

# Policy Brief: Closing the Data Gap – A Prerequisite for Climate Justice for Persons with Disabilities

## Overview

The climate crisis is a global emergency that disproportionately impacts over 1.3 billion persons with disabilities, 80% of whom live in developing countries. However, the experiences of persons with disabilities are largely invisible in climate data, preparedness, planning, response and recovery. The invisibility becomes further exacerbated when it comes to women and girls with disabilities, for whom the prevalence of disability is at 18% compared to 14.2% for men. Data gaps perpetuate the exclusion from adaptation and mitigation efforts, amplifying risks during disasters, deepening inequalities, and impeding inclusive, effective gender-just and disability inclusive climate action.

The BOND Disability and Development Group (DDG) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) Climate Task Groups have worked together to publish a critical report on [unequal climate justice for people with disabilities](#). The report includes insights and evidence from communities and civil society organisations, including 32 organisations from more than 38 countries across the 'Global South'.

This policy brief draws on the findings of the report to highlight the critical need to bridge the existing data gaps by applying the voices of persons with disabilities and shedding light on their lived experiences amid the climate crisis.

## Why Data Matters

Effective climate policy depends on data. Yet, people with disabilities are underrepresented in official climate datasets which undermines the

effectiveness of climate responses. The data and evidence on the experience of women and girls, boys and youth with disabilities to the climate crisis is even more limited. Their absence from official data is not unique to climate data; people with disabilities have been routinely excluded from official data for diverse, complex and varied reasons. This includes inaccessible data collection methods, systemic discrimination, and a lack of disaggregated reporting. This underrepresentation leads to inadequate climate change policies, risk assessments and inaccessible interventions, such as early warning systems, evacuation plans and shelters.

Civil society organisations (CSOs), including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) have stepped in to fill this gap. Their data, both qualitative and quantitative, offer rich, community-based insights, capturing real impacts of the climate crisis on daily life, access to services, and resilience. This 'non-official data' is vital for shaping inclusive policies and practices that ensures equity in the societies. It also shows that tailoring solutions to both geographic and climate conditions, as well as considering the social, economic and demographic characteristics of local residents (including people with disabilities), will ensure lasting, impactful mitigation measures, adaptation and nature-based solutions.

Data is essential to identify barriers for women and men, children and youth, as well as the elderly with disabilities during climate disasters, track their access to adaptation programs, highlight successful inclusive practices, and uncover patterns masked in national averages.

## **The problem: persons with disabilities are missing from climate data**

### **Absence from official datasets**

Persons with disabilities in all their diversity are routinely left out of national and global datasets informing climate policy due to inaccessible survey designs, weak civil registration systems, social stigma and underreporting, and lack of mandatory disaggregation by disability,. It is also important to go beyond if people have a disability or not, in order to understand different barriers that need to be addressed in climate action.

While there is growing qualitative data, robust, intersectional analysis and disaggregated quantitative data remains scarce, especially in the sectors of health and (re)habilitation, DRRM, humanitarian action and urban planning.

## Underuse of community generated data

The insights shared in the report emphasise the relevance and added value of community and CSO-generated data in strengthening our understanding of the climate crisis. It has highlighted how CSOs and OPDs collect rich data, quantitative surveys, case studies, participatory research, and program monitoring. However, this is seldom integrated into formal decision-making frameworks.

If harnessed correctly, CSO and OPD generated data, as well as child-led or youth-led data and evidence can complement official data systems to deepen understanding of the climate crisis and strengthen climate action.

## Evidence snapshot: what the data (that exists) shows

The evidence presented in the report reveals that the climate crisis affects every aspect of life for persons with disabilities:

- **Health:** Barriers to accessing medicine and services are intensified by extreme weather especially for women with disabilities. High temperatures and poor air quality have serious impacts on the perinatal and maternal health of women with and without disabilities. Extreme weather events also exacerbate the isolation of people with disabilities, increasing their vulnerability and stress, youth and young women with disabilities even more so.
- **Food and Water:** Malnutrition and water insecurity are rising due to inaccessible sanitation and food systems. Women, including those with disabilities often encounter harassment and violence while access available public sanitation facilities and clean water.
- **Education:** Disruptions force children and youth with disabilities out of school, with long-term impacts.
- **Housing and Livelihoods:** People with disabilities face income loss from climate-induced disruptions, with limited access to climate-resilient employment or aid. Young adults and women with disabilities face additional barriers due to restrictive gender- and disability-related social norms and/or limited access to insurance and credit, making it harder to engage in climate-smart livelihoods or migrate for work
- **Rights and Safety:** Climate impacts can become barriers for people with disabilities to exercising their right, for example to electoral participation. Emergency shelters and evacuation systems often exclude persons with disabilities, increasing vulnerability to injury and

