



DISABILITY RIGHTS IN CLIMATE POLICIES

2025 Status Report

Executive Summary

This year's systematic analysis of disability rights in domestic climate underscores that parties to the *Paris Agreement* are making incremental progress toward disability-inclusive climate governance. In 2022, only 37 governments referenced disability in their NDCs and 46 in adaptation policies. The 2025 findings show that 54 NDCs and 99 adaptation policies now reference disability.

Nonetheless, the overall picture remains one of significant gaps and uneven implementation. In Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), 72% of governments still make no mention of disability, and only 14% include concrete measures to advance inclusion. While over 50% of states now reference disability in their climate adaptation policies, only 35 include specific measures, such as accessible communication platforms or inclusive early warning systems. 72 parties to the *Paris Agreement* do not include even a single reference to persons with disabilities or disability in either their NDCs or adaptation policies.

For the first time, this report evaluates how domestic climate policies address the rights of women and children with disabilities. We found that only a handful of NDCs and adaptation policies mention women, girls, or children with disabilities, and almost none provide actionable commitments to address the multiple barriers they face in the context of climate change and action. This exclusion heightens the climate vulnerability of women and children with disabilities by ignoring their distinct needs and perspectives in adaptation planning.

Bright spots do exist. Countries such as Vanuatu, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Costa Rica stand out for integrating disability concerns into both mitigation and adaptation planning, often with specific programs, budget allocations, and commitments to participation. Vanuatu's NDC, for example, includes dedicated priority areas and financial resources for disability-inclusive adaptation. Similarly, Nepal and Pakistan have advanced inclusive early warning systems and capacity-building initiatives. Canada's presence among the top performers signals that industrialized nations can lead by example, though most Northern countries lag behind.

Moving forward, governments must shift from symbolic recognition to substantive action by implementing their obligations under the UNCRPD in the context of climate policy-making. Doing so is not only a legal obligation under international human rights law but a practical necessity for developing equitable and effective policies that foster the transition to climate-resilient and low-carbon societies.

1. Introduction

A large body of evidence demonstrates that persons with disabilities face significant social, institutional, and economic barriers that limit their ability to participate in, and benefit from, climate solutions. Due to their exclusion from adaptation planning, disability communities are exposed to disproportionate risks generated by climate change. They also are negatively affected by the unintended consequences of efforts to reduce carbon emissions that fail to consider principles of accessibility and universal design. As a result, the global disability rights movement has urged states to fully integrate the human rights of persons with disabilities into climate policies and initiatives at all levels.

The first Global Stocktake at COP28 highlighted the urgency of accelerating inclusive climate action, but offered little guidance on disability inclusion. Since the first edition of this report in 2022, progress in integrating disability rights into domestic climate policies has been slow and fragmented, underscoring the need for renewed attention and accountability. By mapping progress and gaps across jurisdictions, our report aims to support organizations of persons with disabilities and their allies calling on states to respect, protect, and fulfill their disability rights obligations in their responses to the climate crisis.

For the first time, this updated assessment introduces new criteria to evaluate how domestic climate policies address the rights of women and children with disabilities, recognizing that these groups often experience compounded vulnerabilities in the face of climate impacts. Their exclusion from planning and implementation processes not only undermines equity but also limits the effectiveness of adaptation and resilience strategies. These additions align with ongoing efforts to implement the UNFCCC's *Gender Action Plan*, which calls for integrating gender-responsive approaches across all aspects of climate policy and action. By explicitly linking disability rights with gender justice, this report aims to ensure that climate governance reflects the diverse realities of those most affected by climate change.

2. The Disability Rights Obligations of States in the Context of Climate Change

The preamble to the *Paris Agreement* recognizes that “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights.” International human rights bodies such as the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have highlighted that persons with

disabilities face disproportionate risks from climate impacts and have called on governments to adopt disability-inclusive, rights-based approaches.

Under international law, states are obliged to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of persons with disabilities in their responses to the climate crisis. This obligation flows from the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), an international treaty that clarifies and articulates the human rights of persons with disabilities. Ratified by 188 parties, including all but four of the parties to the *Paris Agreement*,¹ the UNCRPD obliges governments to recognize and protect the human rights of people with disabilities and ensure their formal and substantive equality in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies. The rights protected under UNCRPD include: civil and political rights (such as the rights to life and to protection in situations of risk); economic, social, and cultural rights (such as the rights to health or an adequate standard of living); and rights that address the unique requirements of persons with disabilities (such as rights to accessibility, independent living and inclusion in the community, and personal mobility).

