

## Climate Change: This Century's Defining Issue

The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities  
within Climate Change Plans:  
**Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political**



## **Acknowledgements:**

This working paper would not have been possible without the input of Tonga National Visual Impairment Association (Pacific); Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association (Pacific); Hloniphani Ndlovu (Africa); Bulawayo Polytechnic (Africa); Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (Africa); Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) (Africa); European Federation of Hard of Hearing (Europe); Guadalupe Morales European Network of (-Ex) Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (ENUSP) (Europe); Asociación de Ciegos para la Cultura y Deporte ACCD (Latin America); Asociación Pro-Vida Independiente de Personas con Discapacidad de El Salvador (Latin America); Asociación de Ciegos del Cibao de la República Dominicana (Latin America); Palestinian general union of people with disability Bethlehem Branch (GUPWD) (Middle East); Swadhikaar Centre for disabilities information research and resource development (Asia); Innovative Development Transformations (Asia); Mobility India (Asia). Asociación de Ciegos para la Cultura y Deporte ACCD - Guatemala (Latin America); Asociación Pro-Vida Independiente de Personas con Discapacidad de El Salvador (Latin America); World Blind Union African Office (Africa); Green Earth Zambia (Africa); Accesibility Organization for Afghan Disabled – Afghanistan (Middle East); CBR Network (Asia); The Arab Forum for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Middle East); CBR Global Network (Asia); Palestine Association of Visually Impaired Persons.

Thanks also to the following organisations for helping make connections to networks possible: World Blind Union Latin American Office (Latin America); IDA Bridge Alumni (Africa); United Disabled Persons Kenya (Africa); Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (Africa); REPSSI (Global); European Disability Forum (Europe).

Finally, thanks to the following CBM colleagues for internal peer review, Dr. Julian Eaton, Christian Modino Hok, Kathy Al Jubeh and Dr. Elizabeth Lockwood.

**Dedication:** This working paper is dedicated to David Lewis who for many years has worked tirelessly in communities that have found themselves at the coalface of climate change. While retired from CBM, he continues to passionately advocate for action on climate change and nurturing the environment for future generations.

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# Disability and Climate Change: The 4Ps

*Collectively, persons with disabilities are one of the most resource-poor groups in the world, and often face further marginalization due to intersecting factors such as their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religious adherence, level of education, and geographical location. Hence, they are globally among the most at risk people to the impacts of accelerating climate change. Practically, this means they and their communities are living with significant climate-related issues including: increasing storms, floods and landslides; coastal inundation; droughts; wildfires; degradation of land, resources, infrastructure and living environments; extremes of temperature; and growing unpredictability and uncertainty (excerpt from Submission High-level Political Forum 2019 Submission Paper by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities).*

The Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities in their 2019 submission paper to the High-level Political Forum clearly made the case that climate change has a negative impact on persons with disabilities, their families and communities. This working paper looks a little closer at these impacts.

Using the 4Ps, this briefing paper focuses on:

- **The Personal** - what affect climate change has had on individual lives and communities in the following areas: Livelihoods, Access to Information, Displacement/Migration and Health.
- **The Programme** – how can programmes implemented by DPOs and mainstream organisations take a more inclusive approach to climate and disability programmes and what does that mean for organisations.
- **The Policy** – what are the current approaches to climate change and disability inclusion in global frameworks and what are the challenges for national implementation.
- **The Political** – how can persons with disabilities become more actively involved in climate change activism and why political leaders need to take a more pro-active approach to including disability in their political commitments.

### **This working paper – why now**

It is now widely accepted that climate change affects the world's poorest and most vulnerable people and while data on its impact on persons with disabilities is not available, some estimates have suggested 20% among those most vulnerable to climate change are persons with disabilities.<sup>i</sup> The aim of this working paper is to explore and analyse the different dimensions where climate change impacts on the lives of persons with disabilities. The momentum for this paper is to bring light to the fact that the need for a disability inclusive approach to climate change is at a now or never moment.

Good progress on disability inclusive approaches to international development and humanitarian frameworks and actions have been achieved throughout the last two decades - all of which has been underpinned by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and a vocal international disability movement calling for inclusion. As this new decade begins, international cooperation as we know it will witness a shift in resources to develop policies and plans to mount a response to the climate crisis emergency we now face. Examples of these big policy solutions and funding packages are already beginning to emerge.

- On a global scale: The UN Green Climate Fund is hoping to raise \$100 billion by 2020 aimed at increasing resilience and enhancing livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, communities and regions; enhancing people's health and well-being; and enhancing food and water security.<sup>ii</sup> In addition, the Climate Summit held in September 2019 launched 12 initiatives to provide the foundation for action to reduce carbon emissions and strengthen adaptation and resilience.<sup>iii</sup>
- At an intergovernmental level: COP25 2019 addressed different topics such as Smart Mobility for Building Sustainable Cities, new technologies that allow immersive communication in climate literacy like virtual reality, capacity building of different actors and stakeholders including gender, youth and indigenous perspective. All of these developments are highly relevant to persons with disabilities and there is now an urgent need to ensure that the new policy and programme agenda that is emerging to respond to the climate emergency is inclusive of persons with disabilities.<sup>iv</sup>
- At a regional level: In late 2019, the European Union adopted their new European Green Deal policy, aiming for the EU to be climate-neutral by 2050.<sup>v</sup>
- At individual/movement level: Under the theme 'Fridays for Future', the climate change strikes led by the youth movement have been mobilizing into different regions of the world such as Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America and North America. Young committed champions such as Greta Thunberg are leading by example and voicing their concerned opinions.

