

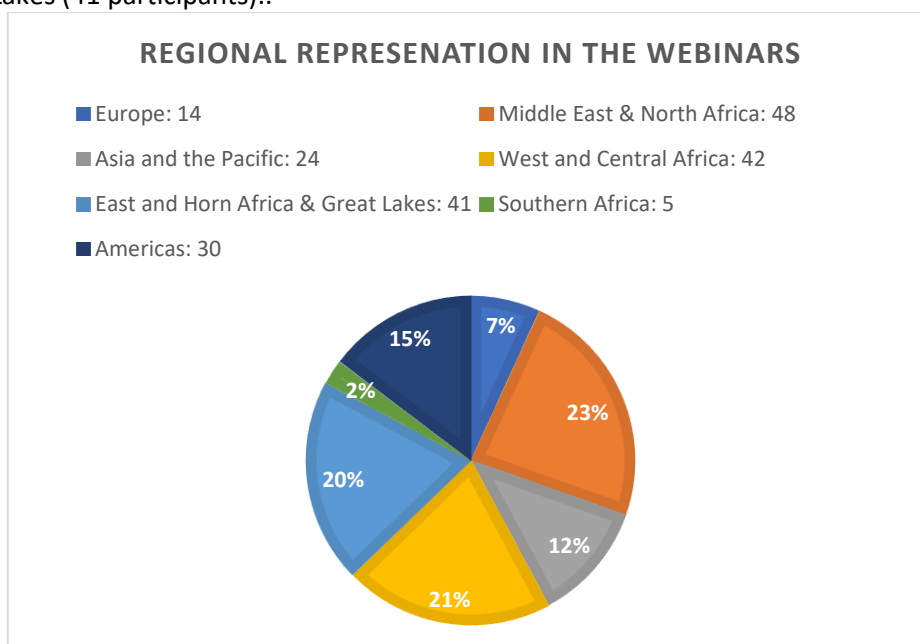


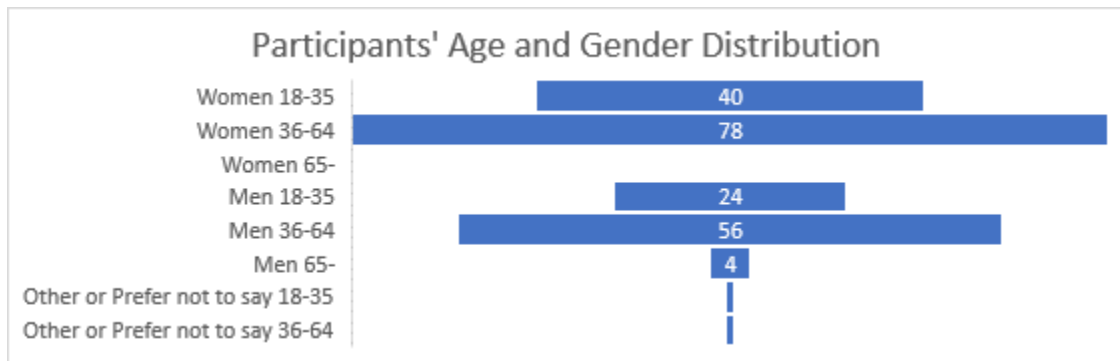
IDA- UNHCR Webinar Series towards an Annual Consultation with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

Summary

As part of the [strategic partnership](#) between the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR and IDA launched a webinar series. The objective of the webinar series was to provide organizations of persons with disabilities as well as forcibly displaced and stateless persons with disabilities a platform to enhance their understanding and engage in an interactive dialogue on means to enhance protection and participation of persons with disabilities under UNHCR's mandate. To ensure equal participation and accessibility, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Sign language interpretation were available during the entire webinar series.

