



# Persons with Disabilities' Access to Humanitarian Aids in Afghanistan



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**Persons with Disability's Access  
to Humanitarian Aids  
in Afghanistan**

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## Executive Summary

The objective of this assessment was to find out about the access of persons with disabilities to humanitarian aids and other challenges in post- August 2021 in Afghanistan.

In this assessment, 68 persons with disabilities participated and shared their views on their challenges from Kabul, Balk, and Bamiyan. 67% of the participants were men and 33% of them were women with disabilities. 85% of them were with physical and around 8% of them with visual disabilities. 22% of the causes of their disability were mine explosions and 25% conflicts related, making up 47% totally. 35% of participants were unemployed and 36% of them had economic problems, making up 71% having economic challenges.

Regarding the humanitarian aids, 80% of the participants did not receive aids. The reasons that the participants have mentioned were that districts representatives, district councils, elders and NGOs did not have awareness about the needs of persons with disabilities in the community.

Only 5% of the respondents did receive their three or six-months pension from Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, but 95% of them did not receive their pension. To add a point, 58% (40 persons) of the respondents of this assessment were receiving pension from the former government annually around \$ 670 USD and 42% (28 persons) of the participants of this assessment said that they were not eligible to receive pension from the former government. After August 2021, a new criterion has been set for the pension payment to persons with disabilities by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

## Conclusion

Persons with disabilities have problem in accessing humanitarian aids. The obstacles are lack of awareness of the community members and policies and programs of the humanitarian aids organization.

Persons with disabilities have economic problems. Majority of the respondents did not receive their pension, but some of them received only the pension of three or six months. Moreover, Covid-19 has had negative impact on persons with disabilities' livelihood and income – business loss and unemployment.

Persons with disabilities are facing psychological problems and they need psychosocial support to enable them to have access to healthcare services in the community.

Finally, persons with disabilities and mine victims have less access to education. Recently, the closure of schools, the impact of Covid-19, limited access of persons with disabilities to education, but the banning of school by Islamic Emirate above grade six is the main problem for girls and women with disabilities now.

## Recommendations

- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, UN agencies and humanitarian aid organizations should consider persons with disabilities needs in their policy and program;
- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, UN agencies and NGOs should create economic opportunities for persons with disabilities and mine victims to improve their livelihood;
- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should pay the pension of persons with disabilities and mine victims to reduce their economic problems;
- Persons with disabilities and mine victims are facing psychological pressures, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, UN agencies and NGOs should provide psychological services for persons with disabilities and mine-victims.
- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should re-open the girl's schools where girls with disabilities could continue their education.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Any political changes in the country have positive or negative impact on the life of every group in the community, especially Afghanistan, a country that has been experienced more than three decades of war and conflicts. The political changes absolutely create new problems and challenges to be dealt with properly – unemployment, access to education and healthcare. The vulnerable people are more prone to the challenges, especially persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are the largest community in the world. 15% of the world population is persons with disabilities, 2-4% of them experience difficulty in functioning (WH/World Bank). They have also many other challenges and difficulties in the community like unemployment, less access to education and healthcare. Afghanistan is one of the countries where a large number of persons with disabilities are living. Report indicates that over 80 percent of people with disabilities aged over 18 have some form of physical, functional and sensory impairment (24.6% mild, 40.4% moderate and 13.9% severe). Server disabilities are more prevalent among female (14.9 %) than males (12.6%) (MDSA 2019). Moreover, the rate of severe disability was reported 2.7% by NDSA report in 2005, which shows an increase in severe disabilities in comparison with the report of MDSA 2019.

Persons with disabilities have different type of challenges in Afghanistan. They have less access to employment, education, healthcare and other opportunity in the community. Regarding the education, before the August 2021, as all schools were open all over the country, children with disabilities had less access to education in comparison with children without disabilities according to ALSO's report in 2018. But under Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan after the August 2021, the situation is much more different because all girls' schools above grade six are closed, affecting negatively on education of girls, especially girls with disabilities.

The rights of persons with disabilities are not respected at family, community and authorities' levels. The main problem is that the level of awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities is low; they have negative perception and understanding about the rights of persons with disabilities. They ignore the rights, needs, and challenges of persons with disabilities.

Afghan Landmine Survivors Organization (ALSO) is one of the local organizations that has been working in disability sector to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Public awareness and advocacy have been two key areas on which ALSO has been focusing since 2007. ALSO conducted several researches and assessments on education, violence against women with disabilities and healthcare of persons with disabilities recently in the country. The objective of the researches and the assessments were to reflect the challenges and needs of persons with disabilities to attract the attention of authorities and civil society organizations to respond to the needs and challenges of persons disabilities. The findings of the reports could also help to



provide update information about the situation of persons with disabilities for policy and program development by civil society organizations, donors and government.

### The situation of persons with disabilities after August 2021

Obviously, the collapse of the former government, the takeover of the country by the Taliban and the withdrawal of the international community had impact on social, political and economic situation of the country. All Afghan people were affected by the changes in the country, including persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are the most vulnerable group in the community; they have less access to opportunities and services in the community.

Persons with disabilities have different challenges. One of their challenges is financial problems. They are unemployed, their pension has not been paid by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Moreover, the humanitarian aids provided by national or international organizations are not equally accessible for persons with disabilities in the community because the policy and programs of the organizations are not disability-inclusive. Persons with disabilities are not priority of their program while distributing provisions and foodstuff.

Considering the new situation, ALSO decided to conduct a short assessment to find out about the challenges and problems of persons with disabilities in the community on aids, education, healthcare and pension, but the focus of the assessment is more accessing of persons with disabilities to the humanitarian aids provided mostly by non-governmental organizations. The people of Afghanistan are more dependent on international financial aids.

The objective of the assessment is to get update information about the access of persons with disabilities to humanitarian aids and other challenges to share with the non-government organizations, UN agencies and Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to pay more attention to the needs and challenges of persons with disabilities in the community. It obvious that the non-governmental organizations and Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have less update information about the challenges and needs of persons with disabilities in the community.

The assessment is not covering many provinces, but it has covered the provinces of Kabul, Balk, and Bamiyan. The findings of the assessment will provide us with a snapshot of persons with disabilities' situation in the community, which the non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) make us of them in their policy and program on disability inclusion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

#### Assessment Objectives

ALSO designed and conducted this assessment to find out about the access of persons with disabilities to the humanitarian aids and other challenges of persons with disabilities in the community after the political changes in the country. This is a very short assessment covering a small group of men and women with disabilities in some provinces. The assessment is not a full-fledged one to deeply generalize the situation of persons with disabilities. The main objective of the assessment is to assess the access of persons with disabilities to humanitarian aids and take a look other challenge of persons with disabilities in livelihood and healthcare.

#### Data Collection Tool

The assessment data was collected by a questionnaire designed by ALSO and sent to persons with disabilities in provinces by email. Then persons with disabilities filled them out with required data and sent back to ALSO's team. At the same time, ALSO conducted interview with some of persons with disabilities who did not have access to the Internet and email. For collecting the data, ALSO got assistance from its volunteers with disabilities in the community to conduct interview with persons with disabilities.

#### Coverage Areas

ALSO selected four provinces: Kabul, Daikondy, Bamiyan and Balkh where different groups of people with disabilities are living. It was also easier for ALSO to conduct the assessment in these provinces. ALSO has volunteers with disabilities who would help implement the assessment in these provinces. ALSO did not have enough resource to carry out the assessment in more provinces to have a stronger generalization about the situation of persons with disabilities in the country.

#### Target Group

The target group of this assessment were persons with disabilities including mine victims with a category of age above 15 years old, both men and women with different type of disability, but the ratio of disability type was not specified. The selection of the individuals for the interview was more on rolling basis or randomly selected and interviewed; one person could introduce another person for interview. On top of that, ALSO had already available list of persons with disabilities to include in the assessment process directly or with assistance of ALSO's volunteers in the community.

#### Report Audience

The audience of this assessment report will be the UN agencies, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, local councils, donors, governments, national and international organizations that are involved

directly or indirectly in humanitarian aids and other services in the community to consider the needs and challenges of persons with disabilities properly in their policy and programs.

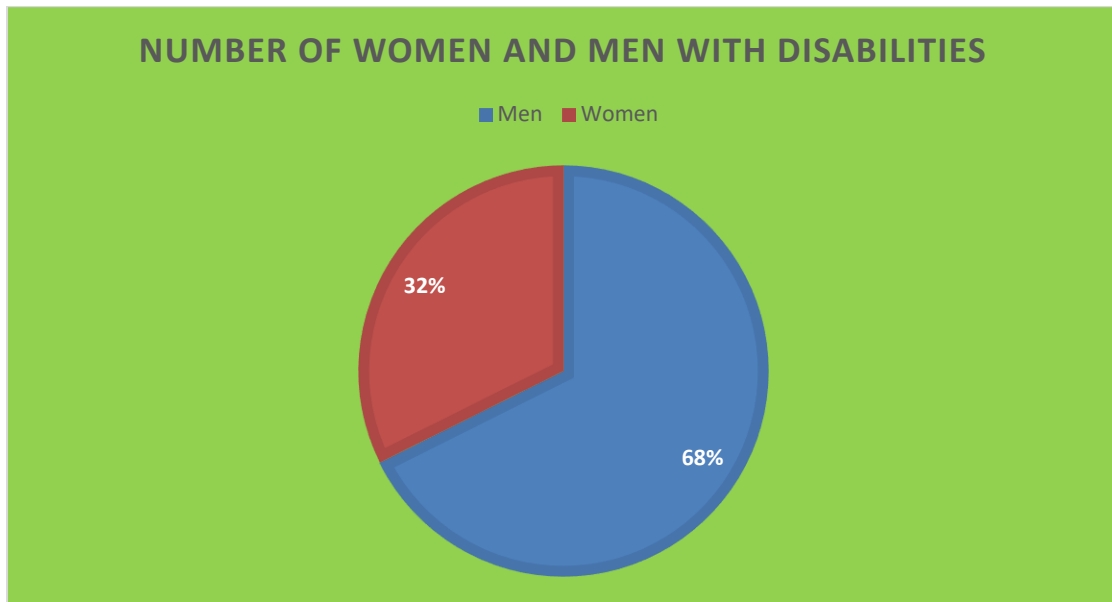
### Challenges

Lack of resources was the main challenge of the assessment; it was not possible for ALSO to cover more places and persons with disabilities to participate in the assessment. The limitation of resources somehow limits the generalization of the assessment findings as well. However, the findings of the assessment report is a snapshot of the real situation of persons with disabilities going on in the community.

## CHAPTER THREE

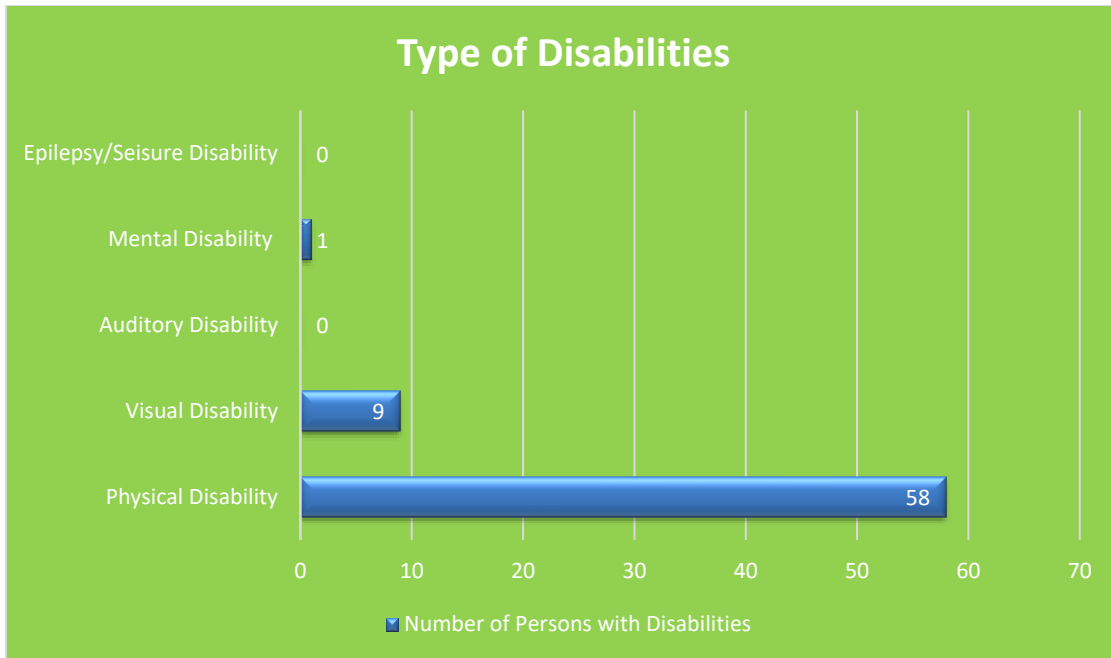
### Data Analysis

The objective of the assessment is to find out about the access of persons with disabilities to the humanitarian aids and some other challenges in the community. The collected data for the assessment will be analyzed in this chapter to produce the report.



**Figure 1: Number of Men and Women with Disabilities Participated in the Assessment**

**Figure 1** shows that 67% of the participants were men and 33% of them were women who participated in this assessment. Because of limited resources, ALSO was not able to cover more persons with disabilities in the assessment. However, the collected data from the participants will help us to reflect the current situation and challenges of persons with disabilities in the community after the political changes taken place in August 2021.

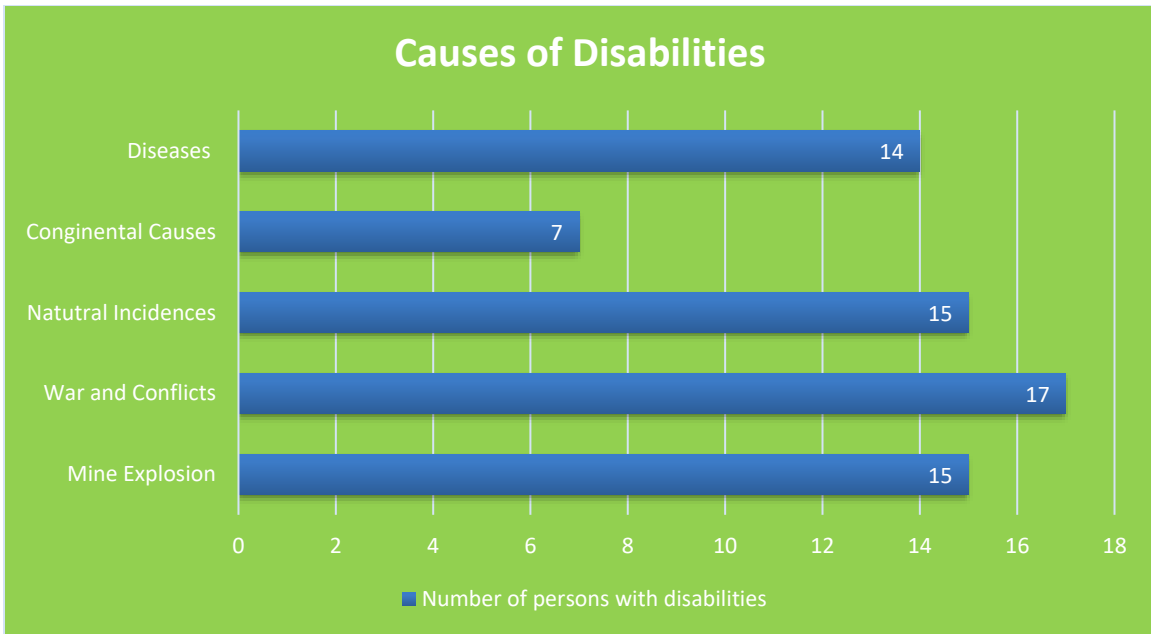


**Figure 2: The type of disabilities of the participants of the assessment**

Disability has been categorized in different type. In Afghanistan, the type of disabilities was categorized in five in National Disability Survey of Afghanistan (NDSA 2005) as “Physical Disability, Sensorial Disability, Mental Disability, Associated Disability and Epilepsy/Seizure”.

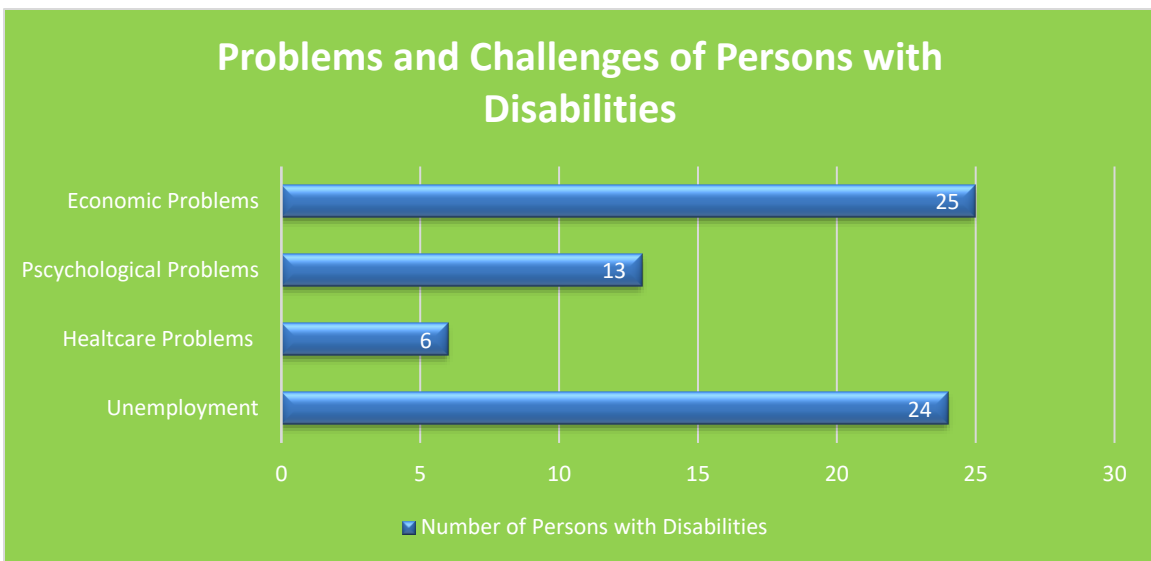
**Figure 2** indicates that 85% of the participants in the assessment have been persons with physical disabilities and around 8% of them were persons with visual disabilities. In assessment, persons with physical disabilities are considerable in terms of number. According to ALSO’s experience, persons with physical disabilities have more mobility and participation in the community rather than other types of disability like persons with visual and mental disabilities.

While conducting this assessment, the ratio of disability type was not considered for the assessment. All participants for interview were selected randomly for the assessment.



**Figure 3: The causes of disabilities of the participants in the assessment**

Disability has different causes in different countries. In Afghanistan, war and conflict are one of the major causes of disability, which include mine explosion, Explosive Remnant of War (ERW) and cross fires. NDSA (2005) report indicates that almost 17% of disability causes are linked to war and conflicts in Afghanistan. Figure 3 also indicates that 22% of the participants’ causes of their disability were mine explosions and 25% conflicts related. If we add up the two figures, they make up 47% of the participants who are the war victims.



**Figure 4: Economic Problems of persons with disabilities in the community**

Persons with disabilities have different challenges. One of their challenges is unemployment. In this assessment, the effort was made to focus on employment challenges of persons with disabilities in the Afghan community as well. Unemployment is a very common problem for persons with disabilities worldwide, including Afghanistan. World Bank/WHO's report indicates that 15% of world's population is persons with disabilities and they have "lower levels of employment, and higher poverty rates. Disability may increase the risk of poverty"<sup>1</sup> in the community. This is true for Afghanistan. The rate of unemployment of persons with disability is lower than non-disabled people in the community (National Disability Survey of Afghanistan, 2005).

**Figure 4** indicates that 35% of the assessment participants were unemployed and 36% of them had economic problems, 71% having economic problems. In addition, 27% of them have psychological and healthcare problems, less access to health services. Theoretically, economic problem could be related to unemployment and income generation of persons with disabilities in the community. If persons with disabilities have more access to employment opportunities, they would probably have less economic problem and will have less a psychological and healthcare problems in the community. In general, persons with disabilities are facing with economic problem in the community.

## Committing Suicide

Recently, media reported that a young person with disabilities committed suicide by suffocating himself in Daikondy province in Khider district in Watma village because of poverty and economic problem. He was at grade 11 of high school. The local people said that he requested money from his family, but his family was not able to provide him with money to due to poverty. So, he committed suicide

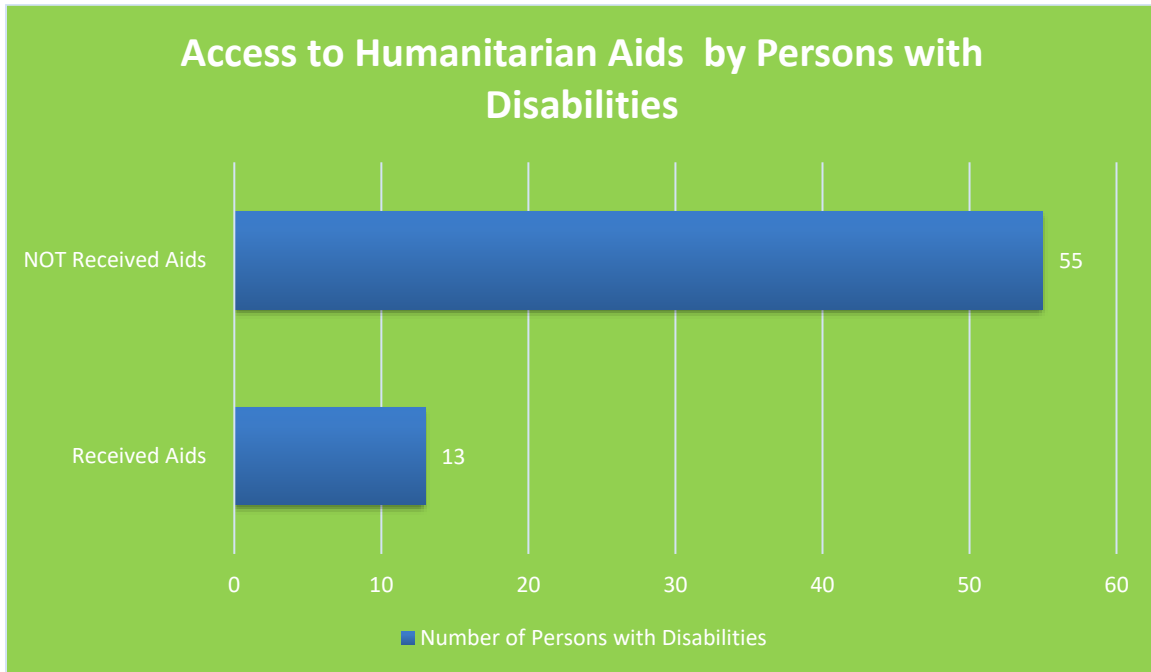


as a result. Mr. Mohammad Danish, head of a disability association in this province stated that persons with disabilities are facing serious economic problem in Daikondy province and

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability#:~:text=Barriers%20to%20full%20social%20and,prejudice%20and%20stigma%20in%20society.>

they have not received their pension yet due to government change. He also added that even some persons with disabilities have put their children and kidney on sale for money because of poverty (29 Jawza 1401, Etilaa Roz).



**Figure 5: Access of Persons with disabilities to Humanitarian Aids in the Community**

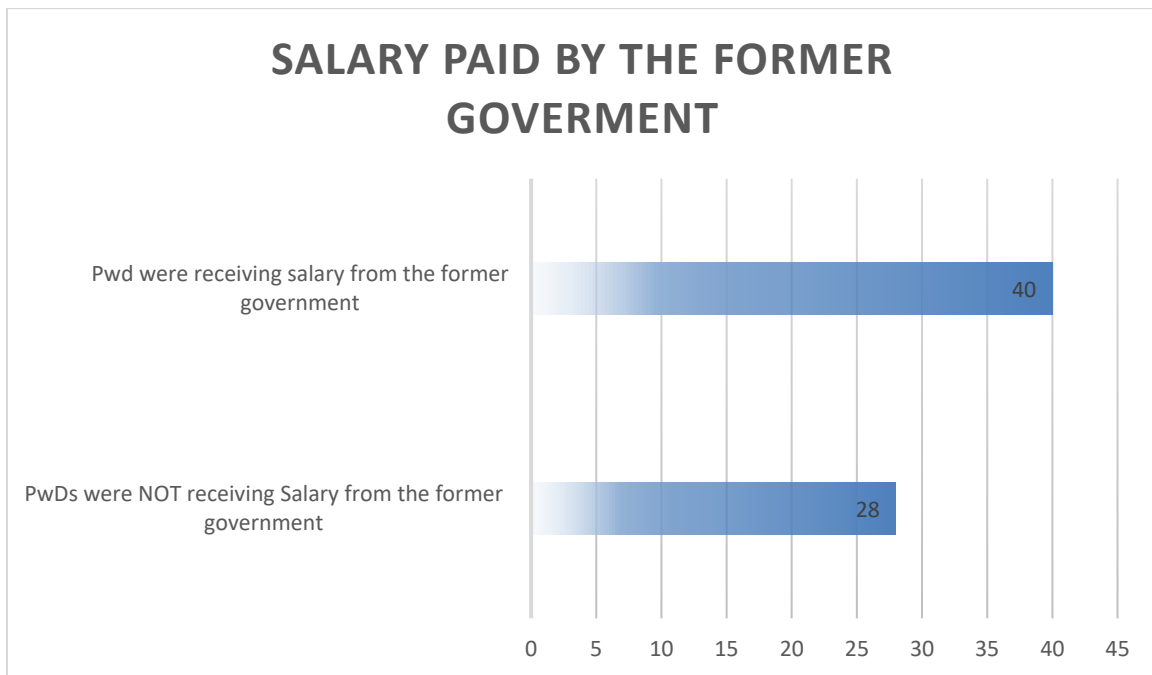
Unfair distribution of humanitarian aids has been a problem in the Afghan community. People have often complained about the unfair and corruption the distribution of aids in the community by humanitarian aids organizations. The people in need were not considered well in distribution plan and programs of the aid distributors in the community. Persons with disabilities were one the groups who often had less access to receiving the aids in the community. One of the reasons could be low awareness and accountability of the organizations distributing aids in the community.

**Figure 5** indicates that 80% of persons with who participated in the assessment did not receive aids distributed by national and international organization in the community. The reasons that the participants have mentioned are that districts representatives, districts councils, elders and NGOs did not have good assessment about the needs of persons with disabilities in the community. They expressed their concern that one of the reasons is lack of transparency and inclusion of persons with disabilities in their humanitarian aids programs. Those 20% who received some



packages of aids said that they are not enough. They expect a meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in the policy of the humanitarian organizations.

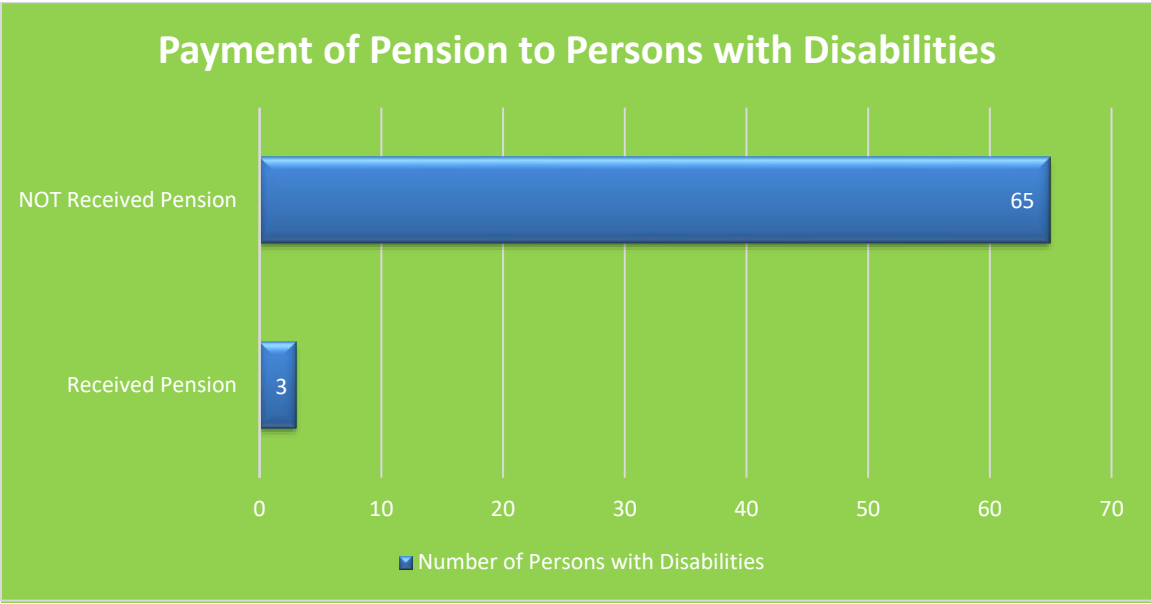
In fact, persons with disabilities are the most vulnerable group in the community from all aspects. It is highly expected that they should be in priority of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and humanitarian organizations' programs and aids distribution in the community.



**Figure 6: Majority of the Assessment Participants were receiving Salary from former government of Afghanistan.**

Article 53 of the Constitution of Afghanistan has enshrined the rights of persons with disabilities. According to National Law on the Rights and Benefits of Persons with Disabilities, the former government of Afghanistan was paying salary for the conflict affected persons with disabilities. But those categories whose disabilities were caused by natural incidences were not receiving pension from the government, which was in contradiction with the provisions of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). On the other hand, the Taliban administration has changed the criteria for salary payment to persons with disabilities and developed a new instruction, which the highest salary is paid to Mujahidin of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which is also in contradiction with UN CRPD's provisions.

Figure 6 indicates that 58% of the assessment participants had been receiving salary from the former government of Afghanistan while 42% of them had not been receiving salary from the former government of Afghanistan – the salary was around \$ 670 USD per year. If we compare it, since August 2021, 4% of the participants of this assessment received their three and some six-month salary and the other 96% of them did not receive any salary yet (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7: Number of persons with disabilities received their pension from Islamic Emirate**

A number of persons with disabilities were receiving pension or salary from the former government of Afghanistan. Those persons with disabilities were receiving salary whose disabilities were related to war and conflicts, but persons with continental and natural causes or incidence were not eligible to receive pension or salary from the government of Afghanistan. But Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has changed the pension payment policy. They have started paying salary to all type of persons with disabilities, war and non-war related disabilities. Under the new policy, some of persons with disabilities have received their pension of three or six months, but others have not received yet their salaries.

**Figure 7 shows** that only around 4% of the people who took part in the assessment has received their pension for the year 2022 (1401) and the other 86% of the participants have not received their pension yet.

The pension payment objective is to support persons with disabilities economically because they are more vulnerable people in the community. They have less access to job opportunity and face more poverty and economic challenges. It is the indicator of the economic challenge that persons

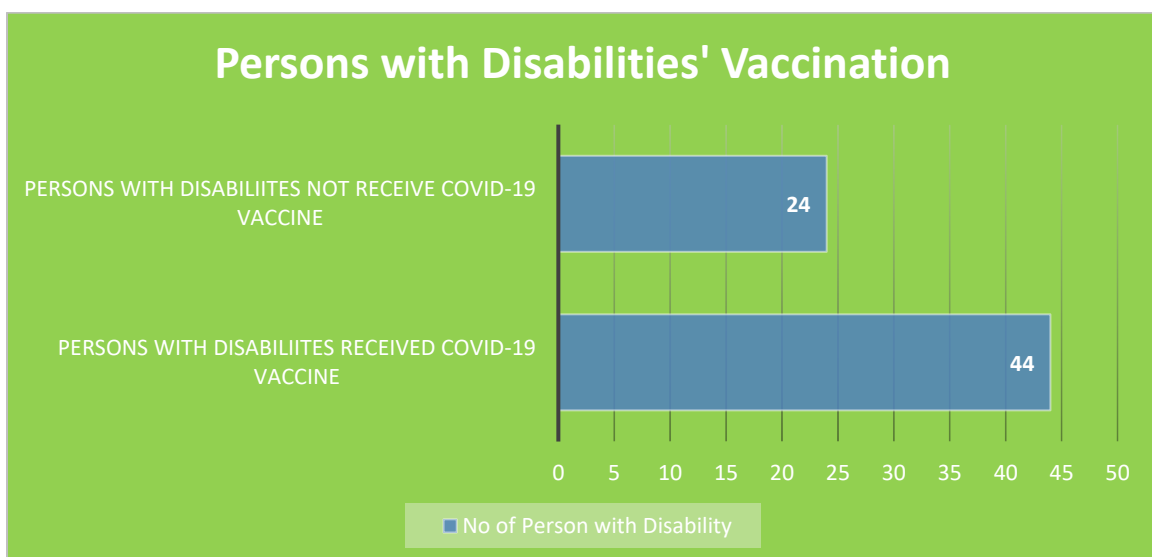
with disabilities are facing now. The assessment’s participants suggested that Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should try to pay the pension or salaries of persons with disabilities.

### Details on pension

Persons with disabilities would usually receive their annual pension in one time from the former government of Afghanistan. The problem now is that Islamic Emirate not only paid their pension but also has decreased the amount of the pensions. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has given more preference to those who have been the supporters of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. However, there is a new development that non- war disabilities have also been registered to receive pension, but it has not practically started yet. The non-war related persons with disabilities were not included in the pension plan before by the former government of Afghanistan. The Law on the Rights and Benefits of Persons with Disabilities were not allowing the conflict and war – affected people to receive pension or salary; it was quite discriminatory according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which Afghanistan ratified it in 2012.

The Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) reported that 117,459 persons with disabilities were registered by the former government of Afghanistan and 16,500 new persons with disabilities have been registered by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan – total registered (133,959) persons with disabilities. Also, 70 thousand persons have received their pension till now from Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan or MMD.

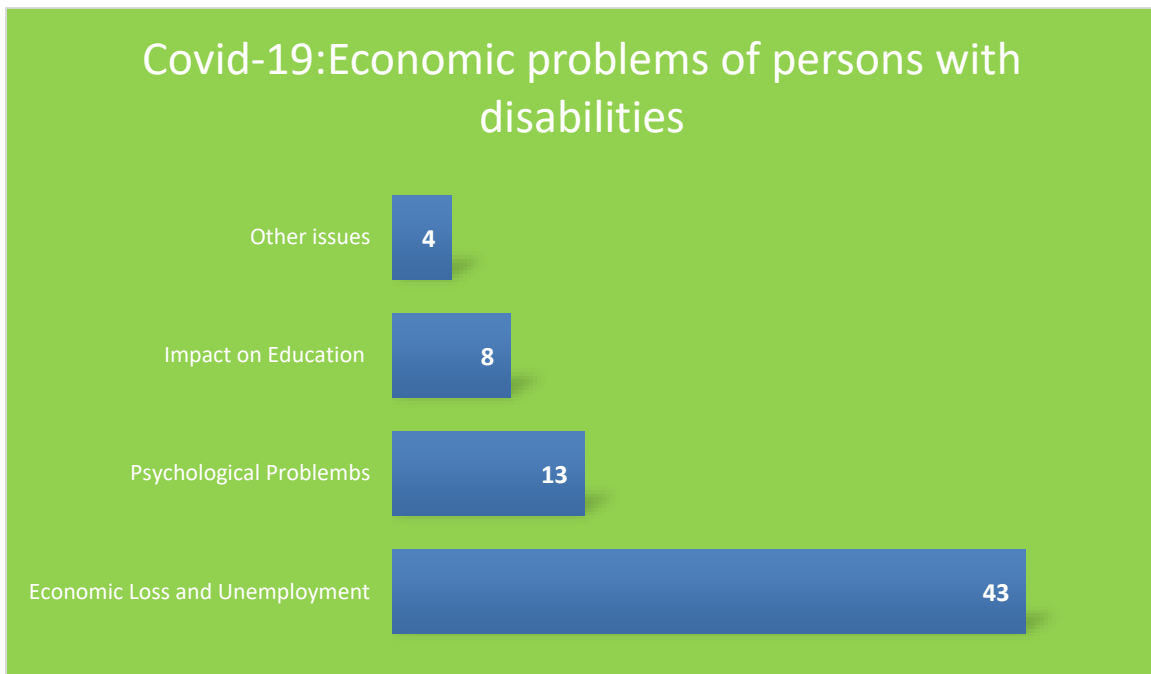
Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not accept all laws passed by the former Afghan government and the Parliament. It is highly possible that Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan would not follow the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was ratified by the former Afghan government in 2012. Islamic Emirate announced that all laws and regulations have to be based on Sharia or Islamic laws.



**Figure 8: Access of persons with disabilities to Covid-19 vaccination**

In general, Covid-19 vaccination will increase the immunity and decrease the vulnerability of the people the Covid-19 virus to decrease the negative impact of the virus. Covid-19 has had considerable social, economic, psychological, educational and health impact on people in the community, including persons with disabilities. Access of persons with disabilities to healthcare services has been a challenge in the community before. So, in this assessment, it was tried to find out access of persons with to Covid-19 vaccination as well.

Figure 8 indicates that 65% of the assessment participants received Covid-19 vaccination and 35% of them did not receive Covid-19 vaccination. The participants have highlighted some of the reasons that persons with disabilities did not get vaccination. The reasons for not vaccinating mentioned by the participants are (1) low access to vaccination centers, (2) low quality vaccine donated, (3) fear of side effects of the vaccine, (4) background diseases of some people, (5) and pregnant and breast-feeding mothers.



**Figure 9: Negative impact of Covid-19 on economic situation of persons with disabilities**

Recovery from the impact of Covid-19 will take a longer time. It is necessary that any program should consider persons with disabilities who have been impacted economically and socially by Covid-19 pandemic. The negative impact will remain months and years with persons with disabilities to recover because persons with disabilities have less resilience to stand up quickly because of high vulnerabilities – social, economic, mental and financial vulnerabilities.

**Figure 9** indicates that 63% of the participants mentioned that Covid-19 had negative impact on their economy and employment; it means that they lost their jobs and their businesses. Regarding health issue, 19% of the participants experienced psychological problems during the Covid-19 pandemic in the community.

Moreover, Covid-19 had negative impact on education of all people because schools were closed by the Ministry of Education. No doubt the educational impact of Covid-19 was huge all over the world and persons with disabilities faced more challenges than others due to lack of communication and other tools in the area of education. For instance, during lockdown in Afghanistan some universities and school continued their program virtually, but most of persons with disabilities were not able to follow the lessons online because they did not have internet and communication tools. Therefore, they lost their educational programs.

On top of that, after August 2021, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan also banned the grade above six of girls all over the country. It is now one year that the girls have not been allowed to attend their schools, including girls with disabilities – the biggest barriers for their education. Losing the education time is not really possible to compensate later. It is the rights of girls with disabilities to have access to education. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should provide education for them.

**Request of the applicants from Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to re-open the girls’ schools.**

In addition to other issues covered in this assessment, a number of the participants suggested that Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should reopen the girls’ schools where girls with disabilities could have access to education and they should not be deprived of their basic rights to education. The banning of school has had negative impact on access of girls with disabilities and mine victim to education in Afghanistan. Persons with disabilities had less access to education before the Covid-19 pandemic and political changes in Afghanistan; it means that persons with disabilities, especially girls have been deprived of their rights to education in the country. Regarding the education, reports indicates that more than 70% of persons with disabilities did not have access to education (NDSA, 2005) in Afghanistan.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion and Recommendation

#### Conclusion

The objective of the assessment was to find out about the level of access of persons with disabilities to humanitarian aids and some other challenges. The focus of this assessment was more on the situation of persons with disabilities and mine victims after the 15 August 2021 in the country under the governance of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The findings of this assessment reflect that persons with disabilities have less access to humanitarian aids in Afghanistan. And 80% of the respondents have not received humanitarian aids from organizations distributing aids to people in the community. It shows the gap that exist within the policy and program of the organizations working in the humanitarian aids distribution where persons with disabilities are not considered well.

In addition, persons with disabilities are facing economic problems. Majority of the respondents did not receive their pension, but some of them received only the pension of three months. They have also experienced the negative impact of Covid-19 on their employment and economy situation. It is highly possible that they have lost their jobs and their businesses impacting their economic situation in the community. Unemployment is one of the challenges of persons with disabilities and mine victims, which causing low income and economical problem for them.

Healthcare is one of the basic needs of persons with disabilities, which include psychological support and rehabilitation. This assessment indicates that persons with disabilities and mine victims have experienced psychological pressure. It is related to the impact of Covid-19 and has also link with economic pressure on persons with disabilities in the community.

Finally, persons with disabilities and mine victims have less access to education. Recently, the closure of schools, the impact of Covid-19, limited access of persons with disabilities to education could the main reasons, but the banning of girls' school by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a big problem for girls with disabilities. They are completely deprived of their

education rights in the community. The assessment participants called upon Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to reopen the girls' schools in the country.

## Recommendations

1. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, UN agencies and humanitarian aids organizations should consider persons with disabilities in their policies and program as a priority to have access to the humanitarian aids in the community.
2. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, UN agencies and NGOs should create economic opportunities for persons with disabilities and mine victims in the community to improve their livelihood.
3. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should pay the pension of persons with disabilities and mine victims to reduce their economic problems.
4. Persons with disabilities and mine victims are facing psychological pressures. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, UN agencies and NGOs should provide psychological services for persons with disabilities and mine victims in the community.
5. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should re-open the schools for girls above grade six where girls with disabilities should continue their education.

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