

# DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

## Status brief on the Philippines



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# Summary

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Its population is susceptible to almost all kinds of hazards including storm surges, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, landslides, and droughts. In the past years, the Philippines experienced major disasters such as Super typhoons Haiyan and Rai in 2013 and 2021, respectively. Both super typhoons caused massive destruction and disruption throughout the country. During these disasters, persons with disabilities were reported to be disproportionately affected.

As a large number of scientific studies indicate that the Philippines will continue to experience a further increase in climate and disaster risks due to global warming, disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction becomes urgent and imperative.

Against this background, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific initiates the development of a Filipino custom-tailored e-learning DiDRR tool. This tool aims to promote and enhance the implementation of DiDRR in the Philippines.

As part of the e-learning tool development process, this study provides an overview of the status of DiDRR implementation in the Philippines. It examines the various legal frameworks supporting DiDRR and delves into the challenges experienced in its implementation in the Philippines. Additionally, the study highlights good practices in DiDRR implementation, using the experience of the Cebu Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Network. The study concludes by providing recommendations aimed at improving DiDRR implementation across the Philippines.

# Abbreviations

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|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| [ASEAN]              | [Association of Southeast Asian Nations]                    |
| [CCA-DRR]            | [Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction]     |
| [Cebu DiDRR Network] | [Cebu Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Network] |
| [CSO]                | [Civil Society Organization]                                |
| [DBM]                | [Department of Budget Management]                           |
| [DiDRR]              | [Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction]              |
| [DILG]               | [Department of Interior and Local Government]               |
| [DRRM]               | [Disaster Risk Reduction and Management]                    |
| [DSWD]               | [Department Social Welfare and Development]                 |
| [IDRC]               | [International Development Research Center]                 |
| [IFRC]               | [International Federation of Red Cross]                     |
| [IEC]                | [Information, Education and Communication]                  |
| [ESCAP]              | [Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific]   |
| [LGU]                | [Local Government Units]                                    |
| [LDRRMC]             | [Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council]      |
| [LDRRMO]             | [Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office]       |
| [NCDA]               | [National Council on Disability Affairs]                    |

- [NDRRMC] [National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council]
- [NDRRMF] [National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework]
- [OPD] [Organization of Persons with Disabilities]
- [PAGASA] [Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration]
- [PDAO] [Persons with Disability Affairs Offices]
- [PHIVOLCS] [Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology]
- [SDG] [Sustainable Development Goals]
- [UNCRPD] [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities]
- [UNDP] [United Nations Development Programme]
- [USAID] [United States Agency for International Development]

# I. Introduction

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The Philippines is among the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its geographical location and geophysical characteristics. It is an archipelagic country, and located in the Pacific Ring of Fire and the Western Pacific typhoon belt.<sup>1</sup> Given this, its population is susceptible to almost all kinds of hazards. This includes storm surges, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, landslides, and droughts.

With the climate crisis, the Philippine government is pushed to act on these concerns – for example, the enactment of disaster risk reduction and climate change-related policies and programs. The government continues to devote significant resources and intensify its plans to increase the disaster capacity and climate change mitigation strategies of local government units (LGUs) and their populations. However, most interventions and measures have tended to overlook the differential impact of climate change-induced risks to people living in marginality, like persons with disabilities.

Several experiences in past emergencies show that, in times of disaster or any disruption, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected. Physical, informational, institutional and attitudinal barriers they face, prejudice and social exclusion they experience, and the absence of disability perspectives from the disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) processes have compounding negative effects on persons with disabilities when they encounter any disasters.

In the Philippines, there is considerable progress made to advance the rights and role of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management and climate governance. Several laws and institutional drivers push for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in

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<sup>1</sup> Bollettino, V., Alcayna, T., Enriquez, K., & Vinck, P. (2018). *Perceptions Of Disaster Resilience and Preparedness In The Philippines*. [https://hhi.harvard.edu/sites/hwpi.harvard.edu/files/humanitarianinitiative/files/prc-phillippine-report-final\\_0.pdf?m=1607102956](https://hhi.harvard.edu/sites/hwpi.harvard.edu/files/humanitarianinitiative/files/prc-phillippine-report-final_0.pdf?m=1607102956)

development initiatives, including DRRM. However, there remain challenges in putting these into practice.

A large number of scientific studies indicated that the Philippines will continue to experience a further increase in climate and disaster risks due to global warming. Therefore, it becomes indispensable that measures and strategies for DRR and adaptation to climate change consistently take into account the needs, perspectives, and capacities of those considered most at-risk population, such as persons with disabilities.

In pursuit of this objective, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) developed an e-learning module on disability-inclusive DRR (DiDRR) in 2018, available in English and Japanese. As it continues to improve on this initiative, the ESCAP, through its project "Facilitating innovative action on gender-responsive disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction policies and programs in Asia and the Pacific," initiates the development of a custom-tailored e-learning tools in four targeted countries, including the Philippines.

As part of the e-learning tool development process, this study provides an overview of the status of DiDRR implementation in the Philippines. This study's result shall guide the Filipino custom-tailored e-learning training module.

# II. Disaster Risk Reduction and Disability in the Philippines

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## A. Disaster Risks in the Philippines

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As an archipelago situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire, with more than 7,000 islands and 36,000 kilometres of coastline, at least 60 per cent of the country's total land area is exposed to multiple hazards, and 74 per cent of the population is vulnerable to their impact.<sup>2</sup> With the effects of climate change, it is predicted that the Philippines will be immensely affected and heavily exposed to increasing incidences of extreme weather events – sea-level rise, extreme rainfall and more frequent, severe and stronger typhoons – that can lead to disasters.

Mainly comprised of coastal communities, the Philippine population is continuously threatened by the rising sea level. A study by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) in 2015 reported that more than 167,000 hectares of coastland, or about 0.6 per cent of the country's total area, are projected to go underwater in the Philippines, especially in low-lying island communities.<sup>3</sup> The 2017 United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Philippine Climate Risk Profile also indicated that the sea levels in the Philippines are rising faster than the global average, increasing the hazard posed by storm surges and threatening permanent inundation of low-lying areas.

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<sup>2</sup> UNDRR (2019). Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines: Status Report 2019. Bangkok, Thailand, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

<sup>3</sup> International Development Research Centre (IDRC). (2016, June 6). Parts of Philippines may submerge due to global warming. ScienceDaily. Retrieved September 16, 2023 from [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160606101406.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/06/160606101406.htm)

At present, 70 per cent of the 1500 municipalities in the Philippines are exposed to risks brought by rising sea levels.<sup>4</sup>

Aside from sea level rise, the Philippines experiences an estimated twenty (20) typhoons every year, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA). Recently, the frequency and intensity of disasters in the Philippines have increased, significantly impacting people, communities, and the economy. For instance, in 2013, the country experienced the devastating effects of Super Typhoon Haiyan, which caused over 6,000 fatalities and \$2.86 billion in damages. Equally destructive typhoons followed the supertyphoon Haiyan of 2013 in regular occurrence.

In 2021, Supertyphoon Rai (locally known as Odette) hit the country. It made nine landfalls in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao - Siargao Island (Surigao del Norte); Cagdianao (Dinagat Islands); Liloan (Southern Leyte), Padre Burgos (S.L), Pres. Carlos Garcia and Bien Unido (Bohol); Carcar (Cebu); La Libertad (Negros Oriental), and Roxas (Palawan). The typhoon traversed more than 10,000 barangays in eleven regions, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC). It affected more than 8 million individuals and displaced 9 million people.<sup>5</sup> The typhoon also caused widespread damage and resulted in more than 30 billion Philippine pesos of damage to houses and infrastructure, and Php 17–billion damage to agriculture. Unlike the Supertyphoon Haiyan, Typhoon Rai registered fewer casualties in the Philippines. However, there were anecdotes that communities and local leaders were caught unprepared and surprised by the rapid intensification of Typhoon Rai. Other notable typhoons that caused catastrophic results in the country include Typhoons

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<sup>4</sup> Abello, J. (2017). Monographic issue Meteorological Disaster Risk Profile of the Philippines Emergency and Disaster Reports. 4.

[http://www.uniovi.net/uied/Emergency\\_and\\_Disaster\\_Reports/EDR\\_Phillippines\\_4\\_2\\_2017.pdf](http://www.uniovi.net/uied/Emergency_and_Disaster_Reports/EDR_Phillippines_4_2_2017.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> A barangay (abbreviated as Brgy. or Bgy.), historically referred to as a barrio is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines and is the Filipino term for a village, district, or ward.

Ondoy and Pepeng (2009), Washi (2011), Bopha (2012), Koppu (2015), Haima (2016), Mangkhut (2018), and Goni (2020).

Located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines also experiences frequent earthquakes, ranging from minor tremors to powerful seismic events. In 2013, the country experienced a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that affected the Bohol province in Central Visayas. The Philippine NDRRMC reported the displacement of 340,000: 222 casualties, 967 injuries, and eight missing persons.<sup>6</sup> Since 1990, this was the deadliest earthquake to hit the country.<sup>7</sup> Six years later, in 2019, another strong earthquake hit the country, specifically the province of Cotabato in the Mindanao region. This 6.3 to 6.6 magnitude earthquake killed at least six people and displaced 8,000 residents.<sup>8</sup> In December of the same year, another 6.9 magnitude earthquake jolted the Mindanao region in Davao del Sur. While the fatality was low, the number of people affected was still relatively high at 378,000.<sup>9</sup> Notably, one-third of those affected by this earthquake were also affected by the October earthquake that struck some provinces in the Mindanao region.<sup>10</sup>

Volcanic eruptions are another hazard that continues to threaten communities in the Philippines. As categorized by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS), there are 24 active volcanoes in the country.<sup>11</sup> This list includes Mounts Pinatubo, Mayon, Taal and Kanlaon, among others.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Guanzon, S. (2022, July 27). TIMELINE: Most destructive earthquakes to hit the Philippines since 1990. RAPPLER. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/timeline-most-destructive-earthquakes-hit-philippines-since-1990/>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> Philippines: 6.9-magnitude earthquake, Davao del Sur Flash Update No. 3 (As of 24 December 2019) - Philippines. (n.d.). ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-69-magnitude-earthquake-davao-del-sur-flash-update-no-3-24-december>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. "Volcanoes of the Philippines". Retrieved June 16, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

The crisis of climate change and disasters are pushing the Philippine government to put these concerns into action (i.e. climate change-related policies, disaster risk reduction programs). It has committed to international frameworks and strategies to address climate change and disaster's short- and long-term concerns. It has also enacted national laws that aim to improve DRRM, reduce risks, and strengthen the capacities of local government units to prepare for, adapt to, and cope with the impact of disasters. Many multi-stakeholder initiatives have also been implemented to contribute to the government's efforts to increase the preparedness capacities of communities through training, community engagement, advocacy and awareness, and other capacity-building activities.

