



## SESSION SUMMARY

**Session Title:** Leave No One Behind – Making Inclusion A Reality

**Session Type:** High Level Plenary

**Date and Time:** Monday, May 13, 9:30-10:30 am, Room 1

### Key Speakers and Agencies:

#### Moderator:

- **Krishna Vatsa**, Recovery Advisor, UNDP

#### Speakers:

- **Pinarayi Vijayan**, Chief Minister, Government of Kerala, India
- **Setsuko Saya**, Director, Cabinet Office, International Cooperation Division  
Disaster Management Bureau, Japan
- **Eddie Ndopu**, UN Secretary-General's SDG Advocate

The session highlighted that the most critical test of a recovery program is its ability to provide differentiated and targeted assistance to everyone. This brings up the issue of community outreach and social inclusion without bias or discrimination when people receive assistance and use it to rebuild their lives. Recovery and reconstruction also need to go beyond humanitarian assistance to the disaster-affected people, and provide them with adequate financial and technical support for their sustainable recovery.

**Pinarayi Vijayan**, Chief Minister, Government of Kerala, India shared how the Government responded in real time to the unprecedented floods of August 2018, with affected families receiving immediate relief in cash and kind. All levels of government, civil society, and mass



organizations held drives for cleaning flood-affected houses, and providing drinking water, medicines, and essential supplies. He drew attention to the launch of a comprehensive program of financial assistance and beneficiary involvement to rebuild lost and damaged houses in an eco-friendly, resilient manner. A wide network of women's self-help groups worked toward the recovery of lost and damaged household items, while the government ensured wage employment to needy families by augmenting the ongoing employment program. He stressed the strong institutional framework that implemented social security measures and progressive interventions like land reforms and education, using experts alongside people's participation. He concluded by emphasizing that the rehabilitation packages have given the utmost importance to fulfilling the basic needs of the most impoverished sections of society, and have ensured the same entitlements and rights for them.

**Setsuko Saya**, Director, Cabinet Office, International Cooperation Division Disaster Management Bureau, Japan contended that inclusion should be mainstreamed in all policy areas. The latest reconstruction program addresses the core issues of recovery of lives, recovery of industry, and recovery of infrastructure. She also highlighted that the government needs the support of the private sector and especially the NGOs because they are better able to support and address each vulnerable individual's different needs. The aim is to achieve equal partnership between the government and NGOs. She shared how an upgraded system to make information-sharing between the government and NGOs more institutionalized is facilitating better coordination, and helping make inclusion a reality on the ground. She closed by emphasizing that those who provide care for the vulnerable also need to be supported, if vulnerable people are not to be left behind.

**Eddie Ndopu**, UN Secretary-General's SDG Advocate emphasized how people with disabilities need to be in the driver's seat of international development, not the beneficiaries of it. He stressed the need to move



beyond compliance. He contended that there was a need for a reconstruction of societal attitudes towards those at the risk of being left behind. Resilience is not just about preventing or recovering from disaster, but about ensuring that people have the conditions and the tools to be able to lead resilient lives each and every single day. He concluded that reconstruction is not just about buildings, but also about reconstructing communities and the world in a way that makes it truly open to all. (Answering a question from the moderator as to how people with disabilities can get their specific needs addressed and receive suitable government assistance after the disaster, he explained that there is a need to envision access beyond compliance. People with disabilities cannot be an afterthought, but need to be included from the outset, so that vulnerable communities are present at every stage of the decision-making process so that there is an entire ecosystem of inclusion.

The session showed that inclusion needs to go beyond compliance. It requires a far more substantive involvement, with politics and reforms reflecting the diversity of needs of vulnerable sections of society. There is a need for several approaches, with communities and NGOs working closely with the affected people and with government to make inclusion in recovery and reconstruction more effective. The greater the inclusion, the greater the participation, the greater will be the accountability. Planning needs to take a bottom-up approach. Democratic planning processes and participation of the people are vital.