

## **OCHA Inputs for the IX Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing: Autonomy and independence**

The provision of humanitarian assistance and protection can support the right to autonomy and independence of older persons to the degree that it recognizes and addresses the specific needs of older persons. Ensuring that humanitarian action is inclusive of older persons is both a matter of principle and of rights. Humanitarian action is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. If humanitarian aid is to be impartial, delivered on the basis of need and without discrimination, it must be sensitive to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of older persons. The need to be inclusive of older persons and responsive to their needs is key to ensuring and protecting their rights, including their protection and safety. Humanitarian response should by design take into account the needs and concerns of older people, in the conduct of needs assessments, in the design and delivery of programs, and monitoring and evaluation. It must ensure that there is meaningful access for older persons to humanitarian assistance and protection in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, without which it will be increasingly difficult for older persons to enjoy autonomy and independence.

The humanitarian community utilizes a number of tools in this regard. The SG's 'Agenda for Humanity' encourages the collection of comprehensive data and analysis to identify, prioritize and track progress of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including older persons, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and other groups. The collections of sex and age disaggregated data is a key standard in this regard. The IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action calls for in-depth and integrated analysis that takes into account the specific vulnerabilities that underlie the risks faced by all affected persons, in particular vulnerable or marginalized persons, including older persons.<sup>1</sup> Another tool is the Gender and Age Marker (GAM), which assists in ensuring that programmes recognize how a person's gender and age affect the way he or she is impacted by emergencies, including how they access and use resources. Understanding the different roles for different age groups for each gender deepens the gender analysis. The GAM uses Gender Equality Measures (GEMs) to breakdown the elements of programming to ensure basic programming steps are taken and that they are linked. It helps programming staff to refine humanitarian action during both the design and monitoring phases. The 'Accountability to Affected Persons' initiative highlights the need for meaningful engagement with affected persons in a manner that recognizes and is sensitive to age, gender and diversity, and that enables them to participate meaningfully in key decisions throughout the humanitarian programme cycle: assessment and analysis, planning and design, resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This in turn helps ensure that

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<sup>1</sup>Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action (2016).

humanitarian assistance and protection recognizes the community's dignity, capacity, and ability for self-determination.<sup>2</sup>

It is also to be noted that age is an important factor of disability. Recognizing that around 15 per cent of the population are living with some kind of disability and that an estimated 13 per cent of people worldwide are over the age of 60, the Age and Disability Consortium as part of the ADCAP programme<sup>3</sup>, launched the first ever 'Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for older persons and people with disabilities' at the OCHA Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week (HNPW) in February 2018 in Geneva. Designed to promote the inclusion in humanitarian action of older people and persons with disabilities, these standards will help address the gap in understanding their needs, capacities and rights, and will provide practitioners and organizations with clear actions that can be taken to protect, support and engage older persons and persons with disabilities, and to strengthen accountability in that respect. In line with the IASC commitment to the World Humanitarian Summit, a Task Team was established in July 2016 to lead the development of system-wide guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. Among its 100+ members, the Task Team comprises representatives from organizations working with and for older people, to make sure the challenges linked to older persons with disabilities are duly taken into account. The guidelines, to be finalized by the end of 2018, will assist humanitarian actors, governments and affected communities to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions that foster the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action, resulting in the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities of all ages and changing practice across all sectors and in all phases of humanitarian action.

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<sup>2</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee Emergency Director's Group, Preliminary guidance note on Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC), (2016)

<sup>3</sup> The Age and Disability Consortium consists in a group of seven agencies working to promote age and disability-inclusive humanitarian assistance: CBM, DisasterReady.org, Humanity & Inclusion (formerly Handicap International), HelpAge International, IFRC, Oxford Brookes University and RedR UK. The Age and Disability Capacity Programme (ADCAP) is designed to ensure older people and people with disabilities are included during emergency responses, both accessing assistance and participating in the decision-making processes that affect them. ADCAP is led by HelpAge International and part of an innovative portfolio of projects under the [Start Network](#), supported by DFID and USAID.