

**DISABILITY AND DISASTER  
RESILIENCE: ENSURING  
EQUALITY AND INCLUSION**

**SIDE EVENT AT THE COSP-15**

# **DISABILITY AND DISASTER RESILIENCE: ENSURING EQUALITY AND INCLUSION**

This proceedings report is developed by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled People (NCPEDP).

## **Documentation**

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# Table Of Contents

<b>Welcome Remarks</b> Niharika Das Programme Officer-Advocacy, National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled People (NCPEDP)	<b>03</b>
<b>Overview of the Side Event titled</b> Status of the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Inclusive education: South Asian perspective	<b>04- 05</b>
<b>Status of disability inclusion in disaster risk management: Indian perspective</b> Abhishek Kumar, NCPEDP-Javed Abidi Fellow	<b>06</b>
<b>Why promote disability inclusion in disaster risk management?</b> Dwi Ariyani, Regional Head of Programs Asia, DRF	<b>07</b>
<b>Barriers faced by persons with disabilities in disaster risk management with specific emphasis on the gender perspective</b> Maria Un, Indonesia Association of Women with Disabilities of the Province of South Sulawesi	<b>08- 09</b>
<b>Approaches to disability inclusive disaster risk management</b> Joe John George, Consultant UNICEF	<b>10</b>
<b>Closing Remarks</b> Arman Ali Executive Director, National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled People, New Delhi	<b>11</b>

## Welcome Remarks

*Niharika Das*

*Programme Officer Advocacy*

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Persons with disabilities are often more prone to be at risk of climate-related hazards and disasters, yet they continue to be neglected in policies, planning, and coordination across preparedness, response, and recovery. They are largely excluded from climate adaptation and mitigation decision-making and efforts, which can build individual and community resilience. There is also a general lack of awareness around the heightened vulnerability of persons with disabilities and how to meet their requirements.

The aim of this side event at the 15th session of the COSP is to understand the importance of Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management and the relevance of investing in Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience.

To work towards *Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience* and ensure *No one is left behind*, the principle of *Build Back Better* should be the guiding force.

## Overview of the Side Event

### *Disability and Disaster Resilience: Ensuring Equality and Inclusion*

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted by the General Assembly by its resolution 61/106 of 13 December 2006 and came into force on 3rd May 2008 upon the 20th ratification. Article 40 of the Convention states that “The State Parties shall meet regularly in a Conference of State Parties (COSP) to consider any matter concerning the implementation of the present Convention”. Since 2008, 14 sessions of the COSP have been held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. This year is the 15th session of the COSP.

Alongside the main sessions of the COSP, Side Events are organized which provide an excellent opportunity for the Member States, UN entities, and NGOs to discuss the themes of the COSP and other critical issues related to persons with disabilities.

As such, the National Centre on Promotion of Employment of Disabled People (NCPEDP) in collaboration with the Disability Rights Fund (DRF) and the World Institute on Disability (WID) is organizing a Side-Event on the said themes, ‘Participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience against natural disasters.’

Physical, communicational, attitudinal, and institutional barriers impede persons with a disability's recovery process. A lack of focus on the accessibility of humanitarian assistance, limited opportunities for economic development, livelihood and skills training, and loss of support and assistive devices- all contribute to the further marginalization of persons with disabilities and make them less resilient to the impacts of disasters and climate change. Persons with disabilities are often not counted within research, programming, resource allocation, and data collection, and neither do they participate in decision-making aimed at strengthening resilience and sustainability.

To cite an instance of lack of availability of data in terms of persons with disabilities, a Rajya Sabha question on ‘data on people with disabilities vaccinated and deceased due to Covid-19 pandemic in India’ states that as of 28th November 2021 only 8390 persons with disabilities have received the first dose of Covid-19 and 4018 have received both the doses of Covid-19 vaccine. With regards to the number of deaths, no disaggregated data on the number of persons with disabilities deceased due to Covid-19 is available. This is just one such instance.

### **Specific Objectives**

- Why promote disability inclusion in disaster risk management?
- The importance of disability inclusion in disaster risk management
- Barriers faced by persons with disabilities in disaster risk management
- Approaches to disability-inclusive disaster risk management
- Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
- Investing in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction for resilience

# Status of Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management: Indian Perspective

*Abhishek Kumar*

*NCPEDP-Javed Abidi Fellow on Disability*

India ranks 89 on the World Risk Index and is prone to disasters like drought, earthquakes, epidemics, extreme temperatures, floods, landslides, storms, wildfires, etc. And the mortality caused due to these disasters is also extremely high and persons with disabilities continue to be among the marginalized and most vulnerable sections.

In terms of inclusive disaster risk management, persons with disabilities are guided by certain legal principles in the form of laws and guidelines. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 under Sections 8, 24, and 25 details the responsibilities in terms of social security and healthcare measures to ensure inclusive disaster management activities. Further, the National Disaster Management Plan 2019 also talks about the availability of an up-to-date list of persons with disabilities at the local level. Thirdly, the Disability inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) Guidelines provide for the implementation of disability inclusion through accessible, inclusive design and construction, awareness creation, community-based disaster risk management, inclusive training resources, and monitoring systems for tracking implementation. However, in spite of these laws, gaps in the form of inadequate data and resource mapping, poor policies, planning, and strategies, poor adaptation of universal design principles, facilitation of accessibility including access to assistive technology, attitudinal barriers, lack of knowledge and capacity building and non-inclusive rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives continue to exist.

