



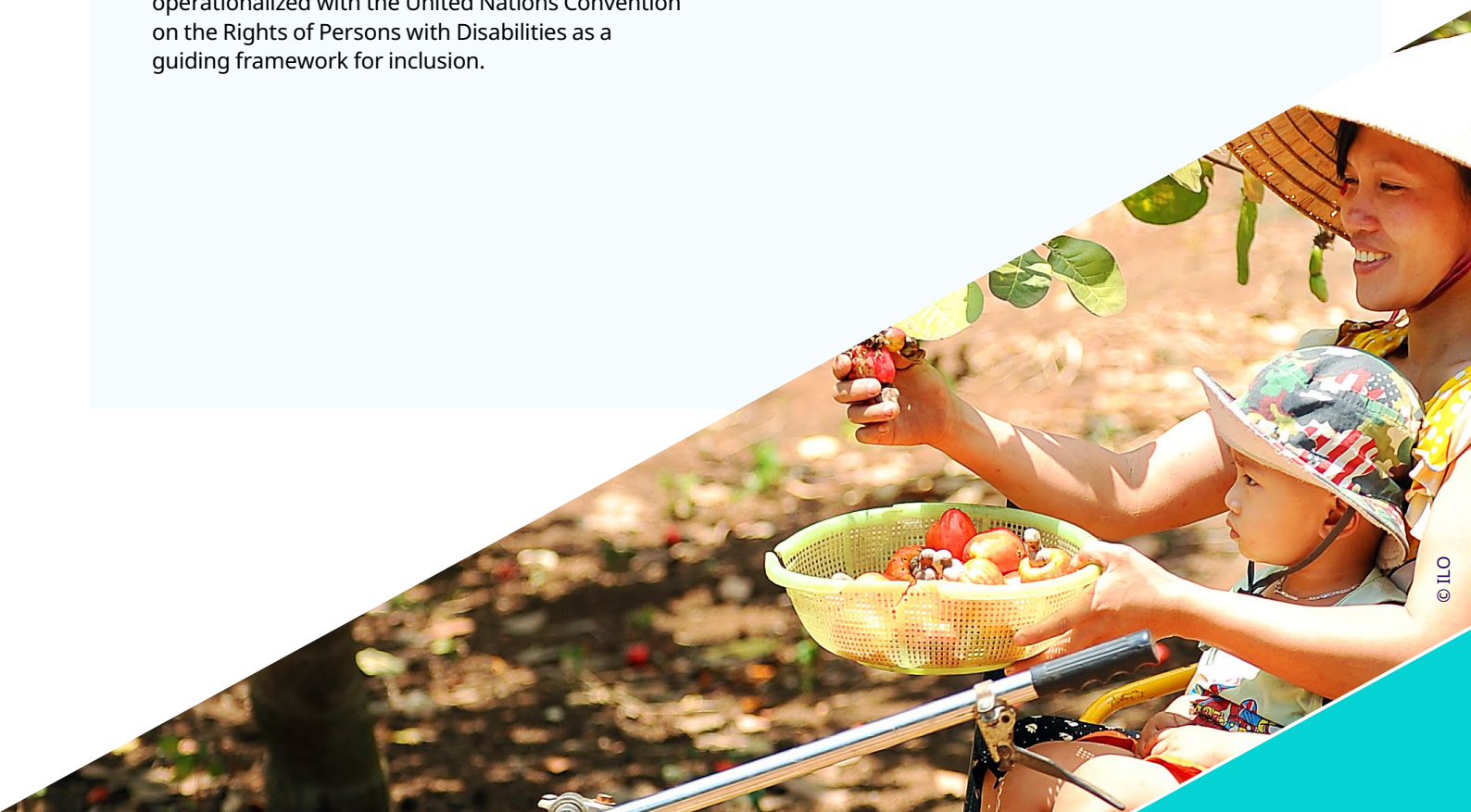
► Just Transition Policy Brief

November 2022

“Nothing about us without us” Realizing disability rights through a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies

Key messages

- ▶ The inclusion of persons with disabilities is fundamental for ensuring no one is left behind and achieving a just transition.
- ▶ Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations possess skills, knowledge and resources that are vital to the realization of decent work and effective climate actions.
- ▶ The Just Transition Guidelines should be operationalized with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a guiding framework for inclusion.
- ▶ Persons with disabilities must be represented at all levels of just transition policy and programme design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation across all policy areas mentioned in the Just Transition Guidelines, including accessible social dialogue.





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Background

The ILO *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, adopted by representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organizations in 2015, provide a policy framework and an operational tool to address environmental change in a way that advances social justice and promotes decent work creation.¹ This policy brief is part of a series of briefs that seek to deepen the technical and policy understanding of the application of the Just Transition Guidelines. They are mutually reinforcing and together form a body of policy guidance on the Just Transition Guidelines.

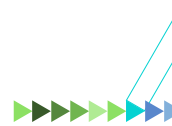
The just transition briefs are intended for use by policymakers and practitioners at all levels to provide practical information and guidance, fostering a common understanding of what is meant by a just transition in specific topic areas and providing recommendations for implementation by countries, international institutions and other actors in academia and civil society. The briefs seek, in particular, to provide guidance on just transition to ILO constituents, including workers' organizations,

employers' organizations, and governments and relevant line ministries.

The briefs cover the following thematic areas: macro-economic and growth policies; industrial and sectoral policies; active labour market policies; enterprise policies; skills development; green works; occupational safety and health; social protection; rights; social dialogue and tripartism; collective bargaining; labour migration and human mobility; indigenous peoples; gender and labour; youth employment; persons with disabilities; persons with HIV/AIDS; and financing a just transition.

