



MMS Bulletin #158

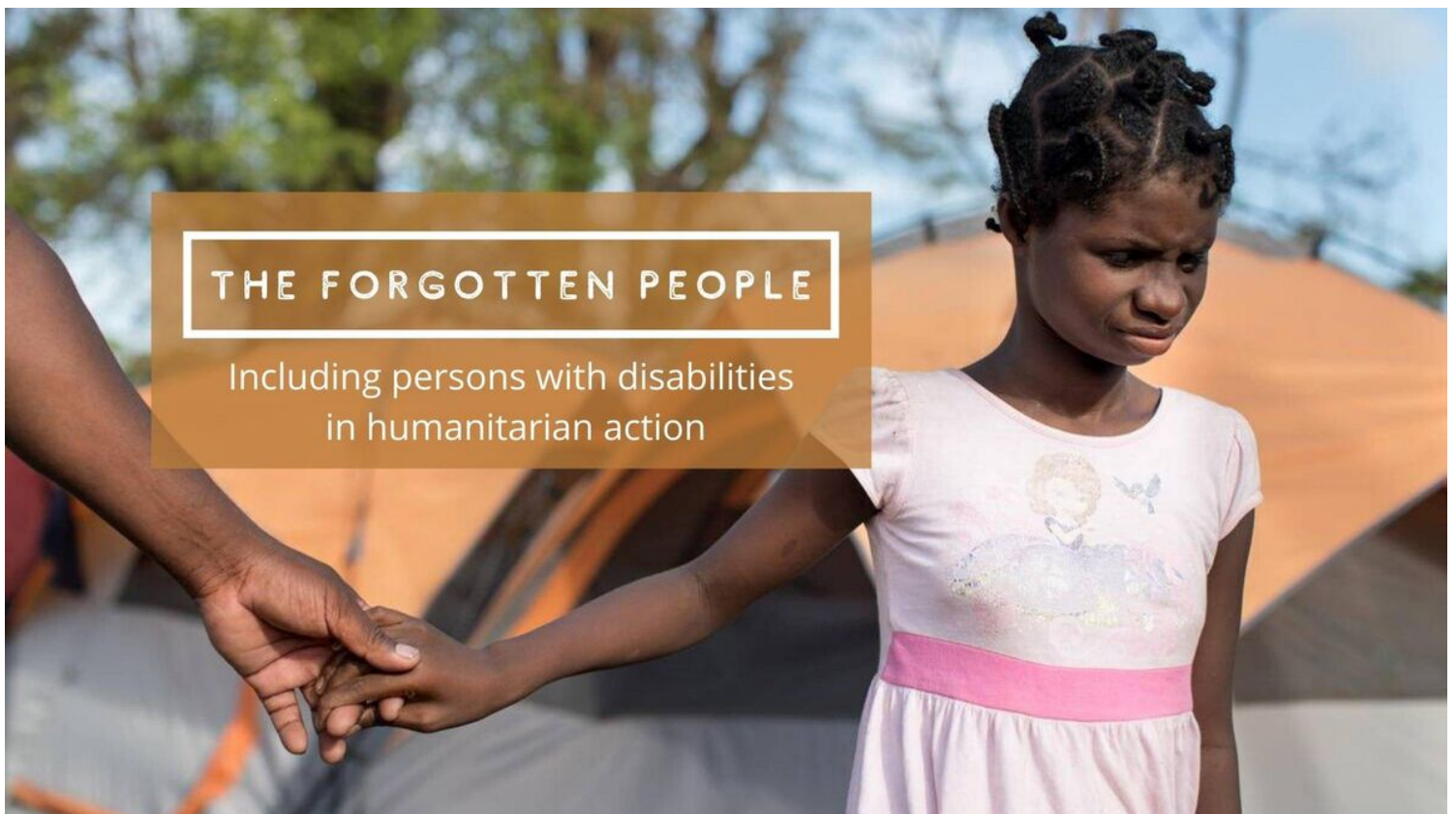
Inclusion in international cooperation: commitment and reality

Persons with disabilities encounter multiple barriers in times of crises and conflict. Can we ensure that their rights are respected?

The forgotten people – no more?

By Andrew P. Kroglund

*In 2019 the Atlas Alliance wrote the report *The forgotten people; Persons with disabilities in crises and conflicts, with a special focus on people with intellectual disabilities (The Forgotten People 2019)*.*



The forgotten people. Photo: © Save the Children / Hanna Adcock

We wanted to highlight what often happens in conflict and crises around the world. One segment of the population at risk, tend to be left further behind.

