

An Assessment of Disability Inclusion in Albania's Disaster Risk Reduction System

Dr. Blerta Drenofci, PhD
Logos University College, Tirana, Albania

Abstract

Albania is among the most disaster-prone countries in Europe, frequently struck by earthquakes, floods, wildfires, droughts, and extreme weather. Persons with disabilities (PWDs), 6.5% of the adult population and 10% of children, face mortality rates in disasters estimated to be two to four times higher than those of the general population. Yet Albania's civil protection system has long been disability-blind: national strategies, local emergency plans, early warning systems, and evacuation protocols have been drawn up with little regard for the specific needs of PWDs. Despite the country's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012 and the adoption of a Civil Protection Law in 2019 that explicitly references PWDs, the gap between legal obligation and operational practice remains wide. This paper analyses results from a structured institutional survey administered to central government bodies, prefectures, and municipalities across Albania. Drawing on responses from 26 institutions, the study examines institutional awareness, policy implementation, training levels, communication practices, and inter-institutional cooperation on the inclusion of PWDs in disaster risk reduction (DRR). Key findings include the near-total exclusion of PWDs from emergency drills, reported by 53.8% of institutions; the absence of accessible emergency communication formats in 65.4% of institutions; severe shortages of trained personnel; and the identification of insufficient financial resources as the primary barrier by 92.3% of respondents. The findings reveal a wide gap between formal commitments, including Albania's Law on Civil Protection (2019), the National DRR Strategy and Action Plan (2023–2030), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and what actually happens in practice. The paper identifies the key deficiencies and closes with seven concrete policy and operational recommendations, covering dedicated budget lines, mandatory training, disability-inclusive early warning systems, evacuation protocols, participatory mechanisms, disaggregated data systems, and accountability frameworks, aimed at building a rights-based, inclusive DRR system in Albania.

Keywords: disaster risk; persons with disabilities; Albania; inclusive policy; civil protection; Sendai framework

1. Introduction

Albania's geography and climate make it one of the most hazard-exposed countries in the Western Balkans. The territory sits on an active tectonic zone and experiences a range of recurring hazards: floods, especially in the north-western lowlands around Shkodër, inundated on at least ten occasions since 2010; wildfires across central and eastern forests; droughts in the south; and snowstorms at higher elevations.¹ The World Risk Index (2024) ranks Albania 5th in Europe and 76th globally in disaster risk, factoring in exposure, vulnerability, susceptibility, and limited coping and adaptive capacity.² EM-DAT data show that between 1979 and 2019, floods accounted for roughly 38% and earthquakes for 15% of recorded catastrophic events.³ The November 2019 earthquake, at magnitude 6.4, killed 51 people and left more than 17,000 homeless, the worst natural disaster in Albania's recent history.⁴

Within this context, the situation of PWDs deserves closer examination. Research consistently documents that PWDs face disproportionately high mortality in disasters, with death rates two to four times those of the general population.⁵ The evidence goes back at least two decades: Wisner's foundational work on disability and earthquake risk showed that standard disaster planning routinely leaves PWDs exposed precisely because they are treated as passive beneficiaries rather than as agents capable of participating in risk reduction.⁶ Cannon similarly argued that social vulnerability, including disability, is systematically underweighted in risk assessments that focus on physical exposure rather than the uneven capacities of affected populations.⁷ In Albania, that vulnerability is further amplified by structural barriers: inaccessible built environments, no disability-adapted early warning systems, and emergency communication that does not reach people with sensory or cognitive impairments.⁸ National data put the share of PWDs at approximately 6.5% of adults and 10% of children,⁹ a population that faces heightened disaster exposure because physical,

¹ Ministria e Mbrojtjes (2023). *Strategjia Kombëtare për Zvogëlimin e Rrezikut nga Fatkeqësitë* [National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction]. Tiranë: Ministria e Mbrojtjes.

² Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft / IFHV (2024). *WeltRisikoBericht 2024* [World Risk Report 2024]. Berlin: Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft.

³ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) (n.d.). EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database. Retrieved from <http://www.emdat.be/>

⁴ World Bank (2020). *Albania Disaster Risk Profile*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group.

⁵ UNDRR (2023). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023*. Geneva: UNDRR.

⁶ Wisner, B. (2002). *Disability and disaster: Victimhood and agency in earthquake risk reduction*. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 24(9), 10–11.

⁷ Cannon, T. (2008). *Reducing people's vulnerability to natural hazards: Communities and resilience*. WIDER Research Paper 2008/034. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.

⁸ UNDRR / OHCHR (2020). *Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Situations*. Geneva: UNDRR.

