

## A Study of Inclusive Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Programming

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### ABSTRACT

*This study weaves together social vulnerability and intersectionality, from the lenses of a human-rights and care-justice approach, as faced by persons with disabilities in disaster programming. With an aim to understand why inclusivity in the field of disaster studies is integral for improved disaster risk reduction mechanisms. This paper stresses on the use of participatory methodological instruments. It builds on lived experiences of disabled community in the face of floods, while exploring the barriers that cause hindrance in affective preparedness and risk mitigation strategies for the flood hit population of Pakistan. It compares on going practices with international standards and obligations. This research aims to add to the disability literature in the context of Pakistan and highlight the lapse in local governmental practices that causes delayed response, resulting in greater disaster damage, and enhanced vulnerability for persons with disabilities.*

**Keywords:** Participation; Inclusivity; Disability; Local Governance; Disaster Risk Reduction.

### INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan is one of the topmost vulnerable countries to disasters, especial those exacerbated by climate change. The increased frequency of disasters accompanied by anthropogenic activities that cause increased exposure to hazard, there is a necessity to deeply study and act in the field of disaster management specially in the context of the population with disabilities. Pakistan achieved independence in 1947 and it was not until 1981 that the first Ordinance regarding recognition of persons with disabilities surfaced up, and since then several documents are drafted, albeit to little avail. There has been ongoing debate on the prevalence rate of disabilities in Pakistan with 6.4% to 2.38% to a shocking 0.28%, emerging as the top contenders. When debate revolves around 'how many?', you do not expect much corrective actionable policies. This research focuses on the physically impaired persons with its essence in participatory methodological tools of inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) governance. Following the 'Build Back Better' initiative, the ideal aim should be to 'to increase the resilience of communities through integrating DRR measures into

restoration of infrastructure, societal systems, revitalization of economies and environment’ (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015). Disaster is a ‘serious disruption to the functioning of a community that exceeds its capacity to cope using its own resources. It can be caused by natural, man-made and technological hazards etc. (International Foundation of the Red Cross, 2022). Exclusion adds to vulnerability, which comes in several layers. Disability and care have a deeply entrenched relationship. In Pakistan decentralized, local governance is responsible to cater to the needs of groups affected by disasters. Social policies remain mainly reactive and ad hoc, which restricts preemptive change.

This research uses data collected from the flood effected population of Islamabad in August 2023. The findings presented link paradigms of vulnerability to explaining the overlap of disability and disaster results in lack of agency. Therefore falling short of guaranteeing fundamental human-rights.

This research focuses on DRR stakeholders and their role in disaster programming. With inclusivity and participation being the key themes this research sheds light on the kind of support environment that exists for people with unique needs. Resilience relates to ecosystem and to engineering (Villanueva, 2010), both need to be controlled as a lapse in either results in increased exposure to vulnerability. An observable gap in policy and practice exists in Pakistan that needs awareness, sensitivity, and bridging. To initiate this conversation, the research questions revolve around assessing barriers for integration of persons with disabilities in disaster programming, through lived experiences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The concept of ‘disability’ has been largely absent from the mandates of the State actors of Pakistan. With the latest report on Global survey on persons with disabilities and disasters the assumed prevalence of disability at any time in a given percentage of population is 16% (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2023).

The paper focuses on local governance failure when it comes to integrating persons with disabilities into disaster programming. According to the 2023 survey by Sendai Framework it was found that an alarming 86% of respondents had reported to have absolutely no contribution in a participatory DRR process (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2023). This shows the global state on the progress that is being made to integrate persons with special needs in something that is a basic human right under the ratification of the CRPD guidelines.

Pakistan uses the definition of disability stated in the CRPD guidelines which is a person having a ‘long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which when interacting with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’ (CRPD, 2006). Floods are the most spatially and economically devastating disasters. Given climate change and anthropological developments, frequency of disasters will only increase (Havstrup and Pauw, 2023). In Pakistan, floods are a recurrent event resulting in loss of life, livelihood, and property. Above 160% of average rainfall was experienced in Pakistan in 2023. Areas that had not yet recovered from the devastating flash flooding hardly a year ago faced the ordeal. (International Rescue Committee, 2023).

Pakistan is in dire need of implementing a flood resilience strategy. There is a need for DRR stakeholders to consider the targeted needs of effective policies. Only the involvement of higher authorities and government bodies can truly make an impact on the effected community (Tuhkanen, 2023). “Normalized exclusionary” (Calgaro et al., 2020) practices are not something exclusive to Pakistan, they are reflected at the state levels across many countries (King et al., 2019) (Lukasiewicz, 2020). The absence of adequate data is a key factor that hinders the recognition of the problem. The gap in information about location and

prevalence of disability essentially leads to inequitable resource management and the inclusion in DRR design and policy making. (Handicap International, 2014) (Calgaro et al., 2020) (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, 2018).

The four pillars of inclusive DRR are “*Accessibility, Participation, Non-discrimination, and Collaboration*”. The necessity to provide comprehensive information in accessible formats, building capacity and allowing collaborative practices can yield a substantially effective stream of actions to reduce risks. Current DRR practices continually support the already privileged creating a bias in hazard exposure (Calgaro et al., 2020).

This study be using experience and observations from fieldwork of urban Islamabad ‘*kaachi bastis*’ (urban slum) and will look at rights-based approach. This approach entails having access to resources and ability to utilize them effectively, to prevent and mitigate the effects impending disaster. (Browne and Millar, 2016). For an effective Disability inclusive DRR (DiDRR) in place there are five crucial areas that need to be tackled, it is *policy, disaster knowledge, emergency response plans, early warning systems and resource mobilization* (Winarno et al., 2021). The Sendai framework urges for a more human centred approach to counter disaster generated vulnerabilities, involving various stakeholders, and making the entire process more bottom-up as opposed to top-down. (Lee and Chen, 2019)

This paper sheds light on Pakistan's governance and its failure to comply with CRPD guidelines. The research endeavors to address the gaps/barriers that hinder inclusivity and stresses on the involved of the effected in disaster programming. This paper can serve its basis to identify the barriers when it comes to inclusivity in disaster programming within the operational context of Pakistan and comparing with global practices to help devise effective policies.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions are stated below and were a basis for the questionnaires designed for the fieldwork in Islamabad, Pakistan. The questions were drawn up by taking inspiration from an extensive overview of literature.

1. How can Persons with Disabilities be better involved in disaster programming?
2. What greater inclusive practices are important?
3. What factors act as barriers to inclusivity and participation?

In a detailed systematic literature review that analysed the frequency of usage of CRPD in literature and with reference to what themes from year 2008 up to January 2022 (Gómez et al., 2020). It was found that most studies were done in Australia, United States, and Spain. There was an evident gap in the use of qualitative research techniques to probe deeper into the process of the lived experiences and implementation regarding CRPD guidelines. The use of “participatory techniques” (Gómez et al., 2020) by means of focus groups and interviews, being the most highlighted research methodologies, substantiate my choice of methodology which fit in line with acclaim publications. The paper also reflects on the fact that none of 65 publications about Article 11 which talks about involvement, protection, and safety of disabled individuals in face of a disaster (Gómez et al., 2020). This was a point of concern as it meant that this is a sector severely under-researched and thus has many practical implications. Emphasis on social wellbeing comes with the attitudinal shift required to break down the walls when it comes to different operational environments,

especially in situations of humanitarian emergencies, as the Sendai framework puts it as an ‘indispensable’ act (United Nation Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

A strong pivot towards the social model of disability and as Islam (2015) frames it to be a “political, rather than an academic approach”, disability literature is supported and enriched by these obligations for a shift towards a more equitable decision-making and policy layouts.

### **Disaster Programming**

Disaster programming can occur in distinct phases which may not necessarily be linear or cyclical, but tend to overlap (Brockie and Miller, 2017). Training, awareness, and early warning systems are all part of ‘Preparation’ phase. Building codes, physical and financial infrastructure etc. all fall under this category. Availability of relevant information is key to “understand and evaluate their risk levels and effectively prepare for hazards” (Calgaro et al., 2020) and are crucial to pave a smooth transition into the following phase which is of ‘Response’. Practical action upon detection of disasters and recusing as much life and property is priority. The final phase is of ‘Recovery’, which is to return to business as usual.

This research comments on the applicability of this disaster management cycle. The findings and another study done in KPK, Pakistan confirms the absence of warnings before a flood (Qasim et al., 2016) thus reflecting a clear absence of early warning systems.

### **Pakistan and Floods**

Pakistan ranks 8th on the index of most vulnerable countries to drastic climatic events (United Nations Development Program, 2020). An intricate play of geographics, climate and anthropogenic variables weave together to result in a repeated devastating occurrence that keeps picking intensity. Monsoon season coupled with climate change induced alterations have intensified the rainfall pattern across the country. Pakistan's topography originating from the mountains in the North to expansive plains as we go South-ward and the sprawling Indus River basin throughout, amplifies the risk of flash-flooding (Rana et al., 2021). Adjacently, with rapid land-degradation, deforestation, inadequate infrastructure and unaccounted for urbanization and sprawl, the absorptive capacity of the terrain has fallen.

Policy is often hampered by lack of resources and timely response mechanisms, leaving one-third of the country under water and millions displaced (Havstrup and Pauw, 2023). Pakistan's national water management system needs to address several fundamental problems. The issue of land use, and ‘illegal and haphazard settlements’ (Rana et al., 2021) within urban areas are another significant cause of floodings. Local governments enforcement of planned settlements is largely absent. Capacity building initiatives on an institutional level along with a total revamp of the economy and its instruments could contribute to bettering the ongoing systems (Khan and Loureiro, 2022).

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) operates on the Nation Disaster Risk Reduction Policy which states that risk knowledge is ‘low’ in Pakistan and therefore there is inadequate analysis of vulnerabilities (National Disaster Management Authority, 2013). The third shift of government within the span of fourteen months reflects the political scenario of the country which paints a tragic picture of flood governance. The National Policy classifies vulnerability based on social/organizational vulnerability, economic vulnerability, and physical or environmental vulnerability. The policy does not mention anything resonate with directed action towards persons with special needs (National Disaster Management Authority, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Disasters tend to trigger “procedural and distributive inequalities and injustices that influence every aspect of daily life” (Calgaro et al., 2020). A rights-based approach comes with components of social inclusion, recognition, agency, voice, capabilities, equality, and self-realization. These also are cognizant with the seven pillars of DiDRR as elaborated by Calgaro (Calgaro et al., 2020). Human Rights are an imperative underlying theme of the CRPD, as they are “fundamentally inherent to a person” (Degener, 2017). The Social model of disability laid the foundation stone for the recognition and necessity for anti-discrimination practices embedded in civil rights. The CRPD is an example of “indivisibility and interdependence” (Degener, 2017) between civil, social, cultural, economic, and political rights.

Focusing on the inherent dignity of a human being as suggested by the Sendai framework, and it is deeply ingrained in the societal infrastructure whether they are enabling or disabling when it comes to employing resources to construct a more equal opportunity and participatory mechanism for inclusive DRR practices. Communities often lack knowledge on how to mobilize resources even if they have limited access. It takes knowledge to “take advantage” (Winarno et al., 2021, p.7).

After having established the premise of overall world view the study will approach this topic through concepts that exacerbate elements of the approach and through fieldwork.

Care is an instrument that permits a person with disability to retain their personal dignity while having the freedom to practice autonomy. ‘Society rarely considers the transformative value of good care, the efforts made by dependency workers for their charge, the means and societal attitude that is necessary for dependent relationships to be successful, and dependency workers are frequently underappreciated and underpaid’ (Gibson, 2021). A ‘care-lens’ goes beyond service provision and is something that needs to be embedded in the design and implementation of policies to alleviate vulnerabilities (Esquivel, 2017) (United Nations Office for DRR, 2015).

The disabled are rendered as passive and powerless groups who require intervention and expertise from outside their ‘kind.’ Fraser puts forth a concept of ‘participatory parity’ which demands each participant’s voice holds equal value and puts it beautifully as ‘recognition is a remedy for social injustice, not the satisfaction of a generic human need’ (Fraser, 2001). In political representation a power differential is reflected in decision-making practices. This does not only concern the distribution of resources, but a lack of disability inclusive legislation.

Care stems from acknowledging that there are unique needs and vulnerabilities. Inclusivity and participation enable the identification and understanding of these specific requirements. Lack of collaborative exercises that make for inclusive and participatory disaster programming in all its phases often leads to incomplete data. In the earlier phases of disaster management - disaster preparedness, involving persons with disabilities to design emergency plans and procedures can yield manifold mitigation of risks. Assessment of available assistive devices and technologies, marking nearest shelters and knowing the kind of transportation facilities required are just some examples that contribute to evacuation plans. Design of alert systems and other methods of communication can take many shapes, audio, visual, braille etc. The importance of catering to these diverse needs is elaborated extensively in literature (Aslam and Rana, 2022) (Barker et al., 2022) (Thomalla et al., 2018).



## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology is a three-part experience to analyze different perspectives from the key players in the DRR process. Academia, local government authorities and persons with disabilities who had lived experiences through a disaster were my identified key players in the arena. With an action- oriented research lens and qualitative research methods encapsulate the everyday lived experiences of human beings. Giving participants freedom to express their feelings, perceptions and narratives was a way of empowering people with disabilities only subtly navigating the flow of conversation to stay within the bounds of my topic.

The flow of the fieldwork was such that a desk review was conducted to make an inductive thematic analysis, followed by four focus group discussions. All interviews were conducted at the convenience of interviewees from July-August 2023. Propagating the Global Prioritization Practice implies the right to fully participate in development and have a voice. The three-part methodology with reflections on positionality and limitations are as under.

In the context of Pakistan there is large vacuum when it comes to inclusive DRR activities. A denial to integrate into the community and non-participation in public life are manifestations of social exclusion and denial of social bases of self-respect (Islam, 2015). Early warning systems are still taken as a suggestive instrument to prevent disaster destruction and inclusion of marginalized groups in the process does not even make it to the priority list.

It is important to explore further the aspect of power and agency dynamics that persist between someone in a position of authority and someone who is a recipient of aid. A combined effort between government and non-government actors at working together with people with disabilities using participation as an instrument can help uplift the status of the marginalized section of society (Villeneuve, 2021).

Interviewees are the most widely accepted medium to obtain a lot of information within a limited period. Each interview lasted no more than 60 minutes and were conducted one- on-one in the office spaces of the relevant personnel. The style of the interviews was semi- structured and because the process was ongoing with focus groups, the study adapted certain questions and the wordings to obtain more information regarding the matter. A free-flowing conversation allowed steering the discussion in the desired direction. However, uneasiness and aversion to questions backs a culture that is not supportive of younger people to counter their elders point of views. Interviewees were government employees of considerable age, and I could feel that they wanted me to take whatever they say as a final word.

The choice of interviewees was focused on local government office holders. In August 2023, due to a shift of power to the interim government in Pakistan it became a challenge for the office holders to agree to converse. The ones that did manage to respond were all courtesy of Pattan Development Organization and its contacts. The study lists people who would cover different phases and positions in a disaster management cycle to gain a more holistic vantage point, and interview about six as the others were not willing to comment.

The mix represents a spectrum of officials that are involved in different stages of disaster programming, from immediate relief providers to policy makers. The intention was to gain greater understanding of structural and institutional instruments and attitudes that contribute to local and national DRR.

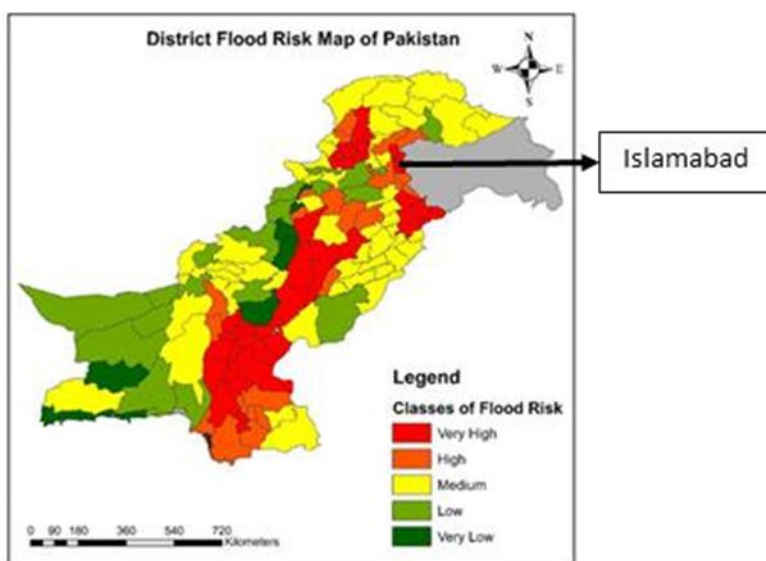
**Table 1: A list of my interviewees and their involvement in phases of DRM.**

Name	Department	Involvement Stage of DRM
Ahmed Kamal	Federal Flood Commission	All phases
Anonymous	Rescue 1122 Services	Preparedness, Response
Rabia Ghani	Pattan Development Organization	Mitigation
Abia Akmal	STEP Organization	Mitigation, Preparedness
Anonymous	NDMA	All phases
Imrana Komal	Disabled Disaster Journalist	Mitigation

*(Anonymous indicates that respondent did not want their name shared)*

By understanding their perception of the concepts, they gave a clear insight into whether such things are a priority for them, or at the very least being worked on. Connecting stakeholders, developing understanding, and defining responsibility (Villeneuve, 2021). Any recommendations or improvements suggested by people holding an office seemed like the logical ending to each interview.

As seen in the map below the city lies in the ‘very-high’ risk area of flood risks. Having a hilly topography is an indicator that water gushes down at every opportunity it gets, sparing nothing that comes in its way (Quaill et al., 2019).



**Map1: Islamabad position on Pakistan’s Map (Rana et al., 2021)**

### **Focus Group Discussions**

The choice of conducting focus group discussions facilitated insight into perspectives and experiences. It allowed for a ‘process of discussion, information gathering, conflict, and eventual decision making...by the group (s) directly affected by an activity’ (Aslam and Rana, 2022). The participants had a range of motor, sensory, and visual impairments. Participatory research practices enable persons with disabilities to pursue

such values in a social setting. By means of interpersonal interactions, participants can deliberate and determine imperative characteristics given a situation. (Sherlaw and Hudebine, 2015) (King et al., 2019)

Pattan Development Organization (Pakistan) and Butterfly Works (Netherlands) assisted with designing the questionnaire and activities for the focus groups. Both organizations are experts in participatory methodologies, where Butterfly Works gave me a lot of insight on the coordination and practicalities of various participatory tools, Pattan helped me ground them in a Pakistani cultural context. The research took inspiration from literature on Care ethics, which tells us that true transformative potential of participatory research is dependent on the relationship between researchers and participants.

Storytelling is a strong tool that allows lived experiences to express themselves in the most natural way, it paves way to support agency and ‘solidify self-deterministic activity in the face of structural barriers’ (Tuhkanen, 2023, p.13). As the Sendai Frameworks Priority number 1 states ‘Understanding disaster risk’ (United Nation Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015), I deemed fit to hear stories from different vantage points. It brought forth various dimensions of the encounter with a flash flood a week prior to my meetings. The memory and agony were very fresh in the minds of my participants.

The questions in conversation also touched on the efforts of relief service providers. Asking about what the future looks like to them and what they expect and anticipate. The questionnaires are attached in the Annex, but it is to be noted that the conversations were not strictly limited to them and rather were very fluid where several unplanned prompts came up during the time.

Being aware of the gap in knowledge base and inadequate work being done on inclusive practices served as motivation to develop the sensitivity and skill required to navigate the environment in a careful manner. Conducting practical fieldwork when working with persons with disabilities necessitates a heightened awareness of the potential power differentials that could arise. Using technology to connect would have added a layer of seclusion and disparity. Physical presence allowed me to operate in communities myself, which allowed me to discover the nuances in intangible things such as culture and linguistics.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

‘Lawaris’ is the word used in Urdu to describe someone who has no next-of-kin or social circle to take care of him and indicates that his/her names die with them. The word was casually being used to reinforce the idea that society fits disabled people in. Morris (2009) talks about this matter in great depth and puts into perspective how the mere recognition as full human beings is a significant barrier to be overcome to realize that a person requires more than treatment care and basic services, and that their value addition to the society can still be comparable to that of a “normally” abled person (Begon, 2020).

