practice guidelines

Access for All

Helping to make participatory processes accessible for everyone

Save the Children

Contents

Acknowledgements

This document started as a brief guide for organisers and participants of Save the Children UK's Global CBR Review and Seminar in March 2000. It has since been developed into a more extensive set of guidelines, thanks to the input and advice of all participants, facilitators and resource people.

Special thanks also go to the following people for their ideas, corrections and comments on earlier drafts; Abdul Rahim Sattar, Ruth Hansford, Ravi Wickremasinghe, Raya Ushurova, Doreen Woodford.

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A

Introduction

Many things can prevent people participating in discussions which affect them or in projects that could benefit them. Participation is about being involved in, and contributing to, a process. But an invitation to participate remains worthless unless efforts are taken to ensure that genuine and significant participation is *actually possible*. This is where the issue of accessibility comes in, because it is about making it possible for people to access communications and environments in ways that are easy and comfortable and which enable involvement and contribution.

This document will draw on the processes we went through during the Global Review of Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and the lessons we learned, to provide practical guidelines to help others achieve better accessed participation in future.

Who is accessibility for?

- You!

- Accessibility is not just an issue for disabled people. It makes participation easier and more effective for everyone. This includes:
    - young people
    - elderly people
    - people who speak different languages
    - people who have different learning styles
    - people with different levels of experience
    - people on drug or diet regimes
    - people with hidden impairments (diabetes, epilepsy)

    - pregnant women
    - parents and carers
    - and it is for people who have difficulty seeing, hearing, moving, learning, and/or speaking; whether this is mild or severe, whether or not they define themselves as disabled, whether or not their impairment is obvious.

- Large print and audio tapes benefit not just people with visual impairments, but people for whom English is not a first language, children and young people, and everyone else.

- Accessible environments (environments without physical barriers) enable parents with young children, elderly people and disabled people to participate. Non-accessible environments are only for an elite minority of young, fit, non-disabled people without children!

- Accessible presentations are lively, varied and clear, providing the maximum learning opportunity for everyone.

Who is responsible for accessibility?

Everyone – because an inclusive society, in which everyone can participate, will only happen if everyone is committed and plays their part.

B

What does accessibility mean in practice?

There are many ways to improve accessibility. Some, like improving physical access to buildings or producing Braille documents are more obvious, while others – such as creating the right atmosphere and work culture – are less commonly considered. We will look at as many elements of accessibility as possible in this document, but inevitably we will not be able to cover everything.

You should see these guidelines as a starting point.

- Use them to think through how you could improve accessibility in your work.
- Use them as a basis to find out more about accessibility.
- Use them to do your bit in developing a more inclusive society.

1 Simple language

Key points

- ✔ Keep documents brief and make sure that the content is well organised.
- ✔ Avoid jargon and too many long words.
- ✔ Use short, simple sentences

  because.....
  - ..... not everyone speaks your language as their first language
  - ..... not everyone reads, speaks, writes or understands things in the same way
  - ..... not everyone is able to or wants to pay attention for a long time
  - ..... it takes longer to read and is harder to browse through a Brailled document.

- ✔ Sign language is a language in its own right, with regional and local differences, as with spoken languages.
- ✔ Don't forget about 'body language' and facial expressions – they're simple but can convey a lot.

It is important to remember that not everyone will have the same level of literacy or understanding of language. The level and style of language you use in speech or documents will make your message more – or less – accessible and give people more – or less – chance of participating.

Adapting the style of language you use is a simple and *cost-free* way of improving accessibility for everyone.

The table below provides a few examples, it is not a definitive list. Even though the table has been broken into sections, it is important to remember that most of the suggestions will apply to all readers and listeners, regardless of their specific needs or impairments.

Points to remember	What you can do to improve accessibility

For second language speakers

If we present information in English (or other main international languages, eg, French, Spanish), we need to remember that our **readers or listeners may not have English as their first language**. Many people may seem to speak second or third languages fluently, but they might not fully understand technical language, jargon or slang.	**Use simple words** as far as possible. Technical terms, jargon, abbreviations, acronyms, and other difficult words should be used sparingly. Always describe them when they first appear in the text and you may also consider including a glossary of difficult terms as an appendix. **Be aware of culturally different meanings** and uses of some words. Use words or variations of words which you know are in **common usage locally.** Be aware that some words, especially more 'modern' ones, **may not have exact translations into other languages** (for example, some languages may not make the precise distinctions between disability and handicap that English does).

For people with learning difficulties

Having a learning difficulty doesn't mean a person cannot understand spoken language or cannot read and write. However, they may read more slowly, understand less of what they read or hear, and be slower or less articulate in their communications	**Use short simple sentences** – avoid long, complex sentences. When speaking, try to **avoid long lists** or giving several instructions at once. People with learning difficulties may have difficulty understanding, remembering or acting upon more than one instruction or fact at once.

Learning difficulties are not always severe or obvious, for example, many people are dyslexic. Their learning difficulties may never be formally 'diagnosed' or recognised, but may affect their use and understanding of language.	When speaking, **clearly emphasise the words which are most important** for conveying the meaning of the sentence.

For people with visual impairments

The physical nature of Braille means that it takes longer to read than conventional written text, and it is harder to scan through selectively. Producing documents using verbose and complex language may, therefore, place a Braille reader at a disadvantage.	**Keep documents short**. Get into the habit of editing all documents to remove unnecessary words and phrases. Make sure that the **content is well organised.** Clearly head pages and new sections and produce a contents list for longer documents. When transcribed into Braille, this will help the reader access the relevant pages.

For people with hearing impairments

Sign language is a language in its own right, with its own grammar and syntax. It is not just a form of translated English or other mother tongues. Signers, therefore, may have English, etc, as their second (or third) language and experience the same challenges as anyone trying to read or write in a second language.	When producing documents for (or reading items written by) people who use sign language, consider the suggestions made above regarding information for people with English, etc, as a second language.
Every country, region or community will have its own sign language and dialect, which evolves like any spoken language.	During meetings with hearing-impaired participants, ensure that you use a sign language interpreter who is familiar with local sign language, dialect, etc.

You should be aware that **direct translation into, or from, sign language is often not possible or accurate.**	You should aim to convey or obtain the meaning (rather than an exact word-for-word translation) of the signing, otherwise misunderstandings can easily happen.
Some **complex words or names may have to be spelt out letter by letter,** if there are no standard signs for them. This can be slow.	During presentations, **keep complex words and names to a minimum**, and provide written lists of such names in advance to assist sign interpreters to prepare. The presenter should check with the signer/interpreter that their pace of speech is not too fast and that they are making appropriate pauses to enable signers to keep up.
You should also remember that **not every deaf or hearing-impaired person uses sign language**, either through choice or because, for example, local education systems are inadequate.	Lip-reading can often form an important part of communication. Seek advice from local organisations of hearing-impaired people to ensure that you make the most of lip-reading opportunities.

And generally ...

... language is more than just words.	It may aid communication to use other methods (eg, non-exaggerated facial expressions or hand movements). When listening to someone, watch for **non-verbal communication** (often called 'body-language') as well. People with speech impairments, for example, may use movements to convey meaning and emphasis they cannot get over verbally. However, be aware that blind and visually-impaired participants may not be able to benefit from these extra cues, so do not rely on them too much.

2 Written documents

Key points

✔ Consult potential users before producing documents.

✔ Consider:
print size, weight, font, contrast, case, colour;
paragraph style, margins, line spacing, shading;
paper quality.

✔ Provide:
Braille versions;
audiotaped versions;
language translations.

2.1 The printed word

Legibility of printed material plays a key role in making information accessible. This applies to all documents, from simple memos to published books. By following these simple guidelines you can make your work accessible to people with visual impairments, and generally more readable for non-visually-impaired people, at no extra cost. It should be something that everyone in your organisation embraces – not just disability staff, but everyone who produces any document in printed form.

- **Type size**
  Use font size 12 as a minimum standard whenever possible, as fonts of 8-11 points cannot be read clearly by enough readers, especially anyone with a visual impairment.

  It is easy to increase font sizes on word-processors or by enlarging a document on a photocopier. You should avoid using fonts smaller than 12 points for main text. Font size 14-16 is usually considered ‘large print’ and should be used when producing documents for visually impaired readers. There is often little point using fonts larger than 18-20 points for main text, as any increases in size beyond this will not really be of benefit to a visually impaired reader. Do not be tempted to use small fonts to make a long document seem shorter – your reader will be more daunted by illegible print than by an extra few pages.

- **Font**
  Visually-impaired readers may find it easier to read *'sans serif'* fonts, such as arial. However, other readers may find *'serif'* fonts (like Times New Roman or Garamond) equally, or more readable. It is probably more important to worry about the other elements of legible print, than font type. However; don't use elaborate fonts, eg, scripts that look like handwriting, and don't use closely spaced fonts.

- **Capitals**
  Avoid using capital letters for blocks of text (ie, more than one or two words). Capital letters are visually too similar in size and shape for readers to be able to easily distinguish letters. Reading written words relies to some extent on recognising the *shape* words make, and words written in capitals do not make such distinctive shapes.

- **Italics**
  Avoid large amounts of text in italics, as italic text is also harder to read.

- **Lines and paragraphs**
  Allow adequate spacing between lines and paragraphs. Also, if you are producing a form or questionnaire, remember to allow extra space for the respondent to write their answers, as visually-impaired people may have larger handwriting.

  Line length should ideally be 50-65 characters (including spaces). Blind and partially sighted readers may prefer even shorter lines than this. Avoid splitting words at the ends of lines.

  If you are using a word-processor, justify the left margin, but avoid fully justifying text. Full justification may look neater (you get straight margins on both sides), but it can create irregular spacing between words and letters, making it harder to read or scan through the text.

- **Colour and paper**
  Think carefully before using coloured lettering or paper. The stronger the contrast between the writing and the paper, the easier it is to read. The best contrasts are black on white or black on yellow. Some of the worst contrasts possible are yellow writing on white paper or black writing on dark blue paper.

  Also think carefully before using shaded text boxes. Do not try to put lettering over shading that is more than 10-20%. If you know readers will be visually impaired, avoid shading altogether. Placing text over photographs is also not recommended.

  Try to avoid 'reversing-out' text (eg, white text on a black background), especially with small font sizes (below 14 points) or

with colours which do not have a strong contrast.

‘reversed-out’ text is harder to read than normal text

Only print on both sides of a sheet of paper if it is thick enough for text not to show through on the reverse.

