

PROMOTING DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN NIGERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Millions of people in Nigeria are affected by natural and man-made disasters such as droughts, floods, landslides and fires. Disasters affect persons with disabilities, just as they do other groups of people that experience a higher level of exclusion. The frequency of these disasters is increasing and their impact is heightened by poverty, increased population density, rampant and uncontrolled urbanisation, environmental degradation and climate change. However, the impact these events can have on people, especially persons with disabilities, and property can be significantly mitigated by effective Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). This study gives an insight to Disaster Risk Reduction and explains the concept of Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR). The paper also discusses strategies that empower communities and local institutions to prepare for, reduce the impact of, and respond to disasters and, in the long-term, increase their resilience. The paper further discusses how these strategies are inclusive, enabling the most at-risk groups, and especially people with disabilities, to become actors in disaster risk reduction and to benefit from protection. This study also highlighted some strategies which can re-enforce disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction such as including persons with disabilities as valued stakeholders in disaster risk management activities, increasing awareness on the safety and security needs of persons with disabilities, ensuring that new construction, rehabilitation and reconstruction are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Key words: Disaster, persons with disability, disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction

INTRODUCTION

Disasters have surely been a source of widespread destruction, disrupting people's lives and causing human suffering with communities finding it difficult to cope. Every year, millions of people throughout the world are affected by disasters such as droughts, floods, volcanic eruptions, mudslides, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis and fires. These disasters, when combined with different vulnerability factors, can cause considerable damage when capacity to cope with them is

poor. Among affected people, some are disproportionately impacted due to factors such as age, gender or disability.

People's vulnerability to the impacts of disaster is determined by social, economic, political, and environmental factors. Disasters impact everyone, but have a disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities who continue to experience barriers to participation and societal exclusion (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDRR, 2023).

Persons with disabilities make up at least 15% of the global population and 80 percent of them live in developing countries, yet continue to be among those most impacted by disasters and more likely to be excluded from emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and related decision-making processes (UNDRR, 2023).

Research shows that when a disaster occur, the mortality rate among persons with disabilities tends to be two to four times higher than that of the rest of the population, as demonstrated during the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, and hurricane Katrina in the USA (UNDRR, 2023). In humanitarian contexts, women and girls with disabilities are particularly at risk of exploitation and violence, including gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual abuse. They also experience more barriers accessing support and services. In addition, women and girls with disabilities and their representative organizations are often not consulted during policy-making and management.

Defining Disability

A disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

Addressing the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities is complex because they are not a homogenous group. They include persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, among others. In addition, people with similar disabilities may experience common barriers in different ways, and some barriers may equally affect people with very different disabilities. The experience of barriers is also dynamic and affected by the intersection of disability with other identities and bases of discrimination, including age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, indigeneity, or other status.

Disaster

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) defines a disaster as: “A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, or environmental losses and impacts which exceeds the ability of the affected community to cope using only its own resources”.

Disasters can be classified into two types, namely natural disasters and man-made disasters (International Civil Defence Organisation, 2019). Major disasters include earthquake, landslides, volcanic eruptions, floods hurricanes, fires, tornados, blizzards, tsunamis, cyclones. Disasters are caused due to the interaction of humans with their environment. A disaster is a function of the risk process. It results from the combination of hazards, conditions of vulnerability and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce the potential negative consequences of risk (UNISDR, 2002).

Disasters, largely climate-related, are constantly rising too, and constitute some 83% of all disasters (up from 76% during the 2000s) (IFRC, 2020). The UNDRR 2020 report estimated that over the last 20 years, some 510,837 people have perished, and some 3.9 billion people have been affected by a staggering 6,681 climate-related disasters, the bulk in Asia, followed by the Americas and Africa. Disasters also include those resulting from human-caused hazards, such as wars and conflict and forced displacement, environmental degradation, pollution, and industrial accidents to name but a few.

Overall, disasters (human and climate related), have impacted close to 60 million people in more than 100 countries in the last 5 years alone (Mizutori, 2018). This is no time to stay still.

Disasters affect lives to the core. They are a source of mortality, they fragment and/or destroy livelihoods, lead to dramatic economic strain and loss of capital, intensify poverty, and displace people. Importantly, they disrupt lives and affect mental health, especially of those who are unprepared and/or ill-equipped to weather stresses and shocks.

Risk

This is the probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human induced hazards, the vulnerability conditions and the capacities of the group concerned.

Therefore, preparedness is highly important. Preparedness is simply getting ready for an emergency before it occurs. Disaster preparedness refers to activities and measures taken in advance to ensure

effective response to the impact of disasters, including the issuance of timely and effective early warnings and the temporary removal of people and property from a threatened location (ISDR, 2002). Since disaster strikes without warning, everyone needs to be familiar with disaster procedures and management as disaster preparedness is considered one of the key steps in disaster management.

Disaster Management

This is the organization, planning, and application of measures preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters.

Disaster Risk

This is the potential loss of life, injury, or destroyed or damaged assets that could occur to a system, society, or community in a specific period, determined probabilistically as a function of hazard, exposure, vulnerability, and capacity.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

These are actions aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.

DRR is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment and improved preparedness for adverse events.

In other words, DRR is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks and vulnerabilities related to hazard and to increasing capacities to deal with. DRR is an action aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.

Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR)

This is the process of reducing barriers and strengthening enabling actions (enablers) to ensure meaningful engagement of people with disabilities in community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) programmes, making them more visible and prioritised in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery initiatives and to ensure all these levels are inclusive of people with disabilities (Christian Blind Mission, 2020).

The International community recognizes inclusion as a guiding principle of DRR. It acknowledges that DRR requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership, which promotes the empowerment and accessible and non-discriminatory participation of all people disproportionately affected by disasters, including people with disabilities. In line with articles 11 and 32 of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), disability inclusive DRR considers the whole community but pays specific attention to persons with disabilities and their families since their vulnerability in a disaster might reduce the entire community's resilience towards catastrophe. (CBM, 2020).

Background of the Problem

People with disabilities are more likely to suffer the effects of disasters. According to Handicap International (now known as Humanity and Inclusion) 2017, a study finds that 75% of people with disabilities believe they are excluded from humanitarian responses to emergencies like natural disasters and conflict. During the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, research indicates that the fatality rate among people with disabilities (registered with the government) was twice than for the rest of the population.

A 2013 global survey (Handicap International, 2017) amongst 5,450 respondents with disabilities from 126 countries illustrates why rates of people with disabilities who are injured or lose their lives are disproportionately high during disaster:

- i. In the event of a sudden disaster, only 20% of respondents could evacuate immediately without difficulty, while the majority would have some level of difficulty or not be able to evacuate at all. If sufficient time was given to evacuate, 38% say they could evacuate without difficulty - still a minority of all respondents.
- ii. 71% of respondents have no personal preparedness plan.
- iii. Only 31% have always someone to help them evacuate, while 13% never have anyone to help them.
- iv. Just 17% of respondents were aware of a disaster management plan in their community, out of which a mere 14% had been consulted on these plans.
- v. 50% say that they wish to participate in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) efforts.

By the time of disasters:

- i. People with disabilities tend to be invisible in emergency registration systems.

- ii. Lack of awareness is one of the major factors for people with disabilities not to comprehend disaster and its consequences.
- iii. People with disabilities are often excluded from disaster response efforts and particularly affected by changes in terrain resulting from disasters.
- iv. Because of inadequate physical accessibility, or loss or lack of mobility aids or appropriate assistance, people with disabilities are often deprived from rescue and evacuation services, relief access, safe location/adequate shelter, water and sanitation and other services.
- v. Emotional distress and trauma caused by a crisis situation often has long term consequences and especially on people with disabilities.
- vi. Misinterpretation of the situation and communication difficulties (What happened? What do I do? Where is my family?) make people with disabilities more vulnerable in disaster situations.

