DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Status brief on Nepal

Author: Dr. Suman Kumar Karna, Urban Governance and DRR Specialist

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Summary

Nepal faces significant climate and earthquake risks, ranking high among multi-hazard-prone nations. With over 80% of the population exposed to natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods, and forest fires, the impact on persons with disabilities (PWDs) is a significant concern. Women and girls with disabilities face double discrimination, encountering increased violence and limited access to recovery services.

The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act of 2017 establishes a comprehensive disaster management approach, covering prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. However, there are gaps in incorporating PWDs into disaster response processes, lacking clear guidelines for collaboration with government agencies at different levels. The existing plans and frameworks inadequately address the needs of PWDs, positioning them as recipients rather than active partners in disaster risk reduction and management. The Government endorsed the National Policy for DRR 2018 and the Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Action Plan (2018-2030), aligning with SFDRR priorities and targets. While acknowledging the needs of vulnerable groups, such as PWDs, the local-level District Preparedness and Response Plan (DPRP) lacks specific strategies and tools for their inclusion and role in DRRM. In addition, there is a need for standardized processes focusing on groups like women, older people, and persons with disabilities, ensuring their active engagement in disaster risk management planning and implementation on the ground.

Integration of PWDs in DRR efforts, with access to knowledge and resources, is crucial for Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction. The development of relevant policies and training conducted by development partners and local governments in Nepal show some progress in this direction. However, there remains insufficient planning, implementation, and monitoring of disability-inclusive DRR, resulting in the exclusion of

PWDs from relief and decision-making processes. Gaps exist in policies and their translation into practice at the local level, where PWDs are not effectively involved in policy formulation and development of disaster management plans. There is a lack of emphasis on collecting disaggregated disability data for planning, and thus, the existing data is inconsistent and incomplete. Access to information on DRR is also hindered by a lack of inclusivity in knowledge products and their limited accessibility for diverse PWDs.

The recommendations focus on enhancing Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction efforts. Locally, governments are advised to align their action plans with DRR laws and policies, ensuring regular collection and sharing of disaggregated disability data. Meaningful participation of PWDs in all DRR processes is crucial, emphasizing the creation of local resource pools for effective disaster response. Improving access to DRR information for PWDs through collaboration with relevant organizations is recommended. Suggested actions include local governments allocating 20% of the 'Disaster Fund' exclusively for PWDs, a review of humanitarian program documents, fostering partnerships between development organizations and local-level PWDs, and training programs for first responders. Lastly, promoting best practices and resource materials on inclusive community-based DRR through accessible formats is encouraged, along with the inclusion of PWDs in risk mapping and financial protection schemes through collaborative efforts between governments and relevant organizations.

Abbreviations

[BIPAD]   [Building Information Platform Against Disaster]

[CBS]   [Central Bureau of Statistics]

[DDMC]   [District Disaster Management Committee]

[DiDRR]   [Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction]

[DPRP]   [Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan]

[DRM]   [Disaster Risk Management]

[DRRM]   [Disaster Risk Reduction and Management]

[GEDSI]   [Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion]

[GESI]   [Gender Equality and Social Inclusion]

[GFDRR]   [Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery]

[INGOs]   [International Non-Governmental Organizations]

[LDMC]   [Local Disaster Management Committee]

[MoHA]   [Ministry of Home Affairs]

[NCDRRM]   [National Council for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management]

[NDRF]   [National Disaster Response Framework]

[NDRRMA]   [National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority]

[NFDN]   [National Federation of Disabled-Nepal]

[NGOs]		[Non-Governmental Organizations]

[OPDs]		[Organization of People with Disabilities]

[PWDs]		[Persons with Disabilities]

[SFDRR]		[Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction]

[UNCRPD]	[United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities]

[UNDP]		[United Nations Development Program]

[UNDRR]		[United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction]

[UNFPA]		[United Nations Population Fund]

[UNISDR]		[United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction]

I.   Introduction

Nepal is vulnerable to various types of disasters due to its geographical location, geological features, climatic conditions and existing socio-economic factors. The country ranks 4th in terms of climate risk according to the Global Climate Risk Index, 11th in terms of earthquake risk, and is in the top 20 of all the multi-hazard-prone countries in the world.[1] More than 80% of the population is exposed to the risk of natural hazards, which include earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, extreme temperatures and glacial lake outbursts flood (MoHA 2017). In 2022, the DRR Portal registered 3929 hazard incidents, which affected around 7,000 families.[2]

Climate change has resulted in extreme rainfall patterns in Nepal. The 2021 Melamchi flood killed 24 people and damaged public and private buildings and infrastructures worth $905 million. Furthermore, incidents of forest fires have increased tenfold in the last decade.[3] From 2013 to 2023, around 769 people have died, and 2,568 have been injured in around 20,000 forest fire incidents. In April 2023 alone, 92 incidents of wildfire were recorded.[4]

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[1] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) (2019), Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal, Status Report. https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/disaster-risk-reduction-nepal-status-report-july-2019

[2] Government of Nepal, Nepal Disaster Reduction Portal. http://drrportal.gov.np/

[3] See: Aljazeera. Lack of cross-border flood alerts adds to disaster fears in Nepal, 10 March 2023. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/10/lack-of-cross-border-flood-alerts-adds-to-disaster-fears-in-nepal, and Raju Jhallu Prasad and Sujan Khanal. More pre-monsoon forest fires in Nepal, 13 May 2023. https://nepalitimes.com/here-now/more-pre-monsoon-forest-fires-in-nepal