This policy brief is intended to present the linkages between just transition and persons with disabilities, providing stakeholders with information and recommendations for implementation. The broad implementation of just transition across all policy areas and cross-cutting thematic topics requires careful consideration of the guidance provided in the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, taking into account the needs, priorities and circumstances of each country.

1 ILO, *Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, 2015.



1. Introduction

The global climate crisis is changing the present and the future of work. Temperatures are rising worldwide, rainfall variability and severe weather events are leading to the destruction of infrastructure and decline of different economic sectors – resulting in increased unemployment, people’s displacement and reduced access to safe working conditions.² The negative impacts of climate change are amplified for persons with disabilities, who already face significant barriers to employment. Persons with disabilities are a diverse group who differ according to age, gender and race, among other aspects, and comprise those “who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.³

Persons with disabilities are especially vulnerable to the risks and hazards associated with climate change, including injury, disease, and death due to more intense floods, heat waves and fires; increased risk of under-nutrition from diminished food production; and increased risk of food-, water-, and vector-borne diseases.⁴ Climate change will also increase the incidence and prevalence of disability due to both disease and injuries that may result from extreme weather events or conflict.⁵ These risks and consequences are especially severe for persons with disabilities who experience intersecting forms of discrimination in the world of work, including women, youth, indigenous and tribal peoples, persons with HIV/AIDS, older persons, refugees and internally displaced people, migrant workers and other marginalized groups; and for groups of persons with disabilities who are extremely underrepresented in the world of work, such as people with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial disabilities and people with deafblindness.⁶

Persons with disabilities comprise 15 per cent of the world’s population, 80 per cent of whom reside in the global South and are overrepresented among those living in poverty.⁷ The profound poverty of persons with disabilities is both a cause and consequence of exclusion from social, economic and political life. A just transition to a sustainable and low-carbon economy presents a unique opportunity to advance decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty. The Just Transition Guidelines aim at enabling governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations around the globe to leverage the process of structural change towards not only a greener, carbon-neutral economy, but also create decent jobs at a large scale and promote social protection, rights at work and social dialogue. The guidelines are both a policy framework and a practical tool to assist governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations at all levels of development to manage the transition to carbon-neutral and socially just economies and can also assist them to achieve the Paris Agreement⁸ and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.⁹

As countries move forward with plans to transform their economies, it is critical that we know more about the potential contributions of persons with disabilities and the types of practices that can yield transformative change in poverty reduction and decent work. Without an explicit focus on creating opportunities for persons with disabilities, the goals of a socially inclusive green economy will remain unreachable. To achieve these goals, there is a need to address the negative impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities in the world of work, as well as to identify and leverage opportunities to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in emerging green job opportunities and ensuring that climate action is meaningful.

2 ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with Jobs, 2018*; ILO, *Working on a Warmer Planet: The Effect of Heat Stress on Productivity and Decent Work, 2019*.

3 UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006, A/RES/61/106.

4 Sébastien Jodoin et al., “A Disability Rights Approach to Climate Governance”, *Ecology Law Quarterly* 47(1) (2020): 73–116.

5 David Lewis and Kath Ballard, *Disability and Climate Change: Understanding Vulnerability and Building Resilience in a Changing World*. CBM, June 2012.

6 DICARP, IDA and GLAD Network, *Towards COP26: Enhancing Disability Inclusion in Climate Action*, 2021.

7 World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, 2011.

8 The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change that aims to limit global warming to below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. Adopted at COP 21 in Paris on 12 December 2015, it entered into force on 4 November 2016.

9 The Sustainable Development Goals are a global blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. The goals address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

The purpose of this brief is to increase stakeholders' understanding of the Just Transition Guidelines – and how to act on them – from a disability rights perspective. It recommends that persons with disabilities be included in the full set of policy areas mentioned in the guidelines, including macroeconomic and growth policies, industrial and sectoral policies, enterprise policies, skills development, occupational safety and health, social

protection, active labour market policies, rights, and social dialogue and tripartism. This brief is intended to support governments, employers' and workers' organizations and other relevant stakeholders in the world of work, including individual companies and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), to engage in collective efforts towards achieving environmentally sustainable economies and societies.¹⁰

2. Disability rights: “Nothing about us without us”

From a disability rights perspective, the motto “Nothing about us without us” is used to communicate that no law, policy, programme or intervention affecting persons with disabilities should be decided without the full and direct participation of persons with disabilities. The motto expresses the conviction that persons with disabilities themselves know what is best for them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) exemplifies this motto and was negotiated and created with the active participation of persons with disabilities from the global North and South.¹¹ The UNCRPD is

a guiding framework for inclusion in all aspects of society, including the world of work. States Parties to the UNCRPD recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others, which includes the right to opportunities to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible. The Just Transition Guidelines present an opportunity to realize the right to decent work in conjunction with the rights to education, participation, accessibility, and social protection for economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

3. Challenges and opportunities for disability inclusion in a just transition

The global climate crisis has caused negative impacts on workers, jobs and work productivity which are expected to become more pronounced.¹² Job losses have occurred due to greater incidences of extreme weather events – including heavy precipitation and extreme heat – resulting in worker displacement and damage to business assets, transport, industrial infrastructure, settlements and agricultural crops. These events are associated with occupational deaths, injuries, diseases and mental health conditions that can lead to disability.¹³ Moreover, heat stress in workers due to rising temperatures and other environment-related hazards has already resulted in a dramatic loss of working hours and days. Between 2000 and 2015, 23 million working-life

years were lost annually at the global level because of such hazards.¹⁴

These negative impacts disproportionately affect persons with disabilities who already face serious challenges in the world of work. When there are fewer job opportunities, persons with disabilities may especially struggle to find work if employers have misconceptions about their work capacities. At the same time, those with health conditions affected by temperature changes may find heat stress causes their manual labour to become hazardous or difficult for them to continue doing. Extreme weather events can have multiple effects, including injury, loss of accessibility in transportation systems and buildings,

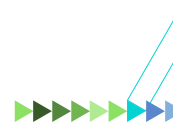
10 Organizations of persons with disabilities are organizations that are controlled by people with disabilities with at least 51 per cent persons with disabilities at the board and membership level.