## **A note on the methodology**

This working paper has been built around responses from a small-scale survey and key informant interviews that were undertaken by CBM in late 2019. Respondents to the survey and participants of the interviews are persons with disabilities representing disability organisations, or representatives of mainstream organisations that are all engaged in climate change and disability inclusion related activities.

**Selecting the themes:** The themes that are discussed in this paper were chosen on the following basis. Firstly, a literature review was conducted of existing resources (including policies) about the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities. This selection of themes was completed by colour coding common topics and extracting the ones that came up repeatedly across the literature. The literature review identified a number of initial themes: Health, Food Security, Water, Drought & Floods, Migration, Urbanisation, Access to Resources, Emergency, Education. Secondly, a short analysis was conducted on 67 CRPD Committee Concluding Observation Reports (CCOR). This analysis involved searching for key words representing each theme outlined above to assess their level/frequency of appearance. This exercise gave a perspective on how much of the themes above in CCOR were either directly linked or indirectly related to climate change. The key finding was that direct references to climate change in the reports were minimal and instead there were more references that are indirectly related. This is not a surprise, as the CRPD was adopted prior to the evolution of climate change as a human rights issue and therefore does not appear in the CRPD text.

**Including the perspective of persons with disabilities:** Nine key informant interviews were conducted with leaders from within the disability movement and also within wider social movements coming from Latin America, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Pacific. Each of the key informants gave their perspective into disability inclusion and climate change. Those interviewed were actively engaged in climate change representing their organisations. Quotes were taken from the interviews and slightly adapted for accessibility where needed.

**Gathering some small base-line data:** In addition to the key informant interviews, this paper includes the responses of a small-scale survey. Twenty people from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Pacific and Europe answered the survey. The survey and interview questions enquired about organisational programming and strategies, to capture people's understanding and knowledge about public policies related to the subject and considering their context, their perception about political engagement on the subject, and how climate change is impacting on their personal lives.

**Limitations to this paper:** As outlined above, this paper does not claim to be a research paper due to the small scale of interviews and also survey responses. The paper was instead prepared with the main aim of raising awareness on climate change and disability and with the outlook to conduct further research in collaboration with our partners in 2020.

# Climate: The Defining Challenge of Our Times



**The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines climate change as *'any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity'*.**

Climate change is now recognised as a global crisis needing intergovernmental agencies, national governments and civil society to work together to find a way out of the crisis. We have all been part of creating this crisis. Some of the following facts will help us understand the crisis that is before us:

| FACTS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE                                      |   |
|---|---|
| The world is getting hotter                                     | 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 have been confirmed as the four warmest years on record <sup>vi</sup>   |
| Arctic temperatures are rising                                  | Winter temperatures in the Arctic have risen by 3°C since 1990 <sup>vii</sup>   |
| Doubling of climate disasters                                   | Including floods, storms, drought and extreme temperatures in the last 25 years <sup>viii</sup>   |
| Displacement has increased and it impacts some more than others | In 2018, 17.2 million people worldwide across 144 countries were displaced within their region. <sup>ix</sup> 80% of people displaced by climate change are women |
| Deaths related to climate impact more on different groups       | During some past climate-fuelled disasters, poor women and children were up to 14 times more likely to be killed than men <sup>x</sup>                            |
| Rising sea levels   | Record rise in sea levels and the exceptionally high land and ocean temperatures recorded in recent years <sup>xi</sup>   |

The consequences of these issues detailed above for persons with disabilities and their communities include:

- Increasing humanitarian emergencies, both fast and slow onset;
- Declining food, energy and water security;
- Declining access to shelter, infrastructure and basic services;
- Increasing displacement or being left behind in degraded environments;
- Declining health and an increase in the prevalence of many impairments, due to changing disease patterns and other impacts on health. Diseases such as malaria and dengue fever are now endemic in new areas, with the transmission season often lengthening; furthermore, extreme temperatures, increasing hardship and climate-induced displacement are likely to negatively impact mental health;<sup>xii</sup> and
- Reductions in human security, with increased vulnerability, due to competition and conflict over increasingly limited resources, as climate change accelerates, and populations increase.<sup>xiii</sup>

### Global frameworks on Disability and Climate Change

There are a number of international normative frameworks and policies that address the need to establish concrete strategies to tackle the impact of climate change, most notably the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13. The global frameworks for climate call for governments to reduce their harmful policies and practices that negatively impact the environment. Equally important, the frameworks and policies highlight that governments use a human rights-based approach when developing and implementing climate policies and programmes to ensure equitable outcomes for all, including for persons with disabilities. The following global frameworks are relevant for climate change:

Global legal frameworks, policies and tools

- **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.** The CRPD represents a benchmark treaty to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and was adopted prior to the evolvment of climate change being framed as a human rights issue.<sup>xiv</sup> As a result there is no direct reference in the CRPD to climate change or its impact, but it does address a vast array of areas directly or indirectly related to climate change, such as migration, mobility, access to basic services like food and water, health, education, and employment opportunities. It also includes Article 11, which obliges States to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies and conflict situations.
- **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.** This framework was brought into light as a global agreement to strengthen cohesive practices towards the prevention and reduction of disasters risks globally. It focuses on building economic and social resilience to mitigate the negative impact of climate change, among other human made threats. Persons with disabilities are explicitly identified across the framework and States should disaggregate for disability when reporting on indicators.<sup>xv</sup> Furthermore, priorities 1 and



3 cover issues related to accessibility and universal design. The priorities are:

- understanding disaster risk,
- strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk,
- investing in DRR for resilience, and
- enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to 'build back better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

- **UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS).** The UNDIS is a system wide strategy focused on raising the standards of the UN's performance on disability inclusion across the board, and action to bring about the unified and transformative change. This strategy is a key milestone in disability and development globally as it presents an accountability framework for all UN agencies to comply their internal and external practices, programmatic strategies, capacity, and efforts with the CRPD. Several agencies are working on climate change related activities, hence these need to be inclusive of persons with disabilities.
- **IASC Guidelines on Inclusive Humanitarian Action.** The guidelines designed by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) set out essential actions that humanitarian actors must take in order to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities who are most at risk and in vulnerable positions in humanitarian contexts. This first-ever set of guidelines for ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts outlines the importance of including persons with disabilities across all stages of response to humanitarian emergencies.



Kazol Rekha from Bangladesh at her accessible water pump.  
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## Climate change policies and framework

- **The SDGs and climate-related references.**
  - Goal 1, target 5 *'build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters'*.
  - Goal 11, target 5 *'By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations'*.
  - Goal 13, target 3 *'improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning'*.
- **The 2015 Paris Agreement** within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. During COP 21 in Paris in 2015, parties of The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reached a landmark agreement for intensifying actions and specific strategies aiming at tackling and mitigating climate change. The agreement highlights the need for parties to align their efforts with the agreement. The Paris Agreement makes reference to the need for focusing on vulnerable populations including persons with disabilities.<sup>xvi</sup>
- **UN Resolution on Human Rights and Climate change** adopted in July 2019, urges governments to ensure human rights in all climate change related actions. It specifically encourages States to ensure participation of those who are most affected by environmental changes, by adopting a 'comprehensive, integrated, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation policies'. It further calls upon States to particularly support the resilience and adaptive capacities of persons with disabilities to better respond to impacts of climate change. The resolution also calls for a multi-stakeholder analytical study on the promotion and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change to be undertaken. The 44th session in 2020 will include a panel discussion on the theme "Promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change", focusing on best practices and lessons learned in the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of the adverse impact of climate change.<sup>xvii</sup>

# Personal

## A good standard of living and social protection



### **Article 28 - Adequate standard of living and social protection**

***“States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions and shall take appropriate steps to safeguard and promote the realization of this right without discrimination on the basis of disability.”***

Having access to adequate food, clothing and housing and good living conditions is key for persons with disabilities and their families to have a good quality of life. Climate change is projected to exacerbate food shortages and malnutrition in the world's poorest regions while also negatively impacting on livelihoods that are made from agriculture and community enterprise. The impact of this is likely to deteriorate the overall 'quality of life' for people living in the poorest communities in which persons with disabilities are disproportionately represented.

Key informant interviews conducted for this paper highlighted the adverse impact of climate change on food security. Key informants from Guatemala and El Salvador described loss of crops and harvest and related increases in price of food baskets, increasing the risk of food insecurity for people in general and having a more significant impact on those living in poverty.

**“We can say that well ... in that sense there was an impact on the crops, there was a drought in the rainy season. Many crops were damaged. They are affected. The little that was achieved was sold at a very high price. Before, with one dollar you bought three pounds of tomatoes. The tomato was damaged with the harvest, so now the tomato doubled in price. There was an acceleration in the ecosystem. Livestock was also affected, excess heat that causes wildlife to die. There is an increase in the basic basket”**

**“During the last month and a half there's been a lot of rain and that had affected the growth of crops. A lot of businesses have been affected and a lot of people lost their crops”**

Another key informant from Kenya highlighted how the effect of climate change was impacting on their diet.

**“Yes, since I am living in Kenya what I realise in spring the rainy season was delayed for farmers, increased the food prices and availability of food products. I am 70% vegetarian, and there are specific aliments that I can't get, for example avocados.”**

With increasing food prices comes an increased risk of poverty. Key informants highlighted how there was a need for social protection to be multi-faceted in order to be able to address the different levels of social support required to adjust to shocks and disruption caused by climate events, as well as to the transitions that will take place as governments move to greener economies. Social security and income-maintenance schemes are particularly important for many persons with disabilities, yet research has shown that most of the limited social safety net programmes that have been developed in poor countries have given little attention to persons with disabilities.<sup>xviii</sup> One key informant from the Pacific region highlighted these challenges.

**“Most of them [persons with disabilities] are unemployed, heavily reliant on family members, heavily dependent on social protection schemes from the government. One of the things we are advocating for is the livelihoods for persons with disabilities. Trying to work on poverty first and then look at what access they have to recover from the impacts of disaster and then climate.”**

Finally, in addition to an inclusive social protection system, having the necessary skills to feel ready and prepared for climate change disruptions is key, so that persons with disabilities and their families can be part of climate adaptation and mitigation plans of their community and country. 56% of the respondents to the survey that gathered data for this paper highlighted their concerns about not having the necessary skills and knowledge to feel ready and prepared for climate change disruptions. 22% of the respondents considered themselves to have skills and knowledge and other respondents either didn't answer or didn't know the answer to this question.



Villagers of Onkolde and a goat being evacuated by a Kenya's Red Cross boat from their flooded village after the Tana River overflowed in coastal region of Kenya  
©CBM, AFP/Andrew Kasuku

## Access to Information



### **Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

***States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice.”***

We live in a world where a number of different platforms for accessing information have increased rapidly over the past decade. The emergence of ‘non-traditional platforms’ such as social media have significantly increased the level of information available to people. Alongside traditional platforms such as broadcast news, print media, government information, there is an overwhelming amount of information for all people to access. These have also supported the engagement of people in organising activism. As the climate crisis has deepened, many of the outlets for accessing information on how to educate ourselves, on how to prepare and help shape responses, on how to become involved in activism and even on how to report being safe after a natural disaster have come through social media. For many persons with disabilities living in low-income countries, access to relevant information can be difficult to come by, as expressed by a key informant from El Salvador.

**“Then, there’s no publicity about climate change, or what we can do about it. There’s more things on social media now. We are a developing country, a lot of people only have a phone but only to communicate, not for using social media or accessing the internet. Some people even don’t have electricity, it’s much more complicated.”**

It is widely recognised that being able to obtain up-to-date information in an accessible format across all parts of life including climate related information, remains a significant challenge for all persons with disabilities. An interviewee from Kenya highlighted how the lack of accessible information, for example when a significant weather event takes place, creates an unsafe and vulnerable feeling particularly when it comes to their individual safety and puts people at higher risks:

**“Having a visual impairment makes me feel more vulnerable for climate change especially in cyclones or rains. I would need to get sufficient information that I feel I do not have today.”**

Not having equal access to information in these cases can mean the difference between life and death for many people.<sup>xix</sup> While equal access to information remains a challenge, a key informant from India highlighted how they are accessing information to inform themselves.

**“My main source of information is the disability world service (radio station from London) that has a programme on every science. I am not a professional, but I am knowledgeable on climate change.”**

Another informant from Kenya highlighted that governments, while considering sustainability strategies for the future, need to ensure equal access to information and create accessible and inclusive spaces for persons with disabilities to engage and become active contributors to the change that is needed.

**“For cities to be really sustainable and resilient in line with the New Urban Agenda, the increasing deployment of “smart city technologies” to enhance resilience and disaster preparedness needs to meet accessibility standards and be guided by universal design principles, so that persons with diverse disabilities can access information and resources on an equal basis with others”.**

Having access to information on the full range of themes that fall within climate change is critical for persons with disabilities, particularly when it comes to information on preparation and adaptation. This includes access to information on the impact of climate change, suggestions on how to live a more sustainable life, actions that can be taken to ensure daily lifestyles are environmentally friendly and steps to adapt to climate impact. It also includes ensuring that persons with disabilities can become active participants and are included in social movements on climate change. If information is not provided in accessible formats, persons with disabilities are denied access to information and critical steps for preparedness. 62% of respondents to the survey expressed that they had access to information about the impact of climate change, while 35% indicated they did not.

## Displacement/migration



### **Article 17 - Protecting the integrity of the person**

***“Every person with disabilities has a right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity on an equal basis with others.”***

While it is difficult to establish reliable climate migration statistics, there were 24.2 million new displacements caused by disasters in 2016.<sup>xx</sup> Within this group there are many persons with disabilities. In addition, persons with disabilities are also frequently left behind in a degraded environment, when others in their family or community move on due to impact of climate change. One key informant from India highlighted how:

**“A lot of people migrate to this district because agriculture work and they move from other cities to work as construction workers.”**

This situation means that many persons with disabilities are left behind without social and support networks. For those who have been forced to leave, moving to new areas brings with it issues of lack of accessibility and also potentially loss of personal support network. Most people, including persons with disabilities, moving from rural to urban environments have no choice but to settle in slums, living in substandard and over-crowded housing prone to the spread of disease, without adequate access to clean water, drainage, sanitation and waste removal, and often have few ongoing livelihood opportunities.