The webinars gathered together 204 participants from all seven regions UNHCR operates (all numbers excluding facilitators, presenters, interpreters and support staff). The participants included 118 women, 84 men and 2 participants preferring not to disclose their gender identity. More than half of the participants were participants with disabilities: 53 % of women and 75 % of men were participants with disabilities. Geographically the webinars were mostly attended by participants from Middle East and North Africa (48 participants), West and Central Africa (42 participants) and East Horn Africa and the Great Lakes (41 participants)..





Webinar 1 – Engagement with Human Rights Mechanisms for disability inclusion
in response to Displacement and Statelessness
Tuesday, November 1, 2022

Presenters

Juan Ignacio Perez - Human Rights Advisor, International Disability Alliance; Peter Swiniarsky - Legal Officer, Human Rights Liaison office, Division of International Protection – Policy and Law Service, UNHCR. Moderator: Ricardo Pla Cordero, Protection Officer, UNHCR.

Summary

The topic of the first webinar was how to effectively engage with Human Rights Mechanisms for disability inclusion in response to situations of forced displacement and statelessness.

The first presentation, given by Juan Ignacio Perez - Human Rights Advisor - International Disability Alliance, included an introduction to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Committee Functions, and the involvement of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in State reviews, individual communications/complaints procedures, inquires, and inputs in the development of General Comments, among other. Juan Ignacio highlighted that the CRPD Committee has made recommendations related to refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities, usually under article 11 of CRPD on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, but also under other rights, for example under article 18 CRPD on Liberty of movement and nationality. Finally, Juan Ignacio also mentioned that other Committees may also tackle disability, forced displacement and statelessness. For example, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) shared recommendations on Indonesia, Myanmar, Kenya, Bangladesh, India, Iraq, among other.

The second presentation was given by Peter Swiniarski, Legal officer from the Human Rights Liaison Office at UNHCR. Peter shed light on issues that UNHCR has been addressing to the CRPD Committee through confidential submissions, including on Article 9 on Accessibility, article 4 on General Obligations, Article 5 on Equality and non-discrimination, Article 25 on Health, Article 11 on Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, Article 16 on Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse and Article 24 on Education. Peter also mentioned UNHCR’s collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the regular updates that UNHCR provides to the CRPD Committee, including through the participation of high-level officials like Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, to briefings with the Committee.

Discussion

Questions from the audience included the extent to which Human Rights frameworks can be used to monitor how reception and detention facilities for refugees and asylum seekers follow national standards on accessibility, whether the information on refugee procedures and protection for

refugees with disabilities is accessible for persons with disabilities, and how do national asylum procedures ensure the provision of reasonable accommodations and adjustments to ensure non-discrimination, for example, by providing sign language interpretation during asylum procedures.

Number of Participants: 46

Links

1. [Compilation of good practices on engaging with human rights systems](#). UNHCR 2022.
2. [UNHCR's Human Rights Engagement Strategy, the case for inclusion: 2020-2023](#). UNHCR, 2019.
3. TB-NET – NGO Network on UN Treaty Bodies. Upcoming Reviews - [Treaty Bodies 2022/2024 - Deadlines – \(Google Doc\)](#)
4. To learn more about UNHCR and IDA collaboration: [Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with Disabilities | International Disability Alliance](#)

Webinar 2 – Towards a 2nd Global Refugee Forum: How you can get involved Tuesday, November 14, 2022

Presenters

Juan Ángel de Gouveia - President of the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS); Machtelt de Vriese - Senior Community-Based Protection Officer, UNHCR; and Niklas Saxen - Senior Humanitarian Adviser, Development Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland. Moderator: Ricardo Pla Cordero, Protection Officer, UNHCR.

Summary

The topic of the second webinar was how to engage in the upcoming second [Global Refugee Forum GRF in 2023](#), based on [previous experiences of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities](#) in participating in the 2019 first GRF.

Juan Ángel de Gouveia started the webinar by providing opening remarks, which built on his experience at the 2019 GRF and the work undertaken by RIADIS and UNHCR with persons with disabilities on the move in the Americas, reflected in the report [Disability and Human Mobility](#). He expressed the need for more efforts to support people with disabilities on the move and how this collaboration is invaluable for that cause. He also mentioned the impact that COVID had on these groups, and the need for producing accessible information for all persons with disabilities to ensure no one is left behind in future responses.

