INCLUDE US IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES!

OUR LESSONS:

AN APPROACH TO DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION – BASED ON CONSULTATIONS WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONS.

cbm inclusion advisory group

An initiative of CBM Global Disability Inclusion

International Disability Alliance

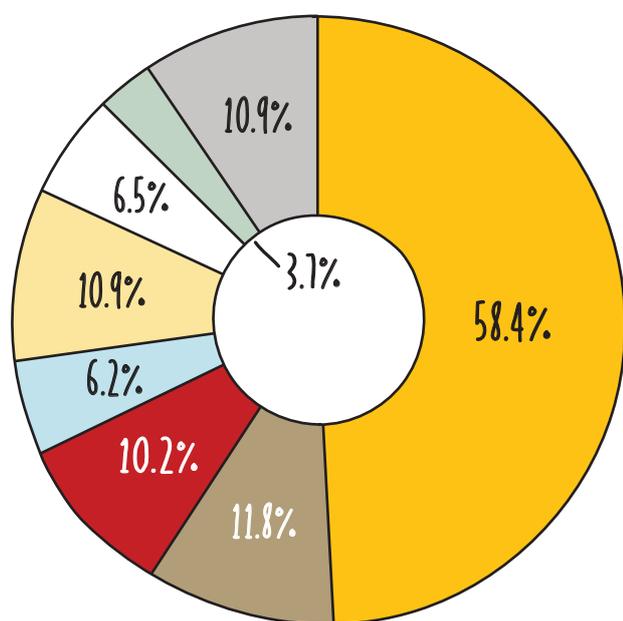Pacific Disability Forum

Funded by: Australian Aid

People with disabilities are systematically excluded from disaster preparedness activities which places them at greater risk.

The Asia-Pacific region has the highest rate of natural hazard events in the world. Within this region **one in six** people have a disability.

506 people from across Asia and the Pacific completed an online survey to share their experiences of disability and disasters. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were then held (virtually in the South and East Asia regions and face to face in five Pacific Islands Countries).

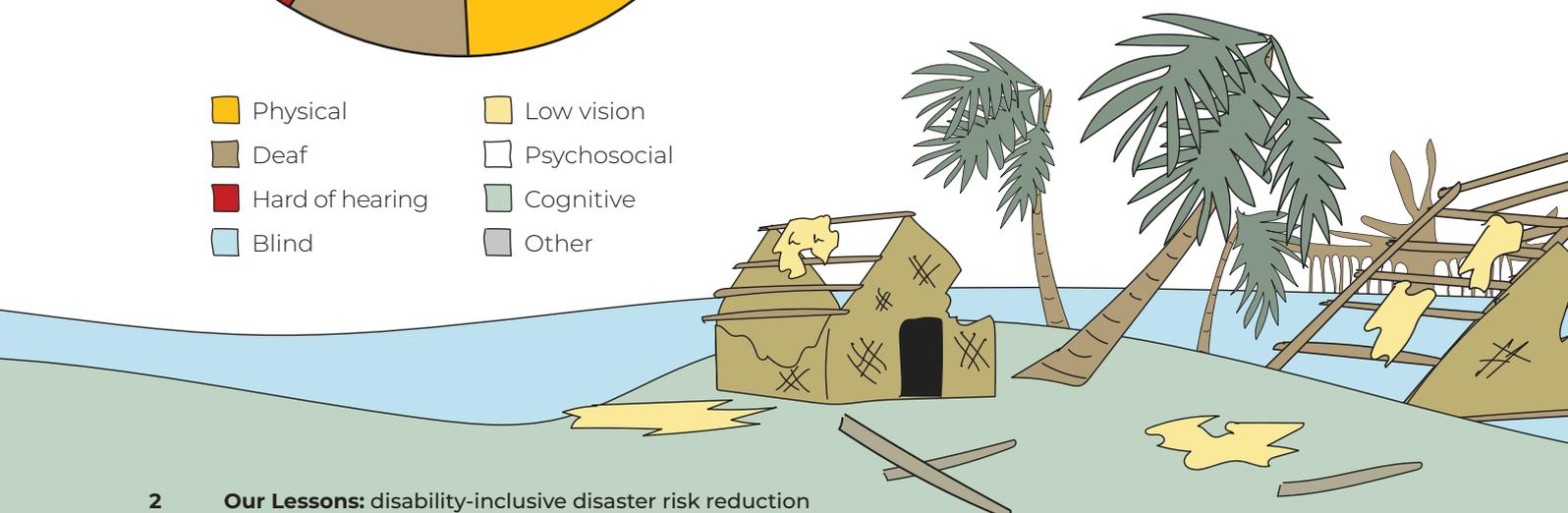## TOTAL RESPONDENTS WITH A DISABILITY, BY TYPE:

Physical — 58.4%
Deaf — 11.8%
Hard of hearing — 10.2%
Blind — 6.2%
Low vision — 10.9%
Psychosocial — 6.5%
Cognitive — 3.1%
Other — 10.9%

Legend:
- Physical
- Deaf
- Hard of hearing
- Blind
- Low vision
- Psychosocial
- Cognitive
- Other

94.2% of respondents had personally experienced a disaster in the previous three years.

