



Research & Studies

---

## Persons with disabilities and climate change in Nepal: Humanitarian impacts and pathways for inclusive climate action

---

Protection and Risk Reduction Division

2023

RS | FP | 43



## **Authors**

Jennifer M'Vouama, Humanity & Inclusion (HI); Mosharraf Hossain, Team Leader, Global Inclusion Consulting Ltd ; Sukharanjan Sutter, IRG Development Services Limited; Mahesh Ghimire, local consultant, Nepal

## **HI Contributors**

Aude Brus, Research Specialist; Ruby Holmes, Inclusive Governance Specialist;  
Sarah Bacha, Project Officer; Annie Hans, Regional DRR and Climate Change Adaptation Specialist.

## **Acknowledgments**

The authors thank all those in HI and its partners for their assistance in supplying information and guidance for this assignment. This report would not have been possible without their time and participation. The authors wish to acknowledge in particular the experts and key informants from the disability movement in Nepal and from a wide range of CSOs, Nepal government representatives, humanitarian agencies, and bilateral and multilateral organisations working in Nepal, whom we interviewed during the study. We also recognise the inputs of hundreds of individuals with disabilities from a wide range of communities across Nepal who participated in a national survey. Finally, we express our sincere thanks to colleagues at Human Rights Watch, for their guidance and support.

## **With the support of the Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs of the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs**

The findings and views expressed in the report are those of the authors, based on their understanding of available documentation and interviews conducted during the assignment.

## **A Humanity & Inclusion publication**

Protection and Risk Reduction Technical Division, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Unit

## **Editing & Layout**

Jennifer M'Vouama, with support from Sarah Bacha & Stéphanie Massoni

## **Cover Photo**

© IRD Social Services Limited, 2022: A survey respondent and a research enumerator in Kanchanpur District, Sudurpashim Province

## **Rights and Permissions**



This work is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International license (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). Under the Creative Commons-Non-commercial-No Derivatives license, you are free to copy, distribute, and transmit this work, for non-commercial purposes only, under the following conditions: **Attribution**-Please cite the work as follows: Jennifer M'Vouama, Mosharraf Hossain, Sukharanjan Sutter, Mahesh Ghimire, *Persons with disabilities and climate change in Nepal: humanitarian impacts and pathways for inclusive climate action*, Lyon: Humanity & Inclusion, 2023. License: Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). **Noncommercial**-You may not use this work for commercial purposes. **No Derivative Works**-You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

## List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AR6	Sixth Assessment Report of IPCC
CAPI	Computer-Aided personal interviewing
CCA	Climate change Adaption
CCMD	Climate Change Management Division
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRPD	Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DICA	Disability Inclusive Climate Action
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EWS	Early Warning System
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEDSI	Gender Equality Disability Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan of Action
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MPH	Mental Health Professional
NAPA	National Adaptation Plan of Action
NCCSP	Nepal Climate Change Support Programme
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDRRMA	National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority
NFDN	National Federation of Disabled Nepal
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NIDWAN	National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OPDs	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
PSEAH	Protection of beneficiaries from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SSA	Social Security Allowance
UNDRR	United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VDC	Village Development Committees
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

# Content

List of Acronyms.....	3
Executive summary .....	5
Part 1 – Introduction .....	10
Part 2 – Context.....	12
1. A highly vulnerable country to the effects of climate change.....	12
2. Climate change governance and policy frameworks in Nepal .....	14
3. Disability in Nepal: An overview .....	16
4. Intersectional considerations .....	18
Part 3 – Methodology .....	19
1. Study design and research team .....	19
2. Localisation of the study .....	19
3. Persons interviewed in this research.....	20
4. Data collection tools and modalities .....	22
5. Treatment and analysis .....	23
6. Limitations .....	24
Part 4 – Findings and discussions .....	25
1. Awareness and perceptions of climate change by persons with disabilities .....	25
2. Challenges faced in situations of climate-induced disasters .....	28
3. Underlying levels of poverty compounded by Climate change .....	33
4. Persons with disability and their representative organizations have yet to fully engage in climate action, but they aspire to do so .....	40
Part 5 – Recommendations.....	45
1. General inclusion principles for all stakeholders.....	45
2. To institutional stakeholders.....	46
3. To humanitarian and development donors .....	47
4. To Local NGOs and iNGOs implementing climate actions .....	48
5. To organisations of Persons with Disabilities .....	48
Part 6 – Conclusion.....	49
Appendices .....	51
References .....	51
List of organisations Interviewed .....	53
List of Organisations and Groups who participated in Focus Group Discussions.....	53

## Executive summary

### Rationale and context

Climate change is affecting every region on Earth and already causing irreversible impacts. While it is a global phenomenon, its negative impacts are felt more intensely by poorer countries and poor communities heavily reliant on natural resources and lacking coping and adaptive capacities to deal with a changing climate. Within those poor communities and countries, persons with disabilities are often amongst the most marginalized people. They experience attitudinal, physical and communication barriers that undermine their access to services and opportunities supporting their well-being and resilience. For this reason, they tend to be disproportionately vulnerable to climate impacts, including more frequent and intense disasters, as those exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. Yet, while it is acknowledged that climate change will exacerbate inequity should we fail to ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making processes in climate governance, disability inclusion in climate action largely remains marginally addressed. Persons with disabilities have been historically left out of climate responses at various levels, from local and national country plans to global negotiations occurring at the UN Conferences of the Parties<sup>1</sup> (COP). Nepal is experiencing an increasing number of climate-related disasters, with a global study ranking it as the fourth worst hit country in the world by weather-related loss events in 2017<sup>2</sup>. Urban floods, landslides, extreme heat, storms, drought, and wildfires are very common climate disasters affecting communities across the country, especially rural populations and their natural resource-dependent livelihoods. Nepal's vulnerability to climate change lies in its varied topography marked by steep terrain and remoteness, its diverse geo-climatic system and social vulnerability, exacerbated by challenges to deliver effective and comprehensive disaster risk reduction and management strategies. To address this serious threat to economic development and prosperity, Nepal has put in place a rich overarching climate change policy framework early on, encompassing dedicated policies and plans, as well as sectoral planning processes integrating climate resilience. Nepal has also established various leadership, coordination, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms to guide climate change policymaking, articulate implementation across the government's three-tier federal structure, and ensure dialogue with key stakeholders including civil society actors.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Status Report on Disability Inclusion in National Climate Commitments and Policies](#), June 2022, McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, Disability-Inclusive Climate Action Research Program

<sup>2</sup> BRIEFING PAPER, [GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX 2019](#), David Eckstein, Marie-Lena Hutfils and Maik Winges, Germanwatch, December 2018

**Endorsed in 2011, Nepal's Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA) is a particularly praised initiative, promoting a bottom-up, inclusive, and flexible approach** for integrating climate adaptation and resilience aspects into local planning. This pioneering, community driven process, places the adaptation needs and opportunities of most vulnerable and highly vulnerable groups at the heart of the approach. Gender considerations factoring intersecting factors of marginalization such as age and ethnicity have been given priority in these processes, to address women's increasing economic insecurity and workload due to climate change. But **inclusion of women with disabilities, or persons with disabilities in general in local adaptation planning has not been strongly evidenced to date.**

According to Nepal Census 2022, 2.2% of the Nepali Population have some form of disability, mainly a physical disability. However, other sources estimate this figure to be much higher. Nepal ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008 and passed the Disability Rights Act in 2017, establishing constitutional directives to support persons with disabilities and making it illegal to discriminate based on disability. Yet, **perception of persons with disability in Nepal remains generally negative**, due to persistent and deep-rooted Hindu religious beliefs associating disability with sinning in a previous life. Women and girls with disability face greater marginalization and discrimination and tend to be hidden away by families. Nepal's caste system also plays a role in shaping the vulnerability of persons with disabilities. Thus, **widespread stigma compounded by the intersectionality of certain factors, combined with structural inaccessibility, create significant barriers to have equal access to resources and participate in decision-making**. This tends to translate into poor socio-economic status, poor health outcomes, and no or low education levels, especially among women and girls. Persons with disabilities in Nepal can register under social welfare to access **several disability-targeted benefit packages, including a Disability Grant**. However, the process tends to be paved with barriers, leading to **high exclusion rates**.

**It is in this context that HI sought to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities for persons with disabilities in the face of climate change in Nepal.** This report is intended to inform how persons with disabilities understand and perceive climate change, what is their experience of dealing with climate extremes, what is the impact on their health, livelihoods and support system, and their actual level of inclusion in climate adaptation planning. To capture those perspectives, HI surveyed 388 persons with disabilities across Nepal's 7 provinces, consulted 20 key informants from the disability movement, government institutions, and the aid sector, and conducted 8 targeted focus group discussions to hear from women, youth, and persons representing diverse disability types. This report is a contribution to the growing evidence base documenting the disproportionate impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities and calling for disability-inclusive climate action at all levels of governance. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the study's key findings as well as its main recommendations.

## **Key findings and messages**

---

While perceived as a complex issue and not understanding its scientific concept, survey respondents report being increasingly aware of climate change through daily observations and directly experiencing the major disruptions it causes. It can generate additional stress and anxiety, especially regarding their health and livelihoods.

---

Most respondents feel that there is an information gap regarding climate change, that could be bridged using easy-to-understand IEC materials (Information, Education, and Communication) in various forms, drawing from COVID 19 good practice, and targeted to end-users. Bridging the climate information gap can support informed action and may help determine adaptation options and behaviours at the individual and household level.

---

**Persons with disabilities are a uniquely vulnerable population to climate-induced disasters, which are particularly life threatening for them.** This is due to lack of access to timely and inclusive early warning information hampering their capacity to adopt protective measures (85% of respondents report not being aware of an early warning system in their community), as well as inability and/or reluctance to evacuate to shelters due to logistical and transportation constraints, as well as safety concerns (especially for women).

---

**As climate-induced disasters are on the rise, reinforced efforts engaging persons with disabilities are critical to develop multi-channel early warning systems that will flow alert information in a way that is inclusive of people's diverse needs.** Examples of local good practice exist and should be scaled-up. Similarly, disability-inclusive preparedness planning is required to identify safe and fully accessible evacuation modalities and shelters.

---

**Climate shocks and stresses are severely threatening persons with disabilities' right to health, as they exacerbate their already higher health-care needs.** Respondents report that in situations of climate-induced disasters such as extreme flooding, risks of losing essential medical equipment and of being cut from the caregiver support necessary for their well-being are high. Persisting inclusion gaps within health and humanitarian systems translate into barriers to access emergency healthcare support meeting specific needs, including mental health and psychosocial support. Heatwaves are of particular concern for persons with chronic illnesses, elders, and persons with psychosocial disabilities.

---

High unemployment rates, threatened rural livelihoods, decreasing intergenerational support and care due to migration, and difficulties to navigate and access social protection services, make it very difficult for persons with disabilities to build economic resilience. Geographical, social, and economic isolation is particularly felt in the hilly areas.

---

**Inclusive social protection systems can play a key role in improving economic conditions and climate resilience.** Many eligible persons with disabilities are not accessing the government's Social Security Allowance. Continued efforts to promote and expand the coverage and adequacy of disability-targeted social protection are critically needed. **Similarly, tackling the barriers and gaps preventing effective scalability of disability-inclusive Shock Responsive Social Protection can play an important role** in mitigating the worst impacts of climate disasters on persons with disabilities. Addressing the lack of coordination between the different government entities involved is a critical step.

---

The research has shown **clear gaps and omissions in terms of inclusion of persons with disabilities in local climate governance**, with a vast majority reporting never having participated in climate discussions or climate decision-making processes in their community. Anecdotal efforts to strengthen disability inclusion in these processes were shared, however they were experienced as tokenism. A limited number of disability activists and OPDs are able to get involved in climate policymaking and planning. While there is willingness to engage more strongly, a majority feels the issue is too large and overwhelming for them to grasp, points to a lack of knowledge transfer to build their capacity and confidence on the subject, and an overall lack of opportunities offered from public structures to participate meaningfully, all resulting in low prioritization compared to human rights topics such as health and education.

---

## Recommendations for stakeholders

### To institutional stakeholders:

- Ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations across the climate change policymaking and planning cycle from the federal to the local level, by fostering a supportive and enabling environment that allows persons with disabilities to become involved and show initiative. This means ensuring the accessibility of all climate change-related IEC materials and venues where climate governance happens, making proactive efforts to work with OPDs, and challenging attitudes and mistaken assumptions about disability within government.
- Keep investing in strengthening inclusive approaches into high impact sectors that offer greater potential for building climate-resilient and inclusive societies.

### To the donor community:

- Ensure mainstream climate funding addresses disability inclusion, by promoting holistic, equitable and locally led approaches that generate benefits for all vulnerable groups.
- Ensure core funding for disability inclusion addresses impacts of climate change.

- Support actions that strengthen inter-governmental coordination processes for climate and promote decentralization of climate finance, so it reaches the most vulnerable.

**To NGOs engaged in climate action programming:**

- Proactively seek to connect with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations throughout the project cycle to inform programming.
- Ensure project activities are accessible and disability-inclusive, such as climate vulnerability and capacity analyses at community level.
- Implement capacity-building activities on climate change and climate response that include persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.
- Disaggregate beneficiary data (disability, gender, and age).
- Raise inclusion awareness among staff to transform practices and operations.

**To Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs):**

- Consider embedding work on climate change in strategic priorities and action plans, following the “nothing about us without us” principle.
- Explore strategic partnership opportunities with climate action and climate justice groups to foster cross-learning: bringing disability inclusion inputs to their initiatives while strengthening internal capacity about climate change and advocacy tactics.
- Consider joining climate change networks managed by civil society organizations.
- Raise awareness about climate change among OPD members.
- Engage in evidence-based advocacy initiatives, building on strengthened internal coordination among OPDs and exploring joint campaigning to maximize impacts.
- Provide capacity-building and training activities on disability inclusive climate action for climate change practitioners and policymakers at all levels.

## Part 1 – Introduction

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>3</sup> AR6 synthesis report was completed in March 2023, summarizing the unequivocal findings of three previous Working Groups Assessment Reports. It provides the world with a much-needed reality check: climate change is "widespread, rapid, and intensifying (...) affecting every region on Earth in multiple ways ", and already causing irreversible impacts. What's more, climate change will exacerbate inequity should we fail to ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making processes in our climate responses, encompassing both mitigation and adaptation measures. Climate-related extremes and disasters such as heavy rainfall, tropical cyclones and floods are growing and becoming more destructive, wreaking havoc on communities, their livelihoods and their well-being. Climate-driven events occurring gradually, such as desertification, loss of biodiversity, land and forest degradation, and rising sea level also produce unique cumulative effects, ultimately greatly impacting social and economic development, public health and security.

While climate change is a global phenomenon, its negative impacts are felt more intensely by poorer countries and poor communities heavily reliant on natural resources. They also lack capacity to cope with, recover from, and adapt to climate-related extremes. Within those poor communities and countries, persons with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change impacts, as those exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. Persons with disabilities make up around 15% of the world's population (WHO). Four in five live in lower- and middle-income countries<sup>4</sup> where the obstacles and barriers persons with disabilities generally face are worsened. Indeed, on average, persons with disabilities as a group are more likely to have less education, poorer health outcomes, higher unemployment, and poverty rates, and simply less opportunities to participate in life, all due to stigma, exclusion and inaccessible environments. These societal inequalities prevent the development of assets, resources, and social capital for enhancing their resilience against the adverse effects of climate change. When experienced in a developing country highly vulnerable to climate change, this set of challenges is exacerbated and leaves millions of persons with disabilities disproportionately at risk and deprived of opportunities to build their resilience and contribute to climate change response. In addition, vulnerability to climate change is heightened when individuals experience intersecting forms of multiple discrimination that arise for instance from disability, gender, and age.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC provides regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

<sup>4</sup> Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, according to the UN Development Programme (United Nations [Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities](#))

Yet, persons with disabilities have been historically left out of climate action and climate governance at various levels, including climate country plans, policies and negotiations occurring annually at the UN Conferences of the Parties<sup>5</sup>. A growing body of evidence produced by organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and their allies is bringing to the fore how disability inclusion remains an afterthought in the climate space, despite persons with disabilities being so affected by the climate crisis.

---



**"Documenting the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities is one of my priorities. (...) We need to show the world how persons with disabilities pay the highest price for climate-irresponsible policies. Furthermore, persons with disabilities typically have little opportunity to influence these policies. This needs to be changed immediately. (...) No climate action would be considered legitimate and efficient without meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations."** - Gerard Quinn, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.

---

This report is an effort to contribute to the evidence base highlighting the disproportionate effects of climate change on persons with disabilities, through an in-depth look at the situation in Nepal. Like others in the region and globally, the country is already facing devastating climate change impacts threatening its long-term development. Millions of Nepalese are estimated to be at risk from the impacts of climate change, with multiple climate disasters occurring in a single year. Indeed, Nepal has witnessed an increase in landslides, droughts, and flooding. Nepal has also made notable efforts regarding adaptation initiatives inclusive of local communities, which makes it an interesting context.

Using a mixed-method approach including a literature review, and first-hand quantitative and qualitative data collected locally in the last quarter of 2022, the report looks at the lived experience of climate change from the perspective of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, in a wider context of systemic inequities. In doing so, the report aims to foster disability-inclusive climate plans, programmes, and policies locally, through a set of recommendations for practitioners and policymakers including state and non-state actors such as key government ministries, INGOs, civil society actors, and ODA donors. It highlights implications across both the development and humanitarian agendas, with a thematic focus on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM), Health, Livelihoods, and Inclusive Governance.

---

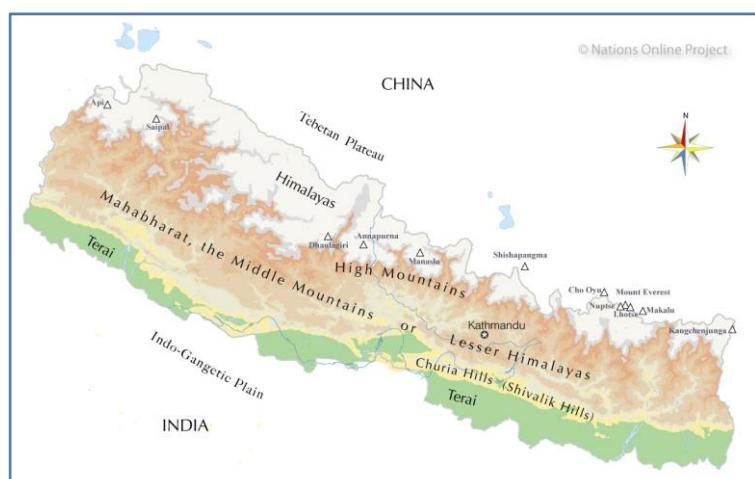
<sup>5</sup> [Status Report on Disability Inclusion in National Climate Commitments and Policies](#), June 2022, McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, Disability-Inclusive Climate Action Research Program

## Part 2 – Context

### 1. A highly vulnerable country to the effects of climate change

Nepal is a landlocked country lying along the southern slopes of the Himalayan Mountain ranges, located between India to the east, south, and west and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China to the north. In the last few decades, the country has experienced an increasing number of climate-related disasters due to global warming, despite having a very minimal contribution to carbon emissions (only 0.027% to global greenhouse emissions, although consumption of fossil fuels is on the rise to sustain the country's growth, leading to an expected increase in emissions). An increase in soil erosion, landslides, flash floods, and droughts has been reported in recent years across the country, with heightened intensity and impact on the lives and livelihoods of the Nepalese. Nepal has become one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change, with a global study ranking it as the fourth worst hit country in the world by weather-related loss events in 2017<sup>6</sup>. Projections indicate that the situation is expected to worsen. By 2050, temperatures are projected to increase by 1.6 to 2.2 degrees, rainfall by 3.9 to 5.1% and extreme rainfall events by 35 to 52%<sup>7</sup>. Nepal's vulnerability to climate change lies in its varied topography marked by steep terrain and remoteness, its diverse geo-climatic system and social vulnerability, exacerbated by challenges to deliver effective and comprehensive disaster risk reduction and management strategies. This makes the country particularly susceptible to a variety of climate-induced disasters, occurring across all three main geographical regions of Nepal, each with a distinct climate:

- The Himalaya region, containing snow and home to several high mountain ranges, including Mount Everest.
- The Hilly region, consisting of mountainous terrain without snow and inhabited by various indigenous ethnic groups.
- The Terai region, a lowland region with some hill ranges.



<sup>6</sup> BRIEFING PAPER, [GLOBAL CLIMATE RISK INDEX 2019](#), David Eckstein, Marie-Lena Hutfils and Maik Winges, Germanwatch, December 2018

<sup>7</sup> USAID, [Climate Risk Profile Nepal](#), 2017

Urban floods, landslides, extreme heat, storms, drought, and wildfires are very common climate disasters affecting different parts of the county and communities.<sup>8</sup> In 2019, UNDRR showed that over 80 per cent of Nepal's 30 million inhabitants is exposed to at least one of these hazards, while the country is ranked among the world's 30 poorest nations (World Population Review 2021). Climate change thus poses a serious threat to economic development and prosperity. Floods and landslides resulting from a combination of heavy rainfall, melting glaciers, steep mountains, and unstable soils are of particular concern, seriously affecting Nepal's predominantly rural population and their natural resource-dependent livelihoods. Indeed, while employment in agriculture tends to decrease (% of total employment), Nepalese still depend mostly on small-scale subsistence agriculture which employs 62% of the country's workforce<sup>9</sup>. With current projections and without ambitious action, Nepalese households are most likely to experience growing food and water insecurity while having a lower income, and lesser access to healthcare.

The Melamchi disaster of June 2021 provided a dramatic illustration of flood damage and cascading hazards in the Himalayan Mountains of central Nepal, resulting from severe and continuous precipitation in the upstream part of the Melamchi river. The flood was one of the most damaging hazards in recent years. It triggered numerous landslides along the river corridors, killing 25 people, destroying hundreds of houses and local livelihoods, displacing an estimated 600 people<sup>10</sup>, and causing disastrous infrastructure damage including on the Melamchi Water Supply Project, designed to address chronic water shortage within the Kathmandu Valley by delivering 170,000,000 liters of water per day. The Melamchi flood disaster exposed Nepal's difficulties to provide disaster relief in a timely manner and highlighted challenges for disaster and climate risks governance in the face of worsening climate change impacts.



---

**"If ever there was a time and place that demonstrated the need to reimagine climate resilience, it was 2021 in Nepal. (...) Climate-related landslides, floods, debris flows and erosion are nothing new in South Asia, but what happened in Nepal last year was unprecedented. "(World Bank Group, March 2022)**

---

<sup>8</sup> [Climate Change Knowledge Portal](#)

<sup>9</sup> [World Bank Data](#), 2021

<sup>10</sup> [Drone Based Rapid Assessment of Melamchi Flood 2021](#), ArcGIS StoryMaps. 2021-07-05.

## 2. Climate change governance and policy frameworks in Nepal

Nepal is party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1994 and currently sits within the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Coordination Group within UNFCCC. The Government of Nepal (GoN) has ratified the Paris Agreement adopted at COP 21 and submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in 2016, enhanced in 2020, with a commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045.