**“In 2016 there was a very serious drought in the eastern parts of Afghanistan. Many people have migrated for hunger to look for shelter. Among other people, many people with disabilities were impacted by this. They were the most sacrifice of this disaster.”**



For persons with disabilities living in countries that are at a greater risk of climate change, for example in the Pacific, migrating to other countries becomes a challenge. We are increasingly seeing persons with disabilities part of the recent human mass movements.<sup>xxi</sup>

**“Yes, for us we look at migration ... there is migration where people from small islands and development states in the pacific are moving away from the island, away due to sea level rise and the lack of access to quality water, quality livelihood to sustain their lives.”**

**“There are areas in the pacific which are having challenges ... persons with disabilities in Kirabiti, an island in the pacific, are experiencing sea level raise first-hand, they have to move their homes every two or three years because of the sea. In that case, the water source is affected by sea water and making it not drinkable.”**

The impact of such disruption experienced by all people who have been displaced or who are left with no choice but to migrate is significant on psycho-social well-being. For persons with disabilities, the impact is disproportionate. They are, for example, facing lack of accessible transport and services while on the move, and not able to access services in countries of relocation.<sup>xxii</sup>



Community response to flooding in 2015  
©CDD

## Health and well-being



### **Article 25 - Health**

***“States Parties recognize that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability.”***

Persons with disabilities have the right to the highest standard of health. Overall good health is not merely about physical wellbeing but also includes mental and social wellbeing. Safe employment conditions, being included in the community and being able to access gender and age appropriate services are all critical for well-being of individuals. Many persons with disabilities live below the poverty line, in underserved areas where the living and environmental conditions are disproportionately affecting their overall health and wellbeing. Considering the rapid changes climate change is causing on natural resources, this can have life-changing consequences on the overall quality of life of persons with disabilities.

Key informant interviewees from Zambia and Zimbabwe living in rural communities highlighted the impact climate change has had on their physical health and also their psychosocial well-being.

**“Climate Change has affected various communities in my country with persistent floods, drought which are all weighing down the mental and psychosocial wellbeing of millions of people.”**

**“In this community, where the blind people are, it is very dusty because there are no trees so obviously the dust can affect their health, and because there are no trees they have to walk long distances to get wood and water. And they walk a lot.”**

Climate change can directly or indirectly impact on people's health. Direct impacts can be caused by storms, droughts, floods, heatwaves, changes in temperature and wildfires. Indirect impacts can be related to water and air quality, changes on land, and in the ecology. The impacts can cause health consequences and wellbeing related illnesses, undernutrition, injuries, respiratory diseases, allergies, cardiovascular diseases, infectious diseases, poisoning, water borne diseases and heart strokes. One key informant from Afghanistan highlighted how this manifested in their country.

**“Yes, mostly the physical environment. The pollution is causing different types of disability.”**

One key informant from El Salvador highlighted how people with specific health conditions, including some persons with disabilities, are prone to be more affected by the impacts of climate change. They provided an example of how higher temperatures are ultimately affecting their participation in the community and social environment.

**“I can't be exposed to the sun; I can't stand in the sun because I have an injury on the spinal cord. I just stay at home with a fan when it is really hot.”**

The impact of climate on health and well-being is well documented and the disproportionate impact it can have on the health and wellbeing of persons with disabilities needs to be considered in public health programmes addressing climate change impacts.



Mobarok and his family were greatly affected by flooding which hit Bangladesh in 2015  
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# Programmes

Global efforts to protect the environment and reduce climate change impact carries a role for different organisations: governmental, non-governmental, private sector and civil society organisations. In the sphere of development and humanitarian work, climate change presents a critical challenge to development and humanitarian programmes to ensure they are designed to respond to the impact that is affecting communities. There is a need for mainstream organisations to have fully inclusive approaches to climate change. Equally, there is a need for DPOs to strengthen their capacity and leadership to become climate change advocates and encourage other partners to also become involved in climate change advocacy. The full inclusion of persons with disabilities and of the organisations representing persons with disabilities in the design, implementation and evaluations of programmatic and advocacy strategies is critical so that disability-inclusive approaches do not become relegated to the margins in programmes responding to climate change.

## DPOs strengthening capacity & leadership



### **Article 29 – Participation in political and public life**

***“Forming and joining organizations of persons with disabilities to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.”***

The CRPD places an obligation for governments to ensure persons with disabilities and their representative organisations are included in all aspects of political and public life. Broadly speaking this means persons with disabilities and their organisations should be involved in all political and civic activities, including those which have now emerged for climate change. The first question to ask in addressing capacity and leadership is: How is disability positioned in the climate change space and how is climate change positioned as an issue in the disability movement?

One key informant from India illustrated how disability can be seen as separate to climate.

**“There’s children protesting against climate change led by Greta. I am sure and I will be very surprised knowing the number of disabled children. Disability sits in a box on its own.”**

**“Finding disabled people working on climate change, DPOs working on climate change is a huge task. It’s a niche subject but finding disabled people that are active and knowledgeable on climate change is difficult.”**

In term of how DPOs are addressing climate change at an organisational level, key informants from El Salvador and Afghanistan quoted below highlight how awareness levels on climate change and good practice on environmental practices among DPOs and their leaders vary.

**“Within our organisation I feel we still need more knowledge. Some of the staff attended training but I think there is still a need for knowing how to bring it into our practices. We still need to keep working on taking responsibility and having more awareness.”**

**“What are you talking about? [he laughs] I do recycle because I am forced to do that where I live. Organisations in the Arab region, I have to say, I don’t know but I doubt it.”**

Other key informants had taken some action within their organisation. A key informant from El Salvador highlighted how they are taking action to raise awareness on their internal carbon footprint. In addition, a key informant from India described how they raised awareness and included children with disabilities.



Diopen Claros carries a fishing net and paddle on Malangabang, a small island where he lives near the Philippines city of Concepcion. His gear was ravaged during the passage of Typhoon Haiyan and he helped carry other survivors to high ground as the storm surge swept over their low lying community.