violence, especially for women and girls. Evidence suggests that women with disabilities, older people and individuals with speech, hearing, intellectual or multiple disabilities are the most vulnerable to discrimination in evacuation and humanitarian assistance. Girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and have less access to essential services compared with their peers without disabilities.

- Policies: International and National climate policies exclude persons with disabilities (only 65 countries had disability included). CEDAW and CRPD are not directly referencing the intersection of disability, gender and climate, but the CSW66 outcome document points out its concern to lacking data in this area.

But these findings are fragmented and based on incomplete coverage, indicating need, not sufficiency, for inclusive and intersectional data and decisive action.

## **Priority actions: Centering data in inclusive climate preparedness and response**

### **Institutionalise disability-disaggregated data in climate systems**

- Mandate disability inclusive and intersectional targets and indicators in all climate relevant data systems (e.g. disaster risk assessments, household surveys, Nationally Determined Contribution (NCD) monitoring).
- Develop a better understanding of the number of women and men with disabilities in all their diversity and their needs and monitor the impacts of the climate crisis on people with disabilities.
- Improve national information systems and the collection, availability and accessibility of sex, age and disability disaggregated data.
- Align disability data collection with international standards (e.g. Washington Group Questions).
- Include disability data and intersectional analysis as a requirement in climate finance proposals, adaptation plans, and resilience strategies.
- Ensure preparedness measures include the development of injury surveillance and rapid assessment mechanisms that include disability data collection as the prevalence and severity of disabilities may suddenly increase in emergencies.

## Scale and integrate OPD and CSO data

- Establish mechanisms for governments and UN bodies to systematically incorporate data from OPDs, women-led OPDs and CSOs into climate assessments and planning.
- Use CSO data to ground-truth national estimates and identify localised vulnerabilities.
- Support data sharing platforms between formal statistical systems and community generated data.

## Build capacity and tools for inclusive data

- Train national statistical offices and climate institutions in disability-inclusive data methodologies and intersectional analysis.
- Fund OPDs, women-led OPDs, child-led and youth-led groups to lead participatory research and monitoring on climate impacts and responses.
- Develop standardised tools for collecting disability data and intersectional analysis in humanitarian and environmental contexts, especially during emergencies.

## Call to Action

We must bridge the data gap to identify, address and report inequities experienced by women and men with disabilities in all their diversity and prioritise advancing disability inclusion across all climate action.

- **National climate action systems and processes, and global forums** should actively seek and use OPD and CSO generated data to inform the development, implementation and monitoring of climate action.
- **Government ministries and national statistical offices (NSOs)** must strengthen the collection, use and reporting of disability disaggregated climate data in local and national contexts.
- **Research, funded by donors and governments,** should actively undertake disability inclusion, intersectional analysis and climate action, including research focused on equitable access to energy and a Just Transition, the experiences of people with disabilities in all their

diversity in climate-affected areas, and the long-term impacts of the climate crisis on people with disabilities.

## **Conclusion: Data Is the Gateway to Disability-Inclusive Climate Action**

The climate crisis demands urgent, inclusive action—but inclusion is not possible without data.

Disability data is not a technical luxury. It is a political necessity to safeguard rights, target resources, and build resilience for those most at risk.

Governments, donors, and climate actors must fund, institutionalise, and act on disability disaggregated and community generated data. Only then can climate action be truly just and truly effective.

**No data, no inclusion.**

### **About the International Disability and Development Consortium**

The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) is global network of civil society organisations gathering around a common vision: a world that leaves no persons with disabilities behind. For the past 30 years, this vision has driven our action, and our mission is to promote disability-inclusive international development and humanitarian action in the Global South.

As a network, IDDC is fully committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Being a member-led network, our members are at the heart of our activities. IDDC's membership includes a broad range of organisations, giving the network its distinctive feature and strength. IDDC unites NGOs specialising in disability inclusion, mainstream humanitarian and development NGOs, organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs), and national and international networks.

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