Prior to this, GoN was already actively engaged in climate change management efforts, particularly in adaptation planning. Nepal developed its National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in 2010, expanded since then, outlining its national adaptation priorities to address climate change impacts in the country. In 2011, GoN then adopted its National Climate Change Policy (updated in 2020) and endorsed its pioneering Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA) to support adaptation planning at the local level. LAPA was born to support integration of national adaptation priorities into local development planning, linking NAP to sectoral programmes and plans of then Village Development Committees (VDCs), municipalities and district development committees (DDCs). This approach is participatory, community-driven and bottom-up in nature, relying on the active engagement of local stakeholders and community members including women, youth, and marginalized groups, across seven key stages to define and implement local adaptation priorities (see chart below).

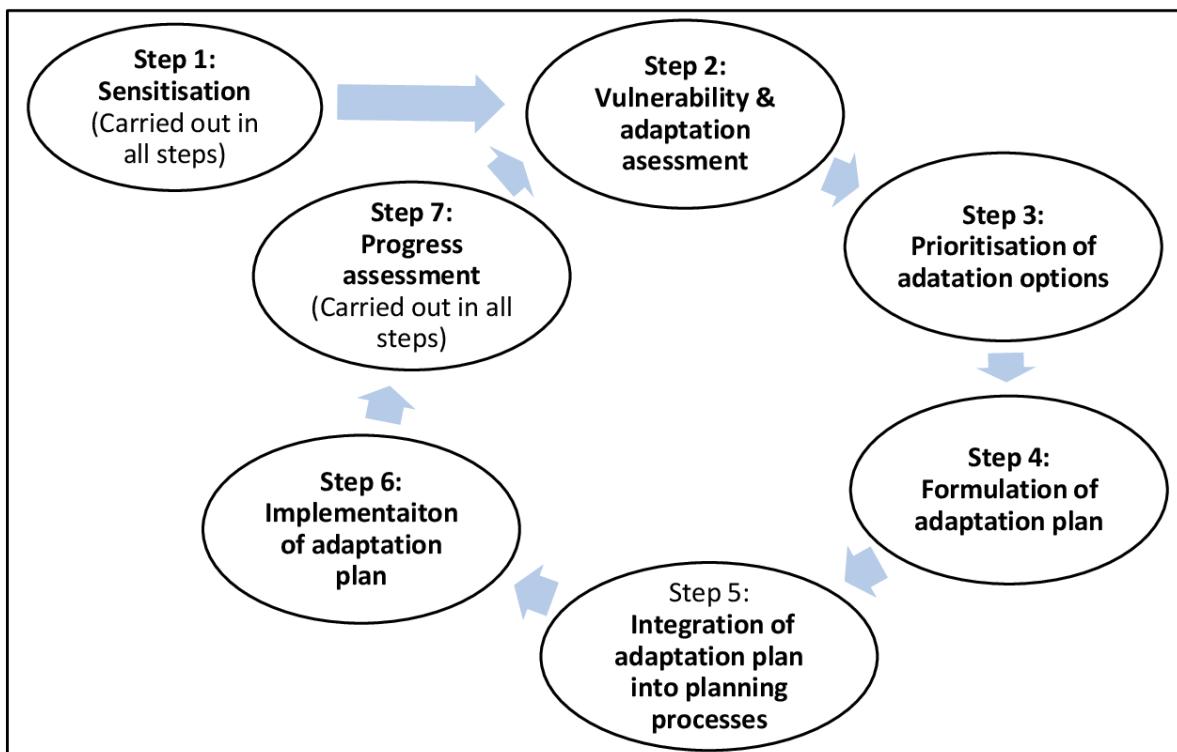


Figure 5.2 Seven steps of LAPA preparation process (Source: (GON, 2011))

The LAPA process has been supported by many international agencies, piloted in 14 districts, upgraded over time, and has served as an inspiration in other contexts. It has gained even more prominence under Nepal's constitution adopted in 2015, establishing a federal system with a three-layered governance model (753 Local Governments- or municipalities, seven Province Governments, one Federal Government), and placing local governments at the center of climate resilience and development efforts. The LAPA approach has been revised considering the new federal governance system and is now embedded into the municipalities' planning and budgeting processes. Nepal's revised Climate Change Policy also includes provisions regarding LAPAs, with a commitment to use at least 80% of the total climate finance obtained through international mechanisms for implementation of local plans.

In addition to these dedicated policies and plans, climate resilience has also been integrated into sectoral planning processes including but not limited to disaster risk reduction and management, agriculture, energy, and forest sector plans. The Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act endorsed by GoN in 2019 is a comprehensive and major legal instrument guiding the overall disaster management cycle in the country across all three tiers of government and provides a framework to prepare for and respond to climate-induced disasters, among others. Moreover, GoN committed to the Sustainable Development Goals early on, affirming their willingness to build a sustainable and climate resilient Nepal.

Finally, Nepal has established various leadership, coordination and stakeholder engagement institutions and mechanisms to guide climate change policymaking and programmes, ensure dialogue and consultations, and articulate climate change responses and implementation across government levels. The Climate Change Management Division in the Ministry of Forest and Environment is the central agency responsible for overall coordination of climate change efforts, from policy formulation to implementation and monitoring, in collaboration with other government entities and non-government organizations. The Multi-Stakeholder Climate Change Initiatives Coordination Committee (MCCICC), established through the NAPA process, serves as a national platform to engage an array of stakeholders on climate change, including civil society actors.

Nepal has a rich overarching climate change policy framework, yet the country struggles to ensure effective implementation of those policies and reduce the impact of climate disasters. A lack of coordination among agencies, confusion over which policies or planning guidelines to follow<sup>11</sup> (i.e., LAPA versus local disaster management plans), and general challenges with decentralization including in terms of climate finance allocations tend to undermine efforts, at the detriment of local communities and marginalized groups bearing the brunt of climate impacts.

---

<sup>7</sup> [Analysis: How decentralisation in Nepal is undermining climate action](#), Kushal Pokharel, Source: The Third Pole (published on 8 August 2022,)

### 3. Disability in Nepal: An overview

According to Nepal Census 2022, 2.2% of the Nepali Population have some form of disability, with a higher incidence among men<sup>12</sup>. However, other sources estimate this figure to be higher, which would be consistent with global estimates suggesting that over 15% of the world population lives with some kind of disability (WHO, 2011). Still according to the 2022 census, the main three types of disability are Physical (37.2%), Visual (22.5%) and Hearing (15.9%). It is acknowledged that there are knowledge gaps on disability in Nepal. The census only provides prevalence rates. Additional information for instance on literacy rates or employment rates among this group is not available through this source. Different organisations conduct small-scale studies in a fragmented manner to fill this gap, however they are often not endorsed by official institutions. Without credible and widely accepted data, disability-programming is made challenging.

In promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, Nepal ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, while Nepal's 2015 constitution ensures all citizens shall be equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination in applying general laws on the grounds of disability (Article 18.2). But it is Nepal's enactment of the Disability Rights Act in 2017 (replacing the Disabled Protection and Welfare Act 1982) that provides a comprehensive framework setting out a disability classification, as well as the services, facilities, and opportunities available for persons with disabilities to live with dignity. This Act classifies disability into ten types, also introducing psychosocial disability in the classification for the first time:

1. Physical disability	2. Visual impairment	3. Hearing impairment	4. Hearing-visual impairment	5. Voice and speech impairment
6. Mental or psychosocial disability	7. Intellectual disability	8. Hemophilia	9. Autism-related disabilities	10. Multiple disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Nepal can register under social welfare to access several disability-targeted benefit packages (social assistance, education, healthcare, transportation, and vocational training and employment). To do so, they must first undergo an assessment of their disability under four categories and then be issued a Disability Identification Card. Those assessed with having “severe disability” (difficulty to perform daily activities without the help of others) are eligible for a Disability Grant (or allowance), detailed in Part 4 - section 3.b of this report.

---

<sup>12</sup> [National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal \(NFDN\)](#)



Figure 1. The four categories of disability severity,  
Excerpt of DISABILITY STATISTICS IN NEPAL infographic, July  
2018

The disability ID card is the main route to access disability-specific services. However, it is estimated that the proportion of persons with disabilities having a Disability Identification Card in Nepal is generally low, due to barriers to access and complete the application process. Examples of barriers from a survey are provided in Part 4 - section 3.b of this report. Overtime, the process of disability screening and issuing disability ID cards has been made more straightforward and accessible under the influence of organisations of persons with disabilities, but it remains challenging for many<sup>13</sup>.

Perception of persons with disability in Nepal is generally negative. They are not considered as relevant contributors to public life and agents of positive change. The main factor that influences the country's perception of disability comes from Hindu religious beliefs and associated cultural practices, which believe that disability is the result of sinning in a previous life<sup>14</sup>. Hinduism is the religion that most of the country's population adhere to. Because of Hindu beliefs, persons with disabilities especially women and girls tend to be made "invisible", often hidden away by families. Combined with other barriers, this stigma makes receiving health services, education, and work opportunities challenging. Thus, despite national policies and legislation to secure disability rights, persons with disability tend to be the poorest in their community, with no or low education levels, and fragile income. Local governments are tasked with the implementation of disability policies and laws, including social welfare. However local institutions are not spared from prejudice which can create barriers to access services. While it is supposed to place marginalized groups at the center, the LAPA framework does not include specific provisions about disability inclusion either.

---

<sup>13</sup> [An innovative model for disability screening and issuing disability ID cards](#), European Union, Save the Children, UNICEF, UK Aid, January 2023

<sup>14</sup> Mukti Prakash Thapaliya, [A report on disability in Nepal, University of Canterbury](#), College of Education, Health and Human Development Christchurch, New Zealand, Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF), 2016

## 4. Intersectional considerations

Other intersectional factors play a role in the stigma persons with disability can experience in the Nepalese society. Nepal is known as a traditional rural society with a hierarchical organization based on a caste system, influenced by Hinduism. The population is traditionally divided into four broad social classes: Brahmin (the superior caste), Kshatriya (the political elite), Vaishya (merchants, craftsmen and peasants) and Shudra (servants of the other three castes). Outside of the caste system and below the 4 castes are the Dalits or Untouchable. They represent about 20% of the total population (depending on the sources) and are the poorest of the society. They have no representation in the higher places of power and are left out of political considerations. While Nepal abolished the caste system in 1963, criminalizes caste-based discrimination, and is making efforts to work on inclusiveness in the society, caste membership retains a significant influence in Nepali society. Entrenched for centuries, the caste system still creates social division, and when combined with disability, it significantly compounds vulnerability and inequality. Similarly, Nepal is considered a patriarchal society where women often face barriers to social, economic and political inclusion, with less opportunities in many areas for instance access to education. Major issues women face in Nepal include Gender Based Violence, Child marriage, and trafficking. 1 out of 4 women is victim or have been victim of physical, sexual or emotional violence and abuse<sup>15</sup>. When gender and disability intersect, research tends to indicate that the main discriminatory factor is the disability itself<sup>16</sup>. Yet, gender exacerbates marginalization for women with disabilities in Nepal, even more so if they belong to a marginalized caste.



<sup>15</sup> [UN Women Asia and the Pacific](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Women with disabilities in Nepal: Photovoice study on the barriers and enablers to social, economic and political inclusion](#), Dr. Christine Bigler, Dr. Sony KC and Yamila Pita, Interdisciplinary Centre on Gender Studies (ICFG) at the University of Bern. 2022

## Part 3 – Methodology

### 1. Study design and research team

The study design has been guided by the following research questions:

- What are the adverse impacts of climate change that affect the human rights of persons with disabilities in Nepal?
- What are the barriers, risks and experiences of exclusion faced by persons with disabilities if any when accessing services that help build climate resilience?
- What are valuable examples of proactive efforts that address those barriers?
- What is the level of participation, inclusion, and leadership of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in climate-related public affairs in Nepal?
- What actionable recommendations can be provided to policymakers and practitioners for improving climate policies, plans and initiatives toward more disability inclusion?

