

Locating disability inclusion in action on climate change

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Photo: 73-year-old Evelyn waters her plot in the community garden set up by CBM and partners in Chivi, Zimbabwe
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1. Introduction

CBM advocates for disability rights and inclusive development. CBM UK policy papers are grounded in programme experience and the lived experience of people with disabilities.

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 and 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 persons with disabilities represent 1 in 5 people living in poverty worldwide¹, disability inclusion is a human rights issue and must be taken into account in all interventions.

Inclusive climate action builds climate resilience and enables impact mitigation, 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 their successful implementation and offers a number of entry points and interconnectivities that are genuinely useful in pushing forward climate and inclusion agenda in mutually reinforcing ways. A number of potential win-wins are suggested to support faster progress, and aid the UK government to better link its climate response to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly *SDG 7 - to build a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, secure, and sustainable society that leaves no one behind*.

1.1 2021: a critical moment for UK leadership on climate and development

2021 marked a critical year for UK international leadership around climate change and development. The UK hosted the G7 Summit, alongside which government commitments were announced² for:

- a new famine prevention and humanitarian crises agreement
- a commitment to make people safer from climate disasters, through early warning, better preparedness and early action
- actions to scale up the finance needed to help countries adapt to the impacts of climate change

The UK also hosted the Global Education Summit in 2021, where the power of investing in girls' education was recognised for its critical role in securing a greener and fairer future in response to climate change³.

This was followed by the UK's hosting of COP26. The UK's COP Presidency promised that the Glasgow COP would be the most inclusive yet; Alok Sharma stressed⁴ the intent that "all voices are heard, including the voices of developing countries, of women, of young people and indigenous peoples". CBM strongly supported this commitment to inclusion, extending it to include the voices of people with disabilities.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) provided welcome assurance⁵ that UK ODA will be aligned to the Paris Agreement, reflecting "the UK's commitment to tackling climate change and its effects as a driver of future instability and poverty". In support of this, we strongly encourage FCDO to not lose sight of the

newly updated [FCDO Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030](#)⁶, as it weaves cross-cutting drivers of poverty, vulnerability and disability into its strategic climate response.

2021 was an important and galvanising focal point for UK climate action, and the Glasgow Climate Pact moves us forward, but COP26 fell somewhat short of its stated intent around inclusion⁷. Lessons will hopefully be drawn regarding the centrality of inclusion – if you want to enable “all voices are heard”, all voices must be present and enabled to speak. The forthcoming UK International Development Strategy is an opportunity to bring different people’s voices and experiences centre-stage in joining up the UK’s development and climate change response. It is a window of opportunity to learn from what has gone before, to hear and respond to the lived experiences of people living with climate risk and poverty, and give the best chance of driving forward appropriate partnerships, projects and investments to meet the commitment to leave no-one behind.

1.2 The case for putting disability at the centre of UK’s climate response

2021 was also a year characterised by a succession of climate disasters worldwide, bringing into sharp focus the increased number and severity of crises over recent years, and led some scientists to express concern that the speed of change had been underestimated. The Race to Zero campaign⁸ highlighted serious floods in China and Western Europe, heatwaves and drought in North America and wildfires in the sub-Arctic among others. In the UK too, extreme weather events have become more commonplace⁹. However, it is in low- and middle-income countries where prevention and protection are weakest and where these crises impact most severely, particularly on the most marginalised communities including people with disabilities.

Climate change impacts are now well-documented¹⁰ and the devastation on people’s lives increasingly clear. Extreme climate emergencies may either be through 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 disasters (extreme weather 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.

Ugandan Climate Activist, Evelyn Acham articulates this devastation powerfully in her recent [open letter to global leaders](#). She argues that 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 calls 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 vulnerability¹¹. 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 living with disabilities – this is approximately 1 billion people (World Health Organisation, 2011), and 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 persons 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."*¹²

Similar concerns exist across the world. Even in resourcerich countries (such as Germany¹³, Australia¹⁴ and USA¹⁵), where capacity, technology and infrastructure are all well-invested, the impacts still affect people with disabilities disproportionately. 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 discrimination and structural inequalities in many areas of life which often leads to disadvantage and exclusion, and a cycle¹⁶ of poverty and disability is evident¹⁷. Discriminatory policies and negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities inhibit individuals' (and their families') access to services and infrastructure, their income generating opportunities, and their active participation in society. People living in poverty generally live in inadequate housing and climate exposed settlements, such as urban slums and informal settlements, on fragile hillsides or flood-prone riverbanks or coastal areas¹⁸. If disaster threatens or hits the area, it is people with disabilities (including older people), that may be least able to move to safety.

