

Participatory audit for the inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian actions

A step-by-step guide



Acronyms, abbreviations and definitions

CBO	Community-based organisation
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard
EGCDWO	Ethiopian Genet Church Development and Welfare Organisation
Elrha	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance Elrha is a global organisation that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation. Visit www.elrha.org to find out more.
FCDO	UK Government’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
HIF	Humanitarian Innovation Fund Elrha’s Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) programme is specifically funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).
HIS	Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
Older person/ people	An older person is defined by the United Nations as a person who is over 60 years of age. However, families and communities often use other socio-cultural referents to define age, including family status (grandparents), physical appearance, or age-related health conditions. ¹
OPA	Older Persons/People’s Association Community-based organisations of older people, aimed to improve living conditions for older people and for developing their communities.
OPD	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (Disabled People’s Organisation or DPO is also sometimes used) OPDs represent the interests of their members with disabilities and have the mandate to advocate for the realisation of their human rights and lobby for the consideration of their interests. OPDs can exist on a local, national, regional, and international levels. Sometimes umbrella organisations represent the interests of several OPDs. The size, structure, capacities, and resources of OPDs can differ considerably. They are usually self-organised organisations where the majority of control at the board and membership level is with people with disabilities. ² For the participatory inclusion audit, it is important to work with organisations or associations with mass membership and led by people with disabilities themselves.
Person/ people with disabilities	Those who have one or more ‘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.’ ³
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) ⁴

¹ From UNHCR Emergency Handbook section on [Older persons](#)

² From CBM International’s [Inclusive Participation Toolbox](#).

³ [UNCRPD, 2006, p4](#)

⁴ <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

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About this guide

This document provides a step-by-step guide for organisations and individuals looking to set up a participatory audit of the inclusion of people with disabilities and older people in humanitarian response (referred to in this document as ‘participatory inclusion audit’, and elsewhere as ‘participatory audit’ for brevity).

Tearfund’s experience

Throughout this guide, boxes like these will be used to explain Tearfund’s experience in developing a participatory inclusion audit approach in Shashemene, in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, funded by Elrha’s Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), called ‘Nothing About Us Without Us.’⁵ The audit project took place from 2021 to 2023, with the audit itself in May 2022.

In June 2020, the city was severely affected by conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic, prompting a humanitarian response.⁶ There are a high number of people with disabilities as well as older people living in the town.

Older people’s associations (OPAs) and organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) worked with Tearfund and local partner EGCDWO to adapt and test the audit tools to gather evidence on the barriers to meaningful participation in humanitarian practices.

⁵ You can watch a video from the Nothing About Us Without Us project at <https://learn.tearfund.org/en>

⁶ This crisis was widely reported both in local and international mass media. For example, Gardner, T. (3rd August 2020) ‘How a musician’s death unleashed violence and death in Ethiopia’, *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/aug/03/how-a-musicians-death-unleashed-violence-and-death-in-ethiopia> (Accessed 19th February 2025).

Why is a participatory inclusion audit needed?

There has been an increase in the frequency and intensity of humanitarian emergencies over recent decades.⁷ ‘Disaster events have increased from 100 per year in the 1970s to around 400 events per year worldwide in the past 20 years.’⁸

This is especially concerning for older people and people with disabilities, who represent a significant and growing proportion of the population.

- By 2030, ‘the share of the population aged 60 years and over will increase from 1 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion’, representing **1 in 6 people**.



- Around the same proportion, an estimated 1.3 billion, or **1 in 6 people**, experience significant disability.⁹
- ‘This proportion is likely to rise with an ageing population¹⁰, and sharply increase in humanitarian crises’.¹¹ The Centre for Disability Studies (2010) has estimated that approximately **16 per cent of all disabilities are war and conflict related**.¹²

‘Looking ahead, the global trends in ageing populations and the higher risk of disability in older people are likely to lead to further increases in the population affected by disability. According to data from World Population Prospects: the 2015 Revision (United Nations, 2015), the number of older persons has increased substantially in recent years in most countries and regions, and that growth is projected to accelerate in the coming decades... Furthermore, the higher disability rates among older persons, as a result of an accumulation of health risks across a lifespan of disease, injury, and chronic illness contributes to the higher disability rates among older people, urges countries to review and further explore the complementarities between the discourses on ageing and on disability.’¹³

UNDESA

⁷ According to Jan Egeland, Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, ‘over the past 10 years, humanitarian needs have grown exponentially. In 2023, the total requirements for UN-coordinated humanitarian responses globally will be more than five times as large as in 2013.’ [Key trends in humanitarian need and funding: 2022. Development initiatives.](#)

⁸ International Disaster Database (EM-DAT) of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), cited in Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2023). [The impact of disasters on agriculture and food security.](#)

⁹ [World Health Organisation. Disability](#) [Accessed 7th August 2024].

¹⁰ More than 46 per cent of older people – those aged 60 years and over—have disabilities and more than 250 million older people experience moderate to severe disability. Ageing and Disability, United Nations. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/disability-issues/ageing-and-disability>

¹¹ [European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. Disability Inclusion](#) [Accessed 7th August 2024].

¹² Cited in Aaron, Anita, *et al.* [The Involvement of Persons with Disabilities in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Efforts: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities \(PWD\) as Part of the Solution in the Post-Conflict Arena](#), World Institute on Disability Report (2015).

¹³ UNDESA <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/disability-issues/ageing-and-disability>

Despite widespread commitments and legal obligations to include people with disabilities and older people in humanitarian action, considerable work needs to be done to ensure their active participation. They remain amongst the most vulnerable people in humanitarian situations, facing attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers to accessing humanitarian support.

These commitments and legal obligations include:

Article 11 of the the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

The UNCRPD is an international treaty which identifies the rights of disabled people as well as the obligations of signatories to promote, protect and ensure those rights. It aims to ensure that disabled people enjoy the same human rights as everyone else and that they can participate fully in society by receiving the same opportunities as others.

This treaty has 164 signatories and 192 parties; it has been very widely adopted.¹⁴

Article 11 of the UNCRPD states:

‘States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.’¹⁵

Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities (HIS)

These are the main frame of reference for participatory inclusion audit. HIS is the first internationally recognised standard for the inclusion of both older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian actions. It was developed in 2018 by a consortium group that came to be known as the Age and Disability Capacity Program (ADCAP).

The nine key inclusion standards are designed both to strengthen the accountability of humanitarian actors to older people and people with disabilities, and to support the participation of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian action. They can be used as guidance for programming, and as a resource for training and advocacy, for creating more inclusive organisational policies and practice. Each key inclusion standard has its own key actions to ensure the inclusion of older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian action.

