



## **Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR)**

**Brisbane, 19-23 September 2022**

### **Statement of Actions:**

#### **Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific**

##### **1. Major achievements in the implementation of the Sendai Framework**

Since the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), Ulaanbaatar, 2018, we have experienced natural hazard emergencies and the challenge of COVID-19. This has been against a backdrop of climate change impacts. While much remains to be done, these challenges have presented opportunities for Disability Stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific to continue support of the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Under **Priority 1** on Understanding Disaster Risk, persons with disabilities have contributed to COVID-19 responses across Asia and the Pacific. Disability Stakeholders have supported government and non-government actors to build understandings of the unique risks faced by persons with disabilities.

Disability Stakeholders have conducted assessments and studies to identify and highlight needs and barriers experienced by persons with disabilities during COVID-19 and responses to the pandemic. Recommendations have addressed the need to improve the accessibility of COVID-19 information and vaccination programmes alongside ensuring ongoing access to essential and routine health care.

The shift to remote consultations has allowed broader representation by, and engagement with, persons with disabilities from outlying regions and islands. However, access to information has been unequal. COVID-19 responses, again, highlight the importance of including persons with diverse disabilities to fully understand disaster risk and design appropriate interventions.

Research by Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) shows climate change is already negatively impacting persons with disabilities and their families. Climate change is amplifying the impacts of pre-existing exclusion and creating new risks. Without action, persons with disabilities will be excluded from the adaptation strategies and interventions that persons without disabilities may benefit from.

In terms of **Priority 2** on Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance, progress has been made since the 2018 AMCDRR. We have seen some increase in the direct representation of persons with disabilities in local and national DRR structures. Disability Stakeholders have established and/or strengthened representation in local disaster management structures. DRR coordinators have also been established in OPDs themselves.



OPD engagement has supported the development of more inclusive local policies, frameworks, and DRR action plans. Accessibility standards have been established in local government regulations for temporary shelter construction. The diverse needs of persons with disabilities, including the importance of mental health support, have been included in national disaster risk management regulations. Working with government, OPDs have produced guidance for local government on disability inclusion during COVID-19 response.

The representation of persons with disabilities in local DRR structures has contributed to more inclusive DRR planning. Disability Stakeholders continue to advocate for, and collaborate on, inclusive risk assessments at national and local levels. This has included directly contributing to government data collection processes and independently collecting disability data to complement the work of others. Ensuring risk assessments are inclusive of persons with disabilities and include data disaggregated by disability is essential for planning, resource allocation, and to ensuring equitable disaster risk governance.

Disability Stakeholders are actively advocating for disability inclusion under **Priority 3** on investing in DRR for resilience. This includes fulfilment of obligations under Article 32 on International Cooperation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Disability Stakeholders have been working with government and non-government actors and communities to ensure DRR investments are accessible and usable by all. This has included guidance on the design and construction of post-earthquake water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities; advocacy to government for accessible evacuation centres; and lobbying for the construction of multipurpose accessible rescue boats for flood response.

Disability Stakeholders are also exploring novel approaches to disaster risk financing and support. This includes the potential of cash transfers to overcome some of the challenges of responding to diverse needs during disaster response. Shock responsive social protection initiatives for persons with disabilities have been piloted. The potential of parametric insurance triggered by high wind or rain to provide financial support to persons with disabilities during tropical cyclones is being explored.

Under **Priority 4** on enhancing preparedness for effective response and recovery, Disability Stakeholders have built capacities and fostered collaborations between DRR and climate change actors and persons with disabilities. This has contributed to wider uptake of the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities.

OPDs and persons with disabilities are contributing to risk and needs assessments and providing training for first responders and search and rescue teams. The establishment of these working relations in advance of a disaster is improving readiness for inclusion in later response. In collaboration with an NDMO, an Emergency Operations Centre staffed by volunteers with disabilities has now guided response efforts towards persons with disabilities through five tropical cyclones.

## **2. Key opportunities and challenges identified**

Over the years, Disability Stakeholders have identified models that work. For example, comprehensive community-based approaches have strengthened the participation of, and



leadership by, persons with disabilities in local disaster risk management. Holistic approaches that combine improving infrastructure and accessibility, supporting livelihoods, and building connections between households and schools and community-level institutions are effective. There are examples that have worked and that can be replicated and taken to scale.

There is increased awareness of the disproportionate risks faced by persons with disabilities and greater recognition at the national policy level. However, momentum has stalled. Policy is not being comprehensively translated into action at the local level. The wider adoption of disability-inclusive practices needs to be prioritised by governments and all DRR and climate change stakeholders. As we reach the mid-point of the Sendai Framework it is time to take stock and take active measures to ensure the commitment to disability inclusion reached in Sendai is realised.