⁹ INSTAT (2024). *Statistika*. Tiranë: INSTAT; MSHMS (2021). *Plani Kombëtar për Personat me Aftësi të Kufizuara 2021–2025* [National Plan for Persons with Disabilities]. Tiranë: MSHMS.

sensory, cognitive, and psychosocial barriers prevent them from accessing protective services, information, and evacuation routes on the same terms as other citizens.¹⁰

Albania has made significant legislative progress. The country ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2012; Article 11 of the Convention obliges States to ensure the protection and safety of PWDs in humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.¹¹ The Law on Civil Protection (No. 45/2019) takes explicit positions on disability: civil emergency plans must prioritise PWDs (Article 14/3); alarm systems must include modalities accessible to people with hearing, visual, and intellectual disabilities (Article 50/2); and PWDs have an explicit right to request protection from civil protection structures (Article 57/2).¹² The National DRR Strategy and Action Plan (2023–2030), developed in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) and EU guidelines, acknowledges the vulnerability of specific groups including PWDs.¹³ Yet legal documents and operational reality manifest significant discrepancies: five years on from the Civil Protection Law, its implementing by-laws still lack standard operating procedures for disability-inclusive actions; only one of Albania's 61 municipalities, Lezhë, has drafted a local DRR plan; and no disability-specific early warning system exists anywhere in the country.¹⁴

This discrepancy between legal obligation and practice is not peculiar to Albania. Gaillard and colleagues have argued that the dominant framing in DRR policy, which positions PWDs as a 'vulnerable group' requiring protection rather than as agents capable of contributing to resilience-building, systematically marginalises them from planning processes.¹⁵ The introduction of the CRPD oriented the formal discourse toward a rights-based model,¹⁶ yet Kelman, Stough and Oven observe that even within this rights framework, disability remains an add-on consideration in DRR practice rather than a mainstreamed dimension of planning, a gap that holds across both high- and lower-income country contexts.¹⁷

This paper examines those gaps through a systematic analysis of survey data collected from central and local government institutions across Albania. The study draws on

¹⁰ Peek, L. & Stough, L.M. (2010). Children with disabilities in the context of disaster: A social vulnerability perspective. *Child Development*, 81(4), 1260–1270.

¹¹ United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. New York: UN.

¹² Republic of Albania (2019). *Law No. 45/2019 On Civil Protection*. Tirana: Official Gazette.

¹³ UNDRR (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. Geneva: UNDRR.

¹⁴ Ministria e Mbrojtjes (2023), op. cit.

¹⁵ Gaillard, J.C., Sanz, K., Balgos, B.C., Dalisay, S.N.M., Gorman-Murray, A., Smith, F. & Toelupe, V. (2017). Beyond vulnerability and capacity: A call and a vision for an expanded politics of disaster risk reduction. *Disasters*, 41(1), 74–98.

¹⁶ Kayess, R. & French, P. (2008). Out of darkness into light? Introducing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Human Rights Law Review*, 8(1), 1–34.

¹⁷ Kelman, I., Stough, L.M. & Oven, K.J. (2020). Disability and disasters: Explorations and exchanges. In I. Kelman (Ed.), *Disaster by Choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 193–210.

Albania's international obligations and the evidence base on disability-inclusive DRR (Di-DRR), and derives practical recommendations from the findings.

The paper comprises five sections, organised as follows: section 2 describes the methodology; section 3 presents the survey findings across six thematic areas; section 4 discusses the results against the national policy context and the international literature; and section 5 sets out conclusions and recommendations.

2. Analysis and results

2.1. Methodology

The empirical basis of this paper is a structured institutional questionnaire, complemented by desk research on the legal, policy, and institutional framework for DRR and disability inclusion in Albania. The questionnaire contained approximately 50 questions distributed across six thematic sections and was sent online to all central and local government institutions with formal competences in implementing DRR policy and disability legislation.

The target population comprised the 12 prefectures of Albania, approximately 40 municipalities, central government agencies, and NGOs active in the DRR and disability sectors. The questionnaire was distributed through official institutional email channels, so that responses came from officials with direct knowledge of their institution's practices. Around 50% of contacted institutions responded, producing a dataset of 26 completed questionnaires. The sample covers a cross-section of institutional types, levels of governance, and geographic locations.

The six thematic sections addressed: (i) general institutional information, including governance level, staff profile, and leadership representation of PWDs; (ii) awareness of and compliance with national civil protection and disability legislation; (iii) civil protection planning, specifically the existence of disability-specific evacuation protocols and the participation of PWDs in emergency drills; (iv) inclusion and participation mechanisms, meaning how PWDs and their representative organisations engage in policy development and decision-making; (v) staff capacity and training on disability-inclusive DRR; and (vi) infrastructure accessibility and inter-institutional collaboration. The final section gathered respondents' views on the key challenges they face and the measures they consider most effective.

Quantitative data were analysed, with frequency distributions calculated for each item. Responses are expressed as percentages of the total sample. The analysis covers evaluation-aimed questions measuring institutional capacities, gaps, and priorities; circumstantial verification questions used for data quality control are not presented here but are included in the full dataset. The findings are illustrated through charts

derived directly from the survey responses (Figures 1–5). The desk research drew on national legislation, government strategies, and peer-reviewed publications, providing the interpretive framework for the discussion in Section 4.