The study adopted a mixed-method approach with quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and tools to best address the research questions and ensure results as close as possible to the reality. A desk-review of relevant documentation was also carried out as preliminary research and throughout the work.

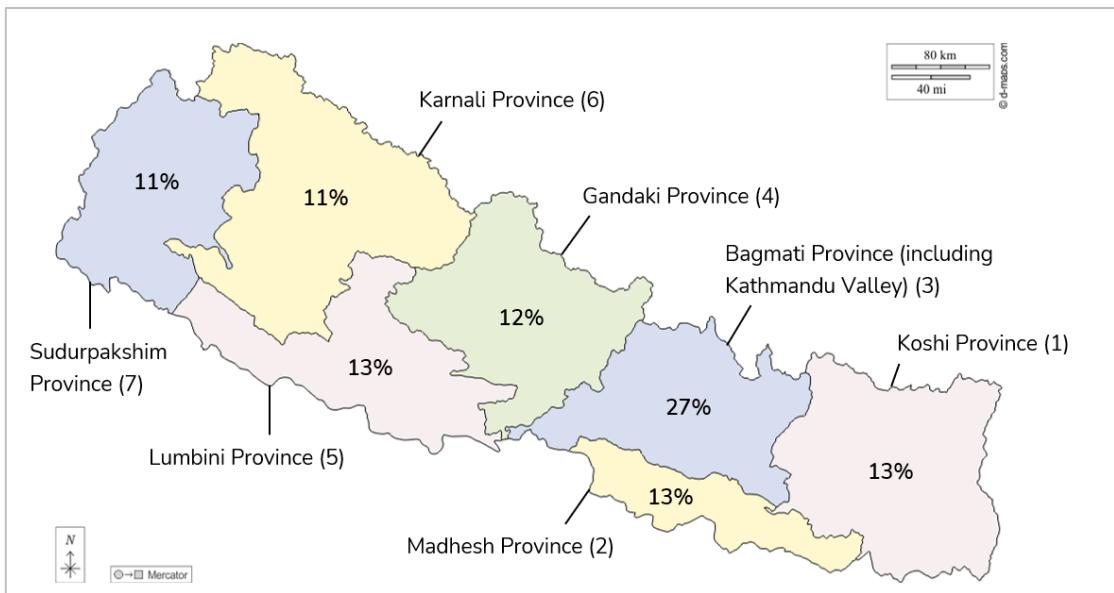
Primary and secondary data were collected using the following methods:

- Desk-based review of primary and secondary sources of literature
- Individual Surveys of persons with disabilities for Primary Data Collection
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
- Key Informant Interviews (KII)

The research team composition differed depending on the activities and methods. A Team Leader from Global Inclusion Consulting ensured overall coordination and coherence across the various data collection activities, carried out desk-based review of primary and secondary sources of literature, and led on Key Informant Interviews. A team from IRG Development Services Limited (IRGDSL), an independent and multidisciplinary consulting firm headquartered in Bangladesh, led on the preparation and implementation of individual surveys of persons with disabilities and Focus Group Discussions.

### 2. Localisation of the study

Field research encompassing the activities described above was implemented in 24 districts across the 7 provinces of Nepal, including in the Kathmandu Valley, to ensure a diverse representation in terms of living environments. Nepal can be broadly divided into three main agro-ecological zones (the Mountains, the Hills, and Terai - or plains), and the country-wide approach adopted for the study enabled spanning all three zones. The map below shows the distribution of individual survey respondents across the 7 provinces.



### 3. Persons interviewed in this research

#### a. Sampling procedures

Given the study focused on a particular segment of the population, purposive sampling was used to identify individual-level survey and focus group discussions participants.

Enumerators approached Districts' Organisations of Persons with Disability (OPDs) to establish networks of trust within the communities and identify participants with disabilities through these connections. From there the research deployed the snowball sampling technique through the help of OPDs and survey participants in the community.

#### b. Quantitative individual survey

This study primarily aimed to hear the perspective of a wide range of persons with disabilities living in Nepal about climate change impacts and local responses. Applying Cochran's sample size formula, considered appropriate in situations with large populations, a sample size of 388 individuals with varying disabilities was used as the primary target group. A gender balance was observed, and there was representation from different age groups, civil statuses, education level, caste/ethnicity, and locations. The Washington Group Short Set of questions on functioning was used to collect data on disability status. 59% of respondents have moderate disability, which includes those having a lot of difficulty on one or more domains of functioning (vision, hearing, mobility, cognition, self-care, communication, upper body). 2% of respondents were categorized as having no disability based on their answers, which may be the result of difficulties in understanding questions. They were kept in the sample based on observations from the research team. Half of the respondents have a physical disability. A more detailed description of the study population can be found in the graphs below.

## Gender of respondents

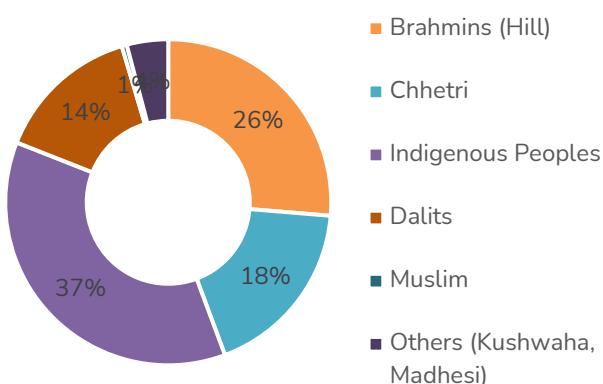
■ Male ■ Female ■ Other



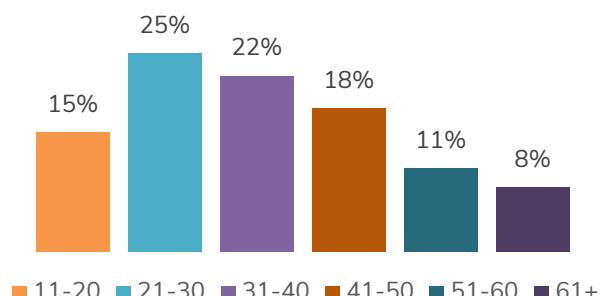
## Distribution of respondents across urban and rural areas



## Caste/ethnicity of respondents

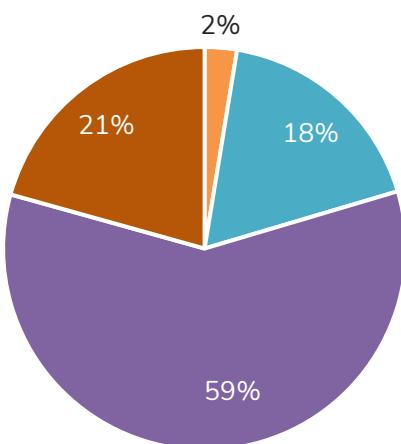


## Age of respondents

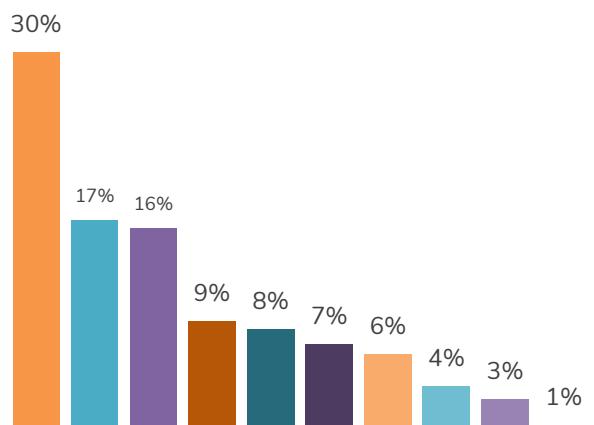


## Disability Severity of respondents using the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning

■ None ■ Milder  
■ Moderate ■ More severe



## Respondents' profession and economic situation



■ Unemployed ■ Student  
■ Employees ■ Small Business  
■ House Wife/Husband ■ Others  
■ Farmer ■ Day Labourer  
■ Retired ■ Craft Worker

### c. FGD participants

As a secondary target group, the research engaged through focus group discussions with community-based groups and civil society organizations representative of specific situations and interests. These included groups of women with disabilities, forest users, the elderly, carers of persons with intellectual and neurodevelopmental disability, youth with disability, young adults living with autism, and disability rights activists. Eight Focus Group Discussions, with a total of 65 participants (8 participants per group on average), were conducted.

### d. KII participants

Finally, 20 key informants were interviewed including leaders of national and district level OPDs, government and international organizations' representatives, humanitarian workers, and aid donors. All key informants were selected for the relevance of their mandate and/or operations with regard to the topic of the study, in order to provide general information and insights into the intersection of climate change and disability in Nepal.

## 4. Data collection tools and modalities

Numerous exchanges took place between the research team and members of the research committee to discuss and validate the research protocol, including the overall methodology, the location of the study, the target population, the sampling approach, data collection tools and methods, field organization, and ethics.

### a. Data collection tools

Three main sets of questionnaires were prepared in English and translated to Nepalese for easy and smooth communication with the various respondents:

- An individual-level questionnaire for face-to-face interviews with 388 persons with disabilities and implemented through the Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) survey methodology, using tablets and mobile phones to record answers as well as GPS data in real time. Topics covered included understanding of climate change, preparedness for climate-related hazards, impacts experienced, and participation in planning.
- A structured discussion guide that helped run eight Focus Group Discussions in the field. All FGDs were transcribed and summarized upon completion.
- Two sets of key informant interview guides in order to conduct semi-structured interviews with 20 individuals, each guide with specific questions depending on the informant's type (disability/civil society movement or government stakeholder). KIIs were conducted in a hybrid manner, online and in the field. All KIIs were transcribed and summarized upon completion.

### b. Data collectors' team and quality check

8 Enumerators (50% of them female) were mobilized to implement the individual-level surveys and Focus Group Discussions. All enumerators followed training sessions prior to field work, and all instruments and questionnaires were tested in the field before implementation. A supervisor conducted a visit to monitor field survey activities during implementation. An IT specialist continuously monitored data processing and activity locations, among other Monitoring and Quality Control measures.



*A survey respondent from Kailali District, Sudurpakshim Province (Province No. 7).*

### c. Informed consent and ethical considerations

The research was implemented in accordance with HI's ethical principles and internal policies<sup>17</sup>. Informed consent was obtained by enumerators from participants in their local language prior to them entering the research. Each participant in the study verbalised their consent to participate in a free and informed manner. Specific informed consent measures were undertaken to interview adolescents with disabilities.

For the individual-level survey, all answers to the questionnaires were entered anonymously. Enumerators asked the Washington Group Short Set of six questions on Functioning (WG-SS) to each participant to understand their disability and make the necessary adaptations to interview guides and locations (such as simplifying lines of questioning and ensuring an adequate physical environment). A little over 20% of the primary target audience participants were accompanied by a caregiver (family member, carer, and interpreter). In such cases enumerators explained the objectives of the research and the flow of the interview to the caregiver as well and engaged them in the activity with the consent of the main participant. Finally, the paper-less, digital data collection process enabled social distancing and reducing risks associated with COVID-19 for both respondents and enumerators. Outdoor environments were also prioritized to carry out the interviews.

## 5. Treatment and analysis

Two types of data were collected, quantitative and qualitative. To process and analyse the qualitative data from the FGDs and KIIs, a manual analysis of interview transcriptions was carried out, organized by main sub-themes, to identify commonalities and divergences.

