

Thematic brief – Sustainable Development Goals

Climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction – mainstreaming disability

Disaster and resilience as well as the impact of climate change on sustainable development were insufficiently included in the Millennium Declaration and absent from the MDGs despite the important impact they have on development and wellbeing of people. During the last decade, an increasing number of studies have drawn attention to the fact that climate change and competition for natural resources are increasing the risk of natural disasters as well as conflicts. While the economic losses of disasters amount to up to one trillion dollars, the funds invested in disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention are estimated at merely 5% of the global funding for emergency response and recovery. During the post-2015 consultation process, an increased emphasis on climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) has become evident and it is crucial that these issues are addressed in the post-2015 sustainable development goals and framework¹.

Persons with disabilities are often overlooked throughout the disaster management cycle and especially during relief operations; they are seldom considered as important actors in climate change discussions or actions, even though they are often more vulnerable during disasters, as well as conflicts and displacement². The UNISDR survey found that 70% of persons with disabilities participating said that they had no personal preparedness plan and only 17% knew about any disaster management plan in their community³.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), articles 11 and 32⁴, requires that persons with disabilities benefit from and participate in disaster relief, emergency response and DRR strategies.

Key recommendations

1. Climate resilience programs, DRR strategies⁵ policies should make disability a core, crosscutting theme and must be included in the post-2015 sustainable development goals.
2. A post-2015 sustainable development framework could draw on the Hyogo Framework for Action but should include goals, targets and indicators on disaster risk reduction and resilience that are inclusive of marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities.
3. Disability must be systematically taken-up across all aspects of the disaster management cycle and provision made for disability awareness and inclusion training of personnel, involving local Disabled People's Organizations and disability NGOs.
4. Disaster relief programs and policies as well as humanitarian interventions in disaster situations must take into account the need for rehabilitation and follow-up services for persons with disabilities and people injured, in order to prevent and reduce possible disabilities. Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is well placed for consultation and involvement in both planning and intervention.
5. All children affected by emergencies and conflicts must be ensured protection and access to relief aid and reconstruction programs; this includes children with disabilities who might need specific attention and measures during periods of unrest and upheaval.
6. A post-2015 sustainable development framework should take into account the knowledge and suggestions of persons with disabilities living in disaster prone countries, in low elevation coastal areas or small island states, to make sure that goals, indicators and development policies are fully inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Key principles for inclusive climate change and disaster reduction policies

- **Participation** – persons with disabilities must be active participants in planning, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian actions (including cluster sectors), and climate change policies; barriers to active participation must be removed and capacity-building programs enhanced.
- **Twin-track approach** – ensuring that persons with disabilities have full access to relief operations, disaster risk reduction policies and climate change programs by removing barriers such as inaccessible communication and information, stigma and prejudice, physical access and, at the same time, addressing specific requirements through more individualized support for persons with multiple disabilities or high dependency needs⁶.
- **Comprehensive accessibility and universal design** are important concepts that should be incorporated in humanitarian action policies, ensuring relief operations and structures are fully accessible for all, including persons with disabilities⁷.
- The immediate post-emergency phase and early re-construction period should be driven by the “**build back better**” principles, stressing the opportunity to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities through sound and inclusive investment and decision-making processes⁸.
- **Non discrimination** is one of the main principles of the CRPD, and should underpin all policies related to disaster response, climate change policies and actions and DRR; it requires a proactive approach aimed at identifying and removing exclusion factors which prevent persons with disabilities having access to relief services and programs on peace and conflict mitigation.
- **Coordination and collaboration** – disaster risk reduction and climate change involve a large variety of stakeholders who all need to coordinate their efforts to ensure that disability is included in programs, policies and bilateral agreements as a core cross-cutting theme.

Key facts around climate change and disaster effects on persons with disabilities

- 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. For example, research indicates that the mortality rate among persons with disabilities was twice that of the rest of the population during the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami⁹.
- Persons with disabilities often live with their family and when disaster occurs, it is family members who 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. This makes disability inclusive early warning systems crucial, as it gives more time for persons with disabilities and their families to evacuate to safe places before the disaster hits.
- 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 death¹⁰.
- 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 services¹¹. 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 mortality¹².

- Disasters and conflicts are among the main causes of disabilities; this stretches community, society and government capacities to cope with the impacts of such extreme circumstances and challenges the development agenda.
- The SPHERE guidelines treat the inclusion of persons with disabilities as a crosscutting issue. Key actions for disability inclusion are outlined in these international standards for humanitarian response¹³.
- 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 crosscutting issue, nor persons with disabilities and their representatives as key stakeholders and resources.
- Environmental, social and attitudinal barriers result in the needs of the 15% of the world's population with a disability not being 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 fulfillment of human rights of persons with a disability.

