

"Basis of Disasters Risk Reduction: Accessible early Warning System for persons with disabilities"

Post-Forum Symposium on Universal Access and Design for Natural Disaster

10th October, 2013
Kathmandu, Nepal

Presented by
Birendra Rai Pokharel

Introduction:

- PWDs are among the poorest of the poor, the most disempowered and the most, in need.
- assumption that support for general population will automatically benefit PWDs within them is false
- development agencies must consider their responses to crisis and poverty from the perspective of PWDs
- programs to ensure all sectors of the population receive equal treatment in relief initiatives
- humanitarian obligations.

Disadvantage to PWDs in comparison to others

- Children are often more dependant on family, educators and others in society.
- In disaster situations they become more vulnerable when they are separated from these supports. Children also experience the trauma associated with disasters
- differently that others and this trauma can affect them negatively for the rest of their lives. Parents provide guidance and support to their children in times of crisis. Parents with disabilities need support to ensure themselves and their children have access to relief. If the Children are well trained for emergency relief before hand,
- Children can significantly develop awareness in the community during and after disasters.
- sensitize their elders and parents urging them for safety against disasters

disasters do affect women and men differently:

- different roles they occupy in society/community
- differences in their capacities, needs and vulnerabilities.
- the collapse of the temporary shelter caused the casualty of more Women in Dharan in October 2009.
- Elderly people will be more likely to have impairment
- Failure to recognise these differing needs can result in these groups being further marginalized
- even denied vital assistance.

International instruments and policies:

- The International Policy guideline has been addressed by the International Human Rights Documents.
- CRPD in its Preamble (j) recognizes the need to promote and protect the human rights of all PWDs, including those who require more intensive support.
- Article 10 ensures the Right to life with the provision of Inherent right to life
- Further the article 11 mention about the Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies
- all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of PWDs in situations of risk,
- including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.”

Universality approach of Disaster Management:

- Universality approach of Disaster Management:

Universality

- If the responses of disaster preparedness are accessible to PWDs
- such as wheelchair users, severely visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities)
- it could most certainly be accessible to elderly people, children, pregnant women, severely ill patients and all others
- it also address diversity, by including ethnic & religious minorities, HIV/AIDS, sex workers, elderly people, pregnant Women, people living in absolute poverty apart from PWDs.

Stockholm principles:

- June 2003,, International Meeting on “Good Humanitarian Donorship”,
- **Humanity**
- **Impartiality**
- **Neutrality**
- **Independence:**
- the PWDs are left from global disaster crises and humanitarian relief
- funding simply is not reaching PWDs
- but in any stage of disaster management
- from preparedness to reconstruction.

Importance of Communication & Mobility / Technology during Disaster management:

- Communication and mobility are two critical elements in emergency relief.
- the PWDs are facing logistically difficult time for such services even water & food
- the PWDs in Koshi Flood, lack of the accessible communication means deprived from essential services
- use of technology should be adopted and used as popular means of communication.
- During the course of evacuation, the accessible transportation should be made available.

Challenges:

- inclusive approach lack the understanding of disability as a social and human rights issue
- . Those who see disability as a “medical” issue do not see the need for discussion and inclusion of PWDS
- Disabilities is not getting on the agenda of both the donor countries and the community of agencies
- In developing countries, the PWDs themselves are focused on their day to day survival issues
- important to acknowledge the differing vulnerabilities, needs and capacities of affected groups
- It is not realized that the disaster preparedness should not be perceived as separate from other development sectors,
- rather, it should be mainstreamed in all development programs.

How can vulnerable population in remote, geologically and other-natural disaster prone areas are helped:

- By being included into the initial planning on local/community/regional levels
- By being included, wherever possible, at national/international levels
- Governments, civil society and activists need to work together to establish standards in disaster preparedness, response, management and rehabilitation plans through dialogue and legislative measures, affordable and appropriate technology in communication, mobility and related needs for people with disabilities.

How can...

- The solutions should be humanitarian and rights based and not the exclusion, which we fear, could happen in the future.
- There is a need to research and understand how technology may be used to assist vulnerable people to function in times of disaster, to help bring about change in their lives and to be used at the prevention stage of disaster preparedness.
- Disasters have an impact on disability, by disproportionately affecting persons with existing disabilities and by creating a new generation of PWDs who will be in need of rehabilitation and support. In settings where resources are limited, the impact of disasters on these groups of people can be long-term and far-reaching.

Recommendations

- right to life with dignity and respect
- Humanitarian agencies provide assistance in a Human Rights
- right to participation,
- non-discrimination and
- information,
- establishment of standards that are inclusive of people with disabilities and implementation
- Guidelines should include accessibility standards for shelter, food and water distribution and healthcare
- services that meet universal design principles

Recommendations contd...

- attention should be given to national emergency plans in accessible formats.
- Information on universal design principles
- relief workers working on the ground in affected areas should be trained
- ensure that new construction and major renovations are carried out using universal design principles and standards
- PWDs nominated/appointed to these standard organizations
- simulation exercises to test and strengthen emergency communication throughout Disasters prone regions.

Recommendations contd...

- The policy environment should include and address disaster preparedness and dialogues
- Multiple solutions and strategies
- Availability and access of accurate and complete data of Vulnerable population.
- A barrier Free environment
- Actions should be tied to the CRPD
- Talk more and keep learning in order to come to a full conclusion
- More education and discussions with this group is needed
- Understanding and responding to diversity within the population of people with disabilities - Women, Children, Seniors, other vulnerable populations
- The school curriculum should cover the disaster management

Finally

From Disability Perspectives,
Disasters Preparedness Programs should:

"Rather doing different things, do the
things differently"

Thanking you all