

Disability Inclusion of Refugees in Ethiopia and Recommendations for Future Practice

This policy brief presents the findings and recommendations from a study, on disability inclusion for refugees in Ethiopia. The study examines the experiences, protection needs, barriers to, and opportunities for providing protection for refugees living with disabilities in Ethiopia, and ways to institutionalise better practices of inclusion.

Persons with disabilities are often programmatically 'invisible' in refugee assistance programmes due to a lack of data and a range of individual, institutional, attitudinal and environmental barriers. Data on gender, age, or type of disability are generally unavailable from the government, UNHCR, or its implementing partners. Refugees with disabilities receive disproportionately less aid and services such as sanitary facilities, education or food, and their inclusion in protection programmes is stratified by individual, institutional, environmental, and attitudinal factors.

Study Objectives

- *To understand the different lived experiences of refugees with disabilities in Ethiopia, and to understand what gaps remain in our understanding around current protection and inclusion practice*
- *To map the current state of play regarding policy and programmes focused on the protection of refugees with disabilities in Ethiopia*
- *In the context of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework's (CRRF) commitment to a 'whole of society' approach, to understand how disability inclusion could be mainstreamed to support displacement-affected communities more widely*

The study was conducted through a combination of desk review of academic and policy works as well as interviews with staff members of humanitarian organisations and disability-focused civil society organisations and with refugees with disabilities within camps located in Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, and Addis Ababa.

Despite the significant barriers identified in this report, there are also several key opportunities for greater inclusion of refugees with disabilities within displacement-affected communities in Ethiopia. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework are all opportunities to improve inclusion of refugees with disabilities in Ethiopia.

[Click to download the report](#)
**Disability inclusion for refugees in Ethiopia:
an urgent need**

Key Findings

1. **Individual, institutional, attitudinal and environmental barriers result in diverse experiences for displaced persons with disabilities in Ethiopia.** In terms of individual barriers, this study has revealed a hierarchy in service provision for refugees with disabilities, with persons with physical disabilities benefiting more readily than those with other, less visible types of disability.
2. **Age and gender also influence disabled persons' experiences, with children and older women facing particular challenges.** Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and violence, and they may have additional difficulty accessing support and services to reduce their level of risk and vulnerability.
3. **Environmental barriers differ in camp and urban contexts and in both refugees with disabilities are constrained from participating fully.** For example, poorly accessible physical facilities affect the daily lives of refugees with disabilities.
4. **Limited funding and human resources are the major institutional barriers to providing satisfactory services for refugees with disabilities.** Poor budgeting affects the allocation of specific aid resources needed to improve the daily lives of refugees, for example, elderly refugees who experience multiple disabilities at times do not have the adequate resources to improve their quality of life.
5. **Most organisations interviewed for this study did not include allocations for disability mainstreaming in their budgets.** While regional, country and organisational-level policies and frameworks may exist, they are not fully implemented.

Key Recommendations

1. There is a **significant lack of data about internally displaced persons and refugees living with disabilities in Ethiopia.** All humanitarian organisations should train their staff about Washington Group data collection tools, and collect and analyse data on the number of refugees with disabilities in their respective settings, using disaggregation according to gender, age, ethnicity and disability type.
2. Training in **capacity building is needed for humanitarian staff and management on how best to include refugees with disabilities in mainstream programmes** and in existing international and national policies and legal frameworks such as the UNCRPD and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. **Capacity-building training is also needed for refugees with disabilities and their representative Organisations of Persons with Disabilities about their rights and existing policy frameworks** such as UNCRPD and the 2019 Refugee Proclamation. It is important to help empower persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, as these groups have been excluded from educational opportunities. Most refugees with disabilities have had few or no education opportunities. Similarly, most OPDs lack the organisational and technical capacity to support the disability- inclusion efforts of humanitarian organisations.
4. Persons with disabilities must be **involved in the design and execution of programmes and policies aimed at supporting them.** Implementing partners as well as policy makers must engage refugees with disabilities and their representatives in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes.
5. **Advocacy initiatives for disability awareness** must be promoted and institutionalised within the humanitarian-development sector, among civil society organizations, and the population at large about the needs of disabled people including disabled refugees.
6. **Disability budgeting should be introduced in humanitarian programmes to ensure that all assistance is accessible to people living with disabilities.** Aid must be allocated specifically for refugees with disabilities to build more accessible camps (where camps are unavoidable) and to help refugees move into community settings where feasible, with adequate support. Such support should include assistive devices and access arrangements.
7. **Moreover, rigorous studies should be specifically conducted on refugee women with disabilities,** as this segment of the refugee community is more susceptible to triple discrimination on the basis of being women, persons with disabilities and among the poorest of the poor.

