

Summary of the E-Discussion

Disabled and other Vulnerable People in Natural Disasters- First week of Discussion

Introduction

The e- discussion “Disabled and other Vulnerable People in Natural Disasters”, organized and hosted by the World Bank is taking shape and has been enriched by the valuable contributions from different parts of the world. The discussion, which has been open to all interested parties, is being fed by the active participation of experts on disability issues as well as emergency planners, responders and relief organizations.

During the first week, the discussion focused on the topics of “Disaster Preparedness & Mitigation”. The following report summarizes the recommendations on the main themes addressed by the participants.

Emergency Plans

Regarding Emergency Plans, most contributions highlighted the necessity of the inclusion of people with disabilities and other vulnerable group in the different stages of planning. Their participation is crucial to ensure equal access to disaster evacuation and relief. Particularly in rural areas, where Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) committees and other local based community organizations are in place, disaster preparedness should be conceptualized and implemented with the involvement of all community members including those with disabilities and other vulnerable group. As a result, vulnerable groups and their specific needs are clearly identified while measures and facilities are adjusted to incorporate such needs. Basic needs of vulnerable populations should be seen as the equivalent of the general population; however, there may be different requirements in fulfilling their needs. The participants concluded that evaluation and monitoring of the inclusion of vulnerable groups in preparedness should be also part of planning. Since all disasters are local, starting locally is always the best plan. Developing a bottom up approach to planning was the most accepted suggestion.

Key points for disaster planning for vulnerable population, especially people with disabilities include:

1. equal access to shelter facilities
2. equal access to evacuation/ transportation
3. equal access to disaster clean up

A particular topic of discussion that attracted the interest of some participants was the incidence of medicine stock control policies on people with disabilities and elderly in natural disaster situations. Restrictive policies should be reviewed and provisions made that would enable patients to more easily access medicine in cases of emergencies.

Another point was to extend the preparedness beyond the civil society- government partnership to increase participation of the local community. For relatively isolated

communities, private sector involvement in response planning is critical. For example, fuel, food, and transportation are often supplied by the private sector. Consequently, there is a need to raise awareness of the local community and in particular the private sector on the specialized needs of people with disabilities in situation of natural disasters.

Regarding the cost of the endeavor of including vulnerable groups into planning, some participants agreed that this process does not have to be costly for either national or local stakeholders, but instead requires planners redistribute existing funds.

Finally, there was a general agreement on that people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations must develop their emergency plans as well as establish support groups at community level.

Training

With regard to specific training on the inclusion of people with disabilities and other vulnerable population in emergency planning, there was a general consensus on a twin track approach: training vulnerable populations is as important as training emergency planners and responders from governmental and other agencies.

The majority of the participants referred to providing training in accessible format for people with disabilities and other populations. This consideration includes materials in Braille, audio versions, large print, use of sign language interpreters, plain language, etc. The need of implementing trainings in facilities that are physically accessible was also mentioned. In addition, people with auditory disabilities should be trained and, at the same time, encouraged to become volunteers, so they can help their deaf communities when interpretation is not available.

One of the communication tools for preparedness that was mentioned was a booklet highlighting the specific needs of the types of disabilities which could be used as a training and reference manual for disaster/relief personnel. This manual would also help to educate persons with disabilities and sensitize the general public as well.

Training of trainers was indicated as a good model for small towns and rural areas in order to enhance the capacity of disaster management committees and prepare a core team of trainers that can easily multiply the effects with limited resources.

Moreover, one of the e-discussion participants brought attention to the fact that families of disabled people often shy away from informing State officials about the existence of people with disabilities. As a result, issue often remains unaddressed at the local-level.

Evacuation

About evacuation of people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, most participants said that emergency-preparedness drills should include real participation of people with disabilities. Simulations or role play exercises where able-bodied persons take the role of disabled people should be avoided.

One participant indicated that persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups need to be accommodated first not last.

Another aspect that was highlighted was the effect of the evacuation trauma on some populations, such as the aging. There is a need to raise awareness of the general population of the trauma of people with disabilities caused by the lack of inclusion in initial planning.

Early emergency communication systems

The development of end-to-end early warning systems is fundamental to save lives when disasters occur. Developing and maintaining all feasible channels of open communication within and across vulnerable groups. The inclusion of satellite and ordinary mobile phones was indicated as an asset for the majority of the participants. Many of them highlighted that the warning system should be accessible for people with disabilities and other groups, especially people who are deaf and deaf blind.

There was an animated discussion about access to mobile phones for disabled persons. Although some participants had concerns about feasibility in developing nations, it was generally recognized that cell phones help inform relevant authorities / groups / neighbors / friends / relatives of the status people with disabilities in emergency situations.

A participant presented the proposal to establish a 24-hour hotline for disabled people to call the local government councils. Other participants stated the need to disseminate information on locations of potential assistance and bring awareness to the procedures that one should follow in the case of emergency since many people with disabilities are not aware of the available resources or plans.

Furthermore, many participants shared some interesting experiences regarding communication and information systems related to emergency planning for people with disabilities. For example, as response to the need for information on evacuation strategies for people with disabilities, a tool kit was developed in Canada with cooperation of disability organizations. The kit includes information on specialized transportation, evacuation devices and evacuation strategies. It also included a publication on emergency sign language and information on technical aids, general introduction to fire and emergency preparedness. This kit is available at cost and it could be replicated and adapted for other environments/circumstances.

In other case cited, the Disaster Office has linked with the Council of/for Disabled to build a data base for emergency purposes, so the specific needs are included in the system; the information is shared with the Teams on the Ground.

Shelter

The majority of the participants that made contributions about shelters pointed out that shelters should become disability friendly and should eliminate all the barriers that could

prevent people with disabilities and other groups from the provision of services. Some of the identified barriers include:

1. Lack of physical access to the facilities.
2. Lack of accessible communication and communication in alternative languages and formats.
3. Blocked or nonexistent disabled parking.
4. Blocked accessible paths by parked law enforcement vehicles.
5. Lack of access to the facilities with Service Dogs.
6. Lack of accessible bathrooms.
7. Lack of accessible sleeping equipment.
8. Lack of access to food and healthcare needs.
9. Lack of or loss of contact with the rest of the family.
10. Lack of Facilities for Power for people who need to recharge power devices.

The concept of universal design evacuation shelters and resources was brought as a way to address the needs of all people including people with disability, children, the aging, etc instead of segregated facilities.

Registration

There was a very interesting debate on the need of registering disabled people and other vulnerable population; however, no agreement on the subject was reached. While some participants were inclined to establish registration as a way to quickly reach these groups and provide them with the needed assistance, other participants raised issues related to the right of privacy of people with disabilities and the potential uselessness of such measure in practice. Other alternatives to registration that were mentioned include local training, integrated public information, and local disaster exercises.

SUMMARY WEEK 2

INTRODUCTION

The second week of the e discussion hosted by the World Bank was interactive and participants addressed the broad topic of *Emergency Response/Relief*. Five sub topics were suggested by the moderators, engaging stakeholders, diversity, and technology, funding and developing standards. The discussions focused on natural disasters, however, it was stressed that disasters as a result of wars, torture and terror activities should not be excluded from the discussion of emergency relief.

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

THE ISSUE

Disabled people are among the poorest of the poor, the most disempowered, and the most in need, they are present in every community in the world, as well as in all populations

targeted by relief and development interventions¹. Aid workers may not see them or know about them, but they will be there and they are likely to be among the most vulnerable or marginalised people within the target beneficiary population. There is a pressing need to have people with disabilities, first responders, humanitarian agencies, development agencies, governments and others to engage in this discussion in order to ensure all sectors of the population receive equal treatment in relief efforts.

It is possible to include people with disabilities and in doing so will ensure a fuller and more effective compliance with the mandates and humanitarian obligations of every relief and development agency.

1. WHAT WILL BE THE CHALLENGES TO SUCCESSFULLY ENGAGE THOSE WHO NEED TO BE INVOLVED SUCH AS DPOS, AGENCIES, RELIEF AGENCIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND OTHERS?

- The uniform engagement of the various groups into the planning segment of disasters. While some progress has already occurred, some agencies speak about inclusive approach but these efforts are often lacking in 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 people with disabilities in their development of policy and practice.
- Understanding the policies of each organization and agency at international and national level working in the field of DRM and evaluating their response to the needs of people with disabilities.
- In some countries people with disabilities themselves are focused on their day to day survival issues and are therefore difficult to mobilize in order to direct the work

2. ARE THERE PRACTICES OR LESSONS LEARNED (GOOD AND BAD) FROM THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED IN THIS AREA?

- In Bangladesh at the DER group, believed that disabled people should become an intrinsic part of all disaster responses, and soon learned that if the responses are accessible to persons with all types of disabilities (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. In August 2005, the DER convened a workshop on Gender & Diversity, where we also participated. (A summary report of the workshop is available at <http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/DER/reports/G&D%20Workshop%20Summary%2014%20Aug%2005.pdf>) This was aimed at coming up with a sort of a checklist. While this

¹ Looking with a disability lens at the disaster caused by the Tsunami in south –East Asia

checklist[http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/DER/reports/DER%20Checklist%20on%20Gender%20and%20Diversity%20Sensitivity%20\(v.24%20Aug\).pdf](http://www.lcgbangladesh.org/DER/reports/DER%20Checklist%20on%20Gender%20and%20Diversity%20Sensitivity%20(v.24%20Aug).pdf)) was mostly focused on gender based elements, it also addressed diversity, by including ethnic & religious minorities, HIV/AIDS, sex workers, elderly people, pregnant & lactating mothers, people living in absolute poverty apart from disabled people.

- Disaster Risk Management Programme of Government of India-UNDP in India where during the village planning exercises the work is supported by the task force during an emergency but much more remains to be done

3. *WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE?*

- Inclusion of issues in international instruments and policies. The International Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, Articles 10 (Right to Life) and 11 (Situations of Risk)
- Development of inclusive policies at all levels and in all agencies involved with emergency relief.
- Completion of an inventory of organizations involved in Disaster Response Management at the national and international level.

4. *WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED TO GET IT DONE?*

- Everyone can take some part. Planning and preparedness needs to be everyone's business.
- Government might have control over the capital of the country but the rest of the country may be in the control of either rebel forces or local warlords such as the Democratic Republic of Congo. We must keep in mind that in such situations, there is no type of government structure to use and all planning for disaster relief may have to come for local communities or agencies outside the country.

5. *WHO SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD THIS PROCESS?*

There is little agreement on who should lead the process of engaging stakeholders. Participants feel that people with disabilities are best positioned to understand issues concerning their own needs.

Some thoughts on who should lead the response effort include:

- Emergency Managers are taught that resources coming to the scene are under the authority of the local folks. They are there to SUPPORT, not run, the disaster. Therefore it should be local folks who take the lead.
- Should local authorities have control? Objectivity and the process of establishing operations require distance. When you think of the comments about the Caste access, and the issues of race in New Orleans etc. There must be a serious consideration of who is in charge in catastrophe. Local communities provide support and knowledge in addressing the crisis. If they become focused to the response their focus becomes diverted. Locals need to focus on rebuilding and establishing the

systems that were in place post storm, or at the very least focus on what is needed to move beyond the response.

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY WITHIN THE POPULATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES - WOMEN, CHILDREN, SENIORS, OTHER VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In order to maximise the coping strategies of those affected by disasters, it is important to acknowledge the differing vulnerabilities, needs and capacities of affected groups². When you are a person with a disability you have a disadvantage in comparison to others in society. When you add child, woman, ageing or ethnic minority to the mix you become at additional risk.

Children with disabilities 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 than 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 they and their children have access to relief.

Although women and men have common concerns, disasters do affect women and men differently: because of the different roles they occupy in society/community; and because of the differences in their capacities, needs and vulnerabilities.

Older Persons in general will be more likely to have an impairment as a result of ageing. In addition, persons with disabilities who are ageing will have increased needs in times of disasters.

Failure to recognise these differing needs can result in these groups being further marginalised, or even denied vital assistance.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- As schools are densely populated, School Disaster Management Plan need to be in place for each school. In India disaster management, as a subject in social sciences, has been introduced in the school curriculum for class VIII & IX. Children are a dynamic and powerful force of change and supporters for creating awareness in the community. They can contribute in a unique manner with energy and vision to find local solutions and enlighten their elders and parents urging them for safety against disasters.

² Humanitarian charter and Minimum standards in Disaster Response, Sphere Project (2004) p.9

- Children response to post trauma distress disorder (PTSD) can be quite different from others and there is a need to consider terminology that is reflective of this impact.
- It is important to look at the needs of each group separately. For example focusing on gender and determining mainstreaming in practical terms and simply looking at a theoretical level.
- Children should be well trained for emergency relief before, during and after disasters.

COMMUNICATION & MOBILITY / TECHNOLOGY, USE OF TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Communication and mobility are often the two critical elements in emergency relief. Today, the nature of natural disasters have become so unpredictable that its difficult to predict even by means of latest technology when and what disaster will strike. There is a need especially in developing countries to establish a central communication point to distribute the warning of an impending disaster.

In the first week we had much discussion about cell phones/satellite phones/ham radio/generators/microwave towers etc. As participants will know, this has already generated a hot debate about the limitations of various technologies. A common thread running through all comments was that the technology itself is less of an issue (as it so rapidly develops, and as it can be "relatively" easily adapted to fix problems people noted (just a couple of examples were use of hand-crank radios or phones, perhaps satellite phones in the hands of local community based organization, or village chief, or other such "designated" officials in order to ensure it is maintained properly, and used wisely).

More of an issue was the question of personal responsibility--how can vulnerable populations in poor, geologically/meteorologically/other-natural disaster prone areas, be helped:

1. By being included into the initial planning on local/community/regional levels
2. By being included, where even possible, at national/international levels
3. By understanding what is realistically achievable, given that disasters have a "cascade" effect (again, people dying of famine, disease, fire, flood, and many other "after effects" than from the original triggering event
4. By realizing that technology is vastly overrated in catastrophic circumstances, and yet might, as in cases of early warning (example of the absence of buoys in the Indian Ocean that could have provided a high level of advance notice is just one; even when the US Government agencies realized the probability of the massive tsunami, they could reach very few people by

internet, radio, phone or otherwise; and few warning devices were in place, even if they could have reached local emergency officials or agencies)

If education and awareness are at the core of any further efforts, then use of technology NOW, before it is too late for one or more parts of the globe.

WHAT TECHNOLOGY?

WHERE YOU HAVE TO EVACUATE this means you must have transportation available or if the roads are damaged alternative shelter has to be found. Ideally some form of communication technology, e.g. mobile phones, laptop computer, wireless of some sort, a white sheet laid on the ground with a RED CROSS or CRESCENT indicating your locality to search and rescue aircraft for ease of recognition and the knowledge that there are people alive in the area. If you are evacuated you will still need essential supplies to see you through what maybe a logistically difficult time to enable water & food supplies to get to the area. Supplies of essentials have proved vital over and over again; remember what happened with the Katrina disaster, people held in 'safe' places but without food and water and sanitation.

