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Institutional policy

Humanity & Inclusion's policy on Disability, Gender and Age

Operations Division
2018

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Preamble

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This policy sets forth Humanity & Inclusion (HI)'s different levels of commitment with regard to Disability, Gender & Age, and the changes to be made in how the organisation works, including with its partners, in line with 2025 strategy. These commitments apply to the whole HI network[1], and are to be taken into account at operational, technical and advocacy levels, and notably in technical and operational strategies, programming policies, etc.

The Disability, Gender & Age policy has been developed in conjunction with the organisation's other institutional policies & directives: "Protection of beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse", "Child protection", "Code of conduct: Prevention of abuse and safeguarding" and "Project planning, monitoring and evaluation", as well as with its "Quality framework". This policy updates and replaces the gender policy published in 2007.

Some key data[2]

- **Disability:** Over one billion people worldwide have a disability, i.e. an estimated one in four households has a family member with a disability.
- **Gender and disability:** Global prevalence is higher for women than men[3]. In low and middle-income countries, women are estimated to comprise up to three-quarters of people with disabilities.
- **Age and disability:** Of an estimated 58 million out-of-school children at primary level, one-third have a disability, with girls far less likely than boys to be enrolled in or attend school.
- Between 40% and 68% of young women with disabilities will experience sexual violence before the age of 18[4].

So, in order to leave no one behind, humanitarian and development actions need to take widespread discrimination on the grounds of disability, gender and age into account, and proactively engage in removing barriers to equal opportunities.

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1. The HI network encompasses the whole HI organisation, i.e. the Federation (Lyon, Paris and Brussels HQs and the programmes), the 8 national associations and the HI Institute for Humanitarian Action.

2. Source: "Making the SDGs count for women and girls with disabilities", Issue brief, UN WOMEN, 2017.

3. 19% for women, 12% for men.

4. Data from "We Decide", a UNFPA-led initiative to promote gender equality and social inclusion of young people with disabilities and to prevent sexual violence. See infographic.

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Policy statement

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Humanity & Inclusion (HI) strives to include everyone, focusing on the most vulnerable and including people and groups discriminated against or at high risk of discrimination, and champion each person's fundamental rights. HI advocates inclusion and meaningful participation of all, upholding diversity, fairness and individual choice. Furthermore, **HI value difference**.

In situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster the HI network responds, with people with disabilities and vulnerable groups, to their essential needs, improving living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and fundamental rights.

In its actions, HI pays specific attention to nine factors generating inequalities: **disability, age, gender**, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, geographical location, ethnic origin, religion, political opinion.

These factors generating inequalities tend to reinforce each other when they intersect, combining into situations of multiple vulnerabilities and exclusion. HI chooses to focus on certain of these factors depending on the context and the goal of the intervention, prevailing perceptions and beliefs and existing

and ingrained power relations.

HI acknowledges, among other factors generating inequalities and that need to be considered, that:

- Disability, gender and age as **socially constructed** norms can be observed in any human group, within which produce different outcomes between people;
- Disability, gender and age are **key factors to understanding** different people's capacities, needs, and exposure to risks in any context or crisis.
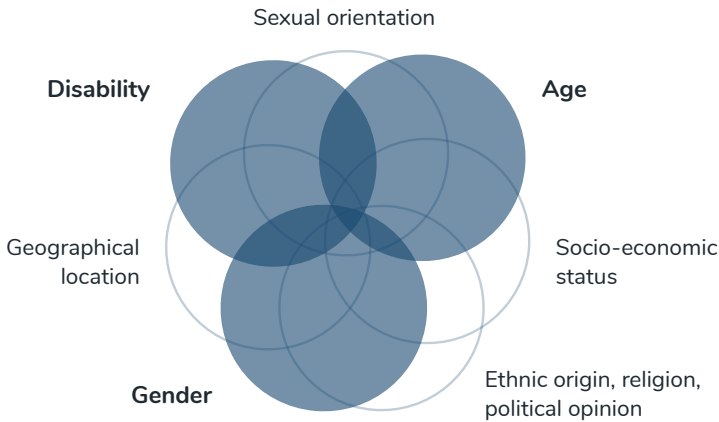
HI therefore commits to paying systematic attention to disability, gender and age-based inequalities in its analysis and to how they interact with other inequality-generating factors.

Consequently, the HI network develops programmatic strategies that allow people encountering discrimination on the grounds of disability, gender and age to benefit from humanitarian action and development opportunities on an equal basis with others.

To this end:

- Participation, equality and non-discrimination, accessibility and safeguarding are guiding principles.
- HI promotes a two-pronged approach:
  - To be **disability-, gender- and age-responsive** in all areas of HI work.
  - To be **transformative** wherever possible in order to achieve effective inclusion.