Barriers faced by persons with disabilities in DRR

Persons with disabilities include those with physical disabilities, vision disabilities, hearing and speech disabilities, cognitive disabilities, psychosocial disabilities, and many other forms of disability. Moreover, people with seemingly similar disabilities may experience common barriers in different ways, and some barriers may equally affect people with seemingly very different disabilities. When considering how best to avoid or mitigate barriers it is important to consider the diversity of the disability community and ensure that DRR consultations reflect the inputs of a wide range of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. It should also be remembered that persons with disabilities who would typically be able to lead quite independent lives during non-emergency situations, may experience emergency-related barriers - such as separation from social support networks, support staff, mobility devices, medication, and physical isolation - that may increase their reliance on others during and after a disaster.

According to Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) 2017, the following are some of the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities that should be addressed through consultation with persons with disabilities at all phases of the DRR process:

Physical Barriers

Public consultations to develop community disaster preparedness plans that are held in inaccessible locations will not benefit from the contributions of persons with disabilities who require access to

participate effectively. Prevention and mitigation measures that are identified as priorities to protect life and assets are often not accessible.

Public transportation systems and road systems that are inaccessible to wheelchair users or people with other mobility disabilities will have limited capacity to assist in evacuating such people, potentially leaving them (and their families) stranded in hazardous locations. According to Ogunrinde (2024), in Nigeria, most public transport buses do not have ramps while ramps in buses like the BRT buses in Lagos state are not functional, as people living with disability have to rely on kind-hearted passengers to carry them into the buses. More worrisome is the fact that the bus pilot of these buses allow able-bodied passengers to occupy the seats allotted to persons living with disability. This contradicts Section 10(1) of the Discrimination against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act in Nigeria which stipulates that “Government transport services providers shall make provisions for lifts, ramps and other accessibility aids to enhance the accessibility of their vehicles, parks and bus stop to persons with disabilities including those on wheelchairs.”

Physical barriers, such as debris, in the aftermath of an emergency can also affect mobility.

Emergency housing that is inaccessible or is located away from accessible transportation options can leave persons with disabilities without temporary housing or reliant on housing that segregates them from social networks, support services, schools, workplaces, medical care, or other essential aspects of community living.

Information and Communication Barriers

Community consultations to develop disaster preparedness plans will not benefit from the contributions of persons with disabilities if the discussions and associated materials are inaccessible to people with hearing or vision disabilities due to lack of captioning, sign language interpretation, Braille, or large print; or to people with cognitive disabilities due to failure to use plain language, among others. Persons with disabilities who are serving as members of DRR teams at local, regional, or national levels may also require reasonable accommodations to facilitate their communications to fulfill their duties.

Early warning systems that rely solely on audible methods, such as sirens, radios, loudspeakers, and some mobile phone alerts, are inaccessible to people who are deaf or hearing impaired, meaning that they may be unaware of impending emergencies, or become aware with little or no

time to respond. Similarly, awareness campaigns, education programs informing the public about existing risks, and prevention and preparedness measures or relief activities often rely on oral communications. Crucial information may therefore be inaccessible to persons with disabilities, affecting their capacity to understand risks and prepare adequately.

Reliance on televisions as a medium for communication may be of limited value if sign language interpretation and captioning are not provided for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or audio description is not provided to ensure that people with vision disabilities can access visual information, such as maps and checklists.

Policy Barriers

Policies that promote separate facilities or services for persons with disabilities can result in the inaccessibility of emergency response systems. For example, the establishment of evacuation centers exclusively for persons with disabilities may result in their being turned away from general shelters or being separated from family. Persons with disabilities (PWD) may also engage in self-segregation if they feel that general shelters are unaccommodating, or if they wish to avoid potential competition for limited resources with other community members.

Policies that prohibit evacuation or housing of animals in shelters may discourage those who rely on support animals from choosing to evacuate in order to stay with their animals. Alternatively, they may be limited in which shelters will accept them and their support animals, or they may become separated, leaving them without an important support and means of independence.

One major barrier to formulation of these policies is the fact that people living with disabilities are not well represented among the active policy makers. Addressing the lack of representation of PWD in legislative bodies at the NILDS 2024 strategic discourse in Abuja Nigeria, Prof. Sulaiman, Director-General of National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), noted that out of the 109 Senators and 360 House of Representatives members, only one lawmaker is a PWD.

