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Title of the Session: Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilient, Inclusive, and Equitable Societies

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Summary

Recent data indicates that persons with disabilities are twice more likely to die than the general population when a disaster occurs. However, many Governments do not incorporate a disability perspective into legal frameworks, policies, and action plans for disaster risk reduction. Physical infrastructures and disaster response services do not incorporate universal design principles, public service announcements are often issued in formats and language that are not accessible by persons with disabilities, and emergency exits, shelters, and facilities tend not to be barrier-free. Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction could save lives, while also preventing and minimizing risk and damage when disasters occur.

Context

In terms of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), disability is a cross-cutting issue that amplifies risk across all groups including those already at high-risk, such as women and children. Persons with disabilities face a disproportionate impact from disasters and such occurrences contribute to increases in incidences of disability among communities and populations.

Disability did not receive adequate attention, or representation, under the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015. This, in turn, has contributed to limited attention to disability in DRR practice and policy under the HFA.

During the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster in 2011, people with disabilities, along with elderly people, were exposed to the highest risk. The death rate of persons with disabilities was double that of the death rate for all the residents.

In the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 11 requests 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.

Thus, it is essential to incorporate a disability perspective into the post-HFA, as well as into legal frameworks, policies, and action plans for disaster risk reduction in each country.

Persons with disabilities, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates in the fields of DRR and disability rights gathered at the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan, on 22 and 23 April 2014, and adopted the Sendai Statement to Promote Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction. The core messages and specific action which the Statement addresses are as follows.

A. Core messages

1. Disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction is critical for the creation of resilient, inclusive and equitable societies.
2. Engaging, on an equitable basis, girls and boys and women and men with disabilities, and their organizations, in all phases of disaster risk reduction and in decision-making processes are prerequisites for everyone's meaningful participation. Communities will benefit from their knowledge and skills in strengthening resilience.
 - (a) Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction optimizes the resilience and survival of persons with disabilities.

Integrating disability perspectives into all phases of disaster risk reduction, especially disaster preparedness, enables persons with disabilities and their support personnel, to access disaster-related information and knowledge, to assess risk, plan, as well as to participate in drills and in disability sensitization exercises, and in the response and recovery process.

- (b) Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction increases the resilience and chances of survival of all persons in the community and minimizes damage and loss.

Investing in infrastructure development that incorporates the principles of universal design yields physical and information environments, public transportation, and related services that persons with disabilities can use. The accessibility and usability of such environments and services enhance the conditions for all citizens' safety, ease of communication, responsiveness and movement.

B. Specific action for disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction

1. National governments and local authorities, supported by organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations, should foster multiministerial, multisectoral and multilevel coordination and collaboration, to ensure that disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction is mandated and implemented, through actions that include the following:

(a) Engage persons with disabilities and disability-related organizations in establishing disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management policies, plans and strategies at, the national level for implementation at local and other levels;

(b) Apply universal design principles, in combination with reasonable accommodation, in all phases of disaster risk reduction, with particular attention to the following: general infrastructure development, risk assessment, preparedness planning, drills, early warning systems, search and rescue systems, emergency shelters, and temporary housing;

(c) Compile disaster statistics, disaggregated at least by sex and age, on comparative rates of death and injury, as well as damage and loss of assets, among persons with

disabilities, including those who acquire impairments as a result of disasters, and persons without disabilities;

(d) Support disability-inclusive research on the parameters for building an equitable and resilient society;

(e) Strengthen the disability dimension in capability development programmes, with gender-balanced participation, for parliamentarians, disaster risk reduction policymakers and practitioners, including through the development of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction training guidelines, as well as related monitoring and evaluation tools;

(f) Strengthen community-based inclusive development to empower persons with disabilities for full participation in, and contribution to, all phases of disaster risk reduction;

(g) Enable persons with disabilities, through the provision of information and knowledge, including local maps and evacuation plans in accessible and easy-to-understand format and language, to undertake informed decision-making;

(h) Use innovative technologies, such as those for crowdsourcing, to enhance the chances of survival in the face of disaster;

(i) Ensure that social protection schemes support girls and boys and women and men with disabilities, including through the equitable provision of financial support, and economic empowerment programmes, as well as assistive devices with related services for their long-term maintenance and use;

(j) Use creative media, such as art, drama and other performing arts, in community and group drills on a regular basis, to strengthen preparedness and responsiveness;

(k) Undertake and enhance public awareness campaigns, including on disaster risk reduction, to foster positive perceptions of persons with disabilities as equal citizens and active agents;

(l) Disseminate the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework and related legal and policy measures in national and local languages and in formats that are accessible by persons with disabilities.

2. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, composed of key operational United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian partners, should include disability-inclusive planning in their coordination of humanitarian policy development to improve the delivery of humanitarian disaster assistance.

3. Development cooperation agencies and their civil society organization partners should facilitate technical cooperation on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, including through the sharing of good practices, experiences and expertise.

Details of the Sendai Statement and other related documents are available at the link below.

<http://www.unescapsdd.org/events/asia-pacific-meeting-disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction>