

Policy on Disability Inclusion

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear outline of Caritas Norway's commitment to becoming a fully inclusive organisation, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The policy provides a framework and a starting point for the process of mainstreaming disability both inside Caritas Norway and in the programmes supported by the organisation.

1. Why a policy on disability?

Persons with disabilities are present in every society and bring diversity and skills to their communities. They are as entitled to human rights as every other person, and should be included equitably in all aspects of social life.

The CRPD states that persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Article 1). It explains how different categories of rights apply to persons with disabilities. It identifies barriers for full realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the areas where their rights have been violated and where protection of rights must be reinforced.

Poverty and disability are closely linked: 20 percent of persons living in poverty also live with a disability, and 80 percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. It is also important to note that the official disability prevalence estimates in developing countries are lower, due to reduced registration levels and survival rates.

Persons living in poverty are at higher risk of a physical, sensory, mental or intellectual impairment, due to factors such as unsafe living conditions and inadequate access to healthcare. At the same time, having a disability can exacerbate issues associated with poverty, such as limited access to education, employment and clean water, and increased vulnerability to gender discrimination, economic and social exclusion, conflicts and emergencies. Due to social stigma and other barriers, persons with disabilities struggle to participate as equals in their communities and are commonly excluded.

An estimated 150 million children live with a disability and therefore face reduced access to schooling, healthcare, recreation and job opportunities. Women and girls living with disabilities are more likely to face discrimination than disabled men and boys.

The number of persons with disabilities tends to increase in emergencies. When crisis strikes, persons with disabilities face higher risks to their well-being and survival; yet, they are largely excluded from humanitarian assistance.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has integrated disability inclusion in several goals – including SDG 4, 8, 10, 11 and 17 – together with the commitment to “Leave no one behind”. Although there are costs associated with including persons with disabilities in development programmes, they are far outweighed by the long-term financial benefits to individuals, families and

society. Furthermore, these costs can be minimised, if disability-inclusive practices are present from the planning and design phase.

2. Terms and definitions

The CRPD states that disability results from interaction between persons with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and attitudinal or environmental barriers that hinder their full and equal participation in society.

According to CBM¹, there are five main models of disability: charity model, medical model, economic model, social model and human rights model. **The human rights model** is the most recognised today. It takes universal human rights as a starting point. Persons with disabilities are seen as having an equal right to participate in all aspects of society. Disability-inclusive development should take a rights-based approach. This translates into the practice of identifying external barriers in cooperation with persons with disabilities, who become the focal points in the process of full attainment of rights. The rights-based perspective adopts awareness, participation, comprehensive accessibility and the twin-track approach as core disability-inclusive development principles.

Disability-inclusive development envisions a society that values all persons with disabilities. Such a disability-inclusive practice seeks to contribute to equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes for all persons around the world.

Awareness of disability and its implications is the crucial first step in development programs' becoming inclusive.

Participation of persons with a disability is essential for genuine empowerment and change within communities.

Comprehensive accessibility ensures that physical, communication, policy and attitudinal barriers are identified and addressed.

Twin track as an approach combines the use of specific actions to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities with mainstreaming of inclusion in all development and human rights work.

3. Inclusion of people with disabilities and Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching says that all humans have an integral and inalienable dignity, that every human life is to be equal, inherently sacred and worth of dignity and respect. It teaches us that true love is also about justice, and that solidarity is one of the most important principles. For the situation of people living with disabilities, the issue of subsidiarity is also central. A just society stands in solidarity with people with disabilities and offers them with the same opportunities, it allows them to make their own decisions in relation to their own needs, relationships and communities and does not unduly delegate their decision-making power to higher authorities and governing bodies.

¹ CBM is a recognized international Christian development organisation committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the poorest communities of the world.

Key human rights conventions have a lot in common with Catholic Social Teaching. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the CRPD all promote respect for human dignity, expressed in a specific and tangible way, and should be recognised as necessary tools in the work of the Church and Caritas. The concept of the Church's 'preferential option for the poor' is also relevant here. To create an option for the poor means to place their needs in the centre of the Church's attention and allow their perspective to shape the Church's approach and practice.

