

Building resilience and reducing exposure and impact from climate-related hazards and other shocks and disasters (targets 1.5, 11.5 and 11.b and Goal 13)

Target 1.5 aims at building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters; target 11.5 aims at making human settlements sustainable and inclusive by ensuring the protection of people in vulnerable situations from disasters; target 11.b aims at inter alia substantially increasing the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change and resilience to disasters; and Goal 13 aims at taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. Within Goal 13, target 13.1 aims at strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries; target 13.3 aims at improving education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning; and target 13.b aims at combating climate change by enhancing capacities for effective climate change-related planning and management, with a focus on marginalized communities.

This chapter assesses the current situation and trends of persons with disabilities vis-a-vis this Goal and these targets, which overall focus on climate change and disasters. Disasters caused by natural hazards, man-made disasters and climate hazards can cause harm to humans, property, livelihoods, resources and the environment. Disasters caused by natural hazards include agricultural diseases and pests, blizzards, cyclones, damaging winds, droughts, earthquakes, floods, heatwaves, hurricanes, infectious disease outbreaks, landslides, lightning and thunderstorms, pandemics, sinkholes, storms, tornadoes, tsunamis, typhoons, volcanic eruptions and wildfires. Man-made disasters and shocks include arson, biological and chemical attacks, chemical spills, cyber-attacks, economic and financial crises, groundwater poisoning, hazardous materials exposures and spills, nuclear explosions, pollution, terrorist attacks, transportation accidents and wars. Climatic hazards are weather-related events and include blizzards, cyclones, droughts, floods, heatwaves, hurricanes, storms and tornadoes.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides a framework to guide preparedness, response and recovery efforts in climate hazards and disasters. In particular, Article 11 of the Convention recognizes that situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies pose serious challenges to persons with disabilities and their rights and reinforces and specifies States' obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and disasters caused by natural hazards.

A number of other international agreements support the need to ensure the safety and protection of persons with disabilities in such emergency situations and to involve them in preparedness and response efforts. The Paris Agreement (2015) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

notes that parties should respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities, when taking actions to address climate change.⁴⁹⁵ The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 adopts a rights-based sustainable development agenda that calls for accessibility and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction policies, all stages of disaster risk reduction planning, and data disaggregation by disability.⁴⁹⁶ The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (2014) acknowledges the importance of engaging a broad range of stakeholders including persons with disabilities in the context of climate change and of strengthening the contingency planning and provisions for disaster preparedness and response, emergency relief and population evacuation for persons with disabilities.⁴⁹⁷ The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) commits to address the special needs of people in vulnerable situations including refugees and migrants with disabilities and calls for the identification of specific assistance needs and protection arrangements for them.⁴⁹⁸ The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2475 on the protection of persons with disabilities in conflict situations (2019) calls upon all parties to armed conflict to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access and prevent violence and abuses against civilians with disabilities in situations of armed conflict.

In addition, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, developed for the World Humanitarian Summit held in 2016 and endorsed by many states and stakeholders, commits to ensure that services and humanitarian assistance are equally available for and accessible to all persons with disabilities, and to guarantee the availability, affordability and access to specialized services, including assistive technology in the short, medium and long term.

This chapter focuses on the safety and protection of persons with disabilities during and after disasters caused by natural hazards, climate-related events and other disasters, provides an overview of the status of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian actions, and provides recommendations to address the needs of persons with disabilities in such shocks and crises.

Current situation and progress so far

Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable during man-made disasters and disasters caused by natural hazards, including extreme climate events. They tend to suffer higher mortality rates, have lower evacuation rates and are more likely to be negatively affected during and in the aftermath of disasters.³² Disasters amplify the marginalization experienced by persons with disabilities, affecting their health, reducing access to healthcare and services, food, water and accessible infrastructure. During disasters and evacuations, transportation and shelters may not be accessible to persons with disabilities; persons with disabilities may lose essential medications and assistive devices; and mental, rehabilitation and other health and support services may become less available. This has led to persons with disabilities being hospitalized or institutionalized during disasters,⁴⁹⁹ which goes against the provisions of the CRPD.

The COVID-19 pandemic again confirmed this disproportionate impact, with persons with disabilities

suffering much higher COVID-19 mortality rates than others. Available evidence points to half of COVID-19 deaths occurring among persons with disabilities and COVID-19 mortality rates among youth with intellectual disabilities 30 times higher than among other youth (see the chapter on Goal 3). Many households of persons with disabilities faced additional difficulties paying for food during the pandemic, especially in developing countries (see the chapter on Goal 2). Higher percentages of persons with disabilities than persons without disabilities did not have access to water delivery, sanitary products and were not able to pay water bills during the pandemic (see the chapter on Goal 6). A large majority of the COVID-19 response, especially in its early stages, was not accessible or inclusive for persons with disabilities, with tests, testing and vaccination sites not accessible (see the chapter on Goal 3) and COVID-19 information not released in accessible formats (see the chapter on target 16.10). The experience of persons with disabilities in countries suffering disasters caused by natural hazards or humanitarian emergencies during the pandemic was even more challenging: 64 per cent of persons with disabilities in these areas reported barriers to accessing healthcare and medicines.⁵⁰⁰

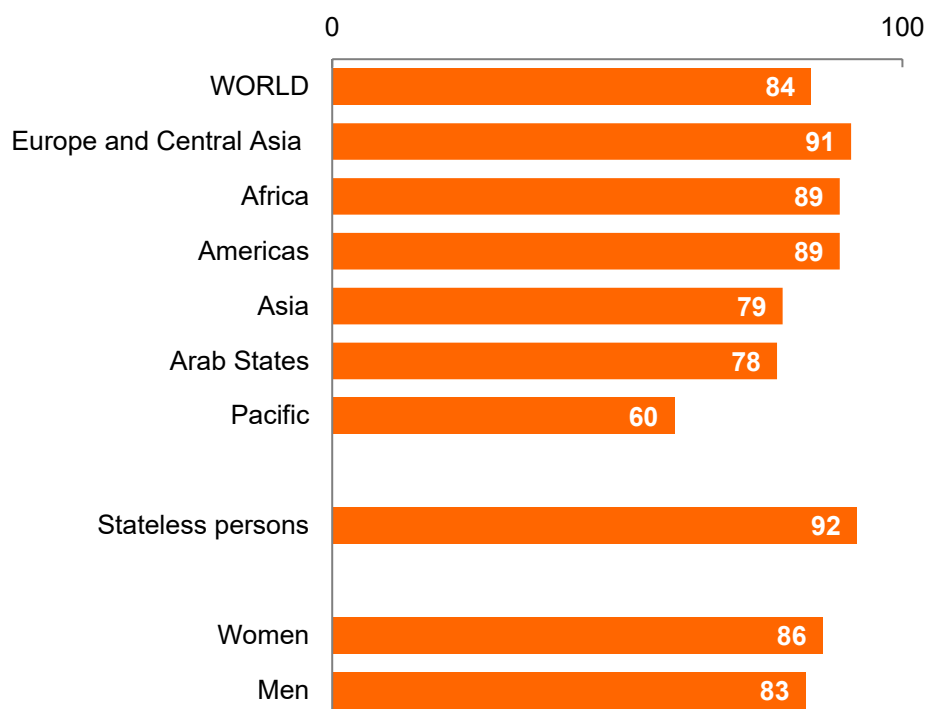
Recent data on the impact of climate-related extreme events on persons with disabilities is scarce. Estimates presented in the *Disability and Development Report 2018* show that the mortality rates of persons with disabilities during such extreme events are twice as high as the mortality rates for persons without disabilities. The socio-economic vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities have remained since then and suggest that persons with disabilities will continue to suffer a disproportionate impact during climate-related extreme events: persons with disabilities are more likely to be poor than persons without disabilities (see the chapter on Goal 1), which means they often live in poorer housing (see the chapter on Goal 11) that is usually on less desirable flood- and heat-prone lands and that is less resistant to weather related events.

