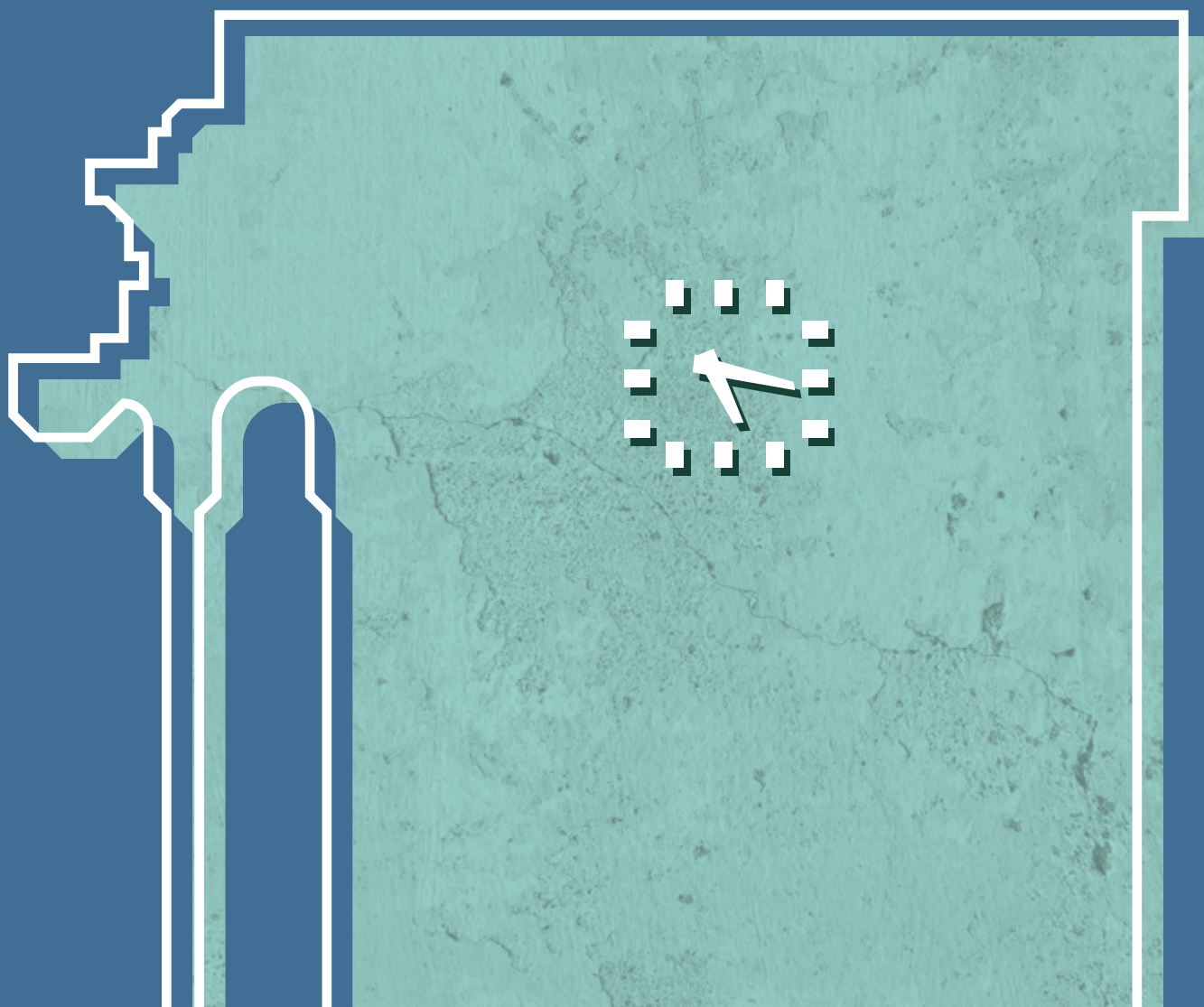


POLICIES FOR DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA



IMPRESSUM

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Gratitude to National Organizations of persons with disabilities for their meaningful participation and contribution in aligning the study with the UN Convention of Right of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The hazard profile of North Macedonia is characterized by the impact of a range of natural and human-made hazards and is dominated by floods, earthquakes, extreme temperatures, storms, landslides, droughts, epidemics and technical–technological incidents. Their consequences seriously undermine the resilience of the society and communities, deepen the existing vulnerabilities and create new social inequalities. With the projected climate change impacts, the degree of environmental degradation, intensive urbanization, new and emerging risks and threats, and the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the magnitude of these events is expected to increase, unequally affecting different population groups, whereby people with disabilities suffer the greatest consequences. Persons with disabilities bear the heaviest burden of the impacts of disasters, both because of their characteristics and vulnerabilities and because of their very frequent exclusion from policies and insufficient practices for their inclusion in risk reduction and strengthening resilience efforts. To improve the inclusion of disability in comprehensive disaster risk reduction, the Public Policies Study supports building the resilience of the society and communities by understanding the relationship between disability and the disaster reduction framework, reviewing the existing context through the identification of the prevailing gaps, challenges and good practices, and by formulating forward-looking recommendations.

From the analysis, it was determined that the two systems, for disaster risk management and disability inclusion, are not sufficiently interconnected, as the foundations of both are not sufficiently integrated into their structures and processes. As in many other sectoral policies and practices, persons with disabilities are still “invisible” and perceived as a group of the wider vulnerable population in the country. Consequently, they are not part of the narrative for reducing climate and disaster risks and do not have fair access to the processes of making policies and decisions and implementing measures and activities to build the resilience of the society and communities. The overall approach to disaster risk reduction in the country is still largely reactive rather than proactive, with emphasis placed on response rather than prevention and mitigation. In that context, both the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the related policies are not sufficiently recognized as basis for building the resilience of persons with disabilities through the development of inclusive policies and regulations, as well as the creation of inclusive practices and actions.

Based on the conducted analysis, as well as existing global and regional frameworks and mechanisms for sustainable and resilient development and social inclusion that call for greater inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the creation and adoption of policies and regulations, this document provides the following set of recommendations for the following period. They include improving and modifying the policy and normative framework, strengthening the institutional architecture, increasing the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their organizations, formulating improved inclusive practices, enhancing the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on disability, improving the access to disaster risk information and communication, and investing in disaster risk reduction by incorporating disability and the resilient recovery of persons with disabilities.

ABBREVIATIONS

CMC	Crisis Management Centre
CMS	Crisis Management System
CMW	Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
CRPD	Convention for the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities
CRPD	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EU	European Union
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
GIS	Geo-information Systems
HRC	Human Rights Council
IFES	International Federation for Electoral Systems
UN	United Nations
PDNA	Post-disaster Needs Assessment
PwDs	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
PRD	Protection and Rescue Directorate
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sendai Framework	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNPRPD	The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organization

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. General hazard profile of North Macedonia	1
1.2. Who is most exposed to risk in the country?	2
1.3. The purpose of this document	4
1.4. Framework for preparation of the Public Policies Study	4
1.5. Approach and the methodological framework	5
2. GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK AND INCLUSION OF DISABILITY INTO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION	6
2.1. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030	6
2.2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	7
2.3. The Paris Agreement	8
2.4. European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR)	9
2.5. Habitat III – New Urban Agenda	10
2.6. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	10
2.7. UN Human Rights Council Resolution	13
2.8. Alignment of North Macedonia to the global sustainable and resilient framework	14
3. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT CONTEXT IN NORTH MACEDONIA RELATING TO THE INCLUSIVENESS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	16
3.1. Policy and regulatory framework of the national disaster risk management and disabilities inclusion systems	16
3.2. Institutional architecture of the national disaster risk management and disability inclusion systems	21
3.2.1. Institutional framework for disaster risk management in the country	21
3.2.2. Institutional framework for climate change in the country	22
3.2.3. Institutional framework for spatial and urban planning	23
3.2.4. Institutional framework of the disability inclusion system	23

4. SYSTEM GAPS, CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE NATIONAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	24
4.1. Introduction	24
4.2. Gaps and challenges for the national disability-inclusive disaster risk management	25
4.3. Good practices and lessons learned in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction in the country	35
5. CONCLUSIONS AND FORWARD-LOOKING RECOMMENDATIONS ...	43
ANNEX 1 - Who is Vulnerable in North Macedonia and Why?	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	54

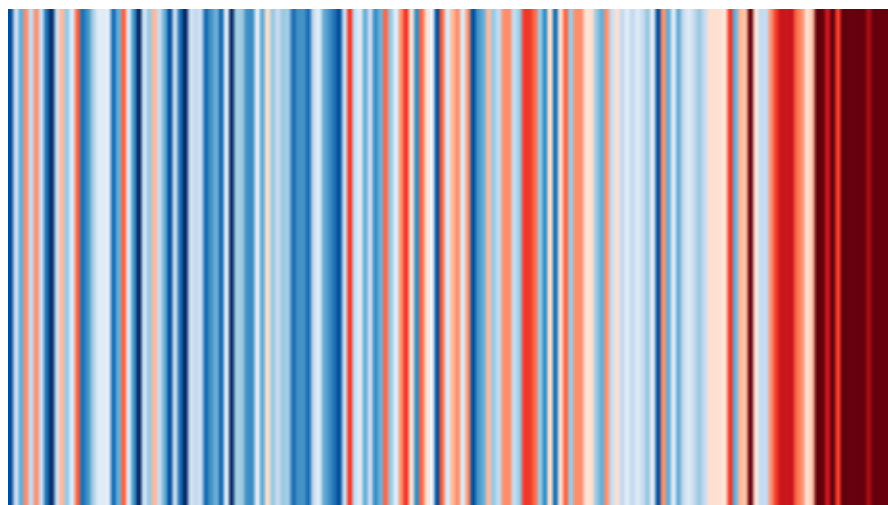
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General hazard profile of North Macedonia

The hazard profile of North Macedonia is characterized by the impact of a range of natural and human-made hazards and is dominated by floods, earthquakes, extreme temperatures, storms, landslides, droughts, epidemics and technical–technological incidents. Floods are most frequent with the highest intensity and magnitude; weather-related events are on the rise with greater magnitudes; wildfires are increasing in frequency and consequences for nature and biodiversity, while earthquakes have the potentially biggest impact in terms of loss of life and long-term damage and losses.

As per the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, the annual average population affected by flooding is about 70,000 and the annual affected Gross Domestic Product is 500 million USD, while the annual average population affected by earthquakes is 40,000 and the annual affected Gross Domestic Product is 200 million USD¹. According to the available data on past disasters, during the last two decades, in 14 disasters, there were 79 human casualties, approx. 1.3 million inhabitants were affected and only eight disasters had a price tag of half a billion USD. Most human casualties were registered during the Skopje August 2016 torrential flood (22), the wildfires in July 2007 affected almost half of the population (1,000,000 inhabitants) and the floods in 1995 had the highest damages of 245 million USD. Additionally, numerous small-scale disastrous events are chronically pressuring the resilience texture of the society and communities by depleting their finite resources.

Figure 1. An overview of the increase in temperature in North Macedonia in the period 1850 - 2022²



¹ Global Forum for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. *North Macedonia section*. 2017. <https://tinyurl.com/47pdmfar>

² Ed Hawkins. University of Reading. Available at: <https://showyourstripes.info//europe/northmacedonia/all>

This trend is expected to grow further in the future given the increase in temperature (see Figure 1), the expected climate change impact and following the analysis of the climate change projections and extreme events³. The country will face warmer and drier climate in the future with the increased occurrence of extreme warm events and decreased number of extreme cold events. On the other hand, the drier conditions will result in a potential increase of extreme precipitations resulting in greater risk of flash floods. The expected reduction of summer precipitation and continuation of the subsequent duration will increase the risk of occurrence of droughts, prolonged vegetation periods and higher number of wild-fires. Because of the deteriorating environmental conditions, intensive urbanization, etc., it is expected that there will be an increase in the frequency, intensity and impact of disaster events that will significantly affect the overall resilience of the country and the local communities, especially affecting vulnerable groups of citizens.

Simultaneously, in recent years, we have been facing new risks and threats i.e. the migrants and refugee crisis since 2015, the air pollution in Skopje and other major cities across the country and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic was the biggest (health) disaster of our time during which, in the period between 03 January 2020 and 26 April 2023 there were 348,059 confirmed cases, 9,672 deaths and cumulative output losses for 2020 and 2021 of 3.7 billion USD⁴. The extremely powerful impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis contributed to the creation of the “*new vulnerable and new poor*” (people, especially from the urban centres, that are experiencing vulnerabilities for the first time as a result of the crisis), the emergence of new forms of social inequality and an increase in cases of domestic violence⁵.

1.2. Who is most exposed to risk in the country?

In general, emergencies, disasters and crises affect the whole population differently with different impacts on their present and future existence and development. Therefore, it is important to identify which categories of citizens are most at-risk in North Macedonia. To that end, the UNDPs’ *Human Development Report 2016 - Risk-Proofing the Western Balkans: Empowering People to Prevent Disasters*⁶ identifies the essential group of seven archetypal vulnerable populations: poor people, women, children and the elderly, persons with disabilities, minorities, migrants, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and farmers. The overview of the essential group of vulnerable populations is presented in Annex 1 of this document. This division is not exhaustive, since there are more comprehensive ones that identify and include additional groups, such as single-parent families, sexual and gender minorities, other marginalized groups, etc. Nevertheless, the root causes of their vulnerability to natural disasters (risk drivers/factors) can be identified in several interlinked areas, e.g. the geographical context and exposure to hazards, socio-economic, social, cultural and other characteristics, level of knowledge and education, access to services, participation in the

³ Gjurgjevik, Vladimir. *Projection report on climate changes and changes in extreme climate events in the Republic of North Macedonia*. UNDP. 2020. p.

4. [online] Available at <https://tinyurl.com/yc3r4yaa>

⁴ UNDP. *Social and Economic Evaluation of the COVID-19 impact in North Macedonia*. UNDP. June 2020. p. 8. Available at: <https://www.impact-covid19.mk/>

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/3z86sdce>

⁶ UNDP. *Human Development Report 2016 - Risk-Proofing the Western Balkans: Empowering People to Prevent Disasters*. 2016. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc548e2v>

policy- and decision-making processes, security and justice, etc.

