

Executive Summary: Stocktake on the IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

Introduction

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action were adopted in 2019 to make disability inclusion a core part of humanitarian action. Since then, they have helped increase the visibility of disability inclusion in policies, coordination mechanisms, financing, and data systems. They have also supported greater recognition of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) as important humanitarian actors.

However, progress on disability inclusion in humanitarian action has remained uneven across contexts. In practice, this means that significant gaps in ensuring that humanitarian action is more disability inclusive remain. Against this backdrop, recent changes in the humanitarian system under the Humanitarian Reset and wider funding cuts will inevitably affect the use and operationalization of the Guidelines.

This stocktake will therefore review how the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action have been used in practice since 2019. This exercise will show what has changed in humanitarian practice, what helped or blocked the uptake of the Guidelines, and what actions to take to ensure that the Guidelines remain relevant in the Humanitarian Reset context.

Objective and working modalities of the stocktake

The stocktake will seek to understand how far the Guidelines have been translated into action. We will assess how they are understood, adopted, integrated into systems and tools, and used in internationally-led responses. The exercise will highlight gaps, good practices, and opportunities to further advance the implementation of the Guideline. Based on this analysis, the stocktake will propose concrete actions for OPDs, governments, coordination actors, UN agencies, NGOs, and donors to strengthen the use of the Guidelines in humanitarian action and, more broadly, disability inclusion, ensuring these are fit for purpose within the new humanitarian architecture.

The stocktake implements the UN Secretariat Executive Committee Decision 2024/28 (3) to “Identify and propose ways to strengthen and measure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action through the IASC and its structures. This includes a stocktake of lessons learned and remaining gaps at the five-year mark of the Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.”

The Disability Reference Group (that is an IASC Community of Practice) leads this stocktake on the IASC Guidelines, which is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO). Humanity and Inclusion is managing the stocktake and hera - right to health, a consulting company, is conducting it under the technical advice of the Stocktake Working Group, which includes UN entities, iNGOs, and OPDs¹.

Key questions and methodology

The stocktake is a broad participatory exercise designed for learning and rapid adaptation. It answers five main questions: (i) how actors understand the Guidelines, (ii) how they have been integrated since 2019, (iii) to what extent they are used, (iv) what enables or constrains their use, and (v) what is to be

¹ This working group is chaired by the IASC Secretariat and Humanity & Inclusion (HI), and includes the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Coalition of Ugandan Activists on People with Disabilities (CUAPWD), the World Institute on Disability (WDI), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), International Organization for Migration (IOM), OxfamNovib, Christian Blind Mission (CBM), Global Disability Fund (GDF), and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

done and by whom to ensure the Guidelines and Disability inclusion more broadly remain at the center of humanitarian action.

In answering these questions, the stocktake will focus on three elements: (i) the four must-do actions and twin-track approach of the Guidelines (across sectors), (ii) the key moments of the humanitarian programme cycle, and (iii) the different roles and responsibilities concerning disability inclusion of different stakeholders. The analysis will be based on a desk review and primary data collection using an online survey, key informant interviews (KIIs) and consultations, along with three in-country deep dives.

The desk review maps how disability inclusion and the guidelines appear across the humanitarian system by analysing policies, plans, coordination terms of reference, operational guidance and existing studies, so it shows both what organisations say they will do and what has already been tried and learned in different responses.

The survey captures how actors across sectors and regions experience this in practice, testing patterns from the desk review and filling gaps where documentation is thin. The KIIs and consultations explain why these patterns look the way they do at global and national levels by exploring decision-making, coordination and implementation dynamics, as well as gaps and opportunities.

The three deep dives (in-country visits) then examine these issues in depth in selected country contexts. KIIs and consultations will be carried out in these three contexts on how the Guidelines are taken up across sectors and levels of response, and how wider system patterns play out in real operational settings.

Findings from these different sources will help compare, confirm, or explain patterns. This triangulation will ensure robust conclusions and avoid reliance on a single source.

Results and Timeline

The analysis of data and results will be shared as part of a final report. This will include actor-specific recommendations on how different parts of the humanitarian system can further advance the uptake of the Guidelines and strengthen disability inclusion. The recommendations will provide practical guidance in the context of the Humanitarian Reset so that persons with disabilities remain central to decision-making and implementation of humanitarian action. The work runs from April to November 2026 in four phases, as shown in Figure 1

This includes the inception phase (April to mid-May 2026) to develop and refine the analytical framework and tools and identify the three countries for the deep dives in discussion with the Working Group. Results will be shared in an inception report that will guide the stocktake.

This will be followed by the desk review and primary data collection (May to July 2026), with early findings from this stage informing the preparation of the deep dives to be carried out in September 2026. Reporting will start in the same period and stretch till November 2026. This time will provide an opportunity to consolidate findings across all methods, develop recommendations, and draft the final report and an executive summary. The process will include opportunities to share and refine findings with the Stocktake Working Group and key stakeholders and support discussion of implications for the Humanitarian Reset.

The process will be consultative throughout, with monthly exchanges with the Stocktake Working Group and weekly check-ins with the co-chairs, including sessions to share and discuss preliminary findings as they emerge across the different stages of data collection. KIIs, consultations, and deep dives will also be leveraged as opportunities to start creating and collecting good practices and recommendations from the different Guideline stakeholders at different levels (global, regional, national).

Figure 1. Timeline and four phases of the Stocktake of the IASC Guidelines

