

## Ensure Positive Action to Include Persons with Disabilities in the Disaster Crisis Management

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**Received:** October 22, 2018; **Published:** November 08, 2018

### Introduction

Bangladesh is a small country. Merely one single of the three thousand parts of the whole globe. It is small in size, approximately 1,47,570 square km. But huge quantities of people (160 millions) live here in the world's best family ties and relations. Nature has bestowed eye-cooling beauty to this territory. In the near past, Bangladesh has been renowned as a centre of trade and commerce, knowledge and culture, granary and treasure. Now it's persuasion and endeavors to become a country of middle-income with the ongoing mass development. But, unfortunately, destiny of disable people, which is almost 18% of our total population, is running with its vulnerability and deteriority which hampers our socio-economical sovereignty.

In this deltaic riverine country, we see frequently recurrence of various severe calamities, for example; flood, drought, landslide, minor earthquake, cyclone and river erosion etc. due to increasing global warming. In the perspective of development, Bangladesh has marched from "least" to "mid". Countries like this, where development dominates, interest of non-productive, compensatory or perpetual or long time rehabilitational groups of people goes under negligence and kindness- almost fits the proverb- "Beggars must not be choosers".

But, now-a-days, the reigning government has taken patronizing and benevolent steps as a challenge to march the disables with the mainstream peoples. But none of their effort will be hundred percent successful until or unless the participation of physically disabled people is ensured in crisis management process.

### Background

In this capitalized world, group or class interest is preferred best. Therefore, very little importance is given to ensure a blissful

and cushy world for the disabled people. However, in recent years, Globally or nationally concerned ministry and authority give them privilege and priority and try to execute the laws and rules related to persons with disability that are described in UNCRPD's article no. 11.

"States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, 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 our National Constitution, article no. 28 also emphasize that all citizens are, regardless their ability or disability, equal before the law and also entitled equal protection and equal benefit from the law. With this view, the Ministry of Social Welfare was established in 1972. This ministry, from its establishment, is trying with heart and soul to render services to the persons with disabilities along with other mandatory sectors.

In the name of democracy martial law and autocracy have governed this country for a long time when the rights of common people was ignored let alone the disabled. However, democracy starts budding. As a result, provisions related to persons with disabilities of our constitution come into light and start execution. Gradually the plight of disable people starts shining. They are now educated, trained and professionals. In home and abroad they can comply and cope with mainstream persons with equal pace. "Relief and Disaster Ministry" was established to flourish and to continue the smooth speed of affected persons- the beacon becomes lustrous- sometimes the red tape of bureaucracy shows hostility in lieu of hospitality. Now people with disability have quality and competency to become the part of this bureaucracy.

“The wearer best knows where the shoe pinches”.

So nobody will treat or deal with us as our own. Therefore, to keep straight our backbone we need inclusion and participation mostly in crisis management action. Now is digital era, Bangladesh has developed much in comparison to others in this sector. The dream of father of the nation “sonar Bangla” is going to be fulfilled through digitalization. Now Bangladesh is also called “Digital Bangladesh” and not a single sector is out of touch total of digitalization. “Disaster Crisis Management Action” is such a one. The total computer set up is computer based. If the personnel’s are of disabilities, the whole official activities will be cordially expedited and carefully completed. It is transparent that traditional bureaucrats are habituated to official red-tape. It is confessed the equal minded can help best. A diastal crisis can make a serious abyss in a victim’s mind. The deaf and dumb people dwelling in the slums, maritime or in the swamps or in the hilly mountainous wards should to be considered a single squad and will be betterly ransacked if the disable people operate the action of crisis management.

Undoubtedly disaster is a panic, it becomes tragic when it forms epidemic. Once epidemic breaks out rescue and shelter works become philanthropic. Within a while, global/ regional fraternal nationals dispatch reliefs equipped with necessary facilities. Standing on these types of natural debris, more often than not, it is vivid that the concerned employees breed their greed and think for profit by calculating debit-credit. So, to provide any kind of assistance disabled persons must be engaged as a bureaucrat.

