.

Inclusive Survey Design: Ensure that surveys/ data collection tools are designed in an accessible and inclusive way for people with disabilities. Consider using multiple data collection methods such as face-to-face interviews, phone surveys, or online questionnaires to accommodate different disabilities and communication preferences. Provide a comprehensive list of impairments and include an open-ended option for people to describe their preferences on support measures.

Intersectionality and Multidimensional Approach: Consider how disability intersects with other identities and experiences, such as gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Go beyond solely collecting data on the prevalence of disabilities. Include questions about the impact of disability on access to healthcare, education, employment, and social inclusion. Also, consider collecting data on intersectional factors, such as gender, age, and displacement status, to understand how these factors intersect with disability.

Conclusions.

Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities in humanitarian programming is crucial for promoting inclusivity and upholding the rights and dignity of all individuals. RCF partners have a significant role to play in improving the accessibility of services for refugees with disabilities. Collaboration with disability experts, organizations, and advocates is essential in designing and implementing inclusive humanitarian projects that align with the principles of disability rights and inclusion. Additionally, partnering with academic institutions, disability organizations, and research entities can provide valuable expertise and resources.

The note presents a comprehensive but not exhaustive set of recommendations to enhance accessibility, including the provision of accessible information, services, and facilities, reasonable accommodation as well as training and capacity building for staff and volunteers. By implementing these recommendations, humanitarian organizations can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment, empower persons with disabilities, and improve the overall effectiveness of their programs. It is crucial for these recommendations to be integrated into all stages of humanitarian initiatives, from planning to implementation and evaluation, to make accessibility a fundamental aspect of all activities.

To effectively address the unique needs and challenges faced by refugees with disabilities, a comprehensive approach is necessary. This approach emphasizes establishing close cooperation among service providers, disability organizations, and government agencies to ensure the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of recommended solutions, particularly in the Ukrainian refugee response in Hungary.

Prioritizing accessibility in humanitarian programming is a key step towards building a barrier-free and inclusive society that leaves no one behind. By ensuring that accessibility is at the forefront of efforts, RCF partners and other stakeholders can contribute to the promotion of inclusivity, protection of rights and the preservation of dignity for persons with disabilities in the context of humanitarian response and assistance, to complement where needed the government response.

Contacts and Other Resources.

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Other Resources:

- **Legal Framework:** | [UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) | [Hungarian National Legislation](#).
- **Inclusion Policies Strategies and Plans:** | [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) | [UNHCR Approach on Persons with Disability](#) | [UNHCR AGD Policy](#) | [UNHCR ExCom Conclusions on Refugees with Disability](#)
- [UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy](#)
- [EU Union of Equality](#)
- [Hungarian Ministry of Interior/Department of Disability: Program](#) ; [Action Plan](#) ; [EFI Portal](#)