---

<sup>17</sup> [Studies and research at Handicap International: for ethical data management](#). Aude Brus. Lyon, Handicap International, 2015.

Quantitative data from the individual-level questionnaires were processed and descriptive statistics were generated. Specific graphs and data visualizations were created for all relevant information.

## **6. Limitations**

Interpretation bias may have occurred as caregivers of persons with disabilities or family members translated answers on behalf of certain participants. Additionally, some lines of inquiry were shortened and simplified by caregivers or family members helping certain participants with the interview, those with hearing disabilities for example. Moreover, adaptations were made in the process of translating from English to Nepalese, as well as interpretations on the ground to facilitate general understanding of questions. Finally, time constraints prevented the organization of a validation workshop with relevant stakeholders in Nepal to reflect on participants' feedback and experiences, and further analyse and synthesise the wealth of data that was collected.

## Part 4 – Findings and discussions

The following findings emerged from this research and capture the insights that were gathered about disability and climate change in Nepal:

- Key **experiences and perceptions** of persons with disabilities about climate change: this theme encompasses findings about persons with disabilities' broad awareness, understanding and perceptions of climate change in connection with their daily lives.
- **Challenges in situations of climate-related disasters:** this finding summarizes the difficult circumstances and events that persons with different types of disabilities experience in the face of more severe and frequent climate-induced disasters due to inaccessible environments, including a focus on health impacts.
- **Impacts on livelihoods:** this theme describes the implications of climate change on already economically vulnerable households of persons with disabilities.
- **Participation in climate governance:** this theme looks at the extent to which the needs and perspectives of persons with disabilities have been successfully advocated for and taken into account in climate change policymaking. It also describes the aspirations of the disability movement and perspectives.

### 1. Awareness and perceptions of climate change by persons with disabilities

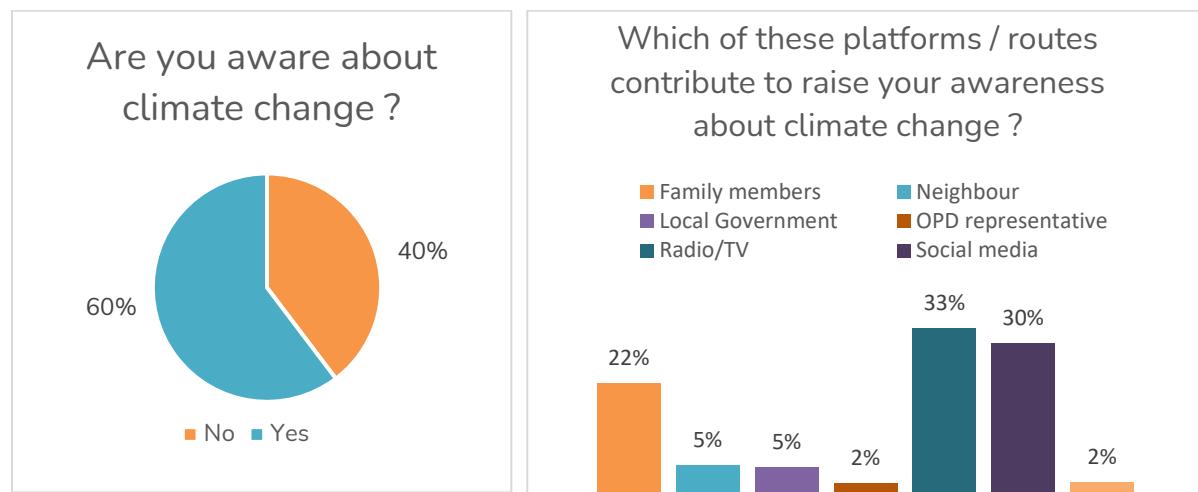
Humanity & Inclusion's research indicates that **general awareness of climate change is moderately high** among survey respondents, with 60% reporting being aware of it. Testimonies show that awareness has significantly increased among the interviewed population in recent years, alongside the frequency of climate change related disasters. While the knowledge and understanding they have about climate change is not rooted in its scientific concept, most persons with disabilities interviewed clearly perceive changes in climate patterns, visibly impacting all regions of the country, causing disruptions to daily activities, livelihoods and access to services, and placing added stress on individuals and communities. Knowledge about climate change is associated to local events and impacts they face, with many Focus Group Discussions' participants sharing their lived experience of annual flooding, landslides, cold and heat waves.



**"I experienced walking difficulties due to the melted Asphalt Road in Kathmandu, because of the extreme heat last summer. My artificial limb got stuck."** - Woman from the Federation of Women with Disability Nepal (FWDN).

A majority of study respondents report observing major disruptions to farming activities, with climate change affecting crop yields, crop health, cropping areas, and water availability. Another concern expressed is the increase in animal invasions to farmlands such as monkeys and porcupines. Most respondents described the struggles of the rural areas, with many farmers abandoning their land and moving to urban centres for economic opportunities. This leaves many persons with disabilities who stay in the villages in a situation of isolation and vulnerability, as migration is often not an option due to mobility challenges. Considering over 60% of respondents said they rely on the support of others for their daily activities, and among them, 98% rely on a family member, loss of livelihoods in the rural areas and consecutive displacement of family members (mostly youth) to urban areas or even abroad is most likely a source of stress, especially for older people. The research also showed strong perceptions that climate change is causing the spread of diseases, existing ones (such as dengue, with reports of increased cases in previously relatively spared areas), but also most probably causing new ones such as COVID 19. This triggers added stress among the study population, especially for individuals with pre-existing health conditions.

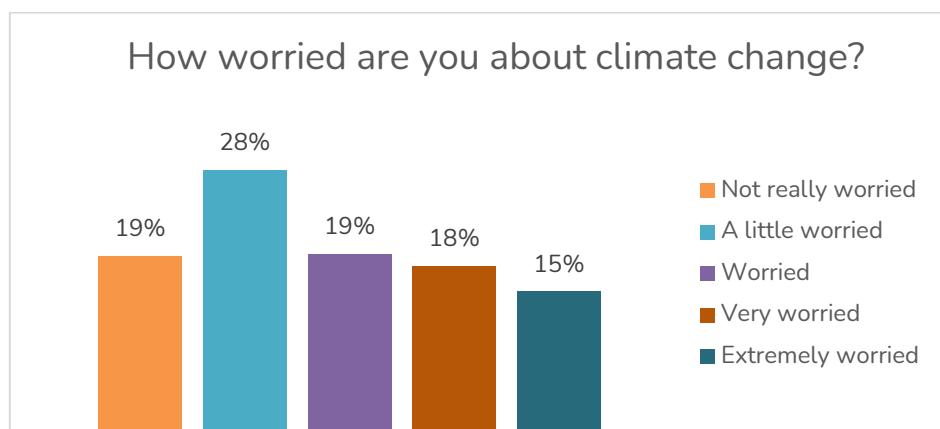
When asked how they hear about climate change beyond their everyday experience and observations, persons with disabilities interviewed report that radio and TV programmes are a primary source of awareness-raising (33%), followed by social media (30%), and engaging in conversations with family members and peers (22%).



There was no evidence of respondents clearly understanding the root causes and implications of climate change on the longer-term, which would be a pre-condition to identify, apply or advocate for effective mitigation and adaptation measures inclusive of all. A sign of this is the relative confusion among the study participants about what constitutes a climate-related disaster, and what doesn't. Because of this, many testimonies and conversations initially focused on spontaneously sharing traumatic experiences and recollections of the 2015 earthquake. When asked about what kind of climate-related

disaster they have experienced, earthquake ranked first, followed by heavy rainfall and floods. The **limited understanding of climate change and its longer-term effects** on ecosystems and communities can be attributed to insufficient access to Information, Education and Communication (IEC) about it. A majority of Focus Group Participants pointed to an **information gap**, and they voiced their interest and willingness to get relevant and up-to-date climate change information services. Some participants expressed that “*the climate change issue is complex*” and “*needs to be simplified*” by leaders and policymakers to increase understanding and awareness among all population groups. There was a commonly shared view and perception that persons with disabilities and older people, and among these groups, women and girls, are more vulnerable to the climate crisis and facing more challenges.

Despite information gaps and lack of in-depth understanding of climate change, the current **level of worry is nonetheless moderately high**, with over 50% of respondents reporting being worried (19%), very worried (18%), and extremely worried (15%) about climate change. Among the other half, those not really worried, or just a little worried, some respondents expressed that climate change is not an easy issue to grasp, and that they have little time to focus on it given “*all the other things on their mind*”.



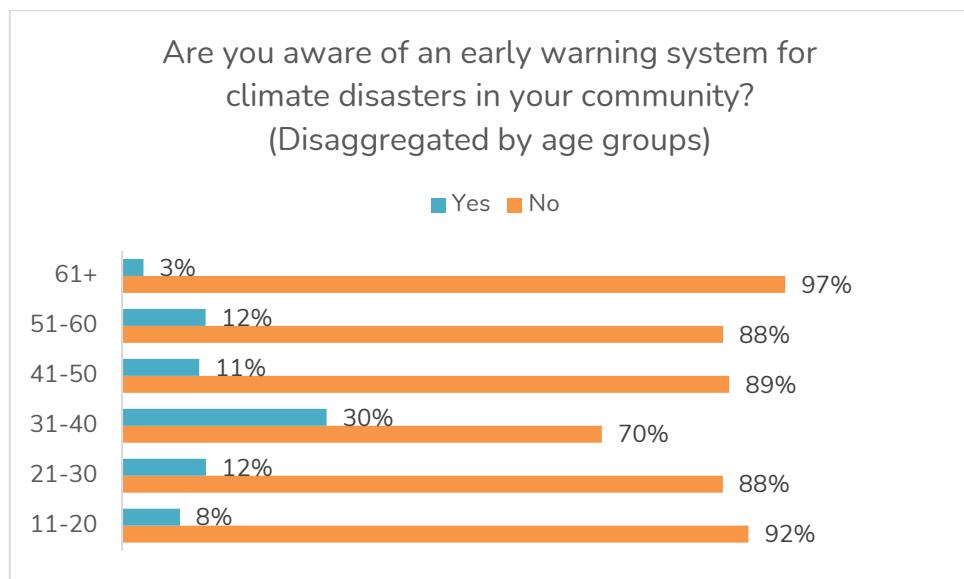
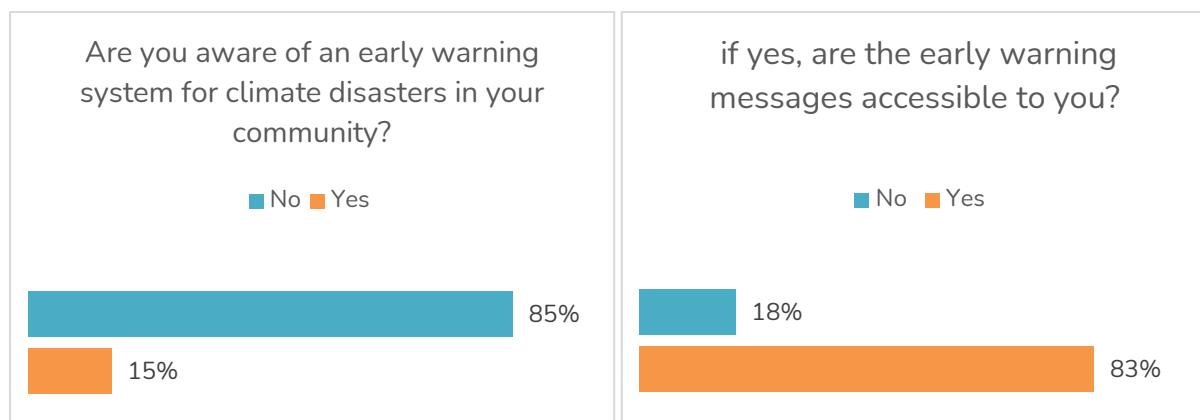
Yet, there is qualitative evidence from focus group discussions that climate change is an additional stress factor, taking a heavy toll on the mental health of persons with disabilities, especially those with psychosocial disabilities or mental health conditions. Some focus group participants, especially those with psycho-social disabilities, reported a feeling of anxiety and additional stress linked to climate shocks and stresses, mainly because of the consequent disruptions to the provision of healthcare services.