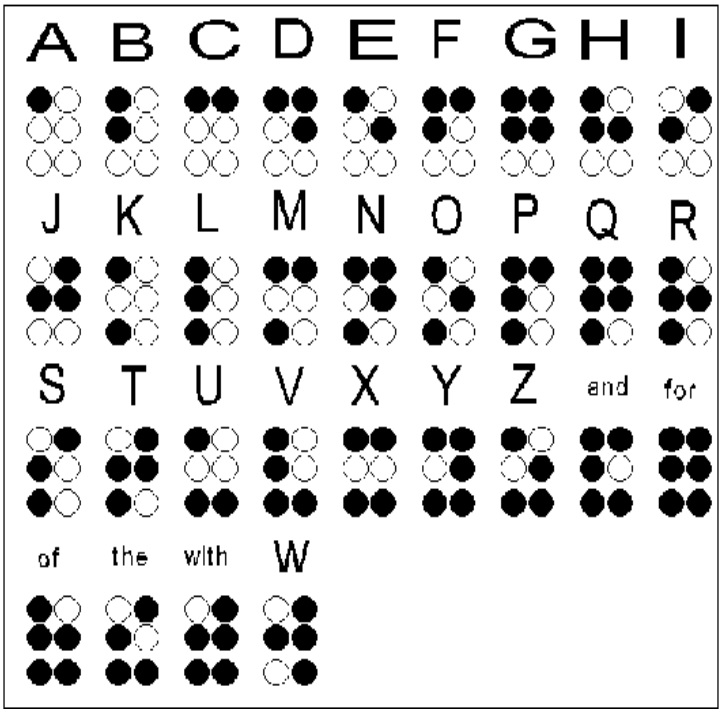
- **Layout**
  If you are setting the text into two columns, make sure that the margin between the columns is wide enough to clearly separate them. If there is not much space between the columns, insert a vertical line.

  Avoid fitting (wrapping) text around illustrations, as this can create irregular line lengths.

2.2 Braille

What is Braille?

Braille is a form of written communication used by many blind and visually-impaired people. It is a main way of turning a written document into an accessible format.



The Braille alphabet

Braille is formed by punching raised dots into paper and is read by feeling the dots with the fingers. The basic alphabet usually remains unchanged, but ‘contractions’ (Braille symbols representing abbreviations of words or groups of letters) may change in different languages. Consequently, you should be wary of simply importing Braille documents from other countries. When providing documents in Braille you should be aware that not all readers will understand the more complex contracted Braille. To ensure that all readers will be able to read your documents, check what type of Braille they prefer. If you cannot afford to produce documents in more than one level of Braille, you should consider using uncontracted Braille as your standard.

How can you get documents Brailled?

Transcription services are offered in many countries by organisations for blind people. Contact your local organisations to see if they offer advice and services. In the UK transcription is usually priced per word or per page (430 printed words are considered to be an average page). There may be extra costs for each page that is printed. If you are using uncontracted Braille you will be printing off more pages, so check pricing policies carefully.

With modern technology, Braille documents can easily be produced using a word-processor and Braille embosser (printer). However it can be very expensive to buy your own embosser and Braille transcription software.

Photograph by : Ms Vu Hong Chau, SC UK Vietnam

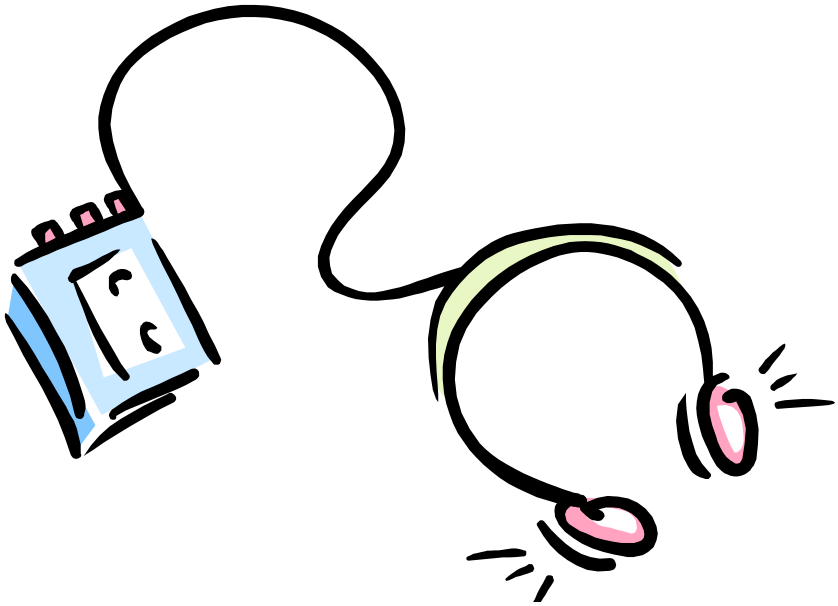
Writing Braille

Transcribers (and blind or visually-impaired people) more usually use Braille machines (often called 'Perkins Braillers') which are like small typewriters with just 6 keys to make the 6 dots from which all Braille symbols are created. Braille can also be 'handwritten' using a guide frame and pointed stylus (see photograph above).

If professional transcription services are not available to you locally, you may be able to find a community member (teacher, social worker, parent of a visually-impaired child) who reads and writes Braille who could undertake some simple transcription work.

2.3 Audio cassettes

Audio cassettes can be a useful alternative for people who are not able to read (or choose not to use) Braille, or who learn better from listening than reading. Again, many local and national organisations will be able to offer tape production services. It will also be significantly cheaper to have a document taped than Brailled.



Key points to consider when producing audio cassettes

- Often documents are written to make an impact or be understood when they are read (rather than listened to). What makes an impact verbally will often be very different from what makes an impact visually. You should therefore carefully read through any document you wish to record, and edit or re-write to ensure that it will work verbally. An example of where changes may need to be made is when you have a table of statistics. You may need to think carefully about how you read out the row and column headings, or whether it makes more sense to read statistics by row or column first.

- Ensure that the speaker being recorded is fluent in the language being used, understands/uses local dialect and has an accent that is easily understood.

- When recording, speak clearly at an even pace, using clear intonation and emphasising key words. Do not speak too slowly, it may make it harder to follow what is being said.

- Do not hold the microphone too close to your mouth, as this can result in distorted sounds. Try not to breathe heavily into the microphone.

- Allow short pauses in appropriate places, for the listener to take in what has been said. However, do not repeat sentences or words, the listener can always use the rewind button if s/he did not hear clearly the first time.