People with some form of disabilities make up at least 15% of the global population, of whom 2 – 4% experience significant difficulties in functioning. The global disability prevalence is higher than previous World Health Organizations estimates, which date from the 1970s and suggested a figure of around 10%.⁷ *“The issue of disability, despite being part of the 2021 Census, did not provide a clear picture of the total number of the population with disabilities. According to the results of the census, there are a total of 94,412 people with disabilities in the country, which represents almost 5% of the total population, of which 2.5% are people over 65 years of age.”*⁸ On the other side, if the figure of 15% is applied, then at the national level in North Macedonia can be estimated that around 276,000 citizens experience some form of disability. *„Persons with disabilities are vulnerable because of physical challenges, dependency on others and dwindling public assistance. While persons with disabilities are often a most vulnerable population group, different levels and types of disabilities (physical, intellectual, mental, sensory, combined) generalize their vulnerability to disaster risks difficultly.”*⁹

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Source: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 1)
<https://tinyurl.com/4znzhshd>

Persons with disabilities are bearing the heaviest burden from impacts of crises and disasters, both due to their characteristics and prevailing vulnerabilities and due to the very frequent exclusion from disaster risk reduction policies and insufficient inclusive risk reduction practices. There are many examples globally that point out this situation. For example, research shows that the mortality rate among persons with disabilities tends to be two to four times higher than that of the rest of the population, as demonstrated during the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, and Hurricane Katrina in the USA¹⁰. The United Kingdom statistics from early 2021 already show that persons with disabilities accounted for six in 10 COVID-19-related deaths.¹¹ Consequently, this trend can be found in other disaster events e.g. floods¹² or wildfires¹³. On the other hand, the May 2014 floods in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina significantly affected persons with disabilities and minorities. The former suffered due to the inefficient immediate response and weak rescue services resulting from the lack of adequate early warning systems and rescue standards and protocols, and poor knowledge of the authorities and the rescue forces of their immediate and early recovery needs. For example, in the municipality of Svilajnac, the evacuation of the population was not performed and persons with disabilities were threatened.¹⁴ Also, *“in the floods of 2014, many persons with*

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⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/3m4tdkum>

⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. *Draft National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2030 with Action Plans 2023-2026*. 2023. p. 15. Available at: <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=61>

⁹ UNDP. *Human Development Report 2016 Risk-Proofing the Western Balkans: Empowering People to Prevent Disasters*. 2016. p. 66. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2ex2vx2f>

¹⁰ *Panel Discussion on Disaster resilience and disability: ensuring equality and inclusion*. ECOSOC Chamber, UN (2013). Available at: https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/iddr2013_%20panelreport.pdf

¹¹ European Human Rights Report. *Impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities*. European Disability Forum (2021). Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2t8xvtxs>

¹² <https://tinyurl.com/yckrvh45>

¹³ <https://tinyurl.com/t7dk9uav>

¹⁴ OSCE. *Rodna analiza uticaja poplava u Srbiji u 2014 godini*. стр.19. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2m3vht8b>

disabilities or pre-existing health problems were evacuated without their necessary medical equipment, prescriptions or documentation, which put them in a more sensitive position.”¹⁵

In North Macedonia, there have been several disaster events where the victims were people with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable categories e.g. women, youth, and elderly. Considering the former, the flash floods in December 2008 in Radovish and Konche accounted for the losses of two people with disabilities, while in the flash floods in Tetovo in August 2015 and Skopje, a year later, many of the victims were from the vulnerable groups of citizens. The exclusion from the risk reduction mainstreamed narrative i.e. from policies, processes and practices, additionally contributes to this inexistence of inclusiveness in building the resilience of the society, communities and people. In general, many disaster risk management systems, globally and regionally, are “*blind*” to inclusive and responsible risk reduction, without providing opportunities for meaningful participation and building the resilience of persons with disabilities based on their needs, knowledge and capabilities.

Taking into consideration the abovementioned and the efforts for the achievement of sustainable, resilient and inclusive development, it is necessary to conceptualize and mainstream the disability-inclusive risk reduction across the disaster risk management system, enabling not only greater participation of persons with disabilities but also inclusive building of their resilience to existing and emerging risks and threats. To that end, the departing point is to better understand disability inclusion into risk reduction policies, programs and services that are aligned with international norms and standards. Therefore, the objective of this research assignment is to conduct a country review on the current state of disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction-related policies and practices.

1.3. The purpose of this document

The main objective of the *Public Policies Study for Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in the Context of the Republic of North Macedonia* is to support the efforts for inclusive resilience-building in the country through an understanding of the disability and the disaster risk reduction frameworks, review of the current context with identification of the existing gaps and challenges and good practices, followed by the formulation of forward-looking recommendations. Also, this Public Policies Study aims to contribute to a transformational change in the understanding and practical inclusion of disability in building the resilience of the society and communities to crises and disasters.

1.4. Framework for preparation of the Public Policies Study

To implement this task, an appropriate approach and methodological framework were determined according to the subject of research, its goals and specificities, as well as appropriate parameters of the study of public policies that are the basis of this process.

¹⁵ UNICEF. *Analiza Klimatske Situacije i Njenih Uticaja Na Decu U Srbiji*. UNICEF. Septembar 2021. p. 31. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/18356/file/CLAC%20izvestaj.pdf>

Table 1. Parameters of the Public Policies Study (Author)

Parameters	Description
Relevance	The extent to which the inclusive disaster risk reduction policies and practices are integrated into the national disaster risk management system.
Response	The role and responsibilities of the entities in disaster risk management, before and after disasters, while taking into consideration the needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities.
Effectiveness	A measure of the degree to which the disaster risk management system is meeting its mandate and the needs of persons with disabilities and monitors whether the expected results are achieved.
Impact	Positive and/or negative impacts of disaster risk management system on the resilience of persons with disabilities, both direct and/or indirect.
Lessons learned/ recommendations	Identification of lessons learned and modus operandi on how inclusive policies and practices should be integrated into national disaster risk management.

1.5. Approach and the methodological framework

The approach and the methodological frameworks are summative and utilize a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools. The preparation of this study included the following tools: *Content Analysis* (it was used during the initial phase of the assignment with review and analysis of the content of all available, documents, reports and information), *Comparative Analysis* (during the desk review of materials and documents), *Combined Qualitative/Quantitative Research Design* (during the information and data collection part by the key informants with the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and consultations with key representatives from the entities) and *Qualitative Research Design* (during the identification and codification of the lessons learned and good practices). The triangulation method was used to verify the information gathered during the process of content review, document review, online questionnaire, key informant interviews and validation during discussions with team representatives. The goal was to validate information and data in a structured way through verification from multiple data sources.

Limitations could refer to the timeframe for carrying out the research task, longitudinal effects (time availability of respondents or availability of key informants), timeliness of responses to the online survey, fatigue of respondents and informants to participate in the survey and interviews, because for many online surveys have been conducted during the pandemic, the prevalence of COVID-19, access to information and data, limited access to risk and hazard assessments and plans, and potential data privacy issues.

2. GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK AND INCLUSION OF DISABILITY INTO DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



2.1. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030¹⁶

The Sendai Framework is a global framework for the reduction of disaster risk adopted at the Third World UN Conference on disaster risk reduction held in Sendai, Japan in March 2015. *The main objective is the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.* The Sendai Framework establishes contemporary ground of resilient development of countries and territories globally through a paradigm shift from disaster management to disaster risk management of existing and future risks bringing in resilience-building as the core goal to be reached by 2030. It has seven targets and four priorities for action that contribute to the prevention of new and reduction of existing risks through the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction across all development sectors, programmes and policies. While the Sendai Framework is a voluntary, non-binding agreement, it calls for an all-of-society engagement, with governments having the primary role of reducing disaster risk.

Four priorities refer to the understanding of risk, enhancing the disaster risk governance, investing in disaster risk reduction for achieving resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness, response and recovery. In addition, within these four priorities, there are 39 guiding principles and two of them directly refer to persons with disabilities, specifically:

- (19) (d): *“Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated into all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted. In this context, special attention should be paid to the improvement of organized voluntary work of citizens.”* and
- (19)(g): *“Disaster risk reduction requires a multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability, as well as on easily accessible, up-to-date, com-*

¹⁶ https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf

prehensible, science-based, non-sensitive risk information, complemented by traditional knowledge.”

This approach necessitates that effective implementation of the four priorities for action must ensure the inclusion of a disability perspective in the development and implementation of all disaster risk reduction policies and practices. It is therefore important to encourage consultation with, and participation of, persons with disabilities and their organizations to truly adopt the envisioned all-of-society approach. Similarly, the adoption of a multi-hazard approach and risk-informed decision-making in the implementation of the four priorities requires access to, use of, and consideration of sound and reliable disability-inclusive processes.¹⁷



2.2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable Development Goals are blueprints for achieving a better, more sustainable and resilient future for all. With a total of 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators, the Sustainable Development Goals focus on three main areas: (i) eradication of poverty; (ii) protecting the planet from degradation, while ensuring that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature; and (iii) promoting universal peace and just and inclusive societies. *“In this manner, achievement of any of the 17 goals can improve the resiliency of persons with disabilities to withstand disasters.”*¹⁸

Climate action and disaster risk reduction are crosscutting issues but explicitly mentioned in *SDG 13*¹⁹ on addressing climate change and its impacts and *SDG 11*²⁰ on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. These two SDGs are relevant to those engaged in disability-inclusive disaster risk management i.e. SDG 11 *“also identifies at-risk populations, including women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities and SDG 13 also promotes raising capacity for effective climate-change-related planning and management that includes women, youth, and local and marginalized communities—all of which would include persons with disabilities.”*²¹ Furthermore, they also contribute to the achievement of many of the other goals. On the other side, five Goals directly include disability and are relevant to persons with disabilities²², i.e. *SDG 4* (Guaranteeing equal and accessible education by building inclusive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for persons with disabilities)²³, *SDG 8* (Promoting inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment

¹⁷ Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. *Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management Promising Practices and Opportunities for Enhanced Engagement*. GFDRR. 2017. p. 26. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3mwta9z6>

¹⁸ Ibid. p.24.

¹⁹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>

²⁰ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

²¹ Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. *Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management Promising Practices and Opportunities for Enhanced Engagement*. GFDRR. 2017. p. 24. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3mwta9z6>

²² <https://tinyurl.com/2jzcyuzs>

²³ <https://www.sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>

allowing persons with disabilities to fully access the job market)²⁴, *SDG 10* (Emphasizing the social, economic and political inclusion of persons with disabilities)²⁵, *SDG 11* (Creating accessible cities and water resources, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, providing universal access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces) and *SDG 17* (Underlining the importance of data collection and monitoring of the SDGs, emphasis on disability disaggregated data)²⁶.



2.3. The Paris Agreement²⁷

The Paris Agreement seeks to significantly scale up climate actions and deal more comprehensively with climate change impacts to safeguard development and eliminate poverty. It specifically aims to significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience. *“Of relevance in this context, is the acknowledgement in the preamble that climate change is a ‘concern of humankind’, and that in taking action on climate change, parties should also consider their obligations concerning the human rights of people in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities.”*²⁸ Articles 7 and 8 explicitly focus on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction: Article 7.1, on enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and Article 8.1, on averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change. In particular, *Article 8* establishes *“the global goal on adaptation of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change, to contribute to sustainable development.”*²⁹ Accordingly, areas of cooperation and facilitation to enhance understanding, action and support may include early warning systems; emergency preparedness; slow onset events; events that may involve irreversible and permanent loss and damage; comprehensive risk assessment and management; risk insurance facilities, climate risk pooling and other insurance solutions; non-economic losses; and resilience of communities, livelihoods and ecosystems. These areas of cooperation and facilitation correlate with the Sendai Framework priorities and SDGs goals and targets as presented in the table 2.

²⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

²⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal10>

²⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

²⁷ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

²⁸ Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. *Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management Promising Practices and Opportunities for Enhanced Engagement*. GFDRR. 2017. p. 27. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3mwta9z6>

²⁹ WB Group. *LIFELINES The Resilient Infrastructure Opportunity*. 2019. p. 27. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2bv7hdmd>

Table 2. Correlation of the Article VIII areas of cooperation and facilitation with the SFDRR priorities and the SDGs goals and targets (the Author)

Paris Agreement Article VIII	Sendai Framework	SDGs
Early warning systems/Emergency Preparedness	Priority 4	3, 11, 13
Slow onset events/Events that may involve irreversible and permanent loss and damage	All priorities	1, 2, 13, 15
Comprehensive risk assessment and management	Priority 1	11, 13, 15
Risk insurance facilities, climate risk pooling and other insurance solutions	Priority 3	13
Non-economic losses	Priority 3	1, 2, 11, 13, 14, 15
Resilience of communities, livelihoods and ecosystems	All priorities	All SDGs



2.4. European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR)³⁰

The *Roadmap 2021-2030 for a climate and disaster-resilient Europe and Central Asia*³¹ marks a new phase in the advancement of inclusive disaster risk reduction in Europe. Accordingly, this Roadmap addresses disability in several areas i.e. *risk understanding and communicating* (the roadmap recognises the disproportionate risk faced by persons with disabilities and highlights the need for investments in inclusive and accessible tools to communicate this risk, including disaggregation of data by sex, age and disability), *risk governance and decision-making* (the knowledge, skills, resources and experiences of those most at-risk are included as essential in supporting inclusive disaster risk reduction), *inclusive and innovative investments* (leaving no one behind), *preparedness for response and resilient recovery* (early warning systems must be accessible, preparedness for complex emergencies must be inclusive and development of new tools must prioritise accessibility).³²

³⁰ <https://efdr.undrr.org/>

³¹ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/european-forum-disaster-risk-reduction-roadmap-2021-2030>

³² <https://www.edf-feph.org/edf-welcomes-regional-roadmap-to-resilience/>



2.5. Habitat III – New Urban Agenda³³

“In setting forth its vision for liveable, accessible, inclusive, and sustainable communities, the New Urban Agenda includes numerous references to intersecting populations, including persons with disabilities. In addition to promoting equitable and affordable access to sustainable physical and social infrastructure, the New Urban Agenda also cites the need to empower and ensure the contributions of all relevant stakeholders, including persons with disabilities.”³⁴



2.6. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³⁵

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the UN Member States in 2006 and entered into force in 2008 and accordingly, as a legally binding mechanism, was ratified by 185 out of 193 UN member states. It is the first international human rights treaty which addresses and regulates the civil and political, economic, social, and cultural rights in the context of disability. Its purpose is “*to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity*” (Article 1). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights refers to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a blueprint for action to include and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.³⁶ The Convention’s preamble affirms that “*the observance of applicable human rights instruments are indispensable for the full protection of persons with disabilities, in particular during armed conflicts and foreign occupation, including and the emergencies*”³⁷. Therefore, the important aspects of the Convention are that the states are the primary duty bearers to promote and protect their rights, Persons with Disabilities and their representatives are provided with a central role and voice in all aspects of its implementation³⁸ and embrace the human rights-based approach to disability in the humanitarian protection of Persons with Disabilities requiring all actors to discard the references to persons with disabilities as a “vulnerable” or “neglected” group in connection with emergencies³⁹. The follow-

³³ <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

³⁴ Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. *Disability Inclusion in Disaster Risk Management Promising Practices and Opportunities for Enhanced Engagement*. GFDRR. 2017. p. 28. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3mwta9z6>

³⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/2p8pr4py>

³⁶ https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Disabilities_training_17EN.pdf

³⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/4yzx2nbn>

³⁸ UNDRR. *Persons with disabilities in situations of risk: A scoping study on Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). 2022. p. 11. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4c66ua4p>

³⁹ Thematic study on the rights of persons with disabilities under Article 11 of the CRPD on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies OHCHR, A/HRC/31/30 p.3 Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mm4t9run>

ing articles from the Convention have relevant importance in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and support inclusive disaster risk reduction efforts:

- **Article 11** of the Convention is the central provision which refers to the obligations in situations of risk including “humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters”. It calls on the parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities “*to take, following their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.*”
- **Article 3** stipulates the Convention’s fundamental principles i.e. participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment⁴⁰, making their own choices; and being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make before, during and after an emergency, which needs to be respected during these situations.
- According to **Article 4**, persons with disabilities should be included and actively participate in the decision-making processes. This requires States to ensure active and meaningful participation of all categories of persons with disabilities i.e. active participation and coordination in the creation of policies and regulations and implementing measures and actions concerning emergencies and natural disasters during all stages of the disaster risk management cycle.
- **Article 6**, in line with Article 11, addressed that women and girls with disabilities⁴¹ are subject to multiple and intersectional discrimination and are at increased risk of sexual violence, including in humanitarian crises and conflict and post-conflict settings. There the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that appropriate services for women and girls with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergency, based on their individual needs, should be made available and their accessibility should be secured by removing physical, communicative, social, cultural, economic, political and other barriers, including the expansion of quality services in rural and remote areas⁴²
- **Article 8** promotes raising awareness of disability inclusiveness and, linked to Article 11, calls upon the States to engage in awareness-raising measures throughout society to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities and to promote awareness of their capabilities and contributions.
- **Article 9** refers to the accessibility of Persons with disabilities to a wide scope of services, ranging from the built environment to the emergency services i.e. physical environment, transportation, information and communication and public services. In situations of risk, natural disasters and armed conflict, the emergency services must be accessible to persons with disabilities or their lives cannot be saved or their well-being

⁴⁰ HRC Resolution. Ibid. Preliminary Para.14, as well as Paras. 5, d and 6.