‘Humanitarian principles require that humanitarian assistance and protection are provided on the basis of need, without discrimination. No one should be excluded from humanitarian action, either deliberately or inadvertently. Yet there is still limited capacity among humanitarian actors to fulfil this commitment. Discrimination based on disability, age and gender often combines with other forms of discrimination to deny older people and people with disabilities their right to assistance and participation in humanitarian action.’¹⁶

¹⁴ [15. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) [Accessed: 27th February 2025]

¹⁵ [Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies | United Nations Enable](#)

¹⁶ ADCAP [Humanitarian inclusion standards](#), p9

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action¹⁷

The guidelines, published in 2019, set out essential actions that humanitarian actors must take in order to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of people with disabilities who are most at risk of being left behind in humanitarian settings.

Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)

The CHS is a globally recognised, measurable standard. It promotes equitable and collaborative relations between people and communities and those working to support them. It aims to address power imbalances. It is relevant and applicable for all those who individually or collectively work to support people and communities.¹⁸

Commitment 1.1

Ensure diversity, equity and inclusion considerations are integrated into the organisation's work with people and communities, with attention to the most marginalised.

Tearfund's participatory inclusion audit approach, led by grassroots associations and organisations of people with disabilities and older people in Ethiopia, and developed in partnership with the [Ethiopian Guenet Church Development and Welfare Organization \(EGCDWO\)](#) and [Elrha's FCDO-funded Humanitarian Innovation Fund](#), provides a model for meaningfully engaging older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian action. As the motto of the auditors reminds us, people with disabilities and older people have 'a great role to play!'

By providing opportunities for older people and people with disabilities to actively audit humanitarian practices, we achieve more inclusive and effective humanitarian responses, better responding to the needs of communities, and better aligned with international law and humanitarian principles of impartiality and universality.

You can read more about the need for a participatory inclusion audit approach in the briefing paper [here](#).

What is a participatory inclusion audit?

The participatory inclusion audit approach has been developed to support systemic change and improved quality of humanitarian programmes, by bringing about the inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society – in particular older people and people with disabilities – in programming across the humanitarian sector.

It facilitates OPAs and OPDs and their representatives to review humanitarian action, whether by national, regional or local governments or non-governmental organisations, or other local relief providers. Through the development and use of a standard audit tool and approach, older people and people with disabilities are able to assess the work of humanitarian organisations, in line with the Humanitarian inclusion standards, and give direct feedback to them about the ways in which their work could be more inclusive. In turn, this enables humanitarian organisations to make immediate adjustments and action plans to strengthen future responses.

¹⁷ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/>

¹⁸ <https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

One of the key strengths of the participatory inclusion audit approach is that it can be used by organisations that are neither well-resourced nor well-connected at the start, and individuals who are not very familiar with the humanitarian sector, confident in research or highly literate. There is space to develop what is needed through the journey of undertaking a participatory inclusion audit.

In light of the ongoing need for greater involvement in humanitarian response for older people and people with disabilities, Tearfund and partners developed a participatory inclusion audit approach for use by associations of older people and organisations of persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts. The development of this innovation built on other inclusion audits carried out by disability specialist organisations Sightsavers and CBM UK.

Key features included:

- Forging partnerships with older people's associations and organisations of people with disabilities, and highlighting their role in inclusive humanitarian response
- Strengthening older people's associations and organisations of people with disabilities to play a meaningful role in humanitarian response and to lead on the audit process
- Co-designing an audit tool with older people's associations and organisations of people with disabilities
- Positioning these associations and organisations of older people and people with disabilities to lead on conducting the audit of organisations involved in humanitarian response and interpreting the findings
- Using the audit to develop a locally contextualised humanitarian response strategy inclusive of older people and people with disabilities, to sustainably address barriers to inclusion

Benefits of a participatory inclusion audit



- Identify barriers to inclusive humanitarian actions within the specific contexts of governmental, non-governmental and community-based organisations.
- Identify potential opportunities that nurture humanitarian actions more inclusive of older people and people with disabilities.
- Enhance awareness of accessibility and inclusion, particularly prompting government departments or other humanitarian organisations to adapt their premises to be more accessible in cost-effective ways and actively engage older people and people with disabilities in their programmes.
- Build self-esteem for older people and people with disabilities involved, especially those experiencing intersectional barriers, releasing personal potential and agency.
- Enhance the leadership capacity of OPAs and APDs/OPDs through their facilitating of proactive engagement in decision-making processes and advocacy initiatives.
- Foster collaboration among disparate groups of older people and people with disabilities and their caregivers, and forge relationships between OPAs and OPDs and humanitarian actors.

If the participatory inclusion audit approach was scaled up throughout the global humanitarian community and became standard practice, this could drastically increase the effectiveness of humanitarian preparedness and response in meeting the needs of all the most vulnerable members of society, not solely older people and people with disabilities. This would support the achievement of the Humanitarian inclusion standards.

Phase 1: Preparation

Before starting the participatory inclusion audit with partners in Shashemene, Tearfund piloted an inclusion audit of its own water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and cash programming provision, asking OPAs and OPDs to develop audit indicators for inclusive cash provision and inclusive WASH support. This provided a useful starting point for developing the participatory inclusion audit approach.

1 Familiarisation and mindset

A participatory inclusion audit should be implemented with the understanding that:

- Older people and people with disabilities are the experts of their own situation, and should play a central role in leading the audit.
- OPAs and OPDs can effectively represent their members' wide spectrum of experience and the barriers they face.
- Older people and people with disabilities are likely to have faced multiple barriers throughout their lives, resulting in reduced political and socio-economic representation. This is likely to have limited their sense of agency and implementing capacity.
- OPAs and OPDs often experience organisational capacity challenges related to constrained financial resources, limited infrastructure and lack of experience in engaging with humanitarian response
- Therefore, providing opportunities for OPAs and OPDs and their representatives to take steps to strengthen their capacity should be regarded as a central part of facilitating a participatory inclusion audit.

The Humanitarian inclusion standards (HIS)¹⁹ should be the main frame of reference for any audit. Becoming familiar with these standards is an important part of the familiarisation process. They consist of nine key inclusion standards, derived from the Nine Commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), and seven sets of sector-specific inclusion standards: protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; food security and livelihoods; nutrition; shelter, settlement and household items; health; and education. Each set of standards includes key actions to meet the standard.

2 Assessing feasibility

Context

It is important to consider whether it is possible to carry out a participatory inclusion audit in a particular humanitarian context at the present time. Some security concerns may make it difficult to carry out a participatory inclusion audit putting auditors at unreasonable risk. It may be appropriate to wait until after the immediate emergency relief phase to conduct a participatory inclusion audit, or to consider different ways to undertake an audit that are feasible within the context.

