

Locating Disability Inclusion in Climate Action

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Photo: Prabin has a physical disability and was supported by our partner REMREC Nepal with plastic tunnels, a drip irrigation system, and drums to store water.

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Charity Registration No 1058162 (England & Wales) SC041101 (Scotland)

ⁱ With thanks to Kirsty Smith (CEO, CBM UK) for her detailed review of the original version of this paper, published in 2022, to support CBM UK Advocacy around COP26. This version was updated in September 2025, with inputs from James Tanna and review by Mark Barrell (both CBM UK). Any limitations remain the author's own. For correspondence, please write to ursulag@cbmun.org.uk

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1. Introduction

This policy paper sets out the inter-relationships between disability and climate change. It acknowledges that, in the context of climate change and climate crises, 'leave no one behind' is more than a phrase, it's literally a matter of life or death for many people, and particularly for people with disabilities. The devastating impacts of climate change and crises are felt most acutely by those living in more risk prone and marginalised environments – most often the poorest communities worldwide. As people with disabilities represent 1 in 5 people living in poverty worldwide¹, disability inclusion in climate action is a human rights issue and must be taken into account in all interventions.

Inclusive climate action builds climate resilience and enables impact alleviation, in ways that support governments to realise their international human rights obligations. The paper recognises the existing policy frameworks designed to respond to these challenges, and questions what is holding up progress. It highlights barriers that might be undermining successful implementation and offers entry points and interconnectivities that can usefully push forward climate and inclusion agendas in mutually reinforcing ways. Several potential win-wins are identified to accelerate progress, including the much-needed formal recognition of the disability movement within climate action, and stronger efforts to align States' climate responses with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the overarching vision of Agenda 2030 – *to build a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, secure, and sustainable society that leaves no one behind*.

1.1 UK leadership on climate and development

The UK has long positioned itself as a global leader in climate and development, with 2021 marking a high point through its COP26 Presidency and hosting of the G7 Summit. Commitments made that year—ranging from inclusive climate action to humanitarian crisis prevention and adaptation finance—reflected a strong intent to align UK aid and diplomacy with the Paris Agreement and broader equity goals.²

CBM UK's advocacy for disability inclusion within these frameworks was a vital extension of the UK's stated ambition to ensure all voices were heard³. However, despite some promising signals, the UK's global leadership has been undermined by frequent shifts in domestic political leadership and policy prioritisation. The inclusive aspirations of COP26 were not fully realised, and subsequent years saw fluctuating commitments, including foreign aid cuts that risk diluting progress. Encouragingly, the election of a Labour government in 2024 brought renewed focus, with climate action elevated not only within manifesto promises but also within initial priorities of the then Foreign Secretary.⁴ At COP29 the UK was the first G7 country to set a 2035 NDC, announcing it would cut its greenhouse gas emissions 81% by 2035, compared to 1990 levels. However, the NDC and the accompanying Information to facilitate Clarity, Transparency and Understanding (ICTU) makes no reference to disability.⁵

As COP30 approaches, the UK has an opportunity to reclaim its leadership role—by championing inclusive climate policies that prioritise those most affected, including people with disabilities living in extreme poverty. To do so credibly, the UK must demonstrate consistency, ambition, and

accountability in both domestic and international arenas. This paper explores what this might look like – not only for the UK but all Parties committed to advancing climate justice.

1.2 The case for putting disability at the centre of climate action

Climate change impacts are now well-documented⁶ and the devastation on people's lives increasingly clear. Climate emergencies may occur due to either slow onset changes (such as increased temperatures and changed rainfall patterns, prolonged drought, sea level rise, and salinity intrusion into groundwater stocks, reduced air quality) or fast-onset events (such as floods, landslides, heatwaves, hurricanes, tsunami). Either way, many people living in disaster prone areas are now suffering multiple, direct impacts, including loss of life, homes, or livelihoods, loss of crops and food shortages, and indirect impacts, such as insecurity, malnutrition, and food price increases, with consequent impacts on health and wellbeing.

All countries everywhere are affected, but low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are worst affected. Ugandan Climate Activist, Evelyn Acham articulated this devastation powerfully in an [open letter to global leaders](#), in which she argued that climate crises destroy lives, homes, businesses (particularly agriculture, which employs 60% of Africa's population), and leaves families without food, water, shelter, school or health facilities: "it has left them suffering and in pain of an uncertain future for their children". Acham called for a better understanding of the intersectionality of climate change. Her argument that gender equality, racial justice, social justice, education justice and environmental justice are fundamental to climate action is supported by the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC)'s strong association of poverty with greater climate vulnerability.⁷ It recognises that the most marginalised populations are disproportionately affected by crises.

Disability is a critical part of this picture; one in five people living in poverty has a disability and people with disabilities experience poverty at twice the rate of non-disabled counterparts. To put this into perspective, around 15% of the world's population are people with disabilities – approximately 1 billion people (World Health Organisation, 2011). Disability inclusion must therefore be part of this urgent call for justice in climate action.

