

protection division



## unrwa disability policy

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## Statement of Commitment

- 1) UNRWA works to protect and promote the human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human development of all Palestine refugees in all settings, including development and humanitarian/emergency contexts, in accordance with international law, and to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 2) UNRWA provides services across its areas of operations to registered Palestine refugees<sup>1</sup> and other persons eligible for services in accordance with the UNRWA Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions (CERI) OF 2009. UNRWA beneficiaries include Palestine refugee women/girls and men/boys with disabilities.
- 3) UNRWA recognizes the existing barriers to the full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities and is committed to ensuring that all its policies, programmes, services, and internal processes<sup>2</sup> address the rights, needs, and interests of Palestine refugees with disabilities. This policy adopts the concept of disability as outlined in the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which states that “persons with disabilities include those who have 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.”
- 4) The Agency acknowledges the cyclical relationship between poverty and disability and commits to helping break this cycle through the provision of essential services, including but not limited to health, education, social assistance, and training and economic opportunities to adults and children with disabilities on an equal and equitable basis with others, in line with its mandate.
- 5) This commitment is grounded in the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (A/61/611) adopted by the General Assembly on 23 December 2006 (A/RS/61/106) and entered into force on 3 May 2008, and also builds on the *Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* (A/RES/48/96) adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993, as well as the principles and actions laid out in the *World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons* (A/RES/37/52) adopted by the General Assembly on 03 December 1982.
- 6) With reference to Article 11 of the *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the Agency commits to taking “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.”

<sup>1</sup> This definition, introduced in 1952 by the UN General Assembly, mandates UNRWA to provide services to Palestine refugees, namely “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.”

<sup>2</sup> Internal processes refer to the works of UNRWA support departments such as Planning; Human Resources; Information Management and Technology; Communications; Procurement and Internal Oversight Services.



- 7) Article 31 of the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 “encourages the Agency, in close cooperation with other relevant United Nations entities, to continue to make progress in addressing the needs, rights and protection of women, men, girls and
- 8) boys with disabilities in its operations, including through the provision of necessary psychosocial, specialized, and humanitarian support, in accordance with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*,<sup>3</sup> the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*,<sup>4</sup> and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.<sup>5</sup>
- 9) UNRWA’s commitment to disability inclusion continues through the implementation of the *United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS)*, *The Charter for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, and the Agency’s regulations and specific frameworks such as the *UNRWA Disability Inclusion Guidelines*, in addition to this *Disability Policy*.
- 10) The Agency commits to pursue the goals of inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities and promotion of their human rights, well-being, perspectives, and aspirations. The Agency will systematically embed the rights of persons with disabilities in all its work, internal and external.
- 11) Pursuant to the United Nations system leadership framework (CEB/2017/1), the Agency commits to providing strong leadership to ensure that the human rights-based approach to disability is reflected in all organizational policies, strategies, programmes, practices, monitoring frameworks, and results.
- 12) The Agency commits to the empowerment of beneficiaries with disabilities to ensure their full and meaningful participation in the planning, design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of UNRWA services.
- 13) The Agency commits to creating an enabling and accessible work environment, empowering employees with disabilities and addressing exclusion and discrimination on the basis of disability in any form, including multiple and intersecting discrimination and discrimination by association, against staff with disabilities as well as staff with dependents with disabilities. The Agency will accelerate efforts to achieve the goal of the empowered, progressive, and substantially increased representation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity among all categories of United Nations employees, especially at decision-making levels.

### Pathway to Disability Inclusion

UNRWA shall maintain a rights-based approach towards achieving the following policy objectives to promote the realization of rights of Palestine refugees with disabilities within its broader efforts towards human development, humanitarian aid and protection:

<sup>3</sup> *United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1577, No. 27531.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid., vol. 1249, No. 20378.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid., vol. 2515, No. 44910.*



- 1) Promote and advocate for the realization of human rights of Palestine refugees with disabilities as a necessary condition in all settings, including humanitarian/emergency settings, in accordance with the principles and requirements laid out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Consistent with the rights-based approach, this will include empowerment of Palestine refugees with disabilities to claim their rights on an equal and equitable basis and to hold duty bearers accountable.

This will also entail awareness-raising and advocacy directed towards changing attitudes, policies, and practices regarding persons with disabilities.

- 2) Promote equal and equitable opportunities for Palestine refugees with disabilities to access and benefit from all UNRWA programmes and services, including internal processes, through the twin-track approach. This will involve mainstreaming disability in all UNRWA policies, programmes, and services, coupled with disability-specific initiatives, such as access - including through referrals - to specialized educational and health services, Early Detection and Early Intervention<sup>6</sup>, prevention, assistive devices, and technology, including education technology, as necessary.<sup>7</sup>
- 3) Promote the rights of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. This will include valuing and supporting a diverse workforce at UNRWA through developing an inclusive and accessible work environment and promoting equal opportunities and conditions for participation in the UNRWA workplace for persons with disabilities.
- 4) Develop staff capacity regularly to identify and respond appropriately to the rights and needs of persons with disabilities within UNRWA policies, programmes, services, and internal processes.
- 5) Ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and review of UNRWA policies and interventions that affect them, to the extent possible and on an equal basis with others.
- 6) Participate in Inter-Agency advocacy efforts to improve representation of needs of Palestine refugees with disabilities and resource allocations in humanitarian assessments and response plans.
- 7) Ensure that UNRWA senior management promotes and advocates for disability inclusion across the Agency through the championing of disability inclusion, and coordination and accountability of dedicated and appropriately resourced disability focal points at the programmes/departments and field levels, in alignment with the UNRWA Protection Strategy and existing accountability frameworks.
- 8) Coordinate the Agency's disability inclusion work with mainstreaming policies, procedures and processes (including protection audits, accessible environment standards, and inclusive education policy, data collection and outreach methodologies) to achieve cross-programmatic outcomes for

<sup>6</sup> The Information Management and Technology Department also has a critical role to play in this regard, particularly with respect to the integration of a disability data collection tool into existing databases and the establishment of new databases for disability data collection.

<sup>7</sup> Mainstreaming disability is understood as a process of assessing and addressing the implications for persons with disabilities of any planned action. In a twin-track approach, there is recognition that additional and/or parallel measures may be necessary in combination with mainstreaming to remove barriers to equal access and participation by persons with disabilities. UN OHCHR (2010) Monitoring the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Available at: [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Disabilities\\_training\\_17EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Disabilities_training_17EN.pdf).



disability inclusion. This also includes coordination with programmes/departments through the Disability Task Force and equivalent stakeholders at the field level.

- 9) Adopt a uniform, internationally recognized standard of disability identification, disaggregated data collection, and analysis across the Agency to guide policy and planning, monitoring of disability inclusion, and to inform programming.
- 10) Allocate adequate financial and human resources to enable achievement of commitments to disability inclusion.

### Guiding Principles of Disability Mainstreaming

UNRWA will achieve the objectives set out in this policy based on the following disability inclusion principles:

- 1) Non-discrimination – all persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to access and benefit from all UNRWA programmes, services, and internal processes; and no actions of UNRWA contribute to the creation or reinforcement of barriers. The principle of non-discrimination, as applied in practice, should ensure systematic identification, targeting, and prioritization of individuals with increased
- 2) vulnerability to access and benefit meaningfully from all UNRWA programmes, services, and internal processes. The principle of non-discrimination also includes active outreach to invisible, hard-to-reach populations, including persons with disabilities, based on the concept of disability detailed in the UNCRPD.
- 3) Data disaggregation and data systems – all data collected must be harmonized and systematically consider disability, gender, and age disaggregation (at minimum) and will be used to inform and continuously improve programming. All data systems to be updated to ensure effective analysis.
- 4) Awareness – awareness-raising on disability and its implications among UNRWA staff and Palestine refugee communities as part of the efforts to achieve the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- 5) Participation – persons with disabilities participate actively in all UNRWA programmes and services to ensure that they are relevant and effective in meeting the needs and interests of all refugees.
- 6) Barrier removal – identification and removal of physical, communication, attitudinal and institutional barriers that persons with disabilities face in accessing and participating in UNRWA programmes, services, and internal processes. This is not limited to buildings and external environments but also includes adapted service delivery, procurement, transport, and information and communication.
- 7) Intersectionality – all tools, data systems, and analysis processes are designed to place particular emphasis on the *intersectionality* of disability with other vulnerability factors such as gender, age, socio-economic status, legal status, geographical location etc., to ensure those most at risk are identified and assisted as a priority. Systematic consideration to be given to the increased risk of physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological violence faced by persons with disabilities across life stages due to stigma, discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, and dependency with acknowledgement that this affects differently children and adults across gender, age and diversity breakdowns. UNRWA



policies, programmes and services will thus pay particular attention to address the particular needs, rights, and interests of women/girls with disabilities, older persons with disabilities, youth and children with disabilities, including through partnerships/collaborations with women's rights, child rights, and disability rights movements, and local and international NGOs.

### Monitoring and evaluation

- 1) The monitoring of this policy will entail an annual report on its implementation by each UNRWA Headquarters (HQ) programme/department and fields of operation to the UNRWA Advisory Commission and through inputs to the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy report submitted to the Executive Office of the United Nations Secretary-General.
- 2) Evaluations of Agency programmes, projects, and support functions will systematically mainstream disability as a cross-cutting theme via disaggregation of existing indicators, addition of disability-specific indicators, and systematic identification of target populations; guidance on disability inclusion will be developed, as part of the evaluation guidelines.

*This policy is to be operationalized through the continued implementation of the UNRWA Disability Inclusion Guidelines, the Protection Alignment Review and recommendations, and the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy as it applies to UNRWA. The UNRWA Disability Inclusion Guidelines will be reviewed to align with this policy, while the policy will also be regularly reviewed according to the provisions of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, with appropriate resources allocated for implementation.*