



Launch of International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

By

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President of Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation

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Invited guests, ladies, gentlemen and children

A special ***bula vinaka*** to all persons with disabilities in Fiji, some are here today, as we ^{are} about to witness together the launching of this historical and auspicious occasion.

This year the UNISDR turns its focus on the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR), on the 13th of October, for some one billion people around the world who live with some form of disability. The World Health Organisation (WHO), states that persons living with disabilities represent one-fifth of the world's population, who still have no significant representation in the planning processes to reduce disaster risks, prevent disasters or build resilient societies and communities.

During earthquakes and tsunamis or other natural disasters, persons with disabilities are always neglected in disaster prone parts of the world because many of those who died were unable to leave their beds or failed to comprehend in time the need to escape.

Persons living with disabilities are often doubly vulnerable to disasters, not only because most of them live in extreme poverty but they have limited access to education, health care, shelter, food and work before crisis strikes. All these are driving issues that leads to the upcoming International Day of Disaster Reduction (IDDR) on the 13th October, 2013.

The IDDR is a mode of making disability visible within our midst during the time of disaster. Persons with disabilities are often invisible-sometimes literally hidden away by their families. Both governments and aid agencies often do not know of their existence and needs. The lack of inclusion and participation in disaster risk reduction processes, means that the need and possible contributions of persons living with disabilities are often overlooked by planners.

The IDDR theme for this year of *“People with Disability and Disasters”* comes to our shores at an appropriate time when the government of the day have shown total engagement and commitment in making disability visible in this beloved nation.

The completion of the review of all existing disability legislation in the middle of this year and the formulation of a new disability legislation will definitely change and alter the uncertainties and anxieties of persons living with disabilities in Fiji during trying times like disasters. After Fiji signed the UN Convention on the Right for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in June 2010, all the ground work had been done for the last 2 years by reviewing all existing legislations relating to disability in Fiji with the ultimate formulation of the 2013 Disability Decree which captured most of thematic articles highlighted in the CRPD.

In the coming weeks, we hope to receive the final endorsement from Cabinet before the final preparation of the CRPD instruments for its ratification in not too distant future. Another anticipated historical milestone would be the availability of the Braille copy of the 2013 Constitution of Fiji by next month for the visually challenged in Fiji.

The government of the day is looking forward to work together with all stakeholders in making disability visible during these times of crisis in the form of disasters. All we need is to adopt a more collaborative approach and synergistic thinking with active involvement of persons with disabilities as we try to address disaster reduction together.

In the course of launching the Fiji Disability flyer (I DID), **"Include Disability in Disasters"** in its planning and management is a historical leap for persons with disabilities in Fiji allowing them to exercise their own rights as enshrined in the 2013 Constitution of Fiji and enhance the notion of empowering them to become visible in times of disasters.

Whilst I DID campaign is a local initiative, it is timely that it is launched together with the international initiative on IDDR

May you have a successful campaign by living the I DID principles ensuring persons living with disabilities and disasters is inclusive for us all.

Thank you/Vinaka vakalevu/ Dhanyabad