In addition to the global COVID-19 pandemic the most common disasters people reported experiencing were:

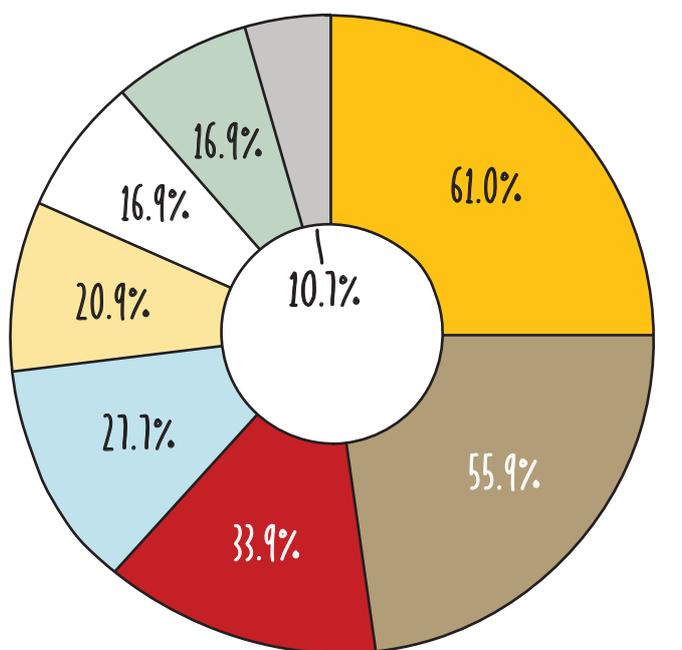| Disaster	Percentage
Floods	37.8%
Earthquakes	35.4%
Air pollution	32.9%
Extreme heat/heatwaves	29.8%
Tropical cyclones/typhoons	28.6%
Droughts	14.5%
Extreme cold	9.8%
Insect infestations	9.2%
Conflicts	8.9%
Volcanic eruptions	7.1%

96.3% of respondents believed themselves to be at risk of future disasters.

During disaster response, people with disabilities are inadvertently excluded, despite their desire to participate.

Less than half of all survey respondents (41.2%) had participated in DRR activities. 65.5% of people with disabilities reported that a lack of accessibility prevented them from being included in DRR activities.

REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION OR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES:

61.0%

55.9%

33.9%

21.7%

20.9%

16.9%

16.9%

10.1%

- I wasn't invited to participate
- Lack of access to information
- Lack of communication support
- Lack of physical accessibility
- No reasonable accommodation/ adjustments provided
- No accessible transportation available
- Don't know
- Cost of participating too high

"Due to stigmatisation, people with disabilities were already label[led] as useless and worthless human being[s who] cannot contribute any valuable assets to the community. Therefore, people with disabilities were not invited or considered to be heard."

Participant from Tonga focus group

"Lack of accessible transportation, lack of awareness of laws/rules/ guidelines related to persons with disabilities among the public authorities resulting in lack of implementation of those laws, policies etc. This makes it difficult for persons with disabilities to access any facility."

Participant from India focus group

"[Our members], women with disabilities, identified that early warning systems were very limited and most women with disabilities did not receive any warnings from local authorities. The most common source of early warnings was via social networks. Those who lived on the edge of the village and largely stayed at home due to their impairment were the least likely to receive early warning information. Furthermore, in some cases family members withheld information from women with disabilities because they were concerned it would be stressful and upset them."

Cambodian Organisation of Disabled Persons (OPD)

Despite people with disabilities being more likely to **have taken action** to prepare for disasters than people without disabilities, they were more likely to be **excluded** from participation in community DRR activities.

Social isolation is a key contributor to the loss of life of people with disabilities during disasters. The consultation found that some groups, such as people with sensory impairments, are more vulnerable to social isolation.

