

MAA INTERNATIONAL

DISABILITY INCLUSION POLICY



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

MAA International (MAA) is committed to protecting the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of gender, race, country of origin or religious belief. Indiscrimination is in the core of all of MAA's aid and development programs, for this reason, disability inclusion is deemed very important in MAA's context.

Disability-inclusive development means that all stages of development processes are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. It requires that all persons be afforded equal access to education, health care services, work and employment, and social protection, among others.

Furthermore, in certain project contexts, persons with disabilities may be in a position of vulnerability and may be excluded from certain activities. MAA's disability inclusion policy aims to address these issues and reduce their occurrences by recognizing the equal rights of people with disability and incorporating the principal of disability inclusion into all of its projects.

1.2 POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and related personnel of MAA. This includes all employees of MAA, MAA Members, MAA Field Partners and MAA Country Offices. It includes board members, volunteers, interns, and international and local consultants, in addition to individual and corporate contractors of these entities and related personnel. Furthermore, this policy includes non-MAA entities and their employees and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with MAA.

Disability inclusion in the workplace is not included in the scope of this policy.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used in this policy document and are defined as follows:

Beneficiary: A person who receives assistance as part of humanitarian relief or development programs.

Child and young person: A child or young person is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years, unless a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier.

Disability: The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) defines disability as:

- Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions
- Total or partial loss of a part of the body

- The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body
- A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment, or that results in disturbed behaviour and includes disability that:
 - Presently exists
 - Previously existed but no longer exists
 - May exist in the future
 - Is imputed to a person (meaning it is thought or implied that the person has disability but does not).

Persons with Disability: A person or people (group of individuals) with an impairment or health condition who encounters disability or is perceived to be disabled. The term "persons with disabilities" should always be understood as referring to "girls, boys, women and men with disabilities". It is important to emphasise both gender equality and the inclusion of children and youth, wherever appropriate

Vulnerable adults: those aged over 18 years and who identify themselves as unable to take care of themselves/ protect themselves from harm or exploitation; or who, due to their gender, mental or physical health, disability, ethnicity, religious identity, sexual orientation, economic or social status, or as a result of disasters and conflicts, are deemed to be at risk.

2 POLICY & PROCEDURES

2.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The need to incorporate disability inclusion into development has been recognized at an international level. MAA upholds the principals of UN's *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* which emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming disability issues into development strategies and facilitating conditions for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of society. MAA staff must ensure and abide by the following conditions and policy statements to safeguard disability inclusion in all of MAA's programs:

- 2.1.1. MAA must ensure that staff are aware of disability and its implications – is the crucial first step in development of programmes becoming inclusive. Project managers must research using primary and secondary data sources to investigate the state of disability inclusion in the given location of all projects. Field Partners must incorporate information regarding the presence of people with disabilities to people so that they receive the outputs and services equally (or even higher priority) with the other receiving beneficiaries.
- 2.1.2. MAA recognises and ensures that persons with disabilities have the same rights and access to legal advice as everyone else. This includes the rights of children with disability (see MAA's Child Protection Policy POL_COM010) and vulnerable adults with disabilities (See MAA's Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Prevention Policy POL-COM014).
- 2.1.3. MAA must ensure the participation of people with disability in all of its projects (where possible). This is essential for genuine empowerment and community change. One example of this is to provide persons with disability with income generating livelihood opportunity that suits their condition, enabling them their financial independence.
- 2.1.4. MAA must endeavour to the best of their abilities to provide comprehensive accessibility for people with disabilities to ensures that physical, digital, communication, policy and attitudinal barriers are both identified and addressed
- 2.1.5. MAA must endeavour to have a performance criteria which assesses its projects on how well it has met the needs and catered for persons with disability. Some of these performance criteria may be centred around and include:
 - a. Using a person-centred approach work in a manner that acknowledges the person with disability as their own expert
 - b. Facilitate person-centred options for action on relevant issues and discuss with the person and/or family and/or carer and/or relevant other
 - c. Provide assistance to the person with disability to facilitate communication of their personal goals
 - d. Provide person-centred support in a manner that encourages and empowers the person with disability to make their own choices
 - e. Assist with strategies to ensure that the person is comfortable with any decisions that are being made on their behalf

- f. Assist with accessing advocacy services and other complaint mechanisms as required
- 2.1.6. MAA commits to promote the disability inclusivity in its projects in communication with governments, NGOs, suppliers, donors and communities.

2.2 DISABILITY INCLUSION IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Disability inclusion in emergency situations requires measures that are in addition to or different from those in development programming. When emergencies hit, people with disabilities may have difficulty reaching safe areas, may become separated from family and friends, and may have trouble accessing vital emergency information, or lose assistive devices such as wheelchairs, white canes, glasses or hearing aids. Hence they experience heightened vulnerability. Undertaking the following actions during Preparedness phases of an Emergency situation will help mitigate this vulnerability (note: these are ideal situations, MAA recognizes that in some contexts the following statements are not socially applicable or available).

- 2.2.1. People with disabilities, their families need to be represented and included in all disaster risk reduction or management committees. Particularly in instances where MAA field partners works with local authorities, these committees should be encouraged to include people with disabilities as members.
- 2.2.2. People with disabilities, their families need to be represented and included in community disaster risk assessments and contingency planning processes c. Search, rescue and evaluation mock drills
- 2.2.3. Identify people with disabilities in the community noting where they live and their needs during humanitarian situations to enable appropriate planning for inclusion in disaster response. Community based disaster management committees should collect this information.
- 2.2.4. Ensure disaster risk reduction information, education and communication materials are accessible for people with different types of impairments through ensuring all messages are communicated using multiple formats (leaflets, posters, radio, loud speaker announcements, simple language and drawing or symbols).
- 2.2.5. Consult with people with disabilities in the development of early warning systems to ensure accessibility. Use multiple formats including visual and auditory modalities for early warning signals to ensure people with different impairments receive the message
- 2.2.6. New disaster shelters and infrastructure, including WASH points should be designed and built in a disability accessible manner. Advocate for existing facilities used for shelter during a disaster such as schools or public buildings to be made accessible
- 2.2.7. Disability inclusion should be considered when conducting training on disaster preparedness. When this training occurs in-country it should be delivered where feasible in collaboration with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs). These may include: Emergency preparedness plans (EPP) and EPP workshops and training

provided for MAA staff and field partners who may be involved in disaster response activities

3 REVISION HISTORY

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