The second presentation was given by Machtelt de Vriese - Senior Community-Based Protection Officer, UNHCR. Machtelt recalled how the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) was endorsed in 2018 by the General Assembly of the United Nations with the aim of providing a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing through four key objectives: 1) Ease the pressure on host countries, 2) Enhancing refugee self-reliance, 3) Expanding access to third-country solutions and 4) Supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. In addition, the Global Compact recognizes a whole-of-society approach, so we cannot reach the objectives of responsibility sharing if we don't work together. Machtelt also talked about the first [Global Refugee Forum](#) in 2019, which was co-hosted by UNHCR and Switzerland and co-convened by five countries hosting large numbers of refugees, such as Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Germany, Pakistan, and Turkey. The GRF 2019 had 3000 participants, states, ministers, private sectors, development actors, and refugees. Machtelt highlighted how the identification process for the participation of refugees was not as inclusive as the

organizers would have liked and called for the support of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities to ensure better representation of refugees with disabilities in 2023.

The third presentation was provided by Niklas Saxen - Senior Humanitarian Adviser, Development Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland. Niklas talked about pledges shared by Finland in GRF 2019, which had a special focus on inclusive refugee response, protection, and solutions which included self-reliance, where disability inclusion had a prominent role. Finland made also a disability-focused pledge to support UNHCR on disability inclusion efforts. Niklas also shared ideas for future pledging that States could follow, including by funding for organizations for persons with disabilities, and including women and girls with disabilities in pledges focusing on gender equality.

Discussion

Questions from the audience included a need to well understand development and humanitarian funding mechanisms, ways on supporting access for refugees in local labour markets and national protection schemes and increasing funding on technical support and capacity building for organizations of persons with disabilities to engage in refugee response and self-reliance. Overall, there was a strong interest in strengthening the participation of refugees with disabilities in the upcoming Global Refugee Forum in 2023, including through the direct engagement of refugees with disabilities in planning efforts for the organization of the event.

Number of Participants: 33.

Links:

1. [Disability and Human Mobility](#)
2. [IDA attended the first-ever Global Refugees Forum, 17-18 December 2019 in Geneva | International Disability Alliance](#)
3. [The Global Compact on Refugees | The Global Compact on Refugees | UNHCR \(globalcompactrefugees.org\)](#)
4. [Global Refugee Forum GRF in 2023](#)

Webinar 3 – Understanding the protection mandate of UNHCR and connections for persons with disabilities

Monday, November 21

Presenters

Mathilde Crepin – Senior Protection Officer, Refugee Status Determination Section, Division of International Protection at UNHCR; Marcella Rouweler – Statelessness Officer, Statelessness Section, Division of International Protection at UNHCR. Moderator: Ricardo Pla Cordero, Protection Officer, UNHCR.

Summary

The topic of the third webinar was understanding the interaction between the rights of persons with disabilities and the core mandate of UNHCR as regards to the protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons.

The first presentation was given by Mathilde Crepin on process of refugee status determination. The presentation opened with a short introduction to the refugee definition under the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), with mentions to regional instruments such as the [Cartagena Declaration](#) and [Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa](#). Matilde provided examples on how different types of disabilities have been considered in the process of determination of refugee status,

and how the process should be adapted to account for the needs of applicants with disabilities, following the [UNHCR - Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate](#), which include relevant mentions across different standards and a dedicated [Unit 2.9 on Applicants with Mental Health Conditions or Intellectual Disabilities in UNHCR RSD Procedures](#).

The second presentation was given by Marcella Rouweler, who introduced [statelessness as part of UNHCR's mandate](#). She discussed key concepts on statelessness, the right to a nationality, the processes for becoming stateless, its impact on an individual and societal level, the legal framework to address it at the international level as well as a solution, and a quick overview of the major situations of statelessness. She introduced the [two key conventions on statelessness](#): the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Marcella recalled how the right to nationality is itself a human right, as reiterated in many human rights instruments, but it also provides access to other rights. Statelessness can be both cause and consequence of displacement, though most stateless persons have never left their country of birth. Discrimination, gaps, and conflicts in nationality law, state succession, and lack of birth registration are all examples of causes of statelessness, including for persons with disabilities. In this regard, disability discrimination is the most prevalent form of discrimination in nationality laws around the world, as reflected in the [Background Note on Discrimination in Nationality Laws and Statelessness](#). For example, some nationality laws include provisions requiring individuals to be of “sound mind”, which can be used to discriminate against those with disabilities. Sometimes there are language requirements for nationality, which could also be a barrier for persons with disabilities. Finally, Marcella mentioned how [UNHCR's IBelong campaign](#) includes 10 actions that States can take to eliminate statelessness globally.

Discussion

Questions from the audience included the relation between disability and resettlement, how persecution against persons with disabilities is understood under the 1951 Refugee Convention, how to ensure that host countries can improve the integration of refugees with disabilities, and who are primary responsible stakeholders for the protection of stateless persons, among others.

Number of Participants: 37.

Links

1. [UNHCR Refugee Status Determination Procedural Standards](#).
2. [Disability | UNHCR Integration Handbook](#)
3. [Resettlement assessment tool Refugees with disabilities](#)
4. [Background Note on Discrimination in Nationality Laws and Statelessness](#)
5. Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with Disabilities - [IDA-UNHCR Strategic Collaboration in 2021: Achievements, Challenges, and Way-Forward](#)

Webinar 4 – Gender-Based Violence and Forcibly Displaced Women with Disabilities

28th November 2022

Presenters

Emilie Page - Senior GBV Officer, Division of International Protection, UNHCR; Gabriella Martinez, RIADIS Board Member; Pauline Nkatha, HIAS Kenya; Edith Saada and Maha Ismail, UNHCR Syria;

Elizabeth McGuinness, UNHCR EU Bureau; Jakub Wojdyński, Mudita Foundation Poland. Moderator: Elham Youssefian, International Disability Alliance.

Summary

The topic of the fourth webinar was exploring the impact of Gender Based Violence in women and girls with disabilities, and exploring promising practice in its prevention and response, building on advocacy efforts made during the 16 Days of Activism.

Gabriella Martinez, board member of the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS), provided opening remarks for the event. Gabriella spoke on the violence experienced by displaced women with disabilities in South America, emphasizing that this is exacerbated by the increasing number of gangs and natural disasters and the impact of unreported violations such as forced sterilization. Gabriella also stressed the invisibility experienced by women with intellectual disabilities and the lack of opportunities for education, employment, decision making that consequently reduce their independence and further expose them to GBV.

Emilie Page introduced [UNHCR's work on the prevention and response to Gender-Based Violence](#), including the [UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence, 2020](#). She spoke on the definition of GBV, its disproportionate effect on women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, and outlined opportunities to further strengthen the inclusiveness of GBV interventions for forcibly displaced women and girls with disabilities.

These presentations were followed by a panel discussion on operational practices across Kenya, Syria and the Ukraine Response in Europe, including on efforts to include accessibility assessments into GBV Safety Audits and engaging women and girls with disabilities in these assessments, but also on identifying gaps in GBV response, with an important effort to be made on aligning service provision with preferences and priorities shared by women and girls with disabilities, instead of providing services based on assumptions on disability-related needs perceived by service providers.

Number of Participants: 63.

Links

1. [UNHCR's work on the prevention and response to Gender-Based Violence](#)
2. [UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence, 2020](#)
3. [Intersectionalities | International Disability Alliance](#)

Webinar 5: Year-End Consultation with OPDs and refugees and stateless persons with disabilities
Monday, December 05, 2022

Presenters

Elham Youssefian, Senior Adviser, Inclusive Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction, International Disability Alliance. Ricardo Pla Cordero - Protection Officer - Disability Inclusion, Division of International Protection at UNHCR.