⁴¹ CRPD. *Committee’s General Comment no. 3 on Article 6 on women and girls with disabilities*. CRPD/C/GC/3, September 2016. Para. 50. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3jzab9bu>

⁴² CRPD. *Statement of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on disability inclusion for the World Humanitarian Summit*. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3nshtrws>

protected. Accessibility must be incorporated as a priority in post-disaster reconstruction efforts. Therefore, disaster risk reduction must be accessible and disability-inclusive.⁴³ States' duties on accessibility, under Article 9, are indispensable to ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded during situations of risk and humanitarian emergency, especially regarding information and alert mechanisms. They are also crucial in upholding and promoting universal design (Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), particularly during reconstruction.

- *Article 12* stipulates the right to equal recognition before the law, upholds the exercise of legal capacity by adults with disabilities and requires the implementation of supported decision-making, moving away from substituted decision-making schemes. This right is particularly important in emergencies i.e. when persons with disabilities are required to make key decisions regarding their property, living arrangements, finances and medical treatments and cannot be subjected to derogation.
- *Article 21*, in line with Article 11, calls upon the States to ensure that all emergency-related information be made available in formats accessible to persons with different types of impairments, including to deaf persons through sign language, and in the various languages spoken in its territory. Also, the States should encourage the media to take an active and inclusive role, at all levels - local, national, regional and global levels - as well as to adopt specific disaster risk reduction communications policies, and to support early warning systems and life-saving protective measures, as well as to contribute to the raising of public awareness and understanding and to disseminate accurate and non-sensitive disaster risk, hazard and disaster information, including on small-scale disasters, in a simple, transparent, easy-to-understand and accessible manner.
- *Article 31* refers to the need to collect information and statistical and research data for relevant inclusive policy formulation, while data disaggregation, accessibility and privacy are ensured. Disaggregated data collection and analysis, including by disability, is a critical element in the design of inclusive policies, also in situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. In addition, States Parties should ensure the access of persons with disabilities to all statistical data in accessible formats.
- *Article 32* promotes international cooperation, including international development programs that are inclusive of, and accessible to, persons with disabilities, and can be seen through Article 11 and Target F of the Sendai Framework on the substantial increase of international cooperation with developing countries by 2030. Considering the former, persons with disabilities should be part of this cooperation process in all phases and should be promoted and strengthened at all levels, including concerning capacity-building, and access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technology.
- *Article 33* promotes that state parties should permit monitoring to continue during emergencies, ensuring that risks are mitigated to the maximum extent possible. Where in-person monitoring is impossible, state parties should devote available resources to adopting alternatives, such as digital, electronic or other modes of remote communication, to ensure effective independent monitoring.⁴⁴

⁴³ CRPD. Committee's General Comment no. 2 on Article 9, CRPD/C/GC/2, Para. 36. <https://tinyurl.com/mrxckn58>

⁴⁴ CRPD. Guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies. (2022). <https://tinyurl.com/4dbxaex2>

Notably, the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities created a mandate for the United Nations and triggered the adoption of a *UN-wide Disability Inclusion Strategy* that commits to a rights-based model of disability inclusion. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Committee – an international monitoring body that reviews the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – has issued several general statements considering Article 11, specifically:

- Statement on “the situation of persons with disabilities affected by disasters in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia” (Adopted at the CRPD 17th Session - 20 March to 12 April 2017)⁴⁵;
- Joint CMW-CRPD statement on “Addressing disabilities in large-scale movements of refugees and migrants”, (April 2017)⁴⁶;
- Statement by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE - Securing inclusion of persons with disabilities in the New Urban Agenda-Habitat III – Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, (November 2016)⁴⁷;
- Statement of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on disability inclusion for the World Humanitarian Summit (Adopted at the CRPD 14th Session - 17 August to 4 September 2015)⁴⁸;
- Statement on Disability Inclusion in the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and beyond (September 2014)⁴⁹;
- Statement on the inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda on disability and development (January 2014)⁵⁰.



2.7. UN Human Rights Council Resolution⁵¹

Two important developments contributed to the building of resilience of Persons with Disabilities during emergencies, armed conflicts and natural disasters. The *OHCHR thematic report from 2015*⁵² sets out the standards on the human rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and presents a harmonized understanding of existing international humanitarian law under Article 11 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. “*The report also pointed out the failure of governments and others to*

⁴⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/k72tx33k>

⁴⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/yckwuu93>

⁴⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/5n6wcjxk>

⁴⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/4fz3av5k>

⁴⁹ <https://tinyurl.com/bde896ka>

⁵⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/3j2cvav4>

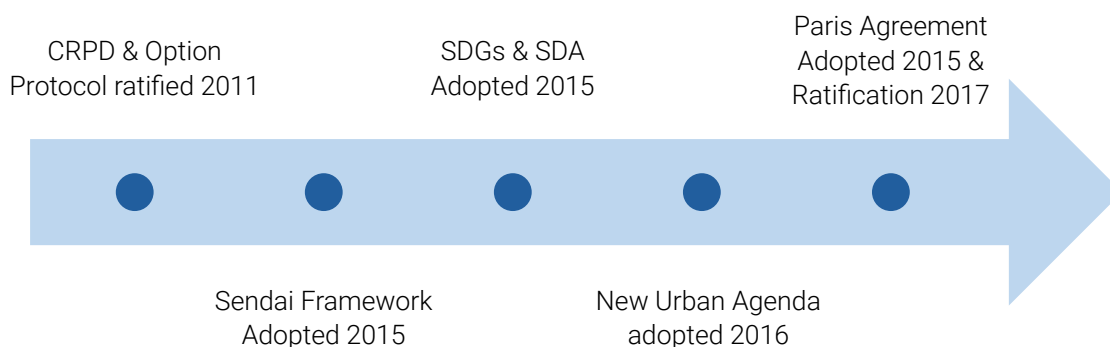
⁵¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/about-council>

⁵² <https://tinyurl.com/5fb39d2u>

take reasonable preventive action to reduce vulnerability and enhance the resilience of persons with disabilities, as well as to provide effective mitigation.”⁵³ In 2016, the Human Rights Council adopted the *Resolution on the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies*⁵⁴ which calls upon States to “take effective measures to ensure protection and participation of persons with disabilities at all stages of situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disaster”. It emphasized the need to reinforce the implementation of Article 11, including strengthening the involvement and participation of persons with disabilities and their representatives in all stages of disaster risk reduction.⁵⁵ In May 2020, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provided guidelines on COVID-19 and the rights of persons with disabilities⁵⁶.

2.8. Alignment of North Macedonia to the global sustainable and resilient framework

Figure 2. Relevant global policy agreements and North Macedonia accessions (Author)



- **Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Option Protocol** - North Macedonia is one of the 175 parties of the Convention and disability inclusion went higher on the development agenda and advancement in the inclusion of persons with disabilities can be noted. The Convention was signed on 30 March 2007, the Option Protocol was signed on 29 July 2009 and both documents were ratified on 05 December 2011. Since it was ratified in line with the Constitution, it is part of the national legal system i.e. the provisions contained in the Convention are directly applicable. *“In the following period, the rights of persons with disabilities were advanced because of the ongoing reforms in social protection and education, and developments in the areas of non-discrimination, inclusive employment services, deinstitutionalization, access to sexual and reproductive health services, prevention of gender-based violence and promotion of gender equality. A political will to ensure the*

⁵³ UNDRR. *Persons with disabilities in situations of risk: A scoping study on Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). 2022. p. 20. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4c66ua4p>

⁵⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/3ec8datk>

⁵⁵ UNDRR. *Persons with disabilities in situations of risk: A scoping study on Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). 2022. p. 20. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4c66ua4p>

⁵⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/5n3nn3h9>

*active participation of persons with disabilities is evident and reflected in the legislative framework.*⁵⁷ Nevertheless, many aspects are still open and disaster risk reduction-related progress cannot be noted.

- **Sendai Framework** – North Macedonia was one of 187 countries that adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 during the Third World UN Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in March 2015 in Sendai, Japan. It is the main driver for the development of national disaster risk management. Nevertheless, the country has not officially submitted reports on the progress in the achievement of the targets.⁵⁸ Also, “*the country lacks a national disaster-risk strategy in line with the Sendai Framework, and there are significant challenges in complying with European Union legislation and standards.*”⁵⁹ Considering the Sendai Framework Targets, there is no official report submitted and there are no data from the Sendai Framework Monitor.
- **Sustainable Development Goals** – The Sustainable Development Report⁶⁰ assess the progress of the country towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals based on the SDG indicators and the voluntary national review. On track or maintaining the Sustainable Development Goals achievement are the following Goals: 1, 6, 8, 10 and 12, while moderately improving with significant challenges remaining are Goals 2, 3, 5, 15, 16 and 17. Scores stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of the required rate are identified in the scope of Goals 4, 7, 9 and 11, but Goal 13 on Climate Action is with a decreased score.
- **Paris Agreement** – Concerning the Paris Agreement (2015), the country has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions for Climate Change, as well as the Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution⁶¹. Concerning *the Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and damage*⁶², thus far the country has not engaged sufficiently in reporting on loss and damage and in utilizing the benefits from the mechanism, but it “plans to develop a National Adaptation Plan based on nexus approaches in the following areas: water, food, energy, health, biodiversity, tourism, forestry, disaster risk reduction, loss and damage, built-in infrastructure.”⁶³ National Adaptation Plans can ensure coherent integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
- **New Urban Agenda** – The visibility of the implementation of this global framework is insufficient.

⁵⁷ UN. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. P.8. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2kr2xzpc>

⁵⁸ <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/>

⁵⁹ UNDP. *Country programme document for the Republic of North Macedonia (2021-2025)*. p.4. <https://tinyurl.com/2p9xnt2b>

⁶⁰ <https://dashboards.sdindex.org/profiles/north-macedonia>

⁶¹ <https://tinyurl.com/3fbsfcre>

⁶² <https://tinyurl.com/yc7m45ks>

⁶³ <https://tinyurl.com/2vktzybt> p.20

3. DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT CONTEXT IN NORTH MACEDONIA RELATING TO THE INCLUSIVENESS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

3.1. Policy and regulatory framework of the national disaster risk management and disabilities inclusion systems

The existing disaster risk management framework in the country, in the context of the inclusiveness of persons with disabilities, consists of a legislative framework and the related institutional infrastructure. In that context, this section of the document is a review of the crisis management, protection and rescue systems, including the essential normative framework from the public health area in connection with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the national framework for the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, concerning the adaptation to climate change and the strengthening of urban resilience and the increasing importance of the existence and well-being of persons with disabilities, the review includes a brief overview of the essential policy and regulatory framework in the areas of climate change, spatial/urban planning and disability inclusion. Regarding the vertical hierarchy of the legal acts that regulate the reduction of disaster risks, the structure is as follows:

- In the *Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia (2018)*⁶⁴ there is no direct provision about disaster risk management, but Article 125 establishes that the Parliament can declare a state of emergency through regular procedure in case of a natural disaster or an epidemic. Considering persons with disabilities, the Constitution provides their protection based on Article 35, para. 2 & 3 – “*The Republic guarantees them the right to assistance to the infirm and to citizens unable to work. The Republic provides special protection of disabled persons and conditions for their inclusion in the social life*”.
- From the aspect of legal regulations, the laws on protection and rescue, crisis management, firefighting, healthcare, public health and protection of the population from infectious diseases were analysed. *The Law on Protection and Rescue (2004)*⁶⁵ does not include aspects of disability, neither in terms of needs nor the abilities of persons with disabilities. However, the Law provides some general formulations, e.g. in the protection and rescue operations priority is given to the life and health of people (Article 6, para.1, item 2), everyone is responsible to support the protection and rescue operations within their capabilities (Article 6, para 1, item 3); the following categories of citizens are exempted from the duty to participate in protection and rescue forces: pregnant women, mothers and single

⁶⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/4hkfuxze>

⁶⁵ Law on Protection and Rescue (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 36/04, 49/04, 86/08, 124/10, 18/11, 41/14, 129/15, 71/16, 106/16, 83/18, 215/21)

parents and guardians which have or are taking care of a child (Article 42), but persons with disabilities have not been recognized or included. Furthermore, there are no specific considerations on disability in the set of protection and rescue measures i.e. evacuation, sheltering, flood and fire protection or in the education and awareness-raising activities. The *Law on Crisis Management (2005)*⁶⁶ and *the Law on Firefighting (2017)*⁶⁷ do not include provisions relating to disability and/or the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities. In the field of healthcare, the situation is similar. The *Law on Health Protection (2016)*⁶⁸ does not include disability aspects and only the principle of fairness among other groups of the population refers to persons with mental or physical disabilities. The Ministry of Health and health institutions are obliged in general acts, per the law, to determine their tasks for providing healthcare in emergency conditions and crises (natural disasters and other severe accidents and emergencies), to provide funds to stockpile resources, to adapt their work and to cooperate with the Crisis Management Centre, the Protection and Rescue Directorate and other stakeholders (Articles 281 – 284). The *Law on Public Health (2016)*⁶⁹ and the *Law on Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases (2016)*⁷⁰ also do not include the aspects of disability, but the former uniquely formulates that the public health institute and public health centres perform interventions that do not discriminate individuals based on race, gender or different national and social origin, or property status, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation or the status of a person with special needs (Article 16).

- In the *by-laws regulating protection and rescue*⁷¹, no provisions regarding disability and/or the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities have been included. Only Article 5 of the *Regulation on the implementation of the protection and rescue measures for evacuation of the population (2010)*⁷² determines the categories of population that are subject of evacuation: children up to 7 years of age, pregnant women or mothers of children up to 7 years of age, children up to 14 years of age whose parents or guardians have been mobilized in the protection and rescue or defence forces and seriously disabled or immovable persons.
- The context of the *by-laws regulating crisis management* is different because certain aspects are included in different documents. *The Regulation on the methodology for the preparation of assessment of the security threat to the Republic of Macedonia from all risks and dangers, its content and structure, the manner of storage and updating, as well as the determination of the entities in the crisis management system to which a complete or statement is submitted from the assessment (2011)*⁷³ in the General part of the Assessment, the *III. Elements of Risk, 3.3 Demographic profile* refers to the number and charac-

⁶⁶ Law on Crisis Management (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 29/2005, 36/2011, 41/2014, 104/2015 and 215/21).

⁶⁷ Law on Firefighting – Refined text (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 168/17).

⁶⁸ Law on Health Protection – Editorial refined text (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 37/16).

⁶⁹ Law on Public Health – Editorial refined text (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 37/16).

⁷⁰ Law on Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 66/04, 139/08, 99/09, 149/14, 150/15 and 37/16).

