Disability Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness and Response
An evaluation of disability inclusion in the Disaster READY program in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste

June 2021

Executive Summary

Introduction

People with disabilities are disproportionately disadvantaged by disasters and are more likely to be injured or die during a disaster than people without disabilities.[1] Underlying disadvantages, such as higher risk of poverty, stigmatising attitudes, exclusionary policies, and an inaccessible built environment further marginalise people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response.[2]

Disability-inclusive disaster preparedness efforts are an important way to address this issue. This is a primary focus of Disaster READY (2018–2021), a $50 million program of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the Pacific and Timor-Leste. The Disaster READY program supports local communities and organisations to prepare for and respond to disasters across five countries: Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Timor-Leste. One of the five overarching objectives of the program is that *the rights and needs of women, people with disabilities, youth and children are being met in disaster preparedness and response at all levels*.

Disaster READY[3] is implemented by six Australian non-government organisations (ANGOs): CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, Oxfam, Plan International Australia, Save the Children Australia, and World Vision Australia as well as their consortium members and local partners in-country. In addition to Disaster READY's disability inclusion mandate, ANGOs have made broader commitments to disability inclusion as a necessary component of DFAT accreditation.

An evaluation of disability inclusion in Disaster READY occurred in 2020. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are people with disabilities experiencing positive outcomes as a result of Disaster READY?
2. What is working well within Disaster READY to enable disability inclusion, and what needs to be improved?
3. To what extent are ANGO activities inclusive of people with disabilities?

The World Bank and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery note that disability-inclusive disaster preparedness helps to ensure that people with disabilities are more resilient to disasters, reducing the likelihood that emergencies will create or exacerbate poverty.[1] In addition, it is well-accepted across the literature that greater representation of people with disabilities in disaster decision-making bodies improves the likelihood that the requirements of people with disabilities will be considered in preparedness and response.

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[1] Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (2017) Disability inclusion in disaster risk management: Promising practices and opportunities for enhanced engagement: http://www.didrrn.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GFDRR-World-Bank_Disability-inclusion-in-DRM-Report.pdf
[2] IASC Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (2019) Guidelines: Inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines
[3] Disaster READY is part of the Australian Humanitarian Partnership – a partnership between DFAT and the six selected Australian NGOs.

As such, the first evaluation question sought to explore how Disaster READY has contributed to building the resilience and representation of people with disabilities in an effort to mitigate the negative effects of disasters and promote disaster response and recovery that benefits all people. The second question sought to understand how Disaster READY practices and processes enable or prevent disability inclusion, while the third question analysed Disaster READY's disability inclusion efforts at the activity level.

The evaluation was implemented in close coordination with representatives of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF), CBM Australia – a Christian international development organisation (CBM), and DFAT, who participated in an evaluation reference group. The reference group participated in a review of methodological approaches and deliverables, which included guidance notes developed in response to findings.

The evaluation had a strong focus on ensuring utilisation and shared learning. Early findings were shared with ANGOs and local partners in August 2020 in order to inform their COVID-19 responses. ANGOs were also required to identify how they were responding to the evaluation findings within their work plans and requests for milestone payments for their COVID-19 responses.

The evaluation findings aim to inform the remaining 12 months of the Disaster READY program, future humanitarian responses in the region, and the forthcoming design of the next phase of Disaster READY.

Summary of Findings

When Disaster READY began in 2018, disability-inclusive disaster preparedness and response was an emerging sector across the globe. Disaster READY sought to strengthen disability inclusion in disaster preparedness and response from a very low starting point.

Disaster READY's explicit focus on disability inclusion has pushed ANGOs and their local partners to start thinking and working in a disability-inclusive way. Evidence of this is clear: by 2020, Disaster READY had supported the development of 367 church, community and school development plans which addressed the needs of people with disabilities, and had enabled the participation of people with disabilities in the development of 318 of these plans. By 2020, 61 disaster committees at the national and sub-national levels reported people with disabilities in their membership.

