

Adolescents and disability¹

The Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation (Adolescent Kit) supports adolescents with disabilities through guidance, activities and approaches that promote inclusion and support all adolescent girls and boys to enjoy the same rights and opportunities.

Adolescents with disabilities have the potential to lead fulfilling lives and to contribute to their communities and societies. However, in many parts of the world they experience discrimination, social exclusion and a higher risk of violence, exploitation and abuse. In some societies, children and adolescents with disabilities are hidden away and excluded from basic services such as health and education, and denied their **right** to participate actively in decisions that affect their lives. In particular, adolescent girls with disabilities may face **'double discrimination'** due to prejudice and negative attitudes around gender as well as disability.

The Adolescent Kit promotes adolescents with disabilities as equal partners who have the **right** to enjoy the same opportunities as other adolescent girls and boys, and supports them to develop key **competencies**, knowledge, skills and attitudes that are relevant to their particular needs and circumstances. In this way, the Adolescent Kit aims to open up new ways of thinking about adolescents with disabilities, and to empower them as individuals who can and do contribute to their lives and communities.

Humanitarian situations and disability

Adolescents with disabilities are particularly vulnerable during times of humanitarian crisis. They are more likely to be abandoned by their families, may acquire new impairments due to injuries (caused by the disaster or conflict), lose access to medical care and/or assistive devices, and face disruption of the social networks they rely on for support – such as family, friends, neighbours and social services.² Often confined to their homes due to stigma or limited mobility, they become 'invisible' and face significant barriers to accessing humanitarian support.³

Adolescents with disabilities

Adolescents with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, AND who face barriers that may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Their rights are promoted under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (**CRC**) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**), which demand that all children, irrespective of their ability or disability, enjoy their rights without discrimination – and are recognised as full members of their family, community and society.

Supporting inclusion of adolescents with disabilities through the Adolescent Kit

The Adolescent Kit takes an inclusive approach that includes all adolescents, and recognises that every adolescent girl and boy, regardless of their ability or disability, has the right to enjoy the same opportunities and to express their views. Taking an inclusive approach means working with adolescents with and without disabilities to plan and run interventions that meet their needs, while reducing barriers to participation and creating an environment where everyone can take part in activities, voice their opinion, and contribute – even if they do so in different ways.

You don't need to be a disability specialist to work with adolescents with disabilities! While specific measures may be needed to reach out to adolescent girls and boys with disabilities, often very simple steps can be taken to adapt activities and approaches to make them more inclusive.⁴

The Adolescent Kit supports the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities by:

- ▶ Collecting information about adolescents with disabilities – including the challenges they face, the key issues affecting their lives, their family

¹ Sources: ARC Critical Issue Module 3: Children with Disabilities, Actions for the Rights of Children, 2009; Children with Disabilities: The State of the World's Children, UNICEF, 2013; Including Children with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF and Handicap International, forthcoming (What year?); Take Us Seriously! Engaging children with disabilities in decisions affecting their lives, UNICEF, 2013; Additional Guidance on Including Children with Disabilities: UNICEF Education Kit Handbook, UNICEF, Unpublished.

² Source: United Nations Children's Fund and Handicap International, Including Children with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF and Handicap International, forthcoming in 2015..

³ See the Understanding adolescents in humanitarian situations section of the Adolescent Kit for information regarding the different challenges that adolescents with disabilities face in humanitarian situations.

⁴ There are many useful resources that outline practical steps that facilitators can take to adapt information and activities for adolescents with visual, hearing, communication, intellectual and other impairments, including the forthcoming Children with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, to be published by UNICEF and Handicap International. See the disability section of the Adolescent Kit Resources for other resources.

situations, their interests and priorities, and the barriers they may face – in order to design interventions that address their particular needs and interests;

- ▶ Reaching out to all adolescents, including adolescent girls and boys with disabilities, and finding ways to overcome barriers to their participation in interventions with the Adolescent Kit, such as limited mobility, discriminatory attitudes and inaccessible activity spaces – for example, it may be necessary to work with Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to identify and reach out to adolescents with disabilities who may be hidden away, to organise safe transport for adolescents with disabilities to learning spaces, or to persuade parents or caregivers of adolescents with disabilities to allow them to attend activities;
- ▶ Creating welcoming spaces that adolescents with disabilities can access and move around in safely – this may involve exploring creative options such as organising activities in or near adolescents' homes (if they face physical or security barriers to moving freely), adapting spaces to include features such as ramps, effective lighting and accessible toilet facilities, and using accessible learning/play materials and supplies;⁵
- ▶ Including all adolescents equally in activities and discussions, regardless of their abilities or disabilities – this means selecting, adapting or modifying activities so that adolescent girls and boys with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments can participate; setting ground rules that encourage respect and tolerance and give everyone a say in decisions; and opening up space for adolescents with and without disabilities to connect, value their differences and overcome stereotypes and prejudices;⁶
- ▶ Preparing and supporting facilitators to work with adolescent girls and boys with disabilities in participatory and inclusive ways – this involves including practical guidance for facilitators in Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions on how to adapt their communication, activities and learning spaces to accommodate adolescent girls and boys with different types of disabilities;

An inclusive Supply Kit

The Supply Kit includes a magnifying ruler and an Emotion Cube with high contrasting colours and Braille for adolescents with visual impairments. All of the other materials, supplies and equipment in the Supply Kit can be adapted or used in different ways so that adolescents with disabilities can participate in activities.

how to promote peer-to-peer support between adolescents with and without disabilities; and how to challenge and encourage all participants. It also means identifying specialist support that facilitators can call on for help or advice if they need it – for example, humanitarian Disability Focal Points, DPOs or informal groups made up of persons with disabilities;

- ▶ Encouraging the involvement of parents and caregivers of adolescents with disabilities in interventions with the Adolescent Kit, as well as adults with disabilities as mentors, role models and resources that can empower and support participants – for example, facilitators can often learn from caregivers or family members how to best support and communicate with adolescents with disabilities;
- ▶ Connecting adolescents with disabilities to services, programmes and information that they can benefit from, and taking steps when their health, safety or wellbeing is at risk – this involves being aware of the different issues, protection risks, concerns and services that may be particularly relevant to them; and
- ▶ Involving adolescents with disabilities in all aspects of planning, running and monitoring interventions with the Adolescent Kit, including selecting and adapting activities to meet their particular needs, interests and circumstances – this involves empowering adolescents to build on their abilities (rather than disabilities), and to take on the same tasks, responsibilities and leadership opportunities as other participants.⁸

⁵ Local DPOs or Disability Focal Points may be aware of accessible activity spaces in the community.

⁶ For example through teambuilding and activities that help adolescents to learn about each other.

⁷ For example, due to mistaken beliefs that adolescents with disabilities do not (or should not) engage in sexual relations, they are often excluded from sexual and reproductive health information and services.

⁸ For example, facilitating sessions, running energizers, taking care of activity spaces, managing supplies and participating on steering committees.

Above all, the activities, tools and guidance in the Adolescent Kit advocate a flexible and adaptable approach to working with adolescents (with or without disabilities), that encourages adolescents to take the lead. This approach involves consulting with adolescents on an ongoing basis regarding how activities should be organised so that they can participate, contribute, (and have fun!), equally and safely. It also means taking into account the particular needs and challenges of adolescent girls and boys with disabilities, and finding ways to address barriers they may face.

Consult the **Disability section of the Adolescent Kit Resources** for more information and support in this area.