⁷¹ <https://www.dzs.gov.mk/direkcija/2>

⁷² Regulation on the implementation of the measure for protection and rescue - evacuation of the population (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 101/10)

⁷³ Regulation on the methodology for the preparation of the assessment of the security threat to the Republic of Macedonia from all risks and dangers, its content and structure, the manner of storage and updating, as well as the determination of the entities in the crisis management system to which a complete or statement is submitted from the assessment (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no.13/11)

teristics of the settlements, the number and structure of the population including the number of persons with special needs, as well as the changes from the last 2 – 3 years. Moreover, in the Specific part of the Assessment, *II. Risk Assessment – Procedures and Activities*, (2) *Vulnerability assessment and exposure of the specific elements to which the risk is directed*, the relevant sections are the following: 2.3. *Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the exposed population (gender structure, age groups, groups with special needs, etc.), with mapping* and 2.5 *Impact assessment (vulnerability and exposure) of the concrete hazard to the population*. As a result, in the risk and hazard assessments of the municipalities, the City of Skopje and the State, according to the abovementioned Article 3.3 Demographic profile, number and profiles, as well as civil society organizations and associations on the territory of the municipality or the City of Skopje are identified. For each present natural and human-made hazard on the territory of the municipality or the City of Skopje, the number and profile of the exposed and vulnerable population are included, e.g. physical handicap, visual and hearing impairments. In the *Standard Operation Procedures for communication, coordination and cooperation between the entities of the Crisis Management System during a declared crisis. (2016)*⁷⁴ in section 4.1. *Functions enabling response and support during an earthquake*, the Assistance for the directly affected persons, and taking care of and transportation of persons with disabilities are done by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Health for 2 hours. In section 7.1. *Functions enabling response and support during extremely high or low temperatures and thick fog*, the Assistance for the directly affected persons, accommodation and assistance to persons with disabilities is provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Health for 24 hours.

- Within the broader context of risk management and disaster risk reduction, the existing national climate change framework was reviewed. The *Long-term Strategy on Climate Action (2022)*⁷⁵ aims to reduce the national net Greenhouse Gasses emissions by 72% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels and increase the resilience of the society, economy and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change. For the monitoring of the socioeconomic vulnerability to climate change, the indicators of social and economic status can include the demographic structure (e.g. percentage of the less privileged or dependent population like women, children, elderly and disabled). As part of the measures for enhanced climate mainstreaming in education, research and development, innovation, and awareness raising to support the development of a legal framework and funding to protect climate-vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. *The Draft Law on Climate Action (2020)*⁷⁶ and *the Law on Environmental Protection*⁷⁷ do not include the disability aspects, neither in terms of the needs nor the capabilities of persons with disabilities. In the context of vulnerability, more attention is paid to aspects of gender and climate change. For example, in *the Fourth National Communication on Climate Change (2022)*⁷⁸ they are specifically elaborated, the *Enhanced Nationally Determined Contribu-*

⁷⁴ <https://eprints.ugd.edu.mk/21882/>

⁷⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/ytbw4w9y>

⁷⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/54etuusr>

⁷⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/3faakwca>

⁷⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/54xm6dpx>

tion (2021)⁷⁹ includes the gender aspects as indicators for the policies and measures on mitigation and *the Third Biennial Update Report on Climate Change (2020)*⁸⁰ elaborates gender mainstreaming in a separate section.

- The segment of spatial and urban planning is predominantly focused on providing accessibility to buildings and facilities for persons with disabilities and the accessibility is reviewed in this document in the context of risk reduction. For example, *the Law on Urban Planning (2020)*⁸¹ includes the overcoming of urban barriers for people with disabilities among the priorities of urban planning. Relevant norms for ensuring smooth movement and accessibility of persons with disabilities, the elderly and children are part of the by-law. *The Rulebook on Urban Planning (2020)*⁸² defines persons with disabilities as persons with permanent or temporary disabilities physical, mental and/or sensory impairments or disorders, where the urban and architectural obstacles reduce or prevent their mobility, accessibility to buildings and areas, and thus their participation in society on an equal basis and their exercising of basic human rights. Ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities is part of the textual section of urban design. Technical details for the movement and accessibility of persons with disabilities are stipulated and the urban plans need to contribute to the increase of equality and equity in access and enjoyment of green urban spaces for all groups of people, especially for the disabled and people with reduced mobility, as well as other vulnerable groups of residents. Preparing, adopting and implementing urban plans should provide for overcoming urban barriers and ensuring functional accessibility and mobility of the land for general use, public spaces, next to and in buildings and areas inside and outside the settlements for all citizens, and especially for people with disabilities and people with reduced mobility.
- Within this study, the area of inclusion of persons with disabilities was also analysed to gain insight into the state of inclusion of the disaster risks reduction in it. From the perspective of strategic documents that refer to disability inclusion, during the review period, the *Revised National Strategy on Equalization of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2010-2018*⁸³ was terminated, while the *draft version of the new strategic document – National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023 – 2030 with Action Plans 2023 -2026*⁸⁴ is under consideration and has not been adopted⁸⁵. To better understand the strategic planning of disability inclusion and the existence of integration with disaster risk reduction, both documents were reviewed.

In the text of the *first strategy*, the reduction of disaster risks was not included and the focus was on improving the position of persons with disabilities as equal citizens who enjoy all rights and responsibilities. The set of established basic principles also refers to the reduction of risks from disasters by creating policies or undertaking measures and activities during any of the phases of disaster risk reduction, such as independence, non-discrimination, re-

⁷⁹ <https://tinyurl.com/38tbzt9f>

⁸⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/2654yamw>

⁸¹ Law on Urban Planning (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no.32/20)

⁸² Rulebook on Urban Planning (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no.225/20)

⁸³ <https://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/FINALNA%20Revidirana%20Nacionalna%20Strategija.pdf>

⁸⁴ <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=61>

⁸⁵ The text of the Draft version of the National Strategy on Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2030 with Action Plans 2023-2026 was published on April 3, 2023 on ENER and at the time of preparation of this study was still available for comments.

spect for differences and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity in common life; equal opportunities; accessibility; gender equality and the concept of children with disabilities.

The newly-proposed National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities aims at the promotion, protection and complete enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with other citizens, as well as the promotion of respect for their dignity. The area of disaster risk reduction is included in several areas of strategic importance, although the term crisis situations is primarily used. Within *Priority Area 2: Equality, access to justice and active participation in public and political life, Special Objective 6 (Persons with disabilities exercise their rights in crisis situations)* identifies two measures that should provide mechanisms for the protection of persons with disabilities in crisis situations, including appropriate protocols, accessible information, accessible shelters, appropriate equipment and rescue aids, etc., but also to strengthen the capacities of protection and rescue officials at the national and local level to deal with persons with disabilities. Thus, for example, it is envisaged to provide mechanisms for the protection of persons with disabilities in crisis situations (mapping and improvement of the availability and accessibility of shelters, provision of accessible information and materials in accessible formats for protection in risky situations and analysis of emergency laws and practices and risks, for ensuring protection and security of persons with disabilities) and strengthening the capacities of protection and rescue officers at the national and local level for dealing with persons with disabilities (organizing regular annual training for the Crisis Management Centre and stakeholders in the protection system on risks on the national and local level for ensuring protection and safety of persons with disabilities, development of protocols for dealing with persons with disabilities in conditions of military conflicts, fires, emergencies). A performance indicator will be upgrading the protection and rescue system with protocols for inclusive protection and rescue. Also, in the context of risk understanding and assessment of risks and hazards and operational planning, the collection and sharing of shared data are extremely important, and as well in that context of the *Special Objective 7: Policies related to the rights of persons with disabilities are based on quality data and are provided with an appropriate budget*. The foreseen measures refer to the establishment of a system for records and relevant indicators (disaggregated data) for persons with disabilities and the introduction of budgeting based on disability (disability-based budgeting). Other areas related to the subject analysis are accessibility, specifically accessibility in physical infrastructure, accessibility in the transport system and digital accessibility (Area 1); access to health care (Area 3); local inclusive communities (Area 7); and public awareness (Area 8).

- In the context of the legislative framework, two legal acts were considered, *the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination*⁸⁶ and *the Law on Social Protection*⁸⁷. In the former, Article 5 specifies disability as one of the grounds of discrimination, including a definition of persons with disabilities as “a person who has a long-term physical, intellectual, mental or sensory disability, which interacts with various social barriers that may prevent their full and effective participation in society on equal basis with others” (Article 4). Disaster risk reduction is not included in the Law, although discrimination based

⁸⁶ Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no.258/20).

⁸⁷ Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 104/19).

on disability and health conditions, among other conditions, is prohibited (Article 5). The latter Law not only defines persons with disabilities as persons who have long-term physical, intellectual, mental or sensory disorders, which in interaction with various obstacles may prevent their complete and effective participation in society on equal basis with others (Article 3), but it also regulates the institutional and non-institutional protection of persons with disabilities and providing financial aid. One-time financial assistance or assistance in kind is granted to a person or a family who is in a state of social risk, as well as to a person and family due to a disaster or epidemic or prolonged treatment of a family member in a health facility.

3.2. Institutional architecture of the national disaster risk management and disability inclusion systems

3.2.1. Institutional framework for disaster risk management in the country

The disaster risk management system in the country consists of the crisis management and the protection and rescue systems. The former is led by the Crisis Management Centre and the latter by the Protection and Rescue Directorate. Additionally, the national system includes other entities such as the key ministries, national and local institutions and public enterprises, local self-government units, the Macedonian Red Cross, civil associations and non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, citizens and others.

- **Crisis Management System** – “To propose decisions and for continuous consultations, coordination, rapid response, efficient and accurate use of available resources in eventual crisis situations, provision of a timely, qualitative and realistic assessment of the risks and dangers to the country, the following bodies are established within the crisis management system: Steering Committee, Assessment Group and Crisis Management Centre.”⁸⁸ The *Steering Committee* is the highest body and has the competences for coordination and management of the crisis management systems including crisis situations. It consists of representatives of the key institutions in the country, e.g. the ministries of internal affairs, health, transport and communications, defence, foreign affairs, the head of the Assessment Group, the representative of the Parliament Commission on Defence and Security and the Cabinet of the President, as well as representatives of other state bodies, external experts and local self-government units. The *Assessment Group* performs continuous risk and hazard assessments of the security of the country and proposes measures and actions for mitigation, early warning and response, advising the Steering Committee on the declaration of a crisis situation. It consists of the directors and deputy directors of the Crisis Management Centre and the Protection and Rescue Directorate, the Public Security Bureau, the Agency for National Security, the Army, the Head of the Department for Security and Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence, as well as representatives of other state bodies, local self-government units and external experts. The *Crisis Management Centre* is an independent state institution that performs activities for ensuring the continuity of the inter-departmental and international cooperation, consultation and coordination of crisis

⁸⁸ Popovski, Vasko. *Policy Study for Crisis Management*. Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” – Skopje. 2020. p. 15. Available at: <https://idsocs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/1-ENG.pdf>

management, provides support to the two abovementioned crisis management system bodies, proposes measures and activities for resolving crises and executes other activities in accordance with the law. On the regional and local levels, 8 main and 27 regional centres for crisis management have been established to inform, monitor, and exchange information and data, to make proposals for managing crises and to prepare risk and hazard assessments.

- The *Protection and Rescue System* was established in 2004 for the protection of the population, environment, material goods, natural resources, biodiversity and cultural heritage from disasters. “*The Central relevant institution in this regard is the Protection and Rescue Directorate located in Skopje and with 35 satellite offices throughout the country – its geographic distribution equals the distribution of the regional crisis management centres.*”⁸⁹ The Protection and Rescue Directorate implements a set of activities for protection and rescue including the organization of PRS, development of protection and rescue assessments and plans, establishment, education and training of protection and rescue forces, etc. At the local level, the municipalities have certain responsibilities that are implemented by the municipal councils, mayors and the administration. North Macedonia is a member state of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism.⁹⁰
- Office of the *National Coordinator for the implementation of the National Platform for reducing the risks of accidents and disasters*. There is no detailed description of the competencies and responsibilities of the National Coordinator.
- *National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019)* - the main objectives of the Platform are prevention, primarily through disaster risk reduction, early warning, action in disaster conditions, reduction of consequences of disasters and actions after disasters.

3.2.2. Institutional framework for climate change in the country

The *Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning* is the main governmental body responsible for the development of climate change-related policies. Within the structure of the Ministry, a *National Focal Point for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* and the *Designated National Authority for Kyoto Protocol Implementation* are nominated and they are responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the related provisions of the Convention and the Protocol. Other key ministries, state bodies, and local self-government units have obligations in the implementation of these policies. Some of them appoint focal points or internal commissions for their area of competence, e.g. *Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Gender and Climate Change Focal Point*, Ministry of Health – *National Committee on Climate Change and Health*, etc. At the national level, within the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, a National Climate Change Committee has been established as a multi-sector platform for high-level support and guidance for the overall climate change policy implementation, but it is not fully functional.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.17.

⁹⁰ <https://tinyurl.com/6chdm2c2>

3.2.3. Institutional framework for spatial and urban planning

The *Ministry of Transport and Communications* is the key government body responsible for the development of land management/spatial and urban planning policies and regulations. The *Agency for Spatial Planning* is in charge of implementing the general planning policies and the overall spatial policy of the Republic of North Macedonia.

3.2.4. Institutional framework of the disability inclusion system

“The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is considered to be the main provider of rights of persons with disabilities since most of the bodies responsible for the issues concerning disabilities work under the umbrella of this Ministry.”⁹¹ It has the main responsibility for the creation and implementation of policies for advancing the agenda of inclusiveness of persons with disabilities. Within the structure of the Office of the Prime Minister, the *National Coordination Body for the Implementation of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities* functions as a body that unites the work of various key stakeholders related to the fulfilment of the convention aimed at the advancement of the position of persons with disabilities. In the *Office of the National Ombudsman*, within the Department for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Persons with Disabilities, there is a team for monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *“The team works on cases of rights violation and discrimination based on disability as well as on legislation analysis and proposing legal reforms regarding the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”*⁹² In the Assembly of North Macedonia, an *Inter-Parliamentary Group for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* has been established to advocate for the enhancement of the normative framework of PwDs. *The Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination* is an independent entity that covers 19 defined basis for discrimination sex, race, colour, gender, belonging to a marginalized group, ethnicity, language, citizenship, social origin, religion or belief, education, political affiliation, personal or social status, mental or physical disability, age, family or marital status, property status, health and other bases.⁹³ The *National Council of Disability Organizations of Macedonia (NSIOM)* is the largest representative association of persons with disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia, founded by the association of national disability organizations to work together to advance the rights and realize the interests of all persons with disabilities in the country.⁹⁴

⁹¹ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 10. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

⁹² United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 10. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

⁹³ https://equineteurope.org/author/macedonia_cpd/

⁹⁴ <https://www.nsiom.org.mk/>

4. SYSTEM GAPS, CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE NATIONAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

4.1. Introduction

In general, following the overview of the current context and the policy and regulatory frameworks and institutional architecture of disaster risk management and disability inclusion, it is notable that the mainstreaming of risk reduction and inclusion of the disability aspects is at a very rudimentary stage with only some reference of disability in disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, health or spatial planning related policies, legislative solutions and practices. A similar situation can be found in the disability inclusion area where disaster risk reduction or the more comprehensive building of individual and societal resilience to disasters and crises is not recognized as an area important for persons with disabilities' existence, well-being and resilience building. *“The gaps related to the situation of persons with disabilities in an emergency- or humanitarian-crisis-related context have become evident during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The existing legal framework for humanitarian crises and state of emergencies is not harmonized with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and does not provide for and guarantee the participation of and consultation with persons with disabilities and the representative organizations of the persons with disabilities.”*⁹⁵ Nevertheless, with the adoption of the global sustainable and resilient development frameworks or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international mechanisms, it is important to strengthen the commitment to the disability-inclusive reduction of the existing and emerging risks. Therefore, aiming to profile the potential development pathway of building an inclusive and resilient society and communities in the country, this section of the study identifies the existing gaps and challenges, as well as the strengths and good practices which are used to formulate forward-looking recommendations and follow-up actions. The review is done as per the phases of the disaster risk management cycle and the priorities of the Sendai Framework, as follows:

⁹⁵ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 41. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

Table 3. Structure of the review of the inclusion of disability into disaster risk reduction

Desk review	Sendai Framework	DRM Cycle - phase
Terminology	Priority 1: Understanding Risk	Prevention/mitigation
Policy and regulatory frameworks	Priority 2: Disaster risk governance	Prevention/mitigation
Institutional architecture	Priority 2: Disaster risk governance	Prevention/mitigation
Inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and their organization	All priorities	All phases
Disaster risk reduction practices and disability inclusion	All priorities	All phases
Collection and analysis of disaggregated data on disability	All priorities	All phases
Accessibility to climate and disaster risk information and communication	Priority 1: Understanding Risk Priority 2: Disaster risk governance Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness and “Build Back Better”	All phases
Investments in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction	Priority 3: Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction	Prevention/mitigation Preparedness Response
Recovery and the needs of persons with disabilities	Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness and “Build Back Better”	Recovery

4.2. Gaps and challenges for the national disability-inclusive disaster risk management

- Terminology** – As can be seen from the review analysis of the policy and normative documents above, the initial challenge is the terminology and defining the category of disabilities. There is a different approach and different definitions or understandings can be found in the documents and practices, both in the disaster risk management and disability inclusion forums. Considering the former, in the country, there is no standardized terminology for disaster risk reduction as per the *UNDRR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction*⁹⁶, and both the crisis management and protection and rescue systems have a different approach to this issue and the most advanced normative act is the *Regulation on the methodology for the preparation of the assessment of the security threat to the Republic of Macedonia from all risks and dangers, its content and structure, the manner of storage and updating, as well as the determination of the entities in the crisis management system to which a complete or statement is submitted from the assessment (2011)* by the Crisis Management Centre, where the main definitions including resilience are based on this

⁹⁶ <https://www.undrr.org/terminology>

terminological foundation. Regarding the latter, “*while the Law on the Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination is regulated in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Constitution and the existing legal framework are burdened with derogatory terminology, mainly using the medical approach to disability. Differences within the disability community itself are not recognized and are not considered within the legislation, strategies, plans and budgets.*”⁹⁷

Furthermore, “*the definitions of persons with disabilities used in various documents are not unified, whereas persons with psychosocial disability are not recognized at all*”.⁹⁸ This is the case in the disaster risk reduction framework, where different terminological identification of persons with disabilities can be found i.e. persons with mental and physical disabilities, persons with special needs, persons with disabilities, disabled and people with reduced mobility. In addition, the importance and the position of the *caregivers*⁹⁹ for persons with disabilities are not considered in the terminological frameworks of both areas.

- **Policy and regulatory frameworks** – The UN Situational Analysis points out that there is a “*complete absence of disability strategies and disability mainstreaming in existing strategies of all duty bearers.*”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the review of the national strategies, policies and normative acts related to protection and rescue as well as crisis management, health, climate change, land management/spatial and urban planning have found practically no reference to disability in country-specific documents with hardly any progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework from the perspective of disability inclusion. Disability inclusion is not a part of the current disaster risk reduction policies and regulations and the existing framework can be labelled as disability inclusion “*blind*”. In particular, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is not mainstreamed, especially Article 4 which requires the national legislation on emergency response and disaster risk reduction and their corresponding policies to be in compliance with the Convention. This insufficient integration was identified in the *UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities review of the Initial Report of the country on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2018* where it was clearly stated that the Committee was concerned about the lack of incorporation of perspectives concerning disability, accessibility and support to persons with disabilities in the national Protection and Rescue Directorate, and the lack of emergency numbers in accessible formats, accessible equipment and provision for emergency and rescue training courses for persons with disabilities.¹⁰¹ Consequently, the recommendation for the policy and regulatory framework was to revise the legislation, policies and guidelines to ensure that disaster risk reduction management and humanitarian aid are accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.¹⁰² Furthermore, “*the legal framework for humanitarian crises and emergency*

⁹⁷ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 6. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

⁹⁸ Ibid.p.13.

⁹⁹ “Caregivers are people who take care of other adults, often parents or spouses, or children with special medical needs. Some caregivers are family members; others are paid.” Available at: <https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/caregivers/>

¹⁰⁰ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 31. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹⁰¹ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Concluding observations on the initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. CRPD/C/MKD/CO/1. 29 October 2018. p.5. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2fpkkwhv>

¹⁰² Ibid.p.16.

is not in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the pandemic situation, people with disabilities were again marginalized, as their specific needs were not appropriately addressed.”¹⁰³

This issue can be reviewed from the strategic/policy and legislative solutions aspects. Considering the former, there is no strategic document on reducing the disaster risks in the country and the number and profile of the policy documents are insufficient from this point of view. The absence of a national disaster risk reduction strategy is contributing to the lack of vision in building inclusive resilience of society and communities and streamlined resilient development. However, there are efforts at the local level aimed at adopting local or inter-municipal strategic plans for disaster risk reduction which would contribute to the alignment with the Sendai Framework Target E: Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies (E-2: Percentage of local governments that have adopted and implemented local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies)¹⁰⁴ and where the inclusion of the needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities is recognized as a guiding principle and formulated in the activities specified in the action plans. These strategic plans are the first policy documents that are integrating the all-of-society approach in the country in the reduction of the existing and emerging risks on the territories of participating municipalities. With regards to other sectors, only climate change includes gender mainstreaming in its policies and documents, as a part of the vulnerable attributes of the population, where persons with disabilities are included only in the draft Climate Action Strategy as part of the overall efforts to monitor the socio-economic vulnerability to climate change and to enhance the climate mainstreaming across sectors. Additionally, these documents are not referenced in Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On the other side, with the same type of documents from the disability inclusion area, no disaster risk reduction mainstreaming could be identified.

With regards to the normative framework, the key disaster risk reduction-related legislative acts, specifically on protection and rescue and crisis management, were adopted before the Sendai Framework, in 2004 and 2005, and they are limited to the regulation of the consequent areas rather than providing grounds for formulation and implementation of comprehensive resilience-building and inclusive measures and actions. This situation is reflected in the by-laws, as secondary legislative acts, where only the Regulation on the methodology for the preparation of the assessment of the security threat to the Republic of Macedonia from all risks and dangers, its content and structure, the manner of storage and updating, as well as the determination of the entities in the crisis management system to which a complete or statement is submitted from the assessment (Crisis Management Centre, 2011), defines that the number and structures of persons with special needs as part of the general and exposed population to particular hazards are to be collected and analysed. Also, the standard operating procedures for communication, coordination and cooperation between entities in crisis situations stipulate two situations where persons with disability are mentioned. In the urban planning area, they are considered with the sectoral law and technical guidance only for urban planning in terms of mobility, accessibility and accessibility to urban spaces and services and these aspects are part of the urban resilience component. Nevertheless,

¹⁰³ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 6. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹⁰⁴ <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/analytics/global-target/13/6>

the specialized standard operating protocols and protocols for the protection and rescue of persons with disabilities are missing. Similar to the policy framework, disaster risk reduction is not integrated into the legislative solutions from the disability inclusion area with the Law on social protection only formulating assistance for persons at social risk in the events of emergencies and disasters. Therefore, “*out of a total of 250 decrees with the power of law adopted during the state of emergency, only two provisions explicitly mention persons with disabilities.*”¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, an important challenge is the fact that “*most of the official documents, such as laws, policies, and circulars cannot be used by persons with disabilities*”, since they are not provided in understandable formats and there is a lack of a policy and regulatory repository which would contain all these documents and could be accessed by all categories of persons with disabilities.

- **Institutional architecture** - “*Translating the language of disability inclusion into meaningful action on the ground requires supportive attitudes, structures and systems within organisations involved in DRR.*”¹⁰⁶ The institutional architecture for disability-inclusive resilience-building can be seen from the perspectives of whether the institutions have included it in their structures, the level of awareness and knowledge of the key personnel on disability inclusion, as well as accessibility to these institutions and inclusive services. Hence, it is important to emphasise the following: “*Most government ministries and departments do not have disability focal points for coordination. There is a lack of awareness and understanding of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities among most government officials in various ministries as well as in the courts and Parliament. Most of the central and local government offices are not accessible for persons with disabilities.*”¹⁰⁷

Lack of awareness and insufficient mainstreaming capacities of the key policy- and decision-makers in these institutions results in the disability-inclusive reduction of climate and disaster risk being excluded from the resilience-building agenda. Alongside the appointment of the disability focal points, there is a lack of employed persons with disabilities in the institutions from the disaster risk management system who could contribute to better planning and implementation of disability-inclusive policies and actions. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of the climate and disaster risks, social inclusion and the essential root causes of vulnerability. This absence of in-house knowledge and technical expertise on mainstreaming disability in the overall climate and disaster risk reduction leads to having disability “*blind*” policies, regulations and practices. Furthermore, there is insufficient coordination between the institutions on the resilience-building of persons with disabilities. The existing coordination mechanisms are weak due to the low awareness and understanding of the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities. Access to the institutions and provision of services was especially difficult and limited during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the various imposed restrictions on the movement or special requirements.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia* – 2021. 2022. p. 15. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹⁰⁶ John Twigg, Maria Kett and Emma Lovell. *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction. Overcoming barriers to progress*. ODI. July 2018. p.5. Available at: <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12324.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia* – 2021. 2022. p. 11. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

■ **Inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations** – “*Listening to people with disabilities and learning about their experiences is essential. Disability advocates have played a significant role in shaping international disaster management agendas, notably the Sendai Framework. Participation in decision-making is considered a key issue by people with disabilities and by their organisations. Lack of coordination or engagement between formal actors and people with disabilities and their representative organisations is widely reported in many countries and contexts, even in countries with progressive disability legislation and relatively high levels of awareness of disability issues.*”¹⁰⁸ The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Article 4, paragraph 3 stipulates that the governments should consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the development and implementation of policies and regulations and decision-making processes concerning disability-related issues.¹⁰⁹ To that end, in the national context of North Macedonia, persons with disabilities are insufficiently included in the process of policy-making in almost all areas and this was particularly evident during the pandemic crisis.¹¹⁰ This situation stems both from the inadequate policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks, as well as from the “*invisibility*” of persons with disabilities and the predominant narrative that they are considered within the broader group of vulnerable population. Additionally, the practices of lobbying for their participation in the public policy-making mainstream are still insufficient and ineffective.

Accordingly, this relates to the climate and disaster risk reduction policies, regulations and practices and the participation of persons with disabilities needs to be ensured throughout the respective processes. Nevertheless, there is an absence of inclusive and participatory decision-making and active involvement of persons with disabilities in all phases of the disaster risk management cycle, specifically prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and this exclusion results in adopting policies and measures that are not fully in line with their specific needs and abilities or the needs of their caregivers. Even though there are possibilities to include the representatives of persons with disabilities in various aspects of climate and disaster risk reduction, e.g. in inclusive and participatory risk and hazard assessment, climate change projections, operational planning, scenario development, preparedness curricula and training, response and recovery and other areas, they are overlooked and there is no practice for their inclusion and participation. “*Practitioners also lack the training or tools to respond appropriately to the specific requirements of persons with disabilities in emergencies or to ensure effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness, response and recovery.*”¹¹¹

On the normative level, the Law on Crisis Management stipulates that external experts can be included in the work of the main bodies from the crisis management system i.e. the Steering Committee (Article 14, para. 1) and the Assessment Group (Article 18, para. 14), but this possibility has not been used with persons with disabilities and their needs during

¹⁰⁸ John Twigg, Maria Kett and Emma Lovell. *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction. Overcoming barriers to progress*. ODI. July 2018. p.5-6. Available at: <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12324.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ <https://tinyurl.com/ycxd8th9>

¹¹⁰ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 11. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹¹¹ John Twigg, Maria Kett and Emma Lovell. *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction. Overcoming barriers to progress*. ODI. July 2018. Available at: <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12324.pdf>

emergencies and crises. A positive example for this is the inclusion of representatives from non-governmental organizations in the work of the Main Headquarters for Crisis Management at the Crisis Management Centre¹¹² where, during the pandemic crisis, representatives of non-governmental organizations participated in its operations. Similarly, there are other cases of stand-alone inclusion of the representatives of non-governmental organizations in the work of the regional/local level headquarters for protection and rescue during some disaster events i.e. wildfires in 2021. Nevertheless, this is not a systematic practice, the relationship is informal, and it can be considered more as an individual action of the participating representatives and the organisations of the PwDs were not continuously included.

This narrative and practice are present in the other key sectors of the disaster risk management system that are mentioned above. For example, “*despite the existence of various items of legislation and strategies, access to health for persons with disabilities remains a major constraint.*”¹¹³ In climate change, especially in the adaptation pillar, the prevailing focus is on the gender dimensions and vulnerable groups of citizens, without proper interaction with persons with disabilities and their organizations. A similar situation can be identified in urban planning, considering the mobility and access to institutions, where there are no systematic interactions or consultations.

*“The challenges of inclusion and partnership need to be addressed well before the disaster or emergency occurs. This involves increasing the representation of people with disabilities on decision-making bodies at all levels, and forging partnerships with disabled people’s organisations.”*¹¹⁴ At present, there is a lack of meaningful participation and contribution of persons with disabilities in all phases of the disaster risk management cycle, but they could be real advocates and agents of transformation building the resilience of the communities, and they can be particularly active in providing valuable contributions to promoting disability inclusion through creation of relevant policies and regulations, development of tools and guidance, and implementation of disability-inclusive practices.

- **Disaster risk reduction and disability inclusion practices** – Insufficient integration in the policy and regulatory framework, ineffective institutional architecture and unsatisfactory inclusion of persons with disabilities lead to disability inclusion being overlooked in the creation and prioritization of adequate climate and disaster risk reduction measures and actions. This is evident from the fact that most of the disability-inclusive practices were stand-alone project interventions financed by international organizations and donors with poor sustainability or ownership of national and local DRR actors. Rarely any practice and implemented action continued to exist beyond the projects’ finalization dates or was replicated or scaled up consequently with new and more complex activities.

The approach to identifying and prioritizing the risk reduction measures and actions is one-dimensional i.e. being driven for the needs of the whole population and available resources instead of the needs and capabilities of various groups of citizens including the vulnerable

¹¹² <https://mk.tv21.tv/sednitsa-na-glaven-shtab-za-upravuvane-so-krizi-pri-tsuk/>

¹¹³ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021, 2022*. p. 21. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹¹⁴ John Twigg, Maria Kett and Emma Lovell. *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction. Overcoming barriers to progress*. ODI. July 2018. p.6. Available at: <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12324.pdf>

and persons with disabilities. The processes of risk and hazard assessments and operational planning for various natural and human-made hazards, including the protection and rescue plans are not publicly available and the general population including persons with disabilities are not informed on the risk profiles of their communities, evacuation routes and public shelters, procedures to be followed, rights and obligations. Furthermore, even the present public documents and information are not published in persons with disabilities-friendly formats. Consequently, this lack of accessible knowledge and information on the prevailing hazards leads to lack of awareness on how to prepare for mitigation and response to these climate and disaster risks. Furthermore, there are no integrated services for supporting persons with disabilities in their communities, especially during the phases of response and recovery, except for the humanitarian assistance provided by the municipal and national organizations of the Red Cross being frequently initiated by international organizations. It is important to emphasize that the present protection and rescue measures do not include the specific needs of persons with disabilities, e.g. for evacuation, rescuing, sheltering, immediate response and early recovery needs.