- Read out a clear contents' list at the start of the tape, providing the section number and title, and if relevant, which side of the cassette the item is on. State clearly when there is a new section or question. It may also help the listener to have a brief description of what follows the heading, to make selective browsing easier (eg, "Section 3 – list of key contacts. There follows a list of ten names and addresses of useful organisations"). Ideally, give each section a number, as it is often easier to remember a number than a title when trying to browse or find a section.

- If your document will not fit on one side of a cassette, make sure that you split the document in a sensible place, ie not mid-paragraph, or just after a section heading.

- Ensure there is no extra background noise which could be picked up by the microphone.

- Use new cassettes and good quality recording equipment, as far as possible, to ensure a high quality recording.

- If you are holding a meeting, make sure you can provide visually-impaired participants with cassette machines on which they can listen to the key documentation cassettes. Remember that people with physical disabilities may find it hard to press buttons on a machine. If you can use cassette machines with large, easy-to-use buttons this may help to make your recorded information even more accessible.

2.4 Translating documents into other languages

Why translate?

Documents can be clearly printed and well written in simple words, but if the reader does not understand the language used, then the document is totally inaccessible. Language translation is an essential element to ensure participation by everyone, not just those who are linguists or who have been lucky enough to receive a good education in second and third languages.

Translation should be considered when producing any document. It should not be seen as a luxury if other language speakers are to participate in your process or meeting. However, before you translate everything, consider carefully how essential each document is and whether, by not translating, you will be preventing someone from participating or carrying out their work.

Reducing translation costs

Translation is often not done, even with essential documents, because of the costs involved. It can be very expensive and to ensure quality and accuracy you should have documents translated and proof-read – two separate processes with two lots of charges. There are ways to reduce the cost of translation. Try to source translation services locally – it does not have to be arranged by your head office (often situated in cities where translation costs may be significantly higher). You will need to ensure that you have some basic standards for translators to follow, wherever they are based (see Save the Children UK's *Guidelines for Translation*).

Some documents can be summarised before translation, if you cannot afford to translate a large document. It means that other language speakers may not have the same level of participation as the main language speakers, but it may be considered an acceptable compromise. Remember that a summary document will have other uses – you could Braille the summary rather than the full document; it will be a more appropriate and accessible document for young people or people with learning difficulties and senior management are more likely to read it! So, time invested in preparing a summary document will not be wasted.

3 Meetings, presentations and discussions

Key points

- ✔ Consult participants before the event to assess everyone's needs.
- ✔ Create an open, honest and enabling atmosphere where everyone can express their accessibility needs and feel comfortable when communicating.
- ✔ Provide preparation time and support for participants to develop their presentations or arguments.
- ✔ Provide information and training on accessible communication.
- ✔ Provide a range of communication formats so that everyone gets a chance to communicate in some way.
- ✔ Think about the speed, clarity, volume of your speech, etc.
- ✔ Employ qualified sign-language interpreters and language interpreters, rather than relying on participants to interpret for each other. Arrange for backup interpreters to be available in case of emergencies or during long events.
- ✔ Provide interpreters with papers, data, etc well in advance so they are prepared.
- ✔ Think about physical environments, accessible basic facilities.
- ✔ Think about room layout, lighting, seating, background noise.
- ✔ Think about timetabling, regular breaks, working days to suit all participants.
- ✔ Put plenty of time and effort into planning and organisation before the event – there are lots of little things which can help, or hinder, people's participation and communication.

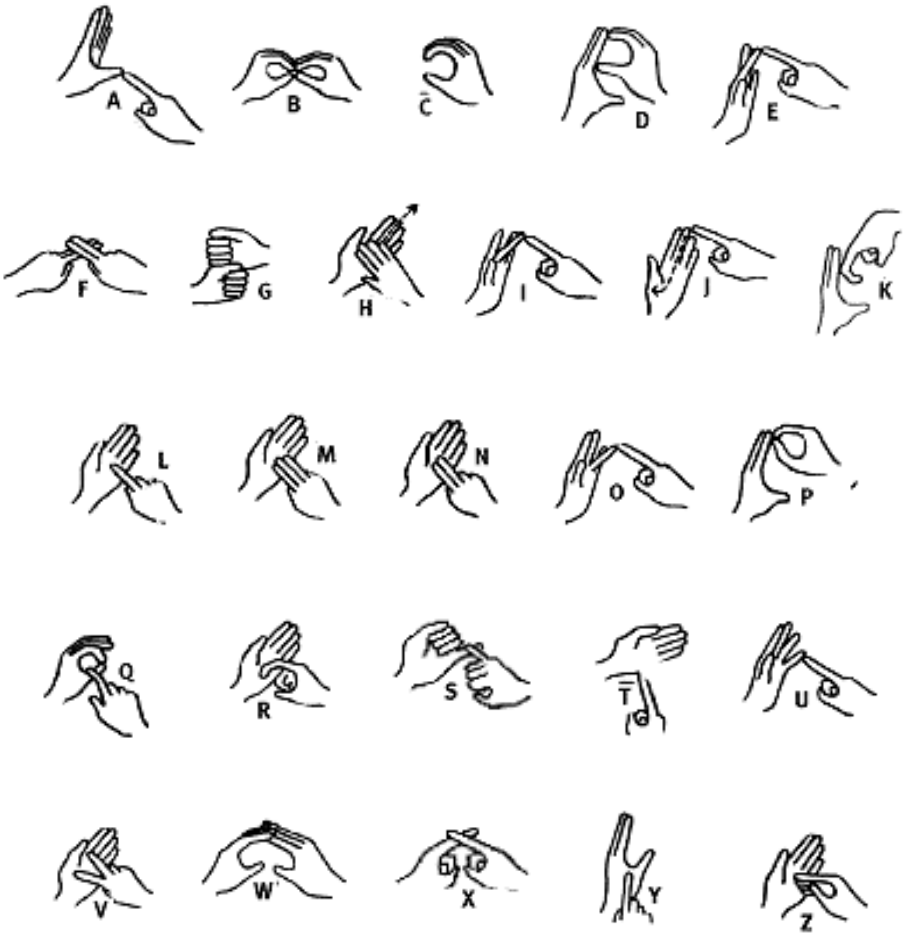
3.1 Spoken communication

3.1.1 Clear speech and sign language

Most communication during a meeting or discussion will be spoken, so sign language is essential to enable many hearing-impaired people to take part in meetings and discussions. We should also remember that hearing impairment does not always mean total loss of hearing, so there is a lot we can do to enable everyone to hear and access as much of what we say as possible.