Table 1. Key Elements of a Disability Rights Approach to Domestic Climate Governance

| Disability Rights Obligations of States in the Context of Domestic Climate Governance | Key Provisions of the UNCRPD |
|---|--|
| 1. States must ensure that climate mitigation and adaptation policies respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of persons with disabilities. | Articles 4-5 especially and 6-30 more broadly. |
| 2. States must assess and address the differential impacts of climate change for persons with disabilities through an intersectional approach. | Articles 4-7, 10, 11, 14-20 & 22-28. |
| 3. States must ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in climate decision-making, action, and justice. | Articles 4, 8, 12, 13, 21, & 29. |

Rooted in the UNCRPD, this report draws on disability rights framework that has three main implications for developing and implementing climate policies (see table 1 above). First, states must respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of people with disabilities in the context of climate action. *Respecting* disability rights entails that states ensure that their climate policies do not violate the rights of people with disabilities. *Protecting* these rights requires that states prevent third parties from violating them in

¹ South Sudan has signed but not yet ratified the UNCRPD. The Holy See and Niue have not signed the UNCRPD. The United States has not ratified the UNCRPD. While it has taken steps to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, this withdrawal will not take place until January 2026.

the context of climate change or climate action. *Fulfilling* these rights means that states must take steps to fully realize these rights by leveraging their climate policies to address existing barriers in society.

Second, states must assess and address the differential effects of climate change for persons with disabilities, considering how their impairments and the barriers they face in society make them vulnerable to different types of climate impacts. This exercise must be conducted through an intersectional approach that recognizes the effects of multiple and compounding forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and poverty. In particular, the UNCRPD contains specific provisions that safeguard the rights of women and children with disabilities, which are highly relevant to climate policymaking (see box 1 below).

Finally, states must ensure the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in climate decision-making, action, and justice. This entails providing them with access to information, capacity-building, and resources to support and empower them as agents in climate governance, meaningfully involving them and their knowledge in the development, implementation, and evaluation of climate policies and programmes, and ensuring they have access to judicial and administrative remedies when they experience harm due to climate change or measures adopted to combat it.

Box 1. Disability-inclusive climate action must include the rights of women and children with disabilities

Article 6 of the UNCRPD recognizes that women and girls with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination and requires that States take measures ensuring their full development, advancement, and empowerment to guarantee equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms. Article 7 affirms that children with disabilities must enjoy all human rights on an equal basis with other children and obliges States to act in the best interests of the child in all decisions affecting them. These obligations are critical in the climate context, where women and children with disabilities often experience heightened vulnerability to climate impacts and systemic exclusion from adaptation and mitigation planning. By specifically considering the human rights of children and women with disabilities, governments can live up to their obligations under both the UNCRPD and the conventions that protect the human rights of women and children.

3. Analysis of Disability Inclusion in Domestic Climate Policies

Disability Inclusion in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Our analysis reveals that only 54 of 195 parties to the *Paris Agreement* refer to persons with disabilities in their current NDCs. This means that 72% of parties currently do not refer to disability in any way in their NDCs.

Among the governments that do refer to persons with disabilities in their NDCs, we determined that 14 do so in the context of measures to enhance resilience to climate change, 6 do so in the context of efforts to reduce carbon emissions, and 31 do so in relation to both. Regardless of the context, however, we found that many of these references to disability are broad and are often unaccompanied by concrete measures to protect the rights of persons with disabilities or to involve them in climate action. Many governments discuss only the disproportionate impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities (see, for example, Azerbaijan, Tanzania, Togo, and Vietnam). Others highlight the need to ensure disability-inclusive climate mitigation and adaptation efforts but omit any reference to specific initiatives to include persons with disabilities in climate action (see, for example, Australia, Fiji, Mexico, and Saint Lucia).