Attitudinal Barriers

The attitudes of others can be the most significant barriers for persons with disabilities. Stereotyping and stigmatizing of persons with disabilities can lead to both overt and more subtle forms of discrimination, which can permeate the policies and practices associated with DRR and create or perpetuate physical, informational, communicational, and other barriers. For example,

disparaging societal views of persons with disabilities, or even beliefs that they will bring bad luck, may lead to them being turned away from shelters or relief centers by aid workers or other survivors.

Making DRR Inclusive

As shown previously, “individuals and communities are differently impacted by disasters due to gender, disability, age, culture, socio-economic factors, geographical locations, levels of governance, a lack of awareness and lack of communication within society (from youth to older people, women to men, children to adult and vice versa)” (Handicap International, 2017). The equal participation of all groups in DRR decisions and addressing the root causes of disasters will therefore help to address their underlying vulnerability, increase capacities to cope with the effects of natural hazards and facilitate empowerment.

Inclusive DRR is responding to:

- i. Marginalized groups being more likely to suffer from disasters.
- ii. Disasters exacerbating vulnerabilities and social inequalities.
- iii. Vulnerable groups being excluded from DRR decision-making, thus making them even more vulnerable to the impact of disasters.

Considering that particularly excluded groups (based on age, gender and disability) are at higher risk to disasters, Inclusive DRR is “an effort to reduce vulnerabilities of the most excluded ones and to increase their capacities to reduce the risks”. Inclusive DRR is also the recognition of the right of these groups to benefit from and participate in Disaster Risk Reduction strategy.

Still, people at risk because of their age, gender and disability have capacities that DRR planners should recognize, such as:

- i. Young people act as key informants.
- ii. Older people contribute to household security and accumulated knowledge around disasters, traditional knowledge of natural resources and provision of childcare.
- iii. People with disabilities are best placed to assess their own need before, during and after disasters.
- iv. Vulnerable groups should be included in DRR as active agents of change to effectively and equitably build resilience.

Key Principles for Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Policies

- i. Participation - persons with disabilities must be active participants in planning, implementation and monitoring of DRR actions, in climate change policies, conflict prevention and mitigation. Therefore barriers to active participation have to be removed and capacity building programs enhanced.
- ii. Twin-track approach - ensuring that persons with disabilities have full access to relief operations, disaster risk reduction policies and conflict prevention/mitigation programs by removing barriers, and at the same time, addressing specific requirements through more individualised support for persons with multiple disabilities or high dependency needs.
- iii. Comprehensive accessibility and universal design are important concepts that should be incorporated in humanitarian action policies, making sure relief operations and structures are fully accessible for all, including persons with disabilities.
- iv. The immediate post-emergency phase and early re-construction period should be driven by the “build back better” principles, stressing the opportunity to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities through sound and inclusive investment and decision-making processes.
- v. Non-discrimination should underpin all policies in emergencies and conflict prevention/mitigation, and require a proactive approach aiming at identifying and removing exclusion factors, which prevent persons with disabilities from accessing relief services and programs on peace and conflict mitigation.
- vi. Coordination and collaboration Disaster and conflict management involve a large variety of stakeholders that all need to coordinate their efforts to ensure that disability is included in their projects as a core-crosscutting theme.

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction as it relates to Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals are blueprints for achieving a better, more sustainable and resilient future for all. With a total of 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators, the Sustainable Development Goals focus on three main areas: (i) eradication of poverty; (ii) protecting the planet from degradation, while ensuring that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature; and (iii) promoting universal peace and just and inclusive societies.

“In this manner, achievement of any of the 17 goals can improve the resiliency of persons with disabilities to withstand disasters.”

Advocacy has been done to ensure coherence and mutual reinforcement between disaster risk reduction and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development (Handicap International, 2017). Coherence and complementarity can be found in several ways including political recognition of the Sendai Framework and the importance of disaster risk reduction in international agreements and instruments; common indicators and reporting mechanisms; specific mentions to inclusion and disability, and finally in initiatives and partnerships (e.g. early warning systems, insurance measures, and ecosystem management) that can cover implementation of the goals and targets of the post-2015 Development Agenda (Handicap International, 2017).

