

Attention among the humanitarian community has increased on the risks faced by persons with disabilities in humanitarian settings in South Sudan. Efforts are being enhanced to mainstream persons with disabilities to ensure their protection, respect of rights and participation during all phases of the humanitarian intervention. However, humanitarian actors still face challenges to shift towards practices that are fully and meaningfully inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Bentiu Protection of Civilians (POC) Site in South Sudan aims to protect displaced persons and ensure access to essential services. Due to a variety of environmental barriers, persons with disabilities report to be disproportionately exposed to protection risks and discriminative practices, including in accessing the services they require. The barriers identified include unsafe environments, physical access barriers, discriminative attitudes, and the lack of awareness and enforcement of legislations and policies that promote the rights, protection and equitable inclusion of persons with disabilities by service providers. Limited capacities of humanitarian staff to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in the services they provide, coupled with limited monitoring of the access of persons with disabili-

ties, and the lack of consultation and participation of persons with disabilities also enhance the risk that persons with disabilities will face challenges accessing services.

These findings are the outcome of a participatory assessment¹ carried out by Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Bentiu POC Site in December 2017. The assessment collected information on environmental barriers and facilitators related to the safe, dignified, and meaningful access to essential services. The situation in Bentiu Site is likely to be similar to the other POC sites in South Sudan due to the similar set-up and resident structures.

OCHA estimates that a total of 1.74² million persons with and without disabilities, of different ages and sex, are displaced in host communities, collective centres, POC sites, and other camp-like settings across South Sudan due to the ongoing conflict. Though no accurate socio-demographic data is available on the number of persons with disabilities in the country, it is estimated that the rate of persons with disabilities is likely to at least coincide with the global estimates of 15% of persons with disabilities worldwide.³

QUICK FACTS

Among surveyed persons with disabilities in Bentiu POC Site:

- **35% report major problems in accessing essential services.** Persons with psychosocial disabilities, unaccompanied persons with disabilities, and women with disabilities report facing greater risks of discrimination.
- **The major barriers identified** are the lack of access to information in accessible formats (39%), high distance to services (28%), financial fees to access services (18%), physical obstacles to access services (15%), and risk of discrimination and discriminative service-access (13%).
- **49% report they do not have access to enough safe and clean water** because of the travel distance (19%), lack of information (11%), and lack of physical accessibility to water pumps (8%).
- **14% report to have health needs that are unaddressed.** Lack of information on rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, and HIV services, as well as lack of information on voluntary counselling, is a major barrier to access.
- **43% report difficulties to move around in their shelters.** 79% lack help to improve their shelter and 62% have difficulties in accessing reconstruction materials.
- **84% report increased risks of violence and abuse in comparison to persons without disabilities.**
- **48% of women with disabilities report never having access to decision-making processes,** and 38% of respondents with disabilities report not to have any community engagement.
- **Only 17% of men with disabilities and 28% of women with disabilities report having access to sanitation facilities.**
- **Distribution processes do not have mobile alternatives for persons who have difficulties to move around.** Although there are priority queues at food distribution sites, persons with disabilities experience difficulties to get their rations home because containers are unsuitable and often stolen by others on the way or at home.
- **Children with disabilities are not going to the child friendly spaces** because they are not easy to access, learning methods are not suitable, and they are not encouraged to attend.
- **In order to make their life easier, persons with disabilities in Bentiu POC Site requested easy, safe and dignified access to essential services, such as latrines (63%); increased support to family members (45%); increased access to recreational and cultural activities (26%); and increased access to non-formal education (19%).**

1. The participatory methodology used for the assessment is based on practical and evidence based experience. The methodology, which HI started developing in Iraq in 2013, aims to collect information on contextual risk and factors of discrimination faced by persons with disabilities.

2. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin, South Sudan (23 May 2018)

3. World Health Organization and the World Bank, World Report on Disability (2011)

FACTORS OF DISCRIMINATION

The assessment showed how environmental access barriers can impact the wellbeing, rights, and full participation of persons with disabilities living in Bentiu POC Site. These barriers include protection risks, such as violence and abuse, and discriminative practices, such as challenges to access services required in an easy and safe manner.

It was revealed that access barriers are rooted in the lack of information in accessible formats on services, rights and entitlements; in the limited access to protection prevention and response mechanisms; and in the physical access barriers (e.g. long distances to services, physically inaccessible infrastructures, lack of access to mobility

aids) in and around Site infrastructures (e.g. housing, sanitation and health facilities). Protection threats including theft, bribery, robbery and coercion were also identified as creating barriers to access services, in addition to limited financial resources and livelihood opportunities.

Persons with disabilities also have limited representation mechanisms inside the Site and within coordination structures and are rarely consulted by humanitarian actors. This led to the design and implementation of humanitarian interventions in Bentiu POC Site which are not inclusive of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

Donors should

- Promote comprehensive, accountable, safe and non-discriminative humanitarian actions, through adequate funding and prioritisation of activities, services and programming. This includes promoting the protection of persons with disabilities and other groups at risk of discrimination and the inclusion of men, women, boys and girls with disabilities of different ages.
- Support the use of guidelines and standards⁴ that promote qualitative, accountable, safe and non-discriminative humanitarian action, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.⁵
- Promote the use of disability disaggregated programme data, markers and indicators that monitor meaningful, safe, and dignified access to services.

Camp coordination mechanisms should

- Deliberately identify persons with disabilities, by systematically collecting and analysing accurate disability data through the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions⁶ and participatory situational analyses.
- Address physical access barriers in and around the sites by designing accessible infrastructures, by allocating persons with disabilities to accessible and safe housing conditions, and by providing accessible information on their rights, legislations, and available and accessible services.
- Strengthen protection mechanisms to better identify, prevent, and mitigate the threats faced by persons with disabilities through trusted community members, and accessible and fully inclusive systems.
- Promote and monitor commitments and actions to protect and equally include persons with disabilities in line with global frameworks, guidelines and standards.⁴
- Increase the participation of persons with disabilities in sites management, by developing stronger representation mechanisms and by building their capacities.

- Create a two-way dialogue between humanitarian service providers and persons with disabilities to identify good practices, resources and priorities for change.
- Train sectorial and inter-sectorial focal points on rights-based, safe and disability-inclusive programming.

Humanitarian staff and service providers should

- Mobilise the necessary financial resources, capacities and tools to plan and deliver services that are inclusive of persons with disabilities. This can be done for example by training focal points in every team on non-discrimination, barrier-free service provision, disability inclusion and rights-based approaches to disability, and by adding reasonable accommodation and accessibility to budget lines.
- Regularly evaluate and report on the meaningful, safe and dignified access to services of persons with disabilities during all programmatic phases.
- Continuously strive to adhere to global frameworks, guidelines and standards⁴ that promote qualitative, accountable, safe and non-discriminative humanitarian action during all phases of intervention.
- Seek technical support from international or local mainstreaming actors and groups representing persons with disabilities.

Humanity & Inclusion (HI)

HI first deployed an emergency response team to South Sudan in 2006. Since then, HI promotes the protection, equal rights and equal access to services for persons with disabilities and temporary impairments. HI has continued to adapt its activities to respond to the needs of the internally displaced population and of refugees from other countries residing in South Sudan. HI also works with the host communities in development actions.

4. Sphere standards, Core Humanitarian Standards, protection mainstreaming guidelines, Humanitarian Inclusion Standards

5. <http://humanitariananddisabilitycharter.org/>

6. <http://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/washington-group-question-sets/short-set-of-disability-questions/>