A key informant in Guatemala voiced concern to CBM about the amplified, life threatening risks faced by people with disabilities during extreme weather events:

*"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."*⁸

Similar concerns exist across the world. Even in resource rich countries (such as Germany⁹, Australia¹⁰ and USA¹¹), where capacity, technology and infrastructure are all well-invested, the impacts still affect people with disabilities disproportionately. Not enough decision makers are people with disabilities, and decision makers do not properly consider persons with disabilities in their disaster response planning.¹² This is reflected in the fact that those persons are, according to one estimate, up to four times more likely to die in disasters.¹³

Disproportionate impacts are observed in a number of ways, including:

- **People with disabilities are more likely to live in disaster prone areas**

People with disabilities face widespread discrimination and structural inequalities across many areas of life,¹⁴ often resulting in exclusion and a persistent cycle of poverty and disability.¹⁵ Discriminatory policies and negative attitudes limit access to services and infrastructure, restrict income-generating opportunities, and hinder full participation in society both for individuals but also their families. People living in poverty are more likely to reside in inadequate housing and climate exposed areas, such as urban slums and informal settlements, fragile hillsides or flood-prone riverbanks and coastal zones.¹⁶ When disasters strike, people with disabilities (including older people), are often least able to evacuate to safety or access emergency support. As a result, climate change intensifies existing inequalities, further limiting access to food, safe water, healthcare (both physical and mental), education, adequate housing, and social protection systems.¹⁷

- **Disability incidence increases in climate-vulnerable settings**

Climate change and extreme weather events contribute to rising rates of disability through injury, illness and long-term impairment. Hazards such as extreme winds, floods, landslides, heatwaves or wildfires can cause a wide range of injuries. In addition, global warming is linked to climatic shifts that increase the prevalence of disabling diseases. For example, a 2024 study found that increased humidity and altered rainfall patterns are intensifying the transmission of mosquito-borne diseases globally, particularly in Africa, where conditions are becoming more favourable for mosquito breeding.¹⁸ Cerebral malaria is one such disease, with approximately one in ten children who contract it experiencing lasting neurological impairments, including epilepsy, learning disabilities, behavioural changes, loss of coordination and speech difficulties.¹⁹ Other climate-related health impacts include respiratory conditions, malnutrition related impairments, cardiovascular diseases, infectious and water-borne diseases, heat strokes, poisoning, and psychosocial disabilities.²⁰

- **Climate displacement causes hardship for people with disabilities**

Climate change is projected to displace over 140 million people by 2050 across three of the world's most densely populated regions: sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America.²¹ Displacement often deepens vulnerability as people are forced to leave behind their assets, support networks, and familiar environments, resettling in marginal areas such as urban slum areas or roadsides with limited infrastructure or services.

People with disabilities are disproportionately affected.²² Many are unable to relocate due to physical, financial or social barriers and are left behind in degraded environments without essential support.²³ Those who do relocate often face heightened risks due to broken support networks, stigma, and discrimination. For example, persons with albinism in Mozambique reported fears of being kidnapped or harmed when placed among unfamiliar groups, undermining their safe relocation after Cyclone Idai in 2019.²⁴ Displacement also weakens local economies and individual resilience, while increasing competition over scarce resources – heightening the risk of conflict.

Without disability-inclusive approaches in climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR), people with disabilities will continue to face disproportionate and escalating impacts. Climate change is a human rights issue, and inclusive responses are essential to ensure no one is left behind.

2. Climate change treaties and disability rights obligations

There is a clear legal and moral imperative for countries to include people with disabilities in their climate action plans. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) obliges State Parties to consult with persons with disabilities on matters affecting their lives (Article 4), and to take all necessary measures to ensure persons with disabilities benefit from and participate in disaster relief, emergency response and disaster risk reduction strategies (Articles 11). This obligation is reinforced by the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which pledge to 'leave no one behind'. Ten of these goals explicitly position disaster risk reduction (DRR) as central to sustainable development,²⁵ underscoring the need for inclusive approaches.

The UK government has historically played a leading role in advancing disability inclusion in development. Notably, it co-hosted the first [Global Disability Summit](#) (GDS) in 2018 and launched the ambitious [Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy](#) at the 2022 GDS, which specifically identifies inclusive climate action as an emerging area of focus. The most recent summit in 2025 saw over 100 governments, including the UK, and organisations pledge that at least 15 percent of country-level development programmes will actively pursue disability inclusion. This renewed commitment stands in contrast to the rollback of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives by major institutions such as the US government, Meta, Google, and Amazon. It also comes amid projected aid cuts of 28% by G7 countries in 2026 compared to 2024 levels,²⁶ underscoring the importance of sustained leadership and accountability in inclusive development.

- **Disability inclusion in climate agreements**

The [Paris Agreement \(2015/6\)](#) is a legally binding international treaty under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It commits signatory State Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to climate impacts, and support developing countries through financial and technical assistance. At national levels, these commitments are enacted through laws, policies, plans and programmes, including those focused on coastal protection, disaster risk reduction, food security, and infrastructure adaptations, etc.

Article 7.5 of the Agreement calls for adaptation actions that are "country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent," and that "take into consideration vulnerable groups, communities and ecosystems." While persons with disabilities are not explicitly named, their inclusion is clearly implied given the disproportionate impacts they face from climate change. Ensuring that disability is explicitly recognised and addressed in climate adaptation and resilience planning is essential to uphold the principles of equity and human rights embedded in the Paris Agreement.

Mirroring the preamble of the Paris Agreement, the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) (COP26, 2021) later maintained the single (but significant) acknowledgement urging State Parties to “respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights... including the rights of persons with disabilities”.

The [UN Resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change \(2019\)](#) encouraged States to adopt a ‘comprehensive, integrated, gender-responsive and disability inclusive approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation policies’ ensuring the participation of those most affected by environmental shifts.