The three main reasons why new technology available is not practical:

1. Remote location and difficult terrain
2. Essential services that most of us take for granted not being available.
3. Indifference by some local authorities to prepare a universal plan and unwillingness to train and work with volunteers.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- 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. The solutions should be humane and compassionate and not the exclusion, which we fear, could happen in the future.
- The volume of data, scholarship and writings on the topic of disaster and people with disabilities is vast and critics complain about too many words and not enough action, perhaps it is all necessary as part of the awareness and education of the issue.
- It is perhaps the BEST technological solution there is--chalk and a chalkboard, paper and pencil, oral/pictorial story telling where literacy is intractable problem, computers where available--all of these exist HERE AND NOW almost everywhere. This CAN be done, and can be done NOW, and can be done relatively cheaply compared to many technological and other fixes being discussed.
- Concrete measures (such as the installation of the buoys in the Indian Ocean, or phones, radios, computers capable of receiving constant, updated weather information from technologically advanced agencies around the world) DO help. They cannot, at present, prevent the asteroid from hitting, or, as we are seeing develop in last few days, predict the timing of an earthquake (which may well be triggering an eruption of volcano Merapi, on top the tsunami related drain on human life and all other resources in the region to this day).
- There is a need to research and understand how technology may be used to:
 - ✓ assist people with disabilities to function in times of disaster
 - ✓ to help bring about change in the lives of people with disabilities

- ✓ to be use at the prevention stage of preparedness

NEW TECHNOLOGY

The Global Earth Observation System of Systems, (GEOSS) is an effort by participating countries, including countries from South Asia, to create an all-hazards warning system. Just as we have tools to determine where tsunamis could hit, we have tools to forecast weather and monitor air pollution, wind currents, air temperature, and ocean currents. These tools include satellites, seismographs, gauges, and buoys. GEOSS would link our U.S. technology to that of the other participating nations, creating an integrated system that would give us access to data from around the earth. Out of this effort, proponents tell us we not only will enhance and expand our ability to predict and warn of tsunamis, but also be able to make informed decisions in anticipation of a variety of other threats to life, health, property, and the economy around the world and here at home.

Question: Surely there are many people with disabilities working within the 60+ countries, and 40+ international organizations, which are affiliated with this system (expected to take 10 years, to implement). Is there any way to reach them as part of this effort to formally include, and seek ways to benefit, people with disabilities? There must be. How?

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED TO GET IT DONE?

- People with disabilities need to be involved in every step of the way

FUNDING & WHERE MONEY GOES, WHO DECIDES - MONITORING EXPENDITURE OF FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS MADE DURING DISASTERS

"The serious threat posed by disasters requires a concerted effort by the international community to support creative disaster reduction initiatives."

- United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan

INTRODUCTION

Disasters have an impact on disability, by disproportionately affecting persons with existing disabilities and by creating a new generation of persons with disabilities 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.³ Considering that 10% of the world's population has a disability it is shocking to know that so little resources are targeted to this population.

At an International Meeting on "Good Humanitarian Donorship", in Stockholm, June 2003, donor countries agreed to the Stockholm principles:

- **Humanity:** Central is saving human lives and alleviating suffering wherever it is found.

³ Disasters, disability and rehabilitation, World Health Organization (2005)

- **Impartiality:** Actions must be implemented solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between populations or within an affected population.
- **Neutrality:** Humanitarian action must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute where such action is carried out.
- **Independence:** All actors' humanitarian objectives must be autonomous from their political, economic, military, or other objectives in the affected areas.

Yet as we review the International Disability Rights Monitor: Disability and Early Tsunami Relief Efforts in India, Indonesia and Thailand we see that “people with disabilities have been largely excluded from the relief effort at the level of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relief agencies as well”. The report goes on to say...” When people with disabilities were discussed, little concrete action resulted, due to a perceived lack of expertise within most multilateral agencies and international NGOs”

Other reports have noted that funding simply is not reaching people with disabilities in any stage of disaster management from preparedness to reconstruction. In our discussions many have acknowledged that there has been an unprecedented discussion, debate and awareness in recent years and it seems that disability is finally getting on the agenda of both the donor countries and the community of agencies who work on emergency relief. However, much remains to be done if people with disabilities are to get their fair share of resources to rebuild their lives after a natural disaster.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Donors need to acknowledge the importance of a disability-inclusive response. To achieve this, advocacy initiatives should be undertaken to highlight the pressing need to address the increasing level of risk and vulnerability, and the vicious cycle of poverty caused by recurrent disasters in risk prone zones. However, care must be taken that this does not result in good words like “inclusive” but little in the way of real action. Monitoring of a disability inclusive response will be required. Agreement needs to be reached about appropriate disability specific protocols that will ensure comprehensive support is afforded people with disabilities. (For example Spheres appears to be more of a medical model rather than a rights or social approach)
- Co-ordination of the disability response in the reconstruction period requires more than a proposal that states “disability inclusive”, real actions that result in real benefits to the community of people with disabilities. This co-ordination must include people with disabilities
- The policy environment at national, regional and international levels must be influenced to include people with disabilities at all level of dialogues. Unless Disability finds a place in policy dialogue, it will remain challenging to secure sufficient funding.
- We need to highlight the fact that disaster preparedness should not be perceived as separate from other development sectors, rather, it should be mainstreamed in all development programs. It is an established fact that development plans make significant contributions in increasing risk and vulnerability factors, and therefore, integration of people with disabilities in all development plans would provide a lasting impact on risk and vulnerability factors.

- Accountability in the use of resources dedicated to disasters will require constant review and reporting to highlight situations like hurricanes Katrina and Rita where funding did not reach most in poverty situations.
- The following points should be addressed in a meeting with the GEOSS and EPA leaders:
 1. The GEOSS program has been in process of formation since 2003 and was, signed into law in 2005 but NOT funded in 2005 appropriations legislation.
 2. Has the program started now, has Congress, and/or the 60 countries and 40 international organizations, begun to fund and staff the program?
 3. Is there any specially designated funding for addressing the needs of people with disabilities? Is there a provision to fund a position for a disability advisor, or for hosting an international meeting of people with disabilities, and related organizations to address the issues?

List of suggested sources of funding:

Armstrong Foundation

Ford Foundation, McArthur Foundation

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Gates Foundation

The Dallas Foundation (<http://www.dallasfoundation.org/>)

Cleveland Foundation (<http://www.clevelandfoundation.org/>)

The New York Community Trust (<http://www.nycommunitytrust.org/>)

Yumekaze Foundation (see posting for translation of their work)

DEVELOPING STANDARDS THAT ARE INCLUSIVE OF ALL POPULATIONS FOR RELIEF AND RESTORATION

Everyone has the right to life with dignity and respect for their human rights. Humanitarian agencies have the responsibility to provide assistance in a manner that is consistent with human rights, including the right to participation, non –discrimination and information, as reflected in the body of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. In *the Humanitarian Charter and the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*, humanitarian agencies undertake to make themselves accountable to those they seek to assist. The common standards outline the responsibilities of organizations and individuals when providing protection and assistance.⁴

It is important to note that while the establishment of standards that are inclusive of people with disabilities are important, more important is that the standards be carried out

⁴ Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, The Spheres Project

and that agencies be held accountable for their work and inclusion of people with disabilities.

- Guidelines should include accessibility standards for shelter, food and water distribution and healthcare services that meet universal design principles
- Increased attention should be given to national emergency plans to ensure that warnings. Preparations, rescue and relief efforts all incorporate special measures and attention to people with disabilities.
- Information on universal design principles and other accessibility guideline should be shared with governments and other agencies working in the area of reconstruction; universal design principles should be routinely adhered to in reconstruction efforts.
- Although some agencies have manuals or guidelines concerning the inclusion of disability in relief efforts, relief workers working on the ground in affected areas either were not aware of them nor did they know how to use them, resulting in the exclusion of people with disabilities.⁵
- Monitoring of standards should include a test for inclusivity of persons with disabilities and the use of universal design principles in reconstruction.
- The donor communities must be encouraged to be doing more to ensure that new construction and major renovations are carried out using universal design principles
- People should contact their national standards organizations and request/lobby for a new ISO standard on disaster preparedness. It is important the people with disabilities be nominated/appointed to these standard organizations.
- Develop hypothetical scenarios that reflect the type of disaster common to each region. Organize regional simulation exercises to test and strengthen emergency communication throughout these regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were asked to submit their recommendations:

- The policy environment should include and address disaster preparedness especially for people with disabilities at all levels of dialogue
- Multiple solutions and strategies should be adhered to rather than depending on one solution/strategy. The best way to do some of this is that the people with disabilities/elderly should be proactive, educated, prepared, part of the training, etc.
- Availability and access of accurate and complete data of persons with disabilities
- Persons with disabilities be included, in a meaningful way, in each and every meeting, sit on every board, be appointed to every commission, have jobs in every agency, join every local council...it is harder to not consider us if we are right there at the table.
- A barrier Free environment for people with disabilities
- Develop globalization and as soon as possible. The international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to be adopted worldwide.

⁵ report at the Mumbai meeting on Standards (2005)

- All disaster-planning organizations are required to incorporate appropriate procedures that are inclusive of people with disabilities. The report could be tied to the UN convention
- Talk more and keep learning in order to come to a full conclusion of what is really needed or best. The more we talk the better the picture of disaster and relief for persons with disabilities.
- More education and discussions like this e group is needed
- People with disabilities themselves need to actively enter into dialogue regarding this, with anyone and everyone who will pause to listen. The community of people with disabilities need to make a conscious decision to pull together in a manner that will demand the recognition needed for us to become positioned in a way to effectively address disability needs.
- The issues and needs of people with disabilities be incorporated into all Emergencies and Disaster Management Plans.

Week 3 Final Summary

Disabled and other Vulnerable People in Natural Disasters

Summary Week 3: “Short/Medium Term Social-Economic Recovery & Reconstruction (with mitigation)”

Maria Kett

Discussions in the final week were wide-ranging, encompassing themes ranging from practical difficulties in the field to cross-cutting issues such as poverty, gender, children, and the environment. It is difficult to do justice to all the nuances and contributions to the discussion forum, but the following is an overview of the main themes, questions and issues that emerged out of the discussions and debates:

1. Developing opportunities that may present in the aftermath of disasters
2. Operationalisation of already-existing policies by mainstream donor agencies, international NGOs and others.
3. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development
4. Cross-cutting issues
5. Diversity and alliances.
6. Resources (human and material).
7. Networking.

1. Developing opportunities that may present in the aftermath of disasters

How can potential opportunities that may present in the aftermath of disasters, such as the developmental and strengthening of disabled people’s organizations (DPOs), campaigns for accessibility and inclusion, be developed? This was found to be a particular challenge. Among the many problems small-scale NGOs and DPOs face are recognition and access to donor funding - unless they work in partnership with larger (international) organizations already known to the donors – but there is a danger that this can perpetuate the notion that disabled people are unable to speak for themselves.