[4] Republic. Wildfires at 92 different places across Nepal, air pollution levels rise, 14 April 2023. https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/wildfires-at-92-different-places-across-nepal-air-pollution-levels-rise/
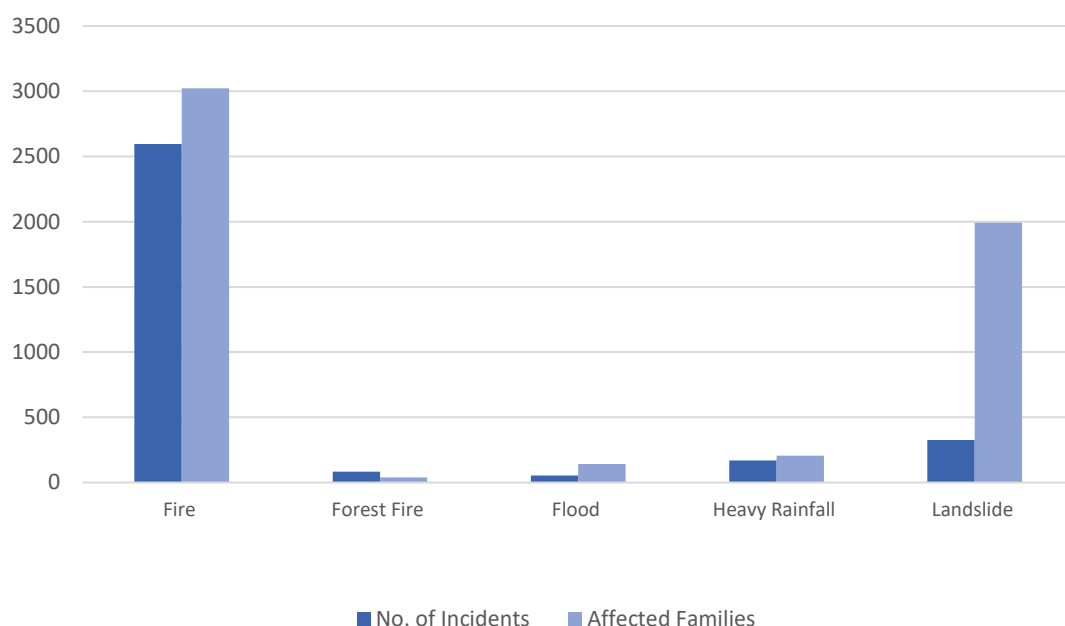
Figure 1: Major Hazard Event and Number of Affected Families in 2022
Source: Government of Nepal, DRR Portal (2023)

All these disaster events can have a significant impact on persons with disabilities. A survey conducted by UNISDR in 2013 revealed that only 20% of the PWDs were able to evacuate their living spaces without difficulty during emergencies, underscoring the critical importance of accessibility in disaster situations. Moreover, individuals with profound and severe disabilities, who often rely on others for support, face even greater challenges when it comes to evacuating themselves during emergencies.[5]

Furthermore, disaster events create the potential for new disabilities. For every person killed in a disaster, another three are injured and left with long-lasting impairment. In the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, about 1100 people lost their limbs, and 12% of the injured

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[5] Austin Lord, and others (2016). Disaster, Disability, & Difference: A Study of the Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Post-Earthquake Nepal. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Nepal. https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/2016/Disaster-Disability-and-Difference_May2016_For-Accessible-PDF.pdf

had damage in their spinal cord, which could lead to permanent paralysis if not properly cared for.[6]

Nepali women and girls with disabilities face "double discrimination." The Disability Inclusive Development report for Nepal states that women and girls with disabilities face increased violence, including psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. Girls with disabilities were particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse in camps and temporary shelters. Women with disabilities, including indigenous women, had less access to recovery, rehabilitation services, and justice.[7]

Many persons with disabilities were unable to access emergency cash transfers due to transportation issues and loss of disability identity cards. Approximately 37% of persons with disabilities were excluded from the relief and recovery programs due to the lack of representation in governance structures. A Study on Disability and Disaster shows that almost 49% of persons with disabilities felt that their level of damage and suffering was worse than other communities in the 2015 earthquake.[8] During the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal, over 45% of the disability community had experienced interrupted access to their regular health services during lockdown, and 36% reported not receiving adequate health services.[9] This raised critical questions about health equity, inclusion and accessibility of services for persons with disabilities.