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was the first of the major 2015 development frameworks, and is notable in explicitly including persons with disabilities as contributing stakeholders. The Sendai Framework establishes inclusion as a guiding principle, and emphasizes the need for a people-centered approach that considers disability, gender, age and cultural perspectives in all disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices (UNDRR, 2023). Relatedly, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are underpinned by the commitment to “leave no one behind”. While all the SDGs are interconnected, 7 of the 17 SDGs directly relate to DRR, and their achievement requires the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities (UNDRR, 2023). Poverty and disability are interconnected, as individuals living in poverty are more likely to have a disability, while individuals with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty. This intersectionality also increases their vulnerability to disasters as both poverty and disability increase disaster risk. Therefore, to achieve the goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms for all people, it is crucial to ensure that no person with a disability is left behind.

Commitments to disability inclusion in the Sendai Framework and 2030 Agenda are underpinned by the UNCRPD, including Article 11 on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (UNDRR, 2023). Ratification of the CRPD requires Member States to ensure that disability inclusion is a requirement under law. This extends to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the prevention of disasters and the reduction of disaster risk.

However, countries are not on track to realize the Sendai Framework objectives by 2030. The midterm review notes some initiatives to increase disability inclusion in DRR, but these are limited; disability inclusion continues to be under resourced and under prioritized. Despite some increase in supportive policies and legislation for disability-inclusive DRR, implementation remains slow

and uneven, and is often driven by non-state actors with short-term funding. The participation of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in DRR is frequently curtailed by limited resources and support from other DRR stakeholders, and the perception of persons with disabilities as “vulnerable”, rather than as contributing stakeholders, persists (UNDRR, 2023).

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in Nigeria

The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) was established in 2020, with the aim of preventing discrimination against persons with disabilities, and to make every one of them have equal rights and opportunities like their counterparts with no disabilities (Leadership Newspaper, 2023).

Nigeria has not demonstrated enough attempts in developing disability-inclusive DRR policies in line with the Sendai Framework. Alongside the Sendai Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are underpinned by the concept of 'leave no one behind', but perhaps most importantly, majority of countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This means that they are obliged to ensure that all persons with disabilities are fully included and meaningfully participate through their representative organizations, in all activities that impact them. This is especially relevant for climate action and disaster risk reduction since persons with disabilities are repeatedly shown to be those most affected by natural hazards and climate change induced disasters.

Nigeria signed the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on 30 March 2007. It was ratified on 24 September 2010 (UN 2018). Article 35 of the UNCRPD requires that State Parties submit reports on how the rights of people with disabilities are being implemented within their country. States must first report within two years of ratifying the Convention, and then every four years after that. Nigeria is yet to submit a report on the UNCRPD. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development was responsible for the UNCRPD reporting but now to be done by the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development. The delay in the completion of the initial report is caused by lengthy national processes. Nigeria is yet to domesticate the convention. The lack of effective legislation and adequate administrative infrastructure is reportedly limiting the impact of the UNCRPD in Nigeria.

National Disability Legislation

In January 2019, the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) was signed into law. It prohibits discriminating against people with a disability. The law lays out penalties for non-compliance that can be levied at individuals or corporations. It also stipulates a five-year transitional period after which public buildings and transport must be accessible. The law will also establish a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, to oversee access to housing, education, and healthcare for persons with disabilities. The Act is regarded as a first step towards the fulfilment of Nigeria's obligations under the CRPD (Thompson, 2020). In addition to the national legislation, the states that have passed disability laws as at 2023 include; Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Bauchi, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara, Abia, Anambra, Cross River, Edo, Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun.

Disability Prevalence

According to the World Health Organization, in 2018, about 29 million of the 195 million people who comprise Nigeria's national population were living with a disability. Data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey reveal that an estimated 7% of household members above the age of five (as well as 9 percent of those 60 or older) have some level of difficulty in at least one functional domain - seeing, hearing, communication, cognition, walking, or self-care; and 1% either have a lot of difficulty or cannot function at all in at least one domain.

Other estimates of disability prevalence vary depending on the source and range from 2% to 10%. Prevalence rates are roughly equal between males and females. The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) estimate that there are over 25 million persons with disabilities in Nigeria (Thompson, 2020).

