

The GEF Small Grants Programme Disability Rights Advocacy Fund and Disability Rights Fund Pacific Disability Forum

Inclusive Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation Policies and Programs

A New Perspective on Disability

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a new human rights treaty that promotes dignity and equality for all persons with disabilities through the enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms.

CRPD Article 11 (on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies) calls upon States Parties to take “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.”



The CRPD requires a significant shift in thinking. Rather than considering persons with disabilities as objects of charity, rehabilitation or special services, the treaty draws on a ‘social model’ approach to assert persons with disabilities as subjects and rights-holders. Persons with disabilities, like all other people, are a normal part of all communities, have rights, and must participate in and benefit from development. Governments are mandated to identify and remove the barriers within society that violate the rights of persons with disabilities, including:

Attitudinal barriers: When persons with disabilities are labeled as ‘less able’, abnormal or ‘special’, they are denied their dignity and potential. Social practices and traditional beliefs stigmatize persons with disabilities and can lead to rights violations where they are denied access to food, education, work, independent decision-making, and justice. Persons with disabilities may be left out of disaster preparedness planning, resulting in solutions that do not meet their needs.

Environmental barriers: Physical barriers in the natural or built environment prevent access and affect opportunities for participation. Inaccessible communication systems deny access to information and knowledge and opportunities to participate in decision-making or in matters that affect their lives. Persons with disabilities may be hardest hit in times of disaster because of their badly constructed housing, the disruption to their family’s or own livelihoods, unfriendly transportation and communication systems, and lack of accessible shelters.

Institutional barriers: Many laws, policies, strategies, or practices discriminate against persons with disabilities. The lack of accurate information about persons with disabilities -- their numbers and the environmental barriers they face -- poses a challenge to inclusive disaster planning and relief.

For persons with disabilities, especially in rural or remote areas in the Pacific region, the impact of climate change can be especially devastating because of attitudinal, environmental, and institutional barriers. On the next page are seven practices to consider for disability inclusive development when working on climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

Good Practices for Disability Inclusive Approaches

1. Include persons with disabilities in country development processes, strategies, plans, and programs at national and local levels

Since persons with disabilities are not consulted or represented in the development of policies and plans, their needs are often overlooked. Engaging disabled peoples organizations as key stakeholders in climate change adaptation policies and programs should be in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

TIP: Strengthen the capacity and resources of DPOs to enable and encourage their participation and engagement.

Including persons with disabilities in national and local level processes must take into account some unique challenges. Savina Nongebatu, President of the People with Disabilities Solomon Islands, explains, “We struggled with translations of complex concepts to Pidgin language. We wanted to ensure gender balance as well as consider different needs related to age differences and impairments. Where possible, a project officer meets with the community in advance to explain the workshop and project objectives and identify, with the community, the kinds of participants who might benefit. Using trainers who are persons with disabilities enhances our credibility.”

2. Include persons with disabilities in community projects

Persons with disabilities are among the poorest of the poor within a community and typically do not have access to education or other resources and are often left out of decisions affecting their lives. Including persons with disabilities in community interventions for climate change adaptation could enhance their livelihoods and quality of life. As a start, consider how persons with disabilities could participate in projects related to food security and food production; water, sanitation, and hygiene; and energy programs in rural and urban areas.

Ipul Powaseu, the Chair of the Papua New Guinea Assembly of Disabled Persons said, “Displacement of communities affected by the rising sea levels poses a challenge to those whose livelihood depends on the sea. Persons with disabilities are especially at risk especially if they are forced to move and adapt to an agriculture based economy, which require acquiring new skills, building new relationships, and owning land.”



3. Specify disability as an element in baseline surveys and situational analyses

Disability affects how individuals and their families experience development. Their exclusion from communities and public services mean they tend to be invisible in standard community assessment processes. Their capacities and needs therefore remain unaccounted for and subsequent activities miss their participation. To promote inclusion, specify disability as a theme for investigation during standard baseline surveys and situational analyses.

TIP: Strengthen national information systems and use participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments to collate information on persons with disabilities and to identify existing risks.

4. Disaggregate data to include numbers of persons with disabilities

Evidence forms the basis of plans and evaluations and helps identify and explain areas of most need. Such plans benefit from establishing processes that record data that is specific to persons with disabilities on a regular basis.

“People with disabilities are often not identified before, during, and after an emergency. Lack of disaggregated data and systematic identification of people with disabilities results in their ‘invisibility’ during risk and needs assessments, including those carried out during the recovery phase. ... If unidentified and unregistered, people with disabilities also fail to receive a range of services, including their basic entitlements to food, water, shelter, and clothing.” (WHO Guidance Note on Disability and Emergency Risk Management for Health, 2013)

5. Raise awareness of disability issues within communities and identify local champions

Raising awareness on the social model of disability is key to successful inclusion. Creating positive attitudes toward disability makes a difference in how persons with disabilities are viewed as staff, partners, and stakeholders. Persons with disabilities may be shut-in or isolated in some areas, making it difficult to reach out and consult with them. In some contexts, marginalized groups among the disability community may be more disadvantaged. Women with disabilities, children and young people with disabilities, people with psychosocial disabilities, people with intellectual disabilities, albinos, little people, or the Deafblind may experience more discrimination and exclusion than other people with disabilities. Ensure that the community groups and national level organizations you work with include the most marginalized.

