

International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2013

Breaking Barriers and Opening Doors - Making Humanitarian Action Inclusive

CBM calls on world leaders and UN agencies to **include persons with disabilities in global disaster preparedness and humanitarian action**, in particular, to **include persons with disabilities in the emergency response and reconstruction** in the Philippines.

Persons with disabilities are often the first to be left behind when disaster strikes, such as in the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami in which the mortality rate among persons with disabilities was twice that of the rest of the population¹. The vulnerability of persons with disabilities due to the impact of disasters was reconfirmed in CBM's first evaluation mission in the Philippines. Services for persons with disabilities were damaged and their families had lost their homes and were in immediate need of food and survival supplies. The President of the Federation of Persons with Disabilities in Estancia, Paney Island, Philippines, Santy Villanueva said **"When the typhoon hit my community, we lost our house, all our clothes, everything we own is damaged, destroyed or missing. Now I meet people with disabilities in many communities and share our experiences. We know how it should be rebuilt to have a better and a safer life within the community."**

Today CBM would also like to emphasize the role of persons with disabilities themselves, individually and/or as part of their organisations. During our emergency response to Typhoon Haiyan, persons with disabilities were instrumental in early relief efforts to support their communities through our partners, the local organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) calls for the protection of persons with disabilities in situations of emergency and risk and also calls on all International Cooperation to be accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

CBM's Director for Emergency Response, Valérie Scherrer, emphasises that **"the inclusion of all community members in disaster preparedness is central to ensuring that communities can deal with crisis and emergencies.** CBM's experience in humanitarian response, including large-scale disasters like the typhoon in the Philippines or the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, is that persons with disabilities themselves and their representative organisations are key partners in preparedness, relief, and reconstruction. They know where persons

with disabilities are located and can most easily find out their immediate needs. Given adequate resources and support, persons with disabilities can also advise on the best way to rebuild inclusive public services, infrastructure, and housing. 'Breaking Barriers and Opening Doors' should be part of preparation for disaster, so it will be part of the humanitarian response and recovery, towards and inclusive society for all."

Contact

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ⁱ UN. (2013). Panel Discussion on Disaster resilience and disability: ensuring equality and inclusion. United Nations Headquarters on October 10, 2013