11 UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

12 ILO, *The Employment Impact of Climate Change Adaptation: Input Document for the G20 Climate Sustainability Working Group*, 2018.

13 CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), *Impact of Climate on Workers*, n.d.

14 CDC, *Impact of Climate on Workers*.



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or damages to assistive devices, which can severely impact their livelihoods and access to employment.¹⁵

Despite being more exposed to the negative impacts of climate change, policymakers and practitioners have paid little attention to disability issues in that context, rendering the needs of persons with disabilities largely “invisible” in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.¹⁶ Persons with disabilities and their rights are often neglected or adversely affected by the design of environmental and sustainability focused policies, programmes and projects.¹⁷ This neglect can render these initiatives inaccessible, such as when climate action decision-making venues, mass transit or ecological buildings are created that are not accessible to persons with

disabilities.¹⁸ Inaccessible public transport, buildings, information and communications can contribute to the high unemployment rates persons with disabilities experience. The UNCRPD notes that achieving accessibility involves the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers in the built environment, and information, communications and other services. Thus, the inaccessibility of environmental and sustainability focused policies, programmes and projects undercuts their effectiveness and reinforces social inequities by limiting opportunities for a significant share of the population to contribute to the green economy and provide innovative ideas and practices. Further, policies to reduce carbon emissions, such as carbon pricing schemes or bans of carbon intensive products, are often designed without consideration of the rights, perspectives, and needs of people with disabilities and do not address the differential costs and burdens that these may impose on individuals with disabilities – particularly those living with low income.¹⁹

Globally, there is disproportionately low representation of persons with disabilities in the labour market with unemployment rates as high as 70 to 80 per cent.²⁰ When persons with disabilities are employed, they often experience poor promotional prospects, disability-based harassment and violence as well as unsafe working conditions, and more likely to be in informal, part-time, low-paid jobs or segregated working arrangements. This is a consequence of a lack of opportunities in the formal economy and the absence of other means of livelihood. Exclusion from education and skills training is another reason why persons with disabilities are prevented from participating in the labour market. Access to education is affected by a multitude of barriers, including physical accessibility of training and education institutions, availability of

15 ILO, *Persons with Disabilities in a Just Transition to a Low-carbon Economy*, 2019.

16 Gregor Wolbring. “A Culture of Neglect: Climate Discourse and Disabled People”, *M/C Journal* 12, No. 4 (2009); Gregor Wolbring and Verlyn Leopatra, “Climate Change, Water, Sanitation and Energy Insecurity: Invisibility of People with Disabilities”, *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 1, No. 3 (2012): 66–90.

17 Deborah Fenney Salkeld, “Sustainable Lifestyles for All? Disability Equality, Sustainability and the Limitations of Current UK Policy”, *Disability & Society* 31, No. 4 (2016): 447–464; Catherine Jampel, “Intersections of Disability Justice, Racial Justice and Environmental Justice”, *Environmental Sociology* 4, No. 1 (2018): 122–135.

18 Lee Yaron, “Glasgow Summit: U.K. Apologizes after Disabled Israeli Minister Can’t Attend Climate Talks”, *Haaretz*, 1 November 2021.

19 Andrew B. Jenks and Kelsey M. Obringer, “The Poverty of Plastics Bans: Environmentalism’s Win Is a Loss for Disabled People”, *Critical Social Policy* 40, No. 1 (2020): 151–161.

20 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with Persons with Disabilities*, 2018; African Studies Centre Leiden, “Disability in Africa”, n.d.; Indian Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, *India: Employment and Unemployment Survey 2011–2012, with ILO standard variables*, 2017.

support services and reasonable accommodations as well as negative teacher and peer attitudes.²¹

There is an important opportunity now for governments and social partners to leverage the previously untapped potential of persons with disabilities, enhance their capacities and implement significant improvements to ensure access to decent work that contributes to climate action. These key stakeholders can demonstrate leadership and be agents of change in creating and extending green jobs opportunities for persons with disabilities, including by implementing proactive recruitment and accessible hiring strategies and practices within their own organizations and ensuring decent working conditions while supporting economic, social and environmental sustainability.

At international and national levels, there is increased attention to persons with disabilities within policy and planning documents that concern climate action and the world of work, and while implementation continues to be a challenge, the expressed recognition of disability is a step in the right direction. For example, the Just Transition Declaration, agreed at the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, recognizes the need to ensure that no one is left behind in the transition to net zero economies – including persons with disabilities.²² Further, a recent systematic analysis²³ found that 34 state parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)²⁴ currently refer to persons with disabilities in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and 45 state parties currently refer to people with disabilities, people with health conditions or those with chronic illnesses in their climate adaptation policies.²⁵ However, countries are still falling far

short of their world of work and climate action commitments and much more needs to be done.

Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations possess skills, knowledge and resources that are vital to the realization of decent work and effective climate actions to transform economies and societies and make them more accessible, equitable and sustainable. The active participation of persons with disabilities in the design of infrastructures and redesign of the built environment for a just transition can simultaneously improve accessibility and resilience of those infrastructures. Designing for inclusion also costs less in the long term as unmet and unforeseen requirements and needs can be captured in the beginning, instead of being tackled later, often at additional expense.²⁶

The Just Transition Guidelines promote opportunities and stress the urgency to build capacity and invest in the greening of economies in line with international labour standards. In today's globalized economy, international labour standards are an essential component of an international framework to ensure that economic growth provides benefits to all. All these standards, even when they don't refer to disability issues explicitly, are relevant to persons with disabilities.²⁷ There is need to invest in persons with disabilities and OPDs as key partners to support the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes, standards and initiatives towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies.

