

May 2024

# Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR): Guidance for organisations of persons with disabilities



# Introduction

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This guidance note provides an overview of the key issues relating to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disability inclusion (DI). It highlights key considerations for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) working on this topic.

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All links were correct at the time of publication.

## What is DRR?

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- DRR refers to the actions taken before a hazard or disaster occurs to reduce the impact of such an event.
- DRR aims to avoid, lessen, or transfer the adverse effects of natural hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, floods, droughts and cyclones, through activities and measures for prevention, mitigation, and preparedness.
- Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) aims to enable persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs) to become active agents of change in their communities.
- Persons with disabilities often have more direct experience of dealing with risk than persons without disability, in relation to disasters. They have important contributions to make to DRR plans and processes.

# Key terminology

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- **A disaster** is a serious disruption that occurs when a threat or natural hazard and existing vulnerabilities compound, leading to human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.
- **Disaster risk reduction** aims to prevent new, reduce existing, and manage residual, disaster risk. This contributes to strengthening resilience and the achievement of sustainable development.
- **Disaster risk management (DRM)** is the application of DRR policies and strategies to prevent new disaster risk, reduce existing disaster risk, and manage residual risk. This contributes to strengthening resilience and reducing disaster losses.
- **Preparedness** is the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organisations, communities, and individuals, to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of disasters.
- **Recovery** is the restoration or improvement of livelihoods and health, as well as economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets, systems, and activities, of a disaster-affected community or society.
- **Resilience** is the ability of individuals, households, communities, cities, institutions, systems, and societies to prevent, resist, absorb, adapt, respond, and recover when faced with a wide range of disaster risks.

# Key Facts

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- Persons with disabilities are **up to four times more likely to die or be impacted during a disaster than those without disabilities.**
- Persons with disabilities are **not yet systematically included in disaster preparedness efforts.** Up to 85 per cent of persons with disabilities have never participated in DRR activities, and do not have information communicated to them in an accessible way. <sup>1</sup>
- Despite persons with disabilities being more likely to have taken action to prepare for disasters, **they are more likely to be excluded from participation in DRR and preparedness efforts.**



## **Disability inclusive DRR**

- **Removing barriers to participation and improving access reduces risk.** This is not only for persons with disabilities. Improved access benefits all and reduces risk for all. As such, removing barriers is an essential part of good DRR.
- **Persons with disabilities have important lived experience** of overcoming barriers, and have diverse perspectives and capacities to bring to DRR activities and systems.
- When persons with disabilities are included in DRR activities, **the risk they face can be reduced and the whole community benefits** from being more informed and prepared in the event of a disaster.

# International frameworks on DRR

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- [The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) guarantees equal rights for persons with disabilities. Article 11 of the CRPD mandates that states parties must do all in their power to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of emergencies or risks.
- [The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction \(2015-2030\)](#) is the key international framework for DRR. It was the first disaster-focused international framework to focus on disability inclusion. Sendai aligns with Article 11 of the CRPD and mandates the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster resilience-building and represents a cultural shift from viewing persons with disabilities as 'vulnerable' to considering them as 'active contributors' in DRR.
- [The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) recognizes the urgent need to reduce the risk associated with disasters. There are specific opportunities to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through reducing disaster risk. [SDG#4](#) (education), [SDG#9](#) (building resilient infrastructure) and [SDG#11](#) (cities), reaffirm the interrelationship between disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. [The SDGs](#) mention disability in several goals but lack specific targets for climate action ([SDG#13](#)).

# Impact of disasters on persons with disabilities

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Disasters can increase existing inequalities and create new challenges, such as:

- **Evacuation challenges:** Disasters such as hurricanes, floods, or fires can necessitate rapid evacuation. Persons with physical disability, visual or hearing disability, or reliance on medical equipment, face difficulties escaping danger zones at short notice. Accessible evacuation plans and training become crucial in these situations.
- **Infrastructure breakdown:** Disasters damage critical infrastructure, disrupting elevators, ramps, and transportation systems that many persons with disabilities rely on for daily living. This can make it harder to access essential services, food, and medication.
- **Health risk:** Disasters can exacerbate health conditions (including mental health conditions) that persons with disabilities may already manage. Access to regular medical care can also be disrupted during disasters.
- **Social isolation:** Disasters can displace people from their homes and communities, scattering support networks. This can be particularly detrimental for persons with disabilities who may rely on caregivers or assistance for daily tasks. Social isolation can lead to depression, anxiety, and a decline in overall well-being.
- **Economic strain:** Disasters can disrupt agricultural production, damage livelihoods, and reduce job opportunities. This can disproportionately impact persons with disabilities who already face increased challenges in accessing employment due to societal barriers.