A key reason why a disproportionate number of persons with disabilities suffer and die in disasters is because their needs are ignored and neglected by the official planning process in the majority of situations. They are often totally reliant on the kindness of family, friends and neighbours for their survival and safety. A comparison between 2013 and 2023, indicates that many aspects of disaster risk preparedness and response for persons with disabilities have worsened in many regions in the world, particularly in Central Asia, Europe and the Americas. In Africa, Asia and the Pacific regions, despite some drawbacks, remarkable progress has been made in some aspects of disaster risk preparedness.

In 2023, worldwide, 84 per cent of persons with disabilities had no personal preparedness plan for disasters, a situation that has deteriorated since 2013 when fewer persons with disabilities, 72 per cent, lacked such a plan (Figure 182). In 2023, in all regions, the vast majority of persons with disabilities has no such plan. The highest percentage of persons with disabilities lacking a personal preparedness plan for disasters is found in Europe and Central Asia (91 per cent); and the lowest in the Pacific (60 per cent). The situation has worsened in all regions since 2013, as the percentages have increased in all regions since then, except in the Pacific where there was a decrease from 71 per cent in 2013 to 60 per cent in

2023. But it is for stateless persons with disabilities that the lack of preparedness plans is more acute: 92 per cent of them lack these plans. A slightly higher percentage of women with disabilities (86 per cent) than men with disabilities (83 per cent) lack these plans.

Figure 182. Percentage of persons with disabilities who do not have a personal preparedness plan for disasters, in the world and by region, for stateless persons, and by sex, in 2023.

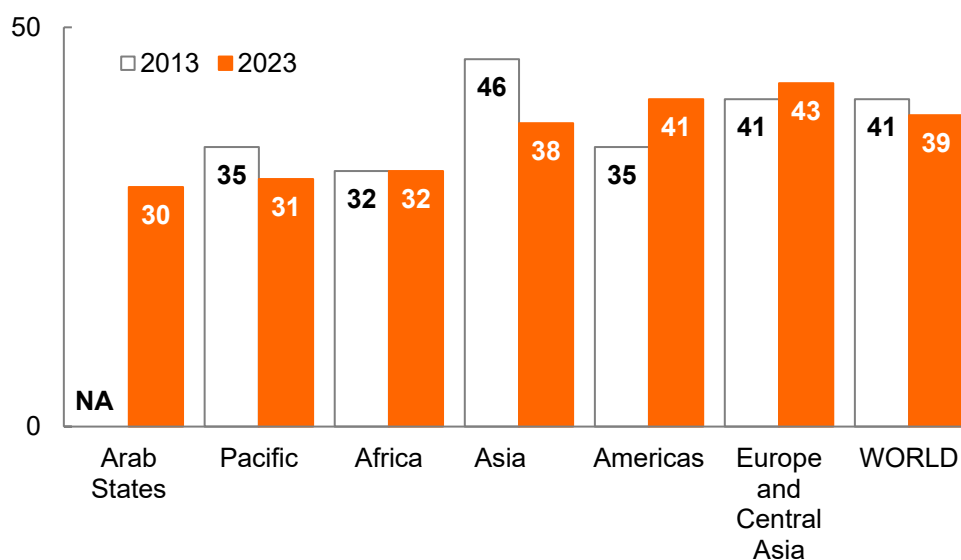


Source: UNDRR (2023).⁵⁰¹

Worldwide, persons with disabilities face a lot of difficulties or are unable to evacuate without assistance in the event of a sudden disaster, a situation that has improved little since 2013: 39 per cent of persons with disabilities in 2023 down from 41 per cent in 2013 (Figure 183). While there has been progress in Asia, with an 8 percentage point decrease since 2013, and in the Pacific, with a 4 percentage point decrease since 2013, in other regions the situation has worsened, particularly in the Americas where 41 per cent of persons with disabilities would face difficulties or not be able to evacuate at all in 2023 up from 35 per cent in 2013. If given an early warning and sufficient time, the percentage of persons with disabilities worldwide who would face difficulties or not be able to evacuate decreases to 23 per cent.⁵⁰¹

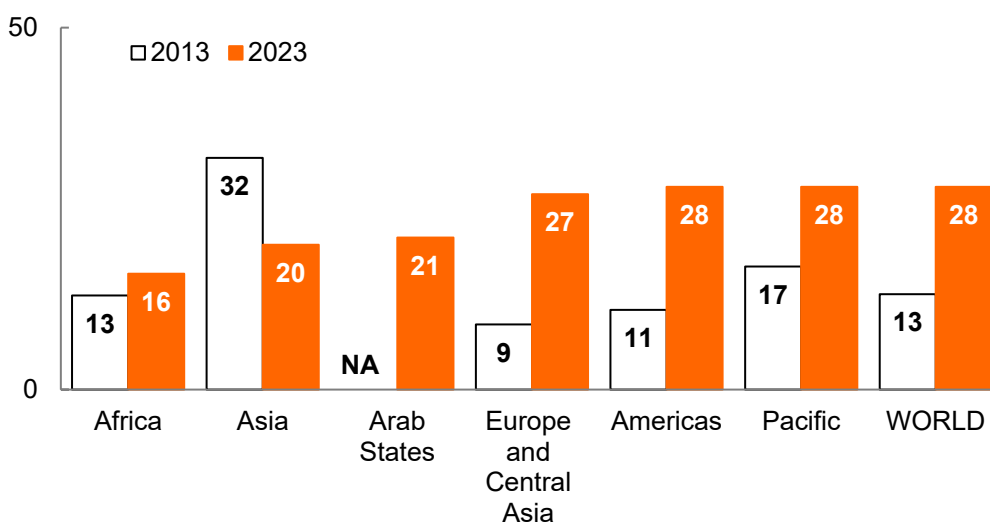
For persons with disabilities who require assistance to evacuate before a disaster, 28 per cent have no one to assist them, up from 13 per cent in 2013 (Figure 184). The situation has worsened in all regions since 2013, except for Asia, where 32 per cent of persons with disabilities in 2013 but only 20 per cent in 2023 had no one to assist them.