On a more meso-level the social attitude was a very refreshing take and in contrast with a lot of literature (Brockie and Miller, 2017). Participants used words like ‘bhai’, ‘behan’ and ‘bachay’ to describe how their communities treated them. The words translate to ‘brothers’, ‘sisters’ and ‘children’, which reflected on the care they would receive from their neighbours and society when a disaster would strike. While relief camps and support centers were positioned far from inhabited areas an aspect that took a physical toll on the disabled to reach them.

The most celebrated theme to emerge from focus group discussions was the importance and dependence on community members. They would often be the first responders to people with disabilities. Disaster preparedness is also viewed as resilience building at a community level; it depends on stakeholder engagement and involving local leadership to share decision-making with authorities to promote civic



engagement. This is where the concept of social capital comes in which builds on participation and thus leading to inclusion. Reduced social stigma against people in need of dependency generates an 'increase (in) the level of understanding and compassion, resulting in a more inclusive environment' (Gibson, 2021). Literature also suggests that strong community efforts have often been the backbone and are the 'best partners' (Paswan, 2015). The applicable concept here is that of localization, which means the pre-existing knowledge-established best practices and practical skills are utilized to deliver the best possible response.

The common theme of objectification kept arising and a great number of my participants could relate to it. Mehwish (pseudo name) quotes 'They pick me up like an old vase and put me in the corner for safe keeping'. Governance actions are short term. What they do to make things better is most times tokenistic, at best. This is why inclusivity is rather integral in DRR as without it we are potentially losing essential human resources. Although local authorities are in the best position to identify vulnerable communities, such agencies are commonly underfunded, understaffed, and hence unmotivated. State agencies, on the other hand have better resources but lack the systems and knowledge base to allocate them (Deen, 2015).

The interview with the Commissioner concluded that inclusivity efforts were weak and not an immediate priority. There is a gap in access to advanced technology, and a disconnect with other organizations working with and for people with disabilities. This leads to inefficiency, duplication of efforts, and unaccountability of funds. Such reasons have led to decades of inadequate flood and water management. During interviews with local government officers 7 pillars of DiDRR (Calgaro et al., 2020) were touched upon and every interviewee had a rather confused response, which was not something that had been anticipated. Another interviewee dismissed probing about the applicability of DiDRR by implying that some concepts sound better in books and papers, and in reality.

STEP worked for disability-inclusive policy advocacy for over three decades. Speaking to their representative was a very fresh experience as she could resonate with what this research probed into. But she agreed that the ignorance at bureaucratic and local governance levels for social inclusivity is largely prevalent.

A disaster Journalist (Komi- pseudo name) narrated an incident for me that reflects the lack in training of response providers. She said herself is a person who requires support to walk, once when she was covering Pakistan's historically devastating floods in 2010, she accidentally caught her leg between fallen tree branches. She reported that the rescue team was in the area and when they came, they started rigorously pulling her prosthetic leg. Upon explaining how to handle the situation, the mocking attitude of the rescue team left her in complete horror. One can only expect that low-quality training may even be the cause of medical damage. Linking back to humanitarian responses following a utilitarian principle, the neglect of disability sensitive response training is proof.

Method of Communication for persons with disabilities vary from those accessible to the public. Giving off a warning in a newspaper does not reach its intended audience, a fact that the federal flood commissioner acknowledged.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The overarching theme of my research is done under a rights-based lens, which goes beyond basic access to human rights and works towards ensuring that person with disabilities get their rightful opportunities. Disability heightens the risks that come with disaster because often society is structured in a way to systematically exclude persons with disabilities from upward social mobility. Factors such as

stigmatization, lower employment rates, vulnerable housing conditions persist in the lives of persons with disabilities (Stough and Kang, 2015).

*Vulnerability* comes in many shapes and forms, and interacting with them poses a substantially distinct set of challenges as part of the experience. The UN defines vulnerability as the “the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards” (United Nations Office for DRR, 2015)

Vulnerability expands beyond being financial and seeps into more physical environments. Sen (2009) came through with his infamous ‘Capability Approach’ and labeled the toolkit required to realize political and social and revolve around different conceptual and normative rationales. Lack of infrastructure, exclusive educational policies, and overall stigmatization by treating persons with disabilities as objects that need caring and not as subjects that can contribute to richer polices are examples of conversion factors.

