

What is disability mainstreaming?

Mainstreaming is about challenging discrimination. It involves supporting basic services to ensure that persons with disabilities are included, and enjoy equality of access to those services. It pertains to universal mainstream services such as education and health, which are not particularly focussed on disability.

Consequently, disability considerations intersect with UNRWA's core work of providing basic education, primary health care, the provision of shelter and facilities, humanitarian relief, and social support and protection. In much the same way that gender cuts across the boundaries of the key programmes, disability can be regarded as a 'cross-cutting' issue.

Definition

Disability mainstreaming is understood as a process of assessing and addressing the possible impact of any planned action on persons with disabilities. It is a way to promote inclusion and to address the barriers that exclude persons with disabilities from the equal enjoyment of their human rights.

UNRWA's work

UNRWA's planning framework for 2012-13 treats disability as a cross-cutting and protection issue in the implementation plans of field and headquarters. This will be continued in the 2014-2015 biennium.

All fields have incorporated disability as a cross-cutting issue in their respective field implementation plans to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities into programmatic delivery and to ensure their access to, as well as adapting services to, their specific needs.

The aim is to embed disability considerations within programming, project design, policies, protocols and procedures as well as in staff training. Disability mainstreaming involves a process of supporting programmes to find structured ways of responding to the needs and circumstances of persons with disabilities. One way to do this is through better coordination of our response to need.

Progress has been made through the activities of disability working groups and steering committees in all fields of operation. The goal is to improve the coordination of services across programmes to the benefit of refugees with disabilities.

In most fields, the key programme areas of health, education, social services and camp infrastructure are involved. In some fields, particular initiatives are also involved, such as job creation and provision of micro-credit to vulnerable refugees.

The work fosters the sharing of information and facilitates working together across programmes to streamline pathways for refugees with disabilities, for instance through better internal and external referral mechanisms.



Examples from the Fields

In **Lebanon Field** the Special People Special Focus (SPSF) Working Group in Saida, consists of representatives of relief, health, education and the protection unit. In parallel there is an SPSF Focal Group, whose members represent, in addition to the above mentioned programmes, the programme support and scholarship units, engineering, micro-finance, communications and human resources.

The Lebanon model is based on a similar model with a focus on children with disabilities which is operating in Gaza. This is the Special Children with Special Needs Initiative, which works across education, general health and mental health, relief and social services, and protection areas.

In the **Gaza Field**, specialist teachers at Learning Support Centres are appointed to coordinate the inclusion of school students with disabilities in education and community activities.

This includes connecting children with other UNRWA departments such as community mental health, conducting awareness raising for teachers, peers and parents, and facilitating participation in non-curricula activities, such as International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the Summer Games in 2011.

Efforts are also made to outreach to persons with disabilities. UNRWA's Job Creation Programme in Gaza has worked in partnership with community based organisations and community based rehabilitation centres to provide job opportunities to persons with disabilities. For example, the programme has supplied 26 extended employment contracts to support the Forsan Al Erada radio station, a specialised channel advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities.

In Lebanon, measures are taken to address disability in recruitment processes, by making explicit reference to equal opportunities, by outreach to the disability community through sharing vacancy announcements with non-government agencies working with people with disabilities, and by establishing quotas at UNRWA Training Centres for vocational opportunities and in the Job Creation Programme.

Main ideas

- ⇒ Disability is a cross-cutting issue
- ⇒ Embedding disability in the planning process and project design is an effective way to mainstream
- ⇒ Disability working groups at the field level are demonstrating successes in coordinating services for persons with disabilities

More information

<http://www.vso.org.uk> for VSO Handbook on Mainstreaming Disability, 2006

<http://www.un.org/disabilities> for UN Economic and Social Council Resolution E/RES/2012/11 on 'Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda'



UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and is mandated to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 4,797,723 registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions.

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