Figure 183. Percentage of persons with disabilities who, without assistance, would have a lot of difficulty evacuating or would not be able to evacuate at all in the event of a sudden disaster, in the world and by region, in 2013 and 2023.



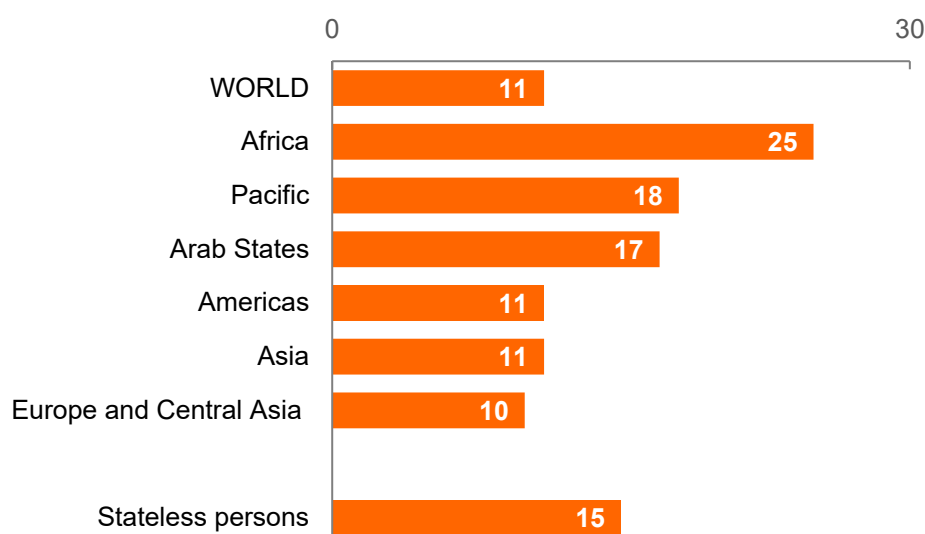
Source: UNISDR (2013)⁵⁰² and UNDRR (2023).⁵⁰¹

Figure 184. Percentage of persons with disabilities who need but do not have someone to help them evacuate before a disaster, in the world and by region, in 2013 and 2023.



Source: UNISDR (2013)⁵⁰² and UNDRR (2023).⁵⁰¹

Figure 185. Percentage of persons with disabilities who indicate that information on disaster management or risk reduction available in their community is disseminated in accessible formats (e.g., Braille, easy-to-read versions and sign language), in the world and by region, in 2023.



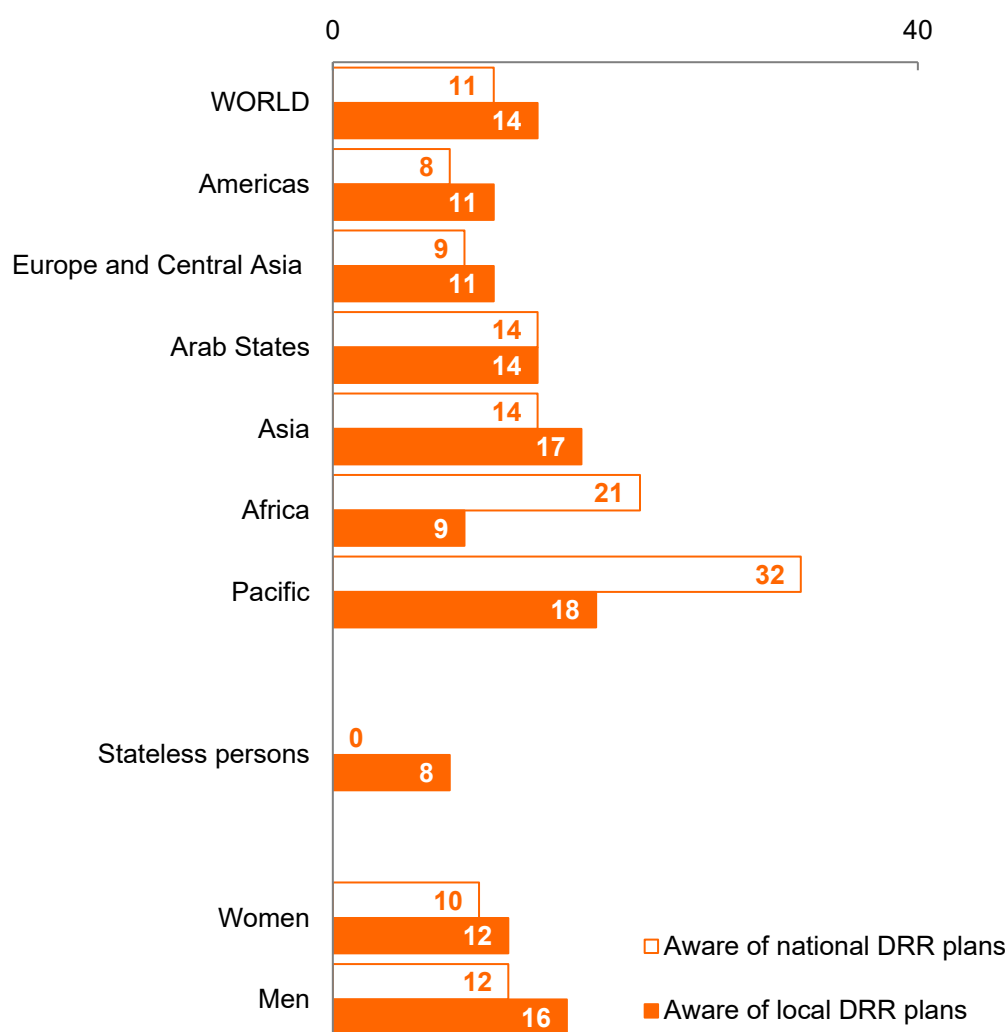
Source: UNDRR (2023).⁵⁰¹

Persons with disabilities may experience more obstacles in evacuating and protecting themselves from disasters if they face barriers in accessing information on disaster management, risk reduction and early warnings because this information is not disseminated in formats accessible for them, such as Braille, easy-to-understand versions and sign language. Worldwide, only 11 per cent of persons with disabilities indicate that information on disaster management or risk reduction available in their community is disseminated in accessible formats, from 10 per cent in Europe and Central Asia to 25 per cent in Africa (Figure 185). Only 15 per cent of stateless persons with disabilities indicate that such information is disseminated in formats accessible to them.