We found that only 28 governments include concrete measures for disability inclusion in their NDCs. Several highlight the need for disaggregated data collection that accounts for the impacts of climate change and disasters on persons with disabilities (see, for example, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Somalia, Tonga and Venezuela). For instance, Antigua and Barbuda commits to the creation of a Monitoring, Verification and Reporting system, which will promote the collection of sex- and age- disaggregated data on persons with disabilities. Several governments provide for the construction of accessible public transit systems (see, for example, Costa Rica, Sri Lanka and Bolivia). Others address accessibility in different public spaces; for instance, Ethiopia commits to developing disability-inclusive school infrastructures, while Somalia provides for the development of accessible and climate-resilient health care infrastructure. Many also commit to constructing disaster shelters that are accessible to persons with disabilities (see, for example, Mauritius, Bangladesh and Cambodia). Finally, both Moldova and Sri Lanka highlight specific programs that will be implemented to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the transition to a green economy.

We found only 2 governments that refer to women or girls with disabilities in their NDCs, Vanuatu and Sri Lanka, and only 1, Eswatini, that addresses the intersection between gender and disability. While all 3 governments acknowledge the heightened

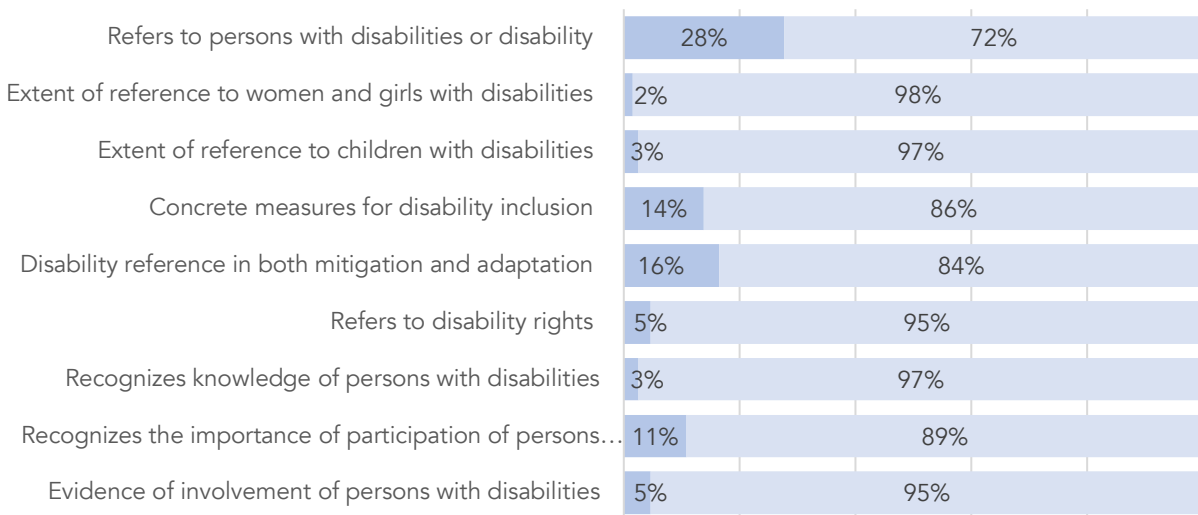
vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities to the effects of climate change, none outlines concrete mechanisms to enhance their resilience or to ensure the full enjoyment of their rights.

Similarly, only 3 governments refer to children with disabilities in their NDCs (Moldova, the United Arab Emirates, and Vanuatu), while 2 governments refer to the intersection between age and disability (Chile and Eswatini). As with references to women and girls with disabilities, most governments merely acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities of children with disabilities in the context of climate change. However, both the United Arab Emirates and Vanuatu refer to concrete measures to promote the participation of children with disabilities in climate action. The United Arab Emirates indicates that financial support was provided to ensure the participation of children with disabilities in climate negotiations, while Vanuatu commits to ensuring the construction of climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools are also accessible to “learners with special needs”.

We found that Vanuatu has the most robust NDC in terms of disability inclusion. It is the only NDC that includes “people with disabilities” as a heading of their submission, with three separate priority areas focused on disability concerns, complete with specific monetary values to achieve these targeted measures. Vanuatu’s NDC includes commitments to provide people with disabilities with information necessary to address the health risks of climate change; promote the participation of people with disabilities in adaptation planning; and provide support and resources to persons with disabilities initiating and running adaptation projects.