- **Increased disability incidence occurs in climate vulnerable settings**

Climate change and extreme weather events increase the incidence of disability through injury and impairment. A multitude of potential injuries are caused by extreme winds, floods, landslides, heat or fire. However, global warming is also associated with climatic changes that result in disabling illness. For example, increased humidity is associated with an increased prevalence of mosquito-borne diseases like malaria (up by 6% in some countries, by 2000¹⁹); roughly one in ten children will suffer from neurological impairment after suffering cerebral malaria, including epilepsy, learning disability, changes in behaviour, loss of coordination or speech impairments²⁰. Other examples include respiratory diseases, malnutrition related impairments, cardiovascular diseases, infectious diseases, poisoning, water-borne diseases and heart strokes, as well as psycho-social disabilities²¹.

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

Climate change could result in the displacement and internal migration of more than 140 million people before 2050 in three of the world's most densely populated regions, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America²². Displacement can cause considerable hardship and a deepening of vulnerability. When people are forced to leave their homes, they often leave behind their assets and personal support networks, and resettle in sub-standard marginal areas, such as urban slum areas or roadsides.

Those that cannot leave – disproportionately people with disabilities – are left behind in degraded environments where they are often left without social networks to help provide essential support and protection²³. Local economies and individual resilience are weakened through displacement, and the potential for conflict is exacerbated by competition over increasingly limited resources.

People with disabilities report feeling particularly unsafe, and at increased risk when their support networks are broken, due to stigma and discrimination. For example, persons with albinism in Mozambique reported a fear of being kidnapped or killed if placed with large groups of strangers, and this undermined their safe relocation, despite the devastation caused to their homes by Cyclone Idai, in 2019²⁴.

Climate change is a human rights issue. Without disability inclusive interventions in climate change adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) plans, persons with disabilities will continue to face exponential negative impacts.

2. Climate change treaties and disability rights obligations

There are legal requirements for countries to include people with disabilities, which should also include their climate action plans. Disability rights are enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which places specific obligations on 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).²⁵ Further global commitment to disability inclusion is evident in the UN Agenda 2030's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which promise to 'leave no one behind', ten of which firmly establish the role of disaster risk reduction as a core development strategy.²⁶

There is no question that the profile of and commitment to disability inclusion in development and international cooperation has significantly increased over recent years. The UK government has played a leading role in this shift, recognising disability as a neglected issue and developing a vision for disability inclusion 'to ensure people with disabilities are consistently and systematically included in international development and humanitarian assistance'. Although neither the DFID (now FCDO) [Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development, 2018-2023](#), nor the subsequent [Global Disability Summit in 2018](#) (GDS 18) co-hosted with Kenya, directly focused on climate change as a critical area for disability inclusion, they set out clearly how seriously the FCDO takes the rights of people with disabilities within its development mandate. All signatories to the [GDS 18 Charter for Change](#) committed to "make all humanitarian

action fully inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities”, to “mainstream inclusion across all Disaster Risk Reduction and humanitarian sectors”, and to “champion the rights of the most underrepresented and marginalised persons with disabilities, of all ages, affected by any form of multiple discrimination, and notably women and girls with disabilities”.

- **Disability inclusion in climate agreements**

The [Paris Agreement \(2015/6\)](#) is a legally binding international treaty within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) obligating signatory State Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the impacts of climate change, and provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries affected by a changing climate. At national levels, this is enacted through laws, policies, plans and programmes (e.g. around coastal protection, disaster risk reduction, food security, infrastructure adaptations, etc.), all of which need to consider various priorities and needs, (Article 7.5 of the Paris Agreement). Although not explicitly mentioned in Article 7.5, because of the disproportionate impacts of climate change the particular needs and priorities of persons with disabilities are implied. Mirroring the preamble of the Paris Agreement, COP26’s [Glasgow Pact](#) (2021) maintained a single (but important) acknowledgement to 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](#), 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’. Another inter-government negotiated UN agreement, the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#), focused on the prevention and reduction of disaster risk globally, explicitly references persons with disabilities both across the framework itself and through obligating States to disaggregate for disability when reporting on indicators²⁷.

- **Siloed approaches**

Taken together, these global frameworks and conventions provide a sound legislative and policy basis to drive forward holistic and disability inclusive climate action. There is complementarity and interconnectivity across these two policy streams²⁸, but implementation still remains siloed and as a result, disability inclusive climate action has been limited. We need to reflect on the processes around prioritisation and whose interests and voices are being heard in all this and find the right ways to bridge gaps.

3. What is holding back progress on disability inclusive climate action?

The disproportionate impacts of climate change on people with disabilities are increasingly recognised. Why then is it proving difficult to mainstream disability inclusion within climate change policy environments and State-level responses, i.e. climate legislation, policies, plans and implementation?

Firstly, there are competing priorities and interests that need to be mediated, to make sure there is space for voices from more vulnerable groups that may not have such powerful representation or recognition. The challenge is not to compete but to collaborate and build alliances for shared space.

In part, this means showing how disability inclusion can be achieved and what additional value this will have on outcomes. The people best placed to help here are people with disabilities. CBM advocates for and facilitates the bringing together of policy makers with people with disabilities and their representative organisations, to exchange information, learn from one another and ultimately to make sustainable positive and inclusive change. Organisations that specialise in inclusive development can bolster capacities and demystify the twin-track accommodations and initiatives that enable disability inclusion.

Secondly, policy makers and civil servants play a major role in shaping and implementing the climate response. They mediate what gets onto the agenda, and how things are taken forward. If a cross-cutting issue is considered a distraction rather than a central concern, that can have major implications for how it is treated. It is imperative that the disability movement understands how to move within this policy environment, to persuasively articulate their case and data in ways that will resonate, alongside the scientific, environmental and economic impact data and messaging that has more traditionally occupied this policy space.

The following are suggested systemic constraints that underpin and maintain silos and in turn inhibit inclusion in climate action:

- **Limitations of data, information and knowledge** – General data gaps, and weak disaggregation; homogenising people with disabilities, not differentiating experiences, capabilities and needs; devaluing qualitative data and lived experience.
- **Bias and discrimination** - Policy makers themselves carry biases and cultural beliefs that may limit real inclusion. The voices of other climate constituents resonate more persuasively at 'the table'.
- **Limited experience of partnering with OPDs and people with disabilities**, which means that it may be difficult to know who to partner with, and how to accommodate accessibility appropriately to ensure fruitful discussion.
- **Resource limitations** – Budget limits and concern regarding extra costs of inclusion.
- **Accountability and transparency are driven by duty bearers and donors, rather than rights holders and those most affected by climate change** -

Pressure to achieve high-level negotiated commitments has crowded out the less powerful voice of those, like people with disabilities, that are negatively and disproportionately affected by climate change.

If we want to achieve more than sound policies on paper, we need to confront the constraints that inhibit their progress – to turn potential bias, discrimination and ignorance on their head so that lived experience of disability is valued as climate change data, and people with disabilities are integral to driving forward climate policy design, implementation and monitoring.

4. Policy levers to speed up progress

CBM advocates for development and humanitarian interventions which accommodate difference and enable equal access and opportunity for all. Working closely with our partners, we have together identified four policy priorities²⁹ that are most effective in moving this forward. These are:

Priority 1: Strong voice of people with disabilities

Priority 2: Community inclusion and participation

Priority 3: Strong, accessible and person-centred systems including equitable access to services

Priority 4: Disability is mainstreamed across sectors including humanitarian response

Creating supportive community environments (whether local communities, or policy communities) underpinned by positive disability awareness within which people with disabilities are valued, is fundamental. Data systems and use of evidence, policy narratives and communication styles, decision-making and budgeting processes, accountability systems, professional incentives, staff training and capacity, etc., all underpin and reinforce behaviours. As such, these represent potential policy levers for building greater inclusion and collaboration.

The framework presented in Annex 1 identifies some - admittedly stylised - critical policy inputs that link together commonalities of purpose in meeting both the 4 policy priorities of disability inclusion listed above and positive outcomes in the climate agenda, namely the Paris Agreement priorities (i.e. reducing greenhouse gas emissions, scaling up adaptation alongside mitigation, and delivering financial and technical assistance to developing countries).

