

## **Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities Thematic Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action**

### **Position Paper on the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**

#### **Background**

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is at its mid-term. To foster implementation of the Sendai Framework, UNDRR will convene a high-level meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in May 2023 where a political declaration portraying the current status and outlining the way forward for the next seven years will be adopted. The theme of the meeting is “Working Together to Reduce Risk for a Resilient Future”. The Sendai Framework recognized persons with disabilities as contributing stakeholders to DRR and resilience building. It stipulates inclusion as a guiding principle and calls for a people-centered approach taking agender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) also includes specific obligations on disaster risk reduction (DRR) for States and other duty bearers, especially in Art. 11 on Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies.

This paper has been developed as a collaborative effort by Stakeholders Group of Persons with Disabilities Thematic Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action.<sup>1</sup> The paper provides a summary of the current status of disability-inclusive DRR, and shares some recommendations to be considered in the Mid-Term Review political declaration.

#### **Persons with Disabilities and Sendai Framework: Where are we standing?**

Despite some progress, the recently released Midterm Review shows that reporting countries are not on track to realize the Sendai Framework by 2030<sup>2</sup>. The findings also indicate that while efforts towards disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction have been reported, the establishment and implementation of inclusive disaster risk reduction systems is still limited, and persons with disabilities are among the groups that are most often excluded from early warning and post disaster recovery. The report especially highlights that least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing states

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<sup>1</sup> The first version was drafted by CBM-Global Disability Inclusion, reviewed and finalized by the International Disability Alliance. The group wishes to thank Nino Gvetadze for her support to integrate feedback received from members.

<sup>2</sup> UNGA, 2023. Main findings and recommendations of the midterm review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Available at: <https://sendaiframework-mtr.undrr.org/publication/main-findings-and-recommendations-midterm-review-implementation-sendai-framework> (last accessed: 20 February 2023).

countries are disproportionately affected by disasters and their consequences, facing enormous challenges in achieving the goals of the Sendai Framework. Persons with disabilities are estimated to make up about 16% of the world's population – over 1.3 billion people<sup>3</sup> – with 80% of persons with disabilities living in the Global South<sup>4</sup>. Yet persons with disabilities, continue to be among those most impacted by disasters<sup>5</sup>. The situation is exacerbated for persons with diverse, intersecting identities experiencing intersectional discrimination resulting from the existing social inequalities and power relations. Similar trends are observed not only during natural hazard and climate-induced disasters, but in global health emergencies such as recent COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

Recent studies suggest that despite the increase in supportive policies and legislations related to disability-inclusive DRR, implementation remains slow and uneven across the regions, with most initiatives coming from non-state actors.<sup>7</sup> These initiatives are often reactive or project-based which raises concerns about their sustainability.<sup>8</sup> Participation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in DRR varies due to the layered challenges linked to the context and social structures, availability of resources to act, and support from mainstream stakeholders.<sup>9</sup>

On the contrary to the policy-level developments related to disability inclusion in DRR, there is limited reference to disability in country-specific policies and plans related to climate change adaptation.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, rights-based approaches are largely missing from policy and practice, with prevailing reference to persons with disabilities as “vulnerable” groups rather than as contributing stakeholders as per the Sendai Framework.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, persons with disabilities are more

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<sup>3</sup> WHO, 2023. [Fact Sheet on Disability and Health](#).

<sup>4</sup> WHO, 2022. Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240063600> (last accessed: 17 March 2023)

<sup>5</sup> [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#) (2019)

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Report by the [COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor](#),

<sup>7</sup> Gvetadze, N. & Pertiwi, P., 2022. Including Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Risk Reduction: A Research Study from Eight Countries of Africa, Asia and South/Central America. (Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, Centre for Disability in Development, Christian Blind Mission, International Disability Alliance, and Malteser International). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/including-persons-disabilities-disaster-risk-reduction-research-study-eight-countries-africa-asia-and-southcentral-america> (last accessed: 17 March 2023)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Sébastien Jodoin, Katherine Lofts, Amanda Bowie-Edwards, Laurence Leblanc, & Chloe Rourke, *Disability Rights in National Climate Policies: Status Report* (Centre for Human Rights & Legal Pluralism & International Disability Alliance, November 2022). Available at [https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/drcc\\_status\\_report\\_english\\_nov\\_2022\\_formatted.pdf](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/drcc_status_report_english_nov_2022_formatted.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

likely to be excluded from participation in community DRR activities.<sup>12</sup> Social exclusion along with lack of accessible infrastructure and risk information/early warning are reported as key contributors to the disproportionate impact of disaster events experienced by persons with disabilities.

