MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION 13 October 2013

"Persons with disabilities are the biggest untapped resource for disaster planners around the world."

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
BAN KI MOON

More than one billion persons in the world live with a disability. This year’s commemoration of the International Day for Disaster Reduction is an opportunity to hear Mr. Alizada’s message and recognize their vital role in fostering resilience.

Unfortunately, most persons with disabilities have never participated in disaster risk management or related planning and decision making processes. They suffer disproportionately high levels of disaster-related mortality and injuries.

It is important to include disability in disaster preparedness and risk management processes because people with disabilities can contribute positively and be effective partners in the design and implementation process. But if for anything else, this is a human right as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The general principles of Non-discrimination, full and effective participation, inclusion in society, accessibility and equality of opportunity to name a few.

In our case here in Fiji, the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) has developed a report and toolkit focussing on disability inclusive community based disaster risk reduction that can assist disaster stakeholders be more inclusive of persons with disabilities.

We have also launched the "I DiD" (include disability in disasters) awareness campaign which is a multi-approached campaign targeting media, community outreach, and government and NGOs who work directly in disaster risk and reduction. Both initiatives are outcome of the 2 year AUSAID funded project on disability inclusive disaster risk reduction project.

Inclusion saves lives. And it empowers persons with disabilities to take ownership of their own safety – and that of their community.

We can already see their potential contribution in the many persons with visible and invisible disabilities around the world who already serve as volunteers and workers helping communities when disaster hits to cope and bounce back.

On the International Day for Disaster Reduction, let us resolve to do everything possible to ensure that all persons with disabilities have the highest possible levels of safety and the greatest possible chance to contribute to the overall wellbeing of society.

Let us build an inclusive world where persons with disabilities can play an even greater role as resourceful agents of change.