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# Situational Disability - Rethinking disaster relief strategies for disabled people

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## Abstract

The number of disasters has been increasing all over the world. One of the most prone groups are people with disabilities. People are forgotten, cannot be evacuated or simply do not get suitable information about the ongoing events. At the same time, there is very little research on disability and disaster and the strategies for action are insufficient. (Spence 2007) The idea of two groups, people with "normal" abilities and people without, prevails and "ability" remains the leading principle. (Campbell 2009) Though the problem is that the focus on abilities does not take alternative ways into account. Someone might not have the ability to walk but this does not necessarily mean he or she cannot get from one place to another.

Based on this, the author outlines some corner points of an alternative way to rethink disability for disaster relief work. By shifting the focus from abilities to the actual possibilities for action, two important points can be made. First, disability cannot be reduced to impairments or socio-cultural disadvantages, but also includes lacking language skills and thus the inability to understand an evacuation call. This leads to the idea of situational and latent disability of everyone and overcomes the artificial divide. Second impairments do not necessarily constitute a disability. Especially impaired people often develop alternative strategies to circumvent barriers. (Saerberg 2006)

## References:

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