[6] Atullya Foundation (2022). Disability Inclusive Get Ready Guidebook. https://atullya.com.np/category/publications/
[7] Institute of Development Studies. Disability Inclusive Development Nepal Situational Analysis, June 2020. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/15510/DID%20Nepal%20SITAN_June%202020.pdf?sequence=1
[8] Austin Lord, and others (2016). Disaster, Disability, & Difference: A Study of the Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Post-Earthquake Nepal.
[9] National Federation of Disabled - Nepal (NFDN) (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown on persons with disabilities: A rapid assessment report. https://nfdn.org.np/impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-and-lockdown-on-persons-with-disabilities-a-rapid-assessment-report
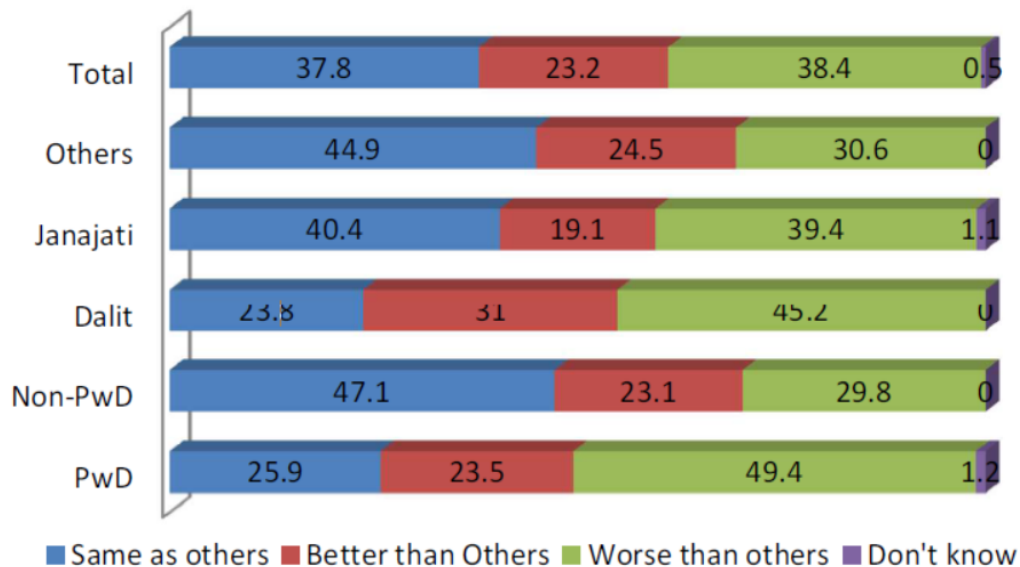
Figure 2: Levels of damage incurred in comparison to others in community

Source: UNDP (2016)

Disability statistics in Nepal remain inadequate and fragmented due to data gaps in census, surveys, and other administrative data systems in practice. The 2011 census reported 1.94%, whereas the National Living Standard Survey reported that 3.6% of the population in Nepal had some form of disability. Other disability data sources include the local government profiles of the urban and rural municipalities in Nepal.[10] However, none of these data sources produce disaggregated information on disability at the household level. Even if that information is available, it is not consistent and accessible in an open format. Official government statistics suggest persons with disabilities constitute just 2.2% of the total population, of which 2.5% are male and 2.0% are female.[11] Disability activists believe that disability-associated stigma and limited in-country data collection capacity result in an underestimation of the population of

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[10] See: http://lgprofile.gov.np/

[11] Central Bureau of Statistics, & United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2014). Population Monograph of Nepal 2014 Volume II: Social Demography. Government of Nepal National Planning Commission Secretariat. https://nepal.unfpa.org/en/publications/population-monograph-nepal-2014-volume-ii-social-demography

persons with disabilities.[12] Indeed, an independent national survey estimated that persons with disabilities could be 15% of the population.[13]

Following the Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017), the Government of Nepal created an official classification scheme for disabilities with 10 categories and four degrees of severity.[14]

Classification of Disabilities – 10 Categories			
1	Physical disability	6	Mental or psychosocial disability
2	Disability-related to vision	7	Intellectual ability
3	Disability-related to hearing	8	Disability associated with hemophilia
4	Deaf-blind	9	Disability associated with autism
5	Disability-related to voice and speech	10	Multiple disabilities
Classification of Disabilities – 4 Degrees of Severity			
1	Profound Disability- Red Identity Card	3	Moderate Disability- Yellow Identity Card
2	Severe Disability- Blue Identity Card and	4	Mild Disability- White Identity Card

[12] Obindra Chand (2020). Pain and plight of people with disabilities during COVID-19 pandemic: Reflections from Nepal. Medical Anthropology at UCL. https://medanthucl.com/2020/06/08/pain-and-plight-of-people-with-disabilities-during-covid-19-pandemic-reflections-from-nepal/
[13] Arne Eide, Shailes Neupane, and Karl-Gerhard Hem (2016). Living conditions among people with disability in Nepal. https://www.sintef.no/globalassets/sintef-teknologi-og-samfunn/rapporter-sintef-ts/sintef-a27656-nepalwebversion.pdf
[14] The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Pub. L. No. 2074 (2017). https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Act-Relating-to-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-2074-2017.pdf