*Micro-Level Vulnerabilities* are experienced by disabled persons in disaster situations in a more intimate capacity as they are connected to individual characteristics and immediate surroundings. Physical disabilities, sensory impairments, and cognitive limitations tend to constrain mobility and self-preservation activities during emergencies. This also entails dependency on a third party to aid the process, which also increases susceptibility to harm.

*Meso-Level Vulnerabilities* of local contexts, including built environment, social support systems, and local disaster preparedness are factors that determine effective DRR. Transport, communication systems, shelters, accessible infrastructure, and public facilities all fall under this banner. Absence of a reliable care-giver, and a communal lack of inclusive support render disabled people to feel isolated and destitute.

*Macro-Level Vulnerabilities*, the broader systemic and policy factors that permeate disaster management policy frameworks, or lack thereof, and commitment to international standards are the pivotal elements that can reinforce or mitigate vulnerability. Adhering to the principles of inclusivity and participation outlined in international best practices is necessary for resource allocation, budgeting, inclusivity of emergency management (Bankoff et al., 2004). Economic disparities are an additional macro-level element crucial to recognize as it is a key determinant of the conversion factors Sen (2009) speaks about when translating best policy into practice (Adams et al., 2019).

*Disaster Risk Driver* is not customary practice for persons with disabilities especially to enjoy professions that are economically beneficial (Aslam and Rana, 2022). There is also a phenomenon known as the ‘earning handicap’ that was posed by Sen (2009) which brings into focus the constraints on employment and lower compensation that persons with disabilities receive.

*Intersectionality* between different structural issues and the vulnerabilities determines the impact of a disaster a community would encounter (King et al., 2019). Disaster can only occur when society and hazard overlap in space and time (De Angeli et al., 2022). Intersectionality compounds vulnerabilities.

## CONCLUSION

Disability rights are mostly talked about from the angel of education and employment but most of the work I came across sounded prescriptive. This study explored how disaster is not the same for everyone, experiences matter in shaping future policies and the absence and inadequacy of DRR was a pandoras box.

Work being done in the relevant field in more rapidly developing parts of the world was an inspiration to strive for a more inclusive DRR system. This research brings forth an issue that is not given enough priority. Institutional ignorance run deep into the veins of Pakistan's local governance systems. Persons with disabilities are de-prioritized in agendas for change, and the common notion of prejudice against their abilities persists.

Embedded in the theories of social justice lies the right for persons with disabilities to have complete autonomy and say in how a policy is drafted and implemented. The 'Build Back Better' agenda strives to put disaster governance onto priority lists of local governments. Operating in this highly globalized world, there exist several examples and guidelines of best practices that can inspire one to realize the potential of social capital that lies within the community. 'Nothing about us, without us' is the perfect agenda setter to initiate the workings of a more just system.

There is a need to talk about it as care policies are highly politicized. It stems from the inequality of resource distribution to priority in matters of emergency and finally the effort invested in capacity building. Services, time, and money are all key components to uplift the status of a marginalized group. Lack of data, information, and awareness around the struggles of a particular community. Disaster Justice is imperative to mitigate the threats to life and livelihood by collective ownership and collaborative practices.

Building on previous work we came across barriers that cause structural marginalization.. Lack of data and awareness of institutions will not mirror the dire need. By acknowledging the overlap of identities with vulnerabilities, the relevant political, social, and economic resources need to be redirected in order to build resilience capacity. Creating spaces to voice opinions and concerns is the first step to empowering persons with disabilities. Local governments and organizations need to engage at grassroot level.

Focus on infrastructural vulnerability and social vulnerability needs to go hand in hand, and there is a necessity to eradicate both through active engagement of local governments and policy makers. The system of Community Based Disaster Management is loosely practiced, however, scaling it up to make it more standardized and replicable would yield swift and guaranteed benefits. Collective agencies enable social dynamics to work in favour of all.

