



*Issued by the Secretariat of the Global Action on
Disability (GLAD) Network*

Promoting Disability-Inclusive Climate Change Action



BACKGROUND

The preamble to the 2015 Paris Agreement includes persons with disabilities as one of the populations most acutely affected by climate change. However, subsequent provisions omit disability inclusion as an essential principle in action against climate change.

Persons with disabilities remain largely excluded from decision-making processes and plans to address and prevent climate change and the responses to climate-related disasters and emergencies at sub-national, national, regional, and international levels. The inclusion of persons with disabilities is pivotal to ensuring that efforts to implement the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) and outcomes of the [Paris Agreement](#) are inclusive. Conversely, persons and organizations of persons with disabilities must advocate for a holistic approach to disability inclusion.

Failure to include persons with disabilities in efforts to combat the climate crisis has dramatic consequences. Preparedness efforts that do not include persons with disabilities and systemically discriminate against often compound situations of vulnerability and poverty exacerbate the exclusion of persons with disabilities and leave them further behind in relief and response efforts addressing the impact of climate change.

Climate change will impact all countries. Its effects shape pervasive and entrenched inequality that disproportionately impact over one billion persons with disabilities. The impacts of climate change – from sudden-onset disasters such as typhoons and wildfires to more slow-onset changes such as drought, temperature increase, and sea-level rise – have disproportionate effects on the lives, health, well-being, and livelihoods of persons with disabilities. And yet, the discourse on climate change does not pay adequate attention to persons with disabilities, either at the national level or in international negotiations, despite obligations under [Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) to protect persons with disabilities in all situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. Anecdotal evidence suggests that persons with disabilities often are denied the opportunity to voice the disparate impact climate change has on their lives compared to those without disabilities.

[1] Notably, Article 7.5 of the Paris Agreement.

Similarly, perspectives on how to operationalize disability-inclusive requirements in adaptation and mitigation policies are rare. The contribution of persons with disabilities' lived experience could bolster effectiveness and foster broader inclusivity, and ultimately lead to better policies for all.

The consequences of climate change are especially severe for under-represented groups of persons with disabilities. For persons who experience intersecting forms of discrimination, including women, children, Indigenous peoples, displaced populations, racialized communities, and minorities and overlapping vulnerability may extend to those living in poverty or affected by humanitarian emergencies. Persons with deafblindness, persons with intellectual disabilities, and persons with psychosocial disabilities often are largely excluded.

As the world moves toward consensus on continued and increasing need to reduce carbon emissions emission, it is crucial to ensure that the human rights and lived experiences of persons with disabilities are part of the design, implementation, and monitoring process in each country. This transition presents a historic opportunity to improve disability inclusion and accessibility of public services and facilities. At the same time, if persons with disabilities are not adequately and genuinely included, the transition to low-emission and climate-neutral economies may lead to enhanced exclusion and inaccessibility. Furthermore, the design of adaptive social protection should be disability inclusive, linking the roles and tools of social protection with approaches on mitigating shocks from climate change for persons with disabilities. For example, it could help countries to anticipate climate-related events such as droughts and quickly scale up cash transfers via their social safety net programs that are accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities in response.

Estimates suggest that, overall, the transition to low-carbon economies worldwide will be a net generator of jobs, with as many as 18 million new jobs appearing by 2030, according to the ILO World Employment Social Outlook 2018. Designing disability-inclusive jobs from the onset will enhance and bolster the transition while ensuring participation and fulfillment of human rights for persons with disabilities. Additionally, the ILO found that economic losses related to the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labor force are large and measurable, ranging from between 3 and 7 percent of countries' and the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



THE GLAD CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISABILITY INCLUSION SURVEY

The Global Action on Disability Network (GLAD) surveyed its members on the intersection of climate change and disability inclusion. The main findings of this survey were:

- Most survey respondents, including development agencies, UN entities, NGOs, and private donors, have a climate change action plan, but only a few of these plans address persons with disabilities.
- The organizations and GLAD Member's funding work on climate change rarely addresses disability inclusion. When they do, only a minimal amount of funding targets persons with disabilities addressed in climate change-related issues.

When GLAD members undertake climate change-related events or produce materials, these are usually not inclusive of or accessible to persons with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To all stakeholders

- Make climate change-related events (both face-to-face and virtual) at the international national and sub-national levels accessible, including providing reasonable accommodation, to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities. [Click here for GLAD Network's guide to organizing accessible events.](#)
- **COP 26** and subsequent COP meetings (and larger preparatory meetings) champion disability inclusion across all discussions and lead by example regarding the accessibility of its events and materials.
- Make information and communication materials (written, audiovisual, etc.) and awareness-raising campaigns on climate change accessible to persons with disabilities. Stakeholders should consider producing easy-to-read documents and infographics, like this [GLAD Network's infographic](#).
- Include persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in climate change action plans from States, UN entities, development banks, and other stakeholders. The rights of persons with disabilities are relevant to and need to be considered both in climate response and prevention initiatives. Disability-inclusive consultations are particularly relevant in the context of preparing the national determined contributions (NDCs).

- In data collected on the impact of climate change on the general population, ensure the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age, and ethnicity, disability using the Washington Group Questions.
- During the production and revision of climate change action plans at the national level, including persons with disabilities, in all their diversity, and their representative organizations in informed discussions, drafting and effective way decision-making processes in accessible ways and sources of solutions that can benefit all in society.

2. To civil society organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities:

- Establish and build connections and collaboration with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to learn about their experiences and priorities and ensure full accessibility of events (physical and virtual) and materials, including websites.
- Organizations of persons with disabilities should prioritize work on climate change, raise awareness among their members, and advocate at the country level to actively engage in climate action at all levels.
- Capacity-building initiatives (including training and local/national discussion forums) to ensure that organizations of persons with disabilities advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities in climate change action at national and international fora.

3. To donors and bilateral agencies:

- Climate change donors and development donors ensure that their climate change funding is disability-inclusive by funding organizations of persons with disabilities.
- Information, communication, and technologies must be accessible and available to persons with disabilities in accessible and appropriate formats.
- Ahead of **COP26**, development donors allocate funds to support the active and meaningful participation of organizations of persons with disabilities from developing countries in national, regional, and global climate change-related events and fora, including support for reasonable accommodations.
- Development donors funding sub-national, national, and regional programs to prevent climate change ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

#InclusiveClimateAction must include #Disabilities!

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