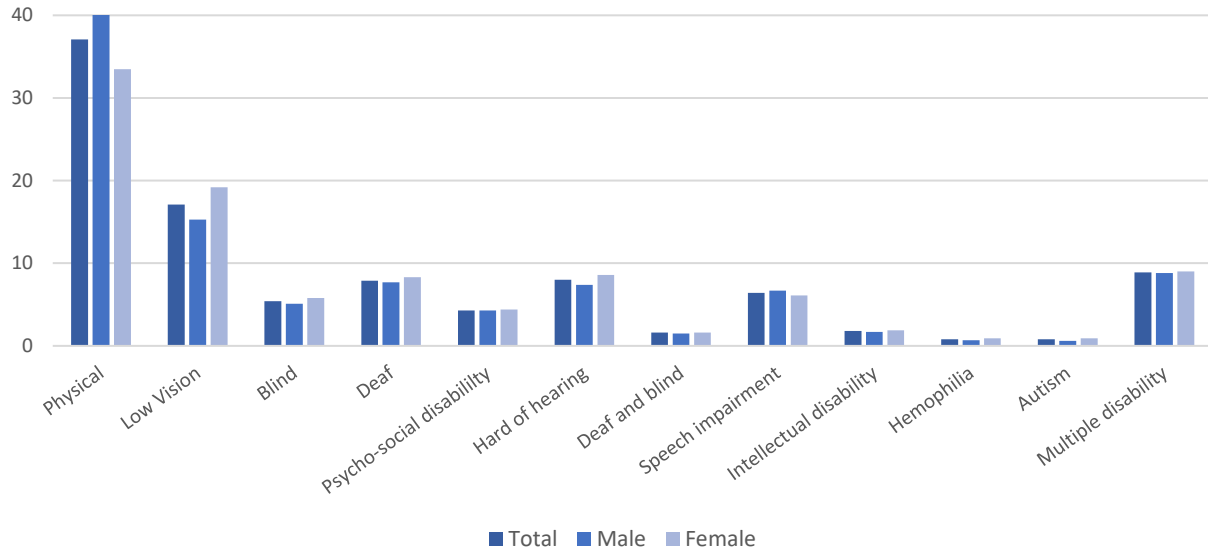Figure 3: Population with disability by type

Source: Census (2021)

II. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management – Institutions and Functions

"Lay down a special plan and program for women, children, senior citizen, Dalit, marginalized groups and communities, people with disabilities who are at disaster risk, and implement and cause to implement the same" – DRRM Act 2017

The Disaster Risk and Management (DRM) Act, 2017 replaced the old Natural Calamity/Relief Act (1982) and established an institutional set-up and accountability mechanism and switched from a relief-centric to a broad-based approach embracing every stage of the disaster management cycle: prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.[15] The National Disaster Response Framework (NDRF, 2018) and the Local Government Operations Act (LGOA, 2017) are supplementary legal frameworks to assist in the DRRM. These legal frameworks are guided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), whereas other ministries, such as the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Urban Development, Agriculture, Health, Education, etc., provide necessary support and prepare a sectoral plan for disaster risk reduction.

The DRRM Act establishes formal structures, roles, and responsibilities at the federal, provincial, district, and local levels. At the federal level, the National Council (NCDRRM) holds the responsibility for the overall approval of national-level disaster management plans and policies, as well as resource mobilization, while the Executive Committee provides guidance and support for building and implementing DRR plans and policies.

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[15] Dhruba Gautam (2022). Nepal's DRRM Policy Landscape: Well On The Way To Making Nepal Ready And Able to Respond to Disasters. https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2022/08/22/nepals-drrm-policy-landscape-well-on-the-way-to-making-nepal-ready-and-able-to-respond-to-disasters/

The NDRRMA is tasked with coordinating and implementing the plans, programs, and decisions made by the council. It also offers technical support to provincial and local governments and mobilizes security forces and rescue teams in coordination with MoHA when needed. At the provincial level, the Provincial Level Disaster Management Committee plays a crucial role in coordinating with local authorities, whereas at the local level, the District and Local Disaster Management Committees (DDMC and LDMC) are responsible for implementing local disaster management plans. They mobilize emergency operations centres, conduct search and rescue operations, and coordinate with provincial authorities and other development partners in implementing their priority DRRM activities in the field.

While the existing institutional structures and processes guided by the DRM Act have made some progress in incorporating persons with disabilities and their organizations in the disaster response process, there remains an absence of clear guidelines regarding their partnership and collaboration with line agencies at the federal and local governments level across all phases of disaster risk management, including prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. The NDRF does not adequately consider the needs and involvement of persons with disabilities in any of its disaster response phases, although it does acknowledge the importance of providing special protection for persons with disabilities. Similarly, the Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans (DPRPs) at the local level often miss-accounting for the specific impacts that vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, may experience during disasters and overlook opportunities for mobilizing and supporting these groups in enhancing and making risk management efforts inclusive. Consequently, the majority of key stakeholders view persons with disabilities as recipients of humanitarian support rather than active partners in the overall DRRM process.

III. Legislative Frameworks, Policies and Strategies

The Constitution of Nepal, 2015; the National Five-Year Plan, the DRRM Act 2017, the LG Operation Act 2017, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guide the current landscape of inclusive disaster risk governance in the country. The DRRM Framework for Nepal is guided by the SFDRR 2015-2030 and their four priorities of action (UNDRR, 2015). The Sendai Framework also recognizes persons with disabilities as major stakeholders and encourages member states to include them and their representative organizations in risk assessment, designing and implementing DRR plans and Programs.

Sendai Framework Priority 4 – Empower persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote equitable and accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches.

Guiding Principle III (19.d) – Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by disasters. It promotes all-of-society engagement and partnership which requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation of those disproportionately affected by disasters.

Guiding Principle III (19.g) - Disaster risk reduction requires inclusive risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability.