Six overarching policy levers are evident, summarised below:

4.1 Data disaggregation & valuing different kinds of evidence

Data is critical throughout the implementation cycle. It is used to set priorities, shape investment choices, and verify progress and impact. The availability, presentation and choices behind which data is used hold repercussions for risk modelling and forecasting, and how these are fed through into climate action – namely agenda setting and balance of power between (potentially) competing priorities. While climate

scientists and policy makers can draw analysis with geographical data and household surveys, which routinely collect gender and age-related data, disability data, although much improved in recent years, remains comparatively weak. Many countries are at a relatively early stage of collecting data disaggregated by disability, making it hard to identify and contextualise intersectionalities with age, geography, ethnicity, gender and so on, or to make climate and environment responses align with the disability rights agenda.

It is important that disability is not homogenised. This means that impairment difference is recognised, alongside the intersections with age, gender, geography and other marginalisation characteristics. The reality is that other forms of data, beyond national household surveys, may need to be relied upon and recognised for their contribution to a fuller data picture. Ideally risk information must be developed with at-risk communities, but at the moment, this rarely happens³⁰. Qualitative or participatory data collection methods can bring awareness of local knowledge and lived experience, and innovative survey methods, such as community-level perception surveys, can enrich and improve disability visibility³¹. The test then is to ensure this data is used across the implementation cycle for climate-related policies, strategies, plans, testing and monitoring.

4.2 Accessible communication of risk and disaster response information

Information is essential for raising awareness on how to prepare for and access services to help keep safe. For many people with disabilities living in lower-income countries, there is limited access to relevant information. For example, posters are not accessible to those with sight impairments, radio announcements may not be accessible to those with hearing loss, and social media platforms may not be accessible to people with learning difficulties or indeed anyone without internet access. A CBM key informant from El Salvador articulated this 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."*³²

When data and information are developed with communities, particularly the most climate-vulnerable populations including persons with disabilities³³, it better facilitates at-risk communities to take action ahead of crises.

4.3 Mobilising disability inclusive climate finance

Increasing funding for climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience is now urgent; not one of the twenty highest per capita recipients of climate adaptation funding in recent years was from amongst the twenty most climate vulnerable countries³⁴. The Glasgow Pact agreed to a doubling of financing for adaptation. However, the target set back in 2009 for \$100 billion a year from developed countries to support countries at the frontline of the climate crises has been missed, and will not be met until 2023³⁵.

All climate finance must meet the **Do No Harm** principle, and it is essential that disability is included as a key criterion. Checks are needed to ensure investments build resilience and mitigate losses, but do so in ways that are disability sensitive and inclusive. This means:

- Ensuring financial support to strengthen the capacity of people with disabilities to engage in climate action opportunities
- Ring-fencing budgets to safeguard the costs of appropriate accommodations across all climate crises investment (e.g. early warning systems, better preparedness and emergency response)
- All new adaptation infrastructure investments (across the economic, transport and social sectors) are underpinned by accessibility considerations and universal design principles.

4.4 Partnerships and alliances with the disability movement

Very few humanitarian or development sector actors currently take a lead in bringing forecast information providers (e.g. climate scientists) and at-risk communities (including people with disabilities) together. This reflects in part the different frames of reference, and terminologies used as well as perhaps a lack of funding to enable it³⁶. There's a role for example in negotiating space for OPD inclusion in initiatives such as the new [Risk Informed Early Action Partnership \(REAP\)](#), formed to encourage governments to turn weak partnerships around, to enable more people-centred early warning systems to be implemented at scale.

It is not enough to invite people to the table, due consideration needs to be given to how active engagement is facilitated, difference accommodated, and partnerships created that go beyond consultation into authentic power sharing. Listening to all voices can only happen when the knowledge and understanding that different people bring is fully acknowledged and valued. The UK government can be a disability advocate pushing for appropriate recognition of people with disabilities as experts and decision-makers, with lived experience of changing environmental conditions and the knowledge to support practical solutions. Advocacy, funding, information and accessibility adjustments all have a role in ensuring OPDs and persons with disabilities an active seat at the table of a somewhat alien policy environment.

