Comments to General Comment on Article 11 - Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

February 2023

Japan Disability Forum

Based on Japan's painful experience with the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, which killed more than 15,000 people, and in which the fatality rate of persons with disabilities in the affected areas was more than twice that of overall residents, we offer the following observations to General Comment on Article 11.

1. Ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities in the enactment of guidelines for disaster prevention and reduction, as well as reconstructing livelihoods.

The State Party should let persons with disabilities and their families to substantively participate as members of national/local government and regional councils related to disaster prevention and reduction, as well as reconstructing livelihoods in order to ensure effective implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

1. Effective use of personal information to confirm safety immediately following a disaster and the establishment of individual evacuation plans

Administrative organs and organizations of persons with disabilities should hold discussions in advance so that personal information held by public administrations can be used effectively to confirm the safety of persons with disabilities immediately following a disaster. In addition, all local governments should establish individual evacuation plans for all who have need in the registries as soon as possible. Furthermore, standards to support the evacuation of persons with disabilities should be developed in line with international standards, including the Sphere Standards.

1. Information Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation for Information in Times of Disaster

The provision of information at the time of a disaster by public administrations and organs of the media, and the provision of information at disaster sites such as shelters, should be conducted in all forms of accessible communication of the choice by persons with disabilities.

1. Shelters

The State Party should make public shelters used by many citizens inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities as well as take effective national measures to ensure privacy. In addition, standards for living conditions in shelters should be developed in accordance with international standards, including the Sphere Standards, and with the participation of persons with disabilities.

1. Temporary Housing

The State Party should take effective national measures to make general temporary housing used by many citizens inclusive and accessible in accordance with the particular characteristics of each disability

1. In Relation to the Nuclear Plant Disaster in Fukushima

In Fukushima, people were forced to repeatedly move between shelters during the Great East Japan Earthquake due to the nuclear plant disaster, and there were persons with disabilities who became physically weak and died from hypothermia or other reasons. Therefore, referring to the experience of persons with disabilities who were affected in Fukushima by the Great East Japan Earthquake, the State Party should establish a committee to discuss how persons with disabilities living near nuclear power plants can safely evacuate in case a nuclear plant disaster occurs.

1. In Relation to the Spread of COVID-19

In light of the spread of COVID-19, the system of medical care, testing, and vaccination should be drastically expanded to ensure that persons with disabilities are not given lower priority in medical examinations and treatment, and that other measures, including hospitalization, are appropriately provided to those who need them. In addition, a system should be established for information accessibility, reasonable accommodation on information and personal assistance based on the characteristics of disabilities during hospitalization and hotel treatment.