2.2. Data Analysis

2.2.1. Institutional Representation of Persons with Disabilities

Only 30.8% of respondent institutions reported having staff with disabilities in leadership positions; 69.2% did not (Figure 1). The finding echoes broader evidence on the exclusion of PWDs from decision-making structures in Albania¹⁸ and has direct bearing on the quality of DRR planning: institutions whose leadership includes PWDs are more likely to account for disability-specific needs when designing emergency preparedness and response measures.¹⁹

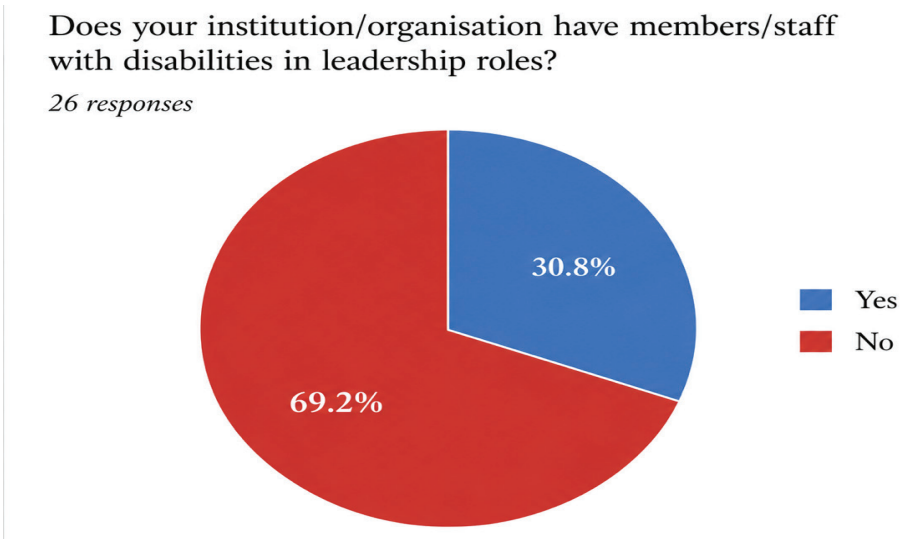


Figure 1. Representation of Persons with Disabilities in Leadership Roles within Surveyed Institutions (%). Source: Survey data, 2025.

On community engagement, 53.8% of respondents described their institution’s outreach to local communities on DRR awareness, specifically targeting PWDs, as occasional, and 26.9% as regular. Only 19.2% reported rare engagement; no institution indicated none at all. The World Health Organization estimates that effective disability-inclusive outreach requires systematic, planned engagement with disabled

¹⁸ MSHMS, Ministria e Shëndetësisë dhe Mbrojtjes Sociale (2021). Plani Kombëtar për Personat me Aftësi të Kufizuara 2021–2025 [National Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021–2025]. Tiranë: MSHMS.

¹⁹ Stough, L.M. & Sharp, A.N. (2021). Disaster case management and disability: Identifying unmet needs. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 55, 102073.

persons' organisations (DPOs) rather than episodic consultation.²⁰ The picture that emerges from Albania is of scattered, event-driven activity far short of that standard.

2.2.2. Legal and Policy Framework: Awareness and Implementation

Legislative awareness is high: 92.3% of institutions reported familiarity with national civil protection and disaster management legislation. The question is what institutions do with that knowledge. When asked whether the legislation adequately addresses the needs of PWDs, respondents split almost evenly: 46.2% considered it inclusive, 53.8% only partially, even as the Civil Protection Law and the CRPD are formally on the books.²¹

The gap widens further when it comes to implementation. Only 23.1% of institutions considered the legislation easily implementable in ways that serve PWDs; 76.9% said implementation is only partial. The obstacle is not indifference but operational incapacity, a pattern Twigg and colleagues document systematically, showing that disability inclusion in DRR stalls at precisely the point where general policy must be converted into budgeted, staffed, and monitored operational action.²² Tozier de la Poterie and Baudoin reach a parallel conclusion on the Sendai Framework, finding that formal adoption at national level rarely translates into change at sub-national level where disasters are actually managed.²³

5. Do you think the national legislation on disaster management (civil protection) is inclusive and addresses the needs of persons with disabilities?

26 responses

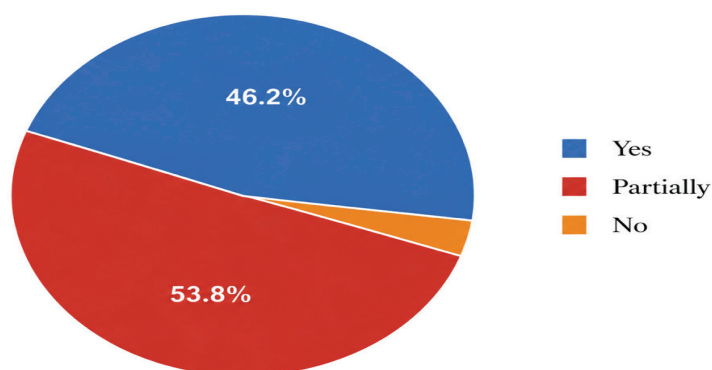


Figure 2. Institutional Assessment of National Legislation on Civil Protection as Inclusive of the Needs of Persons with Disabilities (%). Source: Survey data, 2025.

