

Severe Weather, disability and poverty



Kazol Rekha, Bangladesh

DISABILITY AND POVERTY THE FACTS

- Persons with disabilities are the world's largest minority, making up 15% of the world's population.¹
- The world bank estimates that persons with disabilities may account for as many as 1 in 5 of the world's poorest people.²
- Persons with disabilities are often left behind in an emergency situation and not included in relief efforts.

SOURCES:

- 1 World Health Organisation and World Bank, World Report on Disability, WHO Press, Geneva, 2011, p.29
- 2 United Nations, General Assembly, Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Report of the Secretary General, A/66/230 (3 August 2011), p.12

MY STORY: KAZOL REKHA, BANGLADESH

Kazol uses a wheelchair to get around after an accident left her partially paralysed. But that doesn't stop Kazol from being an active part of her community. Kazol is the head of a local organisation committed to educating others about the challenges of severe weather, particularly for persons with disabilities.

“When a flood is coming, we have to prepare: we store dry food and firewood. We make a list of doctors with their phone numbers; we use that list during the flood if needed. We also plan how to rescue people with disabilities during a flood and where to take them to a shelter with accessible toilets.”

Kazol Rekha, Bangladesh

SEVERE WEATHER AN UNPREDICTABLE CHALLENGE

Studies indicate that in the past 20 years weather-related disaster in the Asia Pacific have increased fourfold.⁴ This, together with rising sea levels, means that nations like Bangladesh are some of the most vulnerable to unpredictable weather patterns and increased natural disasters. When a natural disaster strikes, time and mobility are crucial. You need to be able to quickly move to reach higher ground and find shelter. During an extreme weather event the risk of injury is high for everyone, but is higher for persons with disabilities.

“We were very vulnerable. When the area was affected by flood, nobody bothered about the persons with disabilities; we were totally neglected and helpless as there was always a rush to leave.”

Kazol Rekha, Bangladesh

The impact of a natural disaster doesn't end when blue skies return – the whole community needs to rebuild and recover. There may be long-term impacts such as disease and limited access to safe water, food and shelter. While everyone must deal with these challenges, for persons with disabilities, every stage of a natural disaster – from initial impact to recovery – is more difficult.

For people living in poverty, having everything you own washed away in a flash flood can condemn you, your family and your whole community to live in a cycle of poverty that is hard to escape. For persons with disabilities who are often the most vulnerable, these impacts are even more serious.

Disaster preparedness needs to include persons with disabilities in the planning phase and specific training for persons with disabilities is essential. The entire community can be educated on how they can support everyone in disaster response and recovery.

REDUCING THE RISK WE KNOW WHAT IT TAKES

Many communities in low and middle income countries organise disaster preparedness training, which develops people's skills in how to respond when an extreme weather event strikes.

Disaster preparedness training includes:

- Learning how to find out if extreme weather is approaching.
- Learning how to protect your possessions and home, and where to take refuge.
- Learning ways to communicate with the people around you about life-saving information in an emergency.

These programs are proving very successful; however, persons with disabilities are often excluded from the development of disaster response plans, leaving them especially vulnerable.

DISABILITY, POVERTY, AND THE SOLUTIONS TO END THE CYCLE

In 2015 the world committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. The 2030 Agenda and the corresponding 17 goals, including Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, must be implemented according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

By addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries, we not only achieve the human rights of persons with disabilities, but everyone benefits from their contribution.

“I was always afraid when there was a prospect of flooding but now we know what to do, so I’m not afraid anymore. If there is a flood, I can face it. I feel proud with my role in the community: people didn’t know what to do and now I’m here to help them learn. I feel good!” Kazol Rekha, Bangladesh

This is why inclusion, across all development sectors, is important. Empowering persons with disabilities so they can receive a worthwhile education, access health services, learn how to respond to and recover from emergency situations, and participate fully in society is essential to end the cycle of poverty and disability. This is why inclusion, across all development sectors, is important.

**END THE
CYCLE.** 
OF POVERTY & DISABILITY

End the Cycle is an
initiative of CBM



Kazol Rekha, Bangladesh

SEVERE WEATHER, DISABILITY AND POVERTY - THE FACTS

- There have been four times as many severe weather events in the past 20 years in Asia, compared with the previous 20 years.³
- Severe weather is increasing the vulnerability of persons with disabilities caught up in extreme weather events.
- Persons with disabilities often live in the most vulnerable areas yet may be the least able to move to safer areas when disaster strikes.

SOURCES:

- 3 Disaster Risk Reduction: 2007 Global Review, United Nations. Cited in Oxfam (2007), From Weather Alert to Climate Change, Oxfam Briefing Paper 108, Oxfam International

END THE CYCLE promotes the human rights and lived experience of persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries.



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