Some of the key points regarding the language aspect of sign language have been mentioned above, so will not be repeated here.

Participants at meetings may bring their own sign language interpreter with them, though you should not assume that they will – check in advance. If you need to find an interpreter, it may not be as hard or as costly as you might think. Often, an interpreter can be found within the community (a teacher, parent, health worker, etc). This person will then be more likely to be trusted by deaf participants and to understand the



British Manual Alphabet (fingerspelling)

local signs. If nobody suitable can be found, contact your local, or national, organisations for disabled and deaf people to see what advice and services they can offer.

Deafblind participants

Remember – there are other forms of communication used by people who are deaf and blind. Every deafblind person will have specific communication needs and methods depending on the degree of their visual and hearing impairments and how old they were when their blindness and deafness started. Ensure that you discuss individual needs with each participant.

There are two main communication methods. The **Block Alphabet** involves using your forefinger to draw the shape of capital letters on the palm of the deafblind person's hand. The **Deafblind Fingerspelling Alphabet** is an alphabet with one sign for each letter. It works by making the signs on the deafblind person's hand. Both methods can be slow so you will need to tailor your communications to allow for this.

What can you do to help everyone participate better in spoken communications?

- The sign interpreter and hearing impaired participants must be able to sit in the most suitable place (so the interpreter can hear the presenter, the participants can see the signer, and can also see the presenter if they want to lip-read, look at flipcharts and overheads, etc).

Speakers should follow some basic rules

- Face the people you are talking to.
- Stand where the light can fall on your face (ie, not in the shadows or with a window behind you).
- Make sure your mouth isn't hidden behind a microphone or your hands.
- Do not speak too quickly, and pause regularly.
- Provide the sign interpreter with a copy of the presentation, difficult words or key names in advance, so they can be prepared.
- Do not exaggerate lip movements, this won't help lip-reading.
- Do not shout, the listener will not hear any better, but what you say may be more distorted.
- Be aware that some letters or sounds may be harder for hearing-impaired people to hear or distinguish (for example, the letters f, s, sh).
- Use a range of other communication techniques, such as gestures, visual aids, etc.

- Try to keep background noise to a minimum. If you are able to be very selective when choosing your venue, check in advance how much background noise there is from outside the building, the air-conditioning equipment, etc.

3.1.2 Language interpretation

Why interpret?

There is nothing more boring and isolating than sitting through a presentation or discussion you cannot understand. If we are going to ensure that we have a representative spread of participants at a meeting, being interviewed, etc, we will inevitably have participants who cannot speak the main language being used. Often, participation is restricted to people with English/foreign language skills. In the case of the CBR Review Seminar, this would have precluded the participation of some of our most important stakeholders – representatives from partner agencies, parents of disabled children, disabled people.

Type of interpretation

Language interpretation can be as simple or complex as you can afford or need.

- You can use technology to assist with simultaneous translation – a sound-proof booth for the interpreter, headphones for those listening, and microphones for all other participants to speak into.
- Or you can simply have an interpreter who translates to a few participants, or co-presents with the presenter, chair or facilitator.

During the CBR Review Seminar we used both methods, and learned some valuable lessons about language interpretation.

Improving interpretation

It can be very hard work for the interpreter to translate everything they hear to their audience, but there are many things all participants, presenters, chair-people and facilitators can do to make this process easier.

- Give the interpreter a copy of your presentation, transparencies, slides, videos, and any other background information, at least a day in advance, so that they can prepare.

- If your presentation is not this well prepared, see if you can at least provide the interpreter with a list of, (or discuss in advance), difficult names or words you think you will use. Think carefully if you really need to use these difficult names and words – perhaps everyone would benefit if they were kept to a minimum.
- Speak relatively slowly and at an even pace. If you are running out of time, don't speak faster, think faster and summarise what you were planning to say.
- Make regular pauses.
- Don't be afraid to ask the interpreter and audience if you are speaking at the right pace.
- Don't be afraid to tell the speaker if they are speaking too fast, cannot be understood by the interpreter, etc.

Photograph by: Michael Bailey, SC UK

A presenter working through an interpreter

It is not a good idea for participants to take on interpretation roles themselves, because it hinders their participation in the meeting/ discussion. An independent interpreter should be employed if possible, but you can try to prepare them in advance for some of the key words, names, concepts and acronyms used by your organisation.

In the case of the CBR Review Seminar, SC UK staff interpreted for one group of partner representatives. It was not effective for either side. The staff could not participate fully as they found the translation work exhausting, especially during such a participatory event. The partners also did not receive adequate translation. Both sides felt their opportunities for informal networking were limited by this arrangement.

If you are able to use a translation booth, headphones and microphones, make sure that all users are shown how the equipment works and how to speak into a microphone properly, avoiding distortion.

If you have only one or two participants requiring the assistance of an interpreter, or if you cannot afford a booth, you will probably have one or two interpreters who just whisper the translations. To make this more effective, bear in mind the following:

- Position the interpreter so that everyone who needs to hear the translation can hear clearly, without the interpreter having to speak too loudly
- The positioning of interpretation groups is important. They should sit where the interpreter can clearly see and hear the presenter. Equally they need to sit where they will cause least disruption to other participants. If possible, seat interpretation groups in a different part of the room to visually-impaired participants: they may find it hard to distinguish who is speaking if they can hear the voices of the presenter and the interpreter.
- Make sure you tell everyone in the room that some participants will be working through an interpreter, otherwise their talking and whispering may be misinterpreted as rudeness.
- If your presenter/chair/facilitator is using an interpreter, make sure that both people are standing where the audience can see and hear them. The interpreter will need to be a confident speaker who is used to presenting to large audiences. You will also need to allow for the extra time that the presenter will need when presenting through an interpreter.

3.2 Visual communication and visual aids

When we talk with another person or give a presentation to a group, we communicate visually as well as orally. We make physical gestures, show overhead slides and write on flip charts. In short, we communicate in ways which may exclude visually-impaired people.

The following guidelines can ensure that everyone is included in discussions and presentations.

Establish a few 'ground-rules' at the start of the meeting, for example:

- Whoever is speaking should say who they are, in case their face cannot be seen, or voice recognised by, visually impaired participants.
- If the chair-person is visually impaired, do not raise your hand to gain attention, but tell him/her that you want to comment or ask a question.
- Speakers and audience should not feel worried about telling each other if they are being inaccessible.

In addition:

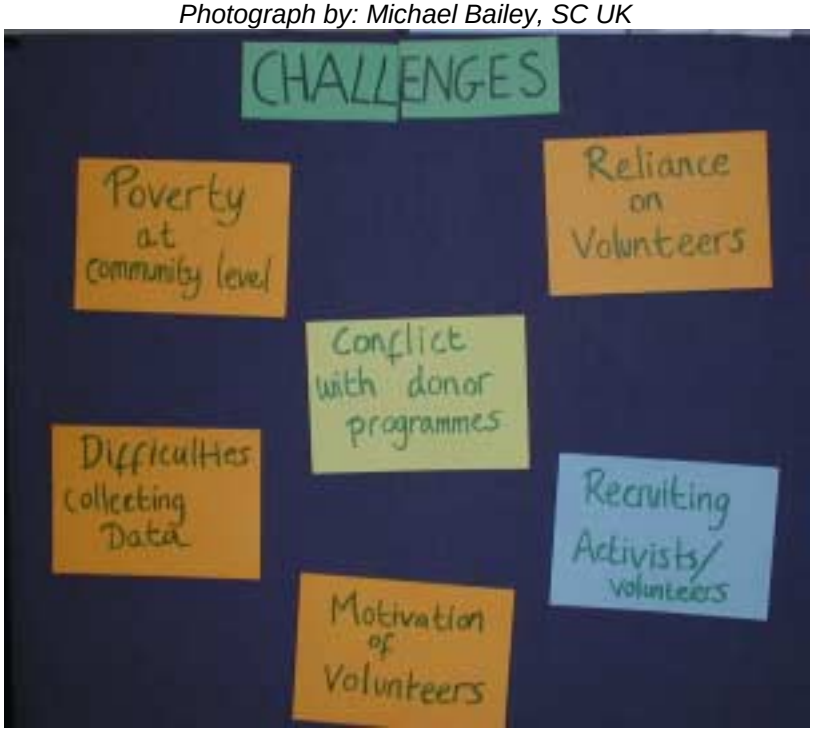
- Make sure that participants are seated in the best place for them.
- Visually impaired participants may find it better not to sit near groups working with an interpreter, in case it becomes difficult to distinguish who is speaking.
- Participants with milder visual impairments must be able to sit where they can see the speaker, overhead screen, TV, etc. Meeting organisers should encourage a working environment where people feel happy to move positions or ask for visual equipment to be moved.

Maintain a minimum standard for all visual aids:

- Flip charts may not be the best way to capture information for the group to see, especially in a large room – the handwriting may be unclear, the size cannot be increased, etc. Participants at the CBR Review Seminar felt that overhead transparencies were much clearer and should be used whenever possible – find out what your meeting participants prefer.
- If you can, you should type overhead transparencies, using black ink and a font size of at least 18 points. If you cannot type them, write very clearly in dark inks (avoid red, orange and green as they

may not show up well enough). Do not use block capitals and joined handwriting, clear print is best.

Photograph by: Michael Bailey, SC UK



Keep visual materials simple and clear

- If you use flip charts, use black or dark blue ink. Red, orange and green cannot be seen clearly enough from a distance, so should be used sparingly.
- Do not try to put too much on one transparency or flip chart, and avoid complex 'overlaying' of transparencies.
- Do not show an overhead or flip chart without reading out or describing what is being displayed to participants who cannot see it
- If you are describing a diagram, keep the description simple and specific – think in terms of what is in the different sections of the image – corner, centre, left, right, top, bottom.
- Do not change overheads or flip charts too quickly, allow people enough time to translate them or read them slowly.
- Do not over-use gestures and body language to communicate things that you are not putting into words as well.

3.2.1 Videos

Videos can enable more diverse communication to take place, providing another opportunity to get your message across in an accessible way. However, unless a few basic standards are followed, then communication through video can be very inaccessible.

- Make sure that your TV or video projection screen is well positioned and clear enough for the group to see.

- Make sure that the sound quality is good. If the sound distorts, the message will be inaccessible, especially to visually impaired viewers who rely on the commentary.

- Check the quality of the film you plan to show. Make sure that there is not too much background noise nor too much visual activity behind the speakers.

- Make sure that any essential subtitles, captions and graphics are readable (see printed word guidelines above).

- When showing a video which does not have adequate commentary to inform visually impaired viewers what is happening, you may be able to add your own brief descriptions of key actions or scenes. You should also try to read out any captions which do not get spoken on the video.