A number of suggestions arose as to ways on which DPOs could be strengthened:

- Through the creation of national councils of disabled people and/or steering committees, who could demand to be partners in the planning and decision-making cycles of the responsible authorities at and/or disaster management level (usually state level).
- Through strategic partnerships and alliances with other civil society organisations.

This week’s discussion highlighted a number of examples of DPOs and fora that came together after a disaster with some success, for example the “Access for All” campaign in Sri Lanka and a World Bank-funded project in post-earthquake Pakistan.

Sri Lanka

- In the aftermath of the tsunami, limited beneficiary participation and knowledge of decision-making processes and plans across the board was a key finding and criticism of post-tsunami relief and transitional phases. As a contributor from Sri Lanka noted, it is vital to “ensure active participation and opportunities for disabled people to voice concerns and set their own agenda and, most importantly, to have the capacity to do so”.
- The disability movement in Sri Lanka has a weak capacity, and the government and other decision-making bodies are very hierarchical. Coordinators in Sri Lanka had difficulty trying to fast track the capacity development of disability groups and disabled people to lobby for their inclusion in the reconstruction process. There was a limited capacity across the board, in areas of attitude, knowledge and skills.
- There was a need identified within the disability community to develop their own knowledge and understanding of accessibility, as beneficiaries had little or no sphere of reference regarding accessible alternatives, given that Sri Lanka did not previously have many model examples. There are now programmes underway developing DPOs and disability organization's skills in communication to empower disabled people to engage in both advocacy and consultation work.
- Engagement and participation were key to the success of the “Access for All” campaign in Sri Lanka. Disabled people have to meaningfully engage in discussions and advocacy with those involved in recovery and reconstruction, both in identifying barriers, as well as giving examples of solutions - particularly as knowledge in this field is limited. In Sri Lanka there is now ongoing work to develop technical knowledge and model examples within the both disability community and agents involved in reconstruction. The earlier this participation and engagement happens, the more chance of success it has.

Pakistan

- In Pakistan the World Bank approved a grant of \$5 million in support of disability inclusion following the Kashmir earthquake in October 2005. The aim of the project is to both enhance direct service provision to persons with disabilities, as well as mainstream disability concerns into the development activities of agencies working on recovery and reconstruction.
- As the contributor noted, by working through an apex poverty alleviation agency, disability would not only be mainstreamed into poverty reduction programs but also build knowledge within these agencies. Another advantage of working through the selected agency is that it will facilitate scaling-up efforts, which are often a challenge in reconstruction efforts.

- DPOs need to be strengthened and included as part of disaster/emergency planning teams etc. Some of the ways suggested to undertake this include the cultivation of good working relationships with the relevant agencies during non-emergency times to demonstrate the knowledge and willingness to contribute. A local DPO, STEP, was cited as having engaged at a number of levels with policy makers on the inclusion of disability in post-disaster planning. They worked closely with many of the UN agencies teams soon after the earthquake as well as a number of international organizations, such as Handicap International (HI).
- HI and STEP collaborated to develop a checklist for disability and disaster management in the aftermath of the earthquake.

2. Operationalisation of already-existing policies by mainstream donor agencies, international NGOs and others

The identification and operationalisation of already-existing policies by mainstream donor agencies, international NGOs and others involved in all aspects of disaster preparedness, mitigation, recovery and rehabilitation was debated at a number of levels:

- Some participants reiterated the need to mainstream disability within **all** policies and frameworks. The SPHERE guidelines were cited on a number of occasions, though some commentators felt it was based on a medical model of disability. It is also worth pointing out that SPHERE are *guidelines*, which focus primarily on immediate measures and responses. There is very little in the way of guidelines for inclusive medium to longer term recovery and rehabilitation projects – especially when the timeline between emergencies and longer term rehabilitation continues to be blurred.
- Many governments, donors, and organisations working in disaster relief and reconstruction may already have mandates/policies to include disabled people as a ‘vulnerable group’ or ‘priority area’. The continuing challenge is to get these working in practice, as soon as possible in the often difficult early phases after a disaster has struck. Lack of awareness and training came up here as an issue (see below). However, the proposed UN Convention on Disability, and recent ECHO document on cross-cutting issues in humanitarian work may assist with this process. It is important to remember that many countries do not have any disability legislation.
- Inclusive Programming - one participant suggested that a practical way to take these issues forward is to focus more broadly on “inclusive programming”, with very practical explanations of what needs to be done with and by disabled people in particular (with simple means, local resources and indigenous knowledge), which emphasizes diversity.
- Many reports noted that funding simply does not reach people with disabilities in any stage of disaster management from preparedness to reconstruction. During

the forum, many participants acknowledged that there has been an unprecedented discussion, debate and awareness in recent years and it seems that disability is finally getting on the agenda of both the donor countries and the community of agencies who work on emergency relief. However, much remains to be done if people with disabilities are to get their fair share of resources to rebuild their lives after a natural disaster.

