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Impacts on people with disabilities

Health: In an emergency, having a disability drastically increases the risk of severe injury, malnutrition, non-communicable diseases, respiratory conditions and infectious diseases. Risk reduction plans often do not include persons with disabilities. Information and warnings are not always accessible. Assistive devices may be lost or damaged, leaving people with disabilities at greater risk of being left behind. Such devices are typically not a part of distributed relief materials and when they are, they may not be tailored to the individual and fail to provide for the same level of functionality and independence. Women and girls with disabilities are more at risk of violence and exploitation.

Food security: Rising temperatures and increasingly frequent extreme weather events will have a negative impact on crops, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture productivity and therefore on the availability of food. Food shortages and malnutrition tend to affect persons with disabilities and their families to a greater extent than the general population.

Adequate housing: During emergencies, environmental barriers may prevent persons with disabilities from accessing shelters and safe spaces. Shelters and services such as information for victims of violence often do not reach women and girls with disabilities. The poorest people, including many persons with disabilities, may have no choice but to move to informal settlements and build shelters in hazardous areas lacking infrastructure and basic services. This poses an extra hurdle for persons with disabilities many of whom already face social and economic barriers, for example, in accessing water for consumption and sanitation.

Decent work: Inadequate access to education, discriminatory attitudes and practices and socioeconomic factors can result in high levels of unemployment for persons with disabilities. Climate change impacts also exacerbates the barriers they face in the job market.

CLIMATE CHANGE: PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

An estimated **1 billion individuals worldwide live with disabilities**. On top of environmental barriers, they often face discrimination, inadequate access to services and resources and lack of representation. This makes them twice as likely to experience poverty as people without disabilities and 30% more likely to be unemployed. Many live in informal settlements, on fragile hillsides or flood-prone riverbanks where they are highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. With extreme weather events and natural disasters set to increase in a warming climate, more needs to be done to plan for and protect the rights of persons with disabilities starting with rapid and ambitious reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and increased support for disability-inclusive climate change adaptation measures.

Owing to their dependence upon, and close relationship with the environment and its resources, indigenous persons with disabilities may be even more affected by climate change. In particular, those who are small-scale farmers face the risk of losing their independent livelihood.

Freedom of movement: Extreme weather events were one of the main causes of the movement of 28 million people in 2018. However, the ability to migrate often depends on resources and physical mobility. Persons with disabilities who do move can face challenges related to the need for assistive devices, service animals and accessible transportation, accommodation and services. The potential loss of personal support networks may put at risk their participation, daily living and survival. Persons with disabilities that are unable to migrate may be forced to remain in locations that are subject to climate change harms. Limited possibilities for resettlement and discriminatory immigration policies further jeopardize migration by persons with disabilities and their families.

POSITIVE EXAMPLES

Climate action can be disability-inclusive, protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and empowering them to be part of the solution. In Nepal, a project implemented by the NGO Humanity and Inclusion included local organizations of persons with disabilities in decision-making, raised awareness in their communities, and conducted vulnerability and capacity assessments. The Local Disaster Management Committees used these project findings to shape action plans for preparedness and mitigation measures. As a result, communities became more resilient, and persons with disabilities were empowered. Through the “survival yard” programme in the Niger, NGOs CBM and Karkara worked together with persons with disabilities, their families and communities to create resilience to climate change impacts. For example, a microclimate against harsh winds was created by planting a border of productive bushy trees around gardens that provide vegetables and fruit to eat and sell, fodder for livestock and firewood.



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What can we do?

Develop specific guidance to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in climate change-related actions and decision-making.

Ensure the accessibility of meeting venues, schools, shelters and work places.

Strengthen the capacities of people with disabilities to respond to climate change by ensuring that information is made available in accessible formats.

Promote equal rights and opportunities in the labor market.

Strengthen education and training for persons with disabilities in general, and in particular on issues related to sustainable development, environmental degradation and climate change.

Develop, collect and **monitor disaggregated indicators**, focusing on age, gender, disability and ethnicity.

Monitor the implementation of disability-inclusive policies throughout project cycles.

Emphasize the need to respect the rights of persons with disabilities as part and parcel of effective climate action at the Human Rights Council, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in other relevant forums.

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Analytical study: undocs.org/A/HRC/44/30

Easy-to-read version: bit.ly/3kj2lnQ

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