

ACCESSIBILITY IN DISPLACEMENT

PART 1: Guidance and Resources



INTRODUCTION

Accessibility is the design of services, information, products, or environments to be usable and understandable by everyone, in total safety, with dignity and the highest possible level of independence - regardless of age, gender or disability.

In displacement settings, ensuring full accessibility of services and assistance can be especially challenging. However, solutions exist to improve living conditions and prevent, remove or minimize some of the barriers identified.

This guidance and accompanying tools and resources were developed to better equip humanitarian workers to improve accessibility of sites, infrastructure and services during displacement. It is divided into two parts:

- Part 1: Guidance and Resources
- Part 2: Conducting an accessibility audit - methodology and tools

This guidance focuses on accessibility for persons with disabilities, who represent 16% of the world's population (WHO, 2023). However, accessibility work implemented in displacement settings will benefit other categories of the population (e.g. children, elders, pregnant women) and the broader community as well.

DEFINITIONS

Universal Design: is the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The seven principles of Universal Design are:

- Equitable use
- Flexibility in use
- Simple and intuitive use
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for error
- Low physical effort
- Size and space for approach and use

Developed in 1997 by a working group of architects, designers, engineers and researchers, the purpose of these Principles is to guide the design of environments, products and communications for more usable results.

Accessibility work: means removing barriers to provide access to services and facilities in total safety, with dignity and the highest possible of independence for everyone. Accessibility can relate to physical access, transportation but also information and communication accessibility. These measures include the proactive identification and elimination of obstacles to accessibility.

Reasonable accommodation: refers to necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments that do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden. These accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy and exercise their rights equally with others. This concept pertains to individual adaptations tailored to specific situations.

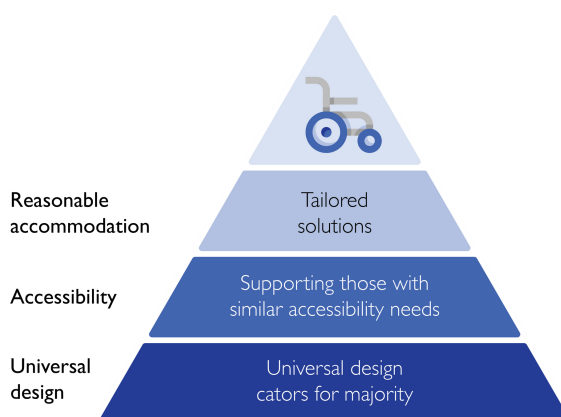
Despite the use of Universal Design principles and accessibility work, reasonable accommodation may still be needed to cater for individual needs and specific barriers faced by individuals, particularly persons with disabilities.

A reasonable accommodation measure is an individual solution which may involve specialized design or tailored solutions. In such cases:

- Ask the person what they require
- Evaluate options given available resources
- Offer a solution within given resources
- Verify with the person if the solution proposed meets its purpose.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodation measures: providing sign language interpretation during Camp Management meetings for a person to be able to participate; adapting a shelter to the individual requirements of a person; providing home delivery of NFIs.

Denial of reasonable accommodation may be considered discrimination, including in humanitarian settings. Any justification of the denial of reasonable accommodation must be based on objective criteria and communicated in a timely fashion to the person concerned.

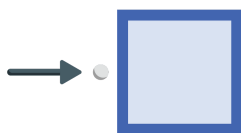


Source: [Disability Reference Group Learning package](#) (adapted)



APPLICABLE STANDARDS AND KEY PRINCIPLES

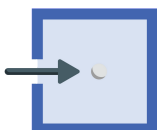
- **Accessibility Standards:** Accessibility standards exist so that the built environment, as well as communications, can be accessible to the majority of people. Technical specifications may be available at the national level (e.g. in national building codes) and international standards can be used by practitioners in the absence of or to complement national ones.
- **The R.E.C.U. principle:** When working on accessibility the R.E.C.U. principle should apply, meaning that everyone should easily Reach, Enter, Circulate, and Use buildings, public spaces, services, etc. with dignity, total safety, and the greatest level of independence. This chain of movements should be unbroken for fully accessible solutions.