Persons with psychosocial disabilities, especially individuals living in institutions, are particularly forgotten and often not considered in preparedness measures.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the use of detention and confinement is a standard response to disasters, the right to live independently in the community is not respected and inappropriate support is provided during response and recovery, which presents multiple barriers to safety and recovery.<sup>14</sup>

### **Recommendations for the Political Declaration**

#### **Priority 1. Understanding disaster risk**

##### **Disability data collection and disaggregation**

Gaps remain in data collection and utilization at the subnational and national levels, with very few countries and other actors reporting data disaggregated by sex, age and disability to the Sendai Framework monitor, the Sendai voluntary commitments and the UN Plan of Action on DRR for Resilience. This is despite disaggregation of data by disability being considered a key driver to achieving all four priorities of the Sendai Framework.

##### **Recommendations:**

- The data collection planning, collecting process and analysis must ensure participation and leadership of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in particular underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities including women, older persons, youth and children, Indigenous Peoples, deaf and hard of hearing persons, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities and persons with deaf-blindness.
- Systematically collect, report and use data disaggregated by disability as part of the national information systems related to disaster risk reduction and risk management using, as a minimum standard, the Washington Group Short Set of Questions and the Washington Group/UNICEF Child

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<sup>12</sup> CBM Global Disability Inclusion, International Disability Alliance, Pacific Disability Forum, 2022. Our Lessons: an approach to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction - based on consultation with people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific regions. Available at: <https://cbm-global.org/resource/our-lessons-disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction-report> (last accessed: 17 March 2023)

<sup>13</sup> CBM Global Disability Inclusion, International Disability Alliance, Pacific Disability Forum, 2022. People with Psychosocial Disabilities in Disaster Events. Available at: <https://cbm-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/people-with-psychosocial-disabilities-in-disaster-events-june-2022.pdf> (last accessed: 17 March 2023)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

functioning model, along with qualitative analysis to understand the key barriers, risks and disproportionate impact of disasters on persons with disabilities, with specific consideration of the existing data gaps related to the underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities.

- Widen and improve the use of disability data to better understand disaster risk, improve reporting and measurement of impact, and to facilitate evidence informed decision making.

### **Disability-informed risk analysis and disaster risk reduction**

Persons with disabilities experience adverse impact of climate change, biological hazards, pandemics, and other forms of hazards in more intense and in different ways leading to further exclusion and discrimination. In order to ensure inclusive planning and response, it is crucial to recognize, reflect and accommodate such experience in risk assessment efforts throughout all aspects of disaster risk prevention and reduction

### **Recommendations:**

- Greater attention is needed in all countries to strengthen understanding of new, emerging, and future risks, including the long-term impacts of climate change and the adverse impacts of rapid technological change and artificial intelligence on persons with disabilities within their diversity.
- Ensure disaster risk information including disability-informed risk analysis is available in accessible and easily understandable formats to ensure it is used in public and private sector decision-making.
- Ensure accessibility and disability-inclusion in all efforts to promote a culture of prevention and education on disaster risk through education curricula, professional training, advocacy campaigns, social media, and community mobilization.

## **Priority 2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk**

### **Meaningful participation**

The Sendai Framework adopts a whole of society approach for effective DRR policy and programming. This requires addressing challenges hindering meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in particular the underrepresented groups. Only by working *with* persons with disabilities and their representative organizations within their diversity, capacities, and exposure of communities and ecosystems may be understood, risks reduced, barriers eliminated, and resilience increased.

Governments must deliver on the Sendai Framework commitments and create accessible platforms and spaces for stakeholders to be systematically listened to and able to exert a meaningful influence over the entire process of disaster preparedness and prevention, planning, response, recovery, monitoring and evaluation.