Summary

The objective of this webinar was identifying and shaping key asks for UNHCR and IDA collaboration in 2023, including towards the second Global Refugee Forum in December.

The registration form used for this webinar included a dedicated space to share three key asks for UNHCR and IDA joint activities in 2023. The webinar opened with a summary of previous webinars and feedback received through the registration form, followed by an open space for sharing additional ideas, questions and comments regarding any of the topics mentioned, or adding new topics to the list.

The four main asks provided through the form and discussed during the webinars could be summarized as 1) Ensuring equality and non-discrimination in accessing services and self-reliance opportunities for refugees with disabilities 2) Addressing the impact of protection concerns faced by forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls with disabilities 3) Ensuring equal access to international protection, including refugee status determination, for refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and 4) strengthening the capacities and meaningful participation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and refugees with disabilities.

Discussion

- 1. Ensuring equality and non-discrimination in accessing services and self-reliance opportunities for refugees with disabilities.** Recommendations under this area included providing affirmative measures to ensure equal access to services, including ensuring the accessibility of services and the provision of reasonable adjustments to address remaining barriers to access; monitoring access to mainstream services, and barriers to access those services; ensuring equal access to basic services, but also education, rehabilitation and support services to enhance autonomy; equal access for refugees with disabilities to social protection schemes addressed to persons with disabilities; enhance the employability of refugees with disabilities.
- 2. Addressing the impact of protection concerns faced by forcibly displaced and stateless women and girls with disabilities.** Key issues highlighted under this area included ensuring the wellbeing of women and girls who are refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons with disabilities by eradicating gender-based violence; setting up mechanisms to ensure prevent of GBV in camps, where women and girls with disabilities may be at heightened risk of violence; empowering women with disabilities by providing employment opportunities; engaging women and girls with disabilities in gender equality efforts.
- 3. Ensuring equal access to international protection, including refugee status determination, for refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities.** Three main areas of interaction of the rights of persons with disabilities as refugees and asylum seekers include equal access to refugee status determination procedures; strengthening the understanding of disability within persecution grounds; and ensuring equal access to protection provisions addressed to any refugee and to protection provisions addressed to any person with a disability. Specific requests included prioritizing persons with disabilities in backlog review cases, accounting for their heightened risk of discrimination; ensuring equal access to procedures by providing reasonable adjustments and avoiding additional barriers, including when digital interaction or remote procedures can cause harm to refugees with disabilities with less access to digital spaces; ensuring safeguards are applied in the provision of reasonable adjustments, and avoiding potential harmful uses of procedures such as appointing an alternative person to support decision making or to address physical or communication barriers, which may result

in lack of participation in decision making, or even reputational risks for the applicant with a disability if misrepresented by the appointed person; strengthen the capacity of asylum staff on understanding a rights-based approach to disability; considering the continuous violation or denial of rights to persons with disabilities as grounds for persecution; avoid negative interaction between refugee and disability provisions, for example subsidized employment for persons with disabilities not being considered as a recognized income generation activity to ensure legal stability, or refugee allowances excluding access to disability benefits; strengthen access to resettlement for refugees with disabilities.

4. **Strengthening the capacities and meaningful participation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and refugees with disabilities.** Specific asks included building the capacity of OPD, refugees and stateless persons with disabilities through access to training opportunities, grassroots level sensitization and engagement; access to financial resources and direct program implementation opportunities; advance the rights of most marginalized groups among persons with disabilities, such as indigenous persons with disabilities and the deaf community; ensure participation of refugees with disabilities the GRF 2023; strengthen linkages with UNHCR offices at country level, beyond global and regional engagement through umbrella OPDs; develop an informal WhatsApp group for further engagement and discussion.

These recommendations will be considered when developing priority areas of work for 2023.

Number of Participants: 25.

Links

1. [Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with Disabilities | International Disability Alliance](#)