It is important to remember that the impact of disasters on persons with disabilities varies depending on individual support needs and context. However, by understanding the general risks, OPDs and communities can take steps to **ensure everyone is included in DRR, preparedness and mitigation processes.**





## Taking action

All DRR actors should consult with OPDs to identify and address specific barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities throughout DRR activities.

**OPDs can play an important role in ensuring persons with disabilities are included** in national plans and actions on DRR. To ensure OPDs are prepared for what to do as a collective in the event of a disaster, use [CSIA's 'Disaster Management and Recovery Toolkit Supporting and Encouraging the Role of Community-Based Organisations'](#)

Other ideas include:



### Awareness raising and capacity building

- **Organise workshops and campaigns** within your OPD and community to educate persons with disabilities on DiDRR. Support persons with disabilities and other OPDs to join the events by ensuring they have the right information, and the events are accessible.
  - **Provide transport** and other accessibility supports for persons with disabilities to attend DRR activities.
  - **Use accessible communications in multiple formats** to meet different needs (for example, sign language interpreters, captions, pictorial forms).
- **Facilitate capacity building and refresher training on DiDRR** with actors, including government.



## Participation and influence

Some countries, such as Indonesia, have OPDs that focus on DRR – a good practice that could be replicated elsewhere. OPDs, who know their community and geographical area, can become valuable resources in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

- **Establish a local OPD DiDRR focal point** with whom local authorities and actors can liaise. OPDs can be involved in/responsible for:
  - Community mapping of people who may require additional support
  - Disaster action planning for persons with disability (including evacuation, accessibility of safe spaces)
  - Local resource mapping and utilisation
  - Inclusive early warning systems design and implementation
  - Assistive device allocation and distribution
- **Collaborate with local government, community, and DRM actors** at all stages of the disaster cycle (preparedness, response, recovery).
  - **Ensure disability data are collected and used in disaster planning.** Official disability data are often unavailable at the local level but are essential during a disaster. OPDs know their own communities and may have access to essential local data that can be used in disaster preparedness and response.
  - **Provide accessible evacuation procedures,** such as how to guide people who are blind or have low vision, or who have mobility impairments.
  - Advocate for all **evacuation centres** to be constructed using [universal design](#) or be retrofitted for accessibility.
  - **Conduct drills or simulations** with the active participation of persons with disabilities, during which accessibility is specifically checked.
  - **Create multi hazard early warning systems with a combination of both visual and auditory warning strategies** and clear language (which also benefits the whole community).





## Policy advice

- Engage with local and national government agencies to **ensure representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes**, such as the development of a national action plan on disaster risk reduction.
- **Advise on accessibility** in all DRR policies and actions, including minimum standards and checklists for all DRR communications to be delivered in an array of accessible formats (for example, with sign language, in Easy Read formats).
  - **Ensure evacuation facilities** and activities are fully accessible, with accessible communications and signage, sanitation, buildings, equipment, and adequate and accessible transport provision.
  - Ensure persons with disabilities are included in the design and selection process of **multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS)** and that these messages can be received, understood, and acted upon by persons with disabilities.
  - Improve the accessibility of **aid distribution sites** during post-disaster contexts, by embedding Universal Design standards to reduce barriers to accessing essential items.
- **Analyse existing DRR policies and identify gaps** regarding accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities. Communicate findings to local and national government.
- **Develop policy recommendations** and position papers advising on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.



## Community preparedness

- **Conduct disability data collection activities to ensure persons with disabilities are known.** Disaggregate disability data by gender, age, and disability type, to better understand who is engaged and benefitting from DRR activities, and who is not. Collect needs assessment data that are disaggregated by disability. Use the [Washington Group Questions Extended Set](#) (with psychosocial questions).
- **Conduct risk assessments** to identify specific risks faced by persons with disabilities in the community during disasters.
- **Organise training sessions** on preparedness and coping mechanisms for community leaders, persons with disability, and caregivers.

# Resources and further information

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- CBM Global. (2019). [Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction \(iDRR\) application.](#)
- CBM Global et al. (2022). [Organisations of Persons with Disabilities: Making a Difference in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.](#)
- CBM Global IAG (2022). [Our Lessons: disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction report.](#)
- NAD, NUDIPU & FEDOMA. (2017). [Disaster Risk Reduction: Disability inclusion and disaster risk: principles and guidance for implementing the Sendai Framework.](#)
- Nossal Institute & CBM Global. (2017). [Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction: Experiences of people with disabilities in Vanuatu during and after Tropical Cyclone Pam, and recommendations for humanitarian agencies.](#)
- Villeneuve, M., Abson, L., Yen, I., & Moss, M. (2020). [Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness \(P-CEP\) Workbook: A conversation guide used by people with disability to tailor emergency preparedness planning to their individual support needs.](#)

More DiDRR resources can be found on [DID4All](#) and [Collaborating 4 Inclusion, DiDRRN.](#)

## Notes

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- 1 UNISDR. (2013). [Living with Disability and Disasters](#)