



Interessenvertretung Selbstbestimmt
Leben in Deutschland



Including Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Risk Reduction

Position Paper

In this position paper, German Development and Disabled People's Organizations stress the need to mainstream disability in disaster risk reduction.

Disaster risk reduction was insufficiently included in the Millennium Declaration and absent from the MDGs despite the important impact it has on development and wellbeing of people. Persons with disabilities, who represent 15% of the world's population, are particularly vulnerable in situations of natural and man-made disasters, to consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, compared to the general population. However, they are largely excluded from disaster risk reduction as well as humanitarian response programs. Whereas disasters, humanitarian crisis and conflicts often cause disability.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), articles 11 and 32ⁱ, requires that persons with disabilities benefit from and participate in disaster relief, emergency response and DRR strategies.

Key recommendations

1. DRR strategiesⁱⁱ, climate resilience programmes and conflict prevention/mitigation policies should make disability a core, cross-cutting theme, which must be included in a post-2015 global development framework.
2. A post-2015 global development framework could draw on the Hyogo Framework for Action but must include goals, targets and indicators on disaster risk reduction and resilience that are inclusive of marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities.

3. Disability must be systematically taken-up across all aspects of the disaster management cycle. A prerequisite is to provide barrier-free access and information to all disaster prevention programmes. Awareness raising campaigns on the inclusion of persons with disabilities have to be carried out involving local Disabled People's Organisations and disability NGOs.
4. Disaster risk reduction must take into account the need for rehabilitation and follow-up services for persons with disabilities and people injured.
5. All children and women affected by disasters and emergencies must be ensured protection and barrier-free access to relief aid and reconstruction programmes; specific attention and support, if necessary, as well as the reestablishment of services (such as health and education) meant for everyone.
6. A post-2015 global development framework must take into account the knowledge and suggestions of persons with disabilities living in disaster prone countries, to make sure that goals, indicators and development policies are fully inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Key facts around disability and disaster

- Environmental, social and attitudinal barriers result in the circumstance that the needs of the 15 percent of the world's population with a disability are not met within disaster management responses. It is therefore crucial that disability-inclusive policies are included in all phases of disaster management events so as to ensure the full and equal fulfilment of human rights of persons with a disability.
- Disasters disproportionately place persons with disabilities and their families in vulnerable situations. Persons with disabilities experience increased problems due to separation from family, loss of assistive and mobility devices, and difficulties with accessing information.
- Persons with disabilities often live with their family and when disasters occur, family members first provide evacuation and assistance. In such situations, the whole family becomes more vulnerable with negative impacts on the household's capacity to cope with the disaster and the community as a whole.
- In the face of climate change, and in times of environmental or humanitarian disaster, the relative poverty of persons with disabilities, combined with problems of inaccessibility of relief services and low prioritization of disabled populations, may place persons with disabilities at greater likelihood of facing hardship, illness and deathⁱⁱⁱ.
- The rate of disability increases during an emergency due to direct trauma, illness from poor living conditions and the breakdown of health services, an increase in psychological stress and lack of rehabilitation services^{iv}. For every one person killed in a disaster, another three are injured or left with a permanent disability. Disability inclusion in emergency and disaster management reduces morbidity and mortality^v.
- Disasters and conflicts are among the main causes of disabilities; this strains community, society and government capacities to cope with the impacts of such extreme circumstances and challenges the development agenda.

- The Hyogo Framework for Action, though providing good guidance to government and civil society for efficient disaster risk reduction, does not include disability as a core cross-cutting issue, nor persons with disabilities and their representatives as key stakeholders and resources.

ⁱ Article 11 – “States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law,... all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters”. Article 32 – International Cooperation “a) Ensuring that international cooperation, including international development programmes, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities”.

ⁱⁱ Disaster risk reduction is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events. Resilience is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. Definitions are from UNISDR Terminology and Disaster Risk Reduction 2009.

ⁱⁱⁱ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2011). “Disability and the Millennium Development Goals. A Review of the MDG Process and Strategies for Inclusion of Disability Issues in Millennium Development Goal Efforts”,

^{iv} CBM International. (n.d.). *Inclusive Emergency Response*. Retrieved from http://www.cbm.org/index/Default_245472.php

^v WHO. *Disasters, Disability and Rehabilitation*, 2005. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/other_injury/en/disaster_disability.pdf