

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient

Empowering Girls with Disabilities

Sierra Leone

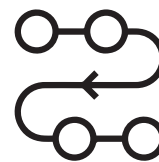


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This document contains the following:



1. Clarifying definitions and strengthening awareness



2. Mapping and enrolling girls with disabilities



3. Supporting girls with disabilities



4. Inclusive practices for girls with disabilities



5. Monitoring girls with disabilities

Overview

This SOP aims to standardise approaches for inclusion and programming for girls with disabilities across the EAGER Consortium in Sierra Leone.¹ This will ensure that as a project, we are engaging, empowering, and monitoring girls with disabilities to the best of our capacity within the project design and resources available.

As a Girls Education Challenge (GEC) and Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) project,² EAGER has a responsibility to reach and engage the most marginalised out-of-school girls (OOS) in the communities in which we work. This includes girls with disabilities — who are likely to experience the multiple disempowerments of being female, being young, being denied an education, and living with disabilities.

Inside their homes, girls with disabilities face greater risk of violence and abuse by household members and partners than girls without disabilities, and may be denied a voice in decisions that affect them. Their capabilities may be underestimated by their families, and narratives of shame may lead to neglect, exclusion, and isolation. The rights of girls with disabilities may not be acknowledged or respected — including their right to participate in EAGER. For some girls, anxiety and depression may also limit their engagement in sessions and interaction with other girls, leading to low learning outcomes or dropout.

Outside their homes, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours from community members (including other girls) may further increase the exclusion and isolation of girls with disabilities. According to the EAGER Baseline Evaluation, stronger stigmas are associated with particular disabilities, including epilepsy. People may see girls with disabilities as weak and vulnerable, and may try to take advantage of them. Global evidence confirms that girls with disabilities are 4-5 times more likely to experience sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse.³

EAGER has a responsibility to ensure that harmful social norms of discrimination against girls with disabilities are never reinforced by staff or volunteers, and instead, always challenged through our attitudes, words, and actions. We have a unique opportunity to be role models and promote new narratives and positive social norms that include and empower all girls with disabilities. We must engage girls with disabilities in a way that creates access to learning and mentoring, encourages self-respect and dignity, strengthens friendship networks and access to support from trusted adults, and links girls to services.

As with everything else in EAGER, we must put girls at the centre of all design, decision-making, and implementation. That means seeing each girl as a unique individual with inherent value, the right to participation and inclusion, and the capacity to learn in her own way. We will do that best when we have a clear understanding of disabilities and our role in creating an enabling environment for girls.

1 EAGER (Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient) is a 4-year project for out-of-school girls ages 13-19 who have missed out on formal education. Through a consortium of four partners (International Rescue Committee, Concern Worldwide, Restless Development, and BBC Media Action), teams in 10 Districts of Sierra Leone deliver a functional Literacy, Numeracy, and Financial Literacy curriculum alongside Life Skills sessions to girls in safe spaces. This is complemented by Community Dialogues and a weekly national and local radio programme focused on girls. Find out more here: www.rescue.org/eager-project

2 girlseducationchallenge.org

3 Please see the following resources for more details: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/side_events/Fact%20sheet%20%20VAVG%20with%20disabilities%20FINAL%20.pdf and www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6998:2012-childrendisabilities-more-likely-experience-violence&Itemid=135&lang=en



1. Clarifying Definitions and Strengthening Awareness

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) explains that:

Persons with disabilities include those who have 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.⁴

As EAGER, we must be clear that 'disability' does not refer to an impairment alone, but also to the ways that a person is treated and enabled to interact with the world around them — this creates the inequalities.

Disabilities can be understood as:

Long-term impairments (physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory)
+ barriers (people and environment)
that block full and equal participation in activities and society

**Disabilities =
Impairments + Barriers**

Impairments are problems in body functions or structures. Examples include loss of a limb function, loss of vision, or memory loss. Impairments often make specific activities more difficult.

The following six categories can help us be more aware of different types of impairments:

Category*	Types
1 Physical	Related to functioning of limbs (arms, legs, hands, feet), spine, organs, skin, and other body processes
2 Visual	Related to eyes and vision function (including blindness)
3 Hearing	Related to ears and hearing function (including deafness)
4 Communication/Speech	Related to voice and speech functions
5 Intellectual	Related to understanding, thinking, and learning functions
6 Psychosocial	Related to emotional and social functions

* Based on the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)
www.who.int/standards/classifications/international-classification-of-functioning-disability-and-health

An impairment alone is not a disability. People with disabilities experience many barriers that exclude them from full and equal participation in activities and society. It is important for us to be aware of barriers so that we can proactively work to remove them.

4 See Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, available here (see p.33):
treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/Ch_IV_15.pdf. The CRPD is ratified by Sierra Leone.

Barriers are any type of obstacle that blocks a person from doing something, or prevents them from fully participating in activities. We can best recognise barriers by looking at three categories:

1. Environment *(relating to the physical environment)*
2. Attitudes *(relating to people's perceptions and behaviours, and based on accepted social norms)*
3. Institutions *(relating to accommodations, policies, and procedures in institutions such as schools, health facilities, government offices, and organisations)*

The following examples of barriers were drawn from brainstorming sessions with EAGER field teams.

ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS THAT MAY IMPACT GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN OUR CONTEXT INCLUDE

Poor roads and paths	Small doorframes	Long distances
Rocky and uneven terrain	Small, dark latrines	Overgrown/bushy areas
Steps	Rivers/streams, seasonal floods	Holes in the ground/open wells
Inaccessible buildings	Unsafe bridges	Noise disturbances

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS THAT MAY IMPACT GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN OUR CONTEXT INCLUDE

Lack of respect	Not prioritizing their needs	Judging
Lack of valuing	Isolating	Insulting
Seeing as unworthy	Overprotecting	Name-calling
Seeing as incapable	Denying decision-making	Neglecting
Shaming	Physical abuse	Excluding
Blaming	Sexual abuse and exploitation	Denying resources
Stigmatising	Emotional abuse	Denying information
Provoking/teasing	Some traditional beliefs	Denying opportunities
Discriminating		Denying leadership roles

INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS THAT MAY IMPACT GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES IN OUR CONTEXT INCLUDE

Lack of specialised learning supports, such as braille books

Lack of specialised training for supporting different learning needs

Limited funds to directly support people with disabilities

Lack of local employment opportunities that accommodate different impairments

Lack of specific policies and procedures to ensure respect and dignity for people with disabilities

Lack of confidentiality as a standard policy and practice

Impairments plus barriers such as these limit girls' full and equal participation in activities and society. For example, girls may be: confined to the home; kept out of school; kept from working; ignored in community discussions and/or excluded from events; unable to access health care; and kept out of decision-making.

Stereotypes about people with disabilities, including girls, may be intentionally or unintentionally passed down through generations to become acceptable assumptions within society. These stereotypes may prevent families and communities from seeing people with disabilities as individuals with value, rights, and their own unique strengths, abilities, and contributions. Such stereotypes can make it difficult for girls with disabilities to recognise their own value, worth, abilities, and power inside — and their power to take action.

It is important for EAGER staff and volunteers to be aware of stereotypes, as we may carry them ourselves without realising it. By strengthening our awareness about our own stereotypes, we can drop them. As we challenge these harmful ideas and stigmas, we can help to shift these narratives about girls with disabilities.

The following list of common stereotypes is drawn from brainstorming sessions with EAGER field teams.

STEREOTYPES ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES THAT MAY IMPACT GIRLS
WITH DISABILITIES IN OUR CONTEXT INCLUDE:

Stubborn	Dirty/unclean	Bad luck
Aggressive	Contagious	A liability to family
Troublesome	Reckless	Cannot be trusted
Cursed/a curse to family	Difficult	Helpless
Being punished by God	Hot tempered	Not useful to anyone
Weak/vulnerable	Forceful/pushy	Cannot be productive
Not intelligent	A burden to others	Cannot care for themselves
Not fit for society	Impatient	Incapable of making decisions
Not capable of anything	Disrespectful	Should be pitied
Not capable of learning	Hard-hearted	Have no future
Half-human	Easily provoked	Are better off at home
Outcasts	Overly sensitive/defensive	No interest in sex
Thieves	Mouthy	No interest in relationships
Do not have any good qualities	Emotional — mood swings	Cannot have a family
Can only be beggars	Judgmental of others	Cannot be a good parent
Witches/wizards/devils	'Empty basket' — worthless	Not fit to participate in cultural or community activities
Dangerous	The cause of problems	

Rights-based terminology

The words we use matter! The ways we talk to and about girls with disabilities can either disempower and diminish them — or empower them. The ways we talk to and about others can also impact how we think about them and ultimately, how we treat them.

Below are recommendations from the CRPD for words to avoid and words that we can use instead:

Recommendation	Disempowering examples (avoid)	Empowering examples (use)
Avoid suggesting that girls with disabilities are inherently vulnerable — point out the barriers that create vulnerability	<i>Girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence.</i> <i>Girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to bullying.</i>	<i>Girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence when they are denied access to resources.</i> <i>Girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to bullying because society reinforces stigmas.</i>
Use first-person terminology	<i>disabled girl</i> <i>blind girl</i>	<i>girl with a disability</i> <i>girl who is blind</i>
Avoid terms with negative connotations	<i>suffer/suffering</i> <i>victim</i> <i>handicapped</i> <i>wheelchair-bound</i> <i>disabled</i> <i>abnormal</i>	<i>...with disabilities</i> <i>...has a hearing impairment</i> <i>wheelchair user</i>
Speak of persons without impairments rather than normal people	<i>Girls with impairments are less accepted in society than regular girls.</i> <i>Girls who are blind face more challenges than normal girls.</i>	<i>Girls with impairments are less accepted in society than girls without disabilities.</i> <i>Girls who are blind face more challenges than girls who are not blind.</i>
Avoid using acronyms that may feel like labels	<i>GWD</i> <i>PWD</i>	<i>girls with disabilities</i> <i>persons with disabilities</i>
Use appropriate terms to refer to different types of impairments	<i>lame</i> <i>handicapped</i> <i>crazy</i> <i>mad</i>	<i>physical impairment</i> <i>visual impairment</i> <i>hearing impairment</i> <i>communication/speech impairment</i> <i>intellectual impairment</i> <i>psychosocial impairment</i>



2. Mapping and Enrolling Girls with Disabilities

Enrolling as many Girls with Disabilities as possible

As a project, EAGER is not equipped to accommodate every girl with disabilities. For example, it would be difficult to support girls with severe mental impairments or psychiatric illnesses, or girls with brain or spinal cord injuries that severely affect body functions. Severe physical impairments that make mobility very difficult may also not be possible to support, given distances, bad roads/paths, and lack of transportation.

Within the realities of context and budget restrictions, the Consortium agreed to include as many girls with disabilities as possible in the learning programme. This includes girls who are blind, girls who are deaf, girls who have communication/speech impairments, and girls with intellectual impairments. For many girls with disabilities, this will be the first time they are included in any learning opportunity, group, or programme. Respecting her right to participate can be empowering in and of itself, and sends a strong message to her family, community, and other girls in the group.

Whilst it is not possible to train staff and volunteers to provide specialised support for girls' learning in response to specific impairments, the project emphasises inclusion, respect, and recognition of every girl's right to participate and learn to the best of her abilities. Training emphasises inclusive facilitation practices, and a range of teaching methods and visual aids are incorporated to support learning. However, in cases where girls with disabilities are not able to demonstrate similar levels of learning as other girls, their inclusion in the group and connection to Mentors and Facilitators may still lead to an increased sense of belonging, friendships, protective social networks, self-respect, and respect from family and community.

To more effectively map and enrol girls with disabilities in Cohort 2, the Consortium agreed to these steps:

1. AWARENESS-RAISING BEFORE AND DURING MAPPING AND ENROLMENT — AND TO REPLACE EARLY DROPOUTS

BBC Media Action provided clips of radio programmes that can be uploaded to USB and used to draw the attention of community members and support the awareness-raising campaign.

Community outreach is led by Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) Officers, Life Skills (LS) Officers and volunteers to leaders, households, and girls. Key messages include the following:

- EAGER is enrolling out-of-school girls ages 13-19* for our learning programme.
- We welcome and encourage girls with disabilities to join our programme.
- We strongly believe that:
 - » **Every girl has value**
 - » **Every girl has a right to education and to learn skills that will support her future**
 - » **Every girl has skills, strengths, and abilities that she can build on**
 - » **Every girl can make positive contributions to her family, peers, and community**
- Disabilities are not a curse or punishment or something to feel ashamed about.
- If there is any girl with disabilities in your household, please allow her to register in EAGER.
- We will support her learning and make sure that she feels safe, included, and respected.

** Girls 18-19 are technically outside the age range for recruitment. However, girls who were mapped or registered in 2019 but unable to join Cohort 1 or who dropped out may be able to join Cohort 2 and should be included.*

2. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF MENTORS IN MAPPING AND ENROLLING — AND REPLACING EARLY DROPOUTS

- Mentors work closely with Officers and actively engage in the process of mapping and enrolling girls. They know the community and may be aware of girls with disabilities.

3. CONDUCTING HOUSE-TO-HOUSE VISITS

- Mentors and Officers visit households of out-of-school girls for mapping and enrolment.
- Mentors advise on any homes where they are aware that there are girls with disabilities.

4. REGISTERING GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

- Officers use the EAGER Beneficiary Selection Tools (which included questions based on the Washington Group short list) to accurately document the type of disability at the time of beneficiary selection. This is further confirmed at the point of enrolment.
- They should record any specific learning needs using the tool at this time to discuss with their supervisor.
- Officers and District Supervisors can follow up by using the Access to Learning Fund.



3. Supporting Girls with Disabilities

Rights-based approach

In line with EAGER's Core Principles for working with adolescent girls, the project takes a rights-based approach to supporting girls with disabilities. This requires doing all we can as a project to ensure that girls with disabilities are enrolled and equally included in all aspects of EAGER. It means ensuring full and equal participation for girls with disabilities, and role modeling respect for their inherent dignity and autonomy — including the freedom to make their own choices. This is essential for countering stereotypes and changing harmful narratives that girls with disabilities may also have internalised. Remember that as a project, we are aiming to strengthen girls' power inside themselves, power to act, and power with others.

The CRPD outlines general principles (Article 3) we must follow to ensure the rights of girls with disabilities:

1	Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons
2	Non-discrimination
3	Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
4	Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
5	Equality of opportunity
6	Accessibility
7	Equality between men and women
8	Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

Countering Stigma against Girls with Disabilities

As noted above, our responsibility as representatives of the EAGER project is to challenge the stereotypes and harmful attitudes held about girls with disabilities. Taking a rights-based approach reminds us that every girl with disabilities has the right to be in the programme and to learn alongside the other girls.

The way that EAGER staff and volunteers interact with girls with disabilities – showing respect, non-discrimination, and full inclusion – allows us to be role models and can have a powerful effect on the way other girls and community members treat girls with disabilities. This starts at the enrolment phase when teams prioritise enrolling girls with disabilities in EAGER, and intentionally reach out to households where girls with disabilities are living. Then, through leading by example both in the learning sessions and in the Community Dialogues and wider community engagement, programme teams can counter stigma and show a different way of treating and including girls with disabilities.

Access to Learning Fund

The EAGER Access to Learning Fund was created to support enrolled girls with disabilities to access and consistently attend the learning programme. Its aim is to remove barriers to attendance and learning, and is flexible to meet needs within the guidelines provided. The fund is allocated equally at district level, so it can be responsive to needs identified at the community level. It can also be used to support girls facing temporary mobility or other physical challenges to support them to return to sessions as soon as possible.

The fund can be used to support the following:

- **Support for mobility/physical impairment:** such as wheelchair, cane, crutches, visit to a doctor for an injury or trauma that has affected her mobility (including broken bones, severe burns, etc.)
- **Support for vision:** such as glasses or large-print learning materials, visit to an eye doctor and treatment for an injury or trauma that affected a girl's vision
- **Support for hearing:** hearing aid if available, visit to a doctor for injury/trauma that affected hearing
- **Support for psychological disabilities:** visits to a counsellor for depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other psychological states affecting day-to-day activities
- **Support for a physical injury sustained during childbirth:** visits to a doctor and necessary procedures and medicine to support her healing, including for fistula

Where services are required, the Access to Learning Fund can be used to support transport to and from the service for the girl and trusted adult, as well as basic provision for meals and accommodation. After mapping and enrolment, any specific needs should be identified **as early as possible** so girls' learning can be supported from the beginning. As soon as a Mentor, Facilitator, or Officer becomes aware of a need related to disabilities, they should communicate with their supervisor so a plan of action can be made and acted on.

Providing Emotional Support and Connection to Services

Of the 14.6% of Cohort 1 girls determined to be living with a disability at the time of the EAGER Baseline Evaluation,⁵ 60% qualified in whole or in part due to their daily experiences of anxiety or depression. This points to the need for significant emotional support and encouragement from Mentors in particular, and the need for volunteers to foster supportive peer networks between girls. Training Mentors to be a 'safe person' to girls following the psychological first aid (PFA) approach is a key strategy for empowering girls with psychosocial impairments to feel valued and supported, feel they have a trusted adult they can safely talk to, and build their own sense of power from the inside out. This will be reinforced through Mentor Learning Clusters, and implementing partners are expected to monitor and coach Mentors to ensure they follow these guidelines.

The EAGER Life Skills Scope and Sequence incorporates a strong focus on social and emotional learning (SEL), and introduces strategies for managing strong emotions — including a series of stress management practices (recorded in English and Krio). These are designed to support girls' resilience and build their power inside in a context where counselling and other professional psychosocial support services are extremely limited. The emphasis on being a good friend and girls supporting each other is designed to strengthen girls' peer networks. The Life Skills session, Different Abilities, aims to strengthen all of the girls' awareness, empathy, and respect for people with disabilities.

Mentors are equipped with Service Directories that can be used to link girls to medical, protection, legal, and psychosocial services that may be available in their district. The EAGER GBV Fund can be used to cover costs for these services anytime girls require care in response to an incidence of gender-based violence.

Building Staff and Volunteers Capacity

To strengthen staff awareness and understanding of disabilities across the Consortium, the EAGER project has incorporated modules on Disabilities and Inclusion into trainings and capacity building opportunities. This is integrated into Training of Trainers, Mentor Learning Clusters, and Facilitator Peer-to-Peer Meetings.⁶ Find out more in the EAGER Learning Strategy.

⁵ The EAGER Baseline Evaluation was conducted in March 2020 by IMC, with Dalan as the data collection partner.

⁶ Learning Clusters and Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Meetings are monthly opportunities for continuous professional development for EAGER Mentors and Facilitators. They gather in small clusters of 10-14 in a central location, and their supervising Officers facilitate structured sessions for peer exchange and learning focused on specific topics.



4. Inclusive Practices for Girls with Disabilities

Inclusion means creating a situation where everyone can participate. This includes ensuring everyone has opportunities, access to resources, a voice, and respect. Inclusion is not about doing someone a favour, but instead about respecting everyone's right to engage and contribute. Every girl has the right to learn and grow and become a productive member of society.

Inclusive practices are the different strategies we use to engage all girls, ensure they feel valued and part of the group, and support their learning. For girls with disabilities, inclusive practices demonstrate and role model respect, and teach all girls to accept and value each other — no matter what their differences are. The consistent use of inclusive practices should make it clear that every girl has something to contribute, and encourage solidarity and friendships that will benefit everyone.

Inclusive Approaches in Literacy, Numeracy, and Financial Literacy

Facilitators received **training** on good facilitation skills and working with girls in a supportive and inclusive way, including girls with disabilities, girls who are pregnant, girls with babies, and girls who are young, shy, or especially quiet and withdrawn. Additional training on Disabilities & Inclusion is provided through Peer-to-Peer sessions during Cohort 2.

The BLN Session Observation and Coaching Tool includes several points related to inclusive practices for all girls but especially any girls with disabilities in the group. Through regular session observations, BLN Officers coach Facilitators on where they can improve their facilitation to be more inclusive of all girls.

The Literacy, Numeracy, and Financial Literacy curriculum materials include visual aids linked to every session to support all girls with learning, and especially any girls with intellectual impairments.

Inclusive Approaches in Life Skills

Mentors received **training** and are supervised and coached to ensure that they are creating a safe physical and emotional space that makes all girls feel welcome and included. Mentors should understand how to be a Safe Person to all girls, and why this is so important. Mentors received additional training on Disabilities & Inclusion, and this is reinforced through Mentor Learning Clusters during Cohort 2.

The EAGER Life Skills manual includes reminders to Mentors to include all girls and create opportunities for all girls to share their ideas and concerns. The session entitled Different Abilities aims to increase girls' and Mentors' awareness about how people's harmful attitudes and behaviours are what make disabilities much worse, and highlight the importance of respect, kindness, and being a good friend.

The Life Skills Session Observation and Coaching Tool includes several points related to inclusive practices for all girls but especially any girls with disabilities in the group. Through regular session observations, LS Officers coach Mentors on where they can improve their facilitation to be more inclusive of all girls.

For the second cohort of girls in the project, the Life Skills manual incorporates one visual aid linked to the story in every session to support learning and memory retention for all girls, and especially any girls with intellectual or hearing impairments.

All girls are encouraged to choose an EAGER Padi (friend) who lives close by them so they can check on each other and come together for sessions. This aims to strengthen girls' social and protective networks, and to strengthen inclusion and accountability in the group towards any girls with disabilities. All girls with disabilities should have an EAGER Padi, and where necessary or helpful, Mentors may encourage small padi groups of 3 girls who may provide a stronger support system for any girls with disabilities.

Inclusive Practices in Action

The following recommendations for inclusive best practices were created through collaboration between the EAGER Consortium Coordination Unit and brainstorming sessions with EAGER LS Officers:

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR GIRLS WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS

- Select the most **accessible Safe Spaces** possible — including consideration of stairs and doorways
- Think about girls with disabilities first in **rehabilitation planning**
- **Mobilise the community** to clear paths, roads, and bridges to make the Safe Space accessible
- Ask her about her **Dos and Don'ts** so you can show respect for her wishes, needs, and dignity
- Make sure she has **physical support** to enter into and leave the Safe Space — if needed
- Invite her to **sit near the entrance and front** — but let her choose where she wants to sit
- Keep the Safe Space **tidy** — no bags or obstacles on the floor
- Give her an opportunity to **exit first** from the Safe Space when the session ends — if she wants to
- Think through any ways to make it **easier for her to access** the Safe Space, latrine, handwashing station, etc.
- If you think she will benefit from a better **device for mobility** (wheelchair, crutches, etc.), tell your supervisor as early as possible so it can be discussed — but make no promises to the girl
- Do not ignore her during activities — **engage her in a way that respects her dignity**
- If it is difficult for her to participate, or an activity puts her at risk, **offer her a role to help you**
- Make sure she has at least one **EAGER Padi** who is happy to support her and be her friend
- Make sure there is **no teasing or bullying** in the group
- Encourage all girls to treat each other with **respect and kindness**
- **Build solidarity** within the group to strengthen supportive peer networks

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR GIRLS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

- Ask her about her **Dos and Don'ts** so you can show respect for her wishes, needs, and dignity
- Invite her to **sit near the front** so she can easily see your face and mouth — but make sure that she sits where she can also easily **see the other girls** when they are talking
- **Face her** when you talk to her in case she can read your lips
- If she has a mild hearing impairment, **speak loudly enough** so she can hear you — avoid shouting
- If you think she will benefit from any **device** (hearing aid, etc.), tell your supervisor as early as possible so it can be discussed — but make no promises to the girl
- Remind girls to **talk one at a time** in case that helps her to hear them better
- Do not ignore her during physical activities — **engage her in a way that respects her dignity**
- Use **actions** to demonstrate stories and key messages
- Use **positive body language** and be very mindful of your facial expressions
- If she does not understand instructions for an activity, invite some **girls to demonstrate** it first, so she can see how it works and can participate
- Be proactive in **recognising her**, and making her feel included and valued
- Be **patient**, and give her time
- **Respect her choices** and decisions
- Give her plenty of time to **look at the drawings up close**
- Make sure she has at least one **EAGER Padi** who is happy to support her and be her friend
- Make sure there is **no teasing or bullying** in the group
- Encourage all girls to treat each other with **respect and kindness**
- **Build solidarity** within the group to strengthen supportive peer networks

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR GIRLS WITH INTELLECTUAL IMPAIRMENTS

- Ask her about her **Dos and Don'ts** so you can show respect for her wishes, needs, and dignity
- Invite her to **sit near the front** so you can support her — but let her choose her own seat
- Reinforce learning by using the **drawings** and giving her time to look at them
- **Explain things clearly** and repeat in different ways if she does not understand
- Give her time — **be patient**
- Give her your **full attention** — listen and encourage her instead of pitying her
- **Encourage her to participate** in activities, but do not force her
- Let her **engage in ways that feel comfortable** to her and that respect her dignity
- Create room for **play and fun**
- If she enjoys singing and dancing, **invite her to lead** activities and energisers with you
- Use **actions** to demonstrate stories and key messages
- Use **positive body language** and be very mindful of facial expressions
- If she does not understand instructions for an activity, invite some **girls to demonstrate** it first, so she can see how it works and can participate

- Encourage her to **participate and contribute** to discussions if she wants to
- Offer her **special assignments and responsibilities** to help her feel included and valued
- If she talks a lot, remind her that other girls also want to share their ideas
- Make sure she has at least one **EAGER Padi** who is happy to support her and be her friend
- Make sure there is **no teasing or bullying** in the group
- **Never accept laughing or mimicking** by other girls — if you hear this, say that this is not OK
- Encourage all girls to treat each other with **respect and kindness**
- **Build solidarity** within the group to strengthen supportive peer networks

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR GIRLS WITH COMMUNICATION/SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS

- Ask her about her **Dos and Don'ts** so you can show respect for her wishes, needs, and dignity
- **Understand how she communicates** her yes, no, and other things she needs to communicate
- Invite her to **sit near the front** so you can support her — but let her choose her own seat
- Be patient, and **give her time to communicate**
- **Reduce external noises** so you can hear her
- Give her your **full attention** — encourage her instead of pitying her
- Encourage her to **participate in activities**, but do not force her
- Let her **engage in ways that feel comfortable to her** and respect her dignity
- Encourage her to participate and contribute to discussions **if and how she wants to**
- Offer her **special assignments and responsibilities** to help her feel included and valued
- Make sure she has at least one **EAGER Padi** who is happy to support her and be her friend
- Make sure there is **no teasing or bullying** in the group
- **Never accept laughing or mimicking** by other girls — if you hear this, say that this is not OK
- Encourage all girls to treat each other with **respect and kindness**
- **Build solidarity** within the group to strengthen supportive peer networks

INCLUSIVE BEST PRACTICES FOR GIRLS WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPAIRMENTS

- Ask her about her **Dos and Don'ts** so you can show respect for her wishes, needs, and dignity
- When she comes to the Safe Space, let her know you are **happy she came**
- Try to **keep her engaged** in the session, and to participate in activities — but do not force her
- Let her **engage in ways that feel comfortable** to her and respect her dignity
- Create an **emotional safe space** that lets girls see they are not alone and encourages peer support
- Give her your **full attention** — listen and be kind and encouraging
- Give her **time** — be patient
- Use **positive body language** and a **kind tone of voice**
- **Be positive** to help motivate her and help her see that all is not lost
- Make sure she is engaged during the **Stress Management Practices** — they can really help her
- Make sure she has an **EAGER Padi** who is happy to support her and be her friend
- Make sure there is no **teasing or bullying** in the group
- Encourage all girls to treat each other with **respect and kindness**
- **Build solidarity** within the group to strengthen supportive peer networks
- Remind her privately that **she can come and talk to you** anytime if she wants to
- Be a **Safe Person** to her — be approachable, kind, and respect confidentiality
- Choose your words carefully — use **healing statements** and use **“I” statements** to avoid blaming
- **Link her to services** — especially counselling, where available
- **Follow up** with her through home visits as needed
- Advocate for medical and other care as needed



5. Inclusive Monitoring Practices and Processes for Girls with Disabilities

Recruiting Girls with Disabilities

Action	Key Considerations
Identifying girls within a community	<p>Do we know where girls with disabilities live in the community?</p> <p>If no, how can we access this information whilst being mindful of the community and traditional ideas regarding disabilities?</p> <p>Are we able to access them in spaces where they feel safe and are able to communicate?</p> <p>Do we know which individuals they are most likely to feel safe with and communicate with?</p> <p>Do girls with disabilities have tailored outreach before the programme compared to girls without disabilities?</p> <p>If no, how can we create new mechanisms for tailored outreach?</p>
Talking to them about EAGER and what the project does	<p>Are the information/materials accessible for girls with disabilities when deciding if to enrol in the programme?</p> <p>Do they feel that their specific needs will be supported? (As this will contribute to the decision process and influence retention.)</p> <p>Do they trust the individuals we have selected to facilitate the programme?</p>
Assuring them that removal of barriers to education will be supported by EAGER	<p>Access to Learning Fund:</p> <p>Do girls know the resources that are available to them to support their learning?</p> <p>Do programme staff understand how to use the fund?</p> <p>Are we ensuring that we are setting realistic expectations of what the Access to Learning Fund can do?</p>

Monitoring Girls with Disabilities

Action	Key Considerations
Improving data collection skills when assessing girls with disabilities	<p>Are data collection staff trained and aware of the different terms and language used to describe disabilities, and how to translate this into the local language, and to those without any formal training or understanding of how to discuss disabilities?</p> <p>Are data collection staff aware of community sensitisation and care when discussing issues that carry stigma (ensuring they do no harm)?</p> <p>Are data collection staff aware of how to communicate consent when collecting information about disabilities?</p> <p>Do data collection staff know how to effectively communicate with caregivers/ husbands/partners about why we are collecting information that disaggregates according to disabilities?</p> <p>Are data collection staff trained on appropriate methods and inclusive practices of communicating with girls with disabilities according to the research methodology (e.g. quantitative or qualitative methods)?</p>
Safeguarding in data collection	<p>Are data collection staff trained on safeguarding and reporting pathways?</p> <p>Have they been trained on how to keep themselves safe during home visits?</p> <p>Are protocols in place to keep data safe, and are staff aware of these protocols?</p>
Improving monitoring of girls with disabilities in the Client Register and Attendance Register	<p>When a girl is enrolled into the cohort, are we ensuring that her disabilities are sensitively identified and logged correctly according to EAGER Guidelines?</p> <p>When we learn more information about a girl's disabilities, have we amended the information in the client register to best represent the girl's disabilities?</p> <p>When we learn more about girls who previously were not recorded to have disabilities, and now we are more aware, can we correctly report this in the client register whilst ensuring we are sensitively addressing this with the girl?</p> <p>The client register contains the most up-to-date information on girls' disabilities. Teams should ensure that these details are up-to-date on at least a quarterly basis, to ensure that a disability logged best reflects the disability reported by the girl.</p> <p>The client register contains the breakdown of the type of disability, whereas the attendance register contains the 'yes' or 'no' information for a quick summary of whether the girl has a disability.</p> <p>Even if a disability is only recognised after the cohort has started, this needs to be logged and updated in the client register.</p>

Improving girls with disabilities ad hoc assessments	<p>Improve <i>ad hoc</i> assessments for girls with disabilities.</p> <p>Ensure that these findings are triangulated with existing data in the attendance registers.</p> <p>Ensure findings are triangulated with secondary data related to disabilities amongst adolescent girls in Sierra Leone.</p>
Adapting monitoring resources so progress of girls with disabilities can be effectively captured	<p>Ensure that all monitoring tools are tailored to specific disabilities. I.e. do we have procedures for hearing or vision impairments?</p> <p>Are girls with anxiety treated as such when they are being assessed?</p>



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IRC Mission

At work in more than 40 countries and over 20 U.S. cities, the International Rescue Committee's mission is to help people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster, including the climate crisis, to survive, recover and gain control of their future.