

Contribution to the online discussion on the preparation of the WHS 'Europe and Others' Regional Consultation

Handicap International- Dec 19th 2014

The World Humanitarian Summit must result in precise, concrete and time bound actions towards a truly inclusive humanitarian aid. Ensuring that the most vulnerable crisis affected people have access to appropriate assistance is a core component of a principled humanitarian action and should be one of the key objectives for the international humanitarian community in the near future.

Aid effectiveness is primarily about leaving no one behind during emergency phases. Yet, humanitarian response, policies and frameworks are far from encompassing everyone, and are ill-adapted to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, injured persons, older people or persons with chronic diseases in contradiction with the principles of impartiality and humanity.

Field experience and studies show how these vulnerable groups are often neglected in the assessment, collection of data, design and delivery of humanitarian relief, making them 'invisible' to relief operations. This *de facto* exclusion from the humanitarian response worsens the long term impact of the crisis on persons and on communities.

Those gaps impede the survival, safety and protection of vulnerable persons further exacerbating their critical health, living conditions, social integration and psychological situation. Additionally, while response to basic needs is often weak and not adapted, their specific needs are even further ignored. The environmental disruption created by a conflict or a natural hazard represents an additional barrier to their survival, security and access to assistance. Vulnerable people are often at higher risk of abuse and violence and they see their physical and psychological health affected by disasters, with the aggravation or creation of new temporary or permanent impairments.

Setting a strong goal towards the full inclusion of the most vulnerable in emergency response is a challenge that the humanitarian community at large should tackle. We believe that it is an achievable goal if undertaken jointly. All humanitarian actors in their diversity must make sure that their policies and practices ensure the coverage of basic and specific needs vulnerable groups. This would only be achievable if donors share this objective and prioritize their policies and strategies to foster inclusion, through planning and long term funding. Lastly, humanitarian actors must support the participation of vulnerable groups in contingencies and emergency planning at international and national level to ensure a tailored humanitarian response in case of crisis.

Full inclusion is not an ideal objective but rather a feasible way to ensure that humanitarian aid finally reaches its objectives and respect its core value of humanity. Handicap International will stay committed as a humanitarian organization to support this objective, and will be fully engaged in the process to ensure that the World Humanitarian Summit will mark a change in humanitarian policies and practices for all crisis-affected people.