Overall, our analysis of NDCs demonstrates that states are neglecting their obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of their NDCs. 72% of the Parties to the Paris Agreement do not currently refer to people with disabilities in any way in their NDCs. Only 9 governments specifically refer to the rights of people with disabilities and only 6 recognize the importance of integrating the knowledge of people with disabilities in climate decision-making. Moreover, while 22 governments recognize the importance of ensuring the participation of people with disabilities, only 9 provide any evidence that people with disabilities were involved in the development of their NDC.

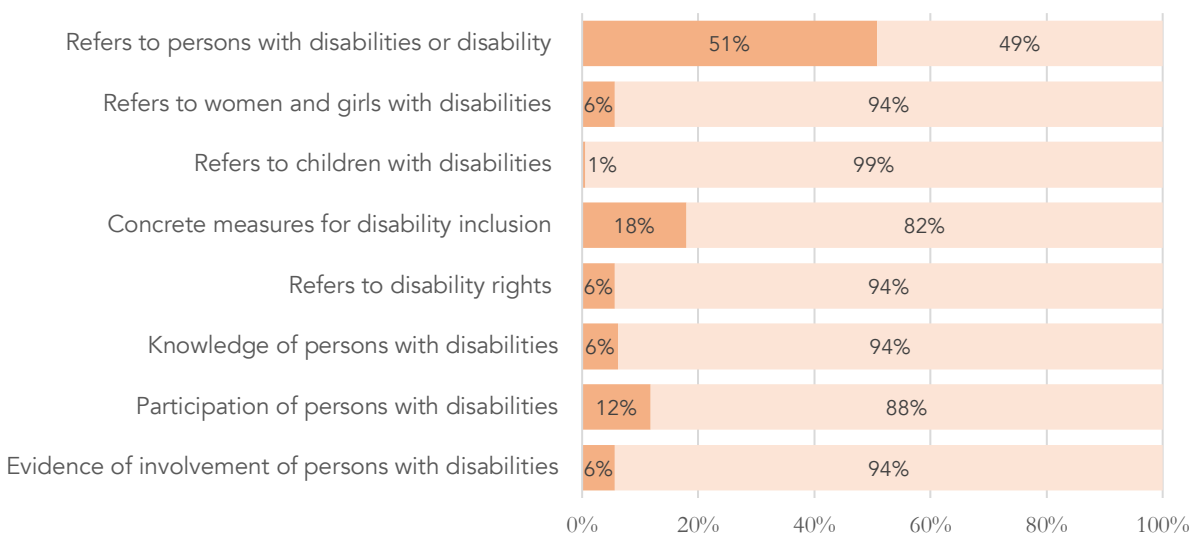
Figure 1: Disability Inclusion in NDCs



Disability Inclusion in Climate Adaptation Policies

Our analysis reveals that 99 of 195 parties to the *Paris Agreement* currently refer to people with disabilities or disability in some way in their framework climate adaptation policies. This marks a significant increase since DICARP's last status report in 2023, where we found that 65 of 195 parties had included such a reference. While this is an encouraging development, 49% of governments still do not refer to persons with disabilities or disability in their climate adaptation policies.

Figure 2: Disability Inclusion in Adaptation Policies



Most references to people with disabilities in the climate adaptation policies we analyzed are cursory in nature. Many policies that contain references to persons with disabilities acknowledge that they are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. For instance, Poland's "Strategic Adaptation Plan" merely includes persons with disabilities in a list of groups that are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts: "Climate change affects society as a whole, but vulnerable groups are particularly vulnerable to climate-related diseases, such as the elderly, the sick, the disabled, the homeless and the poor, and children". Similarly, the Netherlands' "National Climate Adaptation Implementation Programme" simply acknowledges that "persons with certain chronic conditions" are more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of heat waves.

Only 35 adaptation policies include concrete measures to ensure that persons with disabilities, their perspectives, and their priorities are included in climate adaptation efforts. For instance, Bulgaria's "National Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan" provides for the creation of online educational platforms that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Uruguay's "Plan Nacional de Adaptación" highlights the need to ensure that information concerning climate adaptation efforts is accessible to persons with disabilities and, to that end, proposes distributing information through Braille, sign language, and digital means, while Germany's "2024 German Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change" proposes expanding a pre-existing initiative involving the distribution of information concerning heat warnings to persons with disabilities. Another notable example is found in Nepal's "National Adaptation Plan (2021-2050)", which provides for the design and development of early warning systems and preparedness action plans based on "the needs, capabilities and preferences" of persons with disabilities.

