



Workshop – Disaster Risk Reduction: Persons with disabilities in emergency situations

-Conclusions-

Workshop *Disaster Risk Reduction: Persons with disabilities in emergency situations* has gathered the representatives of various associations and unions of persons with disabilities, public officials responsible for disaster and risk management and civil society organizations. They have, in a pioneering effort of assessing the position and role of persons with disabilities in this region, exchanged experiences and recognized the alarming state of human rights of this vulnerable group in emergency situations. The participants recognized that:

- People with disabilities represent one of the most vulnerable categories of the population in emergency situations, whose specific needs should be further incorporated in the functioning of the national protection and rescue system.
- Other vulnerable groups, that are very often situated lower on the scale of vulnerability, profit from much better media coverage and visibility and are more often targeted by programmes and funding of different NGOs than is the case for persons with disabilities.
- The appropriate protection of persons with disabilities require substantial financial means and specialized procedures and trainings that local municipalities are often unable to provide which could have aggravating consequences with regard to life and security of persons with disabilities.

With aims of promoting and furthering the role of persons with disabilities in the system of protection and rescue, improving the early warning systems to include the needs of this particular category of the population and generally increasing the level of their preparedness to the emergency situations, the workshop participants recommend the following:

1. Urgent establishment and further development of relationships between local municipalities and associations of persons with disabilities. Wherever applicable, a representative of this vulnerable group should be appointed in emergency headquarters and working groups involved with development of vulnerability assessments and search-and-rescue plans on local level. Also, inclusion of the representatives of persons with disabilities in working groups involved with elaboration of national strategic and legal documents from this field.
2. Persons with disabilities should be recognized as important and particular segment of population in both the upcoming Law on disaster risk reduction and emergency management and the National Strategy of Protection and Rescue, in accordance with the recommendations of Sendai Framework of United Nations for Disaster Risk Reduction and UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities.
3. It is necessary to appoint a civil defence liaison officer (and possibly his/her deputy) in all associations and unions of persons with disabilities and clear responsibilities should be set out for them. These officers would be responsible for contacting the local municipalities and act as link between the persons with disabilities and local and public competent authorities.



4. Accessibility of information about emergency situations to the persons with disabilities should be increased in the major media outlets – sign language, subtitles, light signalization (blue, red, green depending on hazard type – floods, fire or earthquake). Establishing the quality cooperation and sensitization of media is essential in this regard.
5. Introduce the accessible numbers on which hazards can be reported and adapting this service to the needs of persons with disabilities – special call centre for the deaf with sign language interpreters, sending out of warnings through text messages etc. Also, compiling the register of persons with disabilities that would be accessible to all relevant stakeholders in emergency situations – social workers, 112 emergency operations centre etc
6. Improving the education of persons with disabilities and raising global awareness of the society about the problems encountered by persons with disabilities in emergency situations is of paramount importance. Distribution of educational materials about behaviours and reactions in emergencies that would be in accessible formats (Braille's alphabet, audio materials, sign language or subtitles in electronic formats) through the network of local associations of persons with disabilities and in cooperation with local authorities and civil society organizations.
7. Regular theoretical and practical trainings for reacting in emergencies, both for persons with disabilities as for the educators of competent authorities so they could get familiar about the needs of this vulnerable social group.
8. Establishment of the network of association and unions of persons with disabilities that would exchange experiences pertaining to the field of disaster prevention and risk reduction.