4. Caritas Norway's approach

As a development and humanitarian organisation, Caritas Norway needs to be disability- inclusive. We believe that disability-inclusive development practice will lead to more effective poverty alleviation and greater impact.

Caritas Norway employs the term '**persons with disabilities**'. This follows the language used by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is consistent with the rights-based model of disability. It encourages a focus on the individual and his/her rights and respects contribution, skills and capacity of all individuals.

Caritas Norway adopts the rights-based approach to disability. Rights-based assistance presupposes that all persons are respected and their abilities and resources utilised. Disabled persons are themselves experts on their own life situation and should be at the centre of all decisions that may affect them. This includes the right to participate in development and humanitarian interventions. We therefore aim to ensure that all Caritas Norway projects and programmes are accessible to persons with disabilities, and that they take active part in planning and implementation of the interventions.

Caritas Norway will work towards equal opportunities and non-discrimination, respecting and valuing equally all persons with disabilities. Our work will be based on the principles of awareness, participation, comprehensive accessibility and mainstreaming as part of the twin-track approach. In this work, Caritas Norway will seek cooperation with disabled persons' organisations (DPOs) and include measures in our programmes to reduce barriers in the following four categories:

- **Physical or environmental barriers** — that hinder access to buildings, facilities, paths, water pumps, public transport;
- **Communication barriers** — that limit access to written and spoken information, including media, flyers, internet, community meetings;
- **Policy barriers** — including departmental and organisational policies, bylaws, regulations and procedures that discriminate against persons with disabilities, and/or lack of relevant policies that might provide an enabling framework;
- **Attitudinal barriers** — including negative stereotyping of persons with disabilities, social stigma and other forms of overt discrimination.

5. Programme-specific implications

Disability inclusion should be integrated in all phases of a Caritas Norway project or programme cycle. The tool “Caritas Norway’s Programme Guide on Disability” shall be used to orient the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of any programme.

When evaluating its programmes, Caritas Norway will include the following questions:

- Did the awareness and understanding of disability increase amongst programme staff and in the community?
- Did the programme enhance the capacity of persons with disabilities?
- Were persons with disabilities able to access all the services offered? What are the recommendations for addressing the barriers in the future?
- Did persons with disabilities have the opportunity to be involved as active participants in decision- making processes?
- Did the project personnel receive knowledge and training on the specific requirements of persons with a disability?

Caritas Norway works primarily in the areas of food security and livelihoods, emergency relief and migration. Disability inclusion and measures to combat stigma must be considered in all these programme areas.

Food security and livelihoods

According to FAO, agriculture is the sector where most persons with disabilities worldwide make a living. In the subsistence context, ‘living’ is little more than ‘survival’, as an estimated 430 million disabled people in rural areas of low-income countries are unlikely to be able to undertake the work required in subsistence or commercial agricultural production systems. Persons with disabilities also struggle more than others with access to small loans, savings and other forms of financial support necessary to start an own business. Climate change is projected to increase malnutrition and prevalence of various diseases, thus increasing the overall number of disabled and the hardships that they and their families face in everyday life. Malnutrition is estimated to cause approximately 20 percent of impairments worldwide.

Caritas Norway shall take a disability-inclusive approach in all development and food security programmes. This entails ensuring that persons with disabilities and/or local DPOs are involved in the entire programme cycle, including programme planning, and that they benefit equally from the programme. Capacity-building plans and activities for Caritas Norway’s partners should aim to strengthen local capacity on disability inclusion. Caritas Norway will provide disaggregated data on disability in its food security and livelihood programs.