¹⁹ [Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities](#)

Assessing whether auditors are ready to participate

Wherever possible, participatory inclusion audits should be undertaken through representative organisations of older people and people with disabilities: OPAs and OPDs.

A critical early step is to identify local OPAs and OPDs, and any umbrella organisations associations, taking into consideration how well they represent the diversity of experience in the context of humanitarian action, and how committed they are to taking a rights-based approach to inclusion.

These associations and organisations should reflect a range of different experiences of older age and disability, as well as age, gender and socio-economic background. If those undertaking the audit have only a narrow range of lived experience of older age and disability, they may miss considerations that would be important for inclusive humanitarian action.

Where these associations and organisations do not exist, it could be possible to work with local government or other community-based organisations to facilitate the establishment of mass membership organisations/associations. This option may take some time; priority should be given to helping the organisations and associations to become broad-based in terms of membership and well-organised. The positive longer-term results will make it a worthy investment.

There was a lack of broad-based associations or membership organisations representing older people in Shashemene. In preparation for the participatory inclusion audit, Tearfund worked with older people and local government to encourage the formation of such associations.

3 Planning and resourcing

Before planning a participatory inclusion audit, it is valuable to think about how the participatory inclusion audit will work.

A project approach:

- Will it be a distinct, time-bound 'project', where a third party or technical team brings together OPDs and OPAs as well as humanitarian organisations to design and implement a one-off audit of multiple humanitarian organisations?

A partnership approach:

- Is a particular humanitarian organisation reaching out to OPDs and OPAs to audit their work as part of a regular cycle of review?
- Are OPDs and OPAs coming together to carry out an audit as part of their regular activities, and auditing humanitarian organisations they are already connected to?

This guide focuses on the steps involved in a project approach; however many of the same steps will be relevant for conducting a participatory inclusion audit using a partnership approach.

The 'Nothing About Us Without Us' participatory inclusion audit was a time-bound project carried out with funding from Elrha. The project approach was particularly valuable in this case to develop the methodology described in this guide.

Where other approaches are taken, such as a partnership approach, it may be necessary to adapt some of the steps in this guide.

Whichever approach is taken, relevant resources need to be gathered to carry out a participatory inclusion audit successfully.

What kinds of resources might this include?

- Identifying or applying for any funding required
- Budgeting should include accessibility considerations, in discussion with individuals participating. These could include sign language interpreters, accessible documents which can be navigated by screen readers, personal assistants, transport for those with physical impairments, temporary ramps for wheelchair users etc.
- Allocating time to support and guide the participatory inclusion audit process
- Sharing expertise between members of the project team

The answers to the questions above about auditors' capacity in different areas should be taken into account in the planning process, as well as practical considerations related to the humanitarian context and the accessibility requirements of participants.

Depending on the scale and funding options, setting up a participatory inclusion audit 'project' could require 12 to 18 months, including planning.

4 Establishing partnerships with or between representative organisations

Once partners have been identified, it is important to gauge their interest and commitment to the purpose of the audit. To undertake an audit successfully, commitment is essential, and each partner needs to be clear about their role.

Historically there have been weak or non-existent relationships between OPAs and OPDs and humanitarian actors, and where they have existed, they have been relationships of aid giver and aid recipient. Therefore an establishment and/or redefinition of this relationship is critical.

For the audit to be successful, older people and people with disabilities and their representative organisations need to agree on the importance of the audit, committing to contribute to its effectiveness and working together.

This can be achieved through listening exercises that allow members to express their expectations and concerns regarding their involvement in the participatory inclusion audit process.

It will be helpful to work with the organisations and associations taking part to jointly assess their existing capacity, by discussing topics such as:

- membership – how broad and representative is it?

- influence – how easy is it to mobilise members for change?
- advocacy skills
- inclusiveness, feedback and safeguarding processes
- leadership
- efficiency and administration
- office facilities
- income – how sustainable it is?
- funding – how are they able to fund their core activities and essential costs?

The answers to these questions do not necessarily exclude the organisations and associations from being part of the participatory inclusion audit: if they are committed to the overall purpose, these are areas which can be supported and developed further to enable their longer term effectiveness and sustainability.

Ways of working should be discussed, agreed and written down through a simple partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

5 Assessing ethical considerations and risks

Shifting power – moving from a relationship of ‘vulnerable aid recipient’ (members of OPAs and OPDs) and ‘powerful aid provider’ (humanitarian organisations) to a situation of shared vulnerability – is at the heart of the participatory inclusion audit. A participatory inclusion audit inherently puts the organisations to be audited (in this case, humanitarian actors) in a vulnerable situation as well. Vulnerability is therefore shared.

It is important to consider ethics and risks in light of this shared vulnerability. A participatory inclusion audit requires the interplay of up to three different types of actors, and careful consideration should be made to consider the risks and ethical considerations for each group taking part in the audit:



Humanitarian actors

In a position to provide humanitarian support, and thus might have more power and agency. Participating in the process meaningfully requires a willingness to listen to (potentially negative) feedback and learn from it.



Project/technical team (if applicable)

Need to maintain a purely facilitative role and not overstep this/use any assumed power wrongly.



Representative organisations and individual auditors

Members of the most vulnerable groups in any given context. They should not be put into situations of increased vulnerability. Auditors should consider ethics in how they share audit findings, recognising the willingness of audited organisations to be vulnerable and listen to feedback.

Elrha has issued an Ethics for Humanitarian Innovation resource²⁰ which can be consulted as a framework for assessing ethical risks in implementing a participatory inclusion audit.

The team from Tearfund and EGCDWO oriented the audit team to consider how being involved in an audit process shifts power, creating shared vulnerabilities, and to reflect on the ethical considerations involved in the audit.

The team established ethical ways of working, such as requesting the informed consent of participants before any voice recording or video or photography was carried out.

Below are some of the risks identified by the team, and how these were mitigated:

Risk: The audit team is unrepresentative, and does not promote the voice and interests of a wide range of older people and people with disabilities.

Mitigation: OPAs and OPDs will be responsible for selecting their own representatives to form the audit team, based on clearly stated criteria.

Risk: Training is not accessible to all participants who form the audit team.

Mitigation: Ensure accessibility is considered and budgeted, and reasonable accommodations are put in place to meet the needs of the participants. These may include arranging an accessible venue for training, assigning sign language interpreters for Deaf participants who use sign language, covering the costs of assistants for visually impaired people or others who need them, providing large font training materials, and using local languages as much as possible.

Risk: Some opinions are excluded from the co-design of the audit tool.