**Recommendations:**

- Deliver on commitments to meaningfully engage persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in particular the underrepresented groups in all disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities at sub national, national, regional and global levels. This requires ensuring provision of relevant information in accessible formats including in national sign languages and easy-to-understand formats, and ensuring accessibility of input processes at all levels.
- Invest in mutually benefiting partnerships between organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and DRR actors and support capacity strengthening whereby OPDs can engage within the DRR work, support identification of key barriers through their lived experiences and be part of the decision-making.

**Ensuring adoption of whole of government approach**

Respective ministries or departments responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate action and Disability are often not connected. Natural hazards have the potential to exacerbate tensions and conflicts, with critical impacts on social protection and financial resource allocation.

Therefore, it is essential to adopt a whole of government approach to disability inclusive DRR ensuring continuous dialogue and exchange among all government sectors as well as maintaining sustainable mechanisms for whole of government decision-making and implementation. It is crucial to ensure inclusion of OPDs/representative organizations, disability departments or respective ministries in national and sub-national DRR platforms.

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure risk assessment, mitigation, disaster preparedness, and response happens across sectors with DRR as an outcome adopting an all of government approach with the participation of relevant state agencies including Disaster Risk Management, climate action and social welfare authorities, the private sector as well as civil society including persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
- Disability departments as well as organizations of persons with disabilities must also put disaster risk reduction policies and strategies in place.

**Priority 3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience****Investment and resource allocations**

The United Nations humanitarian appeals in response to extreme weather disasters rose by more than 800 per cent between 2000 and 2021. Since 2017, funder nations have met 54 per cent of these appeals on average, leaving an

estimated \$28 billion to \$33 billion shortfall. By 2030, the unavoidable economic losses due to climate change are projected to reach \$290 billion to \$580 billion.<sup>15</sup> Some 90 per cent of ODA is geared towards recovery, with only 10 per cent for prevention<sup>16</sup>. Additionally, very little money goes into disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction<sup>17</sup>. There is a need for a more balanced approach towards risk informed and inclusive development. Investment in inclusive prevention is more effective and economical efficient than reconstruction. All public and private investments and procurement need to incorporate disaster risk considerations and be in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, applying the twin-track approach to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

### **Recommendations:**

- To achieve the Sendai Framework commitments to disability inclusion, budget and resource allocations must be increased at all levels and across all government and non-government DRR programming.
- Scale up investments in disaster risk prevention and allocate appropriate financial resources for reasonable accommodation to enable participation of persons with disabilities to access mainstream DRR programs.
- Allocate budgets for specific DRR programs addressing the requirements of persons with disabilities such as access to assistive technology and devices.
- Align Climate adaptation and resilience-building and Disaster Risk Reduction at national and sub national levels and ensure that financing is used to leverage common objectives and promote whole of society approach.
- To track spending on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, apply the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Disability and DRR markers.

### **Priority 4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction**

#### **Multi-hazard early warning, disaster preparedness and response**

At-risk groups such as persons with disabilities, women and girls with disabilities, people in rural and remote areas, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced people, gender

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<sup>15</sup> [Footing the Bill: Fair finance for loss and damage in an era of escalating climate impacts \(openrepository.com\)](https://openrepository.com)

<sup>16</sup> UNGA, 2023. Main findings and recommendations of the midterm review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Available at: <https://sendaiframework-mtr.undrr.org/publication/main-findings-and-recommendations-midterm-review-implementation-sendai-framework> (last accessed: 20 February 2023).

<sup>17</sup> UNDRR, 2021. International Cooperation in Disaster Risk Reduction: Target F. Available at: <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/international-cooperation-disaster-risk-reduction-target-f> (last accessed: 6 March 2023)

and sexual minorities, youth and older persons are still often excluded from early warning, early action, response and post-disaster recovery<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, they are still disproportionately affected in disasters, not fully accounted for in emergency settings and conflict situations.

It is vital to ensure persons with disabilities have full access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communication and services in advance of crisis, during emergencies, and in post disaster reconstruction efforts by building forward, safer, accessible and greener. Recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster provides a unique opportunity to ensure principles of universal design are applied and the restoration is disaster safe and ecologically sustainable.

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure multi-hazard early warning, disaster preparedness and response are inclusive of and accessible to all persons with disabilities, including underrepresented groups through accessible risk information, accessible evacuation processes and access to humanitarian aid and recovery support programmes. Reconstruction of institutions and construction of new congregate facilities should be prohibited, and recovery and reconstruction investments made in accessible housing and community living instead.

**Health preparedness and social protection within DRR**

Persons with disabilities face a wide range of health inequities. Many persons with disabilities continue to die prematurely, have poorer health, and experience more limitations to their functioning<sup>19</sup>. Health systems play a vital role in society and having a resilient, prepared and inclusive health system is essential in a world that faces growing climate and other hazards. The Sendai Framework and the International Health Regulations [IHR 2005] together provide a basis for coherent action to facilitate building resilience and health security in communities and countries.

Investments should be made to develop disability inclusive and resilient health systems that are able to respond effectively to emergencies. Health preparedness requires specific planning to prevent institutionalization during and after disasters, as well as protocols for supporting the health and disability related needs of persons with disabilities to ensure that they are accommodated in the community, included in all response and recovery initiatives and never left behind.

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<sup>18</sup> See for example: [CBM-Inclusion-Advisory-Group-IAG-Our-Lessons-report-May-2022](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities: executive summary \(who.int\)](#)

Persons with disabilities should enjoy the same basic income security guarantees and access to essential healthcare as other members of society through national social protection floors without discrimination, sensitive to their specific support needs and respecting their dignity. Inclusive social protection systems can cover basic income security, adequate standard of living, health costs including (re)habitation, early intervention and assistive devices and additional disability related costs

### **Recommendations:**

- Essential health services should be inclusive for persons with disabilities and provision for assistive technology should be part of health preparedness plans
- Health Preparedness and Response Plans must include Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and should be inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, developed in close collaboration with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
- Adopt and implement appropriate Mental Health and Psychosocial Support measures in situation of risks and humanitarian emergencies. These measures must be delivered in an inclusive and non-discriminatory way by ensuring respect inherent dignity and personal autonomy of all persons with disabilities. A multi-sectoral approach needs to be adopted in the design, implementation and monitoring of all Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services in full compliance with the CRPD and other international human rights frameworks<sup>20</sup>;
- Strengthen existing social protection systems to be inclusive of all persons with disabilities and link them with early action, response and recovery so that persons with disabilities have the agency and can act to mitigate the impact of disasters and recover efficiently.

### **The way forward**

Highlighting the role of persons with disabilities and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as contributing stakeholders to disaster risk reduction and resilience building, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities calls for governments to accelerate implementation of the Sendai Framework, including adherence to its Guiding Principles, and to fulfil their legal obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

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<sup>20</sup> [Technical note: Linking Disaster Risk Reduction \(DRR\) and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(MHPSS\) - Practical tools, approaches and case studies - World | Relief Web](#)

Another IASC Information note on disability and inclusion in MHPSS will be published in March 2022



Moving forward, the following priorities are crucial to fulfil the commitments to disability inclusion made in Sendai:

1. Prioritize the development and implementation of fully inclusive strategies for disaster risk reduction (target E) and ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in all their diversity through their representative organizations in all aspects of disaster risk reduction and climate action for promoting universally accessible and inclusive preparedness, response, and recovery.
2. Enhance the use of disability data to improve understanding of disaster risk, reporting and measurement of impact, and facilitate informed decision making.
3. Introduce mandatory provisions for direct participation of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in disaster risk governance, related coordination mechanisms and decision-making, and institutionalize cross-sectoral coordination between all stakeholders for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and risk management.
4. Increase investments and ensure systematic resource allocation to fully mainstream disability inclusion across all DRR programs and practices in addition to investing in capacity strengthening and direct resourcing of organizations of persons with disabilities in recognition of their leadership and contribution to achieving the outcomes of the Sendai Framework.