

Disability Climate Caucus - Advocacy Brief

October 2026

I. Background

Why disability inclusion matters - Persons with disabilities often face heightened risks and additional barriers before, during and after climate-related disasters, including in accessing warnings, evacuation and transport, food and water, shelters, healthcare, rehabilitation, livelihoods and essential support. These barriers can be particularly acute for people living in rural, river-island, coastal, urban and other climate-vulnerable or hard-to-reach communities. Climate action must therefore address both climate impacts and the structural barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from accessing protection, services and decision-making on an equal basis.

Disability advocacy within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has evolved over many years, beginning without formal recognition or structured participation. Early engagement was driven through side events, coalition-building with other constituencies, policy submissions, and sustained dialogue with the UNFCCC Secretariat. Over time, this work expanded into a more coordinated global movement, bringing together a growing number of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and allies.

This collective effort strengthened governance structures, culminating in the development and endorsement of Terms of Reference supported by more than 120 organizations globally. These sustained efforts ultimately contributed to the recognition of the Disability Caucus as an Informal Group within the UNFCCC process. This is a significant milestone in advancing disability inclusion in global climate governance.

II. Introduction

The Disability Caucus is a global coalition of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), civil society organizations, and allied partners working to ensure that disability inclusion is systematically integrated into climate policy and action within the UNFCCC process. Its membership is intentionally grounded in leadership by persons with disabilities, with OPDs forming the majority at 58%, followed by non-governmental organizations at 21%, individual advocates at 11%, and other members - including academic institutions, research bodies, and government-linked actors - at 10%. This composition reflects the principle of “nothing about us without us,” ensuring that persons with disabilities are not only represented but are central to shaping climate discourse, while also drawing on technical, academic, and civil society expertise to strengthen inclusive and evidence-based climate action.

While the Caucus welcomes the increasing recognition of disability rights within the UNFCCC, it remains concerned that persons with disabilities continue to face disproportionate climate impacts alongside persistent barriers to meaningful

participation in decision-making. Although the Paris Agreement affirms human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities, implementation remains inconsistent and fragmented across UNFCCC processes.

The recognition of the Disability Caucus as an Informal Group is an important step forward. However, it must now be matched with stronger institutional commitment to ensure meaningful participation and full integration of disability inclusion across all climate policy and implementation areas.

III. Meaningful participation and institutional recognition

To deliver effective and equitable climate action, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are urged to **support the formal recognition of the Disability Caucus as a full constituency**. Despite progress, persons with disabilities continue to face structural barriers to consistent engagement in negotiations, access to information and participation in decision-making spaces.

Formal constituency status will ensure equal participation within UNFCCC processes, including access to coordination spaces, timely information and structured engagement in negotiations. It will also align with obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and strengthen the legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness of global climate outcomes.

Call to action

The Conference of Parties (COP) and Parties to the Paris Agreement are urged to:

- **Decide** to formally recognize the Disability Caucus as an official UNFCCC Constituency with equivalent rights and modalities to other constituencies.
- **Request** institutionalized participation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) across all UNFCCC processes, including negotiations, constituted bodies, and work programmes.
- **Urge** the provision of dedicated financial and technical support to enable sustained, diverse participation
- **Mandate** full accessibility across all UNFCCC meetings, documentation, and communications, including physical, digital and information accessibility.

IV. Cross-cutting priorities

Systemic inclusion requires embedding disability across all UNFCCC processes rather than treating it as a stand alone issue. This means shifting toward approaches that reflect lived experiences and structural barriers faced by persons with disabilities in all their diversity:

- **Participation:** Establish structured, adequately resourced and continuous engagement of OPDs at global, regional, and national levels to ensure meaningful influence in climate decision-making. Participation should include local OPDs and organisations, not only national-level organisations, recognising their knowledge of local risks, barriers and support networks.

- **Data:** Mandate disability-disaggregated data collection across all reporting, monitoring and transparency systems to strengthen accountability. Data should also be available at local level to inform preparedness, evacuation, service continuity and resource allocation, while protecting privacy and dignity.
- **Accessibility:** Apply universal design principles across all climate infrastructure, platforms, and processes to ensure full access. Accessible climate information should extend beyond early warnings to forecasts, preparedness messages, government services and emergency communications, using plain and local languages, national and international sign languages, captioning, audio, tactile and accessible digital formats.
- **Intersectionality:** Recognize and address overlapping and compounding forms of discrimination and exclusion. This includes the diverse experiences of women and girls with disabilities, Indigenous persons with disabilities, older persons, children and youth, and people living in rural, conflict-affected or climate-vulnerable contexts. Particular attention is needed to people who may face additional barriers to participation, communication and access, including deaf and hard-of-hearing people, people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, people with multiple disabilities, and those whose disabilities intersect with other forms of marginalisation. Climate change can further heighten risks of poverty, displacement and exclusion from education, healthcare and livelihoods, while extreme heat and other hazards may create additional barriers to recognising, communicating and responding to risks. This requires strengthening the participation and leadership of women-led OPDs and women with disabilities in local climate and disaster decision-making, and ensuring the inclusion and protection of children with disabilities during school disruption and emergencies.