Mitigation: Efforts are made to listen to OPA and OPD representatives, ensuring all input is well considered and accommodated.

Risk: Lack of engagement by humanitarian actors to be audited, or humanitarian actors willing to engage in the audit process are unrepresentative.

Mitigation: Potential audited organisations are invited to a workshop to find out more about the importance of the participatory inclusion audit, and official letters sent to invite participation.

Risk: Audited organisations feel threatened by the audit and its findings, and are therefore less willing to engage in the process and respond to the findings.

Mitigation: Training is provided for the audit team on how to approach humanitarian organisations. The required approach and attributes of auditors are jointly developed and agreed by the audit team. Community-based organisations are approached in culturally sensitive ways that respect their rules and traditions.

Risk: The audit report is not well-understood by organisations audited, and the findings are not acted upon.

Mitigation: A series of workshops are organised to validate the audit findings and engage organisations in how to respond to them. Each organisation is provided with their own audit report, and any corrective feedback provided is addressed.

²⁰ <https://www.elrha.org/researchdatabase/ethics-for-humanitarian-innovation/>

Table 1: Summary of recommended preconditions for participatory inclusion audit

<p>OPAs and OPDs</p>	<p>Essential.</p> <p>Older people and people with disabilities need to be organised in groups (at least on a temporary basis) to engage in an audit to represent the larger community. Where no OPAs and OPDs exist, it might be possible to collaborate with local government or other relevant actors to establish new representative groups. The range of OPAs and OPDs involved should always represent diverse experiences of older people and people with disabilities.</p>
<p>Safeguarding</p>	<p>Essential</p> <p>It is important to consider safeguarding implications. You will be working with vulnerable adults and it is important that they are kept safe. One way to do this is to ask them for their input on steps you can take to ensure their safety and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Security</p>	<p>Desirable</p> <p>Humanitarian action takes place in more or less secure contexts. Some security concerns may make it difficult to carry out a participatory inclusion audit without putting auditors at unreasonable risk, or it may be appropriate to wait until after the immediate emergency relief phase to conduct a participatory inclusion audit. Virtual or other digital means may be preferable where the security is deemed too limited</p>
<p>Prior experience implementing inclusive humanitarian response and/or inclusive practices</p>	<p>Desirable</p> <p>Engaging in participatory inclusion audits enables learning from auditors who have first hand experience of living with old age or disability or any other vulnerability. Whilst it is desirable for those involved to be familiar with inclusive practices and inclusive humanitarian response, it is not essential.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>Desirable</p> <p>It is unlikely to be possible to carry out an audit with no funding at all, but the participatory inclusion audit can be implemented with very little funding/no specific funding in some circumstances, using a partnership approach. Depending on the scope of the response and the audit planned, a specific budget may be required.</p> <p>Funding for accessibility considerations is likely to be essential, to ensure representation of different experiences of older age and disability.</p> <p>Organisations could fund the audit in partnership, reducing the requirement on any one organisation.</p>
<p>Expertise on Humanitarian inclusion standards (HIS)</p>	<p>Desirable</p> <p>A good understanding of standards such as the HIS and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) will greatly aid the effectiveness of a participatory inclusion audit. The process will enrich knowledge and expertise through practice.</p>

Phase 2: Inception and set up

1 Engaging stakeholders in the audit process

The implementation of a participatory inclusion audit involves a range of stakeholders. Key amongst them are older people and people with disabilities and their representative organisations, who form the auditing team. Engaging and establishing partnerships with these organisations has been discussed above.

Beyond this, it is important to engage humanitarian actors well, as those who will be audited, to ensure a collaborative and effective audit process.

Firstly, it is important to identify which organisations to engage. A range of local, regional or even national or federal government organisations may all be relevant to include in the audit process, as well as local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs). It may also be valuable to engage organisations through the UN cluster approach, if activated.

Given the shift in power dynamics involved (noted above), it is crucial to collaboratively and continuously help these actors understand the value of the audit, address their concerns, and establish clear agreements on how audit results will be utilised and shared.

How to engage humanitarian organisations to be audited is likely to depend on the context, as well as how far organisations engaged in humanitarian response have already developed their understanding on inclusion of older people and people with disabilities. Below are some potential strategies.



Strategies for building relationships with humanitarian organisations

- Engage with relevant local government agencies to help engage and facilitate relationships with local humanitarian actors who can be audited. An MoU with these local government agencies may be valuable.
- Hold local project launch ceremonies to raise awareness and understanding of the purpose and benefits of a participatory inclusion audit.
- Help humanitarian actors to understand the potential value of a participatory inclusion audit in relation to enhancing their efficiency in inclusive humanitarian responses. Humanitarian actors should support the shift of power from ‘aid giver’ to ‘aid recipient’.
- Conduct knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) assessments of humanitarian actors related to inclusive humanitarian responses and share the findings. This may encourage humanitarian actors to seek collaboration to resolve gaps.
- Provide an opportunity to answer questions or address concerns about a participatory inclusion audit. This should include a clear agreement on how results will be used and shared.

Tearfund's preparations for the participatory inclusion audit in Shashamene started with engaging in an audit of some of the humanitarian responses it funded in Ethiopia, and engaging OPDs and OPAs in the process. These early pilot audits used a less participatory approach; Tearfund provided the audit tools and carried out the analysis of the findings, but conducting this audit with older people and people with disabilities began to develop some of the relationships necessary for this more innovative and effective participatory approach.

As this project began, Tearfund partner EGCDWO made an agreement with the local government and set up a launch for the project which engaged representatives from humanitarian organisations, relevant government offices and, in line with Tearfund and EGCDWO's faith-based identity, religious groups. This launch introduced the intention to carry out a participatory inclusion audit.

The project team initially carried out a Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP) assessment of humanitarian actors related to inclusive humanitarian action (in particular the CHS and HIS), and a social mapping exercise to understand the context of older people and people with disabilities in Shashemene. This helped to inform which humanitarian organisations were most relevant to audit. The baseline KAP assessment report was shared with those taking part in it as a baseline, and at the same time participating organisations were provided with details about the plan to conduct a participatory inclusion audit.

Based on positive responses to the report and the information about the audit plans, the team found 13 organisations willing to participate and be audited.

These were:

- five CBOs (a fellowship of evangelical churches, a community welfare organisation, a mosque representative, an orthodox church representative, and representatives of the Oromo traditional institutions known as Aba Gadas and Hadha Sinkes).
- six local NGOs (the Ethiopian Red Cross branch, two established by local youth to counter the spread of HIV/AIDS – these were development organisations engaging in humanitarian response, a disability-focused local NGO, and two close partners of Tearfund).
- two government offices (the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs and the Bureau of Finance and Economic Cooperation, which handles registration and reporting of NGOs). The two government organisations were not directly providing humanitarian assistance but played a facilitation role for other humanitarian actors.