While references to disability in UN-negotiated documents have been limited, some progress is evident. The [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#), a globally negotiated UN agreement focused on the prevention and reduction of disaster risk, explicitly references persons with disabilities throughout the framework. It obligates States to disaggregate data by disability when reporting on progress against indicators²⁷ – a critical step towards inclusive risk management. Recent COP outcome documents have included a reference to persons with disabilities in preamble text, and the [Action for Climate Empowerment](#) (ACE)²⁸ programme specifically highlights the importance of including persons with disabilities in climate action.

- **A significant barrier to progress: Siloed approaches**

Taken together, global frameworks and conventions provide a sound legislative and policy foundation for holistic, disability-inclusive climate action. There are clear complementarity and interconnection between disability and climate policy streams,²⁹ but implementation remains fragmented and siloed, and as a result, disability inclusion in climate action has been limited.

To move forward, we must critically reflect on how international, regional and national priorities are set, and whose interests and voices are being heard in these processes. Bridging the gaps between sectors and ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities is essential to achieving inclusive and effective climate responses.

3. Unpacking the barriers to disability inclusive climate action

The disproportionate impacts of climate change on people with disabilities are increasingly recognised, and the legal and policy obligations are clear. Yet, mainstreaming disability inclusion into climate legislation, policies, plans and implementation remains a challenge. Why is this the case?

- **Competing Priorities and Limited Representation**

Climate policy spaces are often dominated by powerful interests and well-established constituencies. Groups with less visibility – including people with disabilities – struggle to be heard. The challenge is not to compete for attention, but to collaborate and build alliances within shared spaces. This means demonstrating how disability inclusion enhances outcomes such as risk management and local-level climate adaptation.

People with disabilities are best placed to lead this work. CBM advocates for and facilitates dialogue between policymakers and persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs), enabling mutual learning and co-creation of inclusive solutions. Organisations specialising in inclusive development can strengthen capacities and demystify the twin-track approaches [i.e. the combination of mainstreaming across all policies, programmes and related actions, with targeted interventions that address the specific needs and rights of persons with disabilities] that enable meaningful disability inclusion.

- **Gatekeepers of Climate Policy**

Policymakers and civil servants play a pivotal role in shaping climate agendas. If cross-cutting issues like disability are seen as peripheral rather than central, they risk being sidelined. The disability movement must engage strategically within climate policy environments – articulating their case persuasively and presenting data that resonates alongside scientific, environmental, and economic data and evidence.

- **Systemic constraints that reinforce silos**

Several entrenched barriers continue to inhibit meaningful inclusion in climate dialogue, policy processes and implementation:

- **Data and Knowledge Gaps:** Weak disaggregation and limited disability data, the homogenisation of disability experiences, and undervaluing of qualitative and lived experience data.
- **Bias and Discrimination:** Cultural beliefs and policy-makers own biases can marginalise disability concerns and inhibit inclusion. Other climate constituencies often have more persuasive voices at decision-making tables, while disability is sidelined as a 'vulnerable group'.
- **Limited Experience of Partnering with OPDs:** Policymakers may not know who to engage or how to ensure accessibility, limiting effective collaboration.
- **Resource Constraints:** Budget limitations and perceived costs of inclusion can deter action.
- **Accountability Gaps:** Climate accountability is often driven by duty bearers and donors, rather than rights holders. High-level commitments can overshadow the voices of those most affected – including people with disabilities.

To move beyond frameworks and “paper outcomes”, we must confront these constraints head on. This means challenging bias, dismantling silos and valuing lived experience as legitimate climate data. People with disabilities must be recognised climate stakeholders, integral to the decision making, design, implementation and monitoring of climate policy and programmes.

4. Identifying policy levers to speed up progress

CBM advocates for development and humanitarian interventions that recognise diversity and enable equal access and opportunity for all.³⁰ Four priorities are considered in this paper as being foundational for disability inclusion³¹ –

Priority 1: Lived Experience – Elevating the voice of people with disabilities as experts in their lives and in climate resilience

Priority 2: Representation – Ensuring meaningful participation of people with disabilities in climate decision making, from international to community levels

Priority 3: Accessibility – Investing in strong, accessible and person-centred systems and services, including technology

Priority 4: Comprehensiveness – Mainstreaming disability inclusion across sector conversations, policies and programmes

The framework presented in Annex 1 outlines some critical policy inputs (resources and capacities) that connect these four inclusion priorities to tangible outcomes aligned with the Paris Agreement: reducing greenhouse gas emissions, scaling up adaptation alongside mitigation, and delivering financial and technical assistance to developing countries. These outcomes are examined through three lenses: efficiency and fairness (i.e. balancing economic and ethical considerations), political acceptability (i.e. ensuring implementation feasibility and sustainability) and legality (i.e. alignment with existing laws, standards and mandates).

The framework is grounded in the principle that inclusive community and policy environments are built on positive disability awareness, where people with disabilities are valued as contributors to climate solutions. Though stylised, it helps identify enabling policy inputs such as inclusive data systems and evidence use, policy narratives and communication strategies, decision-making and budgeting processes, accountability systems, professional incentives, staff training and capacity, etc., that underpin and reinforce inclusive behaviours and drive systemic change.

