



# **Module 3 – Tipsheet**

## **Water Supply and Sanitation**

The **right to water and the right to sanitation are human rights**. The need to include people with disabilities (PWD) in the area of water and sanitation is high because of the implicit effects on health. Restricted access to clean water, hygienic sanitary facilities and hygiene items can be both the cause and the consequence of impairments and increases the isolation and exclusion of people with disabilities. Access to and use of water, sanitation and hygiene (articles) for people with disabilities can vary greatly depending on whether they live in the city or in the countryside, or whether their lives are endangered or impaired by an armed conflict or natural disaster. Dependence on other people increases the risk of violence, with women and girls in particular exposed to sexual violence. When fetching water or using the toilet, care must therefore be taken to ensure their personal protection and safety. People with disabilities who live in isolation or in institutions often have no information about access to adequate water supplies or specific hygiene items and are therefore also exposed to a higher health risk. Restricted access to clean water and hygienic sanitary facilities can be both the cause and also the consequence of impairments and isolate persons with disabilities even more.

Because of these implications for health the following aspects need to be taken into account in interventions in water supply and sanitation:

- As a very personal issue, hygiene has special implications for social barriers. Persons with disabilities often need help and support from others, mostly family members, in fetching water, entering (and often also using) toilets, etc. This **assistance** can be very time-consuming for the helpers and make persons with disabilities feel inferior. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness about rights and barriers so that everyone involved in the intervention (partner organisation, national institutions, population/beneficiaries) is sensitised to the issue of inclusion of people with disabilities.
- **Participation** of people with disabilities (in planning, implementation, monitoring of interventions) – with intersectional representation such as menstruating people with disabilities face additional challenges.
- Access restrictions can occur not only in private households, but also in public

institutions such as markets, schools, etc. They can be technical and/or social, ranging from steps, narrow doorways, out of reach water hand-pumps, lack of handrails, restricted access to hygiene articles and mud to prejudices and discrimination. **Information and knowledge** about existing obstacles to access and their inclusion in implementation has also proved to be more cost-efficient than 'special' measures that often only benefit small groups.

- As a result, eliminating technical barriers also contributes to eliminating social barriers, because in addition to the target group it also benefits their direct environment. In all its aspects, barrier freedom affords **access** for all marginalised groups (including pregnant women, older people), thus contributing to general sustainability. The following measures can help eliminating these barriers:
  - Levelled and paved ways to ensure access to sanitary facilities, water points, etc.
  - Minimising differences in height between the collecting basin of water points and the surroundings.
  - Erection of ramps to reach hand-pumps.
  - Sanitary facilities with wide entrances, handrails and sufficient space for a second person to help when needed.
  - Providing trailers that can be attached to wheelchairs for fetching water.
  - Large-print markings and signposts.
  - Information campaigns, trainings, sector specific standards, construction norms, inclusion in work force, etc.

Consultation with disabled people's organisations (DPOs) and pro disability organisations (PDOs) is also generally advisable in the individual phases of implementation to remedy possible omissions or inadvertent mistakes in good time.