### Urgency of including disability perspectives in DRRM

Despite the significant resources and initiatives to build LGUs' disaster capacity, these interventions and measures have tended to overlook the differential impact of disasters on people living in marginality, like persons with disabilities. In recent years, the Government of the Philippines has made vital steps to advance the rights and role of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management and climate governance. The national government has enacted laws, such as the DRRM Law and Magna Carta for Disabled People, that call for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in planning processes and other community activities in disaster risk reduction and management. However, local government faces challenges in operationalizing these. And, despite the growing popularity of community-based disaster risk reduction and management, the critical roles and contributions of persons with disabilities in development planning and strategizing have been relegated to passive rather than active roles. In most cases, their participation in planning processes and representation in local policy-making bodies becomes an afterthought and oftentimes, tokenistic (merely for compliance) in nature. Their lack of meaningful participation in DRRM processes, planning and budgeting makes them invisible in local DRR and development

plans. By excluding them, DRR plans may not be reflective of their actual needs to prepare for a disaster and make them resilient and recover from the disaster impact, making them more vulnerable to future consequences of climate change and disasters.

With several scientific studies pointing out that the Philippines will continue to experience climate-change-driven risks due to warming temperatures, it is increasingly becoming important for relevant stakeholders to embark on more cohesive actions that address both the long- and short-term effects of climate change and disasters. Equally important is the urgent need for disaster risk reduction measures and climate change adaptation strategies to mainstream perspectives of people who live in marginality, such as persons with disabilities, who are often those who suffer the most from the impact of any disasters or crisis.

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## **B. Impacts of Disasters on Persons with Disabilities**

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Several experiences in past emergencies show that, in times of disaster or any disruption, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected. They are two to four times more likely to die or sustain injuries than the rest of society when facing a disaster situation.<sup>13</sup> This increased vulnerability to disaster impact is a result of the compounding effect of the physical, informational, institutional and attitudinal barriers they face, prejudices and social exclusion they experience from planning processes, and the absence of disability perspectives from the disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) processes.

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<sup>13</sup> Disability inclusive disaster risk reduction – still a tick marking exercise? (n.d.). [Www.undrr.org](https://www.undrr.org). <https://www.undrr.org/event/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction-still-tick-marking-exercise>

Pre-existing social inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities, such as their limited access to education and employment, further prohibit them from building their capacity to prepare for the impact of a disaster event (e.g., stockpiling, strengthening infrastructural integrity of homes). Additionally, as poverty and disability are interconnected, persons with disabilities often find themselves in unsafe living conditions. Their financial constraints due to limited economic opportunities can also be prohibitive for most persons with disabilities to establish safety nets and cushions (e.g., insurance, savings) necessary to recover from a disaster event.

Disaster risk of persons with disabilities can also be exacerbated by their underrepresentation in the DRR processes and structures. This hampers the integration of disability perspectives in DRR-related plans and programs, amplifying the risks and intensifying the challenges they encounter during and post-disaster. Moreover, their limited involvement in the DRR processes deprives them of the resources and training necessary to help them build their own disaster preparedness plan and have access to relevant DRR and warning information.

The recently released report, the 2023 Global Survey Report on Persons with Disabilities and Disaster, reinforces these points. The report indicated that, globally, persons with disabilities continue to be marginalized in DRR despite the increase in policies and legislation supporting it. The report points out that disability inclusion in DRR continues to be under-funded and underprioritized, with most initiatives driven by non-government actors with short-term funding<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, the report presented how persons with disabilities continue to be viewed from a charitable perspective, wherein they are viewed as always requiring help and needing to be rescued. Other key findings of the report on the critical gaps in DiDRR and the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in disaster situations are summarized below.

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. 2023 Global Survey Report on Persons with Disabilities and Disasters. Geneva, 2023.

**FIGURE 1: Global Data**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Preparedness and risk information</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84% of persons with disabilities do not have a personal preparedness plan</li> <li>• 10% of persons with disabilities reported not being able to evacuate immediately without assistance, 38% reporting having some difficulty, and 20% having a lot of difficulty evacuating</li> <li>• if sufficient early warning is provided, 23 per cent would still face a lot of difficulty or would be unable to evacuate without assistance</li> <li>• 56% reported not being aware of or not having access to disaster risk information in accessible formats</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Governance</p>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low awareness among persons with disabilities of national and local-level DRR plans (11%)</li> <li>• Only 8% of respondents reported that local DRR plans addressed the specific needs of persons with disabilities, with these needs only being partially addressed in the plans</li> <li>• Low levels of local government commitment to disability inclusion and lack of government capacity concerning disability inclusion</li> <li>• 57% do not have knowledge of the presence of designated leadership roles for disability inclusion in governance structures</li> <li>• Only 24% of persons with disabilities reported being a member of an organization of persons with disabilities (OPD)</li> </ul> |
| <p>Participation</p>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 86% of persons with disabilities do not participate in community-based DRR decision-making;</li> <li>• But, 57% expressed willingness to participate when provided with the opportunity</li> <li>• 75% reported the absence of mechanisms for DRR participation (forums, direct representation, community-based information dissemination and online platforms)</li> <li>• Accessibility issues and attitudinal barriers continue to limit the participation of persons with disabilities in DRR processes</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Disasters and displacement</p>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24% reported being displaced due to crises or disasters</li> <li>• 50% reporting being displaced due to armed conflict or widespread violence</li> </ul>   |

## Philippines

Disaster risks of persons with disabilities in the Philippines are also more pronounced due to the risk profile of the country. Thus, significant efforts in the country have been made to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRRM and address the underlying factors that make persons with disabilities at risk of disaster.

In an attempt to gain an understanding of the actual challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the DRRM context, a rapid survey on persons with disabilities and disasters was carried out from May to August 2023. The survey was done online using the KoboCollect and Google Forms. The survey reached a total of 72 respondents, with 76% of the respondents having a disability. In terms of geographical location, 33% of the respondents are from Central Visayas, 18% from Calabarzon, and 13% from Caraga. Other respondents are from Central Luzon (6%), Western Visayas (7%), Eastern Visayas (8%), CAR (3%), Central Mindanao (1%), Northern Mindanao (1%), Southern Mindanao (1%), and Western Mindanao (1%). One limitation of the survey was that it used convenience sampling. The survey did not receive responses from individuals coming from some regions of the Philippines. Another is its sample size, which is very low at 72. Due to this limitation, the survey result must be interpreted with caution. The rapid survey highlights are as follows:

- The country lacks accessible and inclusive DRR infrastructure and services for persons with disabilities (60%)
- The capacity and training of DRR personnel in disability-inclusive approaches is insufficient (56%).
- There is inadequate coordination and collaboration between disability and DRR stakeholders (49%)
- There is limited access to available disability-disaggregated data for DRR planning and monitoring (47%).
- The enforcement of disability rights and accessibility standards in DRR programs and services is inadequate (43%).

- Enforcement of policies and frameworks mandating DiDRR is inadequate (43%)
- DRR programs and services of local governments are not accessible and responsive to the needs of persons with different types of disabilities (42%)

Other studies available in the Philippines on disability and disasters support the findings of the rapid survey. For instance, related to disability and DRR data, a 2021 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report titled “Mapping and Analysis of Vulnerable Groups for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCA-DRR) in Support of the Digital Readiness Strategy in the Philippines” pointed out the observed the scarcity of studies and documentation available in the country that capture the consequences of disasters to persons with disabilities (and other at-risk groups).<sup>15</sup> It added that persons with disabilities continue to be “invisible” in disaster situation reports and emphasized that even major government documents tend to overlook to include the assessment of the impact of disaster events on persons with disabilities.<sup>16</sup> The 2020 International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) study “Addressing Specific Vulnerabilities through Climate and Disaster Risk Governance: Lessons from the Philippines” also noted the same observation. The IFRC report emphasized the lack of available data on how persons with disabilities and other at-risk groups in the country are affected by climate-related hazards. It pointed out that this data gap presents challenges when making evidence-based decisions regarding the different needs and constraints they face.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to insufficient data, the 2020 IFRC report highlighted a major issue in the implementation of DiDRR policies and frameworks. Despite having various instruments and plans in the Philippines that consider reducing the risks of persons with disabilities and other at-risk groups as a national strategic priority, their consideration in these

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<sup>15</sup> UNDP (2021). Mapping and Analysis of Vulnerable Groups for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCA-DRR) in Support of the Digital Readiness Strategy in the Philippines. Bangkok: UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>17</sup> IFRC, Addressing specific vulnerabilities through climate and disaster risk governance: lessons from the Philippines, (authored by Tommaso Natoli) Geneva (2020).

plans and programs and sensitivity to diversity and inclusiveness continue to be mostly an 'aspirational statement' without practical implication.<sup>18</sup> This aligns with the rapid survey result, indicating the inadequacy and insufficient enforcement of disability rights and accessibility standards in DRR programs, as well as the implementation of policies and frameworks mandating DiDRR.

Aside from this, the IFRC report also emphasized the need for improvements in existing DRR procedures to ensure that these become responsive to the needs of at-risk groups, including persons with disabilities. Such improvements include providing mandatory training for government actors and civil servants to sensitize them to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different groups and ensuring that CCA-DRR activities are implemented and communicated in a manner that is accessible to people with physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairments (e.g. in a variety of languages, formats and media).<sup>19</sup>

Inaccessibility of warning information and evacuation centres is another recurring challenge faced by persons with disabilities, as pointed out in the 2021 UNDP study. The study cited that 57% of its respondents indicated that they are either unaware or do not have a community-based early warning system in their area. This underscores the inaccessibility of warning information for persons with disabilities. The same study also pointed out that focus group discussions with persons with disabilities revealed that there is little or no support for persons with disabilities in accessing information, including customizing EWS for their specific needs.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of evacuation, the same study indicated that 39% of the respondents reported not being able to evacuate quickly or were not sure if they would be able to evacuate

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> UNDP (2021). Mapping and Analysis of Vulnerable Groups for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction (CCA-DRR) in Support of the Digital Readiness Strategy in the Philippines. Bangkok: UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub.

quickly in a disaster. When asked for reasons, respondents cited that they lack information about where to evacuate, have no access to proper communication or alerts from the barangay, and have difficulty accessing the evacuation areas. Notably, most evacuation centres are schools, which, at present, are also non-compliant with accessibility standards.<sup>21</sup>

Other disaster risks faced by persons with disabilities in the Philippines are illustrated in the article entitled “Typhoon Haiyan One Year On Disability, Poverty and Participation in the Philippines”.<sup>22</sup> This article cited a few of the challenges experienced by persons with disabilities post-Haiyan. Many recounted that they were unable to evacuate during the Typhoon, their homes were destroyed, and they had experienced displacement.<sup>23</sup> For persons with visual disabilities particularly, their displacement resulted in injuries while in evacuation centres, as they became disoriented with their ‘new’ environment.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, some lost their crucial assistive devices and sources of income, compelling them to prioritize livelihood and home reconstruction over accessing essential health services.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, children with disabilities experienced disruptions in their education, and upon resumption, the learning environments were often unsuitable for their specific needs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sol Cruz, K., et. al. (2021). Philippine Disability Sector Research: An Initial Analysis of Access to Social and Public Services, Education, Work and Employment, and Civic Participation and Governance. The Asia Foundation.

