

## Policy Brief Series IV

### Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in Nepal: Challenges and Way Forward.

#### 1. Introduction

People with Disability (PWD) have different needs and practical aspects during disasters including pandemics. During COVID 19 People living with Disabilities (PWDs) concerns such as medical needs, support equipment, hygiene and sanitation equipment's, women specific needs, artificial organs, restricted their mobility and access to response packages were a big challenge. Government attentions towards delivering relief and response package to PWDs was one of the key challenges during pandemics. Nepal Government is emphasizing Inclusive DRR and Management. Different guidelines are under formulation. National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRMA) is preparing DiDRR guidelines in consultation with concerned stakeholders. Disasters are also a cause of disability. Injuries sustained during a disaster, as well as lack of medical aid, mobility aids and preventative care can lead to a wave of new impairments.

#### Why Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR):

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 15% of the world's population, or 1 billion people, have a disability (WHO, 2011).

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented amongst societies' poorest, with reduced income earning opportunities and poorer access to services. In the event of a disaster they are amongst the most vulnerable members of society (WHO, 2011).

Not having their needs met, persons with disabilities also face being identified solely as passive victims, their capacities overlooked and their right to participate in decision making ignored.

#### 2. Key Issues of Disability Inclusiveness Disaster Risk Reduction and Management.

**Diversity within PWDs not well considered:** The diverse physical challenges of persons living with disabilities are mostly underestimated during disaster response. For example, information messages on hand washing will not be relevant to those persons who have no hands or unable to hand movement. The audio messages to them who cannot hear is of no use to understand. They need sign language to understand those awareness messages. Hence, it is of great challenge to humanitarian responders including government to address the diverse challenges of PwDs. However, mostly, their diverse needs are overlooked in disaster response and disaster preparedness planning. The awareness messages focusing PwDs should be disseminated to make them understand based on their disability types and level of severity and implications, and all of them cannot be put under similar categories.

**Local government are not emphasizing PWDs representation and participation while developing frameworks in most of the municipalities:** Though persons with disabilities fall under the most vulnerable category during humanitarian context, but their needs are less addressed hence increasing their vulnerabilities during disaster. Most often, their diverse needs are not prioritized or responders are not aware on the diverse need. Hence, their engagement and participation in the need assessment phase is vital. If they are left behind during data collection and need assessment, they are also left in the response. Their participation in the preparedness discussions and consultations is often not well undertaken so that they are left behind in the response. In addition to response, they are most often left behind in the recovery actions after any disaster response. At most of the local level, the disability data base system also is poor and not well updated in quantitative and qualitative aspect. Mostly, access to information is not well ensured to people living in different remote geographical areas. The identity cards issued to PWDs should be able to distinguish the various distinctions between the conditions and the cards should be made more scientific.

**Policy provisions but gap in proper implementation:** Nepal has made significant progress in disaster risk reduction and management formulating policy strategies, guidelines and action plans in line to the international policy frameworks. Policy provisions have well addressed the perspective of inclusion to address the issues of most vulnerable such as PWDs in disasters and their engagement in all the spectrum of disaster risk reduction and management cycle. However, the existing gap is seen in the representation of PWDs in policy driven structures (federal to local level DRRM committees), and gap in their engagement in risk assessment process and preparedness consultations. Hence, their diverse challenges are left behind in risk reduction and response plans and even in recovery phase after disasters. Local level representatives need guideline and orientation on how they can integrate disability inclusive in their DRRM programs and plan as provisioned in the DRRM policy frameworks.

**Need of Indicator based monitoring and evaluation framework:** There is immense need of monitoring framework to monitor the implementation of inclusive DRRM policy provisions from federal to local level. The indicators based monitoring system and engagement of PWDs stakeholders in the monitoring process is vital.

**Federal Level Voices:** NDRMA is recently established but prioritizes inclusiveness, takes it as important aspect of DRRM. Different provisions and differential treatment has been provisioned, Policy dialogues are important tool for sensitization, has to happen frequently. NDRRMA acknowledges the gap of policy implementation, data is major challenge to address the diversity within the PWDs. Data on disability is important to design the evacuation route modelling. The Blanket approach of response to PWDs may not work well due to their different level of disability condition. Government should develop framework accordingly, at province and local level, data management is very essential disaggregated data is very important at all stage of DRR cycle, hazard wise and PWD diversity wise. Local government has to draw attention for the same, general framework and hazard wise plans should be endorsed in consultation with the persons with disability.