Factors of exclusion and inequality represented by overlapping circles that reinforce inequalities and exclusion as a result of the perceptions and beliefs of a given environment

Sexual orientation

Disability

Age

Geographical location

Socio-economic status

Gender

Ethnic origin, religion, political opinion

Different levels of programming

- **Unaware:** Programming ignores norms, roles, relations and needs related to disability, gender or age. This type of programming can actually reinforce inequalities.
- **Aware/sensitive:** Programming considers norms, roles, relations and needs, and indicates awareness on disability, gender and age; however actions are not adapted to ensure equal benefit from interventions.
- **Responsive:** Programming ensures that people who are discriminated against on the basis of disability, gender or age benefit equally from actions.

- **Transformative:** programming addresses root causes of inequalities or systemic barriers where disability, gender and age intersect, fostering lasting changes so that people encountering discrimination benefit equally from development opportunities and humanitarian action.

People with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression are included in the scope of this Policy. HI will continue implementing pilot initiatives for their inclusion in specific contexts and where field teams have the necessary expertise.

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Principles and approaches related to disability, gender and age

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HI's inclusive humanitarian and development action is underpinned by the following fundamental principles[5]:

2.1 Participation

Participation corresponds to the meaningful involvement of boys, girls, women and men of different age groups (from children to older people), including people with different disabilities, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of actions or policies affecting them. Being participatory also makes organisations more accountable, responsive and effective, as their decision-making is better informed, more considerate of diverse perspectives, and capitalizes on the actual experience of people encountering discrimination. Normalising and systematising participatory approaches has widespread positive outcomes.

2.2 Equality and non-discrimination

Equality is when people enjoy rights, opportunities and resources on an equal basis with others, irrespective of disability, gender or age. So equality means that enjoyment of rights and opportunities are not limited by whether people are born female or male or whether they have a disability or belong to a particular age group. To achieve equal rights and opportunities in humanitarian and development action, HI promotes the following **twin-track approach** which consists in:

- **Implementing cross-cutting and integrated responses** to address disability, gender and age-based inequalities at all levels of its work(political, financial, etc.) and through the work of its partners;
- **Supporting initiatives enhancing the empowerment[6]** of girls, boys, women and men who are discriminated against on the grounds of disability, gender and age.

Discrimination[7] relates to any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the grounds of disability or other criteria (sex, age, ethnic origin, etc.) which has

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5. They are consistent with HI's ethical principles (humanity, solidarity, impartiality & equity, independence, commitment) and other principles stated in human rights treaties. These principles are embedded in internationally- recognised frameworks and already established as guiding principles in the Quality framework in HI's PME policy.

6. "Reinforcing the inner power of people, their ability to know themselves and decide for themselves, and their capacity for action with respect to others and at the collective level". Source: https://people-at-the-center.org/

7. Source: CRPD.

the purpose or effect of compromising or preventing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of all human rights on an equal basis with others. Discrimination includes refusing to provide reasonable accommodation.

2.3 Accessibility[8]

Accessibility refers to an environment, product or service which is made available to meet the needs of all people, including people with disabilities[9]. Accessibility enables everyone to reach, enter, circulate and make full use of a public and private space of whatever nature or purpose, and to receive, understand, develop, modify, share and disseminate information. Accessibility is a prerequisite for the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, cultural, religious and community life, without discrimination of any kind, and it is an investment for all the other segments of the population.

2.4 Safeguarding

Safeguarding aims to do no harm to children and people in situation of vulnerability and do not expose them to the risk of harm and abuse by staff, operations and programmes of organisations. It includes putting preventive measures in place to reduce potential harm and taking proactive measures to ensure they are safe. HI's fundamental principles of protection provide frameworks and define obligations to ensure that relations with beneficiaries or between HI staff respect this ethic, with a particular focus on all forms of exploitation and abuse – including sexual abuse – and the protection of children"[10].

Definitions

Disability
"Disability is an evolving concept. Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"[11].

Persons with disabilities
"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with

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8. Based on art. 9 of the CRPD.

9. Physical, intellectual, visual, auditory or psychological disabilities.

10. "Protection of beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse", 2018 updated version / "Child protection", HI, 2007, 2018 updated version / "Code of conduct: Prevention of abuse and safeguarding", HI, 2018.

11. According to the Preamble of the CRDPH.

various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"[12].

Gender
Gender refers to the social and political roles, behaviours and attributes which are constructed for men and women by a given society and which each given society considers most appropriate and "valued" for men and women. These constructs are learnt, they shape how people define themselves and how they are defined by others. Gender norms can change over time and vary within and between societies. Gender is to be distinguished from **sex, in the biological sense**, which refers to the physical and biological characteristics that distinguish males and females.

Age
Stage in a life cycle seen as a continuum of biological, behavioural and psychosocial processes. Age is also a social construction, as the perception of age and the representations associated with it vary considerably between societies, within societies and over time.