Awareness of national and local-level disaster risk reduction plans is low among persons with disabilities. In 2023, only 11 per cent of persons with disabilities were aware of national disaster risk reduction plans and only 14 per cent were aware of local disaster risk reduction plans (Figure 186). This awareness has worsened since 2013: back then 14 per cent of persons with disabilities were aware of national disaster risk reduction plans and 17 per cent were aware of local disaster risk reduction plans. In 2023, awareness was highest in the Pacific region, where 32 per cent of persons with disabilities were aware of national disaster risk reduction plans and 18 per cent were aware of local disaster risk reduction plans. In all regions except Africa and the Pacific, awareness of national plans was lower than awareness of local plans. A lower percentage of women with disabilities (10 per cent and 12 per cent) than men with disabilities (12 per cent and 16 per cent) was aware of national and local plans. Awareness among stateless persons with disabilities was particularly low, as none were aware of national plans and only 8

per cent were aware of local disaster risk reduction plans.

Figure 186. Percentage of persons with disabilities who are aware of national and local disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, in the world and by region, for stateless persons and by sex, in 2023.

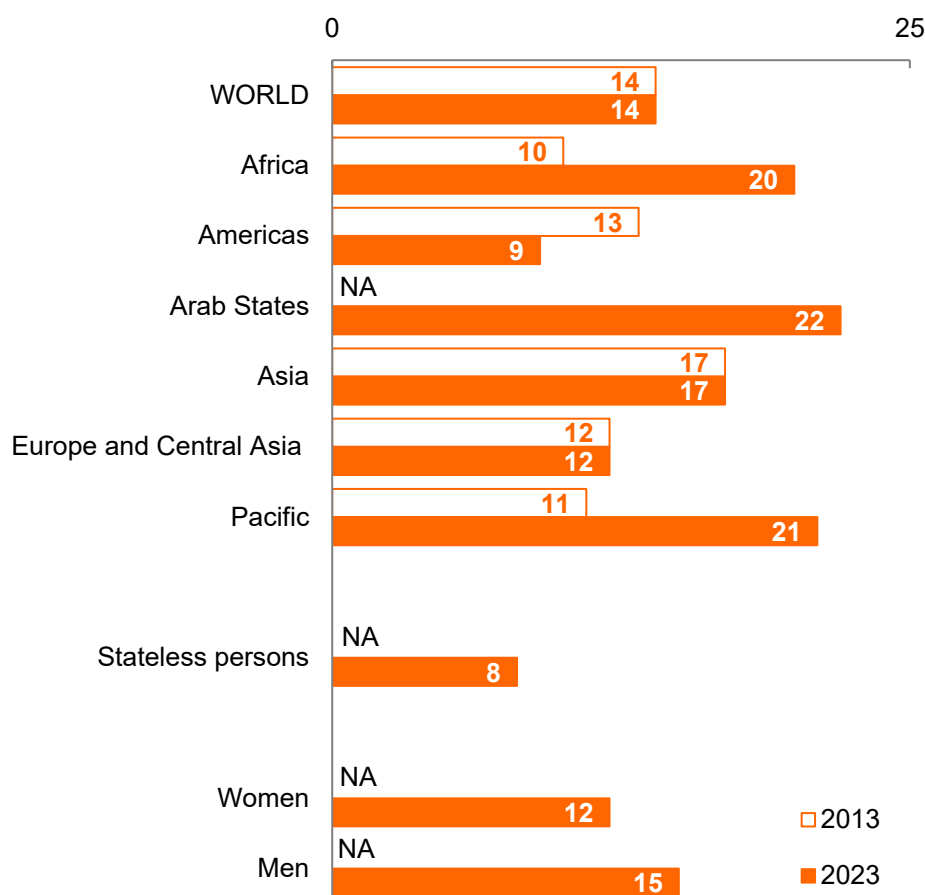


Source: UNDRR (2023).⁵⁰¹

Persons with disabilities often remain alienated from emergency and disaster risk reduction and response planning. Worldwide, in 2023, as few as 14 per cent of persons with disabilities had participated in disaster risk reduction decision-making in their communities, the same percentage as in 2013, although more than half of persons with disabilities expressed a wish to participate in community disaster management in both 2013 and 2023 (Figure 187). Remarkable progress has been made in Africa and the Pacific, which doubled the percentage of persons with disabilities involved in decision-making processes on community disaster management and risk reduction from about 10 per cent in 2013 to about 20 per

cent in 2023. In all other regions, the situation either stagnated or became worse. Stateless persons with disabilities are much less involved in this type of decision-making than other persons with disabilities, with only 8 per cent of them reporting such participation. Women with disabilities (12 per cent) tend to be slightly less involved than men with disabilities (15 per cent).

Figure 187. Percentage of persons with disabilities who are involved in decision-making processes on community disaster management and risk reduction, in the world and by region, for stateless persons, and by sex, in 2013 and 2023.



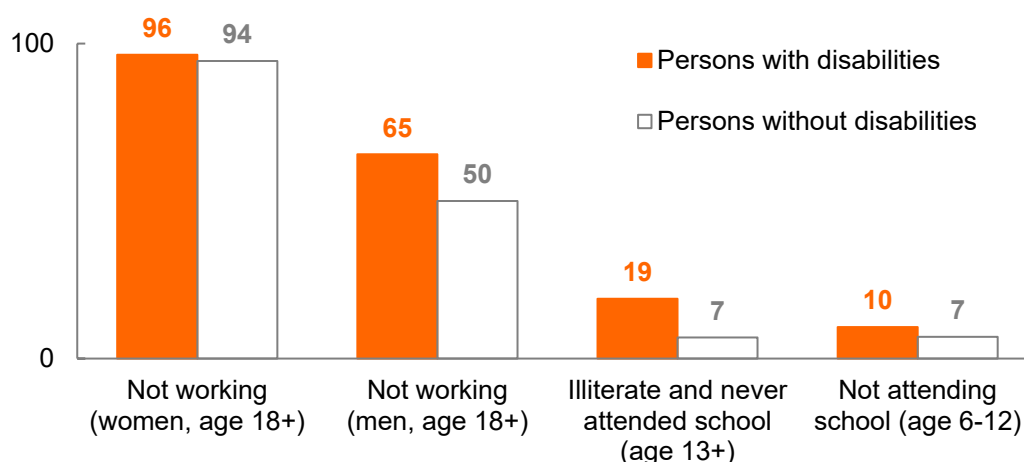
Source: UNISDR (2013)⁵⁰² and UNDRR (2023).⁵⁰¹

Persons with disabilities are also seldom considered in decision-making regarding climate change. Only 35 of the 192 States Parties to the Paris Agreement refer to persons with disabilities in their Nationally Determined Contributions and Intended Nationally Determined Contributions; and only 45 States Parties to the Paris Agreement currently refer to persons with disabilities, people with health conditions or those with chronic illnesses in their climate adaptation policies.⁵⁰³ Persons with disabilities are also often excluded from relief measures to address disasters and emergencies. For example, only 44 per cent of

countries that announced COVID-19 social protection relief measures included provisions for persons with disabilities (see the chapter on Goal 3).

