



WORLD FEDERATION
OF THE DEAF

Disaster Respons Policy

International Sign Version



May 2025

Sendai Framework terminology

Disaster: A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts¹.(UNDRR)

Response: *Actions taken directly before, during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. It is predominantly focused on immediate and short-term needs and is sometimes called disaster relief².*

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): *is the policy objective of disaster risk management, and its goals and objectives are defined in disaster risk reduction strategies and plans. Disaster risk reduction is aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and, therefore, to the achievement of sustainable development.³*

¹ <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster>

² <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/response>

³ <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster-risk-reduction>



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Application of the Disaster Response Policy

This disaster response policy applies in emergency situations as a result of natural hazards, climate-related, and other humanitarian disasters where deaf people are affected.

1. Aim

This disaster response policy aims to guide the WFD in its Disaster Risk Reduction work with deaf communities in countries affected by a disaster by advocating for equal rights and inclusive policies that ensure deaf people are not left behind in humanitarian action.

2. Scope of action:

The WFD will conduct its Disaster Risk Reduction work at the policy and advocacy levels and will be directed at natural hazards, climate-related, and humanitarian disasters.

Eligibility

Overall, this policy covers all Ordinary Members (OM) affiliated to the WFD who are faced with disasters resulting in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, notwithstanding their membership fee payment status. The eligibility criteria does not include the membership standing of the OM. In case an OM is not in good standing, this situation can be addressed at a later stage, for example, during the fundraising process. In the case there is no OM, the WFD seeks contact with Associate Members (AM). If there is no AM in the country affected by the disaster, the WFD will contact international humanitarian organisations active in the country to reach out to the deaf community, which later could become potential new members.

The WFD applies an order of priority when initiating contact with the deaf community in the country affected, as follows:

1. Ordinary Member.
2. If there is no Ordinary Member, Associate Member that is active at the national level.
3. If there is no OM nor AM active at the national level, an Associate Member that is active at the regional level.
4. If there is no OM or AM at the national and regional level, an international humanitarian organisation active in the disaster response at the time.



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In the case where an Associate Member initiates the contact, the WFD will ensure that the order of priority is respected and might need to put the Associate Member in contact with the Ordinary Member if there is one in the country affected or another Associate Member if its scope of action is at the national level.

Whereas WFD endeavours to support all of its OM and AM, there will be exemptions, and clearly defined and agreed conditions of engagement with OM and AM that may have the following standings at the time of the disaster:

- 1) OM/AM in conflict with the guiding principles that govern the WFD partnership with its members.
- 2) OM/AM, which at the time of the disaster and crisis is operating in a country where other UN treaties and bodies have declared the need for special treatment in terms of access or association bound by international law due to being in contravention of international humanitarian law.
- 3) OM/AM that has pending or unresolved issues that touch on integrity and management of resources initially disbursed by WFD or a donor that has disclosed to WFD in holding the OM/AM accountable.

Guiding principles in WFDs engagement work in disaster response

The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) work of the WFD will be guided by the following **international legal instruments**:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴ and its Optional Protocol⁵
- The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁶
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030⁷
- The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action⁸

⁴

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html>

⁵

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/optional-protocol-to-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

⁷ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

⁸ <https://humanitariananddisabilitycharter.org/>



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WFD disaster response action and initiatives with OM and AM shall be centrally guided by the **principles of international humanitarian action and UN agencies**, which are :

Humanity: the WFD will endeavour to respect humanity and treat all deaf people in humanitarian emergencies as a result of disaster as human beings and rights holders with special attention to their contextual vulnerability.

Impartiality: in situations of disasters as a result of war, conflict and complex state of governance disputes, WFD support provided will solely be on the basis of deaf peoples' needs without making any discrimination between or within affected deaf people.

Neutrality: the WFD's support will not favor any side in an armed conflict or other dispute during engagement and will remain politically neutral.

Independence: the WFD's support will be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor, including the donors and the affected deaf people, may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action as a result of disaster is being implemented by the WFD.

Capacity-building of deaf people

Overall, in helping deaf people affected by disasters and emergencies, the WFD will ensure that we prioritise building upon the capacities of the deaf people being assisted through the OM/AM in developing their leadership skills in disasters.

WFD recognises that the magnitude of many disasters and their subsequent emergency situations may be beyond WFD's response capacity and scope; hence, the WFD will apply a case-by-case analysis of our internal capacity and implication of responding prior to making decisions.

This, we shall do through involving the OM/AM at all levels of the WFD-initiated disaster response management, implementation and decision-making and act with a sense of accountability towards our OM/AM.

Core to our disaster reduction and response efforts, the WFD must ensure deaf people are more prepared to face future disasters and are not left behind. This can be achieved by advocating for the protection of their rights, representation and inclusion in all decision



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mechanisms for disaster preparedness, readiness and response with respective government and humanitarian organisations.

Roles and responsibilities of parties in situations of disasters

1. Role of WFD in situations of disasters

WFD, in the spirit of cooperation with the affected OM and AM, may provide the following:

- Advocating and collaborating, together with its member organisation, with relevant governments of the affected countries in lobbying for inclusive policies that ensure deaf people's right to protection and safety, access to humanitarian aid, equality and representation in response and recovery efforts and processes.
- Providing technical assistance and capacity building to the OM on how to effectively engage the respective arms of government and humanitarian actors for deaf-inclusive services and protection of deaf rights. This may include the provision of letters of support and statements done and published in the past on the right entitlements of deaf people in times of conflicts and humanitarian emergencies.
- Building the capacity of existing humanitarian actors identified by the OM/AM and WFD as key in the response to understanding the deaf people's needs and provision of deaf inclusive and accessible humanitarian response and recovery services.
- Linkage of affected OM/AM to other humanitarian actors active in response in addressing disaster-caused hardship and crises or any other needs that the OM /AM has identified.
- Conducting joint co-creation and fundraising initiatives for the felt and identified needs in collaboration with the OM/AM and effectively administering the funds in meeting the objectives.
- Increasing the visibility of the impact of the disaster and emergency on deaf people while increasing the call to action by various actors, including the national government, UN agencies, humanitarian organisations, INGOs, OM and AM of WFD.
- Develop capacity-building activities for OM/AM through funds raised on emergency preparedness and response, DRR advocacy, deaf rights, sign language rights, the rights of deaf children, and leadership and organisational management, per request by the OM/AM.
- In collaboration with the OM/AM, document and collect data on the situation and barriers faced by deaf people in disasters and humanitarian contexts.



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2. Role of the OM/AM in situations of disasters

- Provision of leadership at the national level on the response and meeting needs of deaf people while advising WFD on needs that should be prioritised.
- Coordination of the national response and assistance targeting deaf people within the country from an intersectional lens, especially those who identify as youth, women, aged, with multiple disabilities, refugees and immigrants.
- Lobbying and advocacy with respective national government agencies for deaf-inclusive and accessible disaster response and humanitarian action.
- Representation on key disaster response and management committees and processes at the local and national level in lobbying for rights and the basic subsistence needs of the deaf people affected.
- Awareness raising on rights and needs of deaf people.
- Data collection, documentation and knowledge management of the whole disaster for programming, advocacy and influencing purposes.

3. WFD's managerial roles and responsibilities during the disaster response

- Executive Director (ED): manages the overall administrative, financial and legal procedures.
- Chief Finance Officer (CFO): manages the financial procedure and follow-up with the ED.
- Administrative Secretary (AS): manages the contacts with the Ordinary Members (OMs), Associate Members (AMs), and Regional Secretariats (RS).
- Disaster Risk Reductions Officer (DRR)): coordinates the DRR response from the WFD to the OM/AM.
- Human Rights Officer (HRO): coordinates the Human Rights response from the WFD to the OM/AM.
- Media and Communications Manager (MCM): responsible for media communication during the process.
- Development Officer (DO): responsible for the fundraising campaigns.

Procedure of response



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1. Initiate the contact:

Where the WFD initiates contact:

- When a disaster occurs, the WFD assesses the criteria herein in the policy to determine whether the WFD can contact the OM/AM in the affected country.
- DRRO and HRO draft a letter for the OM/AM
- AS sends the letter to the OM/AM from the general email address (info@wfdeaf.org)

Where the OM/AM reaches out to the WFD for support:

- WFD assesses the criteria herein in the policy to determine whether the WFD can engage with the OM/AM in the affected country.
- If the WFD can lend its support: DRRO and HRO draft a letter for the OM/AM, and AS sends the letter to the OM/AM from the general email address (info@wfdeaf.org)
- If the WFD is unable to lend its support, it refers the OM to identified humanitarian organisations that are active in the country or the National Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD).

2. Upon positive response from the OM/AM:

DRRO and HRO meet online with the OM/AM to identify their request for support from the WFD and their preferred mode of assistance.

What the WFD can propose:

- Raising funds: opening a call for donations (the best option to provide financial/human/material support to the OM/AM).
- Providing the OM/AM with contact information of other humanitarian aid organisations operating in the countries.
- Organising meetings with the humanitarian aid organisations and introducing them to our members.
- Advocating with the OM/AM before their government to include deaf people in their political responses (i.e. Letters of support).
- Addressing their needs at the international level by partnering with UN organisations (i.e. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)).
- If there are funds available, they can be used for:
- First aid support identified and provided by the OM/AM and to be justified in a narrative report and financial report afterwards (suggestion: determine a percentage



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of the collected funds to be allocated for first aid in case the OM/AM asks for additional support as follows).

- On-site disaster preparedness training for deaf people (Training of Trainers).
- On-site awareness-raising training to the humanitarian organisations active in response and deemed beneficial to the OM/AM.
- Strengthening communication and accessibility to disaster response information for deaf people.
- If applicable: the payment of the (overdue) membership fees of the OM so that the WFD can be fully involved in its support to the OM for the other identified activities to conduct with the funds raised.
- Development of context-specific deaf inclusive and accessible DRR and Human Rights information, education and communication materials.
- Providing online training regarding DRR, humanitarian responses, protection against sexual abuse and violence (PSEA), and implicit biases (to be developed from 2024-2027).
- Increasing visibility and influence through continuous capacity building, awareness creation and dissemination that coincides with international, national and local DRR events e.g. IDRR day on October 13th and other context-specific days.

3. If the OM/AM agrees to raise funds for deaf people affected in their country:

3.1. Draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) including:

- Fundraising campaign's objectives
- Anticipated results
- Commitments (including activity and financial reporting obligations).

3.2. Submit the MOU to the OM/AM for review and input while remaining open to clarifications, revisions and addressing any concerns raised.

3.3. Submit the MOU to the ED for approval and return the signed copy to the OM/AM for filing.

3.4. Prepare a rationale for the fundraising campaign led by the MCM and the DO in consultation with the OM/AM, where WFD will give an opportunity for the OM/AM to participate in co-creation of the fundraising campaign agenda based on their experience, knowledge and awareness of the target context.

3.5. MCM and DO create campaign materials and manage the campaign.



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3.6. The DRRO and HRO remain in regular contact with the OM/AM for follow-up, implementation of activities agreed in the MOU, and reporting.

Guidelines for Fundraising and Resourcing DRR

The World Federation of the Deaf commits to working with various OM and AMs affected by and prone to disasters through the provision of fundraising or other resources and support for Disaster and Risk Reduction-specific activities and interventions. To ensure consistency and transparency in the WFD processes the following guidelines that provides the criteria and processes by which the WFD provide Disaster and Risk Reduction (DRR) support.

Disasters- natural hazards, climate-related, and human-made- are dynamic, ever-changing, unpredictable, and unstable. Climate-related disasters are increasing with the escalating impacts of climate change. These guidelines cover general criteria for both the rapid response and long-term early warning systems and disaster preparedness support provided by WFD. At all times of disaster intervention for all WFD Ordinary Members (OMs), these guidelines shall apply. The context on the ground will guide the process, and an appropriate degree of flexibility in funding will be exercised in funding decisions. The guidelines are a result of increasing DRR events experienced by WFD Ordinary Members and a request from the Board to ensure consistency and transparency in our DRR interventions.

1. What Informs WFD Interventions and Fundraising in DRR

The main determining guide during decision-making for what WFD will fund during any given disaster will be:

- The WFD Strategic Direction
- The WFD Action Plan
- WFD Internal Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction

2 . What interventions and fundraising are included

The scope of the WFD's DRR interventions and fundraising efforts will include:

- **Resilience:** "preventive" investments that reduce the risk of disasters or address root causes in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This majorly entails capacity building and empowering members on disaster preparedness while enhancing their organisational abilities and capacity to participate in Disaster Risk Management at the country and global levels.
- **Response:** Investments in response enhance the ability of the OM/AM and deaf members to respond to emergencies and crises, focusing on innovation and primarily financing emergency assistance.



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- **Recovery:** investments that support economic inclusion and full participation of the deaf community in the recovery process and initiatives.

In addition, the overall funding allocation shall be based on the funds that WFD will have acquired through the fundraising campaign and donation system at that time. Consideration will be given to investing in the three priority areas as follows:

- Resilience
- Response
- Recovery

This may vary depending on the specific circumstances of the country. Whereby for every OM/AM earmarked for funding, the Secretariat will ensure that funds given align with the three priority areas and that, at any given time, are used to address concerns and not deviated.

3.Criteria to be considered for WFD DRR interventions and fundraising

The decision to fund any given OM /AM faced by disasters and situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies shall be based on a collaboration and agreement between the OM /AM and the WFD.

The WFD Secretariat must conduct complete due diligence to ascertain things such as membership subscription, governance in place, physical address and presence in the affected country, effectiveness in resource management, and the credibility of the OM/AM in receiving and administering the donations from WFD fundraising.

The following criteria will be considered:

- **The severity of each disaster:** WFD will fund situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies resulting from natural hazards, climate-related, and human-made disasters where it clearly can add value to the deaf people in the geographical area/location.
- **Evidence:** WFD will conduct targeted interventions in countries or contexts where its research, assessment, and consultation with OM/AMs, humanitarian actors, and potential partners reveal that investing in the country adds value to the lives of deaf people by addressing the highest risk to life and livelihood and there is little or no other resources/support available to the OM/AMs..
- **Relevance:** During disasters, situations of risk, and humanitarian emergencies, WFD will make funding allocations where there is clear space for WFD to use its advocacy influence to create a solid impact on the affected deaf people and also on WFD programming priorities globally.
- **Need:** Prioritise funding interventions that, when evaluated in consultation with the OM/AM, are well linked to WFD's development and advocacy agenda from the onset and during the disaster. These interventions could involve providing information on



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disasters in national sign languages, protecting the rights of deaf people internally displaced and refugees, and facilitating access to humanitarian assistance such as food, shelter, cash transfer, and sanitation facilities.

- **Resilience:** With guidance from the WFD DO and CFO, OM/AM will be encouraged to explore funding from their national government to support resilience efforts aimed at building self-reliant OM/AM.
- **Accountability:** Funding to any OM /AM shall be done in tranches, and monitoring done by the Human Rights and Finance teams to ensure adherence to policy and effective administering of the funds results in high impact and informs additional funds release.

Additionally, consideration is given to:

- Priority is given to Ordinary Members affiliated to the WFD. However, if there is no Ordinary Member (OM), then an AM at the national level or, where none, one at the regional level.
- OM/AM must be faced with disasters resulting in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, as outlined in the above criteria (severity, evidence, relevance, need, accountability).
- In case the OM/AM's governance and/or partnership work with the WFD is in conflict with the WFD's guiding principles in this area, the WFD will consult with the OM/AM to seek a common ground that suits both parties in providing support to deaf people affected by a situation of risk and humanitarian emergency as their best interests override the OM/AM (partnership) situation.
- An OM/AM that has no pending or unresolved issues touching on the integrity and management of resources initially disbursed by WFD or a donor that has disclosed it to WFD (i.e. when the OM/AM is unable to document the use of financial resources in ways that align with the WFD's financial practices).
- An OM/AM, whether contacted by WFD or independently reaching out to WFD about the disaster, responded positively to the consultative vulnerability assessment, exploration, and partnership requirements.
- An OM/AM that has actively participated in deaf-led needs identification for assistance, fundraising, and advocacy, as well as set priorities to be taken up by WFD and OM/AM in a joint consultative process during the disaster.
- As far as possible WFD is committed to maintaining impartiality at all times, ensuring that all interactions and dealings with affected OM/AMs are conducted without any political bias.

4. Accountability and reporting



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- The WFD and OM/AM will develop and agree on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to outline the relationship and interventions.
- The OM/AM is expected to report to the WFD on the use and/or effectiveness of the interventions/support, their impact on the affected people, and lessons learned for enhanced sustainability and replication of learning to other affected OMs/AMs. Reporting may be through written reports, messages, videos, or other means.