We found only 9 parties that refer to women or girls with disabilities in their climate adaptation policies, and 2 parties that refers to the intersection between gender and disability. Most governments acknowledge the increased vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities to the effects of climate change but do not address their unique needs or outline concrete measures to strengthen their resilience to climate impacts. Exceptionally, Suriname highlights the need to ensure that aid distribution centres are accessible to women with disabilities, while Uruguay indicates that it will support the development of women's networks and local organizations composed of women with disabilities.

Only 1 party refers to children with disabilities. Myanmar’s “Climate Change Strategy (2018 – 2030)” acknowledges the heightened vulnerability of children with disabilities to the effects of climate change but does not provide specific examples of vulnerability or indicate any measures that could enhance their resilience to climate change.

Only 24 parties refer to the participation of persons with disabilities in their climate adaptation policies. Among these policies, many provide concrete measures to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities through capacity-building initiatives. For instance, Vietnam’s “Report on the National Adaptation Plan for the Period 2021-2030, with a Vision to 2050” proposes enhancing capacity-building trainings on climate change responses for persons with disabilities. Similar examples can be found in the adaptation policies of Benin, Pakistan and Cameroon. Other policies provide more generally for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in climate adaptation efforts (see, for example, Ghana and the United States).

The limited acknowledgement of the importance of the participation of persons with disabilities in adaptation planning is reflected in the small number of adaptation policies that recognize the value of their knowledge (12). Even fewer climate adaptation policies indicate that persons with disabilities were involved in their development (11). The ongoing systematic exclusion of persons with disabilities from domestic climate adaptation planning, exacerbates the risks they face in the climate crisis and undermines their ability to cope with its impacts on their lives, safety, and human rights.

Global Assessment of Disability-Inclusive Climate Policymaking

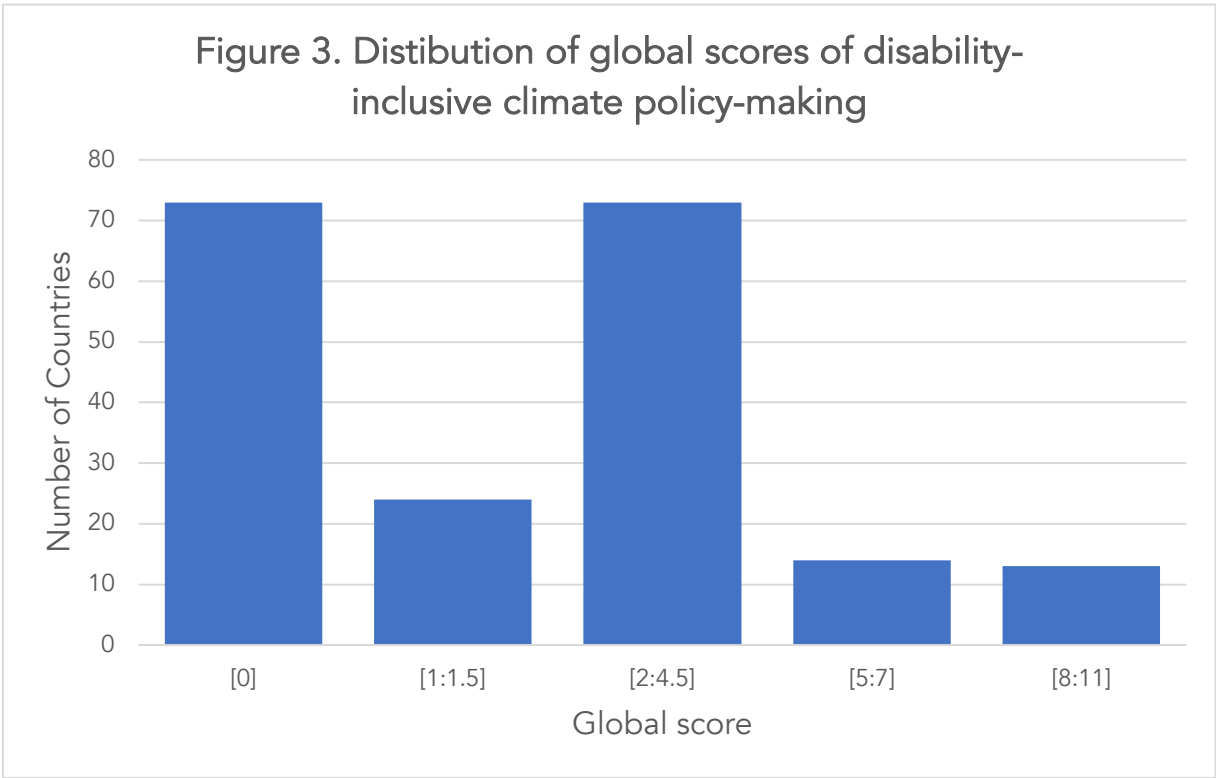
To provide an overall assessment of a party’s commitment to disability-inclusive climate action, we transformed our qualitative legal analysis results into numerical values. Each NDC was assigned a disability inclusion score based on 9 criteria, and each adaptation policy was assigned a score based on 8 criteria (see Appendix 1). We added the scores assigned to INDCs/NDCs and climate adaptation policies to provide a global score of disability-inclusive climate policymaking for each party to the *Paris Agreement*. The average score in our global assessment is a paltry 2.3 out of 17.