HI recognizes that universal **determinants** such as disability, gender and age are **dynamic social constructs which vary** according to societies, within societies and over time.

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Core commitments
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3.1 Commitments at institutional level

HI undertakes to contribute to the promotion of disability, gender and age equality in the following fields:

Knowledge development and sharing

Objective: Help to build a strong evidence base to support equality and fight discrimination on the grounds of disability, gender and age.

This requires us to:
- **Gather and document evidence;**
- **Conduct action research,** in particular on how gender and age combine with inequalities based on disability;
- **Share** tangible and actionable good practices for replication, evidence and research internally, with partners and with other stakeholders;
- **Collect inclusive and reliable data:** ensure accurate and relevant data collection, especially on disability through the use of the Washington Group sets of questions; promote inclusive data collection, including through the use of mobile data collection and other accessible

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12. Art.1 de la CRDPH.

technologies designed to allow the participation of the people concerned;
- **Publish** and share widely in **accessible formats.**

Advocacy

Objective: Advocate for change at all levels to ensure more inclusive policies, and especially to address inequalities relating to disability, gender and age.

This involves lobbying:
- Stakeholders to address and monitor disability-, gender- and age- based inequalities and discrimination;
- Based on conclusive arguments on how to leave no one behind from humanitarian action or out of development opportunities on the grounds of disability, gender or age;
- Directly and with other stakeholders, including disabled people's organisations, women's groups etc.

Communication

Objective: Develop communication targeting the general public on equal opportunities and fighting discrimination on the grounds of disability, gender and age.

This requires communication which:
- Is positive about diversity, and especially about disability, gender and age;
- Promotes role models;

- Is without stereotypes, inclusive, and helps deconstruct stereotypes;
- Is respectful of the autonomy and dignity of all persons;
- Is accessible.

Organisational development

Objective: Strengthen conditions for the effective implementation of this policy.

This involves:
- Ensuring diversity by being an employer who strives to promote systems designed to foster the recruitment, retention and development of staff in different disability, gender and age situations;
- Promoting diversity and incorporating it into different institutional processes, including planning and budgeting for affirmative actions, universal design and reasonable accommodation;
- Building the capacities of staff and governing bodies with regards to disability, gender and age issues.

3.2 Commitments at operational level

In order to be responsive in all areas of its work, HI commits to **systematically developing tailored, pragmatic and innovative solutions** to ensure that people who are discriminated against on the grounds of disability, gender or age benefit from its actions on an equal basis with others.

Being responsive means recognizing and responding to the needs of people discriminated against on the grounds of disability, gender and age without seeking to change existing inequality patterns.
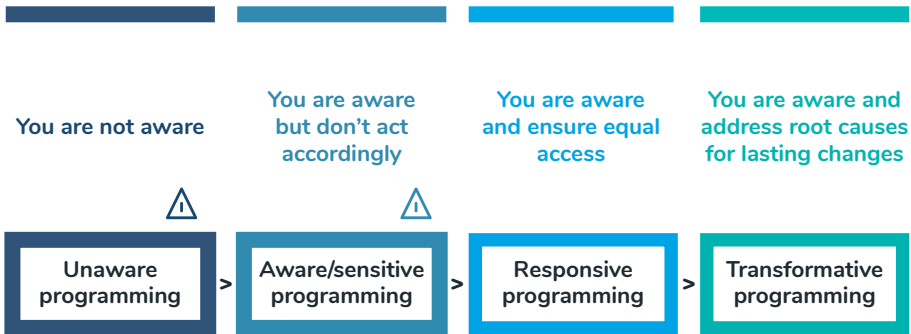
It involves:

- **Strengthening the capacities of people who are discriminated** against on the grounds of disability gender and age;
- **Strengthening the application of HI's fundamental principles with regard to participation, equality and non-discrimination, accessibility and safeguarding through actions adapted** to the needs and capacities of people who are discriminated against;
- **Working with service providers and/or decision-makers to address barriers** faced by people discriminated against on the grounds of disability, gender or age to ensure they can access all services. This means putting dedicated measures in place, including positive action and reasonable accommodation, while strengthening the capacities of decision-makers and service-providers.

⚠ **Reminder: Unaware and aware/sensitive programming does not meet HI's Quality Framework standards or the requirements of this policy.**

You are not aware	You are aware but don't act accordingly ⚠	You are aware and ensure equal access	You are aware and address root causes for lasting changes
Unaware programming	Aware/sensitive programming	Responsive programming	Transformative programming

To be transformative wherever possible and relevant, HI commits to **addressing the root causes of inequalities and/or systemic barriers where disability, gender and age intersect,** and foster lasting changes so that people encountering discrimination can benefit from development opportunities and humanitarian action on an equal basis with others.