Availability of Disability-Related Data

Disability data are crucial to social inclusion and development of persons with disabilities. Data allow for an objective diagnosis of disparities in outcomes between people with and without functional difficulties. They are indispensable for the monitoring of progress (or regress) and the impact evaluation of policies and interventions over time.

Disability-related data are sparse in Nigeria. Data collection challenges include the government's low prioritization of collecting disability-disaggregated data and the lack of expertise in the collection process. Utilizing a disability/impairment approach known to yield low results (National Population Commission, NPC 2009), the 2006 Nigerian population census reported a disability prevalence rate of 2.3%. In 2011, a national baseline survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development documented a similar rate: 3.2% (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, FMWASD 2011).

Promoting policies with the Sendai Framework in terms of disability inclusion by incorporating clear provisions on:

- i. Participatory decision-making and active involvement of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management policy-making and implementation;
- ii. Accessibility of measures and activities to reduce the risk of disasters to persons with disabilities;
- iii. Right to be informed about disaster risks, including provision of risk information in accessible and easy to understand form and formats;
- iv. Prioritizing evacuation of persons with disabilities in emergencies;
- v. Creation of protocols on different situations of emergency response for persons with disabilities;
- vi. Creation of database and inclusion of sex, age and disability disaggregated data in vulnerability and risk assessments;
- vii. Empowering women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender equality and universally accessible response.

Strategies for Plan of Action

- i. Governments must comply with international law, address the needs and include persons with disabilities in disaster planning, including accessible disaster risk information, effective early warning systems and evacuation plans, ensuring they reach communities on the ground. This includes the compliance and implementation of the UNCRPD and/or national disability laws, across administrative levels and ministries and departments.
- ii. Full recognition by decision makers that disability inclusion, and ensuring the equitable participation of persons with disabilities, as legal obligations are required. Dedicated leadership roles for disability experts in decision-making is essential – persons with disabilities should be included in all policymaking and implementation for disaster resilience.
- iii. Governments and DRR stakeholders must take urgent measures to ensure equity between persons with and without disabilities in all measures to reduce and prevent disaster risk. This includes addressing factors that underpin and perpetuate exclusion, including the discriminatory design of communications, information, early warning systems and infrastructure that favour persons without disabilities at the expense of persons with disabilities.
- iv. Governments and DRR stakeholders must support rigorous applied and action-oriented research and learning to identify actions that can reduce disaster risk for persons with disabilities and with complex support needs, and from minorities with increased intersectional risk profiles.
- v. Disability data generation is the bedrock of planning and design for disability inclusion. The dearth of disability data in Nigeria is worrisome. Advocacy for collection of disability-disaggregated data that targets relevant stakeholders, such as the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics and National Population Commission, should be intensified.
- vi. Funding of disability inclusion activities must be prioritized through dedicated budgetary allocations for the ministries, departments, agencies and for all government planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation efforts. Similarly, all public and private actors working on disability must allocate budgets to disability inclusion, without which they cannot achieve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in their programs and services.

- vii. Government agencies like the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should increase awareness among governments and their partners of the safety and security needs of persons with disabilities.
- viii. Ensure that new construction, rehabilitation, and reconstruction are accessible to persons with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

People with disabilities are disproportionately marginalized in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster risk management (DRM). They are often left out of initiatives seeking to plan, prepare, respond and recover from disasters. They confront innumerable barriers, from inaccessible early warning systems, evacuation routes and shelters to unresponsive governments and attitudinal problems, all of which aggravate their exclusion at all levels. They are also more vulnerable to disasters because of their poverty, inequality, where they live, their fragile livelihoods, and the lack of protection alongside the injustices they are exposed to.

DIDRR has grown in importance over the past years as a possible way of addressing this situation, to ensure that DRR programmes are inclusive, prepared and responsive.

PWD should see ability in disability and must be courageous and strong to stand against any form of discrimination. An impactful and result oriented advocacy for DIDRR in Nigeria can be led by famous personalities living with disability such as Cobhams Asuquo (Music Producer), Yinka Ayefele (Musician), Joseph Dosu (Atlanta 1996 Olympics gold medalist), amongst others.

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