<sup>22</sup> Cobley, D 2015, 'Typhoon Haiyan one year on: disability, poverty and participation in the Philippines', *Disability and the Global South*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 686-707.

<https://disabilityglobalsouth.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/dgs02-03-01.pdf>>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

# III. Policy Frameworks and Instruments Guiding DRR

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The Government of the Philippines has recognized the importance of DiDRR and has integrated it into its policies and programs. It has several policy frameworks and legal provisions related to DiDRR. The Philippine government also aligns its DiDRR policies and programs with various international instruments and frameworks, such as the Sendai Framework, Dhaka Declaration, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response.<sup>27</sup> These frameworks and instruments aim to promote the inclusion and protection of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction efforts.

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## C. International Policy and Frameworks

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### Global

- a) **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**<sup>28</sup>. The UNCRPD, ratified by the Philippines in April 2008, outlines the

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<sup>27</sup> The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response is a handbook containing the humanitarian charter, protection principles, core humanitarian standard and minimum humanitarian standards to provide guidance when planning, delivering, and evaluating humanitarian operations. More information about this handbook can be found in this link: <https://spherestandards.org/handbook/>

<sup>28</sup> Copy of the UNCRPD can be accessed here:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with->

rights of persons with disabilities, including their rights in emergencies and disasters. It promotes the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society, including disaster risk reduction and response.

- b) **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**<sup>29</sup> Adopted in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal call for action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030, all people on the planet will enjoy peace and prosperity. As part of the Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly recognizes the importance of disability inclusion in five out of seventeen Goals, particularly relating to education (Goal 4), growth and employment (Goal 8), inequality (Goal 10), accessibility of human settlements (Goal 11), as well as data collection and monitoring of the SDGs (Goal 17). The agenda promotes equitable access to education, employment, and social services for persons with disabilities, aiming to eliminate discrimination and ensure their full and effective participation in society. Disability inclusion is essential for achieving sustainable development, fostering inclusive societies, and advancing social and economic progress worldwide.
- c) **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction for 2015-2030.**<sup>30</sup> Adopted in 2015, this international framework emphasizes the importance of inclusive disaster risk reduction and calls for the inclusion and active participation of persons with disabilities in all phases of disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Framework acknowledges the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to disasters and emphasizes their rights and needs in disaster risk reduction planning and implementation.

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disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html

<sup>29</sup> More information about the SDGs can be found here: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>30</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

d) **The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response.** The Sphere Handbook provides a foundational guide in humanitarian response, providing minimum standards in different areas, including disability inclusion. It outlines the importance of integrating disability concerns into humanitarian responses and ensuring that the needs and rights of persons with disabilities are addressed effectively during emergency situations. This includes accessibility, reasonable accommodations, and ensuring that responses and programs are inclusive of individuals with disabilities. The Handbook emphasizes the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of humanitarian response, from planning and assessment to implementation and monitoring.

## Regional

- a) **Jakarta Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023-2032**<sup>31</sup>. Adopted in August 2023, this document contains the commitments that will guide the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2023–2032, namely the Jakarta Declaration, the Incheon Strategy and the Beijing Declaration and Action Plan. Building on the achievements and lessons learned from the previous three Decades, these commitments outline a whole-of-government and all-of-society approach to “Make the Right Real” in the coming Decade.
- b) **The Asia-Pacific Action Plan 2021-2024 for Implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**<sup>32</sup>. Approved in 2021, the Asia-Pacific Action Plan 2021-2024 for Implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is the product of collaborative efforts. It combines ongoing actions, emphasizing the necessity of continued or expanded efforts in disaster risk reduction, along with new and innovative strategies arising from successful

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<sup>31</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here: [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/B2200897\\_L4\\_E.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/B2200897_L4_E.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/asia-pacific-action-plan-2021-2024-implementation-sendai-framework-disaster-risk>

practices, lessons learned, and recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan aims to expedite the region's progress towards informed development by integrating disaster risk reduction as a foundational element. Its goals include increased funding for prevention, risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and forward-thinking approaches to enhance resilience.

- c) **Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**<sup>33</sup>. Published in 2016 during the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi, this document aims to provide guidance and support to the governments in Asia with their national implementation of the Sendai Framework. This document outlines the priorities and activities to support national and local actions, recommendations to strengthen the collaboration and exchange of good practices between and among countries, and improve knowledge and information management among governments and stakeholders.
  
- d) **Ulabantaar Declaration**<sup>34</sup>. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration, issued in 2018 during Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Mongolia, calls for greater accountability for disaster losses in Asia, the world's most disaster-prone region and accelerate the implementation of Senda Framework for DRR in Asia.
  
- e) **Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific for 2012-2022**<sup>35</sup>. Adopted in 2012, it is a comprehensive framework to advance the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities across the Asia-Pacific region. It focuses on "making the right real," emphasizing the practical implementation of disability-inclusive policies and programs. The strategy outlines

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<sup>33</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here: <https://www.unisdr.org/2016/amcdrr/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FINAL-Asia-Regional-Plan-for-implementation-of-Sendai-Framework-05-November-2016.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here:  
[https://www.preventionweb.net/files/56219\\_ulaanbaatardeclarationfinal.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/56219_ulaanbaatardeclarationfinal.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here:  
<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Incheon%20Strategy%20%28English%29.pdf>

specific actions to promote accessibility, education, employment, and social inclusion, ensuring that persons with disabilities can fully participate in society.

## Sub-regional

- a) **ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in Disaster Management 2021–2025**<sup>36</sup>. This framework aims to express a common vision geared towards advancing protection, gender and inclusion in disaster management within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, aligned with the One ASEAN One Response initiative<sup>37</sup>. The framework is designed to reinforce the execution of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response Work Programme 2021-2025 and other regional declarations and plans by: i) consolidating regional commitments across sectors on target actions for achieving inclusive disaster management; ii) Identifying entry points for collaboration between National Disaster Management Organizations and other organizations working on gender and social inclusion issues; and iii) Supporting ASEAN Member States in setting priorities, indicators, and targets for measuring progress in protection, gender, and inclusion at the national level, while establishing indicators and a baseline for measuring progress at the regional level<sup>38</sup>.
  
- b) **The Ha Noi Recommendations for Action on Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction, 2016**<sup>39</sup>. These guidelines are designed to integrate gender perspectives into disaster risk reduction efforts. While not exclusively focused on disability, they recognize that gender intersects with other forms of vulnerability,

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<sup>36</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here: <https://asean.org/book/asean-regional-framework-on-protection-gender-and-inclusion-in-disaster-management-2021-2025-arf-pgi/>

<sup>37</sup> The One ASEAN, One Response is an ASEAN declaration responding to disasters as one in the region and outside the region to achieve faster response, mobilize greater resources and establish stronger coordination to ensure ASEAN's collective response to disasters.

<sup>38</sup> (n.d.). Asean.org. <https://asean.org/book/asean-regional-framework-on-protection-gender-and-inclusion-in-disaster-management-2021-2025-arf-pgi/>

<sup>39</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here: [https://wrd.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/hanoi-recommendation-final-13-jul-en\\_1.pdf](https://wrd.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/hanoi-recommendation-final-13-jul-en_1.pdf)

including disability. The recommendations emphasize the need for inclusive approaches that address the specific needs and challenges faced by women and persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and response.

- c) **The Dhaka Declaration on Disability and Disaster Risk Management, 2015<sup>40</sup>**. It represents a commitment to disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction. It underscores the importance of recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities and emphasizes their active participation in disaster risk reduction efforts. The declaration sets forth principles for ensuring that disability inclusion is a central consideration in disaster planning, response, and recovery efforts.
  
- d) **Bali Declaration on the Enhancement of the Role and Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the ASEAN Community and Mobilization Framework of the ASEAN Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2011-2020<sup>41</sup>**. This declaration, adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), aims to enhance the role and participation of persons with disabilities in the ASEAN community. While its primary focus is broader than disaster risk reduction, it recognizes the importance of addressing the specific needs and rights of persons with disabilities in various aspects of community life, including disaster management. It underscores the commitment of ASEAN countries to promote disability inclusion and equal opportunities for all citizens, including those with disabilities.