1. Reach



3. Circulate



2. Enter



4. Use the building, facilities or services

- **Users as Designers:** Persons with disabilities, as well as other end-users, should be involved in the design of accessible solutions to make sure proposed modifications meet their requirements. This can be achieved through ensuring their participation during the design and planning phase, their inputs into the identification of obstacles, involving them in the testing of prototypes, and including them in the monitoring phase.
- **The support of trained engineers, architects or dedicated accessibility specialists** will be needed if any structure modification is foreseen - e.g. to install a ramp or to provide other technical solutions.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [IOM selection of accessibility standards and catalogue of accessibility items](#)
- [Case Study - Users as Designers, South Sudan, All Under One Roof](#)
- [Example of ToRs for an accessibility specialist](#)



KEY ACTIONS:

HOW CAN ACCESSIBILITY BE IMPROVED AT SITE LEVEL?

1. Consider diverse requirements through inclusive design to prevent accessibility barriers from occurring in the first place (using Universal Design principles from the onset)

This can be achieved through:

- Site selection, mindful of space for accessibility and topography of the terrain
- Accessible design of sites
- Planning and advocating for a percentage of accessible infrastructure, such as WASH facilities, communal buildings, main access roads, etc. using the 16% global estimate
- Using clearly visible, homogeneous and universally recognizable signs and pictograms

2. Intentionally prevent, remove or minimize accessibility barriers in given contexts

- Conduct frequent accessibility audits in partnership with persons with disabilities (see Part 2 - methodology)
- Budget for and conduct subsequent accessibility work throughout the site life cycle

3. Refine structures, processes and interactions to meet personalized needs and support participation and inclusion

- Provide Reasonable Accommodation and specialized design for the persons who may need it using the “Users as designers” approach



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [Case study: Accessibility of evacuation and multipurpose centers \(Upcoming\)](#)
- [Case study: Improving accessibility in sites \(Upcoming\)](#)

FOCUS ON: ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION



Humanitarian practitioners should work together with persons with disabilities and partners in removing barriers to information and communication and ensure everyone has access to the same information that is clear, understandable and culturally appropriate. Individuals with different communication requirements should also be supported to participate and raise their concerns.

There is no one-size-fits-all communication; however, humanitarian workers should aim at reaching the greatest number of people and work on providing reasonable accommodation for individual requests. Furthermore, beyond the different impairments, the gender dimension should also be considered as accessibility requirements may differ between people of all genders.

Examples of information and communication sources that should be accessible to all:

Signage and pictograms: should be homogenous throughout (e.g. same color scheme, same font), located where they are clearly visible to people seated, standing or walking. Using universally recognizable signs and pictograms will enhance accessibility.

Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials: should be accessible for persons with different types of impairments and context specific.

Low-cost adaptation examples: captioning for video messages, large print, colour contrast, simple written instructions and pictograms.

Higher-cost adaptation examples: sign language interpretation for video messages, braille and easy-read versions.

Meetings and events: meetings and events should also be accessible to the greatest number of people - using different communication formats, (e.g. oral and written), and enquiring about reasonable accommodation measures needed to ensure meaningful participation of all (e.g. sign language interpretation, closed captioning or simultaneous translation).

Early warning systems: use multiple communication channels for disaster warnings in collaboration with persons with disabilities and include them in evacuation drills. Combine audio and visual mechanisms such as alarms, sirens, or loudspeaker announcements with flashing lights, text messages on mobile phones, and printed easy-to-read materials.

Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms: should be set-up in consultation with the affected population. When deciding which complaint and feedback channel to use, consider the accessibility and appropriateness of the channel for persons with disabilities. Everyone should have access to at least one channel that is accessible for them to use.



TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- IOM accessible and inclusive communication guidelines (Upcoming)
- [IOM tipsheet on inclusive facilitation](#)
- Additional resources on early warning systems (Upcoming)



BUDGETING FOR UNIVERSAL DESIGN, ACCESSIBILITY AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Key Actions:

- Budget for accessible activities and projects from the onset
- Dedicate a percentage of the total budget of every project for accessibility (proportional funding model)
- The recommended budget for mainstreaming accessibility in projects can vary between 1% and 7%. This percentage (and proportion of the accessibility budget) may be higher for low-cost projects
- The calculation of budget for accessibility-specific projects should be done together with disability experts and engineers.