A positive example thereof is the practice of the Regional Crisis Management Centre in Strumica which is responsible for the territory of the municipalities of Strumica, Vasilevo, Bosilovo and Novo Selo and prepares accordingly the Assessment of all risks and hazards. As an annex to the main document a list of persons with disabilities on the territory with names, contact details and types of disability are attached and serve both to identify their exposure to the prevailing hazards and to inform the emergency responders from the municipalities on the existence of persons with disabilities in the areas of operations to provide a priority response. However, this practice needs to be additionally reviewed from the aspects of the privacy of data, management of personal data and absence of protocols that will regulate this situation in line with the data privacy regulations and practices. Given the fact that the risk and hazard assessment process is not open publicly, the Author cannot verify the existence of this practice in other municipalities or at national level. In addition, the existing educational and professional curricula both for the emergency responders and the citizens do not include sections on disability.

- **Collection and analysis of disaggregated data on disability** – *“Much better data is needed on disability in disaster contexts, particularly on the impacts and outcomes for people with disabilities, the nature and extent of impairments resulting from injuries sustained in disasters, and the longer-term health and other consequences of disaster injuries for functioning and wellbeing.”*¹¹⁵ Climate and disaster risk-informed and risk-sensitive policy and decision-making are based upon the understanding of the climate and disaster risks which includes assessment of the existing and potential risks. Both the Sendai Framework (Priority 1) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (“leaving no one behind” principle) refer to the collection of disaggregated data. Therefore, one of the guiding principles of the Sendai Framework is that disaster risk reduction *“requires a multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability...”*¹¹⁶ In addition, Article 31 of the

¹¹⁵ John Twigg, Maria Kett and Emma Lovell. *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction. Overcoming barriers to progress*. ODI. July 2018. p.4. Available at: <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12324.pdf>

¹¹⁶ United Nations. *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030*. 2015.p.13 Available at: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordren.pdf

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities refers to statistics and data collection (i.e. disaggregated information) for supporting the formulation and implementation of policies related to the Convention¹¹⁷, but the translation of these obligations is not fully streamlined into the existing risk reduction and disability-inclusive frameworks and the practices of their key duty bearers, specifically the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Crisis Management Centre, Protection and Rescue Directorate, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Education and Science, units of local self-government and other disaster risk reduction stakeholders.

*“All these data are one dimensional and tailored to the narrow needs of the collector. It is most often disaggregated by gender, age group and ethnicity, but only to show the number of male and female persons with disabilities in each sub-group.”*¹¹⁸ These data are collected in a very rudimentary form without being systematically collected and uniformly shared between all competent institutions. *“Most importantly, disability is not mainstreamed throughout data collection mechanisms and methodologies. This exacerbates the invisibility of this group of rights holders in the eyes of the policy creators, undermines the overall accountability of the duty bearers, and explains why the government is mostly unable to design and implement sustainable, coherent, and rights-based disability policies, strategies, or measures in most areas.”*¹¹⁹ Concerning this, in its report, the Committee was concerned about the inconsistency and comparability of the statistics on persons with disabilities, the lack of human rights indicators, and the extent of application of the disability-related indicators in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹²⁰ Consequently, the recommendations were to partly apply disability-related indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals implementation monitoring and to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data including on disability.¹²¹

With regards to the disaster risk reduction area, collection and analysis of disaggregated data are limited to some of the institutions, types and uniformity of data sets, information-communication technology supporting tools, their exchange and sharing between the institutions, as well as the updating intervals. In most cases, the climate and disaster risks data are generalized for the vulnerable population, including PwDs, without differentiating the types of disabilities. The most advanced approach can be identified in the practices of the Crisis Management Centre in terms of the collection of disaggregated data and the creation of databases for risk and hazard assessment purposes (General part of the Assessment, the III. Elements of Risk, 3.3 Demographic profile and Specific part of the Assessment the II. Risk Assessment – Procedures and Activities, (2) Vulnerability assessment and exposure of the specific elements to which the risk is directed, the relevant sections are the following: 2.3. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the exposed population (gender structure, age groups, groups with special needs, etc.)) and their upload to the E-Assessment platform. Also, data from the censuses are collected and uploaded in the separate Population Module of the same platform. Nevertheless, for the collection of data on past events in the Information

¹¹⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/3shx8crt>

¹¹⁸ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 29. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.30.

¹²⁰ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Concluding observations on the initial report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*. CRPD/C/MKD/CO/1. 29 October 2018. p.12. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2fpkkwhv>

¹²¹ Ibid.p.12.

and Documentation Database, disaggregation does not include disability attributes. Other institutions infrequently collect disaggregated data on disability and this is mainly done for information purposes or preparation of analysis and similar documents.

In the text of the Draft National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with Action Plans 2023-2026, the section on the analysis of the state emphasizes the issue of the lack and systematic collection and analysis of disaggregated data on disability, especially concerning the total number of persons with disabilities in the country or the establishment of the so-called *Register of persons with disabilities*. Thus, for example, complete data on the total number of persons with disabilities are missing, with different sources having different data sets. In addition to the questions from the 2021 Census, data from the *Income and Living Conditions Survey* conducted by the State Statistics Office¹²² show that about 31.5% of the population has some form of disability, with women making up approximately 34.2% of this number. Also, the state does not have an official record of the number of persons who have been deprived of their working ability. According to the information of the State Election Commission¹²³, in the last elections in 2021, about 900 people were deleted from the voter's list based on the data received from the court about the deprived working ability of the persons. Nevertheless, it is important to note that *“the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, supported by the World Bank, is developing a methodology for collecting and networking data and creating a software solution that will give a precise picture of the number of people with disabilities according to all demographic characteristics of the territory of the entire country. With this, the long-awaited Registry of persons with disabilities will become a reality.”*¹²⁴

- **Accessibility to climate and disaster risk information and communication** - Considering the accessibility to adapted climate and disaster risk information, communication and provision of related services, there is no streamlined risk information flow reaching everyone in the communities and in a format which would be understandable for the persons with disabilities, such as sign language, Braille, simplified language, etc. The existing risk information including early warning notifications and alerts is not provided in accessible formats and through the media and networks that would reach the persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there is an absence of mediums and modalities to deliver emergency notifications and messages to persons with disabilities, e.g. TV and radio, notification through text messages on mobile phones, social media, direct contact for information, etc. Except for some media events or daily news shows where sign language interpretation is provided, the media is not prepared for wide dissemination of emergency information to persons with disabilities. *“There is a lack of representation of persons with disabilities in the media. Media workers are not disability sensitive and often do not know how to present content involving persons with disabilities other than through a perspective based on compassion.”*¹²⁵ Therefore it is necessary to *“provide emergency numbers in accessible formats,*

¹²² *Income and Living Conditions Survey 2017*, State Statistics Office, Statistics Review no. 2.4.18.13/905, pp. 28-31. Available at: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.18.13.pdf>

¹²³ Assessments of the Capacities of the State Election Commission concerning the Disability Issues. ODIHR/IFES. 2022.

¹²⁴ Source: Interview with representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. *Draft - National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2030 with Action Plans 2023-2026*. 2023. p. 15. Available at: <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=61>

¹²⁵ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021. 2022*. p. 12. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

equipment and emergency and rescue training courses for persons with disabilities.”¹²⁶ In this regard, the application of information communication technologies innovative tools and solutions (e.g. social media tools, crowdsourcing, mobile telephony solutions, online, crowd mapping, etc.) could support reaching persons with disabilities in the country in receiving timely risk-related information. To that end, the Crisis Management Centre plans to include persons with disabilities in the 112 system for reporting emergencies and disaster events.

- **Investments in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction** - “In terms of financing, all institutions in the area of disaster risk reduction, from the local to the state level, should plan budget funds for this purpose within their activities that are implemented on disaster risk reduction issues, but a special budget for disaster risk reduction is not planned at any level of organisation.”¹²⁷ In the country, both the disaster risk management and disability inclusion areas are underfunded by the state or the municipal budgets, as well as from other sources. The current financial framework and practices are *reactive* (financing of personnel and organization and preparedness costs rather than prevention and mitigation) and *ex-post* (after disaster events). An example of the former can be found in the fact that more than 92% of the annual budget of the Crisis Management Centre¹²⁸ is allocated to salaries of the personnel and minimum operating costs. A significant part of the measures and actions for building climate and disaster resilience in the country is provided by international organizations and multilateral and bilateral donors.

Considering the disability inclusion area, “the existing legally enforceable regulations across ministries and Public Financial Management do not incorporate the disability issue, which implies that every year public funds are spent for services that are not accessible to persons with disabilities. There is no systematic and transparent consultation with the organizations of persons with disabilities during the budget process. There are very limited technical capacity and know-how within the public sector and among the donors, including UN agencies, to budget for inclusion. There is low knowledge of persons with disabilities in the budget, formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes.”¹²⁹ Also, like in many other areas, persons with disabilities and their organizations are not directly included in the budgeting of implementation of policies and measures related to social inclusion, neither on national or local level. “Disability budgeting at the local level is usually focused on providing financial support for the operation of daycare centres and transport for children with disability to and from schools. Regular general services at the local level are not available to citizens with disabilities unless they are specifically aimed at the disabled and provided on medical or charity grounds, which is contrary to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”¹³⁰

From that perspective, the desk review of disaster risk management and disability-inclusive frameworks and practices has not identified any specific provisions in the financial frame-

¹²⁶ Ibid.p.6.

¹²⁷ European Commission. *Peer review – report North Macedonia 2018*. European Civil Protection Mechanism. 2019. p. 40. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3m2ut6zt>

¹²⁸ Interview with Mr. Agron Buxhaku: CMC is in a worse condition than it was 15 years ago”, Radio Slobodna Evropa, September 15, 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/ycyj2zxc>

¹²⁹ United Nations North Macedonia, UNPRPD. *Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2021*. 2022. p. 36. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mry7bf3j>

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.27.

works on the national and local levels for financing disability-inclusive risk reduction policies and measures. Similar to the case of financing the prevention and mitigation actions, the specific interventions for building the resilience of persons with disabilities are financed from external sources, i.e. international organizations, and multilateral and bilateral donors. Accordingly, with the absence of stable and sustainable financial resources, the gap in the advancement of disability mainstreaming into disaster risk reduction become bigger and lead to the exacerbation of the existing vulnerabilities and create new inequalities.

- **Recovery and needs of persons with disabilities** – The post-disaster phase is particularly difficult for persons with disabilities for many reasons, such as impacts of disaster events, potential lack of supporting systems and services, as well as assistive devices, tools and equipment, hearing tools, caregivers, service animals, health and social services, separation from families, supportive assistance, etc. From the review of the existing frameworks, a streamlined consideration of the needs of the persons with disabilities during the post-disaster phase could not be identified, as the existing practices are informal and the implemented supporting project activities were fragmented without meaningful sustainability.

4.3. Good practices and lessons learned in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction in the country

- *Advancing disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction at the local level* - Following the need to prioritize and implement resilience-building policies and measures at the local level under the Sendai Framework and existing uncertainties, several Macedonian municipalities have embarked on a local-level journey of risk reduction strategic planning. To that end, seven municipalities have already adopted these plans (Konche¹³¹, Karbinci¹³², Veles¹³³, Kavadarci¹³⁴, Mavrovo-Rostushe¹³⁵, Kichevo¹³⁶ and Gostivar¹³⁷), the City of Skopje is in the final stage of the adoption, two municipalities have adopted an inter-municipal plan (Kriva Palanka¹³⁸ and Rankovce) and another two are in the final stage of the adoption procedure (Valandovo and Dojran). These strategic plans aim to advance disaster risk reduction at the local level in the segment of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from disasters and to provide a strategic framework for disaster resilience-building at the local level through the creation of local policies and undertaking a series of measures and activities that are realistic, practical and applicable and that will contribute to the building of long-term resilience to existing and new risks and threats. The disability-inclusive aspects are included both in the structure of the document and the action plan, as they provide a foundation for the implementation of disability-related mitigation measures. Firstly, during the preparatory phase, representatives of non-governmental organizations

¹³¹ <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Konche.pdf>

¹³² <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/karbinci.pdf>

¹³³ <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/veles.pdf>

¹³⁴ <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/kavadarci.pdf>

¹³⁵ <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Mavrovo.pdf>

¹³⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/27p5ecxy>

¹³⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/yedh37k9>

¹³⁸ https://www.krivapalanka.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/slg14_2022-2.pdf

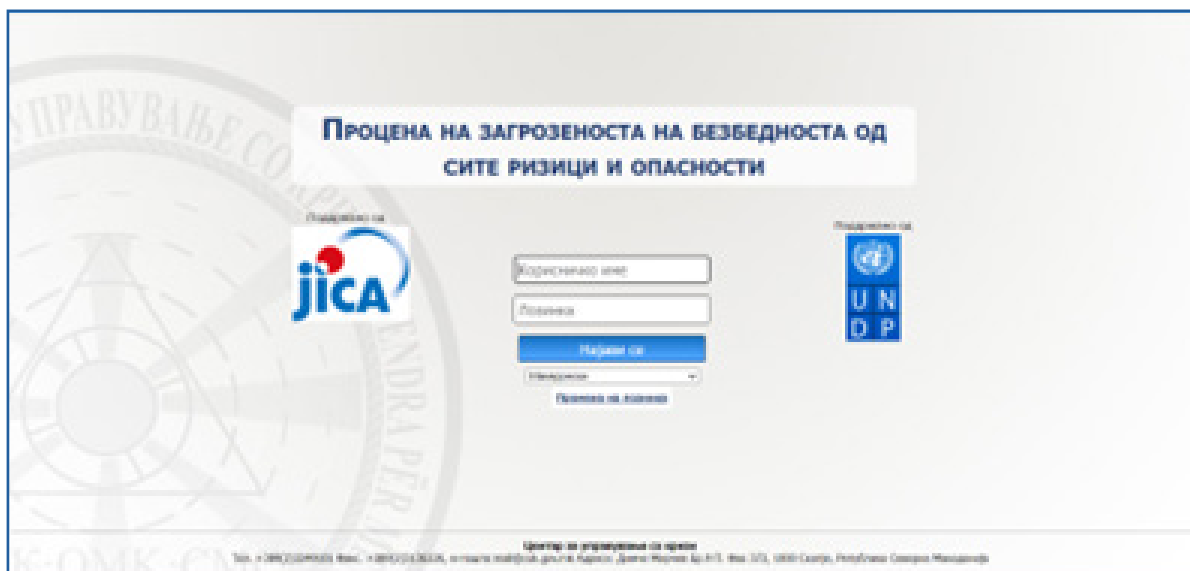
were invited to participate in the consultations for the plan preparation. Secondly, within the scope of the *Principle of equality and protection of human rights*, it was formulated that the implementation of these plans should take into consideration the principle of gender equality and that measures and actions are to be based on the respect of human rights and in line with the needs and the capabilities of the vulnerable groups of citizens including persons with disabilities. Thirdly, the action plans contain particular measures and activities for building the resilience of persons with disabilities. *“They have been identified through a consultative and inclusive process together with representatives of interested parties and their realization is inclusive in partnership with the entities at the local level, but also according to the needs and abilities of all citizens, ensuring that no citizen is left behind.”*¹³⁹ For example, the practical measures and actions are the following:

- providing and setting panic installations and smoke and carbon monoxide detectors for homes of persons from vulnerable categories of citizens, especially persons with disabilities;
 - Inclusion of the most vulnerable categories of the population, including persons with disabilities, that would be most affected by natural disasters, climate change and health crises in disaster risk reduction in order to plan effective support and assistance by mapping the most vulnerable categories of citizens in the area of the municipality, their inclusion in the preparation of assessments and planning documents, realization of targeted activities to strengthen the awareness and knowledge about disaster risk reduction of the vulnerable categories of citizens, including persons with disabilities, preparation of 100 plans for the protection and rescue of households of persons with disabilities/persons from vulnerable groups of the citizens from the territory of the municipality, and targeted education of at least 100 persons with disabilities/from vulnerable groups of citizens in education on protection and self-protection.
 - Participation in the implementation of simulation and training drills of at-risk communities on the existing risks and hazards.
 - Focused strengthening of knowledge and capacities for preparation and response to vulnerable categories of citizens (women, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.).
 - Implementation of health education with special consideration of vulnerable categories of citizens.
 - Assessment of the needs of the population after a disaster concerning the needs of vulnerable groups of the population (women, young people, the elderly, people with special needs, etc.).
 - Meeting the urgent needs of the population after a disaster concerning the needs of vulnerable groups of the population (women, youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.).
- ***Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction solutions based upon the information and communication technology in the country*** – Within the scope of advancing the disaster risk reduction agenda in the country, various databases, web applications, and platforms

¹³⁹ Municipality of Veles. *Strategic Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction of the Municipality of Veles 2021 – 2025*. 2021. p.40 Available at: <https://idsocs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/veles.pdf>

have been established for systematic data collection, analysis, and consequent reporting aiming at improved coordination, cooperation and communication. The risk and hazard assessment process in the Crisis Management Centre is based on the extensive use of information and communication technology supporting tools for enhanced standardized and digitalized analyses, enhanced data collection, facilitated analyses, and spatial visualization for timely, effective, and efficient decision-making that ensures no one is left behind. Initially, it started in 2008 with the development of the Information and Documentation Database for the collection of essential data from emergencies and disasters including information on affected populations, human losses, and the number of injuries. With the advancement of the risk and hazard assessment process in the country, several web applications and databases were established in the last decade, i.e. inventory of the critical infrastructure and other elements at risk, demographic data (population), registry of the capacities and resources of the crisis management system, Nature-based Solutions module (including risks from erosions, landslides, torrents), etc. These systematized databases are integrated into the “E-Assessment” web-based system for risk and hazard assessment that has been established for unified preparation and updating of the national and local (80 municipalities and the City of Skopje) assessments of all risks and hazards. Considering the current normative frameworks and institutional policies, as well as the information and communication technology architecture of the system, this E-Assessment platform was established to facilitate the integrated risk and hazard assessment on the national and local levels and it can be accessed by authorized personnel from the Crisis Management Centre and its regional centres, while the ongoing process of updating of the platform will make some parts of the assessments accessible to the general public.

Figure 3. E-Assessment web page¹⁴⁰



Additionally, the Crisis Management Centre is managing the *Macedonian Forest Fire Information System (MKFFIS)*¹⁴¹ which is the integrated system for the prevention and early warning of forest fires, and serves as a common platform for sharing information and data

¹⁴⁰ <http://procena.cuk.gov.mk/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>

¹⁴¹ <http://mkffis.cuk.gov.mk/>

based on the day-to-day Web-based GIS in which all the competent institutions for the forest fire are connected. Furthermore, this platform is used for the spatial presentation of the above-mentioned web applications and databases of all risk elements mentioned above, including the data related to persons with disabilities: registries of facilities, water facilities and systems, economic and non-economic buildings, and facilities, population and settlements data sets, etc.

Figure 4. E-Assessment Platform Modules



Within the efforts to attain and monitor the implementation of the Sendai Framework objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG13: Climate Action, a new module within this platform was developed aimed to record events, occurrences, conditions, and data on past disaster events and contribute to systematic and better data collection and reporting on damages and losses. Furthermore, this module could serve as the National Disaster Loss Database and could provide valuable input for improved risk assessment, mitigation, and investment in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction. Concerning persons with disabilities, disaggregated data is collected in the context of the objectives for *human losses* (number of dead and missing persons), *for the number of the affected population* (number of injured, persons living in damaged, destroyed, or affected dwellings), *the direct economic losses* (in the housing and critical infrastructure sector) and concerning critical infrastructure damage. Given the SDG13, data is collected on indicators 13.1 (number of dead and missing persons and persons directly affected by disasters per 100,000 population), 13.1.2 (existence of a strategy for disaster risk reduction according to the Sendai Framework), 13.1.3 (number of local authorities that adopted and implemented strategic plans for disaster risk reduction) and 13.2.1 (adopted documents related to climate change).

- **Strengthening the preparedness of children with visual and hearing impairments** - Within its efforts to support the strengthening of disaster preparedness of the national and local stakeholders for timely, effective, and efficient responses to disasters, in 2013 United Nations Development Programme addressed the needs of children with visual and hearing impairments in the event of emergencies and disasters by piloting disability-inclusive activities.

Together with the Crisis Management Centre, the Dimitar Vlahov State School for the Rehabilitation of Children with Visual Impairment and the Ministry of Education and Science¹⁴², *pilot activities for building disaster awareness and preparedness of students with visual impairments* were implemented. They consisted of preparing a set of disaster-prevention-related materials (a manual for children on how to stay safe in case of earthquakes, fires, floods, and other natural disasters in Braille, a colouring book with relief drawings on the same topic), evacuation maps and plans (in Braille) and panic voice installations. “*With this, the Republic of Macedonia became the first country in the Balkans to publish such a manual, which contains useful instructions.*”¹⁴³

Figure 5. Evacuation Plans for the Dimitar Vlahov School in Braille (Photo: Author)



Based upon the experiences of the work with children with visual impairments, a similar approach was applied in *building the disaster resilience of children with hearing impairments* with the preparation of evacuation plans and signs for the Institute for Rehabilitation for Children with Hearing, Speech, Voice and Other Disabilities - Kocho Racin. Additionally, video material on sign language was prepared for earthquakes and high and cold temperatures in Macedonian and English languages.

■ Earthquakes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StlSKGGk01I>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SoQ1589xJf8>

■ Extreme cold temperatures

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHG5Z4Sd8zU>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffQCq79K_Js&t=2s

■ High temperatures/heatwaves

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHVArKcDtLY>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQ77tkD-6Ck&t=2s>

¹⁴² <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/mk/Development-Stories-6.pdf>

¹⁴³ MoLSP. *Initial Report of the Republic of Macedonia in Accordance with Article 35, Paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (First Draft)*. MoLSP. 2014. p. 13. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2p879n6z>

Figure 6. A screenshot from the UNDPMK YouTube channel



Figure 7. Evacuation Plans for the Koco Racin School (Photo: Author)



Marking 13 October – International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2013 - The motto was “Disability is not inability” and the country engaged in marking the day by issuing a poster and posting a blog reflecting the pilot activities for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduc-

tion in the country. “As part of activities to mark the theme of the International Day for Disaster Reduction, the Crisis Management Centre, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) prepared a series of activities motivated by the fact that “involvement saves lives and it enables people with disabilities to be prepared for their safety, and thus the safety of the community.”¹⁴⁴

*Inclusive Disaster Risk Management (online course)*¹⁴⁵ -

Within its efforts to strengthen the resilience of the communities and advance the resilience-building agenda of the key DRR actors at the local level, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe NALAS designed and ran the *Inclusive Disaster Risk Management* course in 2021 and 2022. The objective was to empower local-level officials and practitioners, DRR stakeholders from the social areas, and civil society organizations on the integration and consideration of vulnerable groups in disaster risk management. In the first year, it was open to stakeholders from the Western Balkan countries and territories, and in the second year, the audience was extended to Southeast Europe and beyond. As a result, six practitioners from five municipalities in the country completed the course. Accordingly, the course participants can un-



derstand the concept of Inclusive Disaster Risk Management and its link to Agenda 2030 and SDGs. These results were achieved through four modules i.e. *Module 1: Key terminology and concepts definitions of disaster risk management, the importance of the topic and links to Sustainable Development Goals, Module 2: Needs assessment aspect of DRM (types of assessment as a vital element for planning with a focus on fast needs assessment and vulnerability capacity assessment), Module 3: Development and content of a DRM Plan, including Action Plan for COVID 19 response and identification and formulation of the needs of vulnerable citizens (including PwDs) during the disaster response phase and Module 4: Assessment of the needs of the vulnerable groups of citizens (including PwDs) during the post-disaster and early recovery periods and communication and coordination in crises.*

¹⁴⁴ CMC. *National progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2013-2015)*. CMC. 2015. p.31. Available at: https://www.preventionweb.net/files/42977_MKD_NationalHFAprogress_2013-15.pdf

¹⁴⁵ <http://nalas-academy.com/course/info.php?id=44>

Figure 8. A screenshot from the Course Site at Nalas Academy



Disability-Inclusive Disaster Preparedness As part of the overall awareness raising and education on disaster risk reduction, a *Citizens' Handbook on Disaster Preparedness: Preparedness 72*¹⁴⁶ has been prepared and published. This Handbook provides advice and recommendations for prevention, preparation, response and recovery from existing natural hazards and technical-technological incidents and accidents in the territory of the country. Citizens are active stakeholders in disaster risk reduction and are included as part of the protection and rescue and crisis management systems and participate in the implementation of protection and rescue measures and activities. They should be aware and ready to deal with emergencies and disasters within the limits of their knowledge and capabilities. Consequently, advice for persons with disabilities is formulated within the scope of actions for general actions, specifically evacuation and individual hazards, such as earthquakes, fires, floods, droughts and extreme temperatures.



¹⁴⁶ Vasko Popovski. *Citizen's Handbook on Disaster Preparedness: Preparedness 72*. Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje. 2020. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/29juym42>

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FORWARD-LOOKING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Public Policies Study supports the disability-inclusive resilience-building of society and communities through an understanding of the disability and the disaster risk reduction frameworks, a review of the current context with identification of the existing gaps and challenges and good practices followed by the formulation of forward-looking recommendations. Also, this Public Policies Study aims to contribute to a transformational change in the understanding and practical inclusion of disability in building the resilience of society and communities to crises and disasters.

The findings from the analysis of the state of inclusion of disability in the management of risks and disasters and vice versa indicate the need for the design and implementation of a series of systemic policies and regulations and accelerated activities aimed at advancing the agenda for building resilience in the state, including disability. From the analysis, it was determined that the two systems, for disaster risk management and disability inclusion, are not sufficiently interconnected, as the foundations of both are not sufficiently integrated into their structures and processes. As in many other sectoral policies and practices, persons with disabilities are still “invisible” and are perceived as a group of the wider vulnerable population in the country. Consequently, they are not part of the narrative for reducing climate and disaster risks and do not have fair access to the processes of making policies and decisions and implementing measures and activities to build the resilience of society and communities. The overall approach to disaster risk reduction in the country is still largely *reactive* rather than *proactive*, with the emphasis placed on response rather than prevention and mitigation. In that context, both the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related policies are not sufficiently recognized as basis for building the resilience of persons with disabilities through the development of inclusive policies and regulations, as well as the creation of inclusive practices and actions.

The abovementioned analysis, as well as the existing global and regional sustainable, resilience and social inclusion frameworks and mechanisms, calls for greater inclusion and participation of PwDs in the creation and adoption of policies and regulations, thus this document provides the following recommendations package:

■ General recommendations:

- *A paradigm shift in the resilience-building of persons with disabilities* – They need to become “visible” and be at the forefront of transformative disability inclusion through participation in the designing and implementing disability-inclusive policies, regulations and measures and actions. This should ensure that persons with disabilities would be actively included, as entities that contribute to building resilience. At the same time, in these endeavours, the organizations of persons with disabilities should be actively involved and specify the needs and abilities of all persons with disabilities.

- *Improving disaster risk management in the country through strengthening inclusive climate and disaster risk governance* – Due to the existing profile of risks and hazards, emerging threats and uncertainties, it is recommended to strengthen the current climate and disaster risk governance with the adoption and implementation of policies, measures and actions with inclusion of disability and respecting the rights and capabilities of persons with disabilities. Concurrently, according to their profile, they will be aimed at mitigating the existing and anticipating any new and potential risks and threats, will contribute to greater adaptation thereto, and at the same time, they will enable a transformation of society and communities. The enhanced awareness of the obligations and rights under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the subsequent formulation and adoption of disability-informed policies, regulations, plans and actions will contribute to the above as well as to strengthening the overall resilience building of the society, communities and persons with disabilities.
- *Building strategic partnerships for disability-inclusive risk reduction* – This type of partnership is extremely important for achieving the “*Whole of the Government*” and “*All of the Society*” approaches, which are characteristic of contemporary and inclusive disaster risk reduction. That way, the needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities will come to the fore and they will be a link in the chain of building the resilience of society and communities. Partnerships need to be developed in both the public and private domains, i.e. with national and local authorities, institutions and organizations, as well as with the private sector, research and development centres, academia, the non-governmental sector, and organizations of persons with disabilities. In this segment, it is recommended to promote international cooperation, both for sharing technical support and expertise, as well as for establishing the possibility of implementing measures and activities in which standards and procedures will be shared and improved, including good practices and lessons learned.
- *Effective and efficient collaboration for improved data* – The collection, sharing and analysis of data constitute one of the pillars of resilience, as well as of disability inclusion in comprehensive disaster risk reduction. Therefore, in addition to the improvement of processes, the application of tools and solutions related to data, especially in the context of risk understanding, it is necessary to improve the cooperation with national, regional and global entities regarding data, be it the State Statistical Office or the Washington Task Force on Disability Statistics¹⁴⁷.

■ **Specific recommendations:**

■ **Creation of policies and normative frameworks to reduce climate and disaster risks**

- *Standardization of a terminological framework* that would reflect the essentials of contemporary inclusive climate and disaster risk reduction and integrate the current terminological definitions according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the national framework.
- *Ensuring that climate and disaster risk reduction-related policies, strategic frameworks and action plans are disability-inclusive and in line with the Convention on the*

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/>

Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related policies – In the context of this recommendation, it is necessary to develop a technical checklist to determine the presence or absence of disability inclusiveness according to these global frameworks and mechanisms.