21 Alexis Buettgen et al., "Employment, Poverty, Disability and Gender: A Rights Approach for Women with Disabilities in India, Nepal and Bangladesh", in *Women's Mental Health: Resistance and Resilience in Community and Society: Advances in Mental Health and Addiction*, eds. Nazilla Khanlou and Beryl Pilkington (Springer, 2015), 3–18; ILO, "Making TVET and Skills Systems Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities", 2017.

22 UK Government and UNCC, "Supporting the Conditions for a Just Transition Internationally", 11 April 2021.

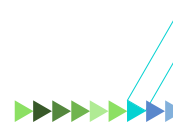
23 Katherine Lofts et al., *Disability Inclusion in National Climate Commitments and Policies: A Status Report*, forthcoming. This report includes examples of disability inclusion in countries' NDCs, including Antigua and Barbuda's Updated [Nationally Determined Contribution](#), 2021 (pp. 11, 16, 32, 34); Georgia's Updated [Nationally Determined Contribution](#), 2021 (pp. 11, 19); and Zimbabwe's [National Climate Policy and National Adaptation Plan](#).

24 The UNFCCC is the UN entity tasked with supporting the global response to the threat of climate change. The Convention has near universal membership (197 Parties) and is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

25 [Nationally determined contributions](#) (NDCs) are at the heart of the Paris Agreement and embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Each State Party is required to prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs that it intends to achieve.

26 Accenture, *The Accessibility Advantage*, 2018; IDRC (Inclusive Design Research Centre), "What is Inclusive Design", n.d.; Mikaela Patrick and Iain McKinnon, "What Is Climate Resilient Inclusive Design and Why Do We Need It? GDI Hub at COP26", 2021.

27 Two international labour standards are specifically dedicated to disability: C159 – Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159); R168 – Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983 (No. 168). See also: R205 – Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), Paragraph 15(h), which ensures inclusion of persons with disabilities.



4. Operationalizing a just transition from a disability rights perspective

The Just Transition Guidelines should be operationalized in accordance with the UNCRPD as a guiding framework for inclusion. The transition process to a low-carbon economy is evolving, dynamic and complex with opportunities for meaningful participation at all levels, which is vital to ensure that nobody is left behind and the transition is just. This includes national, provincial and local geographic levels; multiple stakeholder groups; and collaboration between line ministries and different levels of administration. The guidelines present opportunities for inclusive policy and programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There are opportunities to enhance the readiness of persons with disabilities to actively contribute to a just transition and promote the creation of green jobs and green enterprises, supporting the decent work agenda. The next few sections will describe how these opportunities can be realized by governments, social partners and OPDs.

Increasing inclusion in policy and programme planning and design

When implementing the Just Transition Guidelines, governments are strongly encouraged to implement Article 4 of the UNCRPD which requires states to closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. For example, this can be measured using the following proposed indicators:²⁸

- ▶ Inclusion of just transition policies and measures that support persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of NDCs.
- ▶ Inclusion of issues of concern and concrete policy measures for persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of national adaptation plans (NAPs).
- ▶ Removal of discriminatory law, policy and programmes that inhibit the full implementation of the UNCRPD.

▶ Human rights and climate action planning in Finland

The Government of Finland is taking measures to realize human rights and ensure accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities in their climate action and just transition planning. For example, the Government has conducted human rights impact assessment in legislative reforms and amended the Climate Act to include and take into consideration the rights of persons with disabilities both in the consultation phase and in the impact assessment. Finland is also taking measures to ensure accessibility of web pages including videos with sign language and closed captioning, and easy-to-read information on climate change, so that access to information on climate issues is guaranteed. Accessibility is also a key consideration in investment decisions.

To increase awareness on disability rights and climate action, Finland has also organized and participated at side events at the Conference of the State Parties to UNCRPD and COP26 in collaboration with the International Disability Alliance (an alliance of 14 global and regional organizations of persons with disabilities) to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in a just transition.

“Climate policy is not separate from disability rights policy... When we invest in public transportation to reduce carbon emissions, we must invest in public transportation that is accessible to persons with disabilities. When we invest in innovation and technology, let’s make sure it is accessible and inclusive to persons with disabilities. When we invest in skills development in the green jobs sector, let’s make sure these programs are inclusive to persons with disabilities.”

–Krista Mikkonen, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Finland at the Conference of the State Parties to the UNCRPD, June 17, 2021.

28 Proposed indicators shared throughout this brief are adapted from the Just Transition Guidelines and *The People’s Indicators: Evidence-Based Participatory Indicators – Measuring Progressive Realization* by Disability Rights Promotion International (2017). The People’s Indicators were derived from hundreds of interviews with persons with disabilities from around the world who spoke about their rights within the context of monitoring the implementation of the UNCRPD. Some of these indicators also align with those presented in the *SDG-CRPD Resource Package*.

- Formal collaborations between relevant national ministries, including ministries of labour, environment, economic planning, finance, and any national disability commissions, social affairs and/or health ministries, with a view to establishing just transition policies and programmes.
- Ratification and monitoring of international labour standards most relevant to the just transition framework (as listed in Annex 1 of the guidelines) and persons with disabilities.