However, evidence of the extent to which disability-inclusive activities are leading to positive outcomes for people with disabilities is limited. Disaster READY has clear expectations regarding disability inclusion, articulated in Outcome 2. However, data collection (including interviews, group discussions and reviews of reports) uncovered few examples of Disaster READY disaster preparedness activities influencing or improving the resilience of people with disabilities to emergencies. While acknowledging the nascent nature of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction across the globe and the need to build capacity to enable disability inclusion in all countries, few examples of outcome-focused, disability-inclusive Disaster READY activities were located. Efforts to date have focused on capacity building and output-level action, with little monitoring and reporting of outcomes. As such, this evaluation concludes that effective utilisation of disability-inclusive approaches in disaster preparedness activities by ANGOs, in a way that influences the resilience of people with disabilities to disasters and encourages their inclusion in disaster responses, is still a work in progress.

This evaluation found that several enablers are required to boost disability inclusion in Disaster READY. These include disability-inclusive planning and monitoring processes, streamlined technical assistance, organisation-level commitment to disability inclusion through policies and allocation of human resources and, most importantly, strong and effective partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).

Each of the five countries is at a different point in terms of implementing disability-inclusive activities towards outcomes. Stronger practices were identified in Fiji and Timor-Leste, and these are detailed in stories of change within this report. However, Disaster READY's specific focus on – and provision of resourcing for – disability inclusion has set expectations that are clear for ANGOs, their local partners, and the communities in which they work: disaster preparedness activities must be planned and implemented in a disability-inclusive way.

Findings and Recommendations

Findings and recommendations are presented in line with the three evaluation questions. Unless specified, findings and recommendations are relevant for all five countries in which Disaster READY operates.

Evaluation Question: To what extent are people with disabilities experiencing positive outcomes as a result of Disaster READY?

Category: Disability Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness

Findings:

1.1 Disaster preparedness activities supported by Disaster READY are including people with disabilities more than ever before. However, across all five countries, there is limited evidence of progress towards improved resilience of people with disabilities to disasters or their inclusion in disaster responses.

Recommendation:

A) NGOs[4] to plan and monitor delivery of outcome-focused, disability-inclusive disaster preparedness activities. Priority classified as 'current phase'.
B) NGOs to engage people with disabilities and their representative groups (OPDs) in planning, implementing, and monitoring disaster preparedness activities. Priority classified as 'current phase'.
C) NGOs to collect evidence of outcomes of disability-inclusive activities in their final report in order to inform the next phase of Disaster READY. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

Category: Disaster Response Outcomes for People with Disabilities

Findings:

1.2 Outcomes for people with disabilities as a result of disaster response efforts are evident but limited and ad hoc. These revolve around two main themes: the incorporation of disability identification in community mapping prior to and following disasters, and collaboration with OPDs in order to provide targeted relief to people with disabilities.

Recommendation:

D) NGOs to use the Washington Group Short Set in community-level mapping and assessment to determine the location and needs of people with disabilities in disaster response. Priority classified as 'current phase'.
E) NGOs to mainstream disability inclusion considerations into general disaster response activities, partnering with OPDs as technical advisers and/or implementers as appropriate, and using a demonstration effect to influence local policies and practices.[5] Priority classified as 'current phase'.

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[4] NB: The term 'non-government organisation' (NGO) refers to ANGOs as well as their local partners.

[5] Guidance notes developed as a result of this evaluation, and which focus on disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction, including the response to COVID-19, are available on the AHP website and can provide advice.

Category: Influencing disability-inclusive preparedness and response through representation

Findings:

1.3 Representation of people with disabilities in sub-national disaster preparedness and response decision-making forums supports disability inclusion outcomes. This increases quickly when OPDs are welcomed as active participants and slowly when they are not.
1.4 Representation of people with disabilities in national disaster committees is limited.

Recommendation:

A) NGOs to work with OPDs at the sub-national level and, where available, resource teams[6] to support increased representation of people with disabilities in sub-national disaster committees. Priority classified as 'current phase'.
B) NGOs to use their influence with national disaster committees to create space for OPD representation and voice. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

Evaluation Question 2: What is working well within Disaster READY efforts to enable disability inclusion, and what needs to be improved?