- It was suggested by some participants that it was not necessarily just a lack of awareness, but also lack of knowledge of international agencies. For example, international agencies working in Sri Lanka, when approached, welcomed suggestions for accessibility as well as inclusive policies, but requested guidance in how to implement them. Again, this highlights the need for better links between INGOs and local NGOs and DPOs, combined with capacity building for DPOs to compete with other organizations in the field.

3. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development

The ways in which long term relief, rehabilitation and development can be better linked is a fundamental issue on post-disaster recovery and reconstruction:

- One of the recurrent themes in the literature is the (apparent) absence of data or identification of people with disabilities. Many contributors rightly pointed out that it is an individual's decision over identifying themselves as disabled. Others pointed out that for reasons of safety and security, many, particularly women, did not wish to be identified and registered. However, this can have severe repercussions for the allocation of aid and resources.
- Again, in an example from Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, many development actors claimed not able to find disabled people for consultation purposes at the beginning and middle of the year. However, on analysis of some examples, the methodology for consultation was based on temporary and transitional camp populations, which already presupposed that disabled people were in these camps.
- Attention was also drawn to other excluded and marginalised groups, and a number of participants highlighted the limited attention given to so-called "forgotten disasters", refugees and people internally displaced as a direct result of disasters. There is limited research regarding the coping strategies etc of disabled refugees and IDPs.

4. Cross-Cutting Issues

Fundamental to the above issue of linking relief and development is addressing the issues of poverty. The majority of disaster-prone and disaster-affected countries are poor, and the poor are disproportionately affected by disasters. Indeed, one contributor called poverty a “weapon of mass destruction.” Tackling the question of poverty requires global solutions, and is linked to other global issues such as environmental protection and gender inequalities.

Gender

- As a number of contributors to the debate highlighted, there has been little analysis of the gender implications for the effects of disasters, or the effects of disasters on gender-specific recovery. It was argued that women are at an increased risk from the effects of disasters, which in turn is linked to poverty, as well as disaster recovery and management. Women living with disabilities are at increased risk of poverty, domestic violence and sexual assault, and this has implications for their recovery from the effects of disasters. Contributors discussed the role of women’s groups, but also highlighted important (and as yet unresolved) issues of safety, privacy, security, finance, time, resources, health and human rights.
- An example of one such NGO working in this field came from the ‘Friends Service Council Nepal’ (FSCN - www.fscnepal.org). FSCN works in community level disaster management; women’s empowerment; environmental issues; poverty reduction; children’s rights; peace building; capacity building of network members and human rights issues. FSCN has set up a local networking organization called Networking, Partnership and Linkage (NePaLi), as well as the Disaster Management Network Nepal (DiMaNN). This example again highlights the need for DPOs to engage with other civil society organisations, women’s groups etc to raise these issues and challenges.
- A recent report on poverty among women in Latin America was cited to explore the implications of the links between poverty and gender inequality. The contributor suggested that this has repercussions in disaster-prone or disaster-affected countries, as women face specific problems before, during and after (natural) disasters, such as having children and older adults who are dependent on them. Though the report does not have a specific disaster focus, the conclusions drawn from it may have implications for policy and planning, particularly in the recovery period. (<http://www.undp-povertycentre.org/newsletters/WorkingPaper20.pdf>)

Environment

- Bangladesh was mentioned a number of times during the weeks discussion, as an example of good and bad practices in disaster management. One participant wrote about the practices of the Government and international community

donating corrugated iron roofs to people to reconstruct their houses in the aftermath of a disaster. They linked this to the influence of globalization on agricultural practices, which have led to a loss of land from increased rice cultivation. In turn this has resulted in a loss of traditional building materials. They question whether thinking in more local terms of how to rebuild houses after the (frequent) disasters would not be better for the people concerned from a number of perspectives: safety, security as well as economically.

- However, other contributors felt that there was great deal to be learnt from Bangladesh, and that the example cited above demonstrates both the necessity of different and challenging thinking, and how it is already there within the country. But hearing these voices is equally necessary.

Psychosocial Issues

- Mental health and psychosocial projects have become preeminent in disaster recovery programmes in recent years, as was evident in Sri Lanka after the tsunami. Though the meaning and content is much debated, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can of course be a very real problem following any disasters, and there is an ongoing need to train responders in how to be aware of subtle signs of PTSD.
- One of the gaps highlighted was the overlap (or lack of) between the disability community and psychosocial programmes. An example of a psycho-social programme specifically targeting PWDs came from a community-based NGO in Sri Lanka, who work with people with mental health issues (NEST - www.nestsrilanka.com). Among the varied work they do is to offer a community 'drop-in' center for people in the community who need respite or support. They also offer a community library, training and other community supports.
- Another example of good practice following disasters was that of '*Peer Support*'. This relatively new approach is proactive in its use of resources and networks, and participants found it "incredibly empowering." It is relatively low cost and low tech. It can serve to strengthen the networking of a (disability) community, and could be built on within the community in the aftermath of the disaster. An example of a project in the pilot stage came from the Georgia Peer Support Project (<http://www.disabilitylink.org/docs/psp/peersupport.html>).

5. Diversity and alliances

- The issue of diversity within the disability and wider disaster-affected communities continued to be discussed, as well as other 'vulnerable' groups and priority areas— such as displaced people, female -headed households, youth in conflict-affected areas and informal workers and entrepreneurs in disaster-prone regions. There needs to be stronger alliances across these communities and organisations to get their voices heard.