## Recommendations

- Vulnerability assessment studies and reports
- Inclusive multi-hazard robust early warning systems
- Build Forward Better based on the principle of Leave No One Behind
- Universally accessible response mechanism
- Vernacular and traditional architecture like Kath-Kuni
- Focus on capabilities than just rights
- Persons with disabilities to be included in the decision-making process
- Block/panchayat level disaster and environment action plans
- Data and evidence-based research and advocacy
- Inclusion of DiDRR in Institutional and Academic Curriculum

## Why promote disability inclusion in disaster risk management?

*Dwi Ariyani*

*Regional Head of Programs Asia, DRF*

According to the Office of the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), 2013, some notable data points include:

- 71% of persons with disabilities do not have an individual preparedness plan for natural disasters
- 13% of persons with disabilities have no one to help them evacuate
- 85% of persons with disabilities have not participated in any community disaster management and risk reduction processes in their communities
- 20% of persons with disabilities say that they would be capable of evacuating immediately in the event of a sudden disaster

Disability is often stigmatized leading to persons with disabilities not being seen as active participants in emergencies. Further, the intersectional ties of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, religion and other multiple identities increase their discrimination and marginalization. Women and girls with disabilities are particularly prone to violence during situations of conflict and natural disasters.

Experience from the field shows that persons with disabilities are often forgotten during risk assessment phases making them invisible when a disaster strikes. Those at increased risk are less likely to be consulted and included in the decision-making processes thereby impeding the understanding of their needs.

### **Recommendations**

- Facilitate meaningful participation of persons with disabilities at all levels of disaster risk governance as well as build the resilience of persons with disabilities
- Increase support to OPDs, particularly those from further marginalized sections, and build partnerships between OPDs and humanitarian actors on an equal basis to put real policy change on the ground
- Ensure the rights of all persons with disabilities are taken into consideration in an emergency setting to ensure no one is left behind

## **Barriers faced by persons with disabilities in disaster risk management with specific emphasis on the gender perspective**

*Maria Un*

*Indonesia Association of Women with Disabilities of the Province of South Sulawesi*

The lack of involvement of persons with disabilities especially women in planning, coordination, preparation, response, and recovery adds to one of the major barriers faced by people with disabilities in disaster risk management. This is compounded by the lack of disability disaggregated data. Inaccessible information and early warning systems make it difficult for persons with disabilities. There is also a general lack of awareness and sensitization among the community towards persons with disabilities.

Evacuation and post-evacuation processes for persons with reduced mobility, persons with psychological disabilities, and persons impacted by leprosy tend to be forgotten and ignored. The shelters made are inaccessible and unsafe places which put women and children at risk of violence and sexual harassment. The unavailability of assistive devices for persons with disabilities, medicines, and other needs related to their disabilities at the shelter, and the lack of counseling services exacerbate the barriers further. Additionally, there is no economic recovery program for persons with disabilities particularly women with disabilities.

## Recommendations

- The government must provide disaggregated data on persons with disabilities through the Washington Group of Questions
- Involvement of women with disabilities especially indigenous women across all stages of DRR
- Provision of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in disasters including mitigation, planning, response, and recovery including psychological services as well as physiotherapy and provision of assistive devices
- Information related to disaster management be made in accessible formats using local languages
- DRR training for persons with disabilities including their family members and caregivers
- awareness and sensitization of disaster response volunteers to build the right perspective on persons with disabilities
- post-disaster physical development to adopt universal design principles as well as ensure adequate gender representation in the policy-making process

## **Approaches to disability-inclusive disaster risk management**

*Joe John George*

*Consultant- UNICEF Kerala*

Strengthening emergency response capabilities with emphasis on persons with disabilities is key to disability-inclusive disaster risk management. Additionally, the materials and the modes of communication used should be accessible and available in vernacular languages including sign language. Audio messages in accessible formats for persons with visual impairment and videos with appropriate subtitling and sign language interpretation to be used.

Awareness and sensitization of key stakeholders including persons with disabilities to be done regularly.

### **Recommendations**

- functional sign language course for first responders
- mainstreaming disability-inclusive DRR into the existing programmes/projects/institutions
- training the first responders for rescuing people with disabilities
- producing inclusive and accessible information materials
- spatial mapping of persons with disabilities to their corresponding geographical vulnerabilities

## Closing Remarks

*Arman Ali*

*Executive Director*

*National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled People, New Delhi*

Physical, communicational, attitudinal, and institutional barriers impede persons with a disability's recovery process. A lack of focus on the accessibility of humanitarian assistance, limited opportunities for economic development, livelihood and skills training, and loss of support and assistive devices- all contribute to the further marginalization of persons with disabilities and make them less resilient to the impacts of disasters and climate change. Persons with disabilities are often not counted within research, programming, resource allocation, and data collection, and neither do they participate in decision-making aimed at strengthening resilience and sustainability.

Therefore, from today's discussion, we can understand that there is a need to promote disability inclusion in disaster risk management, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, and invest in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction for resilience.

To work towards *Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience* and ensure *No one is left behind*, the principle of *Build Back Better* should be the guiding force.