Persons with disabilities fleeing disasters, armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies face barriers to accessing education, employment and services and face a higher risk of violence. For example, among Syrian refugees in Jordan, 19 per cent of persons with disabilities are illiterate compared to 7 per cent of persons without disabilities; 10 per cent of children with disabilities do not attend schools compared to 7 per cent of children without disabilities (Figure 188). Levels of unemployment are high among both women with and without disabilities, with about 95 per cent of them not working. Men with disabilities are less likely to be working: 65 per cent of men with disabilities do not work compared to 50 per cent of men without disabilities. In the Malakal protection of civilians site (South Sudan), 39 per cent of internally displaced persons with disabilities lack economic resources to access services, 38 per cent are too distant to the services, 34 per cent cannot physically access the services, 22 per cent lack information about the services, 5 per cent indicate the services do not respond to their needs, 4 per cent indicate communication barriers to access the services, 4 per cent do not feel safe accessing the services due to the risk of violence and 3 per cent fear discrimination or harassment when accessing the services (Figure 189). In this site, 10 per cent of persons with disabilities encounter verbal violence when accessing services and 7 per cent encounter physical violence (see Figure 207 in the chapter on targets 16.1 and 16.2). The episodes of physical and verbal violence include harassment from their neighbours as well as incidents of children pelting persons with disabilities with stones and insulting their disabilities.

Figure 188. Percentage of Syrian refugees in Jordan who do not work, are illiterate or do not attend school, in 2018.



Source: *Humanity & Inclusion and iMMAP (2018)*.⁵⁰⁴

To remove the barriers that persons with disabilities face in disaster prevention, preparedness and response, countries have increasingly taken measures to include persons with disabilities in these efforts.

Many countries have used accessible formats for persons with disabilities in the dissemination of laws and policies related to climate change, disaster and evacuation measures. For example, among 27 countries, only 4 per cent of countries have no accessible formats for the laws and policies on disaster risk reduction (Figure 190). However, a higher percentage of countries, 22 per cent, have no accessible formats for the laws and policies on climate change adaptation. Only 14 per cent of countries have no accessible formats for the laws regulating evacuation measures from private premises, and only 254 per cent of countries for public buildings. Accessible doc/pdf are the most common accessible formats, followed by ePub, easy-to-understand versions and Braille. No countries disseminate the laws and policies on climate change adaptation in easy-to-understand and in Braille.

Figure 189. Percentage of internally displaced persons with disabilities facing barriers to accessing services, by type of barrier, in the Malakal protection of civilians site (South Sudan), in 2020.

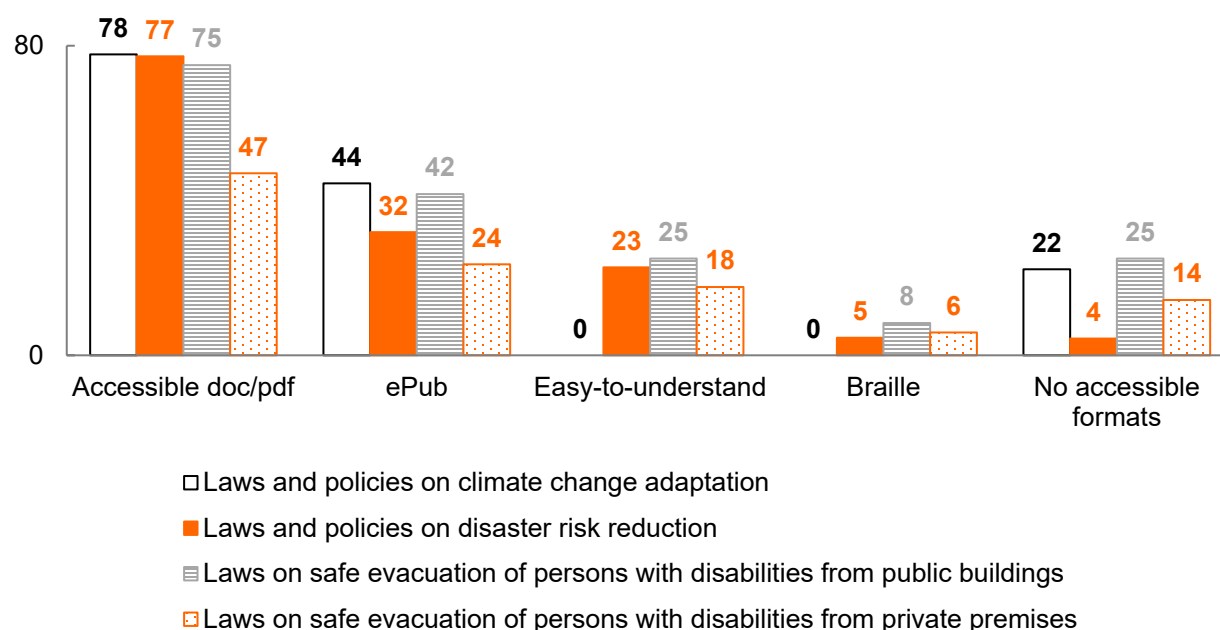


Note: (WG) identifies data produced using the Washington Group short set of questions on functioning.
Source: International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (2021).⁵⁰⁵

Countries have also been increasingly releasing early warnings and information about prevention, preparedness and response to disasters in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. All countries use at least one accessible format to release early warnings and only 4 per cent of countries use no accessible formats to release information on prevention, preparedness and recovery (Figure 191). Sign language, accessible doc/pdf and captioning are the most common features used by countries; ePub and Braille the least common. Easy-to-understand communication is more common than Braille or ePub, but its use remains low, with only 27 per cent of countries releasing early warnings in easy-to-understand communication and only 48 releasing information on prevention, preparedness and recovery from

disasters in this format.

Figure 190. Percentage of countries disseminating laws and policies related to climate change, disasters and evacuation in accessible formats for persons with disabilities, in 27 countries, in 2023.