Policy/Legislation	Year	Description
TABLE 2: Disability in Policies in Nepal		
Protection and Welfare of the Disabled Persons Act	**1982**	An early policy establishing free medical examinations for persons with disabilities.
Ratification of the 2007 United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD)	**2010**	Article 11 of the Convention states that signatory countries are responsible for taking all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.
Accessible Physical Infrastructure and Communication Services Directive for People with Disability	**2013**	Indicated public places must be accessible both physically and in terms of communication for persons with disabilities, with minimum standards, specifications and technical requirements.
Article 18 of the Constitution of Nepal	**2015**	States that no person shall be discriminated against because of their sociodemographic characteristics.
Disaster Risk and Management Act	**2017**	Adopted after two initiatives: international Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), which specifically called for disability inclusion to be integrated into disaster management; and Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action of 2016, which detailed how action inclusive of persons with disabilities was needed across all planning and implementation of humanitarian programme.
The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities	**2017**	Further clarified the right to security, rescue and protection for persons with disabilities with priority during emergencies, disasters and armed conflicts. The Act also made the government responsible for appropriate arrangements and legal actions to reduce the unequal burden on persons with disabilities and promote equity and justice. The Act indicated the need for disability-inclusive emergency and disaster plans, preparedness programme and interventions.
Health sector emergency response plan: COVID-19 pandemic	**2020**	Stipulated quarantine facilities be designed to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, and that risk communication be developed in accessible formats suitable for people with a range of disabilities. Guidance for disability inclusion in regular health services has also been created.

Source: Key Considerations: Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Action and Emergency Response in South and Southeast Asia and Beyond, Social Sciences in Humanitarian Action

In alignment with the principles and framework of the SFDRR, the GoN endorsed the National Policy for DRR 2018 and the Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategic Action Plan (2018-2030). These documents provide a comprehensive planning framework for DRRM, encompassing different priority areas and guiding government actors and stakeholders to achieve targets by adopting appropriate processes. The DRR National Strategic Action Plan (2018-2030) placed priority actions under three different terms, i.e. short, medium and long-term and assigned responsibilities simultaneously within the federal, provincial and local governments. The strategic action plan has identified four priority areas with 18 priority actions and strategic activities for each priority action. Priority Area 2 focuses on Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance at Federal, Provincial and Local Levels, and one of the priority actions is on Ensuring Inclusiveness in Disaster Risk Reduction with a focus on marginalized groups, women, children, older people and PWDs.

Develop and implement special programs on disaster risk reduction on the basis of priority for the highly vulnerable groups such as the marginalized groups of society, women, people with disability, children, and elderly persons – Strategic Activity in Priority Area 2 of National Strategic Action Plan

While the DRR policy acknowledges the needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, older people, and persons with disabilities through a blanket approach, the preparedness plans, such as the District Preparedness and Response Plan (DPRP), do not adequately address the potential impact on these vulnerable groups. The national monsoon preparedness and response plans of 2021 and 2022 include provisions for safe spaces, dignity kits, psychosocial support, and gender-based violence standard operating procedures. However, they fail to specifically mention the needs of persons

with disabilities, girls, boys, unaccompanied children, or older people or provide strategies for addressing the needs of these groups.[16]

Furthermore, the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) urges to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including disasters. The Act relating to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) reinforces the right to protection for persons with disabilities in times of armed conflict, state of emergency, or disaster.

The persons with disabilities shall have the right to obtain security, rescue and protection with priority in times of armed conflict, state of emergency or disaster – Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017

At the local level, the Local Government Operations Act guides disaster management and inclusion efforts. This includes the preparation of local plans and policies, operation of early warning systems, risk assessment and vulnerability mapping, the establishment of a disaster fund, reconstruction and rehabilitation, and awareness raising. Specifically addressing disabilities, the act includes provisions for distributing disability identity cards, establishing rehabilitation centres, and promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in the decision-making process. Despite the existence of policies and plans for disaster risk management (DRM) at the national and local levels, there is a lack of standardized processes and provisions that specifically focus on groups such as women, older people, and persons with disabilities. It is crucial for the federal Government to identify the unique needs of each group and develop specific approaches to ensure their participation, as well as to design response and preparedness programs that cater to their specific needs. These necessary changes

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[16] Dhruba Gautam (2022). Nepal's DRRM Policy Landscape: Well On The Way To Making Nepal Ready And Able to Respond to Disasters. https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2022/08/22/nepals-drrm-policy-landscape-well-on-the-way-to-making-nepal-ready-and-able-to-respond-to-disasters/

should be made at the apex level in the DRR Policy and at the local level in the DPRP in order to further facilitate the active engagement of PWDs in DRRM planning and deliveries.

IV. Knowledge, Information and Capacity

The Government is in the process of localizing the BIPAD platform[17] to collect data on disasters and support all three tiers of Government in their planning and decision-making process. This has also been a guiding principle of SFDRR, which advocates robust disaggregated data for planning. At the local level, multiple administrative data systems are used mostly for upward reporting – Health Management Information System, Education Management Information System, Social Protection Data through Vital Registration Events, Disaster Management Information System, etc. However, there is a lack of digital literacy and infrastructure at the local level to produce, disseminate and use data for decision-making. For instance, the vital registration system gathers data on disability primarily for the issuance of disability identity cards. However, there is a lack of linkage between vulnerability data and disability data. Moreover, most of the datasets are not disaggregated based on disability, ethnicity, age, and gender, which undermines their usability and effectiveness.

In view of knowledge and awareness, there are two crucial aspects to consider. Firstly, the extent to which governments prioritize the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) efforts, and secondly, whether OPDs and persons with disabilities have adequate access to knowledge, informational materials, and other resources produced for disseminating DRR information. Non-Governmental Agencies engaged in the intersection of Disaster and Disability collaborate with OPDs to create materials that are accessible to persons with various disabilities, including hearing impairment and visual

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[17] The Government of Nepal, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority. BIPAD Portal. https://bipad.gov.np/np/

impairments. However, not all types of PWDs have equal access to knowledge and awareness regarding DRR initiatives. Furthermore, the representation of diverse disability groups and gender in the preparation of DRR plans remains limited.

