

## TIP SHEET:

# Shelter and evacuation centre accessibility

## DISABILITY INCLUSION KEY MESSAGES

When thinking about shelter and evacuation centre accessibility, apply the RECU principle – Reach, Enter, Circulate, Use. Make sure people with disabilities (and older people, people with temporary injuries, pregnant women, and small children) can:

- ✓ **Reach** the evacuation shelter. This requires pathways, signage, transport etc.
- ✓ **Enter** the evacuation shelter. This requires wide doorways, ramps etc.
- ✓ **Circulate** within the evacuation shelter. This requires lighting, signage etc.
- ✓ **Use** the services provided in the shelter. This requires accessible WASH etc.

## THINGS TO DO DURING THE PREPAREDNESS PHASE

- ✓ **Awareness raising:** Ensure people with disabilities, their families, and communities, receive information on the importance of evacuating early, the location of evacuation shelters, and their right to an accessible shelter.
- ✓ **Participation:** Ensure the voices of people with disabilities are represented on shelter committees (including the shelter cluster) and in disaster-preparedness committees.
- ✓ **Capacity:** Train NDMO and shelter cluster representatives on disability inclusion. Train evacuation centre management personnel on disability inclusion, with the aim of ensuring they are ready to meet the needs of people with disabilities in a shelter or evacuation centre.

- ✔ **Simulations:** implement a disaster evacuation simulation exercise in which people with disabilities can become familiar with the process to evacuate, routes to the evacuation shelter, and the location and layout of their nearby shelters. This will also assist people with disabilities, their families and community to identify any barriers that need to be addressed.
  
- ✔ **Adaptations to evacuation centre/shelter buildings:** Work with local Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) to conduct an accessibility audit of buildings identified for use as collective evacuation centres/shelters and make recommended adaptations to improve accessibility. Adaptations could include:
  - **Information accessibility:** Signs to and within evacuation centres use large dark print (letters at least 10cm in size for viewing from a 3m distance, and 20cm for 10m distance). Place information boards within the centres at a level that can be seen from seated height (between 75-90cm above the ground and maximum 180cm high). Display a map of the evacuation centre. Use simple language and clear pictures. Use audio broadcasted information. Work with sign language interpreters and other interpreters to communicate with people with different impairment types.
  - **Paths:** Firm, non-slip pathways should be a minimum of 90cm wide and clear of obstructions.
  - **Doors:** Doorways should be a minimum of 90cm wide. Use outward-opening doors with lever-style or easy-to-grab handles located at a height of 90cm above the ground. The colour of the doors and/or the doorframes should contrast with the wall.
  - **Ramps:** Have smooth, non-slip ramps with a maximum gradient of 1:12, at least 90cm wide, and with handrails at heights of 70cm and 90cm from the ramp level. Provide landing areas at the top and the bottom of the ramp, with a minimum flat space of 140cm x 140cm.
  - **Stairs:** If stairs are present, ensure that each step is no more than 15cm high, at least 30cm deep and 90cm wide. The edges of each step should be marked in a contrasting colour to make them easily visible.
  - **WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) facilities:** At least 10% of toilets should be accessible. This requires a toilet cubicle with a clear area of 1.5m<sup>2</sup> to provide wheelchair users with enough circulation space to complete a full turn. Have a non-slip floor and a large, easy-to-use lock located at 90cm from the ground. Tap and toilet height must be appropriate for people with mobility restrictions and have easy-to-hold transfer rails. Have lever-style tap handles that are easy-to-use for a person with limited grip strength.
  - **Bedding:** Consider providing raised platforms and mattresses for elderly people and people with mobility impairments.

- ✓ **Adaptations to temporary tarpaulin/tent shelters:** Work with local OPDs to assess the designs of temporary shelters. Erect a sample tarp/tent and identify possible adaptations including:
  - **Entrances:** The colour of the entrance should contrast with the rest of the tent to make it easy to identify. Consider using coloured tape (at least 5cm wide) to mark the entrance. Identify accessible techniques for people with disabilities to independently open and close tents, for example, a rope or a stick attached to the zip, or use Velcro.
  - **Circulation:** Consider the height of the tent and ensure a clear area of 1.5m x 1.5m inside to provide wheelchair users with enough circulation space to complete a full turn.

## THINGS TO DO DURING THE EMERGENCY AND IMMEDIATE RESPONSE PHASE

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- ✓ **Data collection:** As displaced people arrive at shelters/evacuation centres, collect information to know the number and needs of people with disabilities staying in the shelter. Incorporate the Washington Group Short Set of Questions into evacuation centre registration forms to enable data to be disaggregated by disability.
- ✓ People with disabilities in collective evacuation centres/shelters may require:
  - **Support persons:** People with disabilities need to remain with or be reunited with their family members and/or support persons.
  - **Support items:** Allocate raised beds and mattresses rather than requiring people with disabilities to sleep on the floor. Discuss with people with disabilities their requirements for non-food items, including continence pads, additional sanitation items, pens and note pads for communication, adapted utensils, straws etc.
  - **Location:** People with disabilities and their families should be allocated an easy-to-access space on the ground level close to an accessible entrance, accessible WASH facilities and distribution/information points.
  - **Sufficient space:** International guidelines state that the amount of space required for each person within a group shelter is at least 3.5m<sup>2</sup>. Remember wheelchair users require clear space to transfer from wheelchair to (raised) mattress.
  - **Privacy partitions:** Material to screen between individuals or families/households must ensure safe separation and privacy between people of different genders, different age groups, and between families/households. Within family/household space, provide for internal subdivision.
  - **Lighting:** All public areas, pathways, corridors, and WASH facilities should be well-lit. Consider providing people with disabilities with torches/head torches and whistles.
  - **Safety considerations:** Ensure women with disabilities are not required to move through or past male-allocated sleeping areas to reach accessible WASH facilities, and vice versa. All bathrooms must have easy-to-use locks.
- ✓ **People with disabilities in tarpaulins or temporary tents:** In addition to the above considerations, also ensure people with disabilities are provided with large-enough tarps or tents, offered support to build their tarp/tent shelter, and allocated volunteers who are responsible to regularly visit and check for required maintenance.

## THINGS TO DO DURING THE RECOVERY PHASE

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- ☑ Review: Ask people with disabilities and their families and/or support persons about their experiences in relation to shelter and shelter management after disasters to learn and continue to improve in future.
- ☑ Where possible, prioritise assistance to people with disabilities to rebuild their homes.

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This resource has been developed based on information from the following resources: IFRC, HI and CBM (2015) [All under one roof: Disability-inclusive shelter and settlements in emergencies](#); CBM [Inclusive post-disaster reconstruction: Building back safe and accessible for all 16 minimum requirements for building accessible shelters](#); CBM [Humanitarian hands-on tool](#); CBM, HelpAge International, Humanity and Inclusion (2018) [Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities](#); Pacific Disability Forum Access audit tool for public places; Government of Vanuatu (2016) National guidelines for the selection and assessment of evacuation centres; Global Shelter Cluster (2015) [Protection mainstreaming tip sheet - Shelter Programs](#); Handicap International and Atlas Logistique (2009) [Accessibility for all in an emergency context](#); United Nations (2004) [Accessibility for the disabled: A design manual for a barrier free environment](#); AusAID (2009), [Accessibility design guide: Universal design principles for Australia's aid program](#)