Accessibility measures to be covered by the 1%-7% budget estimate should include:

- Accessibility audits with the participation of persons with disabilities
- Trainings of staff, partners and contractors on accessibility with the participation of persons with disabilities
- Removal of barriers to accessibility and construction work with trained contractors
- Provision of information and communication material in multiple, accessible formats
- Awareness raising on disability inclusion and accessibility in communities
- Reasonable accommodation measures to cater for individual requirements and tailored solutions
- In the absence of internal technical capacities, the recruitment of an accessibility specialist/trained engineer

In some cases, specific equipment might need to be purchased, such as assistive devices. Do NOT purchase assistive devices without the guidance of a disability or health specialist.



PART 2: CONDUCTING AN ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

An accessibility audit is an assessment of a given location, infrastructure, service, activity, or product against accessibility standards and ease of use by a wide range of users. It is a useful exercise to identify, remove or minimize accessibility barriers in a proactive way.

Accessibility audits should be:

- participatory
- conducted in a proactive way throughout the site life cycle
- followed by practical measures and accessibility work to address barriers and gaps identified

PLANNING FOR AN AUDIT: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Agree on the objective of the audit: Identify which areas and services will be at the centre of the audit and what decisions it will inform.

Determine available resources: Consider the time and resources available that may exist for site improvements. In larger sites, areas to be audited may need to be prioritized.

Learn about accessibility standards: Look for existing standards at the national level. In the absence of such standards or if inapplicable to site settings, consult international standards for accessibility of the built environment, IOM selection and possible field adaptations.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR AN ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT



- [Examples of audit forms to be contextualized](#)
- [Examples of accessibility audit reports](#)
- [Training package on accessibility for staff](#)
- [Accessibility Audit Checklist](#)



1. BEFORE THE AUDIT

- 1.1. **Define the list of participants:** Invite persons with different types of impairments, age and genders, and enquire about reasonable accommodation measures according to their needs to ensure equal participation in the process (e.g. presence of a personal assistant, transportation fee, sign language interpretation).
- 1.2. **For technical audits, with structural modifications foreseen:** at least an engineer/architect/site planner/accessibility specialist must be part of the exercise.
- 1.3. **Invite other key stakeholders:** such as facility managers, building/land owners, local authorities, representatives from other humanitarian sector and/or relevant service providers depending on the scope of the audit.
- 1.4. **Raise awareness:** Accessibility work may need to be explained to counterparts and communities. Raise awareness on the benefits of accessible sites and services for the community as a whole and for specific categories. Ensure buy-in from counterparts and plan for culturally appropriate approaches.
- 1.5. **Organize a preparatory meeting with participants on the audit process and tools:**
 - Review audit forms and ensure adaptation and contextualization to the set objectives.
 - Agree on audit's date (taking into account weather forecast) and duration.
 - List the material needed for the day – camera, measurement tape, water for participants, pens, clipboards and printed audit forms, etc.
 - Divide responsibilities among the participants (note-taker, drawer, photographer, in charge of measurements, and/or by areas or services to be audited). Avoid assigning a role to personal assistants or caretakers, they already have a function.
 - If accessibility challenges are to be foreseen during the audit day, communicate them to the participants.



2. THE AUDIT DAY

2.1. Before starting:

- Verify that reasonable accommodation measures requested have been taken for persons with disabilities.
- Provide a recap to participants about the audit process and the area to be audited.
- Remind participants that all observations are written in the forms and good quality pictures taken for record.
- Ensure the audit materials are ready (camera, printed audit forms or any electronic device to be used, clipboards, measuring tapes, pens, water for participants).
- If there is an important number of participants, you may divide them into groups and assign each group an area or service to audit.