The Situation:

- Armed conflict has a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are the subject of targeted killings, have been used as human shields and are at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence. They are more likely to be killed or injured because of inaccessible emergency information, evacuation procedures and shelters.
- Refugee and displacement camps and facilities lack comprehensive procedures to identify refugees and internally displaced persons with disabilities, and consequently fail to ensure that *persons with disabilities* have equal access to essential services including food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- There is a failure to recognize the diversity among persons with disabilities. Little attention is paid to the situation of persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

Promising trends:

However, many countries have signed international obligations where they commit themselves to ensuring that people with disabilities are included in all aspects of humanitarian response and displacement, from recovery to rebuilding and resettlement.

Since 2018 we have seen promising changes in processes, policies and guidelines. Humanitarian organizations are increasingly using the language of inclusion and taking a rights-based approach.



Aziz is seen outside his shelter. Aziz is a Rohingya refugee boy who lives with his family in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: © Alison Joyce, Save the Children

Suggested steps forward

- **Nothing About Us Without Us**

Disability is an issue that risks losing out in humanitarian assistance operations unless there is an active involvement or consultation with Disabled Persons' Organizations (DPOs). The principle of “**Nothing About Us Without Us**” must apply in situations of crises and conflict. Governments and humanitarian organizations should strive towards meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of the humanitarian preparedness and response programs, from needs assessments, design, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

- **Cooperation and coordination**

We should foster and promote technical cooperation and coordination between national and local authorities, humanitarian actors and representative organizations of persons with disabilities to promote cross-learning, sharing of information, of best practices, and of tools and resources.

"Governments and humanitarian organizations should strive towards meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all stages of the humanitarian preparedness and response programs, from needs assessments, design, implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation."

- **Dedicated and competent staff on disability inclusion**

Larger Nordic humanitarian organizations working in crises and conflict areas/situations should consider having a dedicated person/team with a disability inclusion responsibility. This could be a temporary solution, until the organization has implemented a permanent Disability Inclusion Humanitarian Action Plan.



Ryian, 15, plays with his younger sister Siba, two, at their home in Za'atari camp for Syrian refugees, Jordan. Photo: © Jonathan Hyams / Save the Children

- **People with intellectual disabilities**

People with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their families and caregivers struggle the most to bring their specific disability issues up on the agenda of humanitarian assistance. More effective advocacy work by representative DPOs themselves is needed. There are many types of DPOs and those representing people with intellectual/developmental disabilities have not always been as vociferous as their colleagues in other organisations. There is a need to be more visible on various platforms. Also, humanitarian agencies also need to invest more in their own knowledge base and internal policies.

- **Making use of new guidelines**

It is of the utmost importance that both governments and organizations encourage the operationalization and use of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines (IASC 2019) on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. The guidelines describe how families and social networks can operate as enablers to remove or reduce barriers that prevent the participation of persons with disabilities. Supportive families can significantly reduce costs and promote inclusion, particularly for persons with disabilities who are stigmatized or excluded. However, families may also act as barriers as well as enablers. Humanitarian actors must therefore ensure that the person with disabilities remains at the centre of their intervention.

- **Disability Inclusion Humanitarian Action Plans**

The Nordic humanitarian actors have different experiences, histories, and networks. They should strive towards a broad disability baseline analysis, documenting the specific challenges in selected humanitarian operations, as they themselves experience it. This should lead towards Disability Inclusion Humanitarian Action Plans for each humanitarian actor, based on the principles of the IASC Guidelines.

References

- The Forgotten People. Persons with Disabilities in Crisis and Conflicts, with a special Focus on People with intellectual Disabilities. A paper produced by the Atlas-alliance, December 2019. Written by Andrew P. Kroglund. <https://atlas-alliansen.no/wp-content/uploads/2019...>
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines 2019. Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task...>



Andrew P. Kroglund is a senior advisor at the Atlas-alliance. Kroglund is a writer and he is much used as a public speaker and talk host. Email

Kontakt

Deutschschweiz

Medicus Mundi Schweiz
Murbacherstrasse 34
CH-4056 Basel
Tel. +41 61 383 18 10
info@medicusmundi.ch

Suisse romande

Medicus Mundi Suisse
Rue de Varembe I
CH-1202 Genève
Tél. +41 22 920 08 08
contact@medicusmundi.ch

Bank details

Basler Kantonalbank, Aeschen, 4002 Basel
Medicus Mundi Schweiz, 4056 Basel
IBAN: CH40 0077 0016 0516 9903 5
BIC: BKBBCHBBXXX