- Acknowledging diversity within the disability community demonstrates the subtleties that may be lost when putting disability as a ‘cross-cutting’ issue’ or disabled people as a ‘vulnerable group’. However, these do mean that disability is at least on the international humanitarian agenda. Sensitivity for diversity within the populations of disaster-affected countries, which values difference and accommodated these in recovery and rehabilitation programmes is essential for them to be successful. As noted in the discussions, there is not, nor should there be, a ‘one size fits all’ approach.
- A Lebanese DPO was cited as an example of how DPOs can relate with different sections of society and diversity issues (The Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union - www.lphu.com).
- A suggestion was made that while it may be difficult to get a disability dimension in disaster management, a practical diversity approach with specific additions on disability may be of ‘more interest’ to the bigger agencies.

6. Resources (human and material)

The availability and appropriateness of responses, training opportunities, materials and resources (human and material) was much discussed, and again, these are inextricably linked to wider global issues such as poverty and environmental degradation.

Human Resources

- The issue of availability of appropriately trained support staff, rescue workers and others working in the immediate recovery phase and beyond is a thread running through all the weeks discussions. One contributor highlighted how human resources could be strengthened, for example, through networks and member associations.
- The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) initiated a project to raise the capacity of local occupational therapists to respond in disaster situations, to offer support for communities and for persons with disabilities within the communities. In the Indian Ocean region, member associations have set up task forces to strengthen engagement with disaster response and recovery coordination systems at national and district levels, and on a more practical level, contribute expertise to advance local community-based programmes. In addition, each association is developing national action plans in relation to the needs assessed in their own countries. For example, in Sri Lanka, the national group formed a DP&R task force to coordinate pilot projects specific to PWDs in the community.

Training

- Training is linked to mitigation. Equipping people with the resources to cope with the effects of a (natural) disaster, using locally available resources and skills, is essential in the management and mitigation of future disasters.
- In India two approaches are being instigated:
 - a) Disaster Preparedness Training for People with Disabilities. This programme trains members of ‘disaster task forces’ (DTF) in villages on how to help disabled people during natural calamities, as well as equipping disabled people themselves with the skills to cope with such adverse incidents, such as how to reach a place of safety until rescue teams arrive.
 - b) Disaster Preparedness Plan for People with Disabilities. This included collecting accurate data on location of disabled people in towns and villages at risk of (natural) disasters and incorporating them into plans.
- Another example from India was from the NGO UNNATI. They have worked on inclusive design and programming, and have developed projects and materials in direct response to the earthquake in Kutch, the drought in Rajasthan and the Tsunami. (<http://www.unnati.org/social-inclusion-empowerment.html>)
- What these examples demonstrate is the potential for disaster planning and preparedness to be inclusive of **all** those living in towns and villages, utilizing readily available skills, bolstered by simple training, which in addition may act to unite those facing the challenge of (natural) disasters on a regular basis.

Micro Finance

- Several participants asked about specific microfinance resources for people with disabilities were raised several times. This is a relatively new area (though there are some organisations working in this field, such as Leonard Cheshire International and Handicap International). However, the links between targeted micro-credit loans and the economic and social recovery of disabled people affected by disasters needs developing.
- Many recovery and reconstruction projects target specific vulnerable groups, i.e. single female-headed households, informal workers in disaster-affected areas, but not necessary people with disabilities. Concerns were raised that targeting of microfinance as part of economic recovery strategies risked overlooking or excluding a number of people, for examples, disabled women.

7. Networking

The question of on-going networks and discussion forum has been a constant thread throughout the three weeks. Suggestions for how these networks could be used included:

- being a space to exchange and update knowledge and ideas
- mobilizing and coordination of efforts in the aftermath of the next (inevitable) major disaster
- coordinating advocacy efforts with mainstream relief organizations and governments to educate them about the need to integrate disability-related concerns into their work
- Promoting and facilitating links with other civil society organizations (CSOs) and campaigns.

A number of different groups have begun to emerge:

- The *Ideanet* website (<http://www.ideanet.org>), which will host a Community of Practice on “Emergency Standards for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities and Other Specific Needs Populations”.
- A discussion group – *disasterdisabilitypolicy* - which focuses on broad policy issues specific to the needs of people with disabilities and communities preparing for, during and recovering from major disasters and emergencies. To Subscribe, send an email to: disasterdisabilitypolicy-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Conclusions

Disaster mitigation remains a fundamental challenge to the field, and must be included in recovery plans, which need to be inclusive of all those living in affected communities. All of the above efforts must be utilized in recovery and mitigation – poverty reduction; environmental issues; gender; local knowledge; inclusive policies/practices/ training.

The forum demonstrated that planning, response and recovery from disasters cannot and are not the same in any country. Factors including geographical, social, political, economic, and demographic collude to mitigate (or not) the effects of the disaster. But to quote one participant “across all the boundaries [...] disabled people suffer more than their non-disabled peers in all contexts.” Keeping this in mind, it is pertinent to note that, similar to the previous week, some participants highlighted the need for similar discussions and engagement regarding other complex humanitarian emergencies, including violent conflict.

Finally, a summary report, produced by the World Bank, will follow this e-discussion forum, and will draw together all the discussion, resources and events from the past three weeks.