Here, in our country, almost in every ministry, an established bureaucratic tendency is embezzlement of fund management and it has become a hereditary legacy. Therefore, for a fortified harbor in every disaster management fund along with all other social safety net coverage disable personals must to be engaged.

Now, the world is a global village and everywhere there is global race. Some states rival for their excellence and dominance. In this competing trend, in future days, Bangladesh will wear a crown crest, what we firmly believe and expect. Whatever the Endeavour, out show and flavor is the real inner scenario is very blur. The information about disabilities mentioned and supplied are made by bureaucracy. Therefore It demands authenticity.

For implementation of SDG [Sustainable Development Goal] information facilities and rehabilitation provided in various national and international forums and conferences are somewhere stogy

and patchy. So in cases of all human rights development along with disaster crisis management actions, persons with disabilities should be engaged in parallel with the bureaucracy. Otherwise, the rate of GDP [Gross Domestic Products] through ADP [Annual Development Program] and UNDP [United Nations Development Program] will remain hazy than reality.

There is some obvious reality in our country. Government has furnished policy, but bureaucratic autocracy has created socio-political and socio-economical anarchy- as a result, corruption in the name of administration prevails. We can cite perilous melancholic incidents which took place in near past Bangladesh. The collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013, conflagration at Tazreen Fashion in 2012 or devastating boiler explosions in outskirt of Dhaka caused some 2100 lives and left thousands people unable to live a normal life. Moreover, frequent political and communal violence are also to be blamed for worsen disability in Bangladesh. But the participation of persons with disability (PWD is usually very low in the process of tackling this sort of crisis. Thus the question of cordiality of the authority in handling crisis often remains unanswered.

### Motives behind the inclusion of persons with disability in the crisis management

People with disabilities can face a multitude of barriers, including, negative family and community attitudes, stigma and discrimination. The process of ensuring positive action to include people with impairment in crisis management starts with motives behind it. Here are some key motives which would legitimate the inclusion process to prompt actions in favor of it.

1. The first and foremost objective of disability inclusion in the disaster crisis management process is that it considerably reduces the health hazards of physically disabled people. When crisis strikes, physically challenged people usually lag behind because of the complexity in the process of rescuing or evacuating them to a safer place. Thus, during or after the crisis, it is the physically impaired people who suffer most from the hazardous diseases and pestilences.
2. Facilities and services that are usually designed to deal with the aftermath of a crisis are not convenient for the people with disability. In Bangladesh, unlike western developed countries, disability-friendly transport and communication are yet to be introduced. Moreover, most shelters and asylum centers are not accessible and people with disabilities are many times even turned away from shelters and asylum due to a perception that they need “complex medical” services. Disruption to physical,

social, economical, and environmental networks and support systems affect persons with disabilities much more than the general population.

3. The potential risk when resources are scarce is also a matter of concern. People with impairment cannot cope with the dynamisms of mainstream people in taking possession of relief and other life saving resources. Hence the vulnerability of their lives intensifies to further extent.
4. When it come women, children and elderly citizens with disabilities the potential of risk during disaster is even higher. At least 85% of total physically challenged populations in Bangladesh are either children or women. Century old attitudinal disorder towards them worsens the overall plight of impaired people despite increasingly inclusive legislation at the national and international level.
5. In this age of information and technology, the digitalization of disaster forecasting and disaster management system is a blessing for normal people. But scarcely these technologies are designed suitably for the physically impaired people. For instance, a visually impaired person or a person with difficulty of hearing is often found in trouble in using sophisticated technologies. Therefore, they need to be included with further priority in crisis and disaster management processes.
6. Finally, Neglecting the people with disabilities in the disaster management is a clear violation of their human right. The interest of this huge number of people, almost one-sixth of total population of the world, has been fortified by Laws of almost every countries and organizations. But the implementation of law is still blue moon in developing countries like Bangladesh. So all the discussion, debate and effort we see today to ensure basic human right will never succeed if the persons with disabilities people are ignored.

Thus, taking the aforementioned facts into account, it is crucial that disability inclusion in all phases of the disaster management is properly maintained and acknowledged to ensure all-inclusive humanitarian response.

### Mechanism of inclusion

To sort out a proper mechanism to include persons with disabilities (PWD) in disaster crisis management is a huge challenge. Usually an ideal disaster crisis management consists of three phases:

- a. Preparation prior the crisis
- b. Response during the crisis
- c. Follow-up after the crisis

But countries vary from each other as long as geo-political, socio-economical and cultural values and norms are concerned. Including Bangladesh, in under-developing South Asian and African countries, the limitation of resources and lack of dynamic communication system often procrastinate the whole plan of disaster crisis management, thus chronological coordination and maintenance of this three phases is not always possible. Furthermore, paucity of prior experience of implementing such plans also greatly diminishes the desired output. Therefore, several phases of risk reduction process, for example forecasting, first response, relief distribution and rehabilitation, Government, non-government and regional organization must work as an entity to include and ensure the interest of physically impaired people in disaster crisis management process. However the followings could be applied to include physically impaired people in dealing with disaster crisis.

### Collective communal conversance

Community-wide awareness and education programs about looming natural and man-made crisis should be made a national priority. The remote corners of the country, where telecommunication and transportation system is slimmer, should be focused in the first place to raise awareness about the vulnerability and difficulties that physically challenged people are subjected to. Non-government association and volunteers can play a significant role in this regard by arranging publicity campaign. Participation of people with a disability in awareness raising campaign or other government, humanitarian organizations and community groups draws more attention than usual.

### Conducting survey

Collecting elaborated data by conducting house to house field survey to enlist the people with disability in vulnerable groups (Like mild vulnerable, very vulnerable and severe vulnerable) is a vital part in prior-crisis preparation process. Person to person contact helps the volunteers and other concern bodies to identify how many types of disabled people are living in a particular community and in which way the potential disaster might trouble them. It also provides strong anticipation about the potential barriers in including them in disaster management efforts. In such processes, the inclusion of physically impaired persons, for example, as an adviser, adds further dynamism since they are the one who realize the misery of their types more than anyone else.

### Ensuring life saving appliances

Once the survey and evaluation is done we can employ persons with disabilities in allocating budget and merchandizing live saving appliances. Ignoring them in budgeting and buying emergency stuffs might not fulfill the true objectives of disaster crisis management. There has always been a question of transparency in government and NGO based program in corruption-prone countries like Bangladesh. Therefore, ensuring representatives from persons with disabilities (PWD) in the management and development of early warning system to ensure accessibility, assessing individual requirements, including large print, Braille, pictorial, audio and sign language based communication device, wheel chair, white sticks, and other adequate appliances and distributing them to people in need is quite obvious.

### Building convenient platform

Several studies show us that many physically, visually and psychologically impaired people are extremely reluctant to leave familiar surroundings when the request for evacuation comes from the authority. Even if they oblige the evacuation order, typical shelter centres are not conveniently made for them. Particularly, autistic and psychologically disabled people do not feel comfortable to be in touch with strangers. So, with the direct guidance of experts, a convenient platform, where people with disabilities will be the sole inmates can be introduced. Until the dangers of disaster fade away, consultations and other meetings in physically accessible venues can be arranged. Here they can identify the preferred communication mode for themselves. Individuals with a particular disability may help their mates who have similar problems. An educated persons with disabilities (PwD) can educate other while a visually impaired individual may share his/her innovative ideas to solve a particular problem. Thus, by this “self-assisting” method, we can make people with disability useful in disaster crisis management and they will enjoy a psychological satisfaction. Furthermore, this will erase the tag of “burden” off their name and widen the way for disability organizations and volunteers to focus on other people who are desperately in need.

**Volume 2 Issue 12 December 2018**

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