The national and local governments, including the National Federation of Disabled Nepal (NFDN) and selected development partners, are the key agencies which provide training to persons with disabilities and leaders of OPDs on different issues, including emergency shelter and settlement standards. The training programs help to build knowledge and facilitate disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management in the country. Subsequently, the national-level OPD leaders also engage in training relevant stakeholders from the districts, including the OPDs, municipal officials, police and army personnel, and humanitarian actors active in the field. These trainees have formed a collaborative resource pool and hence function as a community of practice, advocating for the rights and privileges of populations with disabilities, including setting accessibility standards based on the Principles of Universal Design. However, these training opportunities targeting persons with disabilities and OPDs are still very occasional and limited in numbers. It is important to make the training and capacity-building programme an ongoing process in order to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities and promote their engagement in different phases of DRRM.

Both federal and local governments, including Development Partners, are at the forefront of implementing a large range of initiatives aimed at integrating disability considerations into disaster risk management. At the federal level, the Government has formulated National Policies and Guidelines on Disability, including the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policy. Additionally, in collaboration with a private organization (Atullya Foundation), they have also developed practical resources such as the Disability Inclusive Get Ready Guidebook[18] and the Disability Inclusive DRR

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[18] Atullya Foundation (2022). Disability Inclusive Get Ready Guidebook.
https://atullya.com.np/category/publications/

Guideline. These comprehensive measures play an instrumental role in mainstreaming disability within the broader framework of disaster risk management.

Building upon the foundation of National Policies and Guidelines, local governments have also taken significant steps to advance disability inclusion. They have developed their own GESI policies, Disaster Management Fund Guidelines, Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans (DPRP), vulnerability mapping handbook and guidelines for the distribution of disability identity cards. By aligning their efforts with the broader national initiatives, these local-level acts, policies and plans create a cohesive approach to promote and ensure disability inclusion in all aspects of disaster risk management. In the same context, Development Partners[19], OPDs, and NGOs are also actively engaged in mainstreaming and supporting persons with disabilities to ensure their rights to protection and participation. Notably, the Atullya Foundation has made significant contributions by developing the BACHAU (SOS) mobile app[20], specifically designed for individuals with hearing impairment. This innovative application allows them to send alerts to ambulance services, fire brigades, and the police during emergencies, ensuring swift assistance. Furthermore, the National Federation of Disabled-Nepal, in collaboration with multiple organizations, has undertaken surveys on vulnerability and disability. Their efforts have yielded valuable insights and led to the publication of resource materials on DiDRR.[21] These initiatives collectively contribute to promoting the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and management processes.

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[19] Development Partners like ASB, CBM, HI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, USAID and others are frequently engaged in promoting DiDRR in Nepal by supporting and implementing different activities around this agenda.
[20] The app is not currently available for download, and it is only limited to two forms of disability.
[21] National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal (2017). Towards greater inclusion in disaster risk reduction in Nepal: Realizing all-of-society commitment through meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. https://nfdn.org.np/presentations/towards-greater-inclusion-in-disaster-risk-reduction-in-nepal-realizing-all-of-society-commitment-through-meaningful-participation-of-persons-with-disabilities/

V. Gaps and Challenges

Nepal has revised its local disaster risk management planning guidelines, emphasizing the roles of persons with disabilities and OPDs in the development of DRR Plans as well as the importance of collecting and using disability disaggregated data. However, DiDRR in Nepal is yet to be fully implemented. Many agencies in the DRR sector have limited focus on disability-inclusive approaches, treating persons with disabilities as recipients of humanitarian aid rather than active stakeholders in decision-making. The planning, implementation and monitoring of disability-inclusive DRR are insufficient, and persons with disabilities are largely excluded from relief, responses and decision-making processes. Agencies like ASB, Handicap International, and CBM have developed methods and tools, but they are not put to optimal use as the culture of sharing information is very limited. Engagement and inputs of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in opportunities like induction, orientation, drills, simulations and other relevant trainings have been very minimal. The advocacy efforts in mainstreaming DiDRR are weak as the community-level risk assessment is scarce, and hence, the inclusion of persons with disabilities' concerns is limited in plans and processes.

Gaps in Policies and Implementation

The Sendai Framework advocates that persons with disabilities and their organizations are legitimate stakeholders in the DRR design, policies and implementation. However, there are still gaps in policy formulation and coherence at the national and sub-national levels in Nepal. The National Policy on DRR 2018 clearly states the representation and meaningful participation of women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities and people from economically and socially marginalized communities in all stages and structures of disaster risk reduction based on inclusive disaster management concept. However, this policy is not translated into practice at the local level. Persons with

disabilities and OPDs are scarcely involved in policy formulation and policy reforms. At the local level, municipalities are ineffective in mobilizing the proactive participation of persons with disabilities in developing preparedness and response plans as they are often only considered 'recipients of benefits' in DRRM. As a result, the real issues of the disability community are often not reflected and implemented through the local-level disaster plans.