- *Revision, modification of the existing and adoption of new policies and legislative acts within the area of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction* - In this context, the adoption of a national strategy for disaster risk reduction is primarily emphasized, as a framework document that will adequately include disability, the continuation of the adoption of local strategic plans for disaster risk reduction and the creation of specific policy documents for the involvement of persons with disabilities in various aspects of understanding and managing risks. The same applies to laws and by-laws, operational procedures, etc. from the areas discussed above and their modernization, both in the context of the global framework for sustainable and resilient development and given the Convention and other global and national mechanisms for disability inclusion and achieving standards (e.g. standards for accessible infrastructure by the International Standardization Organization or early warning and alerting of persons with disabilities, etc.). This way, a vision and foundations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the framework of building the resilience of society and communities will be provided by defining the roles and responsibilities, mandatory measures and activities, enabling continuous and significant participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations, as well as by defining stable and sustainable financial and other necessary resources. These documents and acts need to be accompanied by action plans that will ensure that disability is included.
 - *Ensuring wide accessibility of official policy documents, strategies, laws, by-laws and procedures to persons with disabilities* through alternate and assistive formats and versions that would be understandable to different groups of persons with disabilities.
- **Building the institutional architecture for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction**
- *Preparation of a guidebook on the concept of resilience i.e. disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction* in different accessible forms and languages and implementation of training on contemporary mechanisms for persons with disabilities.
 - *Sensitization and raising awareness of key policy- and decision-makers* within the disaster risk reduction and disability-inclusion areas to break the “*silos approach*”, to understand and recognize the resilience-building needs and to lead the mainstreaming processes of disability inclusion into the disaster risk reduction and vice versa.
 - *Raising the awareness and building the professional capacities of officials and practitioners* on integration, prioritization and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related disability-inclusive policies and measures in the overall climate and disaster risk reduction in the whole cycle of disaster risk management, i.e. in all four phases: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.
 - *Appointment of focal points or disability inclusion officers in the institutions* (preferably persons with disabilities) that would ensure meaningful leadership and advocacy aimed at advancing the disability-inclusive resilience-building agenda within the frameworks

of policies and competencies of the institutions and facilitated exercising of rights and obligations of persons with disabilities.

- *Improving the institutional framework and mechanisms to ensure multi-hazard, multi-risk and multi-sector coordination for inclusion of disability in climate and disaster risk reduction*, vertically across all levels and horizontally across different sectors, e.g. through establishment of coordination bodies, working groups, or inclusion of persons with disabilities in existing bodies and organs, etc. It is also necessary to include disability within the work and priorities of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, as a forum where opinions, experiences and information are met and exchanged, which would contribute to recommendations and good practices. On the other hand, a partnership with the private sector is also necessary, as it could significantly improve the state of disability inclusion, through the exchange of information, knowledge, technical expertise and providing different kinds of resources.
 - *Localization of disability inclusion* by strengthening the capacities of municipalities, advisory municipal bodies, municipal councils, centres for the development of planning regions, associations, etc. on the application of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sendai Framework and the national mechanisms in policy-making and provision of services at the local level, including climate and disaster risk reduction.
- **Inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations**
- *Raising awareness and increasing the knowledge of persons with disabilities and their organizations* on the contemporary sustainable and resilient mechanisms, including the key documents on global, regional and national level.
 - *Creation of a mechanism for full involvement of persons with disabilities in all phases of the disaster risk management cycle in order to provide significant contribution to the realization of the needs and capabilities of persons with disabilities before, during and after a disaster*, i.e. participation in inclusive and participatory preparation of risk and hazard assessments, preparation of protection and rescue plans and other operational plans, dissemination of information on risks and hazards, implementation of training exercises, organization of adequate preparedness for timely, effective and insufficient response and designing a framework for the recovery of persons with special needs, etc.
 - *Formulation of policies, measures and activities for the inclusion of families or communities, caregivers and service animals* in risk and hazard assessments and planning documents with the aim of improved readiness for a timely, effective and efficient response.
- **Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction practices**
- *Ensuring that all information, tools and methods for understanding climate and disaster risks are available and accessible to persons with disabilities*. This is the only way that they would be able to be efficiently and effectively involved in the assessment of risks and hazards and the subsequent activities of managing the reduction of disaster risks.

- *Integrating disability-inclusive risk and hazard assessments* into operational plans and risk scenarios, as well as into national and local policies and sector strategies, programs and plans.
- *Updating the protection and rescue plans for the areas of the municipalities, the City of Skopje, the state and the entities of the protection and rescue system by inclusion of disability*, especially in the implementation of protection and rescue measures, e.g. evacuation, sheltering, mapping of public shelters and accessibility, processes and procedures for responding to natural and human-made hazards.
- *Investing in and developing disability-inclusive resilient infrastructure which is consistent with disaster risk reduction* through policy-making, designing measures and implementing activities, for example: ensuring accessibility by applying universal design for buildings, structures, critical infrastructure, support for modification of existing infrastructure according to the needs of persons with disabilities and standards for reducing disaster risks, etc.
- *Ensuring that school facilities are resistant to disaster risks, adapting to climate change and accessible to students with disabilities* through the implementation of relevant measures and activities, as well as joining the global initiative for safe and resilient schools¹⁴⁸.
- *Ensuring that search and rescue activities are disability-inclusive* and take into account the needs of people with disabilities.
- *Preparation of an educational professional curriculum for professional education and training of professional resources of the entities of the disaster risk management system, both at the national and local level*, including “organizing regular annual training for the Crisis Management Centre, the Protection and Rescue Directorate and entities in the system of protection in risks at the national and local level to ensure protection and safety of persons with disabilities”.¹⁴⁹
- *Adaptation of the European number for emergencies – 112 for persons with disabilities through the development of an appropriate application and communication with various groups of persons with disabilities.*
- *Preparation of a manual for the protection and self-protection of persons with disabilities from natural and human-made hazards present in the territory of the state.*
- *Strengthening the knowledge and capacities of caregivers/service providers, as well as other persons, such as experts, assistants and support staff involved in the delivery of services to persons with disabilities (health, social, educational, etc.) for the protection and self-protection of persons with disabilities and during the provision of services* through the development of a manual and realization of focused education and training.
- *Organizing training for preparation and response to health crises, including epidemics and pandemics* for entities of the system, persons with disabilities and their organizations, based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁴⁸ <https://gadrres.net/>

¹⁴⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. *Draft National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2030 with Action Plans 2023-2026*. 2023. p. 77. Available at: <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=61>

- *Procurement and maintenance of the necessary material and technical resources for preparedness and response of persons with disabilities.*
 - *Designing and implementing technical-technological innovative solutions for resilience according to the needs of persons with disabilities.*
- **Disaggregated disability-related data collection and analysis**
- *Revising the existing administrative/electronic bases/forms of the institutions for statistical operations to provide disaggregated data for persons with disabilities¹⁵⁰, as well as linking them with the aim of better understanding and analysing climate and disaster risks.*
 - *Prioritizing, collecting, analysing and sharing data on disability, gender and age based on the agreed methodological framework and indicators.*
 - *Provision of data, statistical reviews and materials from the State Statistical Office in accessible format and language.¹⁵¹*
 - *Training of staff of key institutions and collection and analysis of data related to disability for risk and hazard assessments, loss and damage assessments, completing the Sendai Framework module, etc.*
- **Access to climate and disaster risk information and communication**
- *Provision of information and communication about climate and disaster risks in all accessible forms, appropriate to the needs of persons with disabilities.*
 - *Adaptation of key institutions' web pages and content to be available and accessible to different groups of persons with disabilities, e.g. introduction of easy-to-read format, audio description or video content with interpretation into sign language.*
 - *Provision of accessible information and materials in accessible formats for protection in risky situations.*
 - *Sensitization of the media and media professionals on climate and disaster risk reduction and disability inclusion.*
 - *Designing disability-inclusive Multi-hazard Early Warning and Alerting Systems in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ensuring no one is left behind, i.e. the notifications and information should reach every person with a disability in the affected area in a form understandable to them.*
- **Investing in disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction**
- *Introducing budgeting for climate and disaster risk reduction that is sensitive to disability (disability-based budgeting)¹⁵² to ensure stable and sustainable financing of*

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p.78.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p.79.

¹⁵² Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. *Draft National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2030 with Action Plans 2023-2026*. 2023. p. 79. Available at: <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=61>

measures for prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery of persons with disabilities.

- *Designing and implementing social safety nets for persons with disabilities* as part of the adaptation to the stresses and shocks of climate change and disasters.
 - *Financing and implementation of structural and non-structural investments*¹⁵³ in measures and operations for enhancing the resilience of persons with disabilities.
- Recovery and needs of persons with disabilities
- *Identifying the needs of persons with disabilities after a disaster and formulating the relevant framework of measures and activities for their resilient recovery.*
 - *Involvement of persons with disabilities and their organizations in the assessment of damages and losses, as well as needs after a disaster.*

¹⁵³ **Structural measures** are any physical construction aimed to reduce or avoid possible impacts of hazards, or the application of engineering techniques or technology to achieve hazard resistance and resilience in structures or systems. **Non-structural measures** are measures not involving physical construction, which use knowledge, practice or agreement to reduce disaster risks and impacts, in particular through policies and laws, public awareness raising, training and education. UNDRR. *Sendai Framework Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction*. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2w84yfnu>

ANNEX 1 - Who is Vulnerable in North Macedonia and Why?¹⁵⁴

#	Category	Description	Essential reasons for vulnerability to disasters	Disaster impacts
1	Poor People/ Economically Vulnerable Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Category of people that don't have access to adequate income and whose human development opportunities are lower than the average. • Disaster risk is a poverty trap; • The poverty incidence (21.8%¹⁵⁵) and unemployment rate (14.3%¹⁵⁶) in the country are still high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor in basic resources; • Do not have access to vital information, e.g. about disasters in their areas; • Lack of mitigation and preparedness or response and recovery behaviours/skills; • Lack of adequate coping mechanisms, e.g. assets, insurance/health schemes, know-how, etc.; • Urban vs. rural poverty/unemployment, and • Certain social groups, such as women and minorities, have higher rates of poverty incidence and unemployment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly vulnerable to direct and indirect disaster losses; • Greatest share in disaster losses; • Unsustainable coping mechanisms, e.g. food reduction, reduced expenditures, taking on debt, etc.; • Poor access to services; • Slower and more challenging disaster recovery.
2	Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and girls are more vulnerable to disasters; • More women than men are injured and die during disasters; • Some categories of women are more vulnerable to disasters, e.g. the uneducated, the poor, low-income and informal workers, the elderly, persons with disabilities or disease, Roma communities, single-parent families, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver responsibilities, for example for children/elderly/ disabled persons; • Lower levels of education and less access to assets; • Limited mobility; • Fewer connections, networks and less control over their life choices; • Limited access to resources and decision-making processes; • Restricted access to services; • Unpaid reproductive labour and the care economy; • Increased exposure to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden disasters and slow-onset hazards, such as drought and post-disaster settings, double the workload of women; • Lack of privacy and security during response and recovery; • Prolonged economic uncertainties; • Poor access to services; • Increased possibility of gender-based or domestic violence or sexual exploitation; • Slower and more challenging disaster recovery.

¹⁵⁴ UNDP. *Human Development Report 2016 Risk-Proofing the Western Balkans: Empowering People to Prevent Disasters*. 2016. pp. 58 – 66. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2ex2vx2f>

¹⁵⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/3mv68d3z>

¹⁵⁶ <https://tinyurl.com/3katf7xu>

#	Category	Description	Essential reasons for vulnerability to disasters	Disaster impacts
3	Children and the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both categories comprise almost half of the population, while children can be one-third; • Demography specifics lead to a higher dependency ratio; • Lack of specific protocols on how to address the special physical, medical and psychosocial needs or capacities of children and the elderly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great dependency on others; • Physical weakness; • Sensitive to extreme weather events and climate change impacts; • For children, there is lack of sufficient knowledge on protection and self-protection; • For the elderly, limited physical and intellectual abilities and stagnated or declined capacities and capabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More casualties in sudden and onset disasters due to limited mobility, dependency on caregivers, medicine and medical treatment; • They will suffer disproportionately from disaster risk without comprehensive social protection schemes; • Poor access to services; • Not attending school; • Increased challenges to physical and mental health; • Increased needs during the response and recovery phases e.g. care-taking, medicines, etc.; • For children, there are long-term consequences following the disaster impact; • Slower and specific disaster recovery.
4	Persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons with disabilities are vulnerable because of society's attitudes towards disability, physical, informational and technology challenges, dependency on others and dwindling public assistance; • Alongside them, also their family members or caretakers are increasingly vulnerable to disasters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or absence of physical, intellectual or combined abilities to protect and self-protect during disasters; • Absence of their participation on all society and governance levels; • Great dependence on others and needs for care-taking; • Limited mobility; • Building structures are mostly inaccessible for people with physical disabilities and their reactions in a disaster and the provisioning of rescue services is limited; • Limited access to early warning and alerting notifications adapted to their needs; • Insufficient education, information and communication materials and channels for mitigation of and preparedness for disasters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal attitude towards disability; • Reliance on public services that may not be available during the recovery period; • Insufficient disability assistance during response or early recovery phases; • Limited access to public aid; • Specific needs during response and recovery; • Potentially excluded from the recovery efforts; • Slower and specific disaster recovery.

#	Category	Description	Essential reasons for vulnerability to disasters	Disaster impacts
5	Minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular at risk for several structural reasons related to multiple vulnerabilities, such as being poor, living and working in hazard-prone areas and substandard buildings, having inadequate access to high-quality social services and being excluded from decision-making structures and processes; • In the country, the most vulnerable is the Roma minority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable because of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion; • Lack of resources, assets and knowledge; • Poor education; • Lack of timely, effective and efficient disaster and crisis information and communication; • High rates of poverty and unemployment; • Tend to live in high-risk and under-serviced areas such as flood plains or in seismically unsafe building structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly vulnerable to direct and indirect disaster losses; • High share of disaster losses; • Most likely to have their homes and prospects for livelihood damaged or destroyed; • Lack of coping mechanisms; • Discrimination and inequality during response and early recovery; • Slower and more challenging disaster recovery.
6	Migrants, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People on the move: migrants, returnees, IDPs and people moving to urban areas are vulnerable because of unpredictable mobility, settlement in insecure and exposed areas, and exclusion; • Uprooted and dislocated from their societies, communities, networks and safety nets and have little control over their lives; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are more vulnerable than the residents; • The appearance of so-called “eco-migration” - vulnerability resulting from displacement caused by natural hazards, and will become frequent in the future; • Internal migration to urban centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposed due to their unpredictable movement and mobility; • Settlement in insecure and exposed areas; • Lack of information and decision-making powers in their new settlements; • Lack of knowledge of local disaster context, measures and procedures; • Unable to understand early warnings due to language barriers; • Often distrust authorities because of their illegal status; • Often live in ephemeral shelters in hazard-prone areas, such as along riverbanks; • Living in the informal settlements in urban centres that are highly exposed to natural hazards; • Excluded from society and the mainstreamed local politics and disaster risk reduction actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully vulnerable to direct and indirect disaster losses; • Most likely having their shelters or homes and prospects for livelihood destroyed or heavily damaged; • Absence of coping mechanisms; • Due to their legal status and connected barriers highly likely to be excluded from the disaster response and early recovery mainstream actions and measures; • Potential discrimination during the response and early recovery phases; • Limited or absence of access to public aid.

#	Category	Description	Essential reasons for vulnerability to disasters	Disaster impacts
7	Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their livelihood is heavily dependent on natural cycles; • Almost half of the land in the WB region is agricultural and employs approx. 18% of the population; • Smallholdings comprise large portions of farmers; • The impact of recent extreme weather events and projected climate change impacts will further exacerbate their vulnerabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the agricultural land is exposed to various natural hazards; • Most farmers lack the resources and assets for mitigation, response and recovery from disasters; • Most farmers own small plots of land; • Insufficient early warning systems in the rural areas, especially for sudden disasters; • Lack of sustainable financing schemes and mechanisms, e.g. crop insurance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully vulnerable to direct and indirect disaster losses; • Insufficient resources and assets for resilient recovery; • In most cases, post-disaster assessment is done on the actual damages and not on the projected losses; • Absence of insurance schemes.

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