2.2. Ending the audit day:

- Conduct a debriefing with participants. Capture their feedback on the day and their recommendations for accessibility work and potential solutions.
- Collect all forms and pictures from participants.
- Communicate next steps, including sharing of full audit results and prioritization exercise which may be needed.

When debriefing participants after the accessibility audit:

- Collect participants' general feedback on what they saw during the audit.
- Ask for participants to elaborate in any area/issue they want to discuss.
- Ask if any other observation was not included in the forms.
- Allow time for discussion and write down all relevant information.
- The debriefing may be used for prioritization /to initiate the discussion on priorities among participants.



3. RESULTS AND VALIDATION

3.1. **Analyze the results:** Results can be divided into different categories:

- Simple = small-scale improvements, with no or limited costs and that will not require accessibility specialists (e.g. = adding chairs to a registration area).
- Medium = may involve small or moderate costs and will not require accessibility specialists (e.g., setting up a door-to-door distribution).
- Complex = require more planning, resources and the involvement of engineers, architects, site planners or accessibility specialists (e.g., construction of ramps or any structural modification).

As an alternative, the results can be ranked according to the priority.

3.2. **Coordinate with respective sectors:** some issues identified may fall under other sectors' responsibilities. Refer concerns raised during the audit for follow-up and feedback to communities.

3.3. **Draft a short report:** Include the services or areas audited, maps, photos and information collected. Include recommendations and costs estimates for each modification. Audits' reports are also be useful tools to fundraise for site improvement work.

3.4. **Agree on solutions and designs prior to the beginning of the construction or modification work:** Share the report and recommendations with:

- Participants to the audits and other relevant stakeholders to agree on priorities for accessibility work and proposed solutions, taking into consideration available budget
- The site authorities, land/building owners, and other sectors of interest, in particular if any significant modifications to the structure(s) are planed, any change in the flow of movement, any obstruction of passages, risks in terms of disruption of services during construction
- Agree on the next steps, including roles and responsibilities.



4. TAKING ACTION: ACCESSIBILITY WORK PROCESS

Once accessibility work has been communicated and validated, the construction work can start:

- 4.1. **Procurement of materials:** Liaise with procurement and logistics teams to purchase materials for accessibility work. Use materials available in the national/local market whenever possible and ensure quality of materials selected.
- 4.2. **Recruitment and training of contractors:** Ensure contractors receive basic training on accessibility and the importance of following the given measures to meet accessibility standards. Often, builders might have practical experience but no formal training in construction work.
- 4.3. **Testing of prototypes and monitoring of construction:** Whenever possible, have persons with disabilities test the prototype(s) before finalization. Develop a schedule for monitoring visits while accessibility work is being conducted. Invite persons with disabilities, preferably those who participated in the audit, to join the monitoring visits, asking them to help evaluate the progress and results. Ensure that their feedback is used to make relevant adjustments.
- 4.4. **Awareness on the use of accessibility works:** Awareness sessions with staff and communities should be carried out to ensure proper use, maintenance and durability of the work completed.
- 4.5. **Evaluation of results:** A meeting with persons with disabilities should be held to collect their opinion on the quality and relevance of the work completed and testing of the work done. Satisfaction surveys can also be carried out 3 to 6 months after completion of the work to understand better people's opinions on safety and access on a day-to-day basis.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CCCM

The Disability Inclusion in CCCM Toolbox, 2023: [DI in CCCM toolbox](#)
Additional examples of catalogues of accessibility items and designs (IOM resources):
[Examples from different countries on catalogue of accessibility items](#)

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

Comprehensive shelter resource on inclusive shelter and settlements programming:
[Global Shelter Cluster, All Under One Roof, 2023 edition](#)

WASH

WASH resources (IOM and external resources):
[Accessibility audit forms resources for WASH and examples](#)
[Comprehensive Safety and Accessibility Audit toolkit by Global WASH Cluster](#)

Videos – Voices from the Field

[IOM Bangladesh, Conducting an Accessibility Audit](#)

IOM would like to thank missions in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Fiji, Iraq, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, South Sudan, Türkiye and Yemen for their contribution to the enclosed resources on accessibility.

For Further Information
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