Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness in NSW: Enabling Local Community Resilience through Collaboration

A project funded under the joint State/Commonwealth Natural Disaster Resilience Program

As part of the Australian Government Natural Disaster Resilience Program, the University of Sydney’s Hazards Research Group (HRG) and Centre for Disability Research and Policy (CDRP) have partnered to lead a two-year ground-breaking project entitled “Disability Inclusive Disaster Preparedness in NSW: Enabling Local Community Resilience through Collaboration”.

The project aim is to provide the NSW Government with knowledge and tools to assess and increase the resilience of people with disabilities to natural disasters. This will be achieved by promoting the active participation and meaningful contribution of people with disabilities, their families and carers in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies. To this end, the project will create and activate a collaborative platform including people with disabilities, Community Services Organisations (CSOs), Disabled People Organisations (DPOs), Emergency Managers (EMs) and Local Businesses.

The project started in May 2015 and has already received formal and enthusiastic support from several NSW emergency management agencies, as well as state and national organisations working with people with disabilities.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

One in five people in NSW lives with disability. People with disabilities are four times more likely to die or be injured during natural disasters than the general population. Individuals with disabilities are more likely to be socially isolated and have nobody to turn to in times of emergencies. Risk is further increased due to a fragmented system where responsibility to address the unique needs and capabilities of people with disabilities in disasters is unclear.

In disasters, many people with disabilities rely on the support from Community Services Organisations (CSOs), Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs), Local Government Areas (LGAs) and local businesses. Yet these organisations have limited experience in emergency preparedness, and might have unrealistic expectations on the help that Emergency Management Agencies are able to provide.

PROJECT AIM:
This project will enhance the resilience of people with disabilities by increasing the organisational capability of CSOs, DPOs, LGAs and local businesses, working collaboratively with Emergency Managers (EMs) and involving people with disabilities in emergency preparedness.
PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. To identify current practices, knowledge and barriers to disability inclusive emergency preparedness focusing on local community level (Scoping).
2. To develop and field-test an “Organisational Self-Assessment Tool” (OSAT) for CSOs/DPOs/LGAs to self-assess their organisational capability to support people with disabilities in disasters.
3. To assist people with disabilities to assess their resilience to disasters using an innovative tool ("Individual Self-assessment Tool" or ISAT) recently developed and field-tested by our team.
4. To implement disability inclusive emergency preparedness workshops in three NSW LGAs (urban, peri-urban, rural) bringing together EMs, CSOs, DPOs, LGAs, local businesses and people with disabilities.
5. To bring field-tested NSW findings to inform the development of Disability Action Plans and sector practice in NSW.

PROJECT ELEMENTS:

6. Emergency Preparedness Workshops

- Bringing together people with disabilities, Emergency Managers, CSOs, DPOs, LGAs and Local Businesses
- To build a collaborative network, provide training in emergency preparedness and in the use of the resilience assessment tools

2. Resilience Assessment Tools

1. ISAT
   - For people with disabilities to self-assess their resilience to natural hazards
2. OSAT
   - For CSOs, DPOs, LGAs and local business, to assess their capability to support people with disabilities in disasters

3. Case-study locations in NSW

- One urban, one peri-urban and one rural. Selected by exposure to natural hazards and number of people with disabilities
- The resilience assessment tools (ISAT & OSAT) will be applied in each location, in collaboration with LGAs, local CSOs, DPOs, and local businesses

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1. Increased knowledge to underpin evidence based policy development in NSW, including Disability Action Plans for local and state government.
2. Enhanced emergency management organisational capability of NSW CSOs/DPOs/LGAs and local businesses
3. Enhanced local community resilience including people with disabilities in disasters.
4. Increased collaborative engagement between people with disabilities, CSOs/DPOs/LGAs and local businesses to develop innovative solutions in relation to disaster preparedness, including support options for people with disabilities who are socially isolated (e.g. ‘Circles of Support’).

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY CONTACTS

HAZARDS RESEARCH GROUP
Faculty of Science:

Dr. Filippo Dall’Osso (Project Manager)
Room 444, F09 - Madsen Building
Ph. +61 (0) 420 593600
e-mail filippo.dallosso@sydney.edu.au

Assoc. Prof. Dale Domaine-Howes
Room 448, F09 - Madsen Building
Ph. +61 2 9351 6641
e-mail dale.domaine-howes@sydney.edu.au

CENTRE FOR DISABILITY RESEARCH AND POLICY
Faculty of Health Sciences:

Prof. Gwynnyth Llewellyn
C43J - J Block Cumberland Campus
Ph. +61 2 9351 9533
e-mail gwynnyth.llewellyn@sydney.edu.au

Dr. Michelle Villeneuve
J106, Cumberland Campus C42
Ph. +61 2 9356 7438
e-mail michelle.villeneuve@sydney.edu.au

Follow the project and join the conversation on Twitter: @PWD_DRR