Practical resources

- Caritas Norway's programme guide on disability inclusion
- Caritas Norway's checklist on disability-inclusive organisations

Humanitarian assistance

During disaster responses, persons with disabilities are often invisible and excluded from accessing emergency support and essential services such as food distribution, medical care, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. Information on disaster preparedness is often not diffused in accessible formats, so persons with disabilities are less aware and less prepared for emergencies. Moreover, disasters increase the prevalence of disability in a community. For every person killed in a disaster, another three are injured or left with a permanent disability. Persons with disabilities experience increased vulnerability during natural disasters due to separation from families and loss of mobility devices. They are at heightened risk of violence and exploitation, and often have restricted access to protection. According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), of the one billion persons living with disabilities around the world, approximately 20 million are affected by conflict or disaster and an estimated 6.7 million have been forcibly displaced from their homes².

Caritas Norway shall take a disability inclusive approach in all humanitarian aid programmes. This includes providing disaggregated data on disability in our emergency relief. Caritas Norway shall follow the SPHERE guidelines for emergency response, which make an explicit reference to persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group. Caritas Norway shall furthermore adhere to the Istanbul 2016 Humanitarian Summit Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action³.

Practical resources

- Caritas Norway's programme guide on disability inclusion
- SPHERE Minimum Standards for Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action⁴

² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Five reasons why disability matters in a crisis, 26 December 2016.

³ The signatories of the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action pledge to include persons with disabilities in their future humanitarian, based on five principles: non-discrimination and recognition of the diversity of persons with disabilities; involvement of persons with disabilities in developing humanitarian programs; ensuring equal availability and accessibility of services and humanitarian assistance to all persons with disabilities; implementation of inclusive global policies; cooperation and coordination among humanitarian actors to improve inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Charter has been endorsed by the Norwegian Government.

⁴ Includes material from organisations with focus on disability and/or older age, together with key documents, including the Sphere Handbook, the Sphere Companion Standards and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

Migration

In addition to the pre-existing physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairments, individuals may acquire or develop impairments during migration. Furthermore, many migrants and refugees do not disclose their disabilities to police, social services or migration authorities for fear that it would affect their asylum application. In the ongoing migration crisis in the European Union, the CRPD Committee has expressed its deep concern with the precarious situation of persons with disabilities⁵. In particular, the Committee has noted that refugees, migrants and asylum seekers with disabilities are detained in the EU in conditions that do not guarantee appropriate support and reasonable adjustments, that migration decision-making procedures are not accessible for all persons with disabilities, and that information and communication are not provided in accessible formats.

Caritas Norway shall take a disability-inclusive approach to all domestic activities related to migration and refugees. This includes ensuring that the Caritas Resource Centres are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities and can offer appropriate advice to disabled migrants. Caritas Norway shall raise the issue of disability and inclusion during introduction meetings for volunteers preparing to work with migrants and refugees, to ensure that activities run in the Caritas Resource Centres and in Norwegian Reception Centres are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Practical resources:

- Caritas Norway's programme guide on disability inclusion
- Caritas Norway's checklist on disability-inclusive organisations
- Building standard guidelines by The Norwegian Association of Disabled

6. Organisational implications

Building a disability-inclusive approach to development often means starting with your own organisation. The tool "Caritas Norway's CN checklist on disability-inclusive organisations" shall therefore also be used internally to identify gaps and potential for improvement. This self-assessment should be done together with and at the same frequency as the CIMS self-assessment. Appropriate measures should be taken to follow up on the findings.

In addition, Caritas Norway commits to the following measures and principles within our own organisation:

- A non-discriminatory employment policy, which includes attracting, deploying, developing and retaining employees regardless of their disability; in the case where two persons are equally qualified for a job, preference should be given to the person with a disability.
- Ensuring that the work environment is accessible to all.

⁵ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the initial report of the European Union, 4 September 2015, p. 5.

- Ensuring that the organisation's website and other communication tools are adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities⁶.
- Provision of disability training and awareness for new staff.
- An appointed person with authority who has responsibility for disability inclusion.
- Provision of specific training for staff involved in assessing funding applications.
- Encouraging Caritas' partners to take similar steps.

Practical resources:

- Caritas Norway's checklist on disability-inclusive organisations
- Personnel handbook

⁶ In line with DIFI guidelines and regulations.