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EMPOWER

Empowering Persons with Disabilities
Through Effective Disaster Management



PODCAST 3

Vulnerability people with disabilities in natural disasters

Summary

In this podcast, Halis (from Turkey), who has been blind since birth, talks about how people with disabilities are more vulnerable to natural disasters. He also gives advice on how to communicate face to face with a person with a disability.



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EMPOWER PROJECT

Empowering people with disabilities through effective disaster management

The project partners are:

The Governorship of Istanbul (from Türkiye)

Institute for Vocational Education and Guidance (from Greece)

Institute for Promotion of Development and Training (from Spain)

Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services (from Türkiye)

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Hello, my name is Halis Kuralay. I was born in 1968

blind in my birth.

I graduated from Büyükçekmece High School

and then graduated from Psychology Department of Bosphorus (Boğaziçi) University in İstanbul

I worked one and a half year for



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the same university and then worked as a counsellor in schools one and a half year and ten years I taught English in the schools for the blind and seven years I was branch manager of İstanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education. And I am now assistant director of İstanbul Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services Ministry, responsible for the projects now.

I am also an author. I have written five books and I have four children. I think that is it.

EMPOWER Project is a very critical project. Why? Because – you know- in earthquakes- you know- natural disasters each normal person, each non-disabled person

- you know- while during the natural disaster is you know- try to save himself or herself

- you know- especially- first of all, he or she should save himself or herself. So, in order to save himself

because natural disaster is a very quick time, very short time, in that time while saving

himself or herself, disabled people is

very possibly forgettable. In order to save himself,

he forgets the disabled person at that place. So, in EMPOWER Project we are trying to do we are trying to

achieve that, we are trying to assume that if we empower disabled by themselves,

then maybe they will not need so much help



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from others. So, this is very important. Of course, natural disasters are equal to disabled and non-disabled people because if- you know- earthquake comes not only normal people but also disabled people as well. But anyway, if someone needs how to save himself from disasters then disabled people need to save themselves as well. Of course, some kind of- you know- disadvantageous with the disabled people. For example, in an earthquake maybe after earthquake some places are- you know- shut down somethings are broken down or something like this. Visually paired normal people can see that there is a problem but maybe in urgent moment a blind person for example may not understand that there is a problem, there is broken things, glasses or something like this. So, in any way, natural disaster training should be given to normal people and disabled people and if the person who gives the training natural disaster training doesn't know about blind people or disabled people, then- you know- it will not be beneficial to blind or



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visually impaired people you know. What I am saying

that for example if in earthquake after earthquake, for example, someone who comes to help

a blind person if he does not know that blind people cannot

benefit from visual clues, but

the person came to help

give some visual clues it is not beneficial to blind person.

So, for example, if

you don't know how to help a blind person for example normally on the way while blind and non-blind person go together,

non-blind person- sorry- blind person

should take the arm of person

who helps him or her. Why normally in society everybody thinks that if you want to help a blind person, you must have blind persons arm, but this is otherwise.

Normally blind person must take the arm of person who can

see who can help. I mean what I am trying to say

is that in earthquake if someone comes to help a blind person, try to help him with visual clues

for example if you don't know how to communicate with the blind person then

there may be problems. So, the people

who help in earthquake time must know how to communicate with

blind and visually impaired and other disabled people.

I mean the big (fact)



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is to be forgotten

by others but for example in

I'll give example from earthquake again, in earthquake for example

if there is a broken wall and if some

cable electricity cables are out, if you

and blind people visually impaired people try to

understand, try to perceive anything with touching, by touching. While touching

to the wall- for example- you can touch some cables and then you can be in danger
with electricity for example. This is one example.

But if other people for example

a disabled people

who need a wheelchair it is very difficult because it is difficult

to get on wheelchair it is difficult to

- you know- work with wheelchair and a lot things.

Especially physical-handicapped people I think more in danger

than other disabled people compared to

for example blind and visually impaired people. For example,

mentally ill people, with autistic people, first of all

these people cannot understand what is happening there in fire

in earthquake and other things you know.

The type will disturb



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mentally ill type of people more than others. They get in stress

they will much worry more than others. This is I think maybe we can say. In disaster,
for disasters,

it is I think necessary to get

the ideas of disabled people for example I mean in order to get ideas of

disabled people, some kind of ways- for example- a university may study on this for
example how can other people help to disabled people,

academic work maybe. But another way, in decision

in order to decide about some strategy

about the natural disaster about disabled people

I think planning groups

making the plan for natural disaster I think must include

some disabled in them in order to

express their feelings to express some ideas, make some contributions or something.