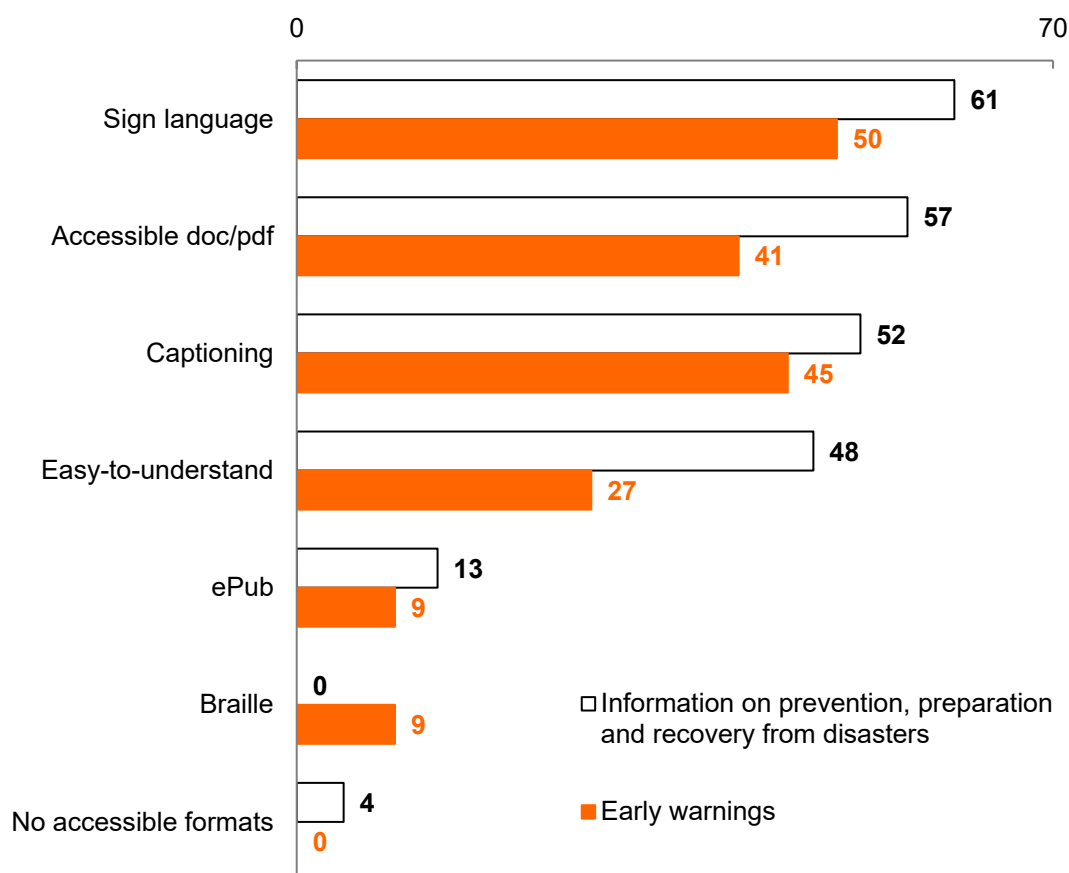
Source: UNDESA.⁵⁰⁶

Many countries have national emergency numbers and calls to these numbers are typically used to report a situation of risk, like a fire, and to request support, like an ambulance. Unless accessible features are embedded in these emergency numbers, like the possibility to text instead of calling, these numbers are not accessible to persons with hearing or speech impairments. Among countries that have a national emergency number, using the emergency number is accessible to persons with hearing or speech impairments in 58 per cent of countries.⁵⁰⁶

When escaping from a disaster, persons with disabilities may need to seek refuge in emergency shelters and disaster relief sites. However, these shelters are not always accessible for persons with disabilities. They may not be physically accessible to wheelchair users, may not have communication available in sign language, or have other barriers for persons with disabilities. Among 27 countries worldwide, 59 per cent have accessible shelters for persons with disabilities.⁵⁰⁶

The vast majorities of countries consult with persons with disabilities or their representative organizations when developing laws, policies and measures related to the prevention, preparedness and response to disasters and climate change (Figure 192).

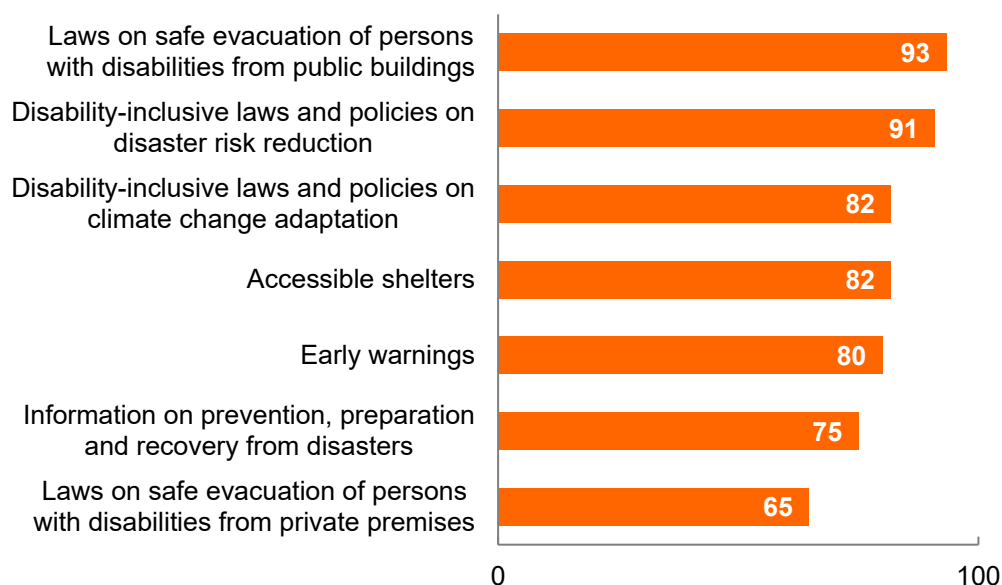
Figure 191. Percentage of countries disseminating early warnings and information on the prevention, preparation and recovery from disasters in accessible formats for persons with disabilities, in 27 countries, in 2023.



Source: UNDESA.⁵⁰⁶

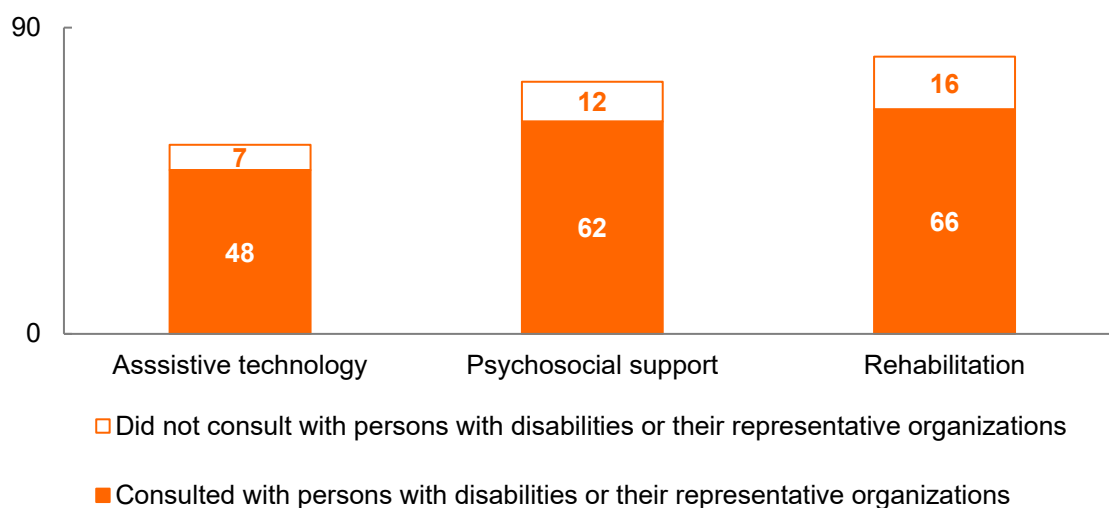
Countries have also been investing in putting in place mechanisms to ensure access by persons with disabilities to rehabilitation (82 per cent of countries), psychosocial support (74 per cent of countries) and assistive technology (55 per cent of countries) during and after a disaster or a humanitarian emergency (Figure 193). The vast majority of these countries consulted with persons with disabilities or their representative organizations in the development of these mechanisms. In the event of a power outage during or in the aftermath of a disaster or other shock, 39 per cent of countries have mechanisms to assist persons with disabilities using electricity-run assistive devices during these power disruptions; with two-thirds of these mechanisms designed in consultation with persons with disabilities (see Figure 120 of the chapter on Goal 7).