4.5 Tackle stigma, harmful norms and disability discrimination

Attitudes and behaviours mediate the ways in which human interactions occur. People with disabilities need to be considered not as 'beneficiaries' but recognised as active agents within the climate policy environment, ensuring their knowledge and experience but also their rights are fully respected. Maintaining a strong internal focus on disability within FCDO, which builds from the exemplary work by DFID to legitimize disability as a central policy lens, and prioritising diversity and inclusion in internal recruitment policies, are just some suggestions for how this can be achieved. By modelling an inclusive organisational culture, FCDO will better engage other climate actors to think and work inclusively too.

4.6 Thinking and working with a disability inclusive lens

People with disabilities are important rights-holders, and duty bearers need to uphold these rights at every stage of discussion, planning and financing for climate change adaptation and resilience interventions. Are the experiences and knowledge of people with disabilities driving design decisions in climate-related investments, strategies and plans? How are people with disabilities involved in implementation and monitoring of impact and progress?

Accessibility is a really important consideration. Universal design principles can be applied across investments into green energy, transport, agriculture, public buildings, urban planning and provision of services, including water and waste management. Universal design builds environments that can be “accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability”³⁷. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all people throughout the design process, then everyone benefits. “Simply put, universal design is good design”³⁸.

Climate action plans need to be mindful of the whole community they serve. People with disabilities must be included in and benefit from actions taken for disaster risk reduction. For example, design evacuation procedures, using chairs or pulleys to provide safe evacuation for people with mobility impairments, display accessible evacuation plans, and hold regular drills which include people with disability and other vulnerable people³⁹.

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

5. Entry points and recommendations

Climate change exposes inequalities. In responding, **the first imperative is to do no harm**. Mitigation and adaptation initiatives must be designed with consideration of the rights, perspectives and needs of persons with disabilities. Increasing fuel levies without due consideration of accessibility needs, for example, might result in the increased exclusion of persons dependent on mobility transportation⁴⁰. Similarly, public bans on single-use, plastic straws had detrimental impacts on people with disabilities⁴¹. We must guard against decisions which can create barriers for persons with disabilities and reinforce social inequities. As the world moves forward with measures to combat climate change, it is vital that these enhance, rather than undermine, the human rights of persons with disabilities.

The UK government can support a more receptive policy environment, and help to strengthen the inter-relationships, systems and structures that underpin rights-based inclusive climate action, though the following key entry points and recommendations:

5.1 Meet the UK’s international commitments

Having ratified key human rights treaties like the UN CRPD, the UK government is obligated to respect, protect and fulfil rights of people with disabilities. There was a

clear political imperative beneath Alok Sharma's pre-COP26 statements to protect people and nature, and to deliver for 'the most climate vulnerable by raising the political status of adaptation and increasing the finance available for adaptation, as well as taking action on loss and damage'⁴². This ambition was ultimately watered down during the process of COP26 negotiations⁴³, but if the commitment to delivering for the most climate vulnerable is to stand, stakeholders must now consult more widely and engage actively with people with disabilities in setting and monitoring the global agenda.

Recommendations:

1. As COP President, the UK must use its negotiating position with other State Parties to assert formal recognition of people with disabilities in UNFCCC processes and emphasise the importance of their experience and knowledge to progress climate action in response to the [Glasgow Pact](#) agreements.
2. Make disability inclusion a key criterion in awarding climate funds. The priority is to get finance flowing to climate action, particularly grant-based adaptation finance, and pre-agreed emergency funding so that countries and communities can react immediately when disaster strikes.
3. All investment into green infrastructure and post-crisis reconstruction must be underpinned by principles of universal design and do no harm.
4. Continue to improve disability visibility and data disaggregation through the use of the Washington Group questions in all FCDO-funded climate work, as well as drawing upon and referencing disaggregated data in international climate fora.
5. Recognise the value of different types of data in monitoring the impact of climate investments, e.g. use qualitative data to illuminate the intersectional experiences of at-risk communities, such as indigenous people with disabilities, with climate change.
6. Take a lead in bringing forecast information providers (e.g. climate scientists) and at-risk communities (including people with disabilities) together. This will do much to reduce silo working at international levels.
7. Enable the equitable collaboration and participation of people with disabilities through appropriate investments in financial, informational and capacity support.
8. All international-level climate engagement – including at COPs⁴⁴ and other climate fora - must be facilitated to ensure access for all. [Accessibility checks and services](#) must become fundamental organising principles for all future engagements (e.g. calls for evidence), and in-person or online meetings and events (e.g. sign language interpretation and real-time captioning, accessible venues for wheelchair users and accessibility-tested online platforms). Work closely with disability movement partners to ensure this.
9. Prioritise diversity and inclusion in internal recruitment and training, and model an inclusive organisational culture within FCDO and in global

cooperation. Expect high standards of disability inclusion from other climate actors.