## 2. Challenges faced in situations of climate-induced disasters

### a. Accessing easy-to understand warning information

The research showed that in situations of extreme weather events, persons with disabilities face significant challenges and heightened threats to their human rights and dignity, starting with a lack of access to warning information limiting opportunities to take personal protective measures ahead of an extreme weather event.

Indeed, while most respondents seem familiar with weather forecasting in general (65% report being aware of weather forecasting, mainly through TV, the radio and digital platforms), awareness of an early warning system (EWS) in their community for extreme weather events is strikingly low. 85% of respondents report not being aware of such system in their community. An age disaggregation shows that nearly none of the respondents aged 61 and above are aware of an early warning system (EWS) in their community. These results are consistent with the findings from a previous study conducted by HI in Nepal about barriers to access Early Warning Systems, which showed that still 30% of community people are not able to receive Early Warning information, with persons with disabilities tending to be left out of these systems and overrepresented in this group.



Out of the 15% who report being aware of a EWS in their community, a vast majority declares being able to access warnings and emergency information without difficulty, usually getting the information primarily through the radio, TV and social media.

These quantitative findings are also supported by qualitative evidence from focus group discussions highlighting that while some people may have heard of early warning systems, only a small minority ever had personal experience of their use and application in practice on the ground. It was shared that while effective alert systems may exist, they are not disability-friendly enough. Communication is particularly challenging for persons with hearing loss and learning disabilities. The information available has yet to become fully adequate for all in terms of accessibility and appropriateness. What's more, some focus groups participants reported a lack of inclusion in mock drill exercises.

That said, the research encountered a few examples of good practices shared by OPDs engaged in Disaster Risk Reduction projects, effectively drawing on the knowledge and insights of persons with disabilities (see Case study n°1). What's more, some OPD representatives interviewed shared that some improvements have been observed since the COVID 19 pandemic with more easy-to-understand communication and information, using for instance sign language interpreters in informational videos, more accessible formats for internet-based materials, and making audio materials available. There is still a lack of availability of simplified pictorial versions for the materials in general though, a key informant noted. Yet these changes are encouraging, and a scale-up and systematization of such modalities is hoped for.



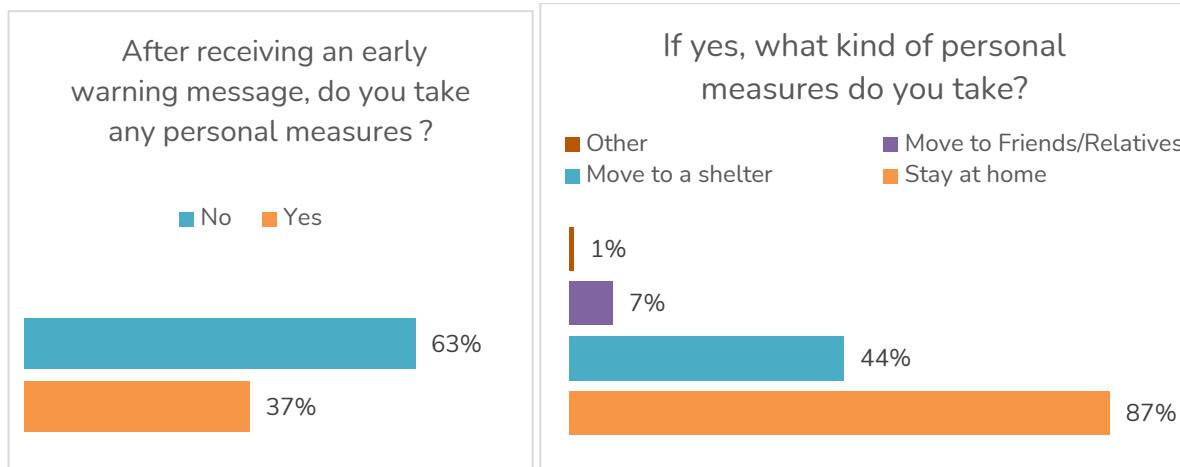
**Case studies:** the Forum for Human Rights and Disability (FHRD) implemented early warning activities as part of a DRR project, where traditional activities were mixed with tailored approaches to reach all community members, such as setting up local task forces inclusive of persons with disabilities to identify disabled community members, providing reasonable accommodations to warning materials, using drums for announcements to persons with hearing loss, combined with loud microphones, ensuring fast delivery of accessible broadcasts, creating visual items, and generally diversifying platforms for information sharing as much as possible. HI also implemented a forecast-based action project where phones were used to deliver warning information using both text and voice messages, as well as traditional routes such as mobilizing village Chokidars (watchmen or village guardians).

---

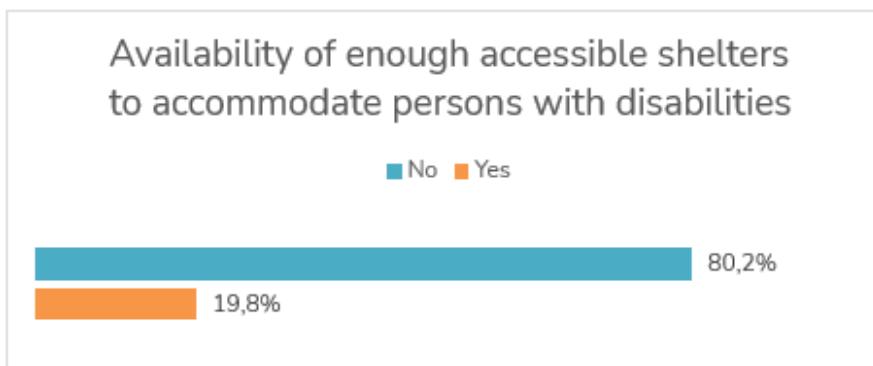
#### b. Access to shelters

Following a warning or when disaster strikes, the research showed that a majority of survey respondents do not take any particular personal measures such as evacuation to a shelter or a relative, rather they prefer to stay at home. This is reinforced by respondents indicating

they do take personal measures, only to cite “staying at home” as their personal measure (87% of respondents). Shelters can play a vital role in protecting people affected by disaster, yet moving to a shelter was mostly cited as a secondary option, by 44% of the respondents.



Schools make up most of the local shelters. A vast majority of respondents (80%) reported an overall lack of fully accessible shelters to accommodate persons with disabilities. Recently constructed infrastructure tends to meet accessibility standards a bit more, with ramps and accessible toilets, demonstrating a stronger consideration of persons with physical disabilities. Yet, the needs exceed the resources currently available. Moreover, some shelters are also at risk of flooding.

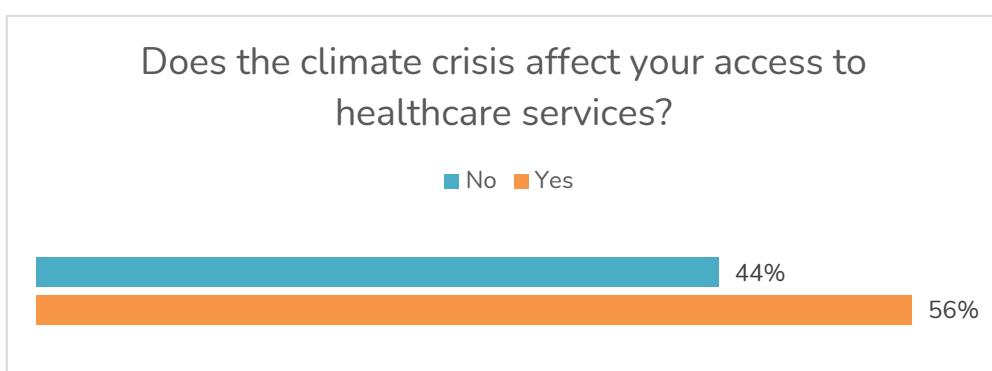


But the decision to stay home is largely attributable to safety concerns about staying in a public shelter, with overwhelming reports in focus group discussions of shelters being unsafe for women and girls, especially those with psychosocial disabilities. Direct accounts of harassment, and at worst violence and abuse were shared, as well as second-hand stories. Many women reported that lack of separate spaces and privacy is also a big challenge, especially for dealing with menstrual hygiene. For these reasons, most persons with disabilities interviewed prefer to stay at home as they perceive it as safer than shelters.

### c. Access to humanitarian relief and healthcare

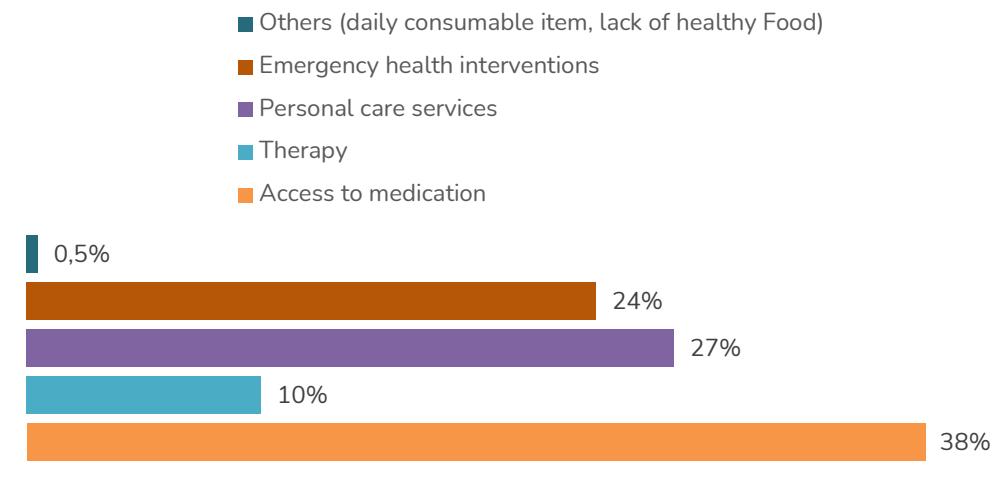
In the aftermath of an extreme weather event, accessing humanitarian relief on an equal basis with others, and receiving humanitarian support that effectively meets specific needs remains challenging. Overall access to essential items and food is deemed sufficient, however access to appropriate healthcare support during and after emergencies can be difficult. Significant disruptions of already vulnerable healthcare systems are common during disasters. When health services are able to resume, they are overburdened and often struggle to care for persons with specific needs.

Under normal circumstances, persons with disabilities living in rural and remote areas already struggle to access health services. For instance, mobility and transportation are a big challenge for those using wheelchairs and living in the Hilly Areas, as roads are not accessible. Unless they live near a health facility, accessing the service is challenging. Moreover, persons with disabilities are likely to face neglect and inadequate health care. Evidence of discrimination and stigma emerged in several FGDs, particularly against Dalits and persons with psychosocial disabilities, further reducing the quality of care. According to a key informant, Dalits were not even touched during the Covid-19 pandemic. Disaster situations exacerbate these pre-existing vulnerabilities. Before disasters, persons with disabilities are likely to be less prepared, less able to perceive risks and access warning information, and act on it. During disasters, persons with disabilities are thus less able to escape hazards, are likely to lose essential medications or assistive products such as prostheses, and to be left behind when a community is forced to evacuate, causing major disruptions to the normal maintenance of their health with potentially severe consequences. More than half of the respondents (56%) acknowledged that climate extremes and disasters limited access to regular healthcare facilities.