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<sup>40</sup> Copy of the declaration can be accessed here:  
<https://globalplatform.undrr.org/sites/default/files/2022-04/The%20Dhaka%20Declaration%20on%20Disability%20and%20DRM.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Copy of the declaration can be accessed here: <https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Bali-Declaration-on-the-Enhancement.pdf>

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## D. National Policies and Frameworks

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### DRRM-related laws, policies and frameworks

- a) **Republic Act 10121 or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010:**<sup>42</sup> RA 10121 provides the legal framework for DRR and management in the Philippines. It provides a comprehensive, all-hazard, multi-sectoral, inter-agency, and community-based approach to strengthen the country's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The law mandates creating the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) and formulating the National Disaster Risk Management Framework. The law also mandates the establishment of the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMCs) to oversee and coordinate DRR efforts at the provincial, city, municipality, and barangay levels. In terms of disability inclusion, this law lays a strong foundation for ensuring the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in DRR efforts. The following policy declarations of RA10121 highlight its mandate for inclusive DRR:

- (d) Promote the involvement and participation of all sectors and all stakeholders
- (j) Ensure that disaster risk reduction and climate change measures are gender-responsive, sensitive to indigenous knowledge systems, and respectful of human rights;
- (n) Develop and strengthen the capacities of vulnerable and marginalized groups (women, children, elderly, persons with disability, and ethnic

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<sup>42</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here:  
[https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2010/ra\\_10121\\_2010.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2010/ra_10121_2010.html)

minorities) to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the effects of disasters

RA10121's other provisions that indicate its promotion of disability inclusion include:

- Section 6.d: Ensure multi-stakeholder participation in the development, updating, and sharing of a Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Information System and Geographic Information System-based national risk map as policy, planning and decision-making tools
- Section 12.d: The Barangay DRRM Committee shall be a regular committee of the existing Barangay Development Council and shall be subject thereto. The Punong Barangay (local chief executive) shall facilitate and ensure the participation of at least two (2) civil society organization (CSO) representatives from existing and active community-based people's organizations representing the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in the barangay.

b) **National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework.** RA10121 requires the NDRRM council to develop an NDRRM framework which shall provide for a comprehensive, all-hazards, multi-sectoral, inter-agency and community-based approach to disaster risk reduction and management and shall serve as the principal guide to disaster risk reduction and management efforts in the country. In June 2011, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework (NDRRMF) was approved by the executive committee of the NDRRM council, which sets the vision of attaining "Safer, Adaptive and disaster-resilient Filipino Communities towards sustainable development". Anchored in RA 10121, this framework calls for a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive approaches, building on the importance of the four pillars of DRRM - prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery and rehabilitation. This framework recognizes that *"disaster-resilient communities are achieved when the risk reduction efforts have been successful and have made the people stronger (in a positive way and not just in terms of their coping mechanism), increasing their*

*ability to bounce back after a disaster” and highlights the importance of “instill(ing) the culture of safety by increasing people’s capacity to bounce back and decrease disaster losses and impact. It also emphasizes that it is crucial in DRRM to “address the underlying causes of people’s vulnerability; building their individual, collective and institutional capacities and building back better wherein people’s lives become sustainably better”. The NDRRM framework is embedded to the 2011-2028 Philippine NDRRM Plan.*

c) **National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan 2011-2028.**<sup>43</sup>

Published in 2011, this plan serves as the national guide in strengthening the disaster resilience of communities, institutionalizing risk reduction measures and arrangements, improving response and adaptive capabilities at all levels, and implementing DRRM efforts in the Philippines until 2028. In terms of DiDRR, this plan, while no specific provision or mention of disability inclusion in DRR, adheres to the principles of good governance, community engagement, participation and inclusion, and partnership between and among the local and national government, civil society organizations, academe, and other institutions to ensure that all Filipinos, including persons with disabilities, are safe, adaptive and disaster-resilient.

d) **Lahat Handa Training Module.** This module is supplementary to the Office of Civil Defense's (OCD) Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CBDRRM) Basic Instructor's Guide. This manual contains guidelines on inclusive early warning systems, tip sheets for persons with disabilities, and accessible evacuation centres. It includes practical approaches for safeguarding and promoting the rights, needs, and capacities of children and youth, older people, and persons with disabilities in DRRM by stressing the

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<sup>43</sup> Copy of the document can be accessed here:  
[https://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF\\_File/reports\\_resources/DILG-Resources-2012116-420ac59e31.pdf](https://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/reports_resources/DILG-Resources-2012116-420ac59e31.pdf)

importance of their participation and inclusion in all phases of the DRRM process.

### Disability-related laws, policies and frameworks

- a) **Republic Act 7277 or Magna Carta for Disabled Persons**<sup>44</sup>. Signed in 1992, RA 7277 is a Philippine law enacted to promote and protect the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities. It sets provisions to ensure equal opportunities and full participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in education, employment, healthcare, and community activities. Moreover, it mandates the accessibility of facilities and establishments, both private and public, by removing architectural, communication, and transportation barriers. While it has no specific provisions on including persons with disabilities in DRRM, the act indirectly supports their inclusion by underscoring the importance of making disaster-related information, facilities, and services accessible to persons with disabilities, ensuring they are not left behind during emergencies.
  
- b) **Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 or Accessibility Law**<sup>45</sup>: This law, signed in 1982, focuses on ensuring accessibility and improving the mobility of persons with disabilities by outlining provisions related to the design and construction of buildings, facilities, and transportation systems to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. These accessibility standards and features cover public transportation, buildings (government offices, schools, hospitals), private facilities, and commercial establishments. Accessibility features include ramps, lifts, handrails, restrooms, and elevators. In DRRM, BP344 is valuable in the inclusion of persons with disabilities as it sets the guidelines and standards that will make public infrastructures, facilities, transportation systems, and community channels barrier-free.

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<sup>44</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/republic-acts/republic-act-7277/>

<sup>45</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/batas-pambansa/batas-pambansa-blg-344/>

- c) **Proclamation No. 688 “Declaring the Period of 2013-2022 as the Philippine Decade of Make the Rights Real for Persons with Disabilities in support of the 3rd Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities”<sup>46</sup>**. This proclamation signified the Philippines' commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in the country and promoting their active participation in the community. It aligns with the regional initiative, 3rd Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities. This proclamation called for implementing measures to empower and capacitate persons with disabilities through public awareness and education, accessibility, inclusivity, and participation in community decision-making, including DRRM efforts. It stresses the need to make the voices of persons with disabilities be heard, especially in matters that affect them.
- d) **Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum Circular 2014-59<sup>47</sup>**: This is a circular issued by the DILG in 2014 directing all local chief executives to establish a local council for persons with disabilities (and older people) which will formulate policies and adopt measures to benefit persons with disabilities (and older people) and appropriating fund allocation for the implementation of such measures. Moreover, these circular mandates the allocation of 1% of the local government's respective budget for programs and services for persons with disabilities and older persons
- e) **Department of Budget Management (DBM) and Department Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Joint Circular 2003-01<sup>48</sup>**: This is a circular issued jointly by the DBM and DSWD providing guidelines for the implementation of the General

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<sup>46</sup> Copy of the proclamation can be accessed here: <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/proclamations/proclamation-no-688/>

<sup>47</sup> Copy of the memorandum can be accessed here: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/240743397/dilg-memo-circular-2014-59-gaa-pwdandsc>

<sup>48</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://www.foi.gov.ph/requests/aglzfmVmb2ktcGhyHQsSB0NvbnRlbnQiEERCTS02NDU4NTUwNTY1MT-EM>

Appropriation Act of 2003 directing all national government agencies, executive departments, bureaus, offices, agencies, commissions, and state universities and colleges to set aside at least 1% of their total budget to programs and activities for persons with disabilities and older persons. It further directs that the funds shall be used for the implementation of initiatives that will address their needs. This includes information, education and communication (IEC) development to increase awareness of their rights, needs, and roles in community development; capacity building (non-formal, care-giving, counseling, technical, vocational); provision of employment opportunities, and protection and safety program for persons with disabilities and older persons.

- f) **Republic Act 11650 or Inclusive Education Act of 2022**<sup>49</sup>. This law further promotes the recognition, protection, and promotion of the rights of all learners with disabilities – whether in or out of school, to education based on equal opportunity. This law states that all public schools in the Philippines must identify learners with special needs and provide these learners with free primary and quality education. It also mandates that all cities and municipalities have at least one Inclusive Learning Resource Center to support teaching and learning through appropriate, accessible, and gender-sensitive materials. As lack of education is considered among the underlying vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities to disaster, this law is critical in ensuring that persons with disabilities have increased access to resources that will increase their disaster awareness, knowledge, and preparedness.

- g) **Republic Act 10524 or An Act Expanding the Positions Reserved for Persons with Disability, amending for the Purpose Republic Act 7277.**<sup>50</sup> Enacted in 2013,

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<sup>49</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://mirror.officialgazette.gov.ph/2022/03/11/republic-act-no-11650/>

<sup>50</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/republic-acts/republic-act-no-10524-an-act-expanding-the-positions-reserved-for-persons-with-disability-amending-for-the-purpose-republic-act-no-7277-as-amended-otherwise-known-as-the-magna-carta-for-persons/>

this law aims to promote the rights, welfare, and inclusion of persons with disabilities, specifically providing equal employment opportunities. It supports the active participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce, contributing to their economic empowerment and social integration. The law mandates that at least one per cent (1%) of all positions in government agencies, offices, or corporations be reserved for persons with disabilities. Private employers are also encouraged to make reasonable accommodations to provide persons with disabilities with access to employment opportunities. In DRRM, this law indirectly contributes to building the adaptive and preparedness capacities of persons with disabilities by increasing their resources to afford safe and accessible housing, establishing safety nets (savings, insurance), and allocating funds for emergency supplies, evacuation, and recovery efforts.

- h) **Republic Act 11228 or the Mental Health Act of 2018**<sup>51</sup>. This law supports promoting mental health for all, protecting the rights of individuals with mental health conditions, and creating a mental health care system in the country. This law plays a vital role in ensuring that people with mental disability are provided with the proper care services, support, and resources. Moreover, it seeks to address the mental health issues in the country, including protecting vulnerable populations such as victims of disasters and emergencies who may be at higher risk of mental health challenges.
  
- i) **Republic Act 11106 or the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Act**<sup>52</sup>. Signed into law in 2021, RA 11106 recognizes FSL as the official national sign language. This law is a significant step in ensuring that Deaf individuals have access to disaster-related information. Its key provisions are mandating news and public affairs programs to have FSL interpreter insets, ensuring that Deaf individuals can

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<sup>51</sup> Copy of the law can accessed here: [https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2019/ra\\_11228\\_2019.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2019/ra_11228_2019.html)

<sup>52</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2018/10/30/republic-act-no-11106/>

access relevant information and stay informed about current affairs and advisories.

- j) **Republic Act 10366 or An Act Authorizing the Commission on Elections to Establish Precincts Assigned to Accessible Polling Places Exclusively for Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens**<sup>53</sup>. Signed into law in 2013, RA 10366 provides the guidelines to improve the inclusivity and participation of persons with disabilities (and older persons) in the democratic processes. Specifically, this law provides measures and guidelines to ensure that persons with disabilities and older persons can exercise their rights to vote by designing polling places to meet their specific during an election. This law underscores the importance of ensuring that persons with disabilities fully participate in democratic processes and governance. Similar to DRRM, involving persons with disabilities in planning, response, and recovery efforts is essential to ensure that their needs and perspectives are recognized.
- k) **Republic Act 10754 or An Act Expanding the Benefits and Privileges of Persons with Disability**<sup>54</sup>. This law, signed in 2015, expands and elaborates on the benefits and privileges of persons with disabilities in the Philippines. It elaborated on the need and importance of accessibility for persons with disabilities; highlighted their need for medical care and support, including assistive devices, and recognized and addressed their economic and social vulnerabilities through social welfare and assistance provisions. In the context of DRRM, RA 10754 supports disability inclusion by emphasizing the support and accommodations for persons with disabilities that must be included and recognized in DRRM planning and programming.