During meetings with local organisations, the project team intentionally included religious leaders and Oromo traditional leaders to bless every meeting.

2 Strengthening the capacity of OPAs and OPDs

At this stage it is important to review any evidence about the existing capabilities of OPAs and OPDs who will be taking part, which has been gathered when considering the feasibility of the participatory inclusion audit. In discussion with OPAs and OPDs, priorities and strategies to address any gaps should be put in place, along with specific training for individuals getting involved as auditors.

The central purpose of capacity strengthening of OPAs and OPDs is to enhance or restore their agency, which has often been reduced through their interactions with society which is not accommodating of older age or impairment, and which has viewed older people and people with disabilities as passive recipients of

support. Long-term, lasting change in this area will take time: to work with OPDs and OPAs to meaningfully enhance their participation could take three to five years.

At this stage, a more detailed partnership agreement may be valuable.



Key areas which might be identified for capacity strengthening for OPAs and OPDs

- Leadership development
- Engagement in advocacy for the rights of their members
- Supporting organisational income generation strategies for OPDs and OPAs
- Developing resilience to humanitarian crises
- Reviewing existing and potential office facilities
- Enhancing networking opportunities
- Envisioning OPAs and OPDs with principles and practices of inclusive humanitarian response through training on different human rights protocols and humanitarian standards

OPDs and OPAs in Shashemene experienced challenges to their capacity including a lack of office facilities and lack of income to run and manage routine activities. The Shashemene branch of the Ethiopian National Association of People Affected by leprosy (ENAPAL) was one of two OPDs engaged in the Nothing About Us Without Us project. At the outset of the project, the manager of the association noted:

‘We don’t need computers, printers, photocopy machines, etc. I said this ... not because we do not need all these machines. But we want to become self-sufficient more than having brand new office facilities. For the time being, we have an old PC, on which we can work. But we want to help our members who are very poor. If we can get something through which we can generate income sustainably, we can provide food for our members, who cannot work both because of their age and their deteriorated health condition. Moreover, we can also teach children of people affected by leprosy who suffer from a lack of basic educational materials.’

A needs assessment conducted as part of the project identified a need to renovate some of the rooms the organisation rents out, to increase their rental income potential. These now generate income for the organisation (around three times as much), and help to generate public awareness of leprosy, changing misperceptions about the risks of interacting with people with leprosy.

3 Identifying and training auditors

Once OPAs and OPDs are engaged, the next stage is to identify potential auditors from within their membership, and make it as easy as possible for older people and people with disabilities with a range of experiences to play a central role in the participatory inclusion audit.

Auditors should be identified by OPAs and OPDs using a set of criteria developed themselves, without criteria being imposed externally. This should celebrate and emphasise their unique wisdom and lived experience over professional qualifications, to ensure the audit reflects their perspectives.

It is important not to assume that every OPA or OPD is fully representative or inclusive of all older people or people with disabilities, and to consider whether multiple organisations could be engaged to achieve this more fully, or whether individual auditors could be identified to address any obvious gaps in representation. This is also a key area of focus when discussing capacity development of the organisations and associations themselves.

It is also critical to ensure that auditors represent a wide range of experience and identities, such as gender, socio-economic background, and education levels.

It is helpful to document the talents, skills and experience of each person involved in the audit, to be able to demonstrate the overall ability of the auditing group. This contributes to learning around how older people and people with disabilities, who may not have been previously regarded as 'qualified', have a high level of ability and experience which adds enormous value and credibility to the audit results.

Once these have been identified, training auditors is essential for building the specific capacity of OPAs and OPDs and making the most of existing skills, experience and talents. Depending on the starting point for auditors, training could focus on rights-based approaches to ageing and disability, inclusive humanitarian responses, and skills in communication, lobbying, and advocacy. The training should not be prescriptive about how to audit.

Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities

The 2018 Humanitarian inclusion standards (HIS) are the main frame of reference for a participatory inclusion audit. A participatory inclusion audit assesses humanitarian actions in light of this framework and identifies key focus areas to help address the gap in understanding the needs, capacities and rights of older people and people with disabilities, and promote their inclusion in humanitarian action.

The 'Nothing About Us Without Us' project trained the leadership of OPAs and OPDs in areas of inclusive humanitarian response, including training on CHS and HIS. Training also covered basic organisational leadership, project proposal writing, lobbying and advocacy, safeguarding, and local resource mobilisation. The project team also sought to informally mentor the leadership of OPAs and OPDs throughout the project.

In the training on the HIS, the project team ensured that there was an understanding that OPAs and OPDs have their own role in achieving each of the HIS. This enabled OPAs and OPDs to become part of the solution, rather than positioning themselves only as fault finders.

Ensure accessibility for all at all stages of the process

It is important to make sure to ensure auditors can operate in an accessible environment when implementing the participatory inclusion audit. Tools assessing functional limitations such as the Washington Group questions²¹ are helpful to identify any accessibility and communication barriers. Interventions such as assigning sign language translators, personal assistants or social workers, developing magnified texts, audio or tactile materials can be used according to demand.



Find an accessible venue

This may require adaptations such as temporary ramps or improved signage. Consider access for wheelchair users via ramps and doorways and corridors, the designation of accessible toilet facilities, how easy the venue is to navigate for those with sensory impairment, and whether it is reachable on public transport



Make provision for accessibility during the training

Circulate training materials in advance, and paper copies with sufficient font size if helpful, ensure the most appropriate language is used, engage a sign language interpreter if required by any Deaf participants, provide a hearing loop, engage individuals' personal assistants during the training, ensure the training schedule includes regular breaks and varied approaches.



Ensure participants' financial costs are covered

Older people and people with disabilities may not have their own financial resources to support participation in the audit, particularly in humanitarian contexts.²² Out of pocket expenses for training such as transport, food and accommodation should be covered. Consider whether the opportunity cost of their time spent on the audit could be covered, through a training allowance or per diem in line with daily wages.

It may be necessary to think about how to manage power dynamics within the group of auditors to ensure that all voices are heard, for example by including activities within the workshop which invite everyone to contribute, or opportunities to work in smaller groups. Emphasising a 'crew' or 'team' mentality may be important in maintaining positive relationships amongst auditors.