There is an urgent need for gender relevant interventions. This includes eliminating the risks of increased violence against women and girls with disabilities in situations of disaster. Concrete action is needed to address all forms of exploitation, including trafficking, forced migration, and violations of sexual and reproductive rights, during crises and disaster response. Further, interventions need to be culturally appropriate and include underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities.

The persistent challenge is disability inclusion is not yet mainstreamed at any significant scale in DRR policy and programming. The examples of good practice we have outlined remain limited in scale and reach. They are also project-based and short-term. This presents challenges for sustaining initiatives and good work over the long term and when project funds come to an end.

The misconception that disability inclusion in DRR is the responsibility of specialised organisations, including OPDs or disability-focused organisations, remains. This results in a lack of prioritisation, insufficient allocation of resources, and limited uptake. As a result, persons with disabilities are still being left behind in the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Greater investment in disability inclusion in DRR is needed, including within government budgets. If we are not budgeting and investing in disability inclusion, we are ignoring the true costs of DRR.

While consultations with OPDs are more common, these need to be non-tokenistic and meaningful. OPDs and persons with disabilities need to be actively engaged in the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring of DRR policy and practice. Consultations are not a substitute for meaningful participation. Universal design should not only be viewed as an outcome in DRR. Processes need to be universally designed. Universal design requires including and valuing the lived experience of persons with disabilities to inform all stages of DRR decision making.

The lack of investment in disability inclusion in DRR and climate change means the participation of persons with disabilities is still largely at the activity level. That is, DRR actors are *doing* activities with persons with disabilities rather than enabling persons with disabilities to be decision-makers and take the lead in shaping risk reduction and prevention.

Ensuring equitable access to information and communication, and related technologies (ICTs), needs to be prioritised. Particular attention must be paid to ensuring access to information and effective communication in geographically remote and isolated regions. All information needs to be communicated appropriately and in accessible and understandable formats. This includes, sign, plain, and local languages and easy to read versions.



### **3. Commitments to implement the Sendai Framework and the Asia-Pacific Action Plan (2021-2024)**

Considering the above, to further advance the full and inclusive implementation of the Sendai Framework by 2030 and the Asia-Pacific Action Plan by 2024, alongside the 2030 Agenda and Paris Climate Agreement, we commit to support Member States in the following priority actions over the next two years. We will report against the following at the next APMCDRR in two years' time.

#### **Priority 1. Understanding disaster risk:**

- Establish partnerships, collaborate, and advocate for the adoption of disability-inclusive risk assessment tools and mechanisms at regional, national, and local levels. This will enable a fuller understanding of the risks faced by persons with disabilities in all their diversity.
- Advocate, collaborate, and support, the prioritisation of the collection and disaggregation of disability, gender, age, and ethnicity data within disaster management systems. These systems include climate and risk assessments, needs assessments, and damage and loss databases.
- We are committed to engaging and collaborating with stakeholders to learn from each other about the separate and different experiences of women, girls, and LGBTIQ+ people, with disabilities.
- Contribute to improving the collection and application of disability data to better identify the needs of people with diverse impairments, including cognitive disabilities, and barriers to inclusion.
- Promote the importance of an intersectional approach to inclusion, including consideration of horizontal inequalities, to fully understand the risks experienced by person with disabilities and other underrepresented individuals and groups.

#### **Priority 2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk:**

- Advocate for the breaking down of silos between disaster risk reduction, climate justice, and sustainable development and the mainstreaming of disability inclusion across risk reduction and prevention activities.
- Contribute to increasing the leadership and direct representation of persons with disabilities, including women and indigenous persons with disabilities, in DRR decision-making mechanisms.
- Support the review and update of DRR strategies and policies at the national and local levels to ensure disability inclusion.

#### **Priority 3. Investing in DRR for resilience:**

- Advocate for increased investment and budget allocations to deliver on policy commitments to disability inclusive DRR.
- Advocate for higher investment in capacity development of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to plan and lead local DRR and climate change initiatives, as highlighted in the Dhaka Declaration on Disability and Disaster Risk Management.



- Advocate and collaborate to explore appropriate resourcing and investment models to ensure OPDs are sustainable and successful in reducing and preventing disaster risk over the long term.

**Priority 4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction:**

- Contribute an inclusive and intersectional lens to recovery from COVID-19 by increasing the meaningful participation and leadership of diverse persons with disabilities in recovery efforts.
- Contribute to strengthening cross-sectoral collaborations to build inclusive preparedness and recovery through multi-stakeholder partnerships between governments, civil society organisations, UN agencies, and OPDs.
- Promote and enable persons with disabilities to take an active part in ensuring accessibility of risk communication and inclusive warning dissemination that address misinformation and secure appropriate actions.

This statement was developed by OPDs and other disability stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific via online consultation before, and in person during, the APMCDRR, Brisbane, 2022.

The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities will continue to engage in delivering its support for the inclusive implementation of the Sendai Framework. We call on governments and other stakeholders to join us in this endeavour to ensure that no one is left behind.