©Paul Jeffrey

**“Yes, so basically we do some actions. Turning off the lights when they are not in use, turning off the water heaters and also looking at when the office closes to turn off the lights...that’s including all computers. And also looking into supporting paperless events so looking at less printing and more electronic use. In terms of such events, sharing information... we also look at the situation of persons with disabilities who don’t have mobile phones, laptops in that case we need to print, provide reasonable accommodation... printing in larger forms, printing a hard copy for them to have access.”**

**“We have different awareness raising sessions, forest walks, working with the environment, working with the earth, and we also have different activities for children with disabilities because they don’t have many opportunities. We try to foster them. The ‘responsibility of how’ is how to live in the environment, how to use natural resources, and how to be more sensible, environmentally sensitive. There are a wide variety of issues. We use different ways so children can actually see.”**

Capacity on climate change at organisational level was identified as critical by survey respondents and key informant interviewees. Survey respondents were asked if they included climate change related topics within their organisational advocacy work. A DPO from EI Salvador shared their concerns related to capacity:

**“We recognise the significant relevance of climate change and its impact on lives of persons with disabilities. However, we do not have the capacity to educate our members on this matter. Furthermore, we do not have the effective tools and knowledge to address this important issue in our advocacy programs and activities. Thus, we need the support to build our membership’s capacity and knowledge on how to bring this issue and its connection to disability inclusion and rights to policy makers and other stakeholders, mainly mainstream civil society organisations engaged in this subject matter”**

A key informant from El Salvador re-iterated this point.

**“I feel I still need to learn a lot. We need to continue learning, increasing knowledge, especially what other good practices are in other countries. We need to communicate with other countries to support us and provide us with ideas.”**

Finally, in 2019, the UN General Assembly called for the need to ensure the meaningful participation, inclusion and leadership of persons with disabilities and their representation organisations within disaster risk management and climate-related decision-making at the local, national, regional and global levels. This is a welcome statement and highlights that persons with disabilities and their representative organisations are crucial to leading disability-inclusive responses to climate change. Investing in building capacity and leadership is critical so that DPOs can engage at all levels.

## Inclusive Programme Development and implementation



### **Article 4 – General Obligations**

***“In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.”***

In general, to ensure inclusive development and humanitarian programmes are effective, it is vital to be inclusive of persons with disabilities. The inclusion of persons with disabilities within all strategic areas in organisational programmes is considered in line with a human rights-based approach.<sup>xxiii</sup> Persons with disabilities are in a unique position to provide insight and expertise within programmes or processes seeking solutions for problems they also face. The ‘nothing about us without us’ spirit of the CRPD needs to be incorporated in organisational climate change related activities. Organisations developing programmes designed for persons with disabilities should ensure persons with disabilities’ representation of strengths and vulnerabilities as part of the strategic process.<sup>xxiv</sup>

A key informant from El Salvador highlighted how they are taking action on disability inclusive climate programmes.

**“We’ve been doing small climate change projects. These were awareness raising sessions, compost training, human rights and climate change training, commitment to the environment, and stuff like avoiding buying plastic. We have now presented a project to an organisation called ‘Tierra Viva’. We aim if that goes well to do other two projects in two different districts of El Salvador and another one about creating a network of 14 organisations to raise awareness on climate change and include the CRPD and the SDGs.”**

Another key informant from Afghanistan shared how at a regional level there is a perception of very little action towards disability and how this influences strategic priorities.

**“Programs on climate change in the Arab region are very scarce. Those few programs that exist do not consider the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their issues. These programs as well as organisations of persons with disabilities remain neglectful of the relevance of climate change issues to disability. At least, they lack the knowledge of how to make the connection between climate change to disability. The region is in need of capacity building for persons with disabilities and their organisations about this subject. More importantly, they need to be educated on the significance and relevance of this issue to their lives and advocacy efforts.”**



This image shows Juvy Ministros, the ADFP Supervisor at the entrance to the ADFP in Concepcion.  
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## Ensuring programmes are inclusive of diversity



### **Article 3 – General Principles**

***“Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.”***

A key factor of strengthening inclusion in current global responses to climate change is linked to the acknowledgement that climate change indeed negatively impacts the global population. While this presents challenges to all people, it amplifies the risks faced by persons with disabilities to the point of becoming life threatening. A key informant from Guatemala highlights their experience below.

**“A heavy rain for a person with disabilities is very difficult. Transportation becomes really difficult. You cannot use an umbrella and a cane at the same time, it is not safe. If you fall, your hands are busy. If there is a broken window, a piece of iron you can get injured. Also, when it rains heavily, the sound is very strong, it is difficult to hear the sound of a motorcycle, a vehicle approaching. It affects.”**

In building community or national programmes to respond to climate change, it is important to address the diversity of persons with disabilities. The one-size-fits-all approach to programme development is not in line with the disability-inclusive approach and is not reflective of the different identities and experiences that persons with disabilities have. Understanding individual’s intersecting identities is the first step in creating awareness for developing a person-centred programmatic approach. Different variables build and intersect a person’s identity. Factors such as disability, gender, age, ethnicity, religious group, national origin, sexual identity and orientation, poverty, access to education and geographic isolation should be taken into consideration across all stages of the design of programmes, definition of audiences and strategic goals. A key informant from India further illustrates this:

**“For me one thing is that I am middle class. I am not from the poor community. I am not rich, but I am not poor. I have enough to eat, shelter, if there is a huge flood I have enough money to go to a safe place. I can also drink water and have good air... it is not like Delhi where quality of life quality is very bad. I live in a rural area. Climate change does not impact my personal life directly.”**

## Working in Partnerships

It is important to foster an integrative and collaborative approach towards learning from good practices to build inclusive and resilient programmes. Exchange of ideas, good practices, evidence-based approaches, strategies, case studies and resources should be established between disability organisations as well as mainstream organisations carrying out disability-inclusive climate change activities. A key informant from Pacific highlighted their approach to partnership.

**“At the moment in terms of DRR we are working on a project in partnership with CBM Australia called the Australian Humanitarian Partnership Pacific Disaster READY programme. This is working with humanitarian NGOs like Oxfam, World Vision, Plan International, CARE... looking at strengthening their work around disability inclusion and advocate to them to have a portion of money to be allocated to DPOs, and ensure the DPOs are provided with enough resources to build the capacity of staff and also coordinate the resources so voices of persons with disabilities are represented in the implementation of the Disaster READY program. Assist in terms of strengthening the work with international NGO on disaster response and strengthening the preparedness and be sure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from disaster response.”**

Another key informant from Zimbabwe referred to having the will to engage and actively involve persons with disabilities within their organisational programmes. However, challenges in reaching persons with disabilities were highlighted.

**“Regionally REPSSI is involved in climate change and in reaching various people there is no discrimination of any sort, however, reaching persons with disabilities comes with challenges of accessing that population group.”**

Finally, survey respondents were asked about their potential partnership with other organisations working on climate change. 67% currently do not have any engagement or partnerships with other organisations working on climate change activities, 19% work with other organisations engaged in climate change activities, and for 14% it is unknown.

# Policy

## From global policy to national and local action



### **Article 4 – General Obligations**

***“In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities.”***

The key challenge at national level with global legal and policy frameworks such as the CRPD, SDGs and the Paris Agreement is to ensure they are effectively implemented and coordinated at national and local levels guaranteeing a coherent approach to disability-inclusive approaches by governments across all of these policies. Implementing frameworks requires funding, monitoring, outreach, coordination efforts and available disaggregated data to monitor progress. The first step is making persons with disabilities visible in climate policies and plans. A key informant from India how invisibility from policies does not mean exclusion, but it also does not mean inclusion.

**“They are not inclusive of persons with disabilities, but certainly persons with disabilities are not excluded. So whatever climate change policies are in India they do consider persons with disabilities. There is no specific action towards disability inclusion in climate change plans.”**

In addition to visibility and awareness, a key informant from India, highlighted the challenge of translating global climate policy into action and in particular the need for training and education.

**“Looks good on print, but when it comes to implementation, most policies need effective strategies for effective implementation. That’s where the problem starts. When it comes to practice, they need money, expertise and all that. In that sense I think the country has many gaps. I started a course at university to motivate people to take development studies and so people can have more knowledge on development studies, climate change and make local action, which is very important. That needs the training. Unfortunately, that kind of training needs a lot of support. Globally, nothing much is coming forward. I feel the UN system should push more. I feel the World Bank should push capacity building. They are not doing it. I feel pushing just policies doesn’t help.”**

The difference between experiences in urban and rural areas was also highlighted when asked about capacity building. This key informant from India highlighted how capacity building needs to be far reaching and not just with policy makers.

**”The capacity building still needs a long way to go, for policy makers... for people with disabilities especially in villages. The majority of people with disabilities live in villages and what happens there is different to urban areas... for building their capacity I think there’s a long way to go. Real change happens only when there’s change at a local level. If we want to see change it should be from the bottom up.”**

Lastly, the importance of coordination between action planning and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations was expressed by a key informant from the Pacific.

**“At the moment, in the pacific they have joint action plans for DRR and climate change adaptation. This looks like integrating climate change in the DRR process. In the development of these policies, DPOs are involved in the early stage of consultation but then in terms of the process around the finalisation, and implementation, there’s a big gap in terms of the representation of persons with disabilities. However, the development of a few of the disaster acts in the pacific have been done in consultation with persons with disabilities and some DPOs have been approached by development authorities to go through these documents.”**

# Political

## Political leaders need to consider disability inclusion in climate change responses



### **Article 29 - Participation in political and public life**

***“(b) To promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including, participation in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country, and in the activities and administration of political parties.”***

Political will is needed to ensure persons with disabilities are included during climate policy development and in measures taken by political leaders on climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

A key informant from India highlighted how in general politicians are not always addressing climate change.

**“The politicians always say something, but they are not very much addressing.”**

Another key informant from Guatemala highlighted how when the ministry does involve persons with disabilities it is not necessarily in climate policies.