People with disabilities tend to rely on their social connections to get their information, rather than the standard channels of information such as radio or social media which may not be accessible.
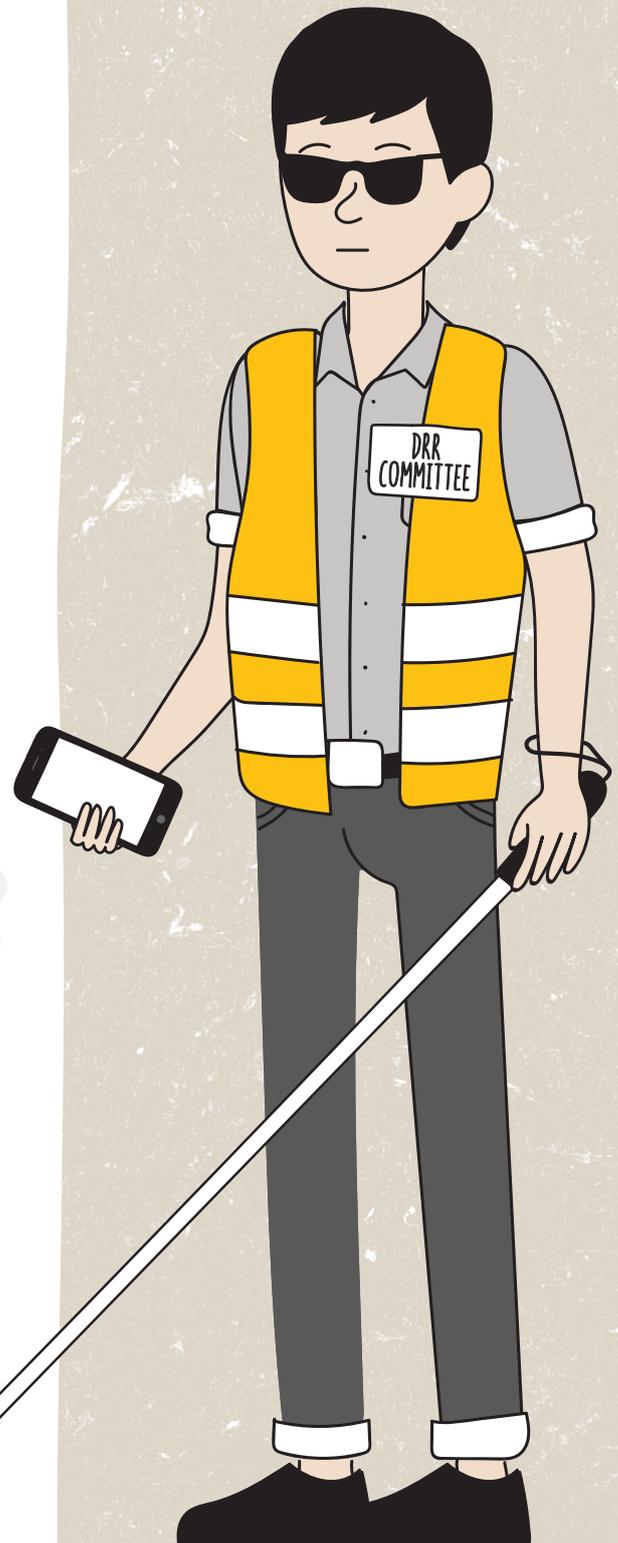
More than 80% of respondents indicated they would have difficulty evacuating to a safer location in the event of an emergency.

"We can be affected by lack of communication with deaf people, without our interpreter we don't know anything about disaster …. we need people to understand our language as sign language, so that information could easily [be] understood by deaf people about Disaster or Warning about Disaster."

– Participant from Kiribati focus group

"[during] Cyclone Thomas, [name withheld] – wheelchair user was isolated in the farm when [the] warning came. He decided to stay back – as a result he passed away."

– Participant from Fiji focus group

What is needed

People with disabilities were asked what needs to be done for them to be safer in disasters. They said:

1 Accessible early warning messages

2 Inviting people with disabilities to participate in meetings about disaster preparedness

3 Making evacuation centres fully accessible (including transport)

4 Allocating budget for accessibility and reasonable accommodation (RA) in DRR activities

Recommendations made by people with disabilities on making COVID-19 responses more inclusive and accessible:

– make sure people can still access support for independent living
– make information accessible
– consult with people with disabilities when developing responses.

> "We must be included in all discussion/planning. As we are people with disabilities, we can contribute and they should understand what our needs are."
>
> **– Participant from Kiribati focus group**

> "We want to see many people with disabilities coming forward and treated as experts, treated as contributors, and we can work as a vital part of the disaster management and climate change also."
>
> **– Key Informant from Bangladesh**

> "Making sure it's in policy. Not reacting to something but making sure it's considered in advance at federal and local levels."
>
> **– Participant from Guam focus group**

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