Wherever possible, HI aims to foster the sustainable inclusion of women and men with disabilities of all ages. To do so, HI seeks to develop partnerships at all levels. There may also be contexts and areas of intervention where HI and its partners focus primarily on being transformative with regard to the inequalities faced by women and girls or by people of different age groups, including those with disabilities. In any case, programming choices will always be based on an analysis of local contexts, capacities and potential partnerships.

When the duration of an intervention is short and there is pressure to deliver, transformative actions might not be a priority. However in some contexts, especially conflict settings where situations can alter rapidly, traditional roles for women and men, youth and elders may change, community structures may evolve to respond to the altered context and in turn this may contribute to changes in attitudes and behaviour. It is important that, as aid actors, we understand these changes so that we do no harm by inadvertently reversing embryonic social change or reinforcing existing inequalities which may be at the root of the conflict.

In addition to the above requirements, being transformative might entail:
- **Empowering** people discriminated against on the grounds of disability, gender and age, along with their representative organisations, to meaningfully participate and voice their needs.
  This means:
  – Building individual capacities, supporting the development of self-confidence, soft and social skills and fostering peer support.
  – Supporting self-representation, local movements and alliances to advocate at local and national level

for policy reforms that enforce human rights.

- **Strengthening the capacities of people encountering discrimination, authorities and policy makers, service providers and international actors to:**
  - Coordinate and improve the governance of a sector or a service, equalise opportunities and propose responses adapted to the needs, strategic interests, capacities and priorities of women and men with disabilities of all ages who are encountering discrimination.
  - And ensure meaningful participation, equality and non-discrimination, universal access and safeguarding.
- **Influencing/supporting the development of more inclusive policies and practices,** and monitoring their impact on different groups of people who encounter discrimination. This includes putting adequate data disaggregation and participatory mechanisms in place.
- **Challenging global and local power systems** based on and fuelling prejudice and systemic inequalities based on disability, gender and age.

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Implementation
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At institutional level, the Disability, Gender and Age policy applies to the whole HI network. Its implementation is therefore the responsibility of everyone at HI. Furthermore, each HI division is required to draw up a specific roll-out plan showing how it will put the commitments outlined in the policy into practice.

At the operational level, the following actions are required to enable HI's projects / programmes to move forward **from unaware or aware/sensitive programming to responsive and transformative programming:**

- Ensure **disability-, gender- and age-differentiated analysis** at each phase of the project cycle and for programmatic frameworks[13]:
  - Analysis of different forms of power and of differentiated needs and interests;
  - Context analysis – contextual dynamics, especially in conflict settings – to understand the impact on individual experiences, access to and control over resources, roles and responsibilities, power relationships and how people react to different barriers and opportunities;

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13. Ibid.

- Disability, sex and age disaggregated data management;
- Accurate and relevant data collection and analysis, especially on disability through the use of the Washington Group sets of questions.
- Strengthen **partnerships** and all forms of collaboration **on disability, gender and age equality;**
- Strengthen the application of HI's **guiding principles** (participation, equality and non-discrimination, accessibility and safeguarding) at **each phase of the project cycle and for programmatic frameworks[14].**

This policy is accompanied by:
- A **practical guide** that outlines the operational commitments for each phase of the project cycle and for programmatic frameworks. It also contains processes, roles and tools for translating the principles presented in this policy into action.

↳ See the practical guide: **How to deliver on inclusion to leave no one behind: An implementing guideline of the Humanity & Inclusion Policy on Disability, Gender and Age**

- A **disability, gender and age marker,** developed more specifically for projects and programmes, which has the following objectives:
  - To measure their practices against the core commitments made in the policy;
  - To determine whether a project or a programme is responsive, transformative or neither;
  - To identify gaps and trigger corrective actions;
  - To determine ambitions with regards to responsive and transformative programming with regard to disability, gender and age;
  - To set time-bound targets;
  - To be a learning tool that helps focus attention on disability, gender and age issues.

↳ See the **Disability, gender and age marker**

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14. Whether geographical, sectoral or technical: such as StratOps, StraTech, Programmatic policies, policy papers, etc.

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Monitoring and evaluation

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Each federal division is responsible for monitoring its own implementation of this policy at least once a year. This will require specific engagement on the part of division directors, according to the scope of their division's activities (Human Resources, Communication...).

Evaluating the implementation of the policy is the primary responsibility of the Innovation, Impact & Information Division, but requires the participation of all divisions.

The framework proposed in this policy is flexible and evolving, and will be updated to take account of experience and lessons learned following its implementation.

The practical guide and its tools, including the marker, will therefore be improved upon with the help of regular contributions to the community of practices. Innovation, Impact & Information Division will coordinate contributions from all the units/divisions concerned.

As with all institutional policies, verifications may be carried out on the effective implementation of the Disability, Gender and Age policy at the request of management and in accordance with internal control requirements.

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