Rajive Raturi, Director of the Disability Rights Initiative of the Human Rights Law Network reflected, “Being inclusive and transparent in our processes helped in our outreach and networking with our constituency. At the beginning, we needed to better manage our consultations because the discussions directly affected people who have been excluded from the wider society. Creating a space where different views can be heard was an effective way to empower marginalized groups.”

6. Make use of skilled and experienced persons with disabilities

Lack of experience in disability doesn't have to be a barrier in your work. Persons with disabilities make excellent advisors if they can participate. Setting up an advisory committee of persons with disabilities to guide planning and development can provide huge benefits, both for the communities and persons with disabilities. Training and orienting humanitarian staff and emergency teams to priority disability issues and needs could help to sensitize staff and volunteers during an emergency.

7. Design and implement accessible and inclusive warning systems, information, and physical support systems for emergency and disaster risk management

Many persons with mobility issues may be unable to run or walk to a shelter. Early warning systems may not be audible or visible to persons with sensory disabilities. Once in a shelter, the facilities may be inaccessible for daily survival. Consulting with persons with disabilities during the preparation for a disaster, as well as during the recovery stage, can help them to reduce the impact of the disaster and stress.

Access to Information

Disability Rights Fund grantees, the Federation of Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) Sitakund and Coastal DPO Alliance are actively reaching out to persons with disabilities in rural and vulnerable communities in Bangladesh to raise awareness about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which Bangladesh ratified in 2007. The Federation targets hill and coastal regions, as well as island communities in the Bay of Bengal, which are reachable only by boat.

The coastal regions experience unpredictable storm surges, devastating cyclones, and regular flooding. Small-scale farming and fishing activities have been adversely affected by rising sea levels and increased salinity of the paddy fields. Since it is common for persons with disabilities to provide support to their families in the rural villages by winnowing rice or weaving fishing nets, the devastation of these activities has impacted their livelihoods.

In the rural and remote coastal areas of the Division, where there is limited access to services and poor road infrastructure, little is known about the situation of persons with disabilities. To combat their isolation, radio is used as a means of gathering and sharing information. Radio sets are relatively inexpensive, and battery operated radios can be used in remote areas where electricity is unreliable. Using radio also gives persons with disabilities a voice, enabling them to share their knowledge and experiences and helping them acquire practical information to improve their lives.



In rural areas particularly affected by cyclones and storm surges, community radio is used as an early warning system. According to the United Nations Secretariat for the CRPD, “Common experience reveals that persons with disabilities are more likely to be left behind or abandoned during evacuation in disasters and conflicts due to a lack of preparation and planning, as well as inaccessible facilities and services and transportation systems.”

Sitakund Federation aims to improve access to information for persons with disabilities and their families through early warning systems using radio or raising a red flag in case of an emergency, signaling people to move to a shelter. Vashkar Bhattacharjee, Program Manager for the Federation says, “Access to information is critical for persons with disabilities who are often isolated from the news that impact their own lives. Increased communication can also help us to learn more about the situation they face in remote villages.”

Indonesia and Disaster Risk Reduction

Since Indonesia's ratification of the CRPD in October 2011, attention to disability rights by government has increased – pressured by the advocacy efforts of disabled persons organizations (DPOs). Ratification marked a significant political and social milestone in this fourth most populous country in the world with a population of 20 million people with disabilities.

Implementation will also require a strong commitment by government to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully recognized as rights-holders. A National Coalition, supported by DRF and DRAF, has advocated for the drafting of a new national law based on the CRPD.

The Yogyakarta Provincial government, after consultations with DPOs, adopted new regulations based on the CRPD. This is especially significant in the province that is home to Mount Merapi, the active volcano that destroyed the lives and livelihood of thousands of villagers in 2006 and 2010. Census figures show that the number of persons with disabilities increased by 73% after the disaster of 2006.

One of the six regulations that was passed deals with "Accessibility on Disaster Risk Reduction." According to Yogyakarta resident, Risnawati Utami, the founder of OHANA and chair of the Indonesian National Consortium for Disability Rights:

We DPOs have been invited to work in partnership with the government on national and local policies.

At the grassroots level, we want to make sure that we create policies and programs that apply to us if and when disaster strikes, as it has with Merapi's eruption and earthquake.

Grassroots voices from the villages and rural areas need to be heard. Our concerns and solutions must be integrated into local level disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation efforts.



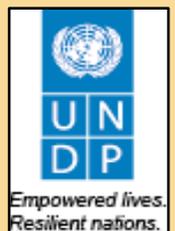
The **Disability Rights Advocacy Fund and Disability Rights Fund** supports Disabled Persons Organizations in the developing world to take the lead in advocating for the human rights of persons with disabilities at local and national levels, utilizing the mechanisms of the convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities.

www.disabilityrightsfund.org
www.drafund.org



Established in 1992, the year of the Rio Earth Summit, the **GEF Small Grants Programme** embodies the very essence of sustainable development by "thinking globally acting locally". By providing financial and technical support to projects that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing people's well-being and livelihoods, SGP demonstrates that community action can maintain the fine balance between human needs and environmental imperatives.

sgp.undp.org



Pacific Disability Forum is a regional peak body that works in partnership with Disabled Persons Organizations in the Pacific region. Their aim is to build the capacity of these organizations and improve the lives of persons with disabilities in the Pacific through advocacy.

pacificdisability.org

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