**Way forward:** NDRMA is very serious to prepare hazard wise guidelines and disseminate at all level special and differential action is prioritized, it will prepare guideline and local and province will integrate relevant local issues and manage DRRM cycle. In coming days NDRRMA will work on protocol step by step for different type of PWDs indicator and strategy to be worked out.

**Practice of Changunarayan Municipality, Bagmati Province:** The municipality has allocated budget accordingly, during COVID-19, needs were assessed and support were provided however due to geographical setting PWDs do not have easy access even for treatment, access to information is bleak, health post are not easily accessible and disable friendly. Their empowerment is critical they should be empowered and raised self-confidence to earn their living not be dependent on relief and other supports only. For this, the local level should develop comprehensive programs and plans to engage the PWDs in income generation activities to build their self-confidence and economic sustainability. Proper database system of PWDs at local level should be available and updated yearly. It is helpful to design the programs for them and also preparedness for disaster response.

**Way Forward:** Livelihood promoting, income generation and skill training for generating income of PWDs.

### **Civil Society voice:**

**Nepal Disability Federation:** There is policy and guidelines however still gap in its effective implementation that we do not ensure women and excluded groups participation during planning. Enabling environment to ensure participation is also a gap. How to protect PWDs from disaster, their rights to access to services etc. is important. Different discussions are happening, policy guidelines are there but still there are plenty of scope of improvement to address the diverse need of PWDs in disaster. The advocacy has resulted in learning how to be safe and protected during disasters. Rescue preference first not given to PWDs during disaster by government as well as by humanitarian actors, hence this needs to be corrected. The proper databases system, their location tracking system will be helpful to rescue them on timely manner. Similarly, the information and education materials also needs to be designed and distributed based on the various level and types of disability. It is very important to sensitize the family members of the PWDs on the way of treating them. During disasters, PWDs especially women and girls might face greater vulnerability in terms of protection related concerns which should be well managed by the humanitarian actors including government.

**CSO/NGO (Eco Nepal):** Effective implementation of disability inclusive DRR is key challenge, National Planning Commission is also applying the international commitment of Leave no one behind during disaster. Infrastructures are not PWDs friendly, CSOs have been advocating for the same since long and especially during preparedness their inclusion is mandatory. Due to various reason, not all local level are not able to follow and be sensitive towards the inclusive policies and guidelines. At the community they are not aware, access to info not able to reach them in terms of

inclusiveness. Some unfavorable policies are also increasing the vulnerability of PWDs. For example, the social security allowance collapses if not withdrawn in three months especially at the community level. This is not a very practical regulation for the PWDs because they might not get the information on time or they are not able to perform it within timeline. Hence, these kind of practical challenges should be well undertaken while developing guidelines and programs for the PWDs. In addition to this, only provisions cannot work commitments and consultation needs to be strategically drawn to enable PWD friendly DRR management.

### **CSO/NGO: Atulya Foundation**

Key gap in addressing the issues of PWDs during disaster is lack of consultation with PWDs during risk analysis, preparedness planning process as well as policy and guideline formulation process. During 2015 earthquake, clear guideline was gap and still the challenge is guideline should not be developed based on the international frameworks but should be developed considering national and local context. People have different understanding, some can be excluded at times of disaster. In normal as well as disaster scenario, the safety and protection of PWDs, public safety for all should be the motto of all the stakeholders those are involved in the humanitarian response.

**DPNet-Nepal:** Inclusive DRR discussion is not happened much hence advocacy discussions should be regular to sensitize humanitarian actors and government so as to listen the challenges of PWDs and to develop disability inclusive frameworks in collaborative and coordinated approach. Though, the guidelines and monitoring system is developing but the framework should be designed with time frame and indicators to see implementation. NDRMA should be proactive in our context to fill the gap. Stakeholders can work collectively to support and sensitize government.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

- PWDs needs to be identified and engaged in the risk analysis process for the disaster risk management plan at local level and their participation in the consultation must be ensured by local level to address their need in disaster preparedness and response plan.
- While addressing the issues and challenges of PWDs during humanitarian context, the policy makers, humanitarian responders need to be informed on their diverse need, types and level of disability.
- Coordinated and complementary approach of non-government stakeholders is required to support the government agencies while formulating policy frameworks and strategic action plans focusing PWDs.
- Well systematized database system of PWDs from federal to local level considering their types and level with their location track system is essential for their safe evacuation during disasters. In addition, proper information on the PWDs is helpful in responding their needs without leaving them behind.
- Monitoring mechanism with indicators of achievement should be developed to track the implementation of inclusive policies at local level. The engagement of PWDs in the monitoring process is essential.

**The policy brief is developed based on the discussion and recommendations from stakeholders in the policy dialogue conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