The Strategic Action Plan (2018-30) has also ensured inclusiveness in DRRM, but inadequate representation of at-risk groups in the governance structures at the sub-national level poses challenges. Province and local level governments are formulating the strategic action plan in line with the national plan of action, which strongly advocates for the participation of women, persons with disabilities, elderly and marginalized groups to make DRRM inclusive. Meaningful participation of women and at-risk groups in organizational structure and system, formulation of strategy and implementation process are prerequisites for sustainable and resilient development. It is their right to participate and take responsibility to contribute in DRRM.[22]

Data and Information Gaps

The significance of collecting disaggregated disability data for effective planning and evidence-based decision-making is not emphatically emphasized in any of the policy documents. Disability data is primarily generated when individuals provide their information to the local authorities in order to access social protection programs using disability identity cards or when the Government conducts surveys at the household level. However, these data collection efforts are often carried out independently by various organizations, resulting in the creation of different datasets that lack consistency and interoperability.[23] Furthermore, they are often incomplete. For example,

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[22] Shakti Gurung and Jwala Pandey (2021). Gender and Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management in Nepal. Women Humanitarian and DRR Platform. https://www.dpnet.org.np/uploads/files/Inclusion%20in%20DRM_WHDRRP-Shakti%20Gurung,%20Jwala%20Pandey%202021-08-18%2020-16-39.pdf

[23] In Nepal, the practice of sharing data and having interoperable sharing platforms is still at a nascent stage. Different agencies collect and use data for their own purposes at federal, provincial and local

the Nepal Population and Housing Census 2021 only captures data by type of disability but does not further disaggregate by ward, gender, type, age group, etc. A standardized collection method should be introduced for more complete and robust disability data. trainers without disabilities with hearing, visual, and orthopaedic disabilities; female, male, and LGBTQIA; older persons and adults. Additionally, the training pool includes trainers focused on children with disabilities. Below is the current composition of the Cebu DiDRR Network Trainer on inclusive DRR.

Intersectionality with Disability

The focus in DRR goes beyond simply representing persons with disabilities but rather emphasizes the proactive involvement of diverse persons with disabilities in DRRM. Despite various organizations collaborating with OPDs and persons with disabilities through municipalities in Nepal, persons with profound disabilities still struggle to exercise their rights to participation and protection. While the National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management incorporates the concept of GESI, there is a notable absence of explicit recognition regarding the role of persons with disabilities and OPDs in DRR planning and programming.

Disability Identity Card and Social Protection Programs

The disability identity card plays a decisive role in reaching the most vulnerable persons with disabilities and ensuring their access to social protection schemes. Currently, the social protection scheme offers cash transfers specifically to individuals with 'profound and fully disabled' status.[24] However, it is worth noting that once a person obtains a

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levels. It is important to note that data sharing between different agencies and ministries can be complex, involving technical and logistical challenges. That is to say that while data sharing is infrequent, the practices are also evolving.

[24] The cash transfers range from about 6 USD to 19 USD per month. People disabled during the civil war – and their caregivers – are covered by a special provision and are entitled to significantly more – about 60USD a month. The reach of this programme is thought to be significantly limited, at less than 40% of identified people with disabilities in Nepal – a number which is itself thought to be a significant underestimate. See: Brigitte Rohwerder (2020). Disability inclusive development—Nepal situational analysis.
https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/15510

specific type of disability card, it cannot be modified even if their disability status changes over time. Therefore, it is essential to periodically monitor the disability status, update data, and expand the outreach of social protection programs to better serve the evolving needs of persons with disabilities.[25]

Lack of Collaboration between Development Partners, persons with disabilities and OPDs

Most of the International Development Partners in Nepal who are not classified as OPDs do not work directly with persons with disabilities and their organizations. Development Partners need to work with persons with disabilities at the local level to build their capacity, incorporate their voices in DRR Planning, and ensure their proactive participation to ensure better mobilization of resources and promote a more targeted approach in DiDRR. Additionally, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by disasters and face significant challenges in accessing relief and essential resources during emergency situations. Due to a lack of accurate data on persons with disabilities at the local government level, vulnerabilities are assessed inadequately, which leads to several issues being insufficiently addressed. This ultimately results in persons with disabilities experiencing greater difficulties in obtaining the necessary support and resources during disasters.

Access to Information on DRR

Using different modes, including websites, a few organizations like CBM, NFDN, and ASB offer information on DRR in accessible formats, including Braille, specifically tailored for persons with disabilities. The engagement of persons with disabilities and OPDs in the development and dissemination of IEC materials is not common, and hence, the effectiveness of such products is questionable. Knowledge products are produced only to implement specific projects and are rarely used in the future, thereby leading to the need to "reinvent the wheel." The duplication of knowledge products and

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[25] Lena M. Banks, and others (2018). Disability-inclusive social protection research in Nepal: A national overview with a case study from Tanahun district. International Centre for Evidence in Disability Research Report: London, UK. https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/Full-report_Nepal.pdf

the confusion of issues cause inefficiencies in this regard. Additionally, the accessibility of this information primarily relies on online platforms, thereby excluding a considerable number of persons with disabilities who are not conversant with computer applications. Knowledge products play a vital role in training and equipping persons with disabilities and their families with practical know-how and skills for preparedness and self-protection during hazardous events. Hence, it is pivotal to generate information that addresses the diverse needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all.[26]

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[26] National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal (2019). Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal (Situation, gaps, challenges and way forward). https://nfdn.org.np/article/disability-inclusion-disaster-risk-reduction-in-nepal/

VI. Recommendations

- Train local Government on policies and strategies outlined in the DRR Policy and Strategic Action Plan, and based on that, develop local-level measurable action plans. Ensure local-level policies and programs address the guiding principles and strategies of the Sendai Framework, National Strategic Action Plan and Article 11 of UNCRPD.

