

Divyangjan Rescue and Safety in Disaster

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Introduction:

Disability itself is a hurdle in living and surviving. In the developed countries situation is better than the developing or under-developed countries. Vulnerable is always a victim of the situations. An attitude towards disability is very unfair in the developing and undeveloped countries. There is a huge gap and discrimination about the disable person which starts from access to daily needs and services and continues up to education, job and earning facilities even though the governments have many more policies and efforts undertaken for mainstreaming the vulnerable. Discrimination in accessing human rights is experienced very commonly.

It is not that no any government is keen on disability related issues. Many acts and policies try to include in developmental plan and policies for disability. But it is observed that disabilities are often excluded from emergency planning and programming by the governments. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India has coined a word 'Divyang' for disable person.

About inclusion of disabled person in disaster management efforts, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 is silent. National Disaster Management Policy, 2009 and National Disaster Management Plan, 2016 have made provisions for rescue of disabled person, but rescue and relief is not adequate in disaster management. The concept of disaster management has a paradigm shift from the erstwhile relief-centric response to a proactive prevention, mitigation and preparedness-driven approach for conserving developmental gains and to minimize loss of life, livelihood and property.¹ It has phases of mitigation-prevention and risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery-immediate restoration to build-back better. According to Sendai Framework its priorities are, understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.² The conceptual expansion of disaster management is inclusive and leads 'Leaving no man behind'. Inclusion of physically and mentally challenged persons in DRR is focused after 2013.

Disaster creates a new generation of survivors with physical, sensory and psychosocial impairments.³ When one person is killed in disaster, another three are injured or left with impairment. Aging and disability

are linked with each other, and many persons develop disabling conditions as they age including limited mobility, low vision, and hearing difficulties.

The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008:

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is the first international human rights treaty that specifically addresses the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities. The CRPD was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. The CRPD promotes the idea of universal design and accessibility. Importantly, CRPD Article 11 states that the State Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

UNISDR 2013 Survey on Living with Disabilities and Disasters, 2013

This is the first-ever global survey made of persons living with disabilities on how they cope with disasters. The results illustrated why they die, or are injured, in disproportionate numbers in disasters. It was conducted by UN. Respondents were 5,717 persons from all over the world. The most significant finding in the survey was that 85.57% of the respondents from 137 countries stated that they have not participated in community disaster management and risk reduction processes in their countries because they have been excluded from the decision making and planning of such processes. 72.20% of respondents said that they do not have a personal preparedness plan in the event of a disaster. Of the 29.29% of PWDs who do have a personal disaster preparedness plan, the most important stated element of that plan is support from family. 50.94% of respondents expressed a desire to participate in community disaster management and risk reduction processes.⁴ Yet only 14.29 % of respondents said that they are aware of a national disaster risk reduction plan in their countries.

Sendai Framework, 2015

The Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) 2015 held at Sendai, Japan incorporated recommendation on a disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction framework and its implementation. The Conference itself initiated its recommendation by availing facilities to the physically challenged persons to attend the sessions. The venue and conference sessions were accessible to both participants and speakers with disabilities in attendance. Sign language interpretation was available on demand for various sessions. Venues provided wheelchair accessible transportation. Documents were in accessible format and blind participants were provided machines that displayed documents in Braille. Most significantly, Thirty-four events addressed various issues related to disability whereas more than 200 persons with disabilities actively participated as delegates, speakers, panelists or contributors.⁹ People with disabilities presented their own expertise in disaster risk reduction. (DRR)

SDGs 2015-2030

In the agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, 2015-2030 persons with disabilities or disability are specifically mentioned eleven times and persons in vulnerable situations are specifically mentioned six times. But the document is not sufficient for inclusion of disabled persons in pre-disaster management.

Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2016

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit endorsed a Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, which pledged to place people with disabilities at the centre of humanitarian response, and to ensure they receive protection and assistance without discrimination.⁵

Although the rights and needs of divyangjan in disasters are increasingly being addressed through policies, standards and guidelines, much more needs to be done to remove the barriers to their inclusion in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and response.

Research Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative method, 10 divyang persons are studied.

Conclusion:

Post-DRR efforts have a motto to include all and not to leave behind anyone from DRR. The documents are trying best; what happens at the field is a question. This study accordingly has undertaken to find out whether these efforts are adequate for capacity building of divyang. It concludes:

- 1) Divyang persons are not aware of act, policy or plan disaster management or aware of inclusion of disability in disaster management.
- 2) There is no preparedness plan to save lives of divyang in disastrous situation.
- 3) Divyang persons are not so far included in disaster management policy framing or planning.
- 4) There is provision of special disaster management training. Divyang person never thought of getting such type of training or feel that they are able to acquire such type of knowledge or training.
- 5) Divyang person is not preferred to evacuate in any hazardous condition. Their tutors and social media could play a significant role in giving them an alarm, is there trust.

Suggestions:

Inclusion of divyangjan in disaster management is a broad concept. In India there is a lack of adequate accessible infrastructure for inclusive policy.

- 1) Inclusion of Divyang in DM: DM policy, plan and machineries must think on absolute inclusion of divyang person. ☐
- 2) Auditing: All the governments must have accurate and comprehensive statistical data on divyangjan in their respective country. Mapping of vulnerability, marginalization, impoverishment be done to define evacuation routes and safe areas as per their requirement. The persons who are registered for census are able to get state assistance and welfare. Accordingly the rescue and evacuation resources could keep ready in particular disaster-prone area.

- 3) Training: For visual impaired person training manuals must transform in Braille language. For hearing impaired person training manuals must transform in sign language. For intellectually disable person training must be given to their tutors especially speech therapist so that they can teach every student as per his/her margin of disability.
- 4) NGOs and special schools: NGOs and special schools can play an important role in framing disaster policy and plan. Tutors in special schools must train for DM so that they could teach it to the special students as per required style and method.
- 5) Shelters and rescue camps: Shelters and rescue camps must accessible for divyang person. Minimum needs like medicine, health, food, clothes must accessible.
- 6) Participation and response: Divyang persons must come ahead to take training they must participate at their own.
- 8) Political support: A strong political willingness is needed for inclusive DM policy and plan along with its systematic implementation. Government must try for mainstreaming disability into all development programmes.
- 9) Media: The alarms and warning must be displayed in Braille as well as sign language.

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