²⁰ World Health Organization (2011). World Report on Disability. Geneva: WHO / World Bank.

²¹ United Nations (2006), CRPD, op. cit.

²² Twigg, J., Lovell, E., Schofield, H. & Morinière, L. (2018). Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction: Overcoming obstacles and integrating approaches. London: Overseas Development Institute.

²³ Tozier de la Poterie, A. & Baudoin, M.A. (2015). From Hyogo to Sendai: Shifts in priorities and actors in international disaster risk reduction. International Journal of Disaster Risk Science, 6(3), 205–212.

Familiarity with the National DRR Strategy and Action Plan (2023–2030) was solid: 80.8% of institutions reported full awareness, with a further 15.4% partially familiar. Knowledge of international frameworks is a different story. Only 19.2% of institutions reported fully implementing practices aligned with the Sendai Framework;²⁴ 23.1% reported partial implementation; 11.5% reported none. Most striking is the 46.2% who were simply unfamiliar with Sendai principles, the very instrument that underpins Albania's own DRR strategy. This resonates with Tozier de la Poterie and Baudoin's finding that operational uptake at sub-national level lags far behind formal adoption at national level.²⁵

On institution-specific disability policies, the data are particularly thin. Only 7.7% of institutions have formal, dedicated policies for addressing PWD needs in DRR; 23.1% are in the process of developing them; 30.8% have none; and 34.6% were unsure. For most of Albania's public administration, disability mainstreaming in DRR is at best an intention rather than an operational reality.

2.2.3. Civil Protection: Evacuation Protocols and Emergency Drills

Asked whether their civil protection plans include specific evacuation protocols for people with physical, visual, hearing, or cognitive disabilities, only 19.2% of institutions confirmed that such protocols exist; an equal share (19.2%) said they do not. More than four in ten respondents (46.2%) were unsure what their own institution's protocols contain, a result that reflects not only the absence of disability provisions but poor internal knowledge management more broadly. A further 15.4% reported no civil protection plan for PWDs at all.

The inclusion of PWDs in emergency drills is even weaker (Figure 3). Only 3.8% of institutions reported systematically including PWDs; 23.1% do so occasionally. The majority, 53.8%, do not include PWDs in drills or simulations at any point. The remaining 19.2% were uncertain. Emergency personnel who have never trained alongside PWDs in a controlled setting are not in a position to respond effectively to their needs when a real disaster strikes.²⁶ Phibbs and colleagues found similar patterns after the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, where the exclusion of PWDs from pre-disaster planning and exercises directly increased casualty rates and recovery difficulties.²⁷

²⁴ UNDRR (2015), Sendai Framework, op. cit.

²⁵ Tozier de la Poterie & Baudoin (2015), op. cit.

²⁶ Stough, L.M. & Kelman, I. (2018). People with Disabilities and Disasters. In H. Rodríguez, W. Donner & J.E. Trainor (Eds.), *Handbook of Disaster Research* (2nd ed., pp. 225–242). Springer.

²⁷ Phibbs, S., Good, G., Severinsen, C., Woodbury, E. & Williamson, K. (2015). Emergency preparedness and perceptions of vulnerability among disabled people following the Christchurch earthquakes. *Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*, 19(1), 10–18.

4. Does your institution have specific initiatives or policies (a policy document, strategy, or specific plan) to address the needs of persons with disabilities in disaster management and risk reduction?

26 responses

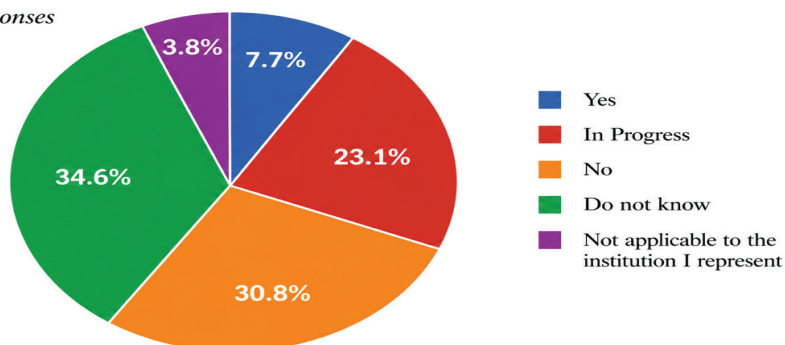


Figure 3. Existence of Specific Institutional Policies or Initiatives to Address the Needs of Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Management and Risk Reduction (%). Source: Survey data, 2025.