Embedding these priorities will ensure climate action is not only inclusive in principle, but equitable in practice.

V. Priority actions across UNFCCC workstreams

While disability inclusion has gained increasing visibility across the COPs, it remains unevenly applied and rarely supported by dedicated implementation mechanisms. As the UNFCCC shifts from negotiation to implementation under the Paris Agreement, there is a clear opportunity to move from recognition to structured, accountable and resourced inclusion. Implementation must reach national, district and community levels.

To support this shift, the Disability Caucus has developed priorities outlining practical pathways to strengthen disability inclusion across key UNFCCC workstreams and ensure that commitments translate into measurable action.

1. Just Transition Work Programme (Belem Action Mechanism)

A just transition must be equitable, rights-based, and inclusive of all workers and communities. Yet current approaches still overlook the systemic barriers faced by

persons with disabilities in accessing green economies and social protection systems. The COP is encouraged to:

- Integrate disability inclusion across just transition frameworks and the Belem Action Mechanism.
- Promote access to inclusive green jobs, skills development, and entrepreneurship.
- Strengthen disability-inclusive social protection systems.
- Ensure disability inclusion in climate finance supporting transition pathways.

2. Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)

Adaptation has increasingly become a central pillar of COP discussions, particularly with the operationalization of the Global Goal on Adaptation. However, adaptation frameworks risk excluding persons with disabilities if indicators and implementation tools do not reflect lived realities. The COP is encouraged to:

- Develop disability-inclusive adaptation indicators.
- Ensure accessibility of early warning systems and disaster risk reduction.
- Promote locally led adaptation engaging OPDs.
- Integrate disability into monitoring and evaluation systems.

3. Gender Action Plan (GAP)

While the Gender Action Plan has strengthened global attention to gender equality in climate action, disability inclusion within gender frameworks remains limited and often implicit rather than explicit. The COP is encouraged to:

- Integrate disability as a core dimension of gender-responsive climate action.
- Mandate disability-disaggregated data in GAP processes.
- Ensure targeted financing for women and girls with disabilities.
- Support women-led OPDs and meaningful participation of women with disabilities in local and national climate and disaster decision-making.
- Strengthen intersectional approaches across all GAP actions.

4. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Since COP21 and the adoption of the Paris Agreement, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) have become the central framework through which countries set and communicate their climate ambitions and actions. However, disability inclusion is still inconsistently reflected across national submissions and implementation plans. The COP is encouraged to:

- Establish disability-specific indicators and targets.
- Allocate dedicated budgets for disability-inclusive climate action.
- Measure outcomes, not only participation.
- Ensure meaningful OPD participation in NDC processes, including identifying priorities and tracking outcomes.

5. Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

The COP is encouraged to ensure that Action for Climate Empowerment is fully disability-inclusive, with accessibility embedded from the outset across education, public awareness, training, participation and access to information.

- Ensure accessible climate education and training, including appropriate materials, reasonable accommodation, sign language, captioning and diverse learning formats.
- Promote positive awareness of persons with disabilities as climate leaders and agents of change.
- Institutionalise meaningful OPD participation, including local OPDs and youth with disabilities, with resources for accessibility and reasonable accommodation.
- Ensure accessible climate and early-warning information through multiple communication formats and accessible digital platforms.
- Integrate disability across NDCs, NAPs and ACE monitoring, including disability-disaggregated data and indicators.
- Ensure climate finance and international cooperation reach persons with disabilities and support accessibility and inclusion.

6. Climate Finance

Although climate finance has expanded significantly through mechanisms under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, accessibility and inclusion remain major gaps. Without deliberate action, financing risks reinforcing exclusion rather than enabling equitable climate resilience. The COP is encouraged to:

- Integrate disability inclusion across all climate finance mechanisms.
- Establish dedicated funding streams for disability inclusion including direct access to flexible funding for OPDs, including at local level.
- Track disability-inclusive climate finance flows.
- Require transparent reporting showing how funded actions reach persons with disabilities.
- Include disability-related loss and damage, including loss of assistive products, accessible housing, livelihoods, rehabilitation, support networks and essential services, in relevant assessment and response mechanisms.
- Recognise reasonable accommodation as a planned and budgeted climate-finance cost from the outset, rather than an exceptional or additional expense.