

12 March 2014



**Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction:  
Changing Mindsets through Knowledge**

**22-23 April 2014  
Sendai, Japan**

**AIDE-MEMOIRE**

**I. Background**

Asia-Pacific is the region most adversely affected by disasters. Evidence from recent Japanese experience in disasters indicates that persons with disabilities are two to four times more likely to die than the general population when a disaster occurs. Due to the intersectionality of ageing and disability, the gap is expected to widened.

Many Governments in the region do not incorporate disability perspectives in legal frameworks, policies and action plans for disaster risk reduction (DRR). Thus, in much of the ESCAP region, physical infrastructure, and disaster response services do not incorporate universal design principles, resulting in accessibility constraints on persons with disabilities, and older persons who are less mobile. Public service announcements are often issued in formats and language that are not accessible by persons with disabilities. Emergency exits, shelters and facilities tend not to be barrier-free. Regular participation of persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness and other disaster risk reduction measures could save lives, as well as prevent and minimize risk and damage when disasters occur.

Furthermore, in the absence of reliable and comparable data on disability and disasters in the region, it is a challenge for Governments and other stakeholders to pursue effective planning on disability inclusion in DRR.

At the global level, the Hyogo Framework for Action (HfA): Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters was adopted in 2005 to advance the inclusion of disaster risk reduction in social and economic development agenda and implementation. The HfA does not address disability-inclusive DRR.

Since the adoption of the HfA, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the world's first disability-specific human rights treaty, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in May 2008. Article 11 of the Convention, in addressing situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, requests States Parties to take 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.

In Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea, organized the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, from 29 October to 2 November 2012, in Incheon, Republic of Korea. The Meeting adopted the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

The Incheon Strategy, with a structure similar to that of the Millennium Development Goals, has 10 disability-inclusive, time-bound development goals, 27 targets and 62 indicators. Each of the indicators was framed to measure progress towards meeting specific targets and to facilitate verification that the targets have been achieved. Regarding Goal 7 of the Incheon Strategy: “ensure disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management”, Governments of the ESCAP region have committed to strengthening disability-inclusive DRR planning and action.

Two Commission resolutions of 1 May 2013 underscore the importance of the Incheon Strategy: Commission resolution 69/12 on enhancing regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific welcomed the adoption of the Incheon Strategy, while Commission resolution 69/13 on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, underscored the commitment of ESCAP members States to the implementation of the Incheon Strategy.

In addition to supporting member States in using the Commission as the regional platform for expressing their commitment, as indicated through the above-mentioned resolutions, the ESCAP secretariat has worked to build capacities related to disaster data in general. The Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disaster Data in Asia and the Pacific was held in 2013 in Sendai, Japan. An ESCAP guide on generating data for measuring progress in the implementation of the Incheon Strategy, including Goal 7 on disability-inclusive DRR, will be disseminated in 2014, to help build member States’ capacity in data collection to measure change, using the Incheon Strategy indicators.

The HfA is expected to be renewed and strengthened in 2015 at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be hosted by the Government of Japan from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan.

In preparation for that, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction will organize the Pacific Platform for Disaster Management in Suva from 2 to 4 June 2014. The Government of Thailand and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction will organize the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction from 22 to 26 June 2014 in Bangkok.

Both these meetings present critical opportunities that may be harnessed through strategic interventions to promote disability inclusion in DRR.

Thus, there is an urgent need for clear articulation of a strong regional voice on disability-inclusive DRR, to be directed at the regional preparatory ministerial conference (June 2014) for the global conference (March 2015). For this new area of work within a tight time frame, consultation among experts in disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction would expedite such articulation.

This endeavour has clear synergies with promotion of the implementation of Goal 7 of the Incheon Strategy.

Disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction within the regional and the global development agenda could contribute to improving the chances of survival of the 650 million persons with disabilities living in the most disaster-prone region in the world.

## **II. Objectives/Outcome of the Meeting**

The Meeting has two main objectives:

1. To take stock of lessons learned from practices of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific.
2. To agree on key disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction elements for inclusion in a document to be prepared by ESCAP that will provide a basis for consideration of issues related to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction at the Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held from 22 to 26 June 2014 in Bangkok, and the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan.

## **III. Organizational arrangements and participation**

The Meeting will be co-organized by ESCAP in cooperation with Rehabilitation International (RI) and the Nippon Foundation. It will be held from 22 to 23 April 2014 at the Sendai Mediatheque, located in Sendai, Japan.

Sendai is one of the cities most severely affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The Meeting will draw on the wealth of experiences that central and local governments, as well as civil society organizations, have gained concerning DRR policy and practice.

The Meeting will bring together Government DRR focal points and disability focal points in Asia and the Pacific, as well as representatives of civil society organizations that are active in the field of disability rights and DRR. It is hoped that focal points who participate in the Meeting will also participate in the forthcoming 2014 Pacific Platform for Disaster Management, to be held in Suva from 2 to 4 June 2014, the Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Bangkok from 23 to 26 June 2014, and in the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in March 2015 in Sendai. Special efforts will be made to establish satellite communication for community-level participants with experience of surviving disasters in selected countries, to engage in discussions during the Meeting.

The documentation for the Meeting will include the following:

- √ Draft agreement to promote disability-inclusive DRR;
- √ An overview of disability-inclusive DRR in Asia and the Pacific.

The official website of the regional preparatory Sendai meeting is <http://www.unescapsdd.org/events/asia-pacific-meeting-disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction> where all meeting documentation will be uploaded.

The Meeting will be conducted in English.

#### **IV. Provisional agenda**

##### **Agenda item 1: Opening and objectives of the Meeting**

*Expected outcome: participants will have a clearer understanding of the objectives and expected outcomes of the Meeting.*

##### **Agenda item 2: Overview of context for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction policy**

*Expected outcome: participants will have a better understanding of the global and regional context for formulating national policies on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.*

##### **Agenda item 3: Challenges to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction**

*Expected outcome: participants will have a clearer understanding of factors that impede effective policymaking for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction*

##### **Agenda item 4: Good practices of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction**

*Expected outcome: through the sharing of country experiences and good practices, participants will have better knowledge of how to formulate and implement disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction policies, and how to foster an environment in which disability-inclusive DRR is practiced.*

##### **Agenda item 5: Way forward**

*Expected outcome: participants will have a clearer understanding of key steps towards mainstreaming disability into the regional and global processes for the post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.*

##### **Agenda item 6: Consideration of a draft substantive outcome of the Meeting**

*Expected outcome: participants will agree on a set of key disability-inclusive DRR elements for inclusion in a document to be prepared by ESCAP that will provide a basis for consideration of issues related to disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction at the Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Bangkok from 22 to 26 June 2014, and the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Sendai, Japan, expected to be held from 14 to 18 March 2015.*

##### **Agenda item 7: Closing**