²¹ [The Washington Group on Disability Statistics](#)

²² Banks LM, Kuper H, Polack S (2017) Poverty and disability in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. PLoS ONE 12(12): e0189996. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0189996> pmid:29267388

Self-audit is a humbling experience. It helps older people and people with disabilities understand their role going forward and gain a sense of empathy with humanitarian actors. Sharing the experience of being audited helps older people and people with disabilities to develop an auditing tool and conduct the audit in a manner that seeks solutions to the problems of exclusion rather than fault finding in another party. This reduces the risk of any antagonism between auditors and audited organisations, exacerbating exclusionary practices further.

The number of auditors required is likely to vary based on the timeframe available to conduct the audit (one or two small teams could be engaged for a longer time period), the size of humanitarian response to be audited, the number of organisations to be audited, and the number of different APDs/OPDs and OPAs in the area amongst other factors.

Whilst it might be logistically possible to conduct an inclusion audit with just four or five auditors, it may be difficult to ensure that the range of perspectives of older people and people with disabilities are well-represented by too small a group.

Tearfund engaged around 30 individuals to take part in the inclusion audit process: ten auditors from OPAs, ten auditors from the local Leprosy Association and ten auditors from the Disability Federation. This group of 30 was sub-divided into six groups of five auditors to carry out the audit. Each group had a chairperson and secretary. None of these auditors identified as having a neurodiversity or intellectual disability. Some caregivers were engaged within the 30 individuals. People with leprosy reported a big impact from being engaged in the training alongside other groups, being greeted with a handshake by other participants and trainers.

Phase 3: Implementation

1 Co-designing the audit tool

Once auditors have been identified and trained, a tool can be designed that assesses the inclusiveness of humanitarian response programmes for older people and people with disabilities in a specific response or geographic area. The development of an auditing tool can either adapt the earlier participatory inclusion audit tool or create a new one, ensuring it reflects the voices and experiences of older people and people with disabilities within the community; their direct involvement in developing the tool is crucial. Starting from an existing tool is likely to be easier.

The auditing tool must be framed around the HIS for older people and people with disabilities, ensuring that audit questions stay focused on humanitarian action.

There should be an openness to discuss any needs not covered by the HIS, as perceived by the auditors. Every auditing team member should be actively involved in the co-designing process; it may be necessary to prevent any individual from dominating this process.

In larger teams, specific roles may be assigned, but all members should still contribute feedback and evaluations, with attention given to leveraging each member's unique skills and expertise.



Developing a participatory inclusion audit tool

- Develop assessment criteria and indicators for evaluating the age and disability inclusiveness of humanitarian response programmes, using open-ended questions to allow auditors to judge the organisation's compliance level.
- Pilot the tool.
- Evaluate the pilot audit's effectiveness through checklists and reflection questions focused on the auditing tool and team members' approaches.
- Provide guidelines and protocols detailing how each audit activity should be conducted, including necessary time frames and resources for both pilot and main audits. This is important for consistency.
- Create a template for recording responses from representatives of the audited organisation, to ensure accurate documentation of audit findings.
- Outline how to analyse the data obtained during the audit to derive meaningful insights.
- Establish a procedure or template for reporting audit findings, for each organisation audited (to feed back the results), and combined findings covering the scope of the audit.

The audit tool developed in Shashemene can be found [here](#); this may be a useful starting point but should be adapted for each context.

Shashemene workshops

Engagement workshop

Tearfund and EGCDWO engaged ten auditors as participants for an engagement workshop, representing each association engaged in the audit process. The aim of this workshop was for auditors to recognise their role in working for inclusive humanitarian response, and to develop a sense of empathy with the organisations they would be auditing. The workshop also enabled Tearfund to gauge the existing capacity of individuals to engage in the audit process.

Participants were introduced to the CHS and the HIS. A motto was developed which was used throughout the audit process to emphasise the importance of engagement with the audit process: 'we, older people and people with disabilities, have a great role to play in the work of humanitarian inclusion.'

Participants discussed the role their organisations should play in the HIS so that they could support the achievement of these standards. The group also conducted a self-audit of their own organisation's inclusion practices. Participants expressed shock at their own limitations in inclusive practices.

Brainstorming workshop

This workshop provided an opportunity to find out how participants understood the term 'audit', how they distinguished humanitarian and development actors, what audit questions would they ask humanitarian organisations, and what they identified as good behaviours of an auditor.

Some older people dominated the group during the training; this was difficult to challenge due to broader cultural norms about the role of older people and the respect due to them. There was also a need to be aware of the wider dynamics of intra-community tension experienced within Shashemene, part of the humanitarian crisis.

During this workshop, some participants reverted to a 'narrow' view of an audit as financial, despite the previous workshop having introduced a wider definition. It was necessary to revisit the meaning of a participatory inclusion audit related to inclusion.

Drama workshop

The group developed a drama, with various participants acting as auditors and humanitarian actors. The audience gave feedback on what, within the drama, represented good auditing practice.

This workshop incorporated a recap briefing on the CHS and the nine HIS.

It identified a committee of participants to draft the audit tool; this group received a per diem for one day to cover their time drafting it.

Presentation of the draft tool by the committee

Tearfund took the draft prepared by the committee, 'polished' it and presented it back to the wider group for feedback. Ideally comments from a wider group would have been gathered before the final 'polishing' was done.

2 Piloting the audit tool

Once a draft tool has been developed, it is important to pilot it with two or three organisations. Ideally these organisations would be very engaged with or committed to the inclusion audit already, and willing to have the pilot tool tested on them.

Be clear with all parties what the pilot is aiming to achieve and plan time after the activity for reflection and feedback.

Logistical considerations – for example, proximity to the training venue – might also be relevant to keep in mind.



Questions to ask to assess the effectiveness of the participatory inclusion audit tool

About the tool:

- Is the tool able to record all findings of the audit in line with the chosen framework (most likely the HIS)?
- Can the auditors (with different functional difficulties) confidently use the tool both to assess humanitarian actors and capture the findings?
- Are auditors able to ask probing questions when they need more detail?
- Can auditors explain their questions further if they have not been understood accurately?

About the audit team:

- Are the auditors who participate able to share responsibilities equally and actively participate?
- Are the auditors able to manage in the time available?
- Are the auditors able to approach humanitarian actors as inspectors and assessors? Or as critical friends who work towards achieving the same ultimate goals of better and more inclusive humanitarian response?

About the audited organisation(s):

- How did humanitarian actors find the exercise? Did it bring undue burden upon them or will it be possible to develop their practice of inclusive humanitarian responses as a result of the exercise?

Tearfund engaged six groups of five auditors to carry out the audit. Within each group, a chairperson and secretary were nominated. Each of the six chairpersons and secretaries gathered in two groups of six to pilot the tool with two partners nearby for one day.

The group felt a longer time for piloting would have been valuable.

