Key Points to Consider for Accessible Events

Due to differences in cultures or access to technology, the resources and tools that are used to help make an event accessible may vary from country to country. Therefore, it is best to develop a taskforce with disability leaders from a variety of disabled persons organizations (DPOs) to ensure a diversity of perspectives on how USAID facilities in their countries could best be modified to ensure full inclusion. Some of the possible considerations to keep in mind include, but are not limited to, the following:

Key points to consider about outreach and publicity:

1. Publicize your event at places and channels through DPOs. Make note of accessible features in your publicity and invite persons with disabilities to notify organizers if they have a disability-related support that is not listed.

2. For any public meetings, put "Sign-language interpreters available upon request" in advertisements. Provide interpreters as needed. Employ qualified sign language interpreters and language interpreters in advance rather than relying on participants to interpret for each other. Arrange for back-up interpreters to be available in case of emergency or during long events. Most sign language interpreters work in teams, alternating every 10-20 minutes.

3. Provide interpreters with papers, data, etc. in advance so they are prepared.

4. Contact DPOs to obtain information on accessible facilities that are easy for people to travel to and from. If public transportation is not accessible, ask DPOs for suggestions on generic transportation companies or other modes of accessible transportation.

5. Pay attention to contrast and type size in visual advertisements for people with low vision. Most large print documents should be produced with the body text in 18-point type in Arial, Times New Roman, or Helvetica font.

6. Often people with disabilities will require an assistant to attend the event with them. It is important to take into account assistants when estimating the number of individuals that may participate in an event.

Key points to consider about getting to the event:

1. Choose a location that is centrally located and easy for people to reach through public or private transportation.

2. In many South (and even North) countries, people using public transportation to reach the event will find it difficult or impossible to get there. Consider arranging a transportation service through a generic transportation company or through a DPO in order to facilitate participation. If possible, reimburse the cost of a taxi if public transportation is not an option.

3. Arrange for a volunteer with a vehicle who can help with transportation if generic services are not available. In some South countries, there may be no other option than to lift a person with a physical disability into or out of the vehicle. When this is the case, be sure to first ask for the person's permission and ask if there are issues you should be aware of when lifting.

4. Have someone stand by the main entrance to direct people to the meeting room and provide support to those who may need it.

Key points to consider about event participation:

1. Make sure the event space is accessible. Check the width of doors (at least 36 inches), accessible bathrooms, seating space in the event room, turnaround space for wheelchairs, lighting, ambient noise, and head-level obstructions. Consider building temporary ramps if an accessible location is not available. Usually one or two steps can be ramped easily.

2. Make sure staff and volunteers helping out with the event know what accessible features are available, where to find them, and how to use them.

3. Ask presenters and, if possible, participants with disabilities what sorts of accommodations or modifications they will require for the event. For example, if a presenter uses a wheelchair, ensure that any raised podiums are accessible.

4. Make sure that there are no obstructions, such as tables or chairs, of the major pathways.

5. Prepare alternative formats of materials to be used during the event. For example, provide handouts in CD-ROM or Word format and have a few copies of the materials available in 16-point font for people with low vision.

6. If using interpreters, make sure that they are well-positioned both to hear what the presenter is saying and to be seen by audience members with hearing impairments.

7. Ask presenters to read all of the information presented in PowerPoint presentations or other similar visual aids to facilitate the participation of people who are blind or have low vision.

8. Allow for individuals to take unscheduled breaks if needed or if requested by a participant.