Category: Disability-inclusive planning processes

Findings:

2.1 Incorporation of the perspectives of people with disabilities in planning is a critical enabler of disability-inclusive outcomes and has improved as partnerships between NGOs and OPDs strengthen.
2.2 Work planning draws on evidence generated through implementation of Disaster READY in a limited way, including lessons learned, reflections, and specific analyses.

Recommendation:

C) NGOs and OPDs to undertake joint annual planning processes. To minimise the demand on OPDs, Country Coordination Committees to establish expectations to guide and encourage coordinated planning processes. Priority classified as 'current phase'.
D) DFAT to require NGOs to indicate how evidence regarding disability inclusion, including stand-alone analyses, reflection and learning from past activities, informs work planning within annual plans. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

Category: Disability-inclusive monitoring processes

Findings:

2.3 The identification of people with disabilities using the Washington Group Short Set questions (as recommended by the AHPSU) is inconsistently applied and, as a result, comparison across countries, NGOs and time periods is unreliable.
2.4 Quantitative disability data collection, monitoring, and reporting focuses on people with disabilities as one homogenous group.

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[6] Resource teams are groups of people with diverse disabilities established by OPDs to represent the perspectives and priorities of people with disabilities in planning, implementation and monitoring activities, and in decision-making fora.

2.5 Different NGOs use different approaches to monitor disability inclusion, resulting in limited and inconsistent reporting and learning.

<u>Recommendation:</u>

E) NGOs to use the Washington Group Short Set to determine the disability status of participants and disaggregate data by disability. CBM and PDF to work with OPDs to provide guidance and training to support this. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

F) NGOs to disaggregate disability data by type of difficulty, and consider use of extended set questions in order to monitor program reach to excluded groups, drawing on CBM for technical advice. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

G) NGOs to strengthen monitoring approaches and tools to enable more consistent reporting, learning and communications. This includes engagement of OPD representatives in monitoring activities, adaptation of monitoring tools to incorporate a disability inclusion lens, and introduction of facilitated discussions to collaboratively discuss and capture the implications of findings. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

Category: Communications to support disability inclusion

<u>Findings:</u>
2.6 There are limited local human resources available to support documentation and dissemination of achievements and lessons in disability inclusion at the country level.
2.7 Communication of good practices is limited by inadequate monitoring, reflection and learning processes.

<u>Recommendation:</u>
H) DFAT (through the AHPSU) to provide adequate resources and technical guidance to support strategic communications activities in country. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

Category: Mechanisms to strengthen disability inclusion capacity

<u>Findings:</u>

2.8 While the range of technical assistance modalities[7] across Disaster READY offers flexibility and choice, it also means there are overlaps and gaps in terms of the availability of technical assistance to NGOs.
2.9 ANGOs tend to rely on OPDs for technical assistance in disability inclusion rather than building in-house capacity.
2.10 OPDs have multiple roles and responsibilities, including critical advocacy roles, and provision of technical advice is not always a priority.
2.11 Strengthening of OPDs to support disability inclusion in disaster preparedness and response is slow and relies on strong partnerships.
2.12 Effective, streamlined and resourced partnerships between NGOs and OPDs are a pre-condition to enabling clear expectations of OPD and ANGO roles and responsibilities, supported by bi-directional capacity development.
2.13 When well-coordinated, provision of technical assistance and training by OPDs and resource teams, supported by Shared Services, can support disability-inclusive implementation.
2.14 NGO access to direct technical assistance has resulted in more contextually appropriate and timely support.

[7] Technical assistance modalities include: Regional approach led by CBM and PDF with OPDs; CBM's membership in three consortia; Provision of technical advice by national OPDs; Engagement of third-party providers of technical assistance; Support for capacity development through Shared Services; Provision of in-house technical assistance by ANGOs to their local partners; Review of work plans and reports by the AHPSU.