The data below demonstrates that reduced access to medication, personal care services, and emergency health interventions are the main challenges faced by persons with disabilities during climate disasters, mainly due to service disruptions and a weakened support system.

## Type of healthcare support made less accessible due to climate change impacts



Testimonies from FGDs align with these findings, with some participants also noting difficulties in accessing information about available healthcare support, and a need for stronger mental health and psychosocial support to help cope with disaster trauma. Indeed, the mental health impacts of climate change were particularly emphasized during FGDs. Climate change affects both the physical and mental health of persons with disabilities, but many participants mentioned the fact that climate change increases mental stress and anxiety daily, with spikes in trauma during extreme episodes of floods and heatwaves. “Persons with chronic illnesses may be more sensitive to heat, and the increase in hot days is worrisome” - this was mentioned mostly within FGDs with persons with psycho-social disabilities and elders. As evidenced by other research, many conditions do impact the body's ability to thermoregulate, such as persons with spinal cord injuries who use wheelchairs and who are more sensitive to heat and cold, resulting in overheating or being too cool.

Elders interviewed praised the few governmental and community-based programmes for elderly care that exist in the country, providing monthly allowances, free health care, pensions, and emotional and spiritual support. They called for a scale up of such initiative and stronger information and communication about their existence for the targeted individuals.



### Focus: Mental health impacts of Climate change

Qualitative interviews provided insights into the mental health impacts of extreme weather events on persons with disabilities. The destruction of assets and livelihoods, the isolation and worry associated from being left behind awaiting relief support, and exposure to risks of violence and abuse during chaotic situations (particularly for women who are farthest behind in the social and economic structure) were identified as the primary drivers of stress and anxiety associated with extreme weather events. There are perceptions that the general population is better equipped to access food and shelters in chaotic situations, while persons with disabilities often feel weaker and helpless, including limited ability to cope mentally and emotionally with the stress associated to such situations. This is particularly true for persons living with a mental health condition. Distress from anticipated climate and environmental change was also noted, especially among groups highly dependent on natural resource for their livelihoods. Under normal circumstances, mental health support is generally not sufficient and not evenly distributed in the country. Nepal has only 200 psychiatrists and a few mental health professionals (MHP) for its 30 million people<sup>18</sup>. They are primarily available in the urban towns and cities. District towns and rural areas are under-served in terms of access to mental health services, treatment, medicine, and counselling. Seeking support involves overcoming significant traveling and transport challenges for people living in rural and remote areas, as well as high costs. In addition, social taboo and superstitions are related to mental illness; many people avoid seeking mental healthcare, mainly because of stigma, discrimination and the high out-of-pocket costs of psychiatric care and medicines.

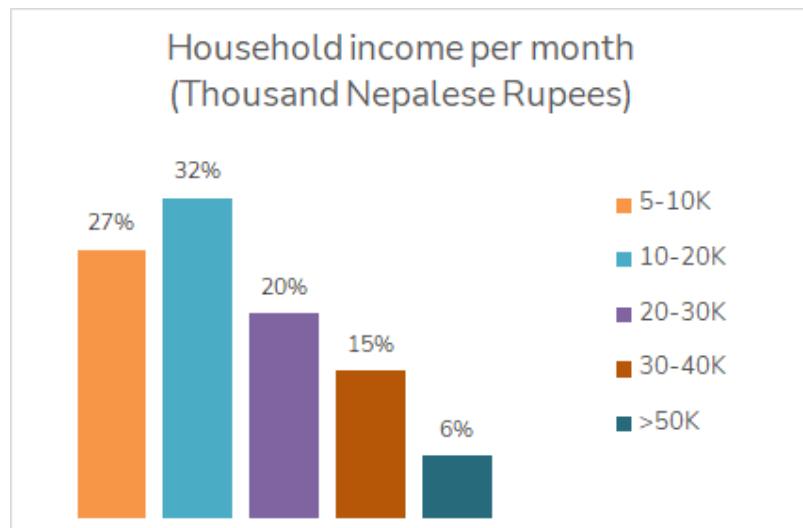
## 3. Underlying levels of poverty compounded by Climate change

### a. Limited and fragile livelihoods options vulnerable to climate change impacts

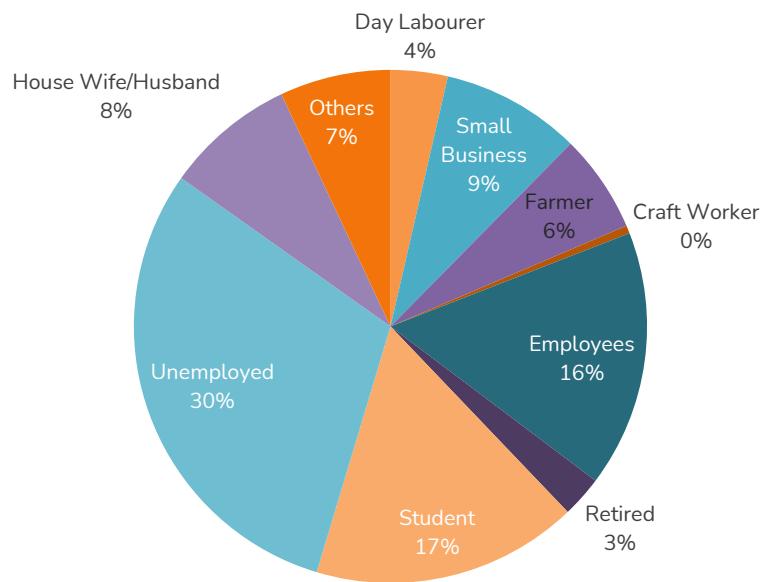
Overall, most of the persons with disabilities/ households with persons with disabilities interviewed lived in precarious socio-economic conditions. 30% of persons interviewed of working age are unemployed. Of those who have an economic activity, a vast majority are low-income people, earning between 5,000 and 20,000 NPR (Nepalese Rupees) per month, which is the lowest average of Nepal income scale.

<sup>18</sup> [Pathways to mental health care in Nepal: a 14-center nationwide study](#), International Journal of Mental Health Systems volume 15, Article number: 85 (2021).

Economic empowerment of persons with disabilities and equal access to employment remains challenging, as the work environment generally lacks openness, inclusiveness, and accessibility. The situation is compounded for persons with disabilities experiencing intersecting factors of marginalization such as disability, gender, and ethnicity (e.g., Dalit).



### Respondents' profession and economic situation



Livelihoods options are limited, mostly concentrated in the agricultural sector and the informal economy. Agriculture is one of the major sectors of Nepal's economy, on which climate change puts a heavy strain across all regions of the country. Rising temperatures are profoundly affecting farming activities, especially rainfed crops, and further threaten already insecure and vulnerable employment for persons with disabilities/ households with persons with disabilities.

Coping with climate variability and unpredictability is increasingly difficult. It affects the duration of dry and wet seasons, the distribution of cultivable lands and general availability of natural resource especially water, crop growth and yield, and it drives extreme events such as winter drought, erratic rainfall in the monsoons and landslides causing long-lasting damage. Agricultural subsidies are available to boost production, improve food security and reduce poverty, but their effectiveness and efficiency is debated, as it is reported that they are generally not benefitting poor and marginal farmers. Focus group discussions highlighted cases of women with disabilities losing their jobs and their indigenous businesses following a disaster and compelled to leave their place due to this sudden loss of capital and property. Indeed, in this context, climate migration is a common pattern to build new economic opportunities in another region, sometimes even abroad for instance in the Middle East. While some persons with disabilities interviewed had some level of self-dependency and could move to another area, most of them are not able to use migration as a response to climate shocks and stresses and depend upon support from their family members for their subsistence. As a result, most of them are left behind when the working force of the household has to migrate to another area, leaving the traditionally inter-generational families fragmented and creating isolation. This is especially true in the Himalayas. Older people are particularly affected as all of them depend on the second generation of their family. Loss of or decreasing family income directly impacts their access to food, medicine, and other basic needs.



**" Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected because of their economic conditions. Women with disabilities from very poor families and the Dalit communities face double or triple impact of climate induced disasters." - National Coordinator of CBR Forum**

#### **b. Opportunities and challenges of disability-targeted social protection**

Given the strong links between disability and poverty, government schemes exist in Nepal providing social security allowances (SSA) and a range of disability-specific services and benefits. Persons holding a government-issued 'Disability ID Card' can register under social welfare, and the severity of their disability will be assessed under four categories, mainly based on medical criteria and the ability to provide for the family. Those whose disability is

considered more severe are eligible for a Disability Grant/Allowance, one of the five social security allowances available in Nepal. This support addresses the fact that persons with disabilities generally earn less, and face extra costs to enjoy full participation in society (care and specialised health services, assistance services, mobility and adaptation costs). Other categories of disabilities considered less severe give rights to concessional rates and subsidies on certain services. However, as mentioned above, persons with disabilities must first undergo an assessment of disability and apply to receive a disability card before registering for the Disability Allowance, which is a separate application process. None of these are straightforward processes, with the usual physical, institutional and communication barriers creating access challenges to both the disability card and the SSA scheme.

Interviews conducted tend to confirm that the system often fails to reach all eligible Nepali citizens, as only a fraction of those interviewed held the disability identification card, combined with lack of knowledge about the very existence of the scheme in some cases. Some study participants reported acquiring impairments following the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015, killing over 8,000 people and injuring another 22,300 individuals. Some did not have a Disability card.



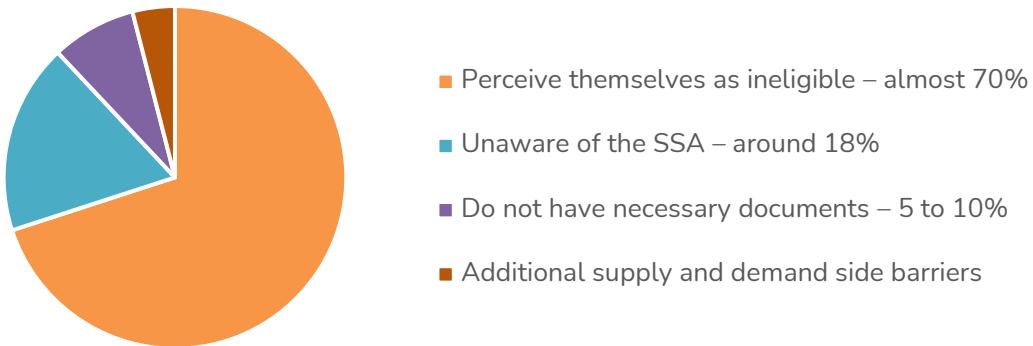
**"We felt the earth shake. My brother, Umesh was just in front of me. The stable wall collapsed, and I was trapped underneath it. I woke up in hospital, with a strange feeling of loss and in a lot of pain. I was missing one of my legs."** (Uma, a young woman of 19 years old and victim of the earthquake, interviewed by Humanity & Inclusion)

Disability prevalence in Nepal is generally thought to be much higher than current estimates. The disability assessment process has improved in recent years with the involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities. But the disability grant remains fraught with coverage and adequacy issues, meaning that many eligible and deserving individuals do not receive financial support, particularly in remote areas<sup>19</sup>. This leads to high exclusion rates, with for instance 30 to 48 % of eligible cardholders not receiving the grants. This is a missed opportunity to reduce poverty and improve wellbeing, for instance in terms of health and food security outcomes, ultimately decreasing vulnerability to climate shocks and stresses.