Figure 192. Percentage of countries that consulted with persons with disabilities and/or their representative organizations in developing laws, policies and measures related to climate change, disasters and evacuation, in 27 countries, in 2023.



Source: UNDESA.⁵⁰⁶

Figure 193. Percentage of countries that have mechanisms in place to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to rehabilitation, assistive technology and psychosocial support during and after a disaster or humanitarian emergency, by status of consultation with persons with disabilities or their representative organizations, in 27 countries, in 2023.



Source: UNDESA.⁵⁰⁶

Climate mitigation and adaptation approaches developed without consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations create additional barriers. For example, added bicycles lanes without considering the needs of persons with disabilities may cause bus stops to become wheelchair inaccessible. Charging extra taxes on private transportation may cause additional barriers for persons with disabilities if public transportation is not accessible. Improvements in energy systems at home can lead to disruptions in the use of electricity, which can lead to disruptions in the use of life-saving assistive technology and in carefully planned layouts and routines that persons with disabilities may need; many persons with disabilities may not be able to go through such disruptions (see the chapter on Goal 7).

Local governments and urban communities play a major role in responding to shocks and climate-related events as well as in building resilience and preparing for crises, whether climate-related, conflict-driven or from other causes. It is therefore crucial that local governments and urban communities ensure that such plans are disability inclusive. Although an increasing number of cities has been taking this approach, not all municipalities and local governments have disability-inclusive plans and, when they have them, the extent of their development or implementation varies (Figure 194). Among 21 cities across 10 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, 24 per cent have not yet designed disability-inclusive multi-hazard risk scenarios and assessments nor developed measures to mitigate the impact of disasters on persons with disabilities; 38 per cent have no accessible formats for information on risk and resilience and have no training on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction accessible to persons with disabilities and to all sectors of the city, such as local government, private businesses, non-governmental organizations and communities; 43 per cent do not actively involve representative organizations of persons with disabilities in planning for a potential disaster event in any area of the city and for responding to such events and have no disaster risk reduction training programmes designed by and for representative organizations of persons with disabilities; 52 per cent do not have or are not developing contingency plans in meaningful consultation with representative organizations of persons with disabilities to protect persons with disabilities from violent situations and for meeting their needs in post-disaster living and meeting spaces; and 62 per cent do not have financial mechanisms for disability-inclusive resilience measures.

The barriers that persons with disabilities face during and in the aftermath of disasters are also being addressed through international cooperation. Several donors made commitments to support the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts and emergencies: in 2021, 1.4 billion US dollars in bilateral aid was committed to provide assistance inclusive of persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts and emergencies (about 9 per cent of all bilateral aid provided to disability-inclusive projects).⁵⁰⁷ Nonetheless, improvements are needed to mainstream disability across the humanitarian response by coordinating the work in various sectors and among various stakeholders. Too often different stakeholders and sectors work in silos.

Figure 194. Percentage of cities that have implemented measures for advancing disability inclusion in local disaster risk reduction, in 21 cities across 10 countries, in 2023.



Source: UNDRR (2024).⁵⁰⁸

Summary of findings and the way forward

Similar to findings presented in the *Disability and Development Report 2018*, persons with disabilities continue to be disproportionately negatively impacted during and in the aftermath of man-made disasters and disasters caused by natural hazards, including extreme climate-related events. Available evidence indicates that persons with disabilities have suffered mortality rates twice as high as persons without disabilities during past disasters and constituted half of all COVID-19 deaths.

A key reason for this disproportionate impact is because the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities are ignored or neglected by official planning processes: 84 per cent of persons with disabilities have no preparedness plan for disasters; 39 per cent would have a lot of difficulty or not be able to evacuate in the event of a sudden disaster; 28 per cent need but have no one to assist them to evacuate;

11 per cent indicate that information on disaster management or risk reduction is not accessible to them; more than 80 per cent are not aware of national and local disaster risk reduction plans; and 86 per cent are not involved in decision-making processes on community disaster management and risk reduction. Persons with disabilities are additionally vulnerable during extreme climate-related events because they face barriers to securing housing in lands and buildings that are resistant to floods, heatwaves and other extreme weather events.

When a disaster or humanitarian crisis occurs, persons with disabilities are often left behind during the evacuation, or are abandoned in institutions, which is not in line with the CRPD. Moreover, persons with disabilities in situations of conflict and forced displacement face barriers to accessing services, with more than 30 per cent lacking the economic resources to pay for essential services, lacking accessible transport to the services or lacking physical access to the services. Because their perspectives are not included in disaster planning, the disaster responses are typically not inclusive for persons with disabilities. For instance, the majority of the COVID-19 response was not inclusive, with COVID-19 tests, testing, vaccination sites and information not accessible to persons with disabilities.

Trends since 2013 indicate that many aspects of disaster preparedness deteriorated: compared to 2013, in 2023, the percentage of persons with disabilities with no preparedness plan for disasters increased 12 percentage points; the percentage of persons with disabilities who need but have no one to assist them to evacuate increased 15 percentage points; and the percentage of persons with disabilities who are not aware of national and local disaster risk reduction plans increased 3 percentage points. These trends need to be inverted in order to meet the disaster-related targets of Goals 1, 11 and 13.

Other aspects showed little progress or were stagnant: the percentage of persons with disabilities who are not involved in decision-making processes on community disaster management and risk reduction stayed the same in 2013 and 2023; and the percentage of persons with disabilities who would have a lot of difficulty or not be able to evacuate in the event of a sudden disaster only decreased by 2 percentage points. At this rate of progress, by 2030, 38 per cent of persons with disabilities are expected not to be able to evacuate. Progress will need to accelerate to a rate 12 times faster to ensure that all persons with disabilities can evacuate in the event of a sudden disaster by 2030.