Recommendation:

I)   In the forthcoming design, DFAT to review arrangements for the provision of technical assistance to strengthen disability inclusion in Disaster READY. DFAT should retain a focus on the following:

   o   encouraging NGOs to build in-house capacity in disability inclusion;

   o   strengthening the capacity of OPDs to undertake a technical role in-country;

   o   establishing resource teams in-country to support local action;

   o   supporting NGOs to work in a bi-directional capacity development partnership with OPDs;

   o   enabling NGOs and Country Coordination Committees to access flexible and contextually appropriate technical advice; and

   o   coordination of technical advice and sharing of lessons learned within and across countries.

Indicative ideas to support these approaches include: the appointment of a Disability Inclusion Adviser to the AHPSU, establishing a panel of disability inclusion expertise available across all five countries, and/or continued provision of funds to each Country Coordinating Committee to enable country-driven access to technical support. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

Category: Supportive organisational commitment to disability inclusion

Findings:

2.15   Organisational commitment to disability inclusion, evident in an overarching disability inclusion policy and dedicated human resources, is an enabler of disability-inclusive practices.

Recommendation:

J)   Where no local disability inclusion policy exists, NGOs to work with OPDs to develop such policies to guide their commitments. NGOs to nominate a disability inclusion focal person to coordinate implementation and monitoring of the policy. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent are NGO activities inclusive of people with disabilities?

Category: Inclusion of diverse people with a range of disabilities

Findings:

3.1   Some OPDs and NGOs are supporting activities that reach and build representation amongst people with diverse and marginalised disabilities, but a lot more could be done.

3.2   While NGOs are making efforts to consider and include various marginalised groups, these are not fully captured in monitoring systems.

3.3   The requirements of people with disabilities and diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are beginning to be explored in Fiji, but remain sensitive in other countries. This population remains at risk of marginalisation.

Recommendation:

K) NGOs to work with OPDs to determine marginalised groups during planning, including people with diverse disabilities, and develop and implement strategies which aim to reach them through mainstreamed and targeted activities. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

L) NGOs to improve reporting of sex- and disability-disaggregated data so that the different experiences and outcomes of women, men, boys and girls with disabilities are reported. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

M) NGOs to seek opportunities to be part of coalitions that nudge change in social norms regarding people with disabilities and diverse SOGIESC. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

N) Country Coordination Committees to consider the establishment of roles and/or structures to influence and coordinate intersectional work. This could include focal points at each organisation who meet in a multi-stakeholder working group to share and learn. Priority classified as 'next phase'.

Category: Implementation of the twin-track approach

Findings:

3.4 NGOs are actively mainstreaming people with disabilities in all countries and providing reasonable accommodations to enable participation; however, challenges in locating and identifying people with disabilities persist.

3.5 While all NGOs can report on mainstreamed activities, few can demonstrate how they are addressing stigma and meeting the specific requirements of people with disabilities.

Recommendation:

O) NGOs to work closely with OPDs and technical assistance providers to develop strategies to enable the identification of people with diverse disabilities in target areas prior to implementation of activities. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

P) OPDs, CBM and PDF to develop a list of reasonable accommodation support options and socialise these with NGOs. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

Q) NGOs to plan and implement disability-specific activities in accordance with the requirements of people with disabilities in their target locations, and the advice received from OPDs. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

R) NGOs to work closely with OPDs to develop strategies to shift discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities, which can be implemented as part of disaster preparedness activities. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

Category: OPD Partnership

Findings:

3.6 OPD engagement in Disaster READY implementation has led to positive outcomes for people with disabilities in communities and for OPDs themselves.

Recommendation:

S) NGOs and OPDs to establish strong and respectful partnerships.[8] These should outline agreed bi-directional technical capacity-building expectations, with OPDs providing advice and support in disability

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[8] Guidance notes developed as part of this evaluation can be drawn on to inform partnership approaches.

inclusion, and NGOs supporting organisational capacity development and sectoral skills and confidence as needed. Priority classified as 'current phase'.

T) NGOs to plan activities collaboratively with OPDs, determine agreed need for technical support, and allocate budgets and technical assistance accordingly. Priority classified as 'current phase'.