---

<sup>19</sup> Positioning paper: Options for an Inclusive Shock Responsive Social Protection system in Nepal, Sarah Blin, Partage Consulting for Humanity & Inclusion Nepal, October 2022

## Key reasons of high exclusion rate from the Disability grant (from a separate survey)



Non-disability-targeted social protection programmes exist that persons with disabilities may also be eligible for in order to access financial support via cash transfers. Several persons interviewed had access to and praised the Old Age Allowance programme, provided to senior citizens from 68 years of age (minimum eligible age has been gradually lowered over time), and currently with a rather high coverage. However, interviewees remarked that many elderly people with disabilities are still not enrolled due to lack of knowledge that such universally targeted scheme exists and is available, citing difficulties in accessing the information in a disability-friendly manner, and challenges with the registration process.

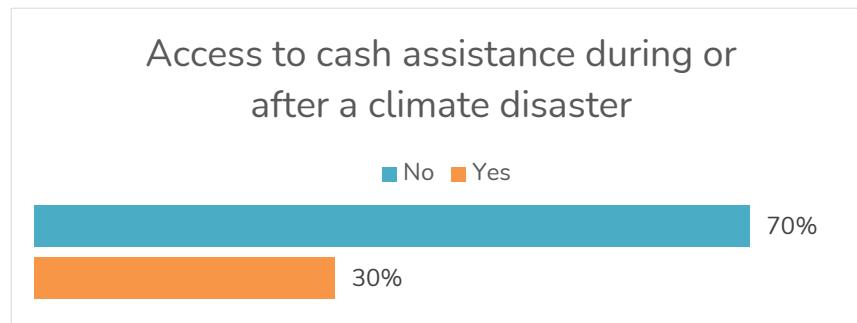
### c. Disability-inclusive Shock-responsive social protection: an emerging instrument

Considering Nepal's vulnerability to natural hazards, most of them climate-induced, and the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities in situations of disasters (often living in hazard-prone areas and fragile habitats, with less awareness of solutions to manage risks, access warnings and evacuate), SSA schemes have been gradually piloted as an emergency cash response to shocks. Shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) "encompasses the adaptation of routine social protection programmes and systems to cope with changes in context and demand following large-scale shocks"<sup>20</sup>. Transfers can occur in a pre-emptive manner based on triggers and warnings or be issued after a disaster to support households' recovery in conjunction with other humanitarian interventions. This approach in Nepal was first tested in 2015 following the earthquake, with a one-off top-up into the accounts of all social security allowance recipients. For persons with disabilities, this can be done by piggybacking onto the Disability allowance. There is evidence that such approach helps build the resilience of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, yet a number of barriers and gaps to inclusive shock responsive social protection exist

<sup>20</sup> Source: European Commission. 2019. "[Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises](#)". Tools and Methods Series No. 26.

preventing effective scalability and limiting its potential. These include but are not limited to barriers in terms of policies, coordination, design, payment delivery and information management systems that make any wider use of the disability allowance in an emergency premature, before wider systems strengthening takes place.

The research supports that there is still a lot of room for the approach to be expanded to assist the most vulnerable effectively during shocks and crises, as 70% of surveyed persons with disabilities declared not having access to emergency cash assistance during or after a climate disaster.



Successfully scaling-up disability-inclusive SRSP by piggybacking on the existing Disability allowance will necessarily involve tackling original issues within the disability allowance scheme itself, such as:

- The lack of clarity regarding the disability allowance, its purpose and delivery mechanism in National Policies;
- The transfer value, established without specific relationship to a purpose - the current official poverty line based on NLSS III is NPR 19,261 and the disability SSA is set at less than NPR 4,000. This amount, although welcome, is minimal.
- The payment mechanism – proxy beneficiary – which does not support notions of independence and participation of persons with disabilities.
- The low levels of literacy among persons with disabilities and their caregivers making them dependent on other community members who can exploit their position of power.
- The resistance by authorities to cash as a modality and to pre-emptive payments.



**Case study:** Humanity & Inclusion (HI) in Nepal has tested the scope for the disability Social Security Allowances to be mobilised by municipalities in anticipation and in response to disasters as part of a joint programme implemented by the Nepal Red Cross Society, the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and the Danish Red Cross and funded by European Commission Humanitarian Aid with United Nations Children's Fund as a strategic partner (2020-2022). The project built on past experience in Nepal of a one-off top-up into the accounts of all social security allowance recipients in 2015 following the earthquake. HI and its partners supported 16 municipalities at risk of flooding to identify persons with disabilities, understand their needs, register them at the municipal level and ensure that they receive cash support in the event of a disaster. HI piggy-backed onto the Disability allowance and connected the municipalities (Palikas) to banks, and in turn to beneficiary bank accounts. It delivered cash top-up to 270 households of 13,500 NPR after the 2021 floods in Tikapur Municipality and Janaki Rural Municipality in Kailali district, using the SSA accounts. This was repeated in 2022 in Janaki. It developed rules, regulated under the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) and municipal government legislation for the use of cash in emergencies in each municipality. Initial feedback from persons with disabilities shows that this avoided entering in debt and facing catastrophic expenditure, supporting their ability to bounce back after the shock. Through this pilot, a number of barriers and enablers to inclusive shock responsive social protection have been identified; while some were addressed in the lifetime of the project, many remain. Cash assistance and the use of social security accounts was generally fraught with political resistance and requires wider systems strengthening at the intersection of disaster management, social protection at large, and disability policy to reach impact at scale.

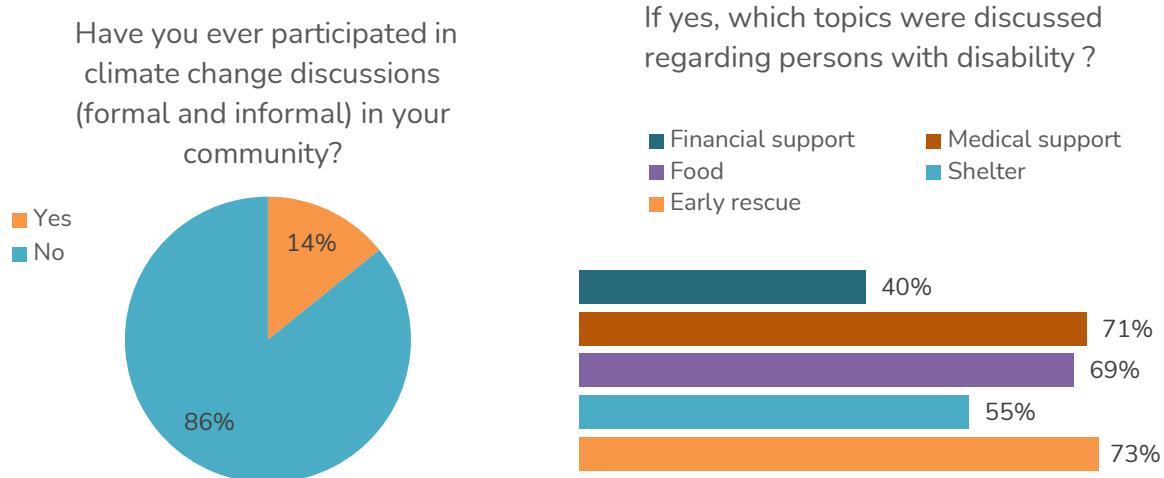
---



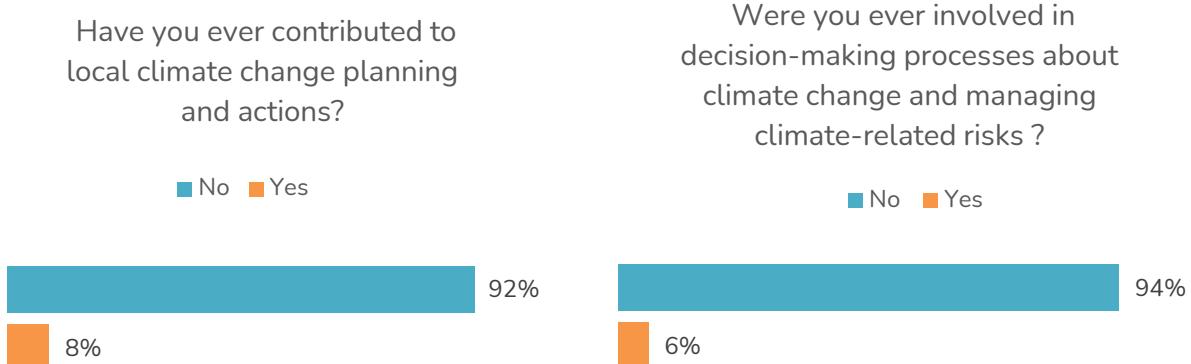
## 4. Persons with disability and their representative organizations have yet to fully engage in climate action, but they aspire to do so

### a. Individual engagement and participation

Humanity & Inclusion's research indicates that persons with disabilities individually are generally not participating in local climate action. Survey results clearly demonstrate these gaps and omissions in local climate governance, as over 80% of respondents indicated never having participated in climate discussions in their community.



What's more, over 90% stated they have never been involved in decision-making processes about climate change and the implementation of subsequent climate actions. This key question was asked in different manners as to ensure understanding and solidify results. Dalits, persons with low income and low education level, and older persons were overrepresented among respondents saying "No". On the contrary, persons from the high-income group and graduates reported having had opportunities to participate.



These results are supported by observations and reports from focus group discussions. While most participants expressed being aware of policies on this subject matter, they are not aware of the extent to which disability provisions exist in those policies, and they overwhelmingly reported that local participatory planning and implementation fails to include their perspectives and needs. Some participants reiterated that climate change is complex and called on policy-makers to make efforts to simplify the issue, ensure general awareness among all population groups through accessible information, and mandate local governments to implement policies in an inclusive and equitable manner. Anecdotal experiences of being invited to forums addressing Disaster Risk Management and Climate Action were shared, however they were experienced as tokenism and not something rooted in a rights-based approach. Similarly, some participants acknowledged anecdotal efforts to strengthen inclusion in LAPA processes. These findings show that while inclusive climate action is a popular concept, delivering it in practice at different levels by ensuring participation of all stakeholders in consultation, planning and design remains challenging.



### What is inclusive climate action?

"A growing demand to address the threats of climate change and social inequality has led to the emergence of inclusive climate action. Building on historical movements such as sustainable development and environmental justice, inclusive climate action addresses a growing burden on underrepresented or excluded social groups, who often suffer the most as a result of climate change. In addition, existing social inequalities could be made worse by the effects of a changing climate. Inclusive climate action means both reducing the effects of climate change on the most vulnerable and ensuring the benefits and burdens of climate action are equitably distributed. Climate action becomes inclusive by engaging a wide range of stakeholders, designing policies that are fair and accessible, and equitably distributing policy impacts. This results in an adaptable and scalable approach that provides economic, environmental, and social benefits."

**Source:** *How Can Climate Action Be Inclusive?*, October 2019, By Wendy Jaglom, Logan Pfeiffer for ClimateLinks.org

### **b. Inclusive climate action within the disability movement: an emerging topic**

The research team interviewed disability leaders and advocates from nine different OPDs operating in Nepal, as well as representatives from iNGOs working with OPDs, donors, and UN agencies. While disability leaders acknowledge having general awareness of the important issue of climate change since the last ten years, from everyday experience and the challenges it poses as well as through the media, overall, the subject has not really been taken up yet by OPDs. Despite a few notable exceptions (NIDWAN), inclusive climate action is generally not included as a strategic priority of OPDs' agendas so far. Several reasons were put forward to explain this:

- Other topics have taken priority to date such as advocating for sectoral mainstreaming of disability rights across education, employment, and health.
- A majority of informants raised that the issue of climate change has been brought to the fore rather recently and is too large and overwhelming for them to grasp, pointing a lack of knowledge transfer from expert organizations or public structures to strengthen understanding within civil society organizