

## WORLD REFUGEE DAY 2026

**Until Everyone Is Safe: Why Refugees with Disabilities Must Not Be Left Behind**

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As the world commemorates World Refugee Day 2026 under the theme **"Until Everyone Is Safe;"** we are reminded that safety is not simply the absence of conflict. Safety means having access to protection, healthcare, education, livelihoods, justice, information, and the opportunity to participate fully in society. It means living with dignity and hope. For refugees with disabilities, however, safety often remains out of reach.

This year's theme is particularly significant as the world marks the 75th Anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a landmark commitment to protecting people forced to flee their homes due to persecution, violence, and conflict. While much progress has been made over the past seventy-five years, refugees with disabilities continue to face unique and often overlooked barriers that prevent them from enjoying the same rights and opportunities as others.

The question we must ask ourselves today is simple: Can we truly say that everyone is safe when refugees with disabilities continue to be excluded from humanitarian assistance, education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making processes? The answer is no.

For many refugees with disabilities, displacement creates a double burden. They face the challenges associated with being refugees while simultaneously confronting barriers related to disability. These barriers include inaccessible services, discrimination, stigma, lack of assistive devices, limited access to information, and inadequate participation in community life.

In refugee settlements and urban refugee settings across Uganda and beyond, many refugees with disabilities struggle to access health facilities because of long distances and inaccessible infrastructure.

Children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school due to a lack of inclusive learning environments and specialized support services. Women and girls with disabilities face heightened risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Many refugees with disabilities remain unemployed because livelihood programs are not designed to accommodate their diverse needs.

These realities raise an important concern: if people cannot access the very services intended to protect them, can they truly be considered safe?

The theme "Until Everyone Is Safe" therefore carries a powerful message for governments, humanitarian agencies, development partners, and civil society organizations. It calls for a renewed commitment to disability-inclusive refugee responses.

Safety must be inclusive. Protection systems must identify and respond to the specific risks faced by refugees with disabilities. Humanitarian services must be physically, socially, and

economically accessible. Information must be available in formats that everyone can understand and use, including sign language, Braille, easy-to-read materials, and other accessible communication methods.

Most importantly, refugees with disabilities must be recognized not merely as beneficiaries of assistance but as leaders, advocates, and agents of change.

The global commitment to "leave no one behind" cannot be achieved while refugees with disabilities remain invisible in policy discussions, humanitarian planning, and resource allocation. Inclusion is not charity. Inclusion is a human right.

As we celebrate World Refugee Day, we call upon governments and humanitarian actors to strengthen disability-inclusive policies and ensure meaningful participation of refugees with disabilities in all decisions affecting their lives.



**We call upon** donors to increase investment in disability-inclusive humanitarian programming and sustainable livelihood opportunities.



**We call upon** communities to ensure that disability inclusion becomes a core component of refugee protection rather than an afterthought.



**Most importantly, we call upon** the world to listen to the voices of refugees with disabilities themselves. Because until everyone is safe, no one is truly safe. using the attached format of the press release, design for me one for ARD and use ARD logo

**Their experiences matter. | Their rights matter. | Their contributions matter.**

The true measure of safety is not how well the majority is protected but how effectively the most vulnerable members of society are included and empowered.

As we commemorate World Refugee Day 2026, let us remember that safety is not complete when only some people are protected. Safety is complete when every refugee including refugees with disabilities -can live free from fear, access opportunities, participate equally, and pursue their aspirations with dignity. The promise of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the spirit of this year's theme demand nothing less.

**Until refugees with disabilities are safe, included, and empowered, our work remains unfinished.**

**Because "Until Everyone Is Safe" means everyone-including refugees with disabilities.**

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