

Advocacy Paper – Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities

Context

While there are no reliable figures, it is estimated that million persons with disabilities are among the 120 million forcibly displaced globally.¹ Refugees with disabilities face additional barriers to access assistance, healthcare, education, and employment, as well as heightened risks of violence and exploitation.

Global Challenge

Current global responses to refugees with disabilities are fragmented and insufficient. While organizations like [UNHCR and the International Disability Alliance](#) have made strides to raise the visibility of this population, significant gaps remain. Refugee-led organizations often struggle to access funding and advocacy opportunities due to bureaucratic hurdles and lack of recognition. Additionally, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) may not always represent the voices and needs of refugees with disabilities, and refugee-led organizations may not be inclusive of this group. These organizational barriers exacerbate the already difficult experiences of refugees with disabilities. These challenges include obstacles to equal access to asylum systems when seeking international protection and to national social protection systems, which are designed for national citizens with disabilities.² Additionally, refugees with disabilities are often excluded from the climate justice movement, despite being disproportionately affected by climate change.

Need for a Global Network

A Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities will be the key to bridge these gaps. This network will empower refugee-led organizations to access advocacy opportunities at national, regional, and global levels, and to raise funds for their initiatives. By uniting these organizations, the network will amplify their voices and ensure that their needs are addressed in global policy and humanitarian responses.

Mission and Vision

Mission: To empower and support refugees with disabilities through advocacy, capacity building, and resource mobilization.

¹ This figure is based on applying the [WHO estimate](#) that 16% of the global population has a disability to the [UNHCR Global Trends](#) in 2024.

² As reflected in the [Discussion Paper: Exploring the intersectionality of International Refugee Protection and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) | International Disability Alliance

Vision: A world where refugees with disabilities are fully included and their rights are upheld in all humanitarian and development efforts.

Objectives

1. **Advocacy:** Promote the rights and needs of refugees with disabilities at all levels.
2. **Capacity Building:** Strengthen the capabilities of refugee-led organizations to support their peers.
3. **Resource Mobilization:** Secure funding for initiatives led by refugees with disabilities.
4. **Inclusion:** Ensure that refugee responses and host communities are inclusive of refugees with disabilities.

Key Activities

Anchored in the principles and provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the network aims to implement the following activities:

- **Advocacy Campaigns:** Organize campaigns to raise awareness about the challenges faced by refugees with disabilities.
 - **Training Programs:** Develop and deliver training programs for refugee-led organizations on disability inclusion.
 - **Networking Events:** Host events to connect refugee-led organizations with potential donors and partners.
 - **Partnership Building :** Facilitate partnerships between member organizations and larger NGOs, UN bodies, and donors to enhance visibility and support.
 - **Funding Initiatives:** Establish a fund to support projects led by refugees with disabilities.
- Resource Mobilization :** Develop a centralized fund to support refugee-led organizations focused on disability rights.



Digital literacy training for refugee women with disabilities in Malawi



Practicing on a braille machine for refugees with visual impairment at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya

Call to Action

We call on donors, UN bodies, NGOs, OPDs, and refugee-led organizations to support the Global Network of Refugees with Disabilities. Your support can help ensure a successful launch at the Global Disability Summit in 2025 and drive meaningful change for refugees with disabilities worldwide.

We urge donors, UN bodies, NGOs, organizations of persons with disabilities, and refugee-led organizations to:

- **Support the Network** : Provide financial and technical support to strengthen the capacity of refugee-led organizations working with persons with disabilities.
- **Inclusive Policymaking** : Ensure that the needs of refugees with disabilities are included in all relevant policy discussions and funding decisions.
- **Collaborate for Impact** : Partner with the Global Network to facilitate its formal launch at the Global Disability Summit in 2025, ensuring the inclusion of refugees with disabilities on the global stage.

Financial needs of the network

The network requires a secretariat to coordinate the function of the network. The member organizations are in need of financial support to carry out projects focusing on the following topics:

- Accessible education
- Provision of assistive devices
- IT skills development
- Community integration
- Economic inclusion
- Livelihood
- Mental health support
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Sensitization against gender-based violence and institutional support

The total expenses of the network for the year 2025, including member projects and secretariat, is **USD 1920000**.

Members

- Association of Refugees with Disability ARD
- Kakuma Voice For Disabled People Association (VDPA)
- Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland (Disability Voices)
- Newcomers with Disabilities in Sweden
- Sounds of Silence Africa Initiative
- UMOJA People with disabilities
- Women for Action Organization

Contact Information

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