All policies, programmes and initiatives should be in accordance with Article 9 of the UNCRPD on accessibility. It is critical to have budgets allocated for accessibility of all types of interventions by jurisdiction. This means ensuring that infrastructures such as buildings, roads, transportation, schools, housing, medical facilities, and workplaces are accessible; as well as putting regulations in place governing the accessibility of information and communication technologies including websites, apps for portable devices, broadcast TV and radio and other electronic and emergency services.²⁹

OPDs can play a key role in designing for accessibility to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of life including the labour market and policy and programme planning. Governments and donors can play a role in mobilizing resources and targeting dedicated climate financing for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in climate action, prioritizing projects led by OPDs.³⁰ For example, eligible countries should include persons with disabilities in Green Climate Fund (GCF) financing decision-making processes and ensure that financing supports inclusive work and employment opportunities to turn NDC ambitions into climate action.³¹ Donors can include obligations and safeguards in funding processes to ensure climate action is accessible, does not undermine disability rights, and facilitates meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

The Just Transition Guidelines present an opportunity for co-designing a transition on the basis on non-discrimination and social inclusion, so as to ensure that the transition is just. This should include

financial compensation for the participation of OPDs (for example, honoraria, stipends and formal contracts) to explicitly value their knowledge and contributions and address longstanding inequities that have led to poverty and social exclusion of persons with disabilities. Participation must involve accessible communication strategies such as sign language, easy-to-read/plain language and other disability-related accommodations, as needed and requested.

► Public-private cooperation for inclusive innovation in India

In early 2022, Atos, a global technology company and a leading member of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network, joined with GIZ, the German international cooperation agency to launch the ICT 4 Inclusion Challenge. The aim is to find and support digital and technical innovations which will mitigate climate change and disaster-related risks for people with disabilities and older people in India. This could be a mainstream solution or an accessibility and disability inclusive-specific solution. Atos and GIZ are collaborating with the global innovation platform Zero Project and the Ability Foundation, India's umbrella body of organizations of persons with disabilities.

Source: GIZ and Atos, "ICT 4 Inclusion Challenge", 2022.

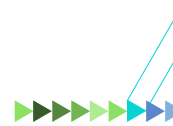
There is no "one size fits all" approach in the Just Transition Guidelines. Policies and programmes need to be designed in line with the specific conditions of countries, including their stage of development, economic sectors and types and sizes of enterprises. An inclusive design process offers a "one size fits one" approach to recognize the contexts of countries and their diverse citizens.³² Inclusive design considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age, and other forms of human difference. Inclusive design should be promoted and implemented in green jobs creation and green job training programmes and services, not only to ensure access, but also to avoid

29 Fundación ONCE and ILO Global Business and Disability Network, *Making the Future of Work Inclusive of People with Disabilities*, 2019.

30 DICARP, IDA and GLAD Network, *Towards COP26: Enhancing Disability Inclusion in Climate Action*, 2021.

31 A critical element of the Paris Agreement, the GCF is the world's largest climate fund, mandated to support developing countries to raise and realize their NDCs. The fund invests across four transitions: the built environment; energy and industry; human security, livelihoods and wellbeing; and land-use, forests and ecosystems.

32 IDRC, "What is Inclusive Design".



duplication of efforts, such as setting up parallel programmes and services targeted exclusively to individuals with disabilities.

Increasing inclusion in social dialogue involving governments, employers' and workers' organizations

Governments should actively promote and engage OPDs and workers and employers with disabilities in social dialogue. This dialogue should be in line with international labour standards such as C159 and the UNCRPD, with particular attention to the general obligations listed under Article 4, and Article 27 on work and employment.³³ Article 27 requires States Parties to protect the rights of persons with disabilities to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities.

For workers' organizations, this means ensuring that workers with disabilities can exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others and meaningfully participate in social dialogue. This is an especially important consideration in a just transition as workers with disabilities face additional vulnerabilities for unemployment and other climate change impacts in the world of work.³⁴

For employers' and business membership organizations (EBMOs), this means actively raising the voices of persons with disabilities by strategically recruiting members that employ persons with disabilities and are engaged in environmental sustainability efforts. EBMOs can advocate for appropriate workplace policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programmes, reasonable accommodation, accessible workplaces, diverse and inclusive business culture and other measures to advance the employment of persons with disabilities in decent jobs, including green jobs. Moreover, EBMOs may raise awareness among members that diverse workplaces can boost performance, lead to innovation, improve productivity and help to engage employees. Since 2010, the ILO has facilitated the Global Business and Disability Network to promote peer-to-peer support among companies and EBMOs on disability inclusion and to provide technical guidance, including through the ten principles of the network's charter.

► Workplace and ecological sustainability at Wipro

Wipro, a multinational IT company based in India, is actively taking up business for human rights and environmental sustainability. Wipro actively recruits and employs people with disabilities and includes disability as a key component of their social and environmental sustainability efforts by promoting education for children with disabilities, including people with disabilities in the determination of their strategic sustainability priorities. Wipro has also participated in speaking engagements in public forums to build sustainability awareness and advocacy and help other companies understand and report how their operations, products, services and business relationships impact the rights of people with disabilities.

In their 2019–2020 sustainability report, Wipro reported employing 587 employees with various disabilities. Their approach to workplace sustainability and disability inclusion is based on principles of “dignity, diversity and being sensitive to human rights”. Wipro is an equal opportunity employer and advocates the same through its supply chain by encouraging supplier diversity including “qualified enterprises owned by persons with disability, women or members of minority communities”.

Source: Wipro, [Sustainability Report: FY 2019–2020](#), 2019.

Currently, there is a need for sector-specific dialogue and knowledge about the barriers, challenges, and opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Just Transition Guidelines suggest that governments, in consultation with social partners and other stakeholders, should develop industrial and sectoral policy frameworks, and establish incentives, mandates, and where necessary, regulations to stimulate demand, private investment and the development of markets for goods and services that are relevant for the greening of economies. This requires particular attention to the priorities of persons with disabilities and workers with disabilities whose livelihoods might experience the hardest

33 C159 stipulates: “representative organisations of employers and workers shall be consulted on the implementation of the said policy” (referring to national policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons).

34 For further references to trade union work, see: ILO, [Trade Union Action on Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities: A Global Overview](#), 2017.

impacts of the transition, as well as efforts to facilitate formalization and promote decent work in relevant sectors, including waste management and recycling sectors.