Figure 3 represents the distribution of global scores across jurisdictions. At the top end of rankings, 13 states have achieved a global score of 8 or more: Bangladesh (11), Nepal (11), Pakistan (10), Costa Rica (9.5), Moldova (9.5), Antigua and Barbuda (9), Sierra Leone (9), Somalia (9), Vanuatu (9), Canada (8), Cape Verde (8), Kiribati (8), and

Nigeria (8). Although there is room for improvement in how and to what extent their climate policies comply with the UNCRPD, these states stand out among their peers for their relatively high performance in disability-inclusive climate governance. It is worth noting that Canada is the only industrialized Northern country to feature among the top-performers in our global ranking.

87 parties have adopted policies that not only recognize the vulnerability of persons with disabilities, but reflect some modest consideration of their rights, knowledge or participation. 24 parties refer to persons with disabilities in either their NDC or adaptation policy but do so without including any concrete measures for disability-inclusive climate decision-making and action. Finally, at the other end of the distribution, 72 parties to the *Paris Agreement* achieve a global score of 0, which means that neither their NDCs, nor their adaptation policies include even a single reference to persons with disabilities or disability.

Overall, our global assessment shows that most governments have a lot of work to do to ensure that their climate policies are consistent with the obligations they owe persons with disabilities under international human rights law. Nonetheless, we find that there have been clear improvements in the performance of parties to the *Paris Agreement* when it comes to disability-inclusive climate policy-making. In 2023, we found that 94 parties achieved a score of 0 and the average score was 1.3.



4. Conclusion

This 2025 systematic analysis underscores that while incremental progress has been made toward disability-inclusive climate governance, the overall picture remains one of significant gaps and uneven implementation. Across the 195 parties to the *Paris Agreement*, references to persons with disabilities in climate policies have increased modestly since 2023 yet remain far from universal. In NDCs, 72% of governments still make no mention of disability, and only 14% include concrete measures to advance their inclusion. Adaptation policies show somewhat better performance, with 99 governments now referencing disability, up from 65 in 2023, but fewer than half translate these acknowledgments into actionable commitments.

For the first time, this report evaluates how domestic climate policies address the rights of women and children with disabilities. We found that fewer than 3% of NDCs and 6% of adaptation policies mention women, girls, or children with disabilities, and almost none provide actionable commitments to address the multiple barriers they face in the context of climate change and action. This exclusion heightens the climate vulnerability of women and children with disabilities by ignoring their distinct needs and perspectives in adaptation planning. The systematic neglect of the intersections of gender, age, and disability not only violates obligations under the UNCRPD, but they also fail to live up to the promise of UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, which calls for gender-responsive and inclusive approaches in all aspects of climate governance.

Bright spots do exist. Countries such as Vanuatu, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Costa Rica stand out for integrating disability concerns into both mitigation and adaptation planning, often with specific programs, budget allocations, and commitments to participation. Vanuatu's NDC, for example, includes dedicated priority areas and financial resources for disability-inclusive adaptation. Similarly, Nepal and Pakistan have advanced inclusive early warning systems and capacity-building initiatives. Canada's presence among the top performers signals that industrialized nations can lead by example, though most Northern countries lag behind.