A series of potential policy levers for advancing disability inclusion and collaboration emerged through this analysis. These are grouped under six headings, each representing an important entry point for building inclusive climate action:

4.1 Data disaggregation & valuing different kinds of evidence

Data is critical across the climate policy cycle. It is used to set priorities, shape investments, and track progress and impact. The type, availability and presentation of data influence risk modelling and forecasting, and ultimately, which issues are prioritised in climate action. While climate scientists and policy makers routinely use geographic and household survey data, which is often disaggregated by gender and age, disability data, though improving, remains comparatively weak.

Many countries are still in the early stages of collecting disability-disaggregated data, making it difficult to understand how disability intersects with geography, age and gender. This limits the ability to align climate responses with the disability rights agenda.

Importantly disability must not be treated as a homogenised category. Differences in impairment, combined with other identity factors, must be recognised. To build a fuller picture, we must also value alternative data beyond national surveys. Ideally risk information must be developed with at-risk communities, but this rarely happens.³² Participatory and qualitative methods, such as community-level perception surveys, can surface local knowledge and lived experience, enriching understanding and improving visibility of disability in climate contexts.³³

The challenge is to ensure that this data is not only collected but actively used throughout the implementation cycle – informing climate-related policies, strategies, planning, testing, monitoring and evaluation.

4.2 Accessible communication of risks and disaster response

Access to timely, relevant information is essential for helping people prepare for and respond to climate-related risks. Yet, many people with disabilities, particularly living in lower-income countries, face significant barriers to information and early warning systems. For example, posters may not be accessible to those with visual impairments, radio announcements may exclude those with hearing loss, and social media platforms may not be useable by people with learning difficulties or those without internet access. A CBM Global key informant from El Salvador captured this challenge clearly:

“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.”³⁴

When risk information is developed *with* communities, especially those most at-risk, it becomes more relevant, accessible and actionable. Participatory approaches help ensure that people with disabilities can take anticipatory action ahead of crises, improving safety and resilience.³⁵

4.3 Mobilising disability inclusive climate finance

As the urgency to scale up climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience grows, the allocation of climate finance remains deeply inequitable. Despite increasing recognition of need, none of the twenty highest per capita recipients of climate adaptation funding in recent years were amongst the twenty most climate vulnerable countries.³⁶

The Glasgow Pact, (COP26), included a collective commitment by developed countries to double adaptation finance from 2019 levels by 2025, aiming for at least \$37.6 billion annually. While this marked a significant step forward, it must be viewed in the context of the broader climate finance goal set in 2009: \$100 billion per year from developed countries to support developing countries at the frontline of the climate crisis. That target was missed annually between 2020–2021, but was finally exceeded in 2022, two years later than originally promised.³⁷ Yet, adaptation needs alone are

projected to reach \$194–366 billion annually by 2030³⁸, underscoring the scale of the gap that remains.

To ensure climate finance does not perpetuate exclusion, all investments must adhere to the **Do No Harm** principle, with disability inclusion recognised as a core criterion. This requires:

- Dedicated financial support to strengthen the capacity of people with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs) to engage meaningfully and participate fully in climate action.
- Ring-fenced budgets to cover the costs of accessibility and reasonable accommodations across all climate-related disaster risk management (DRM) investments, including early warning systems, preparedness and emergency response.
- Universal design and accessibility principles embedded in all new adaptation initiatives and infrastructure – across the economic, transport, energy and social sectors – ensuring that no one is excluded from the benefits of climate resilience.

With growing attention to Loss and Damage finance, especially following COP27, it is critical that disability-inclusive approaches are embedded in emerging mechanisms. People with disabilities, often among the hardest hit, must not be overlooked in the response to irreversible climate impacts.

Equally, the localisation of climate finance must be prioritised. Direct access for OPDs and community-based groups ensures funding reaches those most affected and best placed to lead inclusive, context-specific solutions.

4.4 Partnerships and alliances with the disability movement

Few actors in the humanitarian and development sectors currently take the lead in connecting forecast information providers (e.g. climate scientists) with at-risk communities (including people with disabilities). This gap reflects differences in language, framing and priorities, as well as limited funding to support such collaboration.³⁹

There is a clear role for disabilities organisations and allies in advocating for the inclusion of OPDs in initiatives such as the [Risk Informed Early Action Partnership \(REAP\)](#), which aims to strengthen people-centred early warning systems and improve implementation at scale.

However, inclusion must go beyond simply inviting people to the table. It requires intentional efforts to facilitate active engagement, accommodate diverse needs, and build partnerships rooted in genuine power sharing. Listening to all voices is only possible when the knowledge and understanding that different people bring is fully acknowledged and valued. Governments, donors and implementing agencies can play a vital role in advocating for the recognition of people with disabilities as experts and decision-makers, with lived experience of environmental change and practical knowledge to inform solutions. Advocacy, funding, accessible information and inclusive design are all essential to ensuring OPDs and people with disabilities have a meaningful seat at the table within climate policy environments that may otherwise feel unfamiliar or exclusionary.

4.5 Tackle stigma, harmful norms and disability discrimination

Attitudes and behaviours shape how people interact and engage with systems. People with disabilities must be recognised not as passive beneficiaries but as active agents in climate decision-making, whose knowledge, experience and rights deserve full respect.

One way to advance this is by maintaining a strong internal focus on disability within institutions, including government departments and avoiding a siloed approach. Prioritising diversity and inclusion in recruitment policies, leadership and organisational culture helps build environments where disability is seen as a valued perspective, not a marginal concern. By modelling inclusive practices, organisations can influence others in the climate space to adopt similarly inclusive approaches. Changing norms and tackling discrimination must go beyond policy, it requires intentional shifts in how institutions operate, communicate, and engage with people with disabilities.