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<sup>53</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here:

[https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra\\_10366\\_2013.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10366_2013.html)

<sup>54</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/03/23/republic-act-no-10754/>

l) **Republic Act 9442 or An act providing for the Rehabilitation and Self-Reliance of Disabled Persons and Their Integration into Mainstream Society and Other Purposes granting Additional Privileges and Incentives and Prohibitions on Verbal, Non-Verbal Ridicule and Vilification Against Persons with Disabilities**<sup>55</sup>.

Republic Act No. 9442 contains the amendments to Republic Act No. 7277. This amendment further emphasizes the rights, privileges, inclusion, and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities in social and political activities, including DRRM. It reinforces the need to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to information, facilities are accessible and barrier-free, they are protected and safe, they thoroughly enjoy their rights equally with others, and they have economic opportunities through employment and livelihood. RA 7277 underscores the importance of equal participation of persons with disabilities in various aspects of society, including in DRRM, and that they are provided with the means to do so.

m) **Republic Act 10070 or An Act Establishing an Institutional Mechanism to Ensure the Implementation of Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities in Every Province, City, and Municipality**<sup>56</sup>.

Enacted in 2010, this law sets forth the guidelines for improving service and program delivery to persons with disabilities by mandating local government to establish Persons with Disability Affairs Offices (PDAOs) or Local Persons with Disability Affairs Offices in every province, city, and municipality. These offices coordinate and implement programs and services that ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities. RA 10070 emphasizes the need to develop and implement programs and services tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities. This law directly supports disability-inclusive DRRM by emphasizing the active involvement of persons with disabilities and their organizations in various initiatives related to healthcare,

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<sup>55</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/republic-acts/republic-act-9442/>

<sup>56</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://ncda.gov.ph/disability-laws/republic-acts/republic-act-no-10070/>

education, employment, accessibility, social services, and DRRM. It also highlights the need to empower persons with disabilities to enable them to participate in decision-making processes, contribute their insights and perspectives, and advocate for their unique needs in development initiatives, including disaster resilience efforts.

- n) **Republic Act 11228 or An Act Providing for The Mandatory Philhealth Coverage for All Persons with Disability**<sup>57</sup>. Enacted in 2019, RA 11228 ensures that persons with disabilities can access affordable medical and healthcare services. In DRRM, this law indirectly supports disability inclusion by ensuring that persons with disabilities receive medical and health care before, during, and after an emergency.

### Philippines Laws and Guidelines Relevant to Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction

The matrix below summarizes the legal provisions, circulars, and frameworks which support the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRRM, provides a legal basis for funding for disability programs, including DiDRR, along with various laws relevant to improving the well-being and rights of persons with disabilities, thereby making them more equipped, prepared and capacitated to adapt, respond, and recover from any disaster impact.

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<sup>57</sup> Copy of the law can be accessed here: <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2019/02/22/republic-act-no-11228/>

**BOX 1: PHILIPPINE LAWS AND GUIDELINES RELEVANT TO DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

| <b>Participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRR and other development initiatives</b>  | <b>Budget for DiDRR</b>  | <b>Addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities by promoting social, economic, employment, health and educational opportunities for persons with disabilities</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Republic Act 10121 or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010</li> <li>• National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Framework</li> <li>• National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan</li> <li>• Republic Act 10070 or An Act Establishing an Institutional Mechanism to Ensure the Implementation of Programs and Services for Persons with Disabilities in Every Province, City, and Municipality</li> <li>• Lahat Handa Training Module.</li> <li>• Guidelines on Gender and Disability Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum Circular (MC) 2014-59</li> <li>• Department of Budget Management and Social Welfare and Development Joint Circular 2003-01</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Republic Act 11650 or Inclusive Education Act of 2022.</li> <li>• Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 or Accessibility Law</li> <li>• Republic Act 10524 or An Act Expanding the Positions Reserved for Persons with Disability, amending for the Purpose Republic Act 7277</li> <li>• Republic Act 11228 or the Mental Health Act of 2018</li> <li>• Republic Act 11106 or the Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Act</li> <li>• Republic Ac 10366 or An Act Authorizing the Commission on Elections to Establish Precincts Assigned to Accessible Polling Places Exclusively for Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens</li> <li>• Republic Act 10754 or An Act Expanding the Benefits and Privileges of Persons with Disability</li> <li>• Republic Act 9442 or An act providing for the Rehabilitation and Self-Reliance of Disabled Persons and Their Integration into Mainstream Society and Other Purposes granting Additional Privileges and Incentives and Prohibitions on Verbal, Non-Verbal Ridicule and Vilification Against Persons with Disability</li> <li>• Republic Act 11228 or An Act Providing for The Mandatory Philhealth Coverage for All Persons with Disability</li> </ul> |

Republic Act 7277 or Magna Carta for Disabled Persons

**Disability-inclusive DRR Institutional Actors (adopted from Wester’s DiDRR Actors in Albay<sup>58</sup>)**

This matrix outlines the specific bodies engaged in DRRM and disability inclusion efforts at different administrative levels, providing a foundation for collaboration to promote inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies.

<sup>58</sup> Wester, M., Van Dijkhorst, H., & Warner, J. (2017). Disability Inclusive- Disaster Risk Reduction MSc thesis Disaster Studies Practices of participation in Albay province, the Philippines. <https://edepot.wur.nl/426081>

## BOX 2: PHILIPPINE DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DRR INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS

| Administrative   | DRR   |   | Disability Inclusion  |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| National   | National DRRM Council (chaired by the OCD)  |   | National Council for Disability Affairs   |  |
| Regional   | Regional DRRM Council<br><i>(chaired by the Regional OCD)</i>                                       |   | Regional Federation of Persons with Disabilities; and,<br><br>Regional Offices of the Department of Social Welfare and Development  |  |
| Provincial and Highly Urbanized and Independent City (HU/IC) | Provincial DRRM Council<br><i>(typically chaired by the Governor)</i><br><br>Provincial DRRM Office | HU/IC DRRM Council<br><i>(typically chaired by the Mayor)</i><br><br>City DRRM Office | Provincial Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office <b>or</b> Provincial Focal Person for Disability Affairs under the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office; and, Provincial Federation of Persons with Disabilities          | HU/IC Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office <b>or</b> HU/IC Focal Person for Disability Affairs under the HU/IC Social Welfare and Development Office; and, HU/IC Federation of Persons with Disabilities |
| Municipal/ City  | Municipal/ City DRRM Council<br><br>Municipal DRRM Office   | <i>Not Applicable</i>   | Municipal/City Persons with Disability Affairs Office or Municipal Focal Person for Disability Affairs under the Municipal/City Social Welfare and Development Office; and,<br><br>Municipal/City Federation of Persons with Disabilities | <i>Not Applicable</i>  |
| Barangay   | Barangay DRRM Committee of the Barangay Development Council   |   | Barangay Desk or Committee for Persons with Disabilities; and,<br><br>Barangay Association of Persons with Disabilities   |  |

In terms of DRRM, the Philippines has two major government actors – the local DRRM council and the DRRM office. RA1021 mandates the establishment of DRRM councils at various administrative levels in the Philippines. These include National, Regional, Provincial, Highly Urbanized/Independent City, Municipal/City, and Barangay levels. The

local DRRM council at the national and regional levels is chaired by the Office of Civil Defense. The local DRRM council is responsible for approving, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the local DRRM plans and for the regular review and testing of the plan consistent with other national and local planning programs. It is also responsible for ensuring the integration of DRR and CCA into local development plans, programs and budgets as a strategy for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Lastly, it is mandated to recommend the implementation of forced or preemptive evacuation of local residents during an impending emergency.

In addition to the council, the law also mandates the establishment of a local DRRM office (LDRRMO) in every province, city and municipality and a Barangay Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Committee. The LDRRMO is primarily responsible for designing, coordinating, and programming disaster risk reduction activities following national standards. The LDRRMO leads in facilitating risk assessments, maintaining local risk information, conducting training on disaster management, developing early warning systems, and implementing comprehensive local plans consistent with regional and national frameworks. Moreover, it is responsible for continuous disaster monitoring, hazard identification, risk management, public awareness campaigns, response coordination, recovery activities, establishing and managing operations centres, as well as submitting reports and implementing policies laid down by the local DRRM council.

On the other hand, the agency responsible for creating policies and programs that promote and protect the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities at the national level is the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA). The NCDA is also tasked with ensuring the implementation of these various laws and policies that support persons with disabilities. At the local level, RA10070 mandates the establishment of Persons with Disability Affairs Offices or Local Persons with Disability Affairs Offices in every province, city, and municipality. These offices are responsible for coordinating and

implementing programs and services tailored to support the needs and welfare of persons with disabilities at the local government level. For lower-income municipalities, the law allows the designation of a focal person under the Local Social Welfare and Development Office, who will be responsible for overseeing and addressing the concerns related to persons with disabilities. At the barangay level, a committee or desk for persons with disabilities can be created.

In addition to the PDAO/ focal person/ person with disability committee, while not required by law, RA 7277 supports the establishment of organizations, federations, or associations by persons with disabilities, or self-help groups, at the regional, provincial, city, municipal and barangay level.

# IV. Challenges in DiDRR Implementation

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The Philippines has made significant strides in promoting DiDRRM. It has enacted national laws and localized international commitments that advance the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities. It also promotes their inclusion in planning processes, not just in DRRM but also in other development initiatives. However, challenges exist in fully implementing DiDRRM in the Philippines. More must be done to mainstream disability perspectives in disaster risk reduction and development programming. It can be observed that despite the increasing importance and popularity of community-based disaster risk reduction, persons with disabilities and other particularly marginalized groups are still hardly included in planning processes and strategic decisions relevant to them.

In many cases, their participation is more symbolic, or they are involved after the fact to comply with formal regulations. As a result, the perspectives and needs of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are not reflected in local plans, strategies, and policies. Initiatives that build on these lack relevance for the populations most vulnerable to disaster and climate risks and fail to strengthen their resilience or reduce vulnerability to potential disaster events.

This section presents the existing challenges encountered by the Philippine government during the implementation of DiDRR initiatives.