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Inclusive emergency response in the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan

CBM has been working with local partners in the Philippines for over 30 years. When the typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013, CBM Emergency Response Unit deployed a rapid needs assessment team only a few days after and initiated early relief activities together with local partners.

To ensure a solid ongoing humanitarian response, CBM followed a twin-track approach:

- Working with local organizations of persons with disabilities to make sure to answer immediate needs. Through supporting persons with disabilities they themselves bring a great help to the whole community.
- Coordinating with international organizations such as the UN, HelpAge International and Handicap International to make sure responses are harmonious and efficient.
- Setting up an 'Ageing and Disability Task Force' to have a key role in ensuring persons with disabilities and older people's access mainstream services, as well as receiving the specialist help they need.

Getting back on their feet again

Flora Piel is the mother of three children. Jesson and Jeboy are two teenagers that have communication challenges and reduced mobility. They require full-time care and Flora, a single mother, supports them alone. This is how they lived through the days when the typhoon hit their island:

"When the typhoon came I was very afraid for my children. I knew I had to get them to safety. They cannot talk and can only walk very short distances. I was afraid that if the water came, they would die", she said.



The evacuation center was one kilometer from her house and Flora had to get her three children there by herself.

"The only way was to carry one child at a time. My neighbor came with me and we took Jesson to the centre first. He stayed there with my neighbor while I came home and got Jeboy. When I came back the second time the water was already starting to rise. I was concerned that my children would not be safe," she said.

Jesson and Jeboy were very upset during the typhoon and must have been terrified during the evacuation.

"At the evacuation center, the two kept running around. It was very hard for me to control them. They did not understand what was happening ... I could see they were very scared and confused. My neighbors and other people were helping me. Everyone was very kind."

House, clothes – all belongings lost

The family lives in Barotak Viejo, a small town next to Iloilo and Concepcion on the Island of Paney. Flora has lost everything, from her house to her clothes and belongings. To rebuild the house while having to care full time for her three children will be a challenge, but Flora is trying to keep positive. "I am grateful to God that my children survived." "And look" she says proudly "my chickens survived the typhoon too. My neighbor carried them to the evacuation center."

Now it is time to get back on their feet. Flora is one of the families that receive [CBM support to recover from the typhoon](#). The Association of Disabled Persons in Iloilo (ADPI) was a logical partner with which to team up for the relief and distribution, as they know the area well and understand the population of the municipality. Concepcion municipality has a population of around 45,000 people and more than 6,000 have a disability. CBM and APDI have been providing support by distributing food and survival supplies to 3,000 families, including more than 1,000 families with persons with disabilities. The results of a post-distribution monitoring survey suggest that the biggest focus now for families who received food and survival supplies is for them to repair their houses and regain their livelihood. CBM is working closely with its partner APDI and other relief agencies to see how best and realistically these issues can be addressed.



References

¹ UN. (2013). “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”. Report of the Secretary-General. A/68/202.

UN System Task Team on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda. “Disaster Risks and Resilience. Thematic Think Piece”, UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and World Meteorological Association (WMO), 2012.

Overseas Development Studies (ODI). “Disaster risk management in post-2015 policy frameworks: Forging a more resilient future”, Briefing paper 75, June 2012.

² Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children. “Disabilities among refugees and conflict affected populations”, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, New York, 2008.

³ <http://www.unisdr.org/2013/iddr/#survey>

⁴ 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 programs, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities”.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Adapted from DFID report on Disability, Poverty and Development, where the twin-track approach was proposed as an inclusive development approach. DFID. (2000). “Disability, Poverty and Development”, Department for International Development, United Kingdom.

⁷ Universal design and comprehensive accessibility refers to building programs and policies, relief intervention and conflict prevention/mitigation processes that are designed so that all groups in society can access them. More on universal design can be found at The Center for Universal Design website at: http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/newweb/about_ud/udprinciples.htm

⁸ The rehabilitation and reconstruction phases after a disaster provide a good starting point for building a better and a more inclusive society for all. If disability is taken into account in reconstruction of physical infrastructures (schools, hospitals, clinics, public buildings, roads etc), in community planning, in workforces, in monitoring and evaluation, a solid ground for a more equitable society can be built.

⁹ United Nations. (2013). Panel Discussion on Disaster Resilience and Disability: ensuring equality and inclusion. United Nations Headquarters, October 10, 2013.

¹⁰ 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”,

¹¹ CBM International. (e.d.). *Inclusive Emergency Response*. Retrieved from http://www.cbm.org/index/Default_245472.php

¹² WHO. *Disasters, Disability and Rehabilitation*, 2005. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/other_injury/en/disaster_disability.pdf

¹³ Sphere Standards, 2011, available at: <http://www.sphereproject.org/>