10. Support other government departments to feed UK's CRPD obligations into the domestic climate agenda, so that UK's own [Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\)](#) and [Adaptation Communication](#) have disability inclusion at the heart of the just transition to renewable energy and meeting the 1.5C target, as well as adaptation preparations and support.

5.2 Working in partnership with national governments

Financial and technical support to developing countries is an obligation under the Paris Agreement. This support, as a complement and in addition to ODA, can bolster national level capacities to design and deliver accessible and disability inclusive laws, policies and action plans. Subsequent investments in climate adaptation and protection infrastructure, (including green transport, buildings, coastal protection, disaster risk reduction, food security measures, etc.) will more likely include the whole community they serve, resulting in flood relief that better accommodates people with mobility impairments, refugee and IDP camps that are accessible for people with disabilities, and so on. Disability inclusion needs to be built in from the beginning and in close partnership with people with disabilities.

Recommendations:

11. Recognise people with disabilities as technical experts and active decision-makers, with lived experience of changing environmental conditions and the knowledge to offer practical solutions, including nature-based mitigation solutions.
12. Champion locally-led adaptation plans that are responsive and accessible to persons with disabilities.
13. Underpin all new national-level adaptation infrastructure investments (across economic, transport and social sectors) with accessibility considerations and universal design principles.
14. Climate financing must reach the local level, and space needs to be created for OPD inputs into design, implementation and monitoring of local action plans.
15. Ring-fence budgets to safeguard the costs of appropriate accommodations across all climate crises investment (e.g. early warning systems, better preparedness and emergency response).
16. Ensure disability data is used across the implementation cycle for FCDO-financed climate policies, strategies, plans, testing and monitoring.
17. Connect national focal points for disability (e.g. within Ministries of Social Affairs) with those for climate and environment, and support initiatives to break down silo working (e.g. inclusive climate action working groups).
18. Provide financial support to cover additional accessibility costs associated with greater inclusion in national climate processes and interventions. Many [excellent toolkits](#) and expertise is available to provide technical support for this.

5.3 Enabling a stronger voice for social movements and civil society

Disability champions in local communities may struggle, in isolation, to counter prevailing bias, discrimination and ignorance that undermine active and equitable inclusion. Climate vulnerable people with disabilities have hugely important, locally-lived insights, but they may not link this to the global shifts in climate.

Recommendations:

19. Support wider collaboration and increased awareness through facilitating opportunities for greater peer to peer exchanges, building of networks, alongside the prioritisation of disaggregated data and accessible communication of information.
20. FCDO can play an active role in amplifying the value and significance of including people with disabilities and in legitimizing their place at the table.

5 Conclusion

The science is clear, but the politics is complex and the stakeholders varied and many. As climate-related disasters increase in frequency and severity it is vital to make sure the world hears and actively engages with those most affected.

The urgency cannot be over stated. More than five years have passed since Paris, and 2021 showed us that there is still a long way to go in realising disability rights in the international climate response. Despite legislation being in place to enable disability inclusive and responsive climate action, this broad vision has not yet fully made its way into mainstream climate negotiations, nor implementation.

This paper illustrates the disproportionate impact on people with disabilities living in poor communities who have done least to contribute towards climate change. Prevalence of disability is rising due to climatic impacts, alongside an ageing global population and other trends such as increased chronic global health conditions. The intersectionality between climate and disability cannot continue to be ignored.

To achieve more than sound policies on paper, it is vital to confront the constraints that inhibit progress in meeting internationally agreed commitments. The paper highlights a number of approaches to break down silo working and open up legitimate spaces for the disability movement to claim a higher priority in climate action. The challenge for the UK government, particularly FCDO, is to seek out appropriate entry points and actions to support the disability movement to engage effectively. Enabling those that are most affected to influence and shape disability inclusive climate action is fundamental to driving forward accelerated implementation and progress in locally sustainable and resonate ways.