- If your video also shows sign interpretation, check that it can be understood by your hearing-impaired viewers and that it can be seen clearly enough. If not, the sign language interpreter working at the meeting should interpret.

- If your video is not in the main language spoken by participants, make sure there is an interpreter available who can translate simultaneously. Provide the interpreter with a transcription of the video so they can prepare in advance.

- If you cannot meet most of these standards, then showing the video may be a waste of time.

3.3 Atmosphere

You can make your meeting more accessible by creating a friendly, open, honest atmosphere. Below are some suggestions based on the experiences at the CBR Review Seminar.

How can you create the right atmosphere?

- Make accessibility an integral part of preparations from the very start. From your first correspondence with potential participants introduce chances for people to tell you about their physical access, communication or other needs. This will help to make everyone aware of the issue, even if they do not have any particular needs themselves.

- Aim to provide automatically as much information as you can in alternative formats and languages, and make it clear that participants should not feel inhibited about asking for things if they have other needs

Photograph by: Michael Bailey, SC UK

Creating the right atmosphere is important for accessibility

- Make sure you create a disability-friendly environment, not just in terms of the physical environment (see below), but also by displaying positive-image posters, literature, etc.

- Hold a short session at the start of the meeting to go over some basic ground-rules on accessibility which will help everyone. Ensure that all facilitators, resource people, trainers, etc, start the meeting with the same knowledge and ideas about accessibility, so that they don't break any of the basic rules.

- Allow time for participants to prepare their presentations or arguments, and learn from facilitators (and each other) about the best ways to convey their message. This preparation and learning time is essential if everyone is to participate fully and equally, whether they are professionals with experience of public speaking, or partners, parents and young people who are not used to communicating this way.

- Encourage participants to be open about their needs and not to worry about asking others to adapt their behaviour or explain something again. Nobody should feel shy about asking or embarrassed by being asked.

- Offer a variety of presentation and discussion methods so that people with different personality styles, from different age groups, etc, get a chance to contribute in a way that they feel comfortable with. For example, offer a chance to talk in small groups, one-to-one, through role play, etc, as not everyone will be comfortable participating in, or presenting to, a large and intimidating group.

Photograph by: Michael Bailey, SC UK

Preparation time is essential to enable everyone to participate fully

- Build extra time into the schedule to allow for interpretation.

- Be patient when listening to speakers who have difficulty using another language.

- Place reminder notices at the speaker’s podium.

- For a meeting of several days, encourage feedback on accessibility matters in the end-of-day evaluations, and take steps to improve things for the next day.

3.4 Environment and accommodation

The physical environment can affect whether people participate fully and gain access to discussions or training. There is not the space here to go into lots of detail about accessible environments, but we will remind you of some key points to think about as a start. We suggest that you contact a specialist organisation to find out more information about providing accessible travel arrangements, accommodation and meeting facilities (see below for contact ideas).

Don't assume anything – always ask participants in advance what their needs are.

Travel

People can only participate in a meeting or event if they can actually get to it.

- Can people get to your meeting?
- Can it be reached by public transport?
- Is public transport accessible?
- Can participants afford public transport or taxis, or do you need to provide money in advance?
- Do participants know about notifying airlines of their specific needs?
- Will participants be travelling with an assistant or will you need to meet them at the station/airport?
- Do you have an accessible vehicle to transport participants or will you need to hire one?
- For residential meetings, is it an easy journey from the accommodation to the meeting venue (not too time-consuming or exhausting)? Are you able to accommodate all participants in the same hotel? If not, some participants will be disadvantaged by having to complete longer journeys to and from the meeting, and may not be able to participate in evening group activities.

Venue and accommodation

This is a quick checklist of things to think about and seek extra advice on. You will probably think of other things as well.

- **Steps/stairs** – you need as few as possible.

- **Ramps** – gradient, width, positioning, suitable surface materials, handrails.

- **Lifts** – location, size, position, labelling of buttons, audio announcements of floor numbers.

- **Doors** – widths, relative positioning, stiff hinges/springs/handles.

- **Toilets** – wheelchair accessible, close to meeting facilities, parent and baby facilities.

- **Baths/showers** – wheelchair accessible, handrails, suitable surface materials, lifting equipment, seats, etc.

- **Bedrooms** – height/width of bed, width of space next to bed, accessible storage

- **Furniture** – sensible positioning or removing obstacles for visually impaired people, wheelchair users, parents with prams, etc.

- **Location and layout of communal facilities** (dining rooms, meeting rooms, outdoor areas, etc).

- **Good quality, well positioned audio-visual equipment** (video, projector and screen, flip charts, etc).

4 General organisation

There are lots of little details which can help people feel comfortable and relaxed with their surroundings and fellow participants during a meeting. These can have a big impact on how well people access the discussion and participate.

- Provide regular toilet, drink and meal breaks (this will help everyone feel comfortable and refreshed, but is particularly important for people with diabetes, people who may be on drug regimes or who are pregnant).

- Cater for specific dietary needs.

- Provide water and snacks during the meeting.

- Schedule sensible working days, allow for the extra time that disabled people or parents with young children may need to get ready or travel, and for that fact that not everyone is physically able to work long hours (people will not be able to participate or communicate well if they are exhausted).

- Make arrangements for child-care or for flexible participation for parents.

- Ensure that your arrangements take account of participants' religious observances. Ask participants before the event what their needs are. This may include not working on certain days of the week or certain special days, scheduling break times to coincide with prayer times, providing quiet rooms for praying, providing access to water for ablutions, providing information on local external facilities, etc.

5 Planning and financing

Providing accessible information can be expensive, so budget for it at the start, even if your document or event is not specifically about disability issues.