This is of course much more helpful.

At least, several people

make contributions to solutions

you know. In some way that for example how to communicate with blind people

visually impaired. For example, how can you understand that this person is blind ?

Yes, a blind person is a very- you know- very easy maybe. A blind person can say
that yes I am blind for example.

may be that is very good, that is very helpful. But how can deaf people



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can say I am deaf. He or she cannot say this. But somebody must understand that of course you know earthquake or some natural disaster time, some people will scream for example- URGGGH, ARGGGG*- some other voices- you know. The people who are coming to natural disaster to help, they must understand that this is blind this is physically handicapped or this is especially visually impaired or so, deaf people or something like this. This is of course a very big leap- you know. So, in these aspects people can contribute some disaster plans.

In 1999, in İstanbul

there is a very big earthquake. It was

in 1999 in İstanbul and some other cities Bursa, İzmit, Sakarya

there is a big earthquake. I was affected

at that time. I was affected psychologically because my house wasn't broken down or something like this. But it was in night at 3 o'clock and we were sleeping and then the earthquake

was so big that it very- you know- our house

is shaking or something like this.

We were awakened and then sat down. It was lasted 45 seconds.



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It was very big really. So, at that night the city went away so I have two children of course yes I think

for me more or less there is

no difference blind or non-blind people at that night because since electricity went, everybody wasn't seeing.

In our building, one neighbor I know

she went under the very deep of building. Wrongly she couldn't understand how to go out or

something like this. So psychologically I was affected. But there is no problem for me. One of my children-

I got one of my child and my wife got the other child. So, we went out together. Of course, because of

worry, we didn't go into our house.

We tried to sleep outside. For example, we tried to sleep in a car something like this. For example,

one of my friends, a blind friend said that in their house everybody

worried because of the earthquake and then he said

other neighbors 'please take my arm and I will take you out'.

Because nobody didn't see or something like this. One of my blind students was affected very deeply because their house shut down completely.

So, he was a little bit under the house so somebody helped

him to get out of the house. So, they are still alarmed. This, I can say all this.

Of course in a natural disaster especially earthquake



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how to communicate with for example deaf people? First of all, you must speak to him or her face-to face

because deaf people can understand your lip sign language.

They can understand from your lips what you are saying. So, this is first needed. The other you must

speak very slowly- word by word- as less as abstract words you need

to use less abstract words as concrete as possible because deaf people cannot

understand, so complicated, so abstract things. Blind people I mean I think, for example, if you work with blind person

please don't take blind person's arm, let him or her to take your arm

and then one step backward come on. In this way, if you turn right then your elbow turn right. If you

turn left, then your elbow turn left. So, he or she can understand you are turning left. Maybe, if you step up then,

your elbow, your- you know- step up

you know or down, down again. These are important.

If you give some help, for example, you give him or her

you know tea or coffee or you know ayran or cola or something like

that then while giving, you must give information that I am- you know-

bringing you a cup of coffee, a cup of coke or something like this. If you won't give this information, maybe he cannot understand

you are bringing tea, coffee, or ayran or something like this.

Then, he can hit and then crush, you know. So, this is another problem.

For example, if you stick to a blind person, if you know blind person's name,



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please say his or her name. If you don't say his or her name sometimes,
he or she cannot understand that you are talking to him or her.

If you don't know the name, then you understand that he is blind or she is blind
then for example if you want to say something to him or her please touch his
shoulder for example then he or she can understand that you are talking
to him or her for example. These are- you know- very basic communication
ways I can say. For example, if you try to help a wheelchair person, please
don't push him or her without getting called. Please firstly understand that he or she
needs your
pushing. If she or he can doesn't need to be pushed,
then please don't do it.

But if you want to do, ask him or her, if he arouse of course
you can do.

Otherwise, an earthquake or for natural disasters we must accept that
disabled people are really different category. We must take them into consideration
if you try to give them education then, for example,
if you are talking to blind people- for

example-

if you say that this way for example you show your finger this way, she or he can not
understand

while you are directing them. Some kinds of information about disability is needed to
give disaster education

and to say that people really need some education



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and then disabled people need to be taken into consideration

to make natural disaster plans. Thank you!