How CSOs in South Sudan can ensure that they protect and do not cause harm to persons with disabilities in their programmes?

From the Resource and Support Hub
We will be starting Shortly

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Introduction to the safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH)

Together, we can build a safer sector

RSH WEBINAR:

Date: 24th August 2022

Panellist: Henry Swaka and Atim Caroline

Chair: Caroline Kibos

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Session aim:

The webinar aims to raise awareness on the factors that make persons with disabilities vulnerable to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and how to ensure persons with disabilities are safeguarded in humanitarian programming.

Snapshot of disability in South Sudan

- According to Human Rights Watch, South Sudan is estimated to have more than 1.2 million people living with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in different aspects including; political, social-cultural, economic and access to services.
- South Sudan's legal framework does not give adequate protection to persons with disabilities. There is actually no law with specific protection to persons with disabilities.
- This makes persons with disabilities more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

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Safeguarding and disability

It is important for everyone to know about disabilities in general because that helps strengthen safeguarding for persons with disabilities.

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Vulnerability of persons with disabilities in humanitarian programming

Henry Swaka
Activist

Introduction

- According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD), persons with disabilities are those with 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. South Sudan is not yet a signatory to the UNCPRD.

- People with disabilities are not a homogeneous group as there are different kinds of disabilities namely; physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments and mental health conditions & psychological disabilities.

- People with disabilities are normally more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in programmes and activities.

- Consider other characteristics for instance; disability + woman or disability + woman + being from a minority group

Factors that make persons with disabilities vulnerable

- The factors that can be broken into 3 classes;
- Institutional factors
- Attitudinal factors
- Communication factors

Institutional factors

- Lack of awareness on their rights, safeguarding obligations of organisations, organisational policies & procedures and reporting mechanisms

- Lack of consideration for disability inclusion in program risk assessments thus ignoring their rights and needs.

- Program budgets that are not inclusive and do not consider special equipment to cater for people with different disabilities

- Unsafe program locations that do not consider the needs of people with different disabilities

- Inadequate and inaccessible support and services like reporting mechanisms, referral mechanisms

Attitudinal factors

- Myths, stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities hinder their inclusion and/or participation in programmes leading to their rights and needs not getting considered.
- Discrimination against persons with disabilities sometimes hinder people from believing them when they report cases of SEAH
- Myths, stigma and negative stereotyping makes persons with disabilities easier targets for SEAH
- Stigma and discrimination of persons with disabilities is most acute in rural and remote locations compared to townships

Communication factors

- Inadequate and inaccessible channels of communication that do not take into consideration the different types of disabilities reduces access to information by the different groups of persons with disabilities.

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Recommendations for CSOs

- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in carrying out program risk management (risk identification and mitigation). They should be given equitable chance to make suggestions for improvements.
- Introduction of an affirmative action for employment of qualified persons with disabilities
- Persons with disabilities should also be involved in conducting accessibility audits for physical environment especially those with visual, hearing and physical impairments.
- Conduct regular staff capacity building sessions on disability rights, appropriate language, safeguarding risks and requirements for persons with disabilities, combating stigma and discrimination against people with disabilities while considering the context.

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Recommendations

- Establish a variety of reporting channels and make them accessible, safe and confidential to all program staff and beneficiaries including persons with disabilities
- Establish various channels of communication to take into consideration the different types of disabilities.
- Guarantee that program locations and facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities and potential hindrances are mitigated so as to allow for personal independence
- Set up accessible and safe transportation of persons with disabilities to and from activity locations, reporting channels and other support services

Recommendations

- Consider that persons with disabilities may need additional support when reporting and emphasize that the person receiving reports takes their report seriously.

- Be proactive and innovative in conducting investigations and case handling processes. Persons with disabilities should be part of investigation and case handling processes to bring real life experience.

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Exclusion of persons with disabilities from humanitarian programs

Atim Caroline
Executive Director
South Sudan Women with Disability Network

Definition

- According to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, disability can be defined as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions.

- It refers to the negative aspects of interaction between individuals with a health condition (cerebral palsy, deaf, blind, depression), and personal and environmental factors (negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings and limited social support)

Factors that lead to exclusion of persons with disability

- Inadequate national laws and policies on inclusion of persons with disabilities to address their exclusion
- Weakness in humanitarian policies on NGOs to strengthen engagement of persons with disabilities in humanitarian programming
- Lack of safety equipment (braille, sign language interpretation) within organisations thus limiting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities to be involved in programs
- A biased education system that does not promote education of persons with disabilities therefore making them unemployable

Recommendations

- Strengthen national and NGO laws and policies on inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian programming
- Incorporation of safe equipment in the education sector (have sign language interpretation and brail in schools) to cater for persons with disabilities. This will make persons with disabilities have education and skills that will make them employable and participate in humanitarian programming
- Encourage organisations in the humanitarian sector to grant persons with disabilities employment opportunities and provide safety equipment to aid them in discharging their duties

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Recommendations

- Build the capacity of humanitarian organisations of people with disabilities and organisations for people with disabilities to include persons with disabilities in programming.

- Conduct awareness raising campaigns on the rights of persons with disabilities and their capability of discharging program duties given the right and safe environment and equipment.

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