1. **Inadequate disability data and information.** The Sendai Framework recognizes the importance of collecting and using disaggregated data by age, sex, and disability in disaster risk reduction efforts. It stresses that disaggregated data is

vital to designing and implementing targeted DRR measures. Disaggregated data is essential to understanding different population groups' specific risks and needs in a disaster context. In particular, it highlights the need for disability data to ensure that plans and initiatives incorporate the differential and targeted needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities in risk assessment, disaster planning, and programming. In the Philippines, however, several studies point out that the country faces challenges establishing accurate and updated disability data. The book chapter, *No One Left Behind? A Case for Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines* points out that the disability prevalence in the Philippines was only 1.57%, which falls way below the estimated worldwide disability prevalence of 16% of the World Health Organization<sup>59</sup>. The Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD also mentioned this observation in its 2013 Parallel Report on the UNCRPD, which said, "efforts for data gathering and documentation are lacking, and highlighted that different agencies have outdated and conflicting figures."<sup>60</sup> This was also pointed out as one of the highlighted issues in the 2021 Commission on Human Rights documentation report, wherein it says there remains the *"lack and inaccuracy of data on the number of persons with disabilities"*<sup>61</sup>

2. **Inadequate recognition of functional limitations in DRRM-related plans.** Despite efforts to enhance disability statistics and risk assessment, there is a shortfall in recognizing the diverse functional limitations of persons with disabilities. In 2016, the Philippine Statistics Office conducted the first-ever nationwide National Disability Prevalence Survey or Model Functioning Survey using the Model Disability Survey recommended by the World Health Organization and the World

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<sup>59</sup> Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

<sup>60</sup> Philippine Coalition on the UNCRPD. (2013) "2013 UNCRPD Parallel Report, "<https://www.slideshare.net/akkappasig/2013-uncrpd-parallel-report-of-the-philippine-coalition>

<sup>61</sup> Commission on Human Rights Human Rights Centers Management Office Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Center DOCUMENTATION REPORT. (2021). <https://chr-observatories.uwazi.io/api/files/1625349232262ez4woc5mtcu.pdf>

Bank. The NDPS/MFS 2016 provided information on the different dimensions of disability in the country – impairments, activity limitations, participation restrictions, and environmental factors that either facilitate or hinder full participation. As mentioned in various sections of the study (preface, messages from the NCDA and Department of Health, and Introduction), the study encourages policymakers and program managers to use and incorporate the survey results into policy formulation and program design. In the context of DRRM, the insights from this survey would have been very useful in enhancing the risk and vulnerability assessments included in the DRRM plan. However, existing risk assessment tools and BDRRM plan templates underutilize this information, as these tools lack sections dedicated to capturing functional limitations. Despite the enhancement of the tools and plans, particularly at the barangay level with NDRRMC’s issuance of circular 1 series of 2018 on the adoption of the Quality Assessment System and prescribing the developed simplified BDRRMP Template<sup>62</sup>, which aimed to improve the quality of barangay DRRM plans and promote inclusivity and participation by including indicators related to disability inclusion in DRRM, the prescribed BDRRM Plan template, along with the prescribed contingency plan template<sup>63</sup>, mainly focuses on capturing the number of persons with disabilities and related issues, such as accessibility challenges during evacuation and availability of necessary devices and medications. The prescribed BDRRM Plan template does not effectively capture the specific functional limitations of individuals, which are crucial for understanding their vulnerabilities in disaster situations.

3. **Non-compliance to RA10070.** Several literatures would point out that vital drivers that could ensure the inclusion of the perspectives and needs of persons with

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<sup>62</sup> A copy of the Barangay DRRM Plan Template can be accessed through this link: <https://alertandready.ph/qatportal/>

<sup>63</sup> A copy of the contingency plan template is included in this 2020 contingency plan guidebook which can be accessed through this link: <https://www.studocu.com/ph/document/lyceum-northwestern-university/secondary-education/cp-guidebook-as-of-february-2020-2021-03-06-10-56-45-pm/35997059>

disabilities in DRRM are absent – for example, non-compliance to the establishment of a Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO). In a study assessing the local mechanisms for programs and services for persons with disabilities, only six out of every 10 municipal LGUs belonging to first to third income class has an established PDAO.<sup>64</sup> This indicates that forty percent of the mandated LGUs operate without a dedicated PDAO and assign the office’s responsibilities to a focal person who is mostly at times, holds a concurrent position in the LGU. RA10070 mandates the PDAO with the huge task of formulating and implementing policies, plans, and programs for the promotion of the welfare of persons with disabilities, representing persons with disabilities in local development councils and other special bodies, and compiling relevant data on persons with disabilities. And, the absence of a dedicated PDAO head limits the depth of specialized attention, advocacy, and expertise required to address the needs and concerns of the disability sector not just in DRRM, but in another development agenda.

4. **Limited direct and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.** RA10070 outlines the various functions of the PDAO head that include representing the disability sector in the local development council and other special bodies, like the DRRM council. It should be noted that the law points out the priority appointment for qualified persons with disabilities as PDAO head or focal person, yet it also allows that in the absence of a ‘qualified’ person with disabilities, the LGU can appoint a PDAO head without disabilities. In the same report assessing the local mechanisms for programs and services for persons with disabilities focusing on PDAO, only 44%

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<sup>64</sup> Alampay, E.G., Cureg, E., & Quebral, D.J. Enabling the Disabled: Assessment of local mechanisms for programs and services for persons with disabilities (PWDs) - focus on Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337026594\\_PROJECT\\_FINAL\\_REPORT\\_PROJECT\\_Assessment\\_of\\_Local\\_Mechanisms\\_for\\_Programs\\_and\\_Services\\_for\\_PWDs\\_-\\_Focus\\_on\\_Persons\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_Affairs\\_Office](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337026594_PROJECT_FINAL_REPORT_PROJECT_Assessment_of_Local_Mechanisms_for_Programs_and_Services_for_PWDs_-_Focus_on_Persons_with_Disabilities_Affairs_Office)

of the LGUs indicated their awareness that their PDAO head or focal person is a person with disabilities. This 'leeway' somehow reduces the opportunity for persons with disabilities to directly represent themselves in local development councils and other special bodies. Unless there is a legally registered and accredited organization of persons with disability, the disability sector's agenda and concerns will need to be conveyed by the PDAO in the LDCs.

The participation of the persons with disabilities in these councils is also hindered by the absence of organized and legally registered and accredited organizations of persons with disabilities. A 2022 baseline report of the A2D Project examines the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRRM in 20 local government units in Cebu Province. The report indicated that most federations of persons with disabilities are not involved in local policy decision-making. Their involvement and participation in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programs and projects, particularly in DRRM, are highly constrained due to the lack of a formal, registered, and well-equipped organization for persons with disabilities. Legal registrations and accreditations are prerequisites for CSOs, such as the OPDs, to be accredited and become recognized voting members of the local development councils and other special bodies. This is also consistent with the assessment report on local mechanisms for programs and services for persons with disabilities focusing on PDAO, wherein the survey result indicated low participation of persons with disabilities in local special bodies. Only 33% (out of 230 LGU responses) had representation in the local development council, and only very few were represented in local DRRM councils and other special bodies.

5. **Loose and informal organizations of persons with disabilities.** In the Philippine Local Government Code, a sectoral organization, such as the OPD, can only be represented in local development councils with legal identification. Furthermore, national laws mandate local government agencies and authorities provide support and financial assistance in establishing such organizations that could

enable persons with disabilities to participate and be represented in formal government planning processes. However, there are problems in implementing these laws. In a policy brief published by the Philippine Consortium on Social Protection, this issue concerning the disability community was mentioned. In the policy brief, the provinces of Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, Samar, and Masbate indicated that, at the barangay level, persons with disabilities have difficulty organizing and forming a group due to the absence of a master list, and the lack of support from the barangay LGU to allow them to form a group.<sup>65</sup> Nine municipalities from the four provinces said that persons with disabilities associations are not organized and registered at the barangay level<sup>66</sup>. Similarly, this finding surfaced during a consultative interview of the A2D Project in 1 selected city and three municipalities in Cebu province – Lapulapu City, Cordova, San Francisco, and Santa Fe. During this consultation, participants shared that the barangay associations of persons with disabilities are loosely organized, not formally registered, lack a clear organizational structure, including bylaws and rules of procedure, and are not fully functional because they do not have the necessary resources to implement their plans and programs. The barangay associations' activities are not programmatic, with most activities having been one-off events. Meetings are also done informally and sporadically, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein they only meet for specific events. It is important to note that only when the association of persons with disabilities is organized at the barangay level that the federation of persons with a disability at the municipal level can be formed. This highlights the critical role of formal, organized, and capacitated barangay-level disability organizations to amplify the disability "voice" at the higher governance structure. Given the constraints of barangay disability organizations, the municipal-level federation of persons with disabilities likewise has an observable deficiency in legal recognition and

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<sup>65</sup> Philippine Consortium on Social Protection. Promoting Self-Development and Access and Participation of Persons with Disability: A Policy Brief. [https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/25/2022/03/policy\\_brief\\_pwd\\_final.pdf](https://plan-international.org/uploads/sites/25/2022/03/policy_brief_pwd_final.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*

restricted organizational and technical capabilities. In fact, in the 2022 baseline study of the A2D Project, which looked into the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRRM in 20 local government units in Cebu Province, while thirteen LGUs have a federation of persons with disabilities, this number, only one is legally registered with a government agency. The absence of the legal identity and organizational capacities of these OPDs prevents them from fully and meaningfully participating in these official planning and decision-making processes. Due to their exclusion from these structured planning and decision-making procedures, their voices and viewpoints might not be fully incorporated into community development and DRR plans and projects.

- 6. Lack of accessible evacuation shelters.** Despite the recent improvements in policy frameworks pushing for the full implementation of the accessibility law, there remains a significant gap in its practical application. Inaccessible infrastructure and communication remain enormous obstacles.<sup>67</sup> Government offices, facilities, and school buildings, often identified as evacuation sites, are not fully compliant with BP344<sup>68</sup>, making it challenging for persons with physical mobility during and before a disaster. In an interview with a woman in a wheelchair from an LGU affected by Typhoon Rai in 2021, evacuating to the school that served as an evacuation site did not become an option due to its inaccessibility. This was also consistent with the findings of CBM during a survey after Typhoon Rai in the Philippines. Out of the 200 persons with disabilities and older people affected by Typhoon Rai surveyed, forty per cent (40%) said that the evacuation centre was not accessible for older people and persons with

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<sup>67</sup> Sol Cruz, K., et. al. (2021). Philippine Disability Sector Research: An Initial Analysis of Access to Social and Public Services, Education, Work and Employment, and Civic Participation and Governance. The Asia Foundation.