4.6 Always think and work from a disability inclusive perspective

People with disabilities are important rights-holders, and their rights must be upheld at every stage of climate adaptation and resilience planning – from policy design, financing, implementation and monitoring. Questions to always consider include:

- Are the experiences, needs and knowledge of people with disabilities shaping and reflected in climate-related investments, strategies and plans?
- How are people with disabilities involved in implementation and monitoring impact and progress?

Accessibility is central to mainstreaming inclusion. Applying universal design principles across sectors, including green energy, transport, agriculture, public infrastructure, urban planning and essential services like water and waste management, ensures environments are “accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability”.⁴⁰ Simply, “universal design is good design”⁴¹, benefiting everyone by considering diverse needs from the outset.

Climate action plans must serve the whole community. People with disabilities must be included in and benefit from disaster risk reduction efforts, for example. This includes designing evacuation procedures that accommodate mobility impairments (e.g., using chairs or pulleys), displaying accessible evacuation plans, and conducting regular drills which include people with disabilities.⁴²

Disability inclusion is not an add-on or afterthought. It is fundamental to successful design and must be embedded throughout implementation and impact monitoring.

5. Entry points and recommendations

Climate change exposes and exacerbates inequalities. In responding to it, **the first imperative must be to do no harm**. Mitigation and adaptation initiatives must be designed with full consideration of the rights, perspectives and needs of people with disabilities. For example, increasing fuel levies without accounting for accessibility needs can further exclude individuals reliant on mobility transportation.⁴³ Similarly, blanket bans on single-use plastic straws have had unintended negative consequences for people with disabilities who depend on them.⁴⁴

We must guard against decisions that inadvertently create barriers or reinforce social inequities. As global efforts to combat climate change accelerate, it is vital that these measures enhance, rather than undermine, the human rights of people with disabilities.

Governments play a critical role in fostering a more inclusive policy environment. They can strengthen the systems, structures and relationships that underpin rights-based inclusive climate dialogues, leading to more equitable target setting, policy development, budget allocations and monitoring. These efforts can be advanced at both international and national levels through the following key entry points and recommendations:

5.1 Meet international commitments

Governments that have ratified key human rights treaties, such as the UN CRPD, are obligated to respect, protect and fulfil rights of people with disabilities. It is vital that within all negotiation streams at the UNFCCC – whether that is around adaptation, loss and damage or mitigation activities, as well as specific programmes and plans, such as the Just Transition or Gender Action, that people with disabilities and their representative organisations are specifically included, consulted with their views and context listened to, understood and referenced.⁴⁵

Recommendations at the global level:

- 1. Assert formal recognition of persons with disabilities within UNFCCC processes.** Governments – especially those in the COP Presidency role – should use their leadership and negotiating position with other State Parties and within the UNFCCC to assert formal recognition of people with disabilities in UNFCCC processes and as a constituency, emphasising the importance of their experience and knowledge to progress climate action in response to the [Glasgow Pact](#) and subsequent COP agreements.
- 2. Enable the equitable participation of people with disabilities** in climate conferences, such as COPs, and related policy dialogues through financial, informational and capacity-strengthening support.
- 3. Ensure accessibility in all international climate engagements**, including at COPs⁴⁶ and related fora. [Accessibility checks and services](#) must be a fundamental organising principle, encompassing sign language interpretation and real-time captioning, accessible venues for wheelchair users and accessibility-tested online platforms, as well as accessible calls for evidence and other information. Working closely with disability movement and OPDs to ensure this is imperative.

4. **Make disability inclusion a criterion for climate funding.** The priority is to get finance flowing to climate initiatives at all levels including local level, particularly through grant-based adaptation finance and pre-agreed emergency funding so that countries and communities can react immediately when disaster strikes and support those most at-risk.
5. **Recognise diverse data sources** in monitoring climate investment impacts. Qualitative or citizen generated data can illuminate the intersectional lived experiences of at-risk groups, such as indigenous people with disabilities.
6. **Improve disability visibility and data disaggregation** by applying the Washington Group questions in all donor-funded climate programmes. Reference disaggregated data in international climate fora to strengthen accountability.
7. **Facilitate collaboration between forecast information providers and at-risk communities**, including persons with disabilities. This will help break down silos and foster more inclusive approaches at the international level.
8. **Model inclusive organisational culture within government institutions and global cooperation efforts.** Prioritise diversity and inclusion in recruitment and training, including within negotiating teams and civil society consultations. Set high standards of disability inclusion for other climate actors.

5.2 Align international obligations to the domestic agenda

Financial and technical support to lower-income countries is a core obligation under the Paris Agreement. This support, as a complement and in addition to ODA and aligned with countries' commitments under the CRPD, can strengthen national capacities to design and deliver accessible, disability-inclusive laws, policies and action plans and integrate those into climate policies and initiatives.

Subsequent investments in national adaptation and protection infrastructure, such as green transport systems, resilient buildings, coastal protection, disaster risk reduction, and food security measures, are then more likely to serve entire communities with disability inclusion embedded from the outset. For example, flood relief efforts that can better accommodate people with mobility impairments, and emergency shelters that are designed to be accessible for all. Disability inclusion needs to be built in from the beginning and in close partnership with people with disabilities.