- Ensure regular collection of disaggregated disability data is interoperable across various administrative data systems and shared across multiple stakeholders. The Government should make data available on public platforms and NGOs and should share data periodically with the local governments.

- Ensure the meaningful participation of intersectional groups of persons with disabilities in all the processes related to DRRM – policy making, planning, preparedness, response, mitigation, recovery and reconstruction, etc. It would be a good idea to train and form a resource pool at the local level, which can be mobilized during disasters.

- Improve access to DRR information for persons with disabilities by producing and disseminating information in accessible formats beyond online platforms. Collaborate with organizations specializing in facilitating accessibility and producing knowledge products, such as CBM, NFDN, and ASB to ensure that DRR information reaches and empowers diverse disability communities and their families. The emergency plans and crisis-related information linked to prevention

and response must be shared with all stakeholders who may need them.[27] Local sign languages, audio, captioned media or Braille versions of information should be used as per the needs of diverse groups.

- Encourage local governments to allocate 20 per cent of the total 'Disaster Fund' exclusively for persons with disabilities. This amount may also facilitate the implementation of activities focused on persons with disabilities through different local-level DRM plans like DPRP, EPRP and LDRCRP.

International Development Partners and Organizations

- Conduct a comprehensive review of all humanitarian program documents prepared by UN agencies and other organizations to assess the prospects of participation and involvement of persons with disabilities and OPDs in these response programs. The analysis should focus on identifying gaps and opportunities for enhancing their sustainable engagement and inclusion.

- Foster partnerships between development organizations working on disability issues and the local level persons with disabilities and OPDs for the implementation of technical programs and projects. This collaboration facilitates mutual learning, provides support for mainstreaming disability inclusion, and contributes to capacity building efforts for persons with disabilities and their organizations.

- Assist local Government in establishing a specialized pool of human resources at the local level dedicated to DiDRR. This can be achieved by recruiting and training facilitators and trainers with disabilities who possess the necessary skills to effectively engage and educate communities on inclusive DRR practices.

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[27] Obindra Chand, Katie Moore, and Stephen Thompson (2023). Key Considerations: Disability-Inclusive Humanitarian Action and Emergency Response in South and Southeast Asia and Beyond. Social Science in Humanitarian Action Platform. https://www.socialscienceinaction.org/resources/key-considerations-disability-inclusive-humanitarian-action-and-emergency-response-in-south-and-southeast-asia-and-beyond/

- Deliver training programs targeting the first responders to enhance their knowledge and skills in disability-inclusive disaster response. The training should cover areas such as disability awareness, accessible communication techniques, evacuation procedures that consider the needs of persons with disabilities and providing appropriate support tailored to their specific requirements during emergencies.

- Promote and widely disseminate best practices and resource materials on inclusive community-based DRR. This should include access to e-learning courses of DiDRR and GEDSI and the sharing of case studies, tools, and guidelines that showcase effective strategies for integrating persons with disabilities' concerns into community-level DRR initiatives. The resource should be easily accessible in formats that are readable to individuals with disabilities.

Empower PWDs and OPDs

- Promote empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities and OPDs in risk mapping activities.[28] Engagement of persons with disabilities and the contribution of their unique knowledge and position will help develop a better understanding of specific risks that affect them and their families. Adopting a disability perspective in risk assessment also aligns with the SFDRR's all-of-society approach, leading to the development of safer and more resilient communities.

- The tools and methodologies used in the collection, analysis, and sharing of risk information should be accessible to persons with disabilities to enable their proactive and effective participation.

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[28] Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (2017). Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management: Promising Practices and Opportunities for Enhanced Engagement. https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/GFDRR%20Disability%20inclusion%20in%20DRM%20Report_F.pdf

- Promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in financial protection schemes by collaborating with the Government and OPDs. The local Government should play a facilitative role in enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities in social protection schemes by identifying eligibility criteria, advocating for their involvement and ensuring that the social protection program reaches out to all forms of disability irrespective of severity.

Conclusion

Nepal is prone to disasters, and the situation is getting more serious with the growing impact of climate change in the region. The losses of both human life and infrastructure have already been increasingly frequent, and these impacts are disproportionately felt by persons with disabilities. Despite being signatories to all key international protocols on persons with disabilities and possessing disability-specific legislation, more needs to be done to improve the situation on the ground in Nepal.

Currently, the safety and rights of persons with disabilities are reflected in relevant laws and legislations related to DRR, health, education, access to infrastructure, and others, and different institutions are mandated to support issues and concerns of persons with disabilities. However, these efforts have been limited and have had a mixed impact. While there are strong programs such as the access to social security allowance that provide support to persons with disabilities, government data has been inconsistent with discrepancies between available datasets from different agencies. Furthermore, persons with disabilities are not sufficiently involved in DRRM and are often considered only as recipients of the services instead of collaborators in DRRM.

In general, Nepal is still weak in mobilizing the available resources, relevant tools, and technologies to secure the rights and concerns of persons with disabilities. This paper has outlined a series of recommendations to pursue with immediate effect.

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