

Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction



After a flood in Gaibandha, Bangladesh, this lifeboat was built to help people with disabilities get to safety.

Working together to lower risk

- Persons with disabilities are more at risk in disasters.
- Disaster risk reduction is when communities work together to prepare for a disaster so as many people as possible can be safe.
- The Sendai Agreement is a disaster risk reduction plan. The plan includes those with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities work as experts in disaster risk reduction.



BASELINE

The goal of inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is to strengthen communities to reduce the impact of natural and other disasters. This is particularly important in regions with an increased disaster risk. As part of community based inclusive development (CBID), this work contributes to sustainable and resilient communities that can withstand future disasters.

The path to resilience is highly contextual: interventions to foster it are highly dependent on political and geographic considerations. For example, they may involve raising houses above sea level, constructing earthquake- and storm-resistant buildings, ensuring sustainable livelihoods, or preventing system failures.

Not everyone is exposed to the same disaster risk. Persons with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women and children, among others, are often at a greater risk than other groups because they are often overlooked and left behind in DRR.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was adopted in 2015 and accepted by Switzerland as a political framework. With Sendai the international community recognises inclusion as one of the guiding principles in the field of DRR: a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective must be included in all implementation plans. The Sendai framework also recognises that DRR requires the willingness and commitment of society as a whole, and the involvement of all people, especially those who are disproportionately affected by disasters.

DRR is part of various aspects and areas of development. This is clearly reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, also supported by Switzerland: in ten of the 17 SDGs, there are 25 explicit references to DRR, which underlines their importance.

Further, states parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are obliged 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” (Article 11). Switzerland ratified the Convention in 2014.



MEASURES

The fight against the causes of environmental degradation and climate change requires various measures. Only through active consultation with persons with disabilities can it be established what is needed to increase their resilience and reduce the risks they face.

In disaster preparedness, persons with disabilities and their exact place of residence must be mapped and taken into account in evacuation plans: for example, an accessible early warning system is needed because persons with hearing disabilities cannot hear an audible warning signal such as a siren. Immediately after a disaster, persons with disabilities often find it difficult to get to emergency shelters and safe rooms on their own due to environmental obstacles such as flooded ar-



Crisis management follows a crisis management cycle. This begins with disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures prior to a disaster, followed by crisis intervention and post-disaster reconstruction.

areas or debris lying around, and therefore need appropriate support. In the event of a loss of assistive devices, such as wheelchairs or crutches, they need support tailored to their needs.

In the reconstruction phase, the different organisations of persons with disabilities are linked with each other and strengthened so that they can draw attention to their concerns. They are then put in contact with public institutions and can assert their rights, for example to accessible emergency shelters.

The transition to prevention is then often fluent. The lessons learnt are evaluated to prevent as much damage as possible in the event of a future disaster.

Gaibandha in the north of Bangladesh is an area particularly prone to catastrophes; it is regularly flooded during the monsoon season. Persons with disabilities are among the most at-risk groups to disasters in the region, but they are also role models for the community in reducing disaster risk.

About ten years ago CBM and two local partner organisations implemented a pilot project on inclusive disaster risk reduction in 18 communities in the Gaibandha district that are particularly affected by flooding. The initial project focus was on setting up self-help groups of persons with disabilities. In these groups, the persons affected learned about their rights and how to assert them. This has led to strong networks in which persons with disabilities can jointly advocate for their concerns.

At the community level, disaster risk reduction committees were formed, with at least two persons with disabilities in each. The project provided the committees with a great deal of technical training, for example on designing inclusive early warning systems and evacuation measures, and how first aid should be provided.

GOOD EXAMPLES

Thanks to the political work of the umbrella association of self-help groups, funds were provided for the necessary infrastructural adjustments. Emergency shelters were designed to be barrier-free and accessible to all. The authorities were trained in inclusive disaster risk reduction.

Empowering persons with disabilities led to a high degree of accessibility for all, which was reflected in the last major flood in 2016, when persons with disabilities were less left behind.

Accessible language sections provided by CHANGE (first page)



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LINKS AND INFORMATION

Guide for Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (CBM)

<https://www.cbmswiss.ch/guide-drr>

Flyer iDRR Hands-on-Tool (CBM)

<https://www.cbmswiss.ch/flyer-idrr>

Accessible and Disaster Prepared Communities (CBM)

<https://www.cbmswiss.ch/community-based-drr>

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Management (CBM)

<https://www.cbmswiss.ch/disaster-risk-management>

Disability-Inclusive Development Toolkit (CBM)

<https://www.cbmswiss.ch/did-toolkit>