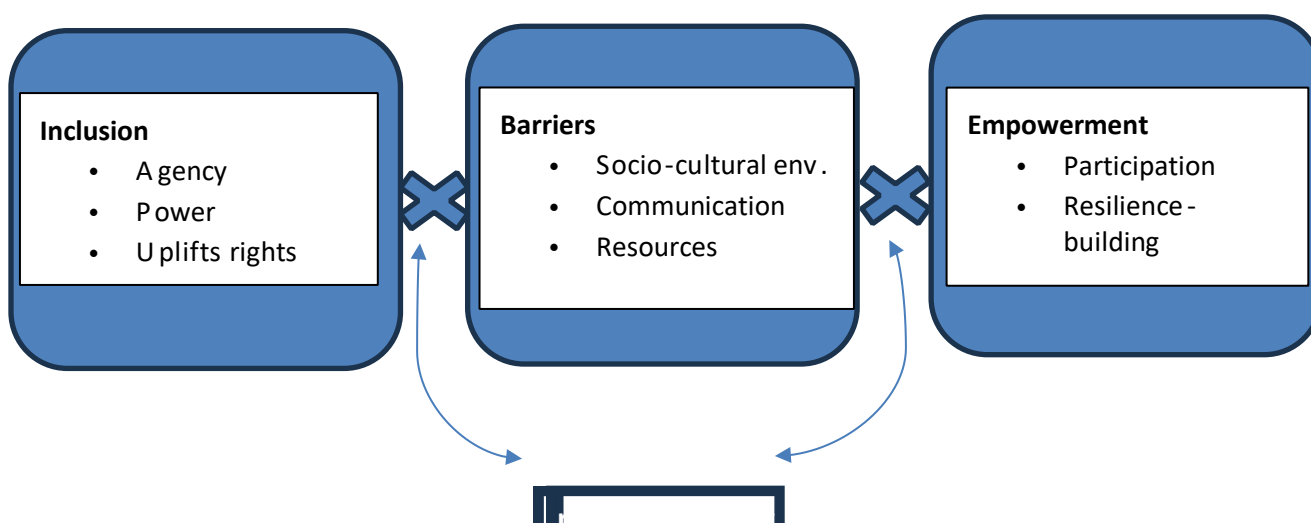


Fig 2: Authors own reflection, 2023.

## **REFLECTIONS**

There is a large scope in Pakistan to not only work in such matters but also replicate best practices done internationally in the field of disaster and disability. Literature lays out adequate resources to learn more and anticipate potential mishaps in the journey. Traditional power structures and hierarchical bureaucrats are resistant to adaptation of mitigation strategies and fail to realise that it all comes with a much greater cost, that if expended in the first place for improved risk deduction practices.

The occurrences of disasters will only continue to pick pace and expose people to intensified vulnerabilities. A lack of willingness at the end of local government level in a capital like Islamabad only forces me to think of the scenario in smaller cities around Pakistan.

### **Appendix 1: Questionnaire for Interviewees**

1. From perspective of your organization how would you define inclusivity and participation?
2. In DRR what are your mitigation strategies? Examples or framework.
3. In my desk research, Pakistan early warning system is ineffective, how do you anticipate it to be in the future? Overall involvement in DRR. (Includes all)
4. Can you describe your current practices/policies to ensure the inclusion of PWD's?
5. What challenges have you had to encounter or what gap at policy level (governance level) do you notice is when it comes to effective DRR and disabled persons?
6. Are there any partnerships or collaborations with disability focused organizations to enhance the involvement of PWDS?
7. What do you think is importance of inclusivity, how to avoid/ tackle duplication of efforts?
8. Have there been exclusive efforts to follow the UN CRPD guidelines in accordance with national frameworks?
9. Going forward how do you see the landscape evolve? Any recommendations/improvements to bridge the gap?

### **Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion Questions**

1. When a flood comes what are your concerns?
2. How is your daily life impacted?
3. How do you prepare for it?
4. Do you have any disabled family or community members?
  - Do you do any special planning for them before and during disaster?
  - How do you envision best practice to be?

5. How do you prepare for pre-and post-disaster situations? (challenges)
  - What is your standardized coping mechanism, and way to deal with it.
6. Has from government institution or local authority ever visited you regarding the flooding situation?
  - What is early warnings system?
  - Who helps in post-disaster assistance? Community, elected person etc.
  - What is the system of relief assistance?
  - If yes, then what happen? What type of assistance is it?
7. How do you see your future disasters? (Cloud bursts etc.)
  - What would you do better?
  - Do you see anything practical happening though?

**Appendix 3: Pictures from Fieldwork**







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