For documents you will need to budget for:

- Braille
- audio cassette
- large print
- language translations,
- usual production costs (proof-reading, design or typesetting, printing).

For meetings you will also need to budget for:

- sign and other language interpretation
- personal assistants who may accompany disabled participants
- facilities, equipment or modifications to the venue.

Donors have a commitment to participatory work. Our experience with the CBR Review has shown that they do consider accessible information to be an essential element that is worth funding.

- Include accessibility in funding applications. Provide information on how you will be making your proposed work accessible and include requests for resources to cover this.

Providing accessible information and arranging for accessible meeting conditions can take more time. Remember to plan for these extra staff hours at the beginning of any project.

Do not forget about the financial implications for participants. Make sure they are aware early on what expenses they will be liable for, what payments (or per diem) the organisers will provide and what they (participants) can do if their financial situation makes it difficult for them to take part.

C

Learning from experience

Some of the most important points we learned about accessibility and participation include:

- Consult users and participants, especially disabled participants, well in advance to get their advice and information about their communication and participation needs.

- Insist on budgeting for accessibility at the start of every project. To say that a sign language interpreter cannot attend a meeting, as there is not enough money, is a violation of a deaf person's rights.

- Check the venue for every meeting well in advance and get proper advice from someone who knows about accessibility. Even if a venue claims to be accessible, it might not be when you look more closely.

- Leave plenty of time in your planning schedule for producing alternative formats and translations of documents. If it takes a month to write and print a written report, add another month to get it translated or Brailled.

- Create monitoring systems during meetings to assess how well you are doing on accessibility. Evaluate your practices after an event or at the end of a project to help improve accessibility in the future.

- Create an open, honest and understanding atmosphere, where nobody is afraid to ask for changes to be made and nobody is embarrassed by being asked to change something.

Improving our practice

True participation cannot begin to happen until accessibility is also addressed. Lack of specialist knowledge of accessibility issues is not a barrier to improving access to communication in all its forms. These guidelines give you an idea of where to start, and there is a wealth of advice available from national and local organisations of disabled people, and of course, from the users and participants of your particular document or meeting.

Achieving accessibility throughout a process can require extra planning, but the more we do it, the more it becomes a part of our everyday procedures, and the less special planning we will need to do. Integrating accessibility into our work will always cost money, even once we have embraced it in our work culture. Translation and Braille services do not come free, but the more experienced we become, the more able we will be to source local, cheaper services. Lack of resources does not have to be a barrier to accessibility – there is so much we can do that is not expensive, if we just give it a little thought.

Contact for further information:
Ingrid Lewis, Policy Officer (Diversity),
Research and Development Unit, SC UK London

November 2000

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Contacts for further information

This list contains details of just a few of the hundreds of agencies and websites that can provide information or point you in the direction of services in your town or country.

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) – UK

RNIB offers an extensive range of services and information. If you have access to the internet then their website http://www.rnib.org.uk/ is highly recommended. It is very comprehensive, covering all aspects of visual impairment, including accessible information. It also contains a database of relevant organisations around the world.

If you do not have internet access, you can contact RNIB's Customer Services for information on publications, equipment, games and information about transcription and library services, magazines, Braille, large print, tape, and publishing services for businesses and organisations.

RNIB Customer Services
PO Box 173
Peterborough PE2 6WS
UK

Telephone:	+44 (0)845 702 3153
Minicom:	+44 (0) 345 58 56 91
Fax :	+44 (0)1733 37 15 55
Email:	Customer services: UK customers - CServices@rnib.org.uk Overseas customers **-** exports@rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) – UK

RNID also provides a range of information, services and training. Their website http://www.rnid.org.uk contains many useful factsheets on all aspects of deafness, most of which can be downloaded. The site also has a large print option.

If you do not have internet access contact:

RNID
Head Office
19-23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL
UK
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7296 8000
Textphone: +44 (0)20 7296 8001
Fax: +44 (0)20 7296 8199
E-mail: helpline@rnid.org.uk

Centre for Accessible Environments – UK

C A E
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London SE1 2NY
UK
Minicom/Tel: +44 (0) 20 - 7357 8182
Fax: +44 (0)20 - 7357 8183
Email: info@cae.org.uk

CAE provides information and services relating to accessibility of the physical environment. Only some of their information publications are available free on their website, http://www.cae.org.uk/ Most publications, or articles from their journal “Access by Design”, need to be ordered. Please note that this site is very oriented to the UK, although its offers links to some European organisations, such as:

Institute of Independent Living – Sweden

Their website also includes a database of related disability and accessibility organisations from around the world, some of which may be able to offer advice or services to help you in your work on accessibility
http://www2.independentliving.temp.pi.se/donet/index2.html

British Council of Disabled People

If you are looking for disability organisations within Britain to consult about access issues, the BCODP has another database http://www.bcodp.org.uk/

BCODP
Litchurch Plaza
Litchurch Lane
Derby DE24 8AA
UK
Telephone: +44 (0)1332 295551
Fax: +44 (0)1332 295580
Minicom: +44(0)1332 295581
Email: general@bcodp.org.uk

Internet accessibility

There has not been space in this document to discuss accessibility of internet communication and information, but if this is an area of interest there are dozens of websites offering information. A general search of the word “accessibility” in most search engines will find you a list of web accessibility sites. However, start off by reading RNIB’s guidelines at http://www.rnib.org.uk/digital/hints.htm

Translation work

Save the Children UK has produced ***Guidelines for Translation***, which we recommend SC UK staff use when undertaking translations.

To obtain a copy contact:

Translations Officer
Development Dialogue Team
Save the Children UK
17 Grove Lane
London SE5 8RD
UK
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7703 5400 ext 2359
Fax: +44 (0)20 7793 7630
E-mail: dialogue@scfuk.org.uk