Beyond international support, donor governments must also support their own domestic departments to meet CRPD obligations in the context of climate action. This includes aligning climate targets, policies, initiatives and funding with disability inclusion. Governments must place disability inclusion at the heart of national transitions to renewable energy, efforts to meet the 1.5°C target, and climate adaptation strategies. For instance, when setting ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), governments should explicitly outline how Net Zero targets will include and benefit people with disabilities. Progress, however, remains uneven. Whilst the UK, for example, missed a key opportunity to embed disability inclusion in its 2035 [NDC](#), there have been some positive signs from other countries including Nepal and [Bangladesh](#) where reference has been made as a crosscutting and human rights issue. Nonetheless, much more needs to be done to ensure these commitments are fully implemented.

Recommendations at the domestic/national level:

9. **Embed universal design and accessibility** across all new green infrastructure investments and post-crisis reconstruction, applying a “do no harm” approach across economic, transport and social sectors.
10. **Ring-fence budgets for accessibility** and reasonable accommodations in all climate-related investment, including early warning systems, preparedness and emergency response.
11. **Recognise people with disabilities as technical experts and decision-makers**, valuing their lived experience of environmental change and their contribution to practical solutions.
12. **Facilitate the full participation of people with disabilities in national climate processes**, drawing on [existing accessibility toolkits](#) and technical expertise.
13. **Collect and use disability data** throughout the implementation cycle of climate policy developments, strategies, and monitoring frameworks.
14. **Champion locally-led adaptation plans that are inclusive, accessible and responsive** to needs and priorities identified by people with disabilities.
15. **Ensure climate finance reaches the local level**, creating space for meaningful participation of OPDs in the design, implementation and monitoring of local climate action plans.⁴⁷
16. **Foster cross-government collaboration** by connecting national disability focal points (often within Ministries of Social Affairs) with climate and environment ministries and Ministries of Finance, and support initiatives that break down silo working (e.g. inclusive climate change stakeholder groups).

5.3 Enable a stronger voice for social movements and civil society

Disability champions in local communities often face entrenched bias, discrimination and isolation that can undermine efforts towards equitable inclusion. People with disabilities hold vital, locally grounded insights, yet they may not link their experiences to wider climate changes or feel them reflected in climate narratives and policies.

Recommendations:

17. **Facilitate peer-to-peer learning and network building** to support collaboration with established climate constituencies and raise awareness of disability as a central climate concern.
18. **Champion the inclusion of people with disabilities in climate dialogue**, actively legitimizing their role in shaping climate action at all levels.

6. Conclusion

The science is clear, but the politics remain complex with many stakeholders involved. As climate-related disasters grow in frequency and severity it is vital that those most affected – particularly people with disabilities – are heard and actively engaged.

The urgency cannot be overstated. A decade on from the Paris Agreement, disability rights are far from being realised in the international climate response. Despite enabling legislation, disability-inclusive climate action is still inconsistently reflected in global climate negotiations and national implementation.

This paper highlights the impacts on people with disabilities in lower-income communities – those least responsible for the crisis. Disability prevalence is rising due to climate-related factors, population ageing and increasing chronic health conditions. The intersection of climate and disability can no longer be ignored.

To move beyond policy rhetoric, governments must confront the barriers that hinder progress and take concrete steps to meet their international commitments. **The paper outlines practical approaches to break down silos and create space for the disability movement to shape climate action both globally and nationally.** Supporting those most-affected to lead and influence disability inclusive climate strategies is essential for driving sustainable, locally resonant solutions.

ANNEX: Critical inputs for disability inclusive climate action – an indicative framework

Disability inclusive policy priorities	Critical Inputs		Inclusive Climate Action Outcomes	
	Resources and capacity [reference to corresponding section in paper]	Efficiency and fairness	Political acceptability	Legality
Lived experience- Ensure strong voice of people with disabilities	[4.1] Disability demystified: data increasingly disaggregated; diversity (i.e. disability not homogenous) and intersectionality (e.g. remote locations) are recognised. [4.1] Different types of data valued: wider sources of evidence, insights & expertise from disability movement, e.g. experiences and knowledge of indigenous people with disabilities [4.4] Climate forecasters and disability activists work together with at-risk communities, building common language and agenda.	Climate change response recognises disproportionate impacts on persons with disabilities. People with disabilities valued as rights-holders. Barriers faced by people with disabilities addressed. People with disabilities safer from climate disasters.	OPD involvement strengthens local relevance, monitoring and regular review of action plans for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and emergency response. Disaggregated data supports stronger decisions but also tracking progress and balanced accountability.	People with disabilities as right holders, and recognised constituents for accountability in climate action. Laws, policies, plans and programmes – planning, building, coastal protection, disaster risk reduction, food security – consider adaptation priorities and needs of vulnerable groups (Paris Agreement, Article 7.5)
Representation- Community inclusion and participation	[4.4] Capacity building at the local level: OPDs and people with disabilities understand climate change better.	Greater resilience and adaptive capacity of people with disabilities and their families and communities.	Disability engaged advocacy for local environment – protecting community land, forests, and water	Parties actively consider their respective obligations on human rights, such as rights of children,

[4.2] Key climate-related risk and response **information communicated accessibly within communities.**

All people better understand how to keep safe during climate crises.
Improved health of whole communities.
Reduced disaster losses, unlocked development potential, fostered social & environmental co-benefits

supplies from destruction, degradation and pollution.
Community development and livelihoods secured through climate change adaptation and resilience action.
Strengthened at-risk community resilience through inclusive mitigation, preparedness, recovery and reconstruction.

people with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations (Paris Agreement).
Stronger climate action and more resilient societies.
Closer towards achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, secure, and sustainable society that leaves no one behind (SDGs)

Accessibility – Invest in strong, accessible and person-centred systems and services

[4.5] Diversity in recruitment and **DI training/capacities built.**
[4.4] **Work in partnership** and alliance with OPDs and people with disabilities.
[4.6] Recognition of where power sits, strong **facilitation** opens up how power is used, OPDs and disability movement capacity supported appropriately, active listening.
[4.3] **Investment** in tools and capacity building to support inclusive policy processes and intervention delivery.

