**International Disability Alliance (IDA)**

Member Organisations:

Down Syndrome International, Inclusion International,

International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus,

International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, World Blind Union,

World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the DeafBlind,

World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry,

Arab Organization of Disabled People, European Disability Forum,

Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus familias (RIADIS), Pacific Disability Forum

**IDA intervention to the CEDAW Committee’s half day of General Discussion on gender-related dimensions of Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change**

**29 February 2016, 63rd session**

Delivered by Angeline Chand on behalf of the International Disability Alliance (IDA)

**IDA welcomes the Committee’s decision to draft a General Recommendation on this very important issue.**

**There is a growing awareness of the gender perspective within DRR related to climate change,[[1]](#footnote-1) and the disability perspective is also finally emerging.** Persons with disabilities are at higher risk in all phases of disaster. They are amongst the most “resource poor” within a community due to social exclusion, lack of access to employment and education, and general voicelessness in public and political decision making. Hence, they have limited adaptive capacities to shifts on availability of climate-sensitive resources such as local water and food supplies.[[2]](#footnote-2) As well as having less access to information, resources and services to build resilience to disaster risk and the impacts of climate change.

**While the inclusion of gender and disability perspectives are welcome and necessary elements to all effective strategies for DRR, we, women and girls with disabilities do not figure prominently in either the gender agenda nor the disability agenda as it relates to DRR. The intersectional dimension of gender, disability and factors such as age, indigenous background, migrant status, among others, have yet to be fully embraced in** the formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of **such strategies**.

**Yet the fact is: we are disproportionately impacted**; 80% of all persons with disabilities live in developing countries and **we, women and girls with disabilities, make up three quarters of that population living mostly in rural areas which are more prone to disaster caused by climate change; where our communities face more challenges to preparedness and resilience**.[[3]](#footnote-3) **Compared to women generally and to men with disabilities, we have even less access** **to education, employment and resources and face greater barriers to participation in public decision making**.

**Last week, the Committee reviewed Vanuatu and heard first hand how women with disabilities and their children perished during Cyclone Pam and other natural disasters due to a lack of accessible information being disseminated about early warning and evacuation.** And how **women with disabilities are particularly neglected in disaster relief measures both concerning Vanuatu and Haiti**, **including lack of access to food, water, supplies, toilets and sanitation.**  **Not to mention the heightened risk and incidents of violence rendering women and girls with disabilities more vulnerable** - such as that following the earthquake in Haiti, including rape and sexual violence and how the lack of services and support available led to death of those victims of violence.

D**espite these increased risks we face, we continue to be invisible in data collection and continue to be excluded in the formulation, management and monitoring of DRR strategies.**

**This invisibility must be put to an end, and it cannot wait. Because climate change is upon us and disasters can strike at any moment.** Last week tropical cyclone Winston hit Fiji- it was the most powerful storm on record in the Southern hemisphere and the full scope of its destruction is still unknown. But we do know that thousands of Fijians are without water, food, shelter and essential services. How many of those are persons with disabilities? women with disabilities? How many of them will actually receive assistance and have access and survive?

**We call on the Committee to fully include and mainstream women and girls with disabilities into your General Recommendation and to be guided by Article 11 of the CRPD on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**. **A high standard of protection and resilience is only possible by**:

* 1) **adopting an inclusive and participatory approach** in policy formulation – **including our direct participation and consultation**;
* 2) **applying accessibility and inclusive standards concerning information, communications and the environment.** All information and communications concerning resilience to the impacts of climate change, disaster preparedness and response must be accessible to all members of the community. Universal and durable accessibility standards should be applied in the planning phases and reconstruction efforts- both with respect to temporary and permanent solutions.
* 3) **Adopting a rights-based approach throughout** **for** equal access to health and information, inclusion in mainstream livelihood, social protection, food production, water, sanitation and energy **programs in both rural and urban areas**.

**A holistic rights based approach must be taken at all levels in order to optimise community resilience inclusive of us all.**

1. The need for a gendered perspective on disaster risk reduction related to climate change has been progressively gaining recognition at the global, regional, national and local community levels, not only with respect to addressing the vulnerabilities of women and girls posed by disasters but also their essential roles in disaster risk preparedness and response to reduce those vulnerabilities and build community resilience. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. IPCC (2007) Fourth Assessment Report. Working Group II. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability,* cited in CBM brief on Disability, sustainable development and climate change, 2012, cited in CBM brief on Disability, sustainable development and climate change, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. World Bank, Women with Disability, http://bit.ly/ybPKNk [↑](#footnote-ref-3)