Measures and actions have been taken in various countries to protect and include persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness, response and in humanitarian actions. In 2023, a majority of countries released key documents and information in at least one accessible format for persons with disabilities: 78 per cent of countries for laws or policies on climate change adaptation; 96 per cent of countries for laws or policies on disaster risk reduction; 75 per cent of countries for laws on safe evacuation from public buildings; 86 per cent of countries for laws on safe evacuation from private premises; 96 per cent of countries for information on prevention, preparation and recovery from disasters; and 100 per cent of countries for early warnings. Despite these efforts, the limited number of accessible formats available still leave many persons with disabilities behind. Most information is still only released in

accessible doc/pdf, with Braille, easy-to-understand and ePub less commonly used. More than 60 per cent of countries have been consulting with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in developing disability-inclusive laws, policies and measures related to climate change, disasters and evacuation procedures.

New conflicts have been emerging and the frequency of climate-related disasters has been increasing. Persons with disabilities around the world bear more of the burdens of these shocks. War, permanent flooding and rising sea levels may force people to migrate, but persons with disabilities may face more barriers to such migration due to socio-economic reasons or lack of accessible transport.

The following steps can contribute to ensure disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and response as well as disability-inclusive humanitarian action:

1. Ensure that persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities, fully and effectively participate in decision-making processes and are active stakeholders at all stages of disaster response and humanitarian action from planning to implementation, evaluation and monitoring.

The best way to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities will be addressed, to significantly reduce their vulnerability and to increase the effectiveness of Government response and recovery efforts, is to include persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all planning and programming phases. When governments consider disaster or humanitarian policies or legislation, or when a community is developing an evacuation plan, an early warning system, or making decisions to combat climate change, it is crucial to include persons with disabilities.

2. Develop laws, policies, operational standards, checklists and indicators for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness, planning and response and in climate change adaptation. Ensure that the standard operating procedures and operational manuals of agencies involved in humanitarian action and disaster response have clear guidance on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness, planning and response. Prepare the standards, checklists and indicators before crises occur and involve persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in developing these instruments.

3. Ensure that emergency information, commodities, infrastructure and services are inclusive and accessible for all persons with disabilities. Apply the principles of Universal Design in all aspects of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response. Make all emergency preparedness or disaster information available in accessible formats and languages for persons with disabilities. Ensure that shelters are safe and accessible spaces for persons with disabilities.

4. Mobilize adequate, timely and predictable resources to operationalize commitments for disability-inclusive emergency preparedness and response. Promote close cooperation of States with the private sector and civil society organizations. Ensure that refugees with disabilities and internally displaced persons with disabilities have access to crucial and essential services.

5. Raise awareness among persons with disabilities on disaster management plans at the local and national levels. Strengthen the capacity of persons with disabilities in the area of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response. It will contribute not only to self-protection and survival of persons with disabilities, but also promote persons with disabilities as key contributors in crisis situations. Persons with disabilities are expected to contribute to planning and implementing disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action by bringing in new or overlooked perspectives, and by helping others after crises hit.

6. Enhance capacity-building for humanitarian actors in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. It is still commonly believed that generic emergency planning will meet the needs of all people, including persons with disabilities. States and key stakeholders in emergency planning often do not recognize the importance of inclusion and how persons with disabilities are at a disadvantage in accessing services if their needs are not considered. It is necessary to provide training on disability for all aid stakeholders at both policy and practice levels. Aid workers should understand the perspectives, needs and strengths of persons with disabilities, which will prove useful in working for and with persons with disabilities in crisis situations. The hiring of persons with disabilities by humanitarian actors should also be encouraged and not limited to projects directly addressed to support persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises.

7. Ensure that all post-crisis recovery efforts, including reconstruction and rebuilding, are inclusive of persons with disabilities. Disasters and conflicts devastate infrastructure and community systems. Apply the principles of Universal Design in all reconstruction and rebuilding programmes. Emphasis should be placed on accessibility features during the planning and reconstruction of infrastructure as well as public facilities as well as adopting accessible technologies and communication systems. Include persons with disabilities in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes. These measures will enable recovery plans to be inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, thus leaving no one behind.

8. Ensure protection mechanisms in emergency and post-crisis contexts to recognize and respond to the heightened risk of persons with disabilities, particularly women and children with disabilities, to violence, abuse and exploitation. Make adaptations to ensure that gender-based violence prevention and response, as well as sexual and reproductive health services, are accessible to persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities, during and in the aftermath of disasters, conflicts and other emergencies. Ensure that all health, legal, social and other services that respond to violence, exploitation and abuse, are accessible to children and young persons with disabilities.

9. Ensure accountability mechanisms at national levels for acts or omissions leading to discrimination or exclusion of persons with disabilities in the context of humanitarian actions and disaster response. Establish reporting and justice mechanisms to address discrimination and exclusion on the basis of disability. Ensure that these mechanisms are accessible to persons with disabilities,

including by incorporating accessible features and providing reasonable accommodation throughout these mechanisms. Ensure that these mechanisms continue to be operational during and in the aftermath of humanitarian emergencies and disasters.

10. Undertake evidence-based research and develop a data collection system on persons with disabilities relevant to conflicts and disasters. Use reliable data in all phases – before, during and after crises. Systematic analyses and reviews of country preparedness, resources and experiences related to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response should be carried out regularly. In particular, data collection should assess overall numbers and the different needs of persons with disabilities in certain communities when a disaster risk reduction plan is developed. Once an emergency situation develops, data that describe the situation of persons with disabilities in disasters and conflict situations are needed. Rapid assessments after crises should include a disability perspective and should develop a systematic way to evaluate magnitude and types of needs among persons with disabilities after conflicts or disasters – to assess just the number of injuries and deaths among persons with disabilities is not sufficient. Explore the use of new technologies, such as mobile phones and social media, to gather rapidly the data needed for an efficient response to persons with disabilities. Share the knowledge and experience of persons with disabilities during real disasters and conflicts.

11. Maintain a register that maps the needs of persons with disabilities during and in the aftermath of disasters. Some persons with disabilities might require support and specialized services in emergency and humanitarian situations. Persons with disabilities may not receive help promptly because the country's authorities did not adequately identify those with different needs before disaster struck. Maintain a register of persons with disabilities that maps the needs of specialized services and commodities and prepare this register together with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations before crises arise. This will help local authorities to immediately respond to persons with disabilities in need.

12. Invest in research and data to fully understand how persons with disabilities are impacted by climate change and the interventions which will be most effective in reducing this impact. Persons with disabilities are under-researched in the fields of science, medicine, law and policy. Disability-inclusive climate adaptation, disaster preparedness and response require data, research, innovation and collaboration across all these fields and in consultation with representative organizations of persons with disabilities.