**“Yes, the ministry involves people with disabilities. Not in climate change policies. The national plans they use are not inclusive of people with disabilities. In general, there is no specific policy about climate change and disability inclusion.”**

Other key informants highlighted the need for national level consultations on climate adaptation plans to be inclusive of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD. Under the Paris agreement, governments need to develop climate adaptation plans and persons with disabilities and their representative organisations need to be part of this process. Survey respondents were asked if their DPOs or others had been approached by politicians to discuss climate change and disability inclusion issues: 67% answered that they had not been approached or did not know of other DPOs who had been approached to discuss disability inclusion within climate change actions, 5% had been approached, and the remainder did not know or did not answer the question.

## **Including persons with disabilities in key social movements for climate justice**

One of the most significant issues for today's young people – and all people – is climate change and its role in increasing poverty and vulnerability of the world's poorest people, including those with disabilities. In recent years, we have witnessed a response to the growing climate crisis through a global civil society movement demanding action by political leaders at national and global levels. This movement includes individuals such as Greta Thunberg, collectives such as Extinction Rebellion, voices from the Global South, including Yola Mgogwana (South Africa)<sup>xxv</sup>, Leah Namugerwa (Uganda), and John Paul Jose (India)<sup>xxvi</sup>. The involvement of persons with disabilities in these movements is critical and like with all social movements, a space needs to be created where the perspective of persons with disabilities are included. A key informant from El Salvador noted the following.

**"Yes, we don't work in isolation. We are now working with an organisation called RACSES that they don't have a disability. They are helping us to get to know how to take care of the environment and we are helping them to be disability inclusive. Is a win-win. This organisation for example didn't know what type of projects to implement with us because they have the wrong concept that we are sick people and don't see us as rightful individuals."**

National and global civil society collectives need also to consider accessibility for their campaigns and ensure all activities, campaign materials and meetings are inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

# Key Messages

## Personal

### Livelihoods:

- Livelihoods must be understood as a multi-faceted issue. It needs to be addressed as an issue interconnected with different social and economic variables.
- Persons with disabilities need to be included in discussions about transitions to greener economies, their involvement will assure more inclusive economies.
- Getting involved in the decision-making process can transform markets, making them more representative of persons with disabilities and their needs.
- Persons with disabilities need to acquire relevant and critical information, skills and knowledge to deal with climate change impacts.

### Access to information:

- In low-income countries, there might be restrictions to access to information caused by lacking infrastructure, preventing people from easily accessing social media or internet-based information.
- Information on how to live sustainably should be available in accessible formats to all.
- Access barriers to accurate information in emergencies caused by climate change can be life threatening.
- Little or no access to up-to-date information on the impact of climate change leaves persons with disabilities uninformed.

### Migration:

- Migrating can directly affects a person's mental and physical quality of life.
- Persons with disabilities have to migrate from rural to urban areas due to fewer opportunities in their communities, but in doing so they face additional challenges in accessing the environment in urban areas.
- In countries that are particularly impacted by climate change, such as small island states, persons with disabilities are disproportionately more vulnerable.
- Key informants have expressed that they feel more vulnerable in situations in which they needed to move quickly.

### **Health:**

- Climate change has a higher impact on people who may already have an existing health condition.
- Health is not merely the absence of disease and infirmity but a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. Health and wellbeing can be directly or indirectly affected by climate change.
- In particular, specific groups such as women or children with disabilities may be affected more significantly by climate change.
- The inclusion of persons with disabilities in discussions related to health and wellbeing are crucial.

## **Programmes**

### **DPOs strengthening of capacity and leadership:**

- Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations are essential in leading a disability-inclusive response to climate change.
- DPOs should engage more in climate change advocacy and policy development activities.
- There is a need for more clarity on good practices and effective leadership of inclusive climate change actions.
- Communication of existing good practices needs to be enhanced and shared among DPOs and mainstream organisations.
- Strengthening capacity also includes internal capacity of an organisation, lowering the organisation's carbon emissions and educating staff and volunteers to become more environmentally friendly.
- Continuous actions are perceived less important than response to extreme weather events.

### **Inclusive Programme Development:**

- Ensure development and humanitarian programmes are inclusive of persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are in a unique position to provide insight and expertise within programmes.
- DPOs are already providing positive examples for proactive alignment of their programmes with climate change advocacy efforts.
- Some DPOs may perceive small attention to climate change within programmatic approaches, reflecting cultural or regional policies.



### **Ensuring Diversity of Experiences:**

- Climate change adversities can present challenges to all people but could amplify risks faced by persons with disabilities to the point of becoming life threatening.
- Awareness of intersecting factors constructing a person's identity can be a first step for developing a person-centred programmatic approach.

### **Working in Partnerships:**

- Fostering an integrative and collaborative approach towards learning from good practices that build resilience and are inclusive.

## **Policy**

### **Global policies:**

- Global Frameworks highlighting inclusion serve as a guidance for efforts to prepare and mitigate climate change impacts.
- There is a need for higher visibility of issues faced by persons with disabilities in global climate policies.

### **From global policy to national and local action:**

- Policies must be effectively implemented and coordinated at national and local levels to ensure coherency regarding disability inclusive approaches.
- Challenges in translating global policies into local policies require training and education.
- Differences in implementation levels between urban and rural areas exist.

## **Political**

- Political representatives must consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the development of climate adaption plans
- Social movements on climate action need to be inclusive and include the perspectives of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations.

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Woman checking the maize / corn plants.  
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