▶ Repsol Social Impact and ILUNION Recycling4all

In 2020, Repsol Social Impact, a company owned by the Repsol Foundation, reached an agreement with ILUNION, a leader in Spain supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce, to create a joint industrial company specializing in recycling waste from electric and electronic equipment (WEEE), fast becoming a serious global environmental waste problem.

The new company, called Recycling4all, is present throughout the business value chain: from collection, to transportation, classification, storage, treatment and recovery of waste. It has 147 employees, 99 of whom are people with disabilities.

Recycling4all was created with the aim of being a benchmark industrial company in the WEEE waste recycling sector and generating a positive triple impact: economic (profitable and sustainable), social (social and workforce inclusion of vulnerable groups or at risk of exclusion) and environmental through recycling activity. Moreover, the company is considering the future possibility of extending the recycling to include solar plates and panels, whose growth will be exponential in the current energy transition.

Source: Repsol Foundation, “Repsol Foundation Has Created a Company to Promote Recycling and Workforce Inclusion together with ILUNION”, 2 December 2020.

Enhancing the readiness of persons with disabilities to contribute to a just transition

Persons with disabilities are at the forefront of creating, designing and advocating for policies, programmes, processes and products that enable them to overcome barriers and transform the spaces, cultures, and institutions in which they interact. Given their unique insights of structural barriers, persons with disabilities

have a pivotal role to play as “knowers, makers and doers” which should be valued in a future where life will likely be much more challenging due to the impacts of climate change.³⁵ Indeed, many innovations that are widely used today were initially created to support persons with disabilities, such as sidewalk curb cuts, speech-to-text and voice recognition apps.

▶ Bridging the gap between sustainability and accessibility: STIL Solutions

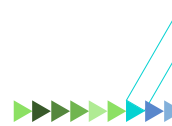
STIL Solutions (Sustainability Through an Inclusive Lens) is a Canadian social enterprise founded and operated by a woman with vision impairment, whose aim is to bridge the gap between sustainability and accessibility. The company produces WasteFinder, a two-part waste management system that provides both tactile and visual information to assist individuals with disabilities to dispose of their waste independently and effectively in public spaces. STIL Solutions also offers consultation and workshops for businesses, communities and institutions to make their spaces more accessible, sustainable and inclusive. Their products have been sold to municipal governments, universities, pharmacies, food markets, sports centers, cafes, medical centers and non-profit organizations across Canada, with recent sales in the United States and India. This enterprise has received numerous grants from a local university and national government-funded agencies to advance research and evaluation of accessible waste disposal. They recently won the international C40 **Women4Climate** Tech Challenge.



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“Environmental stewardship and sustainability should be a responsibility. Not a privilege.” –Hillary Scanlon, CEO STIL Solutions

35 McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, “Knowers, Makers, and Doers of Climate Action: Conversation with Sébastien Jodoin”, *Enabling Commons*, podcast season 1, episode 1, January 2021.



To enhance the readiness of persons with disabilities to actively contribute to a just transition, it is essential for governments and social partners to promote inclusive education and skills development. Governments must give high policy priority to Article 24 of the UNCRPD, which recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education without discrimination, and on the basis of equal opportunity to ensure an inclusive education system and lifelong learning. This requires allocating resources to promote equity in skills acquisition and recognition for all persons with disabilities, including children, youth and older adults, women, refugees and internally displaced people, racialized, indigenous and tribal peoples, people living in poverty and people from LGBTQ+ communities – as well as persons with disabilities who face particular challenges in the world of work such as those with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial disabilities and deafblindness. Governments can work with OPDs and persons with disabilities to draw from their knowledge, identify barriers to education and skills development and leverage opportunities for inclusion.

However, solely focusing on the skills development of individuals does not address the wider issue of discrimination towards persons with disabilities, nor does it meet the needs of employers or the labour market. Governments and social partners can support effective job-matching initiatives to advance inclusive employment, including green decent jobs. They can support employment agencies that effectively match people with jobs based on the skills and abilities of persons with disabilities and provide incentives for these agencies to develop expertise in the needs and issues of green businesses.³⁶

Skills development should also align with UNCRPD Article 27 with reference to enabling persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training. Some proposed indicators of disability-inclusive skills development for a just transition include:

- ▶ formal reviews of skills development policies to support transitioning to more environmentally sustainable economies, including responsive training, capacity building and curricula;

- ▶ budget allocated to inclusive education as a percentage of total budget for education, disaggregated by responsible public jurisdiction (city, town, state and country);
- ▶ budget allocated for education materials in alternative formats (for instance, Braille and plain language/easy read), teaching assistants, sign language interpretation and assistive devices allocated by responsible public jurisdiction;
- ▶ evidence of measures and programmes to stimulate secondary school students with disabilities to pursue higher education and vocational training for green jobs and entrepreneurship;
- ▶ a holistic skills development policy to promote skills for green jobs that are coherent with disability and environmental laws and policies, including means for reasonable accommodation and appropriate recognition through certification of skills.

Governments and social partners can utilize the innovative and creative capacity of persons with disabilities and collaborate with OPDs to support the **development of core skills** required for green jobs across the labour force.³⁷ They include teamwork skills reflecting the need for organizations to work collectively on tackling their environmental footprint; adaptability and transferability skills to enable workers to learn and apply new technologies and processes required to green their jobs; as well as effective and inclusive communication and negotiation skills to promote change to colleagues and customers.

Apprenticeships are one potential pathway between skills training, education and green jobs. Apprenticeships have historically prepared individuals for career pathways in skilled construction and other occupations, providing them with an employer-recognized credential. Apprenticeships are increasingly being recognized in the technological sector which are key industries in the developing green economy. Apprenticeships should be expanded to prepare persons with disabilities for emerging green jobs and can be developed using the ILO approach to successful quality apprenticeship systems based on inclusiveness, meaningful social dialogue, clear roles and responsibilities, equitable funding arrangements

36 For example, see: Marica Rioux et al., *DRPI AWARE Roadmap to Work: A Model of Employment for Persons with Disabilities*, 2019. This manual proposes a model for building an inclusive employment ecosystem in South Asia by connecting the skills of persons with disabilities to labour market demands.

37 ILO, *Skills for a Greener Future*, 2019.

and strong labour market relevance.³⁸ Workers' and employer's organizations can play a key role in promoting social inclusion policies and best practices as well as advocating for inclusion of persons with disabilities in particular sectors that are relevant to the greening of local and national economies.

Beyond apprenticeships, **active labour market policies** should adapt and strengthen public employment services to further develop their role as transition agents. Governments, in consultation with social partners, as well as OPDs, should provide information, guidance, matching services and training for employment service providers about disability rights and inclusion, as well as for persons with disabilities to access training to meet the needs of both workers and employers. Moreover, governments should pay particular attention to the experiences and skills development needs of workers with disabilities who are affected by the transition to environmentally sustainable economies, climate change and who are vulnerable to layoffs due to structural or technological changes. For instance, persons with disabilities are overrepresented in low- and middle- income countries and rural areas with higher reliance on agricultural activities that face heightened risks posed by climate change. It is therefore pivotal to link the climate and agricultural agenda, and target climate finance to poor rural communities, including persons with disabilities.

► Skills for Resilience: Disability-inclusive climate-smart agriculture

Skills for Resilience is a four-year OPD-led project designed to promote climate-smart agriculture, accessible vocational training and social inclusion in Malawi. The initiative targets young smallholder farmers, with a focus on women and people with disabilities in rural areas whose livelihoods are threatened by climate change induced natural hazards. The project engages experts in the private sector, including finance, as well as local government and local associations.

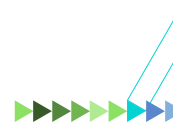
It is coordinated by the Norwegian Association of the Disabled in partnership with the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority in Malawi and is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. To promote disability inclusion, vocational training facilities are being renovated for accessibility, trainers were trained in inclusive facilitation skills, and a cooperative union provided financial education in savings, loans, and investment strategies for economic sustainability as well as access to local markets.

As of March 2021, the project had trained more than 3,000 smallholder farmers in practical climate-smart agriculture; 65 per cent of participants in the training were women and 10 per cent were persons with disability for the last cohort of farmer participants.



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38 ILO, *ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships – Vol. 1: Guide for Policy Makers, 2017*; ILO, *ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships – Vol. 2: Guide for Practitioners, 2020*.



Social protection, safety, and health

For a just transition, it is crucial to promote and establish adequate social protection, safety and health systems for persons with disabilities. This includes healthcare, income security and social services with a view to increasing resilience and safeguarding against the impacts of economic and environmental vulnerabilities and shocks.³⁹ For example, the needs and potential exclusion of workers with disabilities must be explicitly considered when certain industries are shut down as part of NDC measures and workers may require early retirement benefits. The right to an adequate standard of living and social protection is covered in Article 28 of the UNCRPD, which requires equal access to clean water services, assistive devices, poverty reduction programmes, public housing and retirement benefits. Some proposed indicators to measure the operationalization of effective social protection policies for a just transition include:

- ▶ social security budget targeted for persons with disabilities – total amount and as a percentage of total social security budget;
- ▶ number of persons with disabilities in urban and rural areas who applied for disability related and welfare benefits and number of people whose benefits were granted or rejected;
- ▶ legal or policy measures or regulations in place to ensure that financial entitlements of persons with disabilities are paid directly to them;

- ▶ evidence of co-designing and reviewing social protection mechanisms with persons with disabilities and OPDs in the adoption of clean energy measures, to include compensation for persons with disabilities and their families who spend a significantly higher proportion of their income on energy and on goods and services that have large amounts of energy embedded in them.

Governments and social partners should design, implement and evaluate social protection measures and occupational safety and health (OSH) risks from the perspective of persons with disabilities. The need for inclusion in OSH policies is exemplified when inaccessible disaster and emergency preparedness plans leave persons with disabilities behind in relief and response efforts. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations should be consulted when conducting assessments of increased or new OSH risks resulting from climate change, resource scarcity or other risks related to human health and the environment.⁴⁰ This needs to include adequate workers' compensation and social protection policies and programmes that provide financial and practical support to workers with disabilities, or workers who acquire a disability and their families. This should also include disability rights training for OSH boards, committees and other relevant practitioners and OSH policymakers, as well as a measure of the level of involvement of persons with disabilities in training design and delivery.

³⁹ See the *Joint Statement: Towards Inclusive Social Protection Systems Supporting the Full and Effective Participation of Persons with Disabilities*, 2019; ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2020–22*, 2021.

⁴⁰ The UN Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities emphasize that States must develop and implement evidence-based climate mitigation and adaptation policies to prevent and minimize the negative impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities, as well as ensure that persons with disabilities have effective remedies when they suffer harm from climate action or inaction.



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5. Conclusion and key recommendations

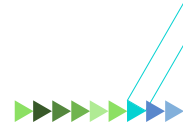
For the transition to a low-carbon economy to be just, it must be inclusive of persons with disabilities. A just transition therefore requires that governments, employers' and workers' organizations and other relevant stakeholders, including donors/funders, companies and OPDs, work together to prevent adverse impacts of climate change and climate policies for persons with disabilities. It also requires that they co-produce inclusive solutions that combat climate change, enhance resilience and dismantle barriers for people with disabilities, offering opportunities for decent work in the new green economy. This includes cohesive service and support systems within nation states; increasing accessible, safe, affordable, and sustainable transportation and housing; inclusive education; accessible information and technology; access to healthcare and other built environments that facilitate entry into emerging green jobs and green enterprises.

The transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies is potentially promising for persons with disabilities. However, the evolution of the green economy and the changing nature of green jobs makes it hard to predict where they will be, what they will look like and how to prepare for them. This presents an opportunity for innovation

and creativity by including persons with disabilities to co-create solutions that suit local, national and global contexts and to reconfigure the relationship between the world of work and the changing climate.

Governments, in consultation with social partners can:

- ▶ Meaningfully include persons with disabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of legislation, policies, and programmes to implement the Just Transition Guidelines in line with the UNCRPD.
- ▶ Foster public-sector investment and public-private partnerships in support of greening the economy that is inclusive of persons with disabilities by ensuring a just transition.
- ▶ Promote a disability rights perspective in just transition discussions at global level, including those that take place in the context of the Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impact of Implementation of Response Measures (KCI).
- ▶ Advocate for developing a Disability Inclusion Action Plan with a dedicated mechanism for its implementation and monitoring under the UNFCCC framework, with such an action plan also



contributing to a just transition from a disability rights angle.

- ▶ Ensure that any bilateral or multilateral development cooperation funding used for implementing a transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies, such as through the Green Climate Fund, requires the inclusion of disability issues, thereby also adhering to Article 32 of the UNCRPD.
- ▶ Include research and impact evaluations in NDC and NAP policy documents, and other environmentally sustainable economic and social policies with evidence-based participatory indicators.
- ▶ Review public procurement policies and practices and make them accessible and non-discriminatory to persons with disabilities. Use public procurement to encourage innovation and set new and better standards and benchmarks so investments include persons with disabilities; and give priority to hiring disability-owned businesses as vendors for green goods and services.⁴¹
- ▶ Develop and realign incentive schemes to dedicate financial and practical supports for employers to hire or retain workers with disabilities in green jobs.
- ▶ Include accountability mechanisms to ensure incentives are used to create productive employment opportunities that align with UNCRPD Article 27 on the right to work and employment and avoid greenwashing (for instance, the superficial and misleading adoption of environmental practices).
- ▶ Promote green entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities.
- ▶ Utilize accessible communication strategies to share information about the impacts of climate change for persons with disabilities and the role of just transition in promoting disability-inclusive climate action.
- ▶ Invest in skills development programmes for persons with disabilities tailored to meet employers’ and workers’ needs in specific sectors relevant to the green economy.

- ▶ Set educational standards and support school-to-work transitions to green jobs and green entrepreneurship through education and labour policies that explicitly address the needs of persons with disabilities and their families.
- ▶ Promote sustainable production and consumption patterns, support local production, and encourage green financing for structural change as well as business conversion for a green economy.⁴²

Employers’ and workers’ organizations can:

- ▶ Raise awareness and provide guidance to members about disability inclusion in just transition frameworks in collaboration with local or national OPDs.
- ▶ Promote the active participation of members who identify as persons with disabilities in social dialogue at the enterprise, sectoral and national levels.
- ▶ Meaningfully include workers with disabilities in collective bargaining to promote social, environmental and economic sustainability together.
- ▶ Promote apprenticeships and on-the-job training that prepare persons with disabilities for career pathways into green jobs, and the green economy.
- ▶ Workers’ organizations can adapt or implement ILO recommendations on trade union action on decent work for persons with disabilities.⁴³
- ▶ Employers’ and business membership organizations can promote disability inclusion practices to:
 - ▶ identify and change processes that support unconscious bias;
 - ▶ raise awareness about the challenges that persons with disabilities face and contribute to solutions;
 - ▶ strengthen including hiring and expand the pool of candidates by engaging with OPDs;
 - ▶ create a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.⁴⁴

41 Shivani Gupta, *Public Procurement and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 2015.

42 For example, the [Local Production Local Solutions initiative](#) addresses supply chain issues that have arisen during COVID-19 across Africa and South Asia and aims to make local production systems more climate resilient.

43 ILO, *Trade Union Action on Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities: A Global Overview*, 2017.

44 Ted Kennedy, Jr. et al., “4 Ways to Improve Your Company’s Disability-Inclusion Practices”, *Harvard Business Review*, 4 June 2019.

Enterprises can:

- ▶ Align corporate, workplace and ecological sustainability policies, programmes, and initiatives to be disability inclusive.
- ▶ Implement the ten principles of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network Charter designed to create equal opportunities at the workplace for persons with disabilities.⁴⁵
- ▶ Develop and support apprenticeships and on-the-job training programmes that include persons with disabilities and aim at meeting the demand for green job skills.
- ▶ Work with governments, employers' and workers' organizations to limit adverse environmental, economic, labour and social impacts which may be generated during the transition while fostering sustainable enterprise development.
- ▶ Encourage creativity and innovation within the workplace to stimulate efforts toward disability-inclusive sustainable development.
- ▶ Improve resource efficiency, invest in clean technologies and upgrade to sustainable production processes.

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) can:

- ▶ Prioritize engagement in climate action and amplify just transition messages in collaboration with government, employers' and workers' organizations.
- ▶ Consider designing and implementing programmes to increase awareness and capacity of their members to play a greater role in enhancing disability inclusion and participation in broader climate action movements and to ensure a just transition.
- ▶ Build connections and alliances with other climate actors and advocates, such as indigenous and tribal peoples, women and youth to enhance inclusivity and accessibility of climate action at different social and geographic locations.⁴⁶

45 The charter is available at <http://www.businessanddisability.org>.

46 OPD recommendations are adapted from: DICARP, IDA and GLAD Network, *Towards COP26: Enhancing Disability Inclusion in Climate Action*, 2021.

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