Disability inclusion no longer at the margins of climate change response.
Full inclusion in design, implementation and evaluation of climate change interventions.

Accessible services designed to minimise environmental impact (e.g. waste management, reduced use of air conditioning, solar panels, 5Rs – reuse, reduce, refuse, repurpose, recycle, accessible green space, etc.)
Early warning systems include OPDs.

Do no harm.
“Nothing about us without us” spirit of SDGs and CRPD incorporated into climate change activities and related services.
Specific, measurable, achievable and disability inclusion relevant targets built into climate response –

			Raised political status of inclusive adaptation.	in budgets, impact criteria, data systems, inclusive & purposeful engagement.
Comprehensiveness Disability is mainstreamed	[4.3] Disability inclusion a key criterion in climate funds (for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience building investments). [4.3] Climate funding reaches local level; space for OPD input into design, implementation and monitoring of local action plans. [4.6] Universal design underpins investments into green infrastructure and post-crisis reconstruction.	A policy response that works for people with disabilities benefits all Disaster risk reduction activities include people with disabilities as a specifically vulnerable group but also as agents of change. Increased financing for disability inclusive climate action.	“Smart technologies” enhance resilience and disaster preparedness while also meeting accessibility standards Reduced carbon emissions (e.g. improved efficiency of accessible buildings, transport and travel) and improved overall environmental sustainability of new investments.	More sustainable production and consumption patterns (SDG 12) More resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation (SDG 9)

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- ¹ World Health Organisation. 2011. World report on disability. https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/
- ² Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy>
- ³ The UK's COP Presidency promised that the Glasgow COP would be the most inclusive yet; Alok Sharma stressed the intent for COP26 that "all voices are heard, including the voices of developing countries, of women, of young people and indigenous peoples". At the time, CBM UK strongly supported this commitment to inclusion, extending it to include the voices of people with disabilities. See 'Keeping 1.5C alive – are Glasgow preparations on track?' <https://casaclimate.org/news/keeping-1-5c-alive-are-glasgow-preparations-on-track/>
- ⁴ The Kew Lecture: Foreign Secretary's speech on the climate crisis: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-foreign-policy-speech-on-the-climate-crisis>
- ⁵ The [UK NDC](#) makes reference to marginalised groups but with no specificity to disability: "The UK recognises that women and girls – alongside other marginalised people – are disproportionately impacted by climate change and are also critical leaders and agents of change in climate action."
- ⁶ <https://rmets.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/joc.7285>
- ⁷ Roy, J., P. Tschakert, H. Waisman, S. Abdul Halim, P. Antwi-Agyei, P. Dasgupta, B. Hayward, M. Kanninen, D. Liverman, C. Okereke, P.F. Pinho, K. Riahi, and A.G. Suarez Rodriguez, 2018: Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty: https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/SR15_Chapter_5_LR.pdf
- ⁸ Source: Mary Keogh and Acuna Gonzalez, 2021, *The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Climate Change Plans: Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political*, CBM Global discussion paper <https://cbm-global.org/resource/climate-change-this-centurys-defining-issue>
- ⁹ *German Flood Deaths Highlight Climate Change Risks for People with Disabilities*, Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/21/german-flood-deaths-highlight-climate-change-risks-people-disabilities>
- ¹⁰ *Climate change threatens the lives of people with disabilities*: <https://independentaustralia.net/environment/environment-display/climate-change-threatens-the-lives-of-people-with-disabilities,15258>
- ¹¹ *How heat waves and climate change put people with disabilities at risk - ABC News (go.com)*
- ¹² United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2024. 'Climate Change and the Health of People with Disabilities'. <https://www.epa.gov/climateimpacts/climate-change-and-health-people-disabilities>
- ¹³ Humanity & Inclusion. 2023. 'How climate change affects people with disabilities'. <https://www.humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/news/how-climate-change-affects-people-with-disabilities>
- ¹⁴ https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_2
- ¹⁵ [The Cycle: EXPLAINED - End The Cycle](#)
- ¹⁶ Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, (2020), *Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change*, Human Rights Council, 45 session, June–July 2020: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/30>
- ¹⁷ Unequal climate justice for people with disabilities: https://www.bond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2508_BOND-Disability_final_web.pdf
- ¹⁸ Frontiers, Innovative strategies and challenges mosquito-borne disease control amidst climate change: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/microbiology/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2024.1488106/full>
- ¹⁹ Jones, I., 2002, Neurological Damage from Malaria, referenced in David Lewis and Kath Ballard (2016) *Disability and Climate Change*, CBM Paper: https://www.disabilityrightsfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Disability_and_Climate_Change.pdf

²⁰ Mary Keogh and Acuna Gonzalez (2021) *The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Climate Change Plans: Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political*, CBM Global discussion paper: <https://cbm-global.org/resource/climate-change-this-centurys-defining-issue>