2.2.4. Inclusion, Participation, and Communication Mechanisms

On mechanisms for PWD participation in policy development and DRR strategy review, institutions divided evenly: 50% reported having some mechanism in place, 50% did not. Among those that do, the dominant approach is public hearings (57.7%). Meetings and forums were mentioned by 15.4% and dedicated working groups by only 11.5%; 15.4% reported no mechanism at all. Public hearings are a blunt instrument: they are often physically inaccessible, information is rarely provided in advance in accessible formats, and the format tends to favour participants who are already well-connected and articulate. Mitchell and colleagues found that meaningful consultation with marginalised groups requires deliberate, resource-backed design, not just open-door events.²⁸

On feedback and communication, only 19.2% of institutions reported fully structured mechanisms for gathering input from PWDs and their organisations in policy reviews; 61.5% described their arrangements as partial; 19.2% had none. Only 38.5% reported having any structured communication practice with PWDs during decision-making processes. Aldrich and Meyer's work on social capital and community resilience underlines why this matters: communities whose most vulnerable members are systematically excluded from governance processes develop weaker collective capacity to absorb and recover from shocks.²⁹

²⁸ Mitchell, T., Tanner, T. & Lussier, K. (2013). We know what we need: South Asian women speak out on climate change adaptation. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

²⁹ Aldrich, D.P. & Meyer, M.A. (2015). Social capital and community resilience. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(2), 254–269.

The accessibility of official documents and materials in alternative formats, Braille, sign language, simplified text, is perhaps the clearest measure of how far institutions are from meeting their obligations. Only 7.7% reported full availability of alternative formats; 26.9% partial; and 65.4%, nearly two in three, none at all. Accessible information before, during, and after a disaster is a legal requirement under Article 50/2 of Albania's Civil Protection Law³⁰ and Article 9 of the CRPD,³¹ and it is a practical matter of life and safety for people with sensory or cognitive impairments who cannot access standard formats.³²

Financial commitment to inclusion is similarly limited. Only 30.8% of institutions reported specific budget allocations for inclusive practices in policy-making and programme implementation. Only 19.2% had carried out any audit or evaluation specifically focused on inclusion in the policy process.

2.2.5. Capacities, Training, and Inter-Institutional Collaboration

Trained human resources in disability-inclusive DRR are scarce. Only 26.9% of surveyed institutions reported staff with specific competences in addressing PWD needs within disaster management; 42.3% confirmed they have no such trained personnel; and 26.9% were uncertain. On dedicated staff to assist PWDs during disasters, 46.2% reported having them, while 50% did not. Stough and Sharp documented a similar deficit, finding that without dedicated case managers trained to work with PWDs in disaster contexts, existing protocols fail to translate into effective on-the-ground support.³³

Inter-institutional collaboration on these issues is mostly ad hoc. Only 11.5% of institutions reported regular cooperation with partner organisations on DRR and disability; 61.5% engage only occasionally; and 26.9% not at all. Without sustained working relationships between civil protection agencies and disability organisations, at national, regional, and local levels, coordinated inclusive response remains out of reach. Monitoring of inclusive practices is similarly absent: only 15.4% of institutions have a dedicated monitoring system; 38.5% have none; and 46.2% were unsure.

2.2.6. Key Challenges and Priority Measures

Respondents were asked to identify the main barriers to disability inclusion in DRR (Figure 4). Insufficient financial resources came first, cited by 92.3%, a margin that underscores the extent to which underfunding drives the gap. Limited training and the lack of inclusive communication systems were each cited by 46.2%. An

³⁰ Republic of Albania (2019), Law No. 45/2019, op. cit.

³¹ United Nations (2006), CRPD, op. cit.

³² UNDRR / OHCHR (2020), op. cit.

³³ Stough & Sharp (2021), op. cit.

unfavourable legal framework was identified by 11.5% and weak inter-institutional cooperation by 15.4%. The World Bank's 2017 disaster risk profile for Albania similarly flagged financing and human capacity as the central constraints on the country's civil protection system.³⁴

3. What are the main challenges you face (or believe exist) regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster management and risk reduction? (You may choose more than one option)

26 responses

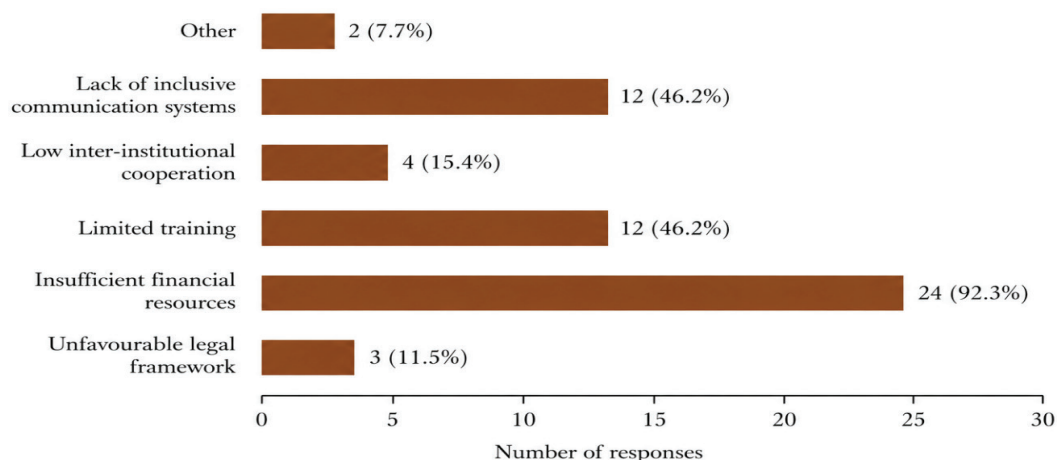


Figure 4. Main Challenges to the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Management and Risk Reduction (% , multiple responses permitted). Source: Survey data, 2025.