<sup>68</sup> Feona, M. (2017, September 28). Evacuation centers, and relief goods not PWD-inclusive. ABS-CBN News; ABS-CBN News. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/09/29/17/evacuation-centers-relief-goods-not-pwd-inclusive>

disabilities.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, 13% indicated that evacuation sites did not have accessible toilets or handwashing facilities.<sup>70</sup>

7. **Lack of inclusive early warning system.** Apart from inaccessible evacuation sites, warning advisories and communication materials also remain inaccessible for persons with disabilities, particularly for the Deaf. In consultation with a Deaf community in Cebu Province, the Deaf participants lamented how warning advisories remain inaccessible during disasters. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they also shared that they felt they were among the last sectors of the population to understand the severity of the situation entirely. They shared that their community was clouded with misconceptions and misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and the government's vaccination program. The inaccessibility of the early warning system for persons with disabilities in the Philippines was also pointed out by another study that aimed to understand the early warning system in the country. The study pointed out that reaching everyone in society, including women, the elderly, persons with vision or hearing disabilities, and Indigenous peoples, remains a significant challenge for EWS.<sup>71</sup> It added that very few warning systems in the country have been designed and developed to be inclusive. Particularly, it pointed out the need to design warning alerts to be accessible for persons with hearing and visual disabilities.

8. **Charitable viewpoints continue to surround DRR.** Several initiatives implemented in the Philippines by civil society organizations aim to mainstream disability-inclusive DRRM. However, several literatures indicate that the inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRR-related planning and programs remains limited. Consultations with persons with disabilities also revealed that their participation

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<sup>69</sup> Peters, S. (2022, February 28). Update on Super Typhoon Odette in the Philippines. CBM Australia. <https://www.cbm.org.au/stories/update-super-typhoon-odette-hit-the-philippines>

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>71</sup> Early Warning Systems in the Philippines: Building resilience through mobile and digital technologies. (2022). [https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PhilippinesEWS\\_R\\_Web.pdf](https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PhilippinesEWS_R_Web.pdf)

in developing disaster preparedness and emergency plans is often limited to attending DRR training and being "present" in DRR planning but not actively participating. Charitable viewpoints surround DRR, even in programs that profess to be disability-inclusive. There remains a tendency to approach inclusion from a charitable standpoint rather than one founded on rights, equity, and meaningful participation. For example, disability-inclusive DRR often prioritizes individuals with disabilities in the rescue and relief distribution process.<sup>72</sup>, as well as allocating resources to stockpile assistive devices. While these are a good starting point, this focus tends to overshadow the need to actively involve persons with disabilities in planning and programming processes and provide them with the means, skills, and knowledge to do so. For instance, during drills, they are often assigned the role of a victim.<sup>73</sup>, reinforcing the passive role of persons with disabilities in DRR rather than as active contributors to their resilience and safety. Moreover, limited internal funding opportunities are made available that can be used to invest in initiatives that will build the capacities of persons with disabilities and make them become effective agents of change and awareness on DRR; address communication barriers through inclusive DRR IEC materials and provision of sign language interpreters, and build awareness on DiDRRM among local government units.

In summary, while the Philippines has made significant strides in promoting DiDRRM, there is still a need for further improvements to ensure the inclusion and protection of persons with disabilities during disasters.

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<sup>72</sup> Wester, M., Van Dijkhorst, H., & Warner, J. (2017). Disability Inclusive- Disaster Risk Reduction MSc thesis Disaster Studies Practices of participation in Albay province, the Philippines. <https://edepot.wur.nl/426081>

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*

# **V. Good practice on DiDRR in the Philippines: A Case Study on Cebu Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Network**

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There are several good practices for DRR in the Philippines. In this study, the case of the Cebu DiDRR Network is examined to demonstrate the practical application of inclusive approaches in the context of DRRM.

The Cebu Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Network (Cebu DiDRR Network) is a multi-stakeholder advocacy coalition working towards disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction and community development. It comprises civil society organizations and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in strong collaboration and partnership with government offices such as the local DRRM and Disability Affairs Office. The Cebu DiDRR Network was established in October 2015 due to a multi-sectoral consultative workshop to assess the experience of persons with disabilities during Typhoon Haiyan in Northern Cebu. During this meeting, the pressing need for a focal organization for DiDRR emerged, stemming from the urgent requirement to address patterns of exclusion faced by the disability population in disaster and DRR. Thus, in October 2015, the Cebu DiDRR Network was launched for this purpose.

Since its establishment, the Cebu DiDRR Network has been involved in initiatives to popularize DiDRR in local governments in the Philippines, especially in Cebu Province. In these initiatives, the Cebu DiDRR Network has abided by the four main elements of

DiDRR as elaborated by Humanity and Inclusion (2014) and CBM (2012) - accessibility, awareness, non-discrimination, and participation. It is worth noting that the implementation of these initiatives has been incremental, as the network has relied heavily on external funding for their execution – partnering with CSOs and the local government.

The following section outlines some valuable practices from the Cebu DiDRR experience. These takeaways serve as an illustrative example of effective DiDRR in action.

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## **E. Nothing about us, without us**

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Driven by its core mission to advocate for the integration of inclusive approaches into DRR efforts of local government and other stakeholders, the Cebu DiDRR Network made it a priority to reflect inclusivity, non-discrimination, participation, and diversity within its own organizational structure and operational framework.

At the inception of the Cebu DiDRR Network, deliberate efforts were made to ensure its membership comprises disability-focused entities and organizations of persons with disabilities. This underscores the acknowledgement that genuine inclusivity in DiDRR necessitates ensuring the active representation of persons with disabilities. Additionally, when formulating the network's vision, mission, and operational framework, an extensive process of consultations and collaborative writeshops was undertaken. This involved active engagement with persons with disabilities and other recognized DiDRR stakeholders. Doing this ensured that the vision would clearly articulate its mission to push for the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities within the context of DRR and sustainable development. Further, this process helped to ensure that the network's mission comprehensively incorporates the urgent requirements of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and accurately

reflects their perspectives on how these needs can be effectively addressed within these guiding documents. The network's mission includes 1) advocating for inclusive DRR-CCA policies and programs in all levels of governance to achieve community resilience; 2) promoting the full implementation of relevant laws and international conventions, thereby ensuring accessibility and inclusion; 3) meaningfully participating and engaging in mandated special bodies of government that work towards inclusion in DRR-CCA; 4) actively engaging with the private sector and other local and international humanitarian organizations to foster collaboration and partnership in DiDRR-related programs; and, 5) building the capacity of the network and its members in the area of DRR-CCA, thereby providing for sustainability and development.

When the Cebu DiDRR Network established its pool of trainers, it ensured that its composition was diverse and encompassed individuals representing not just the disability population but also other significant aspects of diversity – age, gender, and expertise. At present, the training pool of the Cebu DiDRR Network is composed of 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.

BOX 3: Composition of the Cebu DiDRR Network Trainer on inclusive DRR

| Member | W/O Disability | Orthopedic | Hearing | Visual | Children with Disability expertise | LGBTQIA | Female | Male | Older Person |
|--------|----------------|------------|---------|--------|------------------------------------|---------|--------|------|--------------|
| 1      |                |            |         | ■      | ■                                  |         | ■      |      |              |
| 2      | ■              |            |         |        |                                    |         |        | ■    |              |
| 3      |                |            | ■       |        |                                    |         |        | ■    |              |
| 4      |                | ■          |         |        |                                    |         | ■      |      | ■            |
| 5      |                | ■          |         |        |                                    |         |        | ■    |              |
| 6      |                | ■          |         |        |                                    |         |        | ■    |              |
| 7      |                |            | ■       |        |                                    | ■       |        |      |              |
| 8      |                | ■          |         |        |                                    |         |        | ■    |              |
| 9      |                | ■          |         |        |                                    |         |        | ■    |              |
| 10     | ■              |            |         |        |                                    |         | ■      |      | ■            |
| 11     | ■              |            |         |        |                                    |         | ■      |      |              |
| 12     | ■              |            |         |        |                                    |         | ■      |      |              |

This conscious effort to ensure representation, participation, and diversity in the Cebu DiDRR Network, as articulated in its institutional documents and operational framework, exemplifies its steadfast commitment to its core mission to advocate for the integration of inclusive approaches in DRR. This underscores the network’s recognition that true inclusivity in DiDRR demands the active involvement of persons historically excluded – persons with disabilities.

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**F. Inclusion begins with an “I”**

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The phrase "Inclusion begins with 'I'" in the context of disability-inclusive conveys the idea that fostering inclusion and ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in DRR is a responsibility of each person, regardless of whether they are policymakers, practitioners, community members, advocates and allies, and persons with disabilities

themselves. It connotes that taking proactive steps to promote inclusion and make DRR efforts accessible to everyone is both a personal and shared responsibility.

To embody this essence, the Cebu DiDRR Network trained its members to develop their inclusive facilitation, DRR, leadership, and advocacy capacities. These training efforts aimed to foster a unified understanding of DiDRR within the network, cultivating the appropriate attitudes and perspectives needed to advocate for DiDRR.

Recognizing the significant role played by government agencies and offices in promoting inclusive DRR, the Cebu DiDRR network collaborated with other organizations and co-facilitated training to enhance their understanding of DiDRR. Since 2015, the Cebu DiDRR Network provided DiDRR training to local government units in Cebu Province. For the government offices, this training aimed at influencing them to adopt a more proactive stance in facilitating the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in local governance. For persons with disabilities, the training sought to empower them to become proactive catalysts of positive change within their communities rather than as passive recipients of aid and help.

The Cebu DiDRR Network continues its active involvement in providing DiDRR training to local government units. Recently, it partnered with a nonprofit organization to jointly implement a disability-inclusive project across 24 local government units in Cebu Province. This DiDRR initiative adopts a twin-track approach, involving activities to enhance the awareness of DiDRR stakeholders regarding the importance of incorporating the needs, rights, and perspectives of persons with disabilities into their DRRM plans and programs. Simultaneously, this DiDRR project provides resources and inputs (both knowledge and financial) to empower persons with disabilities and provide them with the means to emerge as DiDRR leaders and advocates within their own families and communities.

In conclusion, the examples provided above underscore the pivotal role of the Cebu DiDRR Network in establishing inclusive spaces where policymakers, practitioners, and persons with disabilities can actively participate in meaningful dialogues and open forums. These initiatives encourage collaboration and strengthen the notion that inclusion is a collective responsibility.

