

More than just a Roof: How Emergency Shelter Can Reduce Vulnerability

June 4th, 2024, 16:15-17:45

Emergencies and crises increase everyone's vulnerabilities, and even more that of vulnerable groups. By framing vulnerability around shelter, this session explored how inclusive emergency response can benefit everyone and lead to long-term solutions.

The session showed how shelter response affects every aspect of one's life during an emergency. Well intentioned interventions can lead to further harm to vulnerable groups if not planned thoroughly. It started with an overview of examples of the enormous impact of bad interventions on the physical and mental health of women, children as well as disabled people.

The discussion between experts highlighted how effective civil protection is not possible without meaningful consultation with people who are most at risk. This means including persons with disabilities as lead trainers for civil protection actors, with budget for accessibility in place, at the moment of planning and preparedness. The exchanges also underlined how working with a gender-sensitive approach and the perspective of at-risk groups in shelter operations, must be systematically integrated in our organisational cultures and embedded in all of our operations. Experts also stressed how linking the short term with longer term planning is the only way to ensure resilience and sustainability on shelter interventions.

Session Objectives

The session aimed at both creating awareness and having an open discussion on the responsibilities and good practices around working with *vulnerable* groups in emergency (shelter) operations. The discussions clearly showed how, even though the majority of the organisations have a certain degree of understanding and awareness of these issues, real and meaningful participation is often treated as a complementary practice and not systematically included.

The rescEU strategic shelter reserves aim at taking these issues into account and the Commission intends to keep the dialogue active, to ensure they provide a high-quality response for everyone.

PANEL

- **Gordon RATTRAY, Programme Coordinator, European Disability Forum**
- **Jenny MOLIN, Gender Advisor, MSB – Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency.**
- **Giulia MACI, Urban and Gender Specialist, Cities Alliance – UNOPS**

MODERATOR: Elena GIRAL, rescEU shelter Programme Manager, European Commission – DG ECHO

KEY MESSAGES:

Meaningful participation of people with disabilities. Emergency response can create additional barriers that will create new risks for people with disabilities. The only way to ensure that these are minimised is to properly and meaningfully include people with different impairments at planning stages, to ensure their knowledge is embedded in our response capabilities and they are adequately included in the decision-making process. Moreover, it is important to closely monitor the assistance provided after an emergency, so that it can support all people equally.

From ad-hoc to systematic integration of a gender and Human Rights perspective in operations. It is a shared responsibility to move from commitment to action on the ground, and that with systematic

effort, inclusion of the gender perspective is mainstreamed throughout organisations and policies, as well as operations. “People are not just vulnerable; they also hold important capacities”.

Involvement of women in longer term conflict-sensitive planning. Cities more inclusive to women are cities more inclusive to everyone. It is key to support local authorities to increase inclusive planning in the long-term. Adequate participation and engagement with women can ensure access to basic services in crises, otherwise often neglected by security issues.