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
Strong voice of people with disabilities	<p>[4.1] Disability demystified: data increasingly disaggregated; diversity (i.e. disability not homogenous) and intersectionality (e.g. remote locations) are recognised.</p> <p>[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</p> <p>[4.4] Climate forecasters and disability activists work together with at-risk communities, building common language and agenda.</p>	<p>Climate change response recognises disproportionate impacts on persons with disabilities.</p> <p>People with disabilities valued as rights-holders.</p> <p>Barriers faced by people with disabilities addressed.</p> <p>People with disabilities safer from climate disasters.</p>	<p>OPD involvement strengthens local relevance, monitoring and regular review of action plans for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and emergency response.</p> <p>Disaggregated data supports stronger decisions, but also tracking progress and balanced accountability.</p>	<p>People with disabilities as right holders, and recognised constituents for accountability in climate action.</p> <p>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)</p>
Community inclusion and participation	<p>[4.4] Capacity building at the local level: OPDs and people with disabilities understand climate change better.</p>	<p>Greater resilience and adaptive capacity of people with disabilities and their families and communities.</p>	<p>Disability engaged advocacy for local environment – protecting community land, forests, and water supplies from</p>	<p>Parties actively consider their respective obligations on human rights, such a rights of children, people with disabilities and people in</p>

	<p>[4.2] Key climate-related risk and response information communicated accessibly within communities.</p>	<p>All people better understand how to keep safe during climate crises.</p> <p>Improved health of whole communities.</p> <p>Reduced disaster losses, unlocked development potential, fostered social & environmental co-benefits</p>	<p>destruction, degradation and pollution.</p> <p>Community development and livelihoods secured through climate change adaptation and resilience action.</p> <p>Strengthened at-risk community resilience through inclusive mitigation, preparedness, recovery and reconstruction.</p>	<p>vulnerable situations (Paris Agreement).</p> <p>Stronger climate action and more resilient societies.</p> <p>Closer towards achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, secure, and sustainable society that leaves no one behind (SDG 7)</p>
<p>Strong, accessible and person-centred systems including equitable access to services</p>	<p>[4.5] Diversity in recruitment and DI training/capacities built.</p> <p>[4.4] Work in partnership and alliance with OPDs and people with disabilities.</p> <p>[4.6] Recognition of where power sits, strong facilitation opens up how power is used, OPDs and disability movement capacity supported appropriately, active listening.</p> <p>[4.3] Investment in tools and capacity building to support inclusive policy processes and intervention delivery.</p>	<p>Disability inclusion no longer at the margins of climate change response.</p> <p>Full inclusion in design, implementation and evaluation of climate change interventions.</p>	<p>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.)</p> <p>Early warning systems include OPDs.</p> <p>Raised political status of inclusive adaptation.</p>	<p>Do no harm.</p> <p>“Nothing about us without us” spirit of SDGs and CRPD incorporated into climate change activities and related services.</p> <p>Specific, measurable, achievable and disability inclusion relevant targets built into climate response – in budgets, impact criteria, data systems, inclusive & purposeful engagement.</p>

<p>Disability is mainstreamed</p>	<p>[4.3] Disability inclusion a key criterion in climate funds (for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience building investments).</p> <p>[4.3] Climate funding reaches local level; space for OPD input into design, implementation and monitoring of local action plans.</p> <p>[4.6] Universal design underpins investments into green infrastructure and post-crisis reconstruction.</p>	<p>A policy response that works for people with disabilities benefits all</p> <p>Disaster risk reduction activities include people with disabilities as a specifically vulnerable group but also as agents of change.</p> <p>Increased financing for disability inclusive climate action.</p>	<p>“Smart technologies” enhance resilience and disaster preparedness while also meeting accessibility standards</p> <p>Reduced carbon emissions (e.g. improved efficiency of accessible buildings, transport and travel) and improved overall environmental sustainability of new investments.</p>	<p>More sustainable production and consumption patterns (SDG 12)</p> <p>More resilient infrastructure, inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation (SDG 9)</p>
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¹ World Health Organisation. 2011. World report on disability. https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/

² [G7 Foreign and Development Ministers meetings in London](#)