When asked which measures would most improve the situation (Figure 5), training programme development ranked first (76.9%), followed by increased funding (69.2%), stronger inter-institutional collaboration (65.4%), better equipment and technology (65.4%), and establishing volunteer groups (53.8%). Improving the legal and policy framework was cited by just 23.1%, a figure that reflects a widespread sense that the current legislative base is not the main bottleneck. What is lacking is the money, personnel, and coordination to put it into practice.

³⁴ World Bank (2020), op. cit.

2. What measures do you think would improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in this process? (You may choose more than one option)

26 responses

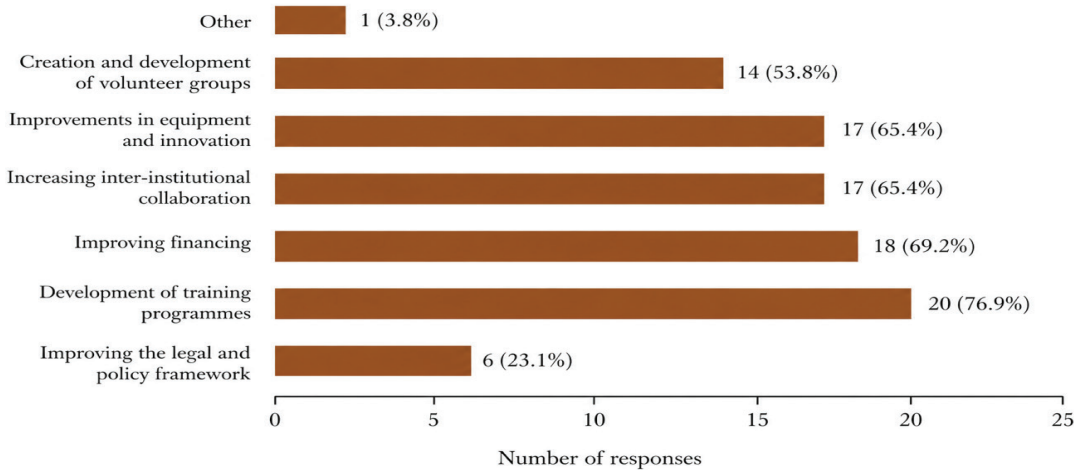


Figure 5. Measures Considered Most Effective for Improving the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Management (% , multiple responses permitted). Source: Survey data, 2025.

2.3. Discussion of Results

The survey results provide consistent insights into the existing gaps. Across every area examined, legislation, civil protection planning, participation, communication, training, and monitoring, a wide gap separates what Albania’s framework requires from what its institutions actually do.

The most fundamental finding is the discrepancy between normative commitment and operational practice. Albania has ratified the CRPD, passed a Civil Protection Law with explicit disability provisions, and adopted a DRR strategy modelled on the Sendai Framework. Yet most institutions have not translated these commitments into functional policies, trained staff, accessible communication, or structured mechanisms for PWD participation. Twigg and colleagues document this pattern systematically, showing that disability inclusion in DRR stalls at the point where general policy must be converted into budgeted, staffed, and monitored operational action.³⁵ Fjord and Manderson’s anthropological analysis adds that this gap reflects a persistent cultural framing of disability as private misfortune rather than a structural concern that demands public institutional response.³⁶

³⁵ Twigg et al. (2018), op. cit.
³⁶ Fjord, L. & Manderson, L. (2009). Anthropological perspectives on disasters and disability: An introduction. Human Organization, 68(1), 64–72.

The almost-total exclusion of PWDs from emergency drills is among the most concrete problems the data expose. Research from countries with more developed inclusive DRR practices shows that joint simulation is one of the few interventions that reliably improves both responder competence and PWD preparedness.³⁷ Phibbs and colleagues' analysis of the Christchurch experience demonstrated that where PWDs had been included in pre-disaster planning and exercises, their outcomes were markedly better.³⁸ In Albania, the cycle of exclusion from drills feeds a cycle of unpreparedness, emergency services that have never worked through an evacuation with a wheelchair user or a person with a hearing impairment are not in a position to do so under real disaster conditions. Addressing this requires practical coordination with DPOs to design and run inclusive exercises, backed by the resources that make this possible.

The communication data raise a different kind of concern. The fact that nearly two in three institutions provide no emergency information in accessible formats means that a large share of the PWD population cannot receive, process, or act on information that directly concerns their safety. The UNDRR and OHCHR have highlighted accessible emergency communication as one of the most cost-effective entry points for disability inclusion in DRR, precisely because it can be improved incrementally through format adaptation without major infrastructure investment.³⁹ Yet it remains almost entirely absent in Albania. The current early warning infrastructure, built around acoustic signals, excludes the deaf and hard-of-hearing community by design, in direct contravention of Article 50/2 of the Civil Protection Law.⁴⁰ Redesigning it is technically feasible, the "All for Change" project is piloting a web-based and mobile disability-inclusive early warning system in Elbasan and Shkodër, but national scale requires sustained political will and dedicated funding.

The finding that 92.3% of institutions cite financial constraints as the primary barrier deserves to be taken at face value. Disability-inclusive DRR costs money: retrofitting accessible infrastructure, procuring evacuation assistive devices, producing information in multiple formats, training staff, and maintaining dedicated focal points all require budget lines that do not currently exist in most Albanian municipalities. The Sendai Framework's Priority 3 and CRPD Article 4 both specify that states must allocate adequate resources for disability inclusion across policy domains. Tozier de la Poterie and Baudoin's analysis found that resource allocation to disability inclusion within DRR budgets has remained marginal even in wealthier signatory states.⁴¹ In a lower-resource context like Albania, this failure is correspondingly more damaging.

³⁷ Stough & Kelman (2018), op. cit.

³⁸ Phibbs et al. (2015), op. cit.

³⁹ UNDRR / OHCHR (2020), op. cit.

⁴⁰ Republic of Albania (2019), Law No. 45/2019, op. cit.

⁴¹ Tozier de la Poterie & Baudoin (2015), op. cit.

The low Sendai Framework awareness at the local level (46.2% unfamiliar) points to a structural gap in the translation of national policy to local practice. It is at the local level that disasters are managed, and civil protection staff who do not know the Sendai Framework will not apply its inclusivity principles. This gap calls for a training cascade that moves from national policy adoption to local operational competence, not only for the Sendai Framework⁴² but for the CRPD⁴³ and the broader set of international standards Albania has committed to.

On participation, the dominance of public hearings as the main mechanism for PWD engagement reflects institutional convenience rather than genuine inclusion. The CRPD (Article 4.3 and General Comment 7) is specific: governments must give particular weight to the views of PWDs through their representative organisations, support those organisations' capacity, and ensure their views are prioritised in decision-making.⁴⁴ Mitchell and colleagues showed that achieving this in practice requires deliberate, accessible, multi-modal consultation design, not open-door meetings that presuppose the communication capacity to participate.⁴⁵ The survey data show that the infrastructure for this does not yet exist in most Albanian institutions.

3. Conclusions

This paper has documented a consistent and substantial gap between Albania's formal commitments to disability-inclusive DRR and what its institutions can and do deliver. Data from 26 central and local government institutions show that PWDs are largely excluded from emergency drills, that emergency communication systems do not serve them, that dedicated trained personnel are rare, that participatory mechanisms are mostly inaccessible, and that monitoring of inclusive practices is almost entirely absent. For approximately 6.5% of the adult population, this means a civil protection system that, in practice, does not protect them equally.

The following recommendations are grounded in the empirical findings and aligned with Albania's obligations under the CRPD and the Sendai Framework:

- Establish dedicated budget lines for disability-inclusive DRR at national and local levels. Without ring-fenced funding, for accessible infrastructure, early warning system adaptation, multi-format communication, specialised staff, and training, the legal provisions already on the books will continue to go unimplemented. Resource mobilisation should draw on both public budgets and the substantial international development presence in Albanian DRR.

⁴² UNDRR (2015), Sendai Framework, op. cit.

⁴³ United Nations (2006), CRPD, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Mégret, F. (2008). The disabilities convention: Human rights of persons with disabilities or disability rights? *Human Rights Quarterly*, 30(2), 494–516.

⁴⁵ Mitchell et al. (2013), op. cit.

- Make specialised training on disability-inclusive DRR mandatory for all civil protection and emergency personnel. All staff with DRR responsibilities at central, regional, and local levels need practical training on the specific needs associated with different types of disability, on disability-specific evacuation equipment, and on accessible communication. Training curricula should be developed and tested with PWDs and DPOs to ensure they reflect real-world conditions.
- Develop and deploy a Disability-Inclusive Early Warning System. Albania's current early warning infrastructure, predominantly acoustic, must be extended to include visual, tactile, SMS-based, and simplified-format alert modalities.
- Require disability-specific evacuation protocols in all civil protection plans. Every national and local civil protection plan must include tested, regularly updated procedures for evacuating people with different types of disability. These should be complemented by Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for individual PWDs and put into practice through inclusive drills that treat PWDs as active participants, not bystanders.
- Replace public hearings with structured, accessible participation mechanisms. Technical working groups with DPO representation, accessible multi-modal consultations, and formal cooperation agreements between civil protection authorities and disability organisations should become standard practice at both national and local levels. Capacity-building for PWD advocates and DPO representatives on DRR leadership and policy engagement is a prerequisite for participation that is meaningful rather than nominal.
- Build disability-disaggregated data into DRR planning systems. Reliable data on the number, location, type of disability, and specific needs of PWDs are missing from most Albanian municipalities. Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments using internationally validated tools, the Washington Group Questions and WHO ICF methodology, should be embedded in municipal GIS databases and updated regularly, providing the evidence base for targeted interventions.
- Establish accountability mechanisms for disability inclusion in DRR. Regular, published audits of DRR practice accessibility, dedicated disability focal points within NACP and municipal civil protection directorates, and a monitoring framework tracking progress against concrete targets would provide structural continuity beyond individual project cycles and begin to close the accountability gap that currently allows legal obligations to remain unenforced.

Albania has made real progress in building a modern civil protection framework. The challenge now is to ensure that framework reaches all citizens, including those with disabilities. The "All for Change" project provides a tested, scalable model, from vulnerability mapping and early warning systems to evacuation planning, community-based resilience, and policy advocacy, and its outcomes offer a regional reference point for disability-inclusive DRR across the Western Balkans.

Bibliography

1. Aldrich, D.P. & Meyer, M.A. (2015). Social capital and community resilience. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(2), 254–269.
2. Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft / IFHV (2024). *WeltRisikoBericht 2024 [World Risk Report 2024]*. Berlin: Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft.
3. Cannon, T. (2008). Reducing people's vulnerability to natural hazards: Communities and resilience. WIDER Research Paper 2008/034. Helsinki: UNU-WIDER.
4. Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) (n.d.). EM-DAT: The International Disaster Database. Retrieved from <http://www.emdat.be/>
5. Fjord, L. & Manderson, L. (2009). Anthropological perspectives on disasters and disability: An introduction. *Human Organization*, 68(1), 64–72.
6. Gaillard, J.C., Sanz, K., Balgos, B.C., Dalisay, S.N.M., Gorman-Murray, A., Smith, F. & Toelupe, V. (2017). Beyond vulnerability and capacity: A call and a vision for an expanded politics of disaster risk reduction. *Disasters*, 41(1), 74–98.
7. INSTAT (2024). *Statistika*. Tiranë: INSTAT.
8. Kayess, R. & French, P. (2008). Out of darkness into light? Introducing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Human Rights Law Review*, 8(1), 1–34.
9. Kelman, I., Stough, L.M. & Oven, K.J. (2020). Disability and disasters: Explorations and exchanges. In I. Kelman (Ed.), *Disaster by Choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 193–210.
10. Mégret, F. (2008). The disabilities convention: Human rights of persons with disabilities or disability rights? *Human Rights Quarterly*, 30(2), 494–516.
11. Ministria e Mbrojtjes (2023). *Strategjia Kombëtare për Zvogëlimin e Rrezikut nga Fatkeqësitë [National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction]*. Tiranë: Ministria e Mbrojtjes.
12. Mitchell, T., Tanner, T. & Lussier, K. (2013). *We know what we need: South Asian women speak out on climate change adaptation*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
13. MSHMS, Ministria e Shëndetësisë dhe Mbrojtjes Sociale (2021). *Plani Kombëtar për Personat me Aftësi të Kufizuara 2021–2025 [National Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021–2025]*. Tiranë: MSHMS.
14. Peek, L. & Stough, L.M. (2010). Children with disabilities in the context of disaster: A social vulnerability perspective. *Child Development*, 81(4), 1260–1270.
15. Phibbs, S., Good, G., Severinsen, C., Woodbury, E. & Williamson, K. (2015). Emergency preparedness and perceptions of vulnerability among disabled

- people following the Christchurch earthquakes. *Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*, 19(1), 10–18.
16. Republic of Albania (2019). Law No. 45/2019 On Civil Protection. Tirana: Official Gazette.
 17. Stough, L.M. & Kelman, I. (2018). People with Disabilities and Disasters. In H. Rodríguez, W. Donner & J.E. Trainor (Eds.), *Handbook of Disaster Research* (2nd ed., pp. 225–242). Springer.
 18. Stough, L.M. & Sharp, A.N. (2021). Disaster case management and disability: Identifying unmet needs. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 55, 102073.
 19. Tozier de la Poterie, A. & Baudoin, M.A. (2015). From Hyogo to Sendai: Shifts in priorities and actors in international disaster risk reduction. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science*, 6(3), 205–212.
 20. Twigg, J., Lovell, E., Schofield, H. & Morinière, L. (2018). *Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction: Overcoming obstacles and integrating approaches*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
 21. United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. New York: UN.
 22. UNDRR (2015). *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. Geneva: UNDRR.
 23. UNDRR (2023). *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023*. Geneva: UNDRR.
 24. UNDRR / OHCHR (2020). *Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Situations*. Geneva: UNDRR.
 25. Wisner, B. (2002). Disability and disaster: Victimhood and agency in earthquake risk reduction. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 24(9), 10–11.
 26. World Bank (2020). *Albania Disaster Risk Profile*. Washington D.C.: World Bank Group.
 27. World Health Organization (2011). *World Report on Disability*. Geneva: WHO / World Bank.

© Academicus™

DP13193-DP13194 28-2010 Academicus International Scientific Journal
International Trademark Classification under the Nice Agreement

 Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC

An Assessment of Disability Inclusion in Albania's Disaster Risk Reduction System
by Blerta Drenofci

is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Presented: May 2026

Included for Publishing: July 2026

Published: July 2026, Volume 17, Issue 34 Academicus International Scientific Journal