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## **G. Beyond DRR**

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The primary mission of the Cebu DiDRR Network revolves around inclusive DRR, yet it does not limit its endeavors to this. The Cebu DiDRR Network recognizes that, as it addresses the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in DRR, it inevitably delves into broader discussions about the inclusion of persons with disabilities in other facets of their lives. Thus, its works extend beyond its DiDRR focus and encompass initiatives that address the broader marginalization and exclusion that underlie meaningful inclusion. Moreover, as the Cebu DiDRR Network creates opportunities for persons with disabilities to reduce their vulnerability, it becomes imperative to simultaneously address the underlying root causes that render the disability population susceptible to disaster risk. In recent years, the Cebu DiDRR Network has embarked on initiatives to address the prevailing vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities – limited economic opportunities, restrictive participation in civic engagement, inaccessible communication materials, and inaccessible infrastructures.

The Cebu DiDRR Network co-facilitates training for OPD leaders and members to equip them with essential personal, organizational, and entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. These training sessions include various topics, including self-awareness and leadership, decision-making, business management, fundamentals of marketing, and basic accounting. The main objective of the training is to foster the development of business skills among the OPD members to enable them to conceptualize a viable business

concept idea that has the potential for sustainable income generation for the OPD and its members. In 2022, the Cebu DiDRR Network co-facilitated these training series in selected 20 OPDs. The OPDs were guided through developing a business proposal aligned with their interests, resources, and capabilities. Subsequently, the OPDs received a seed grant to realize their business ideas. These OPD-run businesses are operational, generating revenue, and gradually recouping their initial seed grant amount (investment). Future hope for these OPD-run businesses is to set aside a percentage from their revenue to establish their organizational fund and provide additional income streams for the members, thereby improving its members' financial well-being and promoting economic empowerment for individuals with disabilities.

In addition to addressing economic vulnerabilities, the Cebu DiDRR Network actively engages in initiatives promoting accessibility. It has partnered with the Department of Tourism Region 7 to conduct webinars to train tourism frontliners on the proper handling of persons with disabilities and provide orientation on universal design. The Cebu DiDRR Network members have also provided feedback and recommendations to government and private facilities to improve accessibility. During training, the Cebu DiDRR Network pool of trainers offers insights to hotel and venue owners on how they can make their facilities more accessible, including creating ramps and widening doors.

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## **H. Creating community champions on DiDRR**

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The social exclusion of persons with disabilities in DRR is deeply rooted in biases and stereotypes that portray individuals with disabilities as helpless, needing help and rescue, and dependent on others. These misconceptions contribute to marginalizing and neglecting their needs and perspectives during disaster-related activities. The Cebu DiDRR Network has undertaken critical advocacy and empowerment initiatives to address this issue. The network engages in advocacy and constructive dialogues with

policymakers to dispel stereotypes and biases, emphasizing their obligation to uphold the equal rights of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the network conducts self-awareness and disability training programs for persons with disabilities. These initiatives enhance their understanding of disability-related issues and rights and build their confidence and knowledge to articulate their unique lived experiences and perspectives effectively. Through these capacity-building activities, the Cebu DiDRR Network strives to ensure that persons with disabilities have the skills and knowledge to make meaningful contributions to discussions, decision-making, and policy formulation related to DRR and other development agendas. Ultimately, the goal of the Cebu DiDRR Network is to expand and strengthen its DRR endeavors by empowering persons with disabilities at the local and community levels who can champion disability-inclusive DRR. Through these efforts, the network seeks to cultivate a broader community of advocates dedicated to promoting inclusive DiDRR practices, thereby enhancing resilience and inclusivity within the network and beyond.

In conclusion, the journey toward inclusive DRR is about challenging stereotypes and biases and empowering individuals with disabilities to be active advocates for their rights. The Cebu DiDRR Network's commitment to dispelling misconceptions and promoting inclusivity has laid the foundation for a more equitable and resilient society. By engaging in advocacy, capacity building, and community outreach, the network has cultivated a growing community of advocates and trainers dedicated to making disaster risk reduction and development truly inclusive.

# VI. Recommendations

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Building on the key takeaways from the Cebu DiDRR Network, the following are recommendations that can be undertaken to further mainstream DiDRR:

1. **Prioritize data collection to identify the total number of persons with disabilities** in the Philippines and other information relevant to the effectiveness of DiDRR. The availability of an updated database helps plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate. In the registration process, explaining the consequences of shame and stigma is essential. Disability acceptance should also be included in information campaigns and public education. Regularly update the LGU list of persons with disabilities since there are new or unregistered ones.
2. **Increase the meaningful and direct participation and role of persons with disabilities** by providing them with skills training, knowledge building, and confidence improvement for persons with disabilities so they can effectively and meaningfully contribute to planning and decision-making activities related to DRR and other development agendas. Nurture their strengths so they can pursue more proactive roles in all levels of decision-making processes and develop programs, projects, and activities beneficial for themselves, their family, and the community. In addition to empowering individuals with disabilities, providing education and support to their families, parents, and guardians is essential. By enhancing their understanding of the rights and untapped potentials of persons with disabilities, we can help eradicate any unintentional contributions to the self-stigmatization of individuals with disabilities. This holistic approach fosters inclusivity and ensures that every community member can contribute their unique strengths to the betterment of society.

3. **Provide training, technical support, and resources for the establishment and strengthening of organizations of persons with disabilities.** In the Philippines, having a registered federation/ organization of persons with disabilities is significant for fostering disability-inclusive efforts, including in DRRM. The OPD serves as a crucial mechanism for the disability community to gain representation and have a seat in essential local councils, such as the DRRM council. Therefore, it is imperative to provide comprehensive technical support to facilitate the formation of such organizations, ensuring they are structured, formalized, and officially registered. Especially for unregistered OPDs, offering institutional enhancement and capacity-building activities to empower these organizations becomes essential. These activities include assisting the organization in crafting strategic and action plans, developing key governance documents like constitutions and by-laws, and establishing operational guidelines. Through this, the OPDs can acquire legal recognition, a critical step in gaining legitimacy and accreditation by LGUs. With legal recognition, these OPDs can assume a rightful role in local policy decision-making, particularly concerning disability inclusion within DRRM initiatives and promoting accessibility. Their official status grants them the authority to participate actively in various local governance processes, advocate for disability-inclusive policies, and work toward improving the disability community's welfare in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

4. **Foster stronger collaboration and coordination among government agencies, organizations, and communities to ensure that DiDRR is integrated into all aspects of DRRM.** In addition, it is vital to maintain and reinforce the advocacy for the establishment of PDAOs while simultaneously equipping existing ones with the necessary tools and capacities to ensure their effective and efficient functioning. The critical role of PDAO/ focal persons with disabilities must be recognized as they are central in the practical and successful mainstreaming and institutionalization of disability-inclusive DRR. The PDAO serves as crucial points

of coordination, advocacy, and support for persons with disabilities within local government units, thus essential in promoting more effective and inclusive disaster preparedness, response, and recovery for all community members, including those with disabilities.

5. **Continue enhancing the capacity of local government units on disability inclusion** by deepening their understanding of the provisions of the various national laws and international commitments promoting disability rights and welfare. The LGUs at the national and local policy play an indispensable role in institutionalizing DiDRR efforts. Thus, it becomes equally important to include them in capacity-building measures to enhance their capacities to implement laws and policies that support DiDRR effectively. This can be done through dialogues, conferences, rights awareness training sessions and disability equality training. These sessions will contribute to their enhanced knowledge and make them more aware of the relevant legal frameworks and global obligations. Through these measures, the government will be 'reminded' of its mandate to ensure the full participation and well-being of persons with disabilities. It can facilitate the seamless integration of disability inclusion into their DRRM and community development plans and programs.
  
6. **Address accessibility requirements to enable full participation of persons with disabilities.** Accessibility is an important facet to empower persons with disabilities, not just in DRRM but also in other development initiatives. Therefore, it becomes indispensable that initiatives to facilitate accessibility are undertaken as they provide the foundation that cultivates an inclusive and equitable society. Accessibility in DRRM encompasses a wide range of domains that include physical spaces, communication and information, among others. For physical accessibility, buildings and facilities, including transportation services, should adhere to universal design principles and guidelines. Wheelchair ramps and elevators shall be designed to be accessible, especially for those with mobility

impairment. In DRRM, evacuation centres and pathways must ensure that they adhere to accessibility requirements. This is to ensure that persons with disabilities affected by a disaster, are not demotivated to evacuate as they feel they will not experience additional difficulty when in these temporary shelters. Transportation services and road networks must also incorporate accessibility features to cater to persons with disabilities. In terms of communication, IEC materials should also be in accessible formats (braille and sign language interpreters). Alert and early warning systems and materials on disaster awareness and preparedness must be in accessible formats for persons with visual and hearing disability. During disaster risk reduction and preparedness training and simulation activities, accessibility and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities must also be considered, budgeted and implemented.

# Conclusion

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In recent years, inclusive and participatory approaches to DRR have been gradually integrated into the plans, policies, and programs of national and local government units in the Philippines. The government has committed to various international instruments and local policy frameworks emphasizing the inclusion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in DRR efforts.

However, despite these significant steps to integrate disability inclusion in various development initiatives, challenges persist in fully implementing DiDRR in the country. There is a lack of accurate, up-to-date, and consistent disability statistics in the Philippines, which is a critical factor in understanding their specific vulnerabilities and needs. Participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, including in DiDRR, also remains limited. The absence of disability affairs offices at the local level and the low participation of persons with disabilities in local special bodies hinder their involvement in planning and decision-making. Their participation in formal decision-making processes is hindered as many organizations of persons with disabilities at the grassroots level are loosely organized, lacking formal registration and clear organizational structure. Their 'absence' prevents their voices and perspectives from being incorporated into community development and DiDRR plans and projects.

Furthermore, practical implementation of existing policies and frameworks advocating for the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities falls short. Inaccessible infrastructure and communication persist, making evacuation sites and early warning systems largely inadequate for persons with disabilities. Deaf individuals, in particular, continue to face challenges in accessing warning advisories and information. Moreover, DiDRR initiatives still, at times, adopt charitable viewpoints rather than rights-based approaches. Persons with disabilities are sometimes limited to passive roles in

planning and programming rather than being active contributors, perpetuating the deeply rooted biases and stereotypes that marginalize persons with disabilities.

As the Philippines continues to face susceptibility to various hazards exacerbated by the climate crisis, strengthening the adaptive coping mechanism of persons with disabilities, including their disaster preparedness and risk reduction capabilities, becomes imperative. Equally important is ensuring that the disability perspectives and needs coming from the persons with disabilities themselves are integrated into these plans and efforts.

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