³ ‘Ripple Effect: Education’s Impact on Sustainability’ was one of four key themes at the Global Education Summit, 2021, a recording of this session is available at [Ripple Effect \(world-television.com\)](#)

⁴ See: [Keeping 1.5C alive – are Glasgow preparations on track? - CASA \(casaclimate.org\)](#)

⁵ [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy \(GOV.UK\)](#)

⁶ FCDO (2022) [Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy 2022-2030- Building an Inclusive Future for All: A Sustainable Rights-Based Approach](#) February 2022

⁷ CBM UK blog: “*Not fear but hope*” – *what do the outcomes of COP26 mean for more inclusive climate justice?* [CBM \(cbmuk.org.uk\)](#)

⁸ [How summer 2021 has changed our understanding of extreme weather - Race to Zero \(unfccc.int\)](#)

⁹ <https://rmets.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/joc.7285>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 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: [SR15 Chapter5 Low Res.pdf \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

¹² 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://www.cbmun.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/climate_change_report-accessible_27June11-1.pdf

¹³ [German Flood Deaths Highlight Climate Change Risks for People with Disabilities | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹⁴ [Climate change threatens the lives of people with disabilities \(independentaustralia.net\)](#)

¹⁵ [How heat waves and climate change put people with disabilities at risk - ABC News \(go.com\)\)](#)

¹⁶ [The Cycle: EXPLAINED - End The Cycle](#)

¹⁷ [Disability \(who.int\)](#)

¹⁸ 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: [A/HRC/44/30 - E - A/HRC/44/30 -Desktop \(undocs.org\)](#)

¹⁹ WHO, 2002, referenced in David Lewis and Kath Ballard (2016) *Disability and Climate Change*, CBM Paper: [Disability_and_Climate_Change.pdf \(cbmun.org.uk\)](#)

²⁰ Jones, I., 2002, *Neurological Damage from Malaria* http://malaria.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTD023883.html (accessed online 4 March 2011) referenced in David Lewis and Kath Ballard (2016) *Disability and Climate Change*, CBM Paper: [Disability_and_Climate_Change.pdf \(cbmun.org.uk\)](#)

²¹ 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://www.cbmun.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/climate_change_report-accessible_27June11-1.pdf

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](#)'

²² World Bank 2018. *Climate Change Could Force Over 140 Million to Migrate Within Countries by 2050: World Bank Report*. [Climate Change Could Force Over 140 Million to Migrate Within Countries by 2050: World Bank Report](#)

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://www.cbmun.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/climate_change_report-accessible_27June11-1.pdf

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: [policy_paper_lftw_unicef - def digital accessible 0.pdf \(licht-fuer-die-welt.at\)](#)

²⁵ CBM Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) Framework, 2020

²⁶ Ibid.

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://www.cbmun.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/climate_change_report-accessible_27June11-1.pdf

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- 28 [CRPD-A4LEAFLET-2-inhouseprint.pdf \(cbmuk.org.uk\)](#)
- 29 CBM Global Disability Inclusion programme priorities taken from the 2020 ToC
- 30 [Risk information must be developed with at-risk communities in the driving seat | REAP \(early-action-reap.org\)](#)
- 31 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>
- 32 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://www.cbmuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/climate_change_report-accessible_27June11-1.pdf
- 33 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/>
- 34 [At What Cost: Help close the gap on adaptation finance - YouTube](#)
- 35 [What happened at Cop26? | Bond](#)
- 36 [Risk information must be developed with at-risk communities in the driving seat | REAP \(early-action-reap.org\)](#)
- 37 Directly quoted from CBM and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development –Strengthening Environmental Sustainability and Inclusion in Health and other Development programs. [CBM and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, \(p.29-30\)](#)
- 38 *ibid*
- 39 David Lewis and Kath Ballard, 2016, CBM paper: [Disability and Climate Change.pdf \(cbmuk.org.uk\)](#)
- 40 [Climate change is our crisis too! Persons with disabilities demand... \(prweb.com\)](#)
- 41 [Why Disabled People Need Plastic Straws - Eater](#)
- 42 [Keeping 1.5C alive – are Glasgow preparations on track? \(casaclimate.org\)](#)
- 43 [What happened at Cop26? | Bond](#)
- 44 [Cop26: Take stock, regroup and keep disability inclusion on the table for climate action | Bond](#)