Compared to previous editions of this report, progress is real but slow. In 2022, only 37 governments referenced disability in their NDCs and 46 in adaptation policies, with just 14 and 15 respectively including concrete measures. By 2023, these numbers rose to 39 NDCs and 65 adaptation policies, with modest gains in participation and rights recognition. The 2025 findings show further improvement, 54 NDCs and 99 adaptation policies now reference disability, but the pace remains insufficient given the urgency of climate impacts. The global average score has climbed from 1.3 in 2023 to 2.3 in 2025,

yet 72 parties still score zero, and intersectional inclusion of women and children with disabilities is marginal. These trends confirm that while awareness is growing, implementation lags far behind commitments.

Despite these advances, the failure to involve persons with disabilities in policy development, evident in only 9 NDCs and 11 adaptation plans, signals a persistent gap between rhetoric and practice. Moving forward, States must shift from symbolic recognition to substantive action by implementing their obligations under the UNCPRD in the context of climate policy-making. Doing so is not only a legal obligation under international human rights law but a practical necessity for developing equitable and effective policies that foster the transition to climate-resilient and low-carbon societies.

Appendix 1: Research Design

Data Collection & Analysis

To produce this report, we systematically collected the climate policies adopted by the 195 parties to the *Paris Agreement*. We specifically collected two types of climate policies. First, we collected the active versions of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by parties to the UNFCCC Secretariat (and available on its website as of October 1, 2025). NDCs are non-binding communications that parties to the *Paris Agreement* must submit every five years in which they set out the steps that they will take to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Second, we systematically collected the climate adaptation policies adopted by parties to the *Paris Agreement*. We examined the most recent NDCs submitted by parties (as of October 1, 2025) and extracted the titles of the most recent framework climate adaptation policies from these communications. We then searched online to retrieve these framework policies. We also downloaded and analyzed the National Adaptation Plans submitted by parties to the UNFCCC Secretariat (and available on its website as of 1 October, 2025). In all, we collected and coded 615 NDCs/INDCs and 364 adaptation policies and built an original dataset of climate policies that refer to disability (44 INDCs/NDCs and 88 adaptation policies).

Once the documents had been collected, a team of coders reviewed the policies to retrieve any references to persons with disabilities, disability, accessibility, and other equivalent medical or cultural terms that may be used, even if they are not consistent with a human rights model of disability (such as people with chronic illnesses, etc.). Specific references to women and girls with disabilities and to children with disabilities were also coded. Building on the framework set out in section 1, the coders then analysed the documents to assess how they refer to people with disabilities and their human rights. Each NDC was assigned a disability inclusion score based on 9 criteria and each adaptation policy was assigned a score based on 8 criteria. These scores were then combined to provide a global score of disability-inclusive climate policymaking.

Disability Inclusion Criteria and Scoring for Climate Policies

| Criterion | Scoring | Policies Scored |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| Does the policy refer to persons with disabilities or disability in one way or another? | 1 = use of the term people/persons with disabilities or disabled people; 0.5 = medical terms/framing and use of term disability; 0 = if no reference. | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| To what extent does the document refer to women and girls with disabilities? | 1 = explicit reference to women or girls with disabilities 0.5 = reference to intersection between gender and disability 0 = no | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| To what extent does the document refer to children with disabilities? | 1 = explicit reference to children with disabilities 0.5 = reference to intersection between age or youth and disability 0 = no | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| Is the reference to disability included within the context of climate mitigation, adaptation or both? | 1 = adaptation and mitigation; 0 = adaptation or mitigation only. | NDCs only |
| Does the policy include at least one concrete measure for enhancing disability inclusion in climate action? | 1 = yes; 0 = no. | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| Does the policy refer to the rights of persons with disabilities? | 1 = yes; 0 = no. | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| Does the policy recognize the importance of integrating the knowledge held by persons with disabilities? | 1 = yes; 0 = no. | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| Does the policy recognize the importance of the full and effective participation of people with disabilities in climate governance? | 1 = yes; 0 = no. | NDCs and adaptation policies |
| Does the policy include evidence that people with disabilities were involved in its development? | 1 = included; 0.5 = consulted; 0 = no evidence. | NDCs and adaptation policies |