As a result of the piloting, the group tried to reduce the length of the tool used and the number of questions asked, and recognised the need for a large font size in the printed tool, to make it easier to use for older people.

Piloting did not involve feedback from the humanitarian organisations audited, but this likely would have been valuable.

The pilot took place the day before the main audit, which was also completed in one day. A bigger gap between piloting and conducting the inclusion audit would have been ideal.

Once the pilot audit is complete, it is helpful for the group of auditors who participated to share their findings and overall reflections of the process, as well as reflections and feedback from the humanitarian actors who participated.

It is then important to adjust the design of the tool based on this learning, and consider refresher training for auditors on any updated elements if helpful.

After piloting the audit tool, Tearfund organised a social meeting the following day for humanitarian actors and auditors to meet and discuss carrying out the audit. The audit itself took place the day after this, with 13 organisations audited by six audit teams of five individuals; each team audited two or three organisations.

The audit tool involved eight audit questions with sub-questions. Some auditors asked probing questions, and some did not probe as much – this was a learning point for the piloting process, to ensure consistency across groups.

3 Conducting the main participatory inclusion audit

Once access to all humanitarian organisations that will participate in the full participatory inclusion audit process has been negotiated, it is important to agree availability and a schedule of audit visits with the team of auditors and the organisations to be audited. This should be based on the time needed at each site and the travel time required.

The necessary accessible transport should be provided for teams, along with essential background information about the organisations to be audited, including where they are located. Any risks or security considerations should be identified and appropriate mitigations put in place.

Ensure teams have the necessary equipment to carry out the audit – paper copies of the audit tool, clipboards, pens and notebooks or electronic devices and the necessary support for accessibility, such as personal assistants or interpreters where appropriate.

Contact details of the audit team and key contacts for each of the audited organisations should be shared in advance, securely and with permission. This could be done through an introduction meeting.



Checklist for an effective participatory inclusion audit

- Clear objectives agreed by all parties
- Agreed number of humanitarian organisations to be audited, introductions made, and relationships built to ease the process; contact details shared with permission
- Auditing teams identified, responsibilities allocated (eg note taker), and their schedules agreed
- Agreed timing in which to conduct the audit for each organisation
- Agreed financial and other resources to be allocated
- Risk assessment and mitigation strategies in place
- Transportation services for auditors for visits arranged
- Assistants/sign language translators/other accessibility support required in place
- Required audit templates printed/shared in soft copy and other stationery materials provided
- Accommodation booked and paid for if required
- Auditors feeling confident and with plenty of time to answer concerns or questions beforehand
- Reflection sessions scheduled to discuss learning and feedback from auditors and the organisations involved, and ensure findings have been documented accurately.

A post-audit reflection session should be scheduled as soon as possible after the audit has been accomplished, ideally no later than the following day. Make sure that each group of auditors share what they observed and learned. Auditors could be asked to evaluate their work: its strengths and limitations. Each group of auditors need to ensure they have recorded all relevant information using the audit data gathering templates.

A similar post-audit reflection with audited humanitarian organisations is also recommended. This enables auditors to get their feedback about how the audit was carried out. It is good to encourage auditors to take notes, as these can be used as additional information when the data is analysed.

Finally, make sure all information is properly recorded. If there is supplementary data such as photos, videos, or audio recorded information, this needs to be stored with the completed data gathering templates.

4 Data analysis and findings

Analysing data and reporting for each organisation participating

Consider the most accessible approach to enable older people and people with disabilities to participate in the collation of the audit findings.



Guiding questions to generate audit findings

- To what extent do audited organisations meet the assessment criteria for age and disability inclusive humanitarian action?
- Are there attitudinal and knowledge barriers observed within the audited organisation?
- How do environmental barriers affect the delivery of humanitarian action within the audited organisation?
- Are there institutional barriers observed within the audited organisation in relation to age and disability inclusive humanitarian action?
- What established or emerging best practices for age and disability inclusive humanitarian action could be scaled up within the audited organisation? What about gaps or challenges related to age and disability inclusion?
- What are the limitations of this specific organisational audit? Are there any gaps in what audit teams were able to find out?
- Any reflections on how the team conducted the audit, and the contribution of different stakeholders?

It is crucial that each group member has the opportunity to share ideas, and that time is taken to discuss all points. It is very important to make sure that the group members have reached a consensus. If it is difficult to reach consensus, it might be good to highlight the point of difference where auditors could not come to consensus within the report.

The audit teams provided the raw data from the audit. Due to time constraints, Tearfund carried out the initial analysis of the data. Ideally, the process would have engaged OPAs and OPDs more fully in the analysis process.

Tearfund organised post-audit reflection workshops for both the auditors (members of the core working group) and the representatives of the audited organisations or humanitarian actors. The reflection workshops enabled further inputs to the audit process, beyond what was captured in audit data gathering templates. Older people and people with disabilities who had been trained as auditors but were not able to participate in the audit itself were able to engage at this stage, providing an external perspective to review the work of auditors. Each audited organisation had the opportunity to validate their own audit findings.

The findings were translated into two local languages.

Tearfund and EGCDWO sought to develop an inclusive humanitarian response strategy, to guide local government and NGOs to work in line with these guidelines. The audit findings were used to develop a dialogue on this.

Once data analysis has taken place, the auditing team should produce an organisational audit report for each organisation being audited. The team should consult both their data analysis notes and the audit data gathering.

A typical audit report would include the following headings; however there may be additional or alternative ways to share the audit findings with relevant stakeholders in an accessible way (eg videos, podcasts, infographics, summary reports).



Audit report headings

- **Cover page**, to include the title of the audit report, names of auditors, project name and any donors
- **Acknowledgements**, to include the audited organisation, its representatives, and any other key stakeholders, including any funders
- **Introduction**, to include the purpose of the audit report, intended audience, the main assessment criteria, and how the participatory inclusion audit was implemented
- **Basic information**, to include contact details as appropriate
- **Profile of the audited organisation**, to include names and location of audited organisations, type of the organisation (governmental, nongovernmental, community based), approximate number of people served through the organisations' missions and main purpose of the organisation
- **Main findings of the audit**, to include assessment criteria and related indicators with summarised findings for each with auditor comments based on the data analysis, and whether the organisation has met that specific assessment criteria fully, partially or not at all with good justification
- **Feedback from the audited organisations**, to include their overall impression of the audit, any concerns and responses from the auditing team
- **Best practices**, to include how they have been scaled up or utilised as opportunities to promote more age and disability inclusive humanitarian actions
- **Observed barriers and challenges**, to include attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers observed which exclude older people and people with disabilities in humanitarian action
- **Gaps and limitations**, to include gaps and limitations of the audited organisation in promoting age and disability inclusive humanitarian action. Gaps can be presented as recommendations
- **Limitations of the participatory inclusion audit**, to include, for example, the collection of data or its analysis or, in the implementation of the audit itself, the audited organisation failing to provide the required information or allocating appropriate time

- **Concluding remarks**, to include a summary of the main findings of the audit and key recommendations for the way forward
- **Appendix**, including the audit tool

Synthesising these findings to draw out general conclusions

The synthesis audit report consolidates findings from individual audited organisations within a specific area or humanitarian action, to provide an overall picture of age and disability inclusion.

It may be easiest for a small team of five to six auditors and one to two project team members, with some technical support, to analyse the data and draft the report, while consulting the broader group of auditors and stakeholders.

It may be helpful to synthesise and summarise the findings across organisations using the structure of the HIS.

The report produced as a result of this will present the audit results and highlight the participatory process involving older people and people with disabilities. Translation of the findings into relevant local languages and summary formats (written, video, audio for example) may help to ensure the results can be effectively disseminated.

This report could also include some reflection on the audit process, using the questions below:



Guiding questions for reflection on the process

- Were older people and people with disabilities able to participate in the audit irrespective of their functional difficulties and limitations?
- What talents and skills were older people and people with disabilities able to use to enable their active participation in the audit?
- Was the auditing environment accessible, taking specific needs into consideration? To what extent were auditors resilient where the auditing environment was not fully accessible? What unique contributions were they able to make to create a more accessible environment?
- To what extent were auditors actively engaged throughout the audit process? Can the active engagement of auditors be described in terms of attendance in all organised events related to the audit?
- How effective were auditors in making contributions to co-create auditing tools, conducting the pilot audit, recording audit-related data, assessing organisations via interviews and observations, and producing first draft organisational audit reports? Were there any observed challenges and gaps in achieving these deliverables?
- Were auditors able to generate lessons throughout the process of the audit?

5 Validating and sharing the findings

Once reports have been developed, it is important to share these with the organisations involved and with the wider membership of OPAs and OPDs, so the findings can be validated and used, and action can be taken.

This might be most easily achieved through a validation meeting in-person, inviting a manageable number of stakeholders to come together and the audit team to share their findings.

Alternatively this could be carried out through an online meeting or by email, if the necessary accessibility requirements could be put in place to ensure a wide range of stakeholders can participate.

Ideally these meetings would involve an opportunity for audited organisations to share their reflections on the findings, how they plan to respond, and what support they might need to carry out these actions.

The audit report produced in Shashemene was used to highlight lessons from the audit, and was shared with all the duty bearers involved to reflect on the way forward.

As noted above, these findings initiated discussions about the drafting and development of the older people and people with disabilities inclusive humanitarian response strategy.

There were also two learning forums at which representatives of audited (humanitarian) organisations and auditors (OPAs and OPDs) shared reflections on participating in the audit.

Phase 4: Response to the findings

1 Follow up with audited organisations

Once the participatory inclusion audit is completed and the final report has been produced, representative parties who were involved in the participatory inclusion audit should consider how to take the findings forward, to maximise impact.

It may be valuable for auditors to continue to engage with audited organisations in an ongoing way, to encourage them to respond to the findings. This might involve return visits three, six or twelve months later.

There may be scope for the audit project to evolve into an ongoing partnership with audited organisations, by maintaining relationships with OPAs and OPDs and inviting them to audit their work on an ongoing basis.

2 Strategic level engagement

It may be valuable to co-design a local strategy for inclusion to ensure that, in the event of future humanitarian crises or ongoing response to protracted crises, the most vulnerable members of society will be more resilient and able to participate.

The active participation of older people and people with disabilities is critical throughout the process, to continually ensure that plans, strategies and activities are always aligned to their needs.

The development of a strategy can be considered at two levels:

- How can a participatory inclusion audit become standard practice for humanitarian action within the target area or response, and beyond?
- How can we ensure more humanitarian action is age and disability inclusive in the target areas?



Steps towards a strategy for inclusion

- **Dream setting:** Organise participatory reflection sessions where OPAs and OPDs articulate their vision for an inclusive humanitarian system using artistic methods. This reflection exercise could use different modalities such as drawing exercise, poetry, songs, etc. A committee compiles and presents these shared dreams to humanitarian actors, identifying actionable steps and barriers to address collaboratively.
- **Post-audit reflection:** Use the audit findings to discuss gaps in inclusion, actionable solutions given local capacity, and the support needed to address gaps. Highlight opportunities for scaling best practices and outline strategies to realise shared objectives.
- **Situational analysis:** Facilitate an analysis of global and local contexts, including statistical evidence, community perceptions, living conditions, vulnerabilities, and policy frameworks, to justify and inform the design of an inclusive humanitarian response strategy.
- **Setting objectives and principles:** Based on reflections and analyses, collaboratively define strategy objectives, guiding principles, and key implementation directions through workshops, ensuring inclusivity and feasibility.
- **Drafting the strategy:** A committee develops a structured, detailed document incorporating shared dreams, situational analysis, and agreed objectives and principles.
- **Validating the strategy:** Conduct validation workshops with diverse and representative stakeholders to refine the strategy, ensuring broad acceptance and alignment with community needs.
- **Sharing the strategy:** Support OPAs and OPDs in promoting the strategy within their networks and advocating for its ratification, fostering ownership and widespread endorsement.
- **Supporting ratification:** Assist OPAs and OPDs in navigating legal processes for strategy ratification, providing advocacy support to maintain momentum and achieve strategic aims.

3 Capture reflections and learning from the participatory inclusion audit

As the practice of participatory inclusion audits becomes more widely used and evolves, it will be valuable to share learning about its effectiveness and scalability across diverse contexts. This should include best practices and ways of overcoming challenges.

Those involved in a participatory inclusion audit should take time throughout, and particularly at the end of the process, to reflect on what has been achieved and how, what worked well in the approach outlined here and what needed adapting. If possible, please write a short summary of the lessons learned from the participatory inclusion audit.

Additional Resources

Online course on conducting a participatory inclusion audit with older people and people with disabilities in disasters

<https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/online-courses/including-older-people-and-people-with-disabilities>

Briefing paper describing the need for the participatory inclusion audit approach

<https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/tools-and-guides/innovation-for-older-age-and-disability-inclusion-in-humanitarian-response>

Elrha's glossary for the Humanitarian Innovation Fund <https://www.elrha.org/support/hif/hif-glossary/>

Tearfund would love to hear about your experiences, to inform future versions of this guide. Please also get in touch with any questions or to request supplementary information to support a participatory inclusion audit. Please get in touch by emailing publications@tearfund.org