For a full review of the linkages with mental health, please refer to CBM Global Disability Inclusion (2021) 'Climate change, mental health and wellbeing – Examples of practical inclusive practices': https://cbm-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Climate-change-and-Mental-Health_CBMGlobal.pdf

²¹ World Bank 2018. Climate Change Could Force Over 140 Million to Migrate Within Countries by 2050: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/03/19/climate-change-could-force-over-140-million-to-migrate-within-countries-by-2050-world-bank-report>

²² Amnesty identify a 'double injustice' impacting people displaced in the context of climate crises, which includes examples affecting people with disabilities: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa05/0343/2025/en/>

²³ Mary Keogh and Acuna Gonzalez, (2021), *The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Climate Change Plans: Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political*, CBM Global discussion paper: <https://cbm-global.org/resource/climate-change-this-centurys-defining-issue>

²⁴ Light for the World (2019) *A review of access to Humanitarian Aid for women and men, girls and boys with disabilities affected by Cyclone Idai, Mozambique*, UNICEF: https://www.licht-fuer-die-welt.at/app/uploads/sites/8/2021/09/policy_paper_lftw_unicef_-_def_digital_accessible_0.pdf?_ga=2.54021736.1345939198.1638376137-1813232659.1638376137

²⁵ SDGs with Targets related to Disaster Risk: <https://www.preventionweb.net/sustainable-development-and-drr/sdgs-targets-related-disaster-risk>

²⁶ Oxfam. 2025. 'Biggest-ever aid cut by G7 countries a death sentence for millions of people - Oxfam'. <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/biggest-ever-aid-cut-by-g7-countries-a-death-sentence-for-millions-of-people-oxfam/>

²⁷ For a fuller overview of these conventions and agreements, refer to earlier CBM paper written by Mary Keogh and Acuna Gonzalez, (2021) *The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Climate Change Plans: Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political*, CBM Global: <https://cbm-global.org/resource/climate-change-this-centurys-defining-issue>

²⁸ Action for Climate Empowerment, UNFCCC: <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-and-youth/big-picture/ACE>

²⁹ See CBM UK Discussion Paper (2023) *Climate Change and Disability Rights*: <https://www.cbmun.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/04/Climate-Change-and-Disability-Rights-Discussion-Paper-June-2023-1.pdf>

³⁰ See CBM Global Climate roadmap: <https://cbm-global.org/resource/climate-advocacy-roadmap>

³¹ For more information on CBMG's framework for creating an enabling environment for disability inclusion and equity, see: <https://cbm-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/preconditions-for-inclusion-overview-final-17-march.pdf>

³² Risk information must be developed with at-risk communities in the driving seat: <https://www.early-action-reap.org/risk-information-must-be-developed-risk-communities-driving-seat>

³³ Contributors to this video from the European Disability Forum (EDF) stress the importance of disability visibility. Video in short form (4 mins) <https://youtu.be/36jwHdRtmGg> and long form (17 mins) <https://youtu.be/JnOIRdFFdMk>

³⁴ Mary Keogh and (2020) Acuna Gonzalez, *The 4 Ps for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Climate Change Plans: Personal, Programmes, Policy and Political*, CBM Global: <https://cbm-global.org/resource/climate-change-this-centurys-defining-issue>

³⁵ This video of climate action in Bristol, England, accessibly reaches and validates the involvement of people with disabilities using communication methods appropriate to the UK context: <https://bristoldef.org.uk/community-climate-action/>

³⁶ At What Cost: Help close the gap on adaptation finance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wO2E_hLU_I

³⁷ Bond blog (2021) What happened at COP26? By Helen Rumford: <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2021/11/what-happened-at-cop26>

³⁸ Rising to the Challenge - Climate Adaptation and Resilience: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/rising-to-the-challenge-climate-adaptation-resilience>

³⁹ Risk information must be developed with at-risk communities in the driving seat: <https://www.early-action-reap.org/risk-information-must-be-developed-risk-communities-driving-seat>

⁴⁰ Directly quoted from CBM and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development –Strengthening Environmental Sustainability and Inclusion in Health and other Development programs, p 29-30. https://www.cbm.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CBM-Strengthening-Environmental-Sustainability.pdf?srsId=AfmBOorT-BrlxI9Mrp6gNa3cjPBfYvyFK-O__pp3Au7Fu8EzeHksefWL

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² David Lewis and Kath Ballard, 2016, CBM paper: https://www.disabilityrightsfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Disability_and_Climate_Change.pdf

⁴³ <https://www.prweb.com/releases/climate-change-is-our-crisis-too-persons-with-disabilities-demand-cop26-break-the-exclusion-cycle-814868648.html>

⁴⁴ Why Disabled People Need Plastic Straws: <https://www.eater.com/2018/7/19/17586742/plastic-straw-ban-disabilities>

⁴⁵ Integrating disability rights into climate action – now!: <https://www.iddcconsortium.net/blog/integrating-disability-rights-into-climate-action-now/>

⁴⁶ Cop26: Take stock, regroup and keep disability inclusion on the table for climate action: <https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2022/01/cop26-take-stock-regroup-and-keep-disability-inclusion-on-the-table-for-climate-action>

⁴⁷ For example, the UK Government have developed a GEDSI guidance note for all UK International Climate Finance (ICF) programming –signalling good intent towards ensuring greater inclusion in UK climate finance: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6826f9b3c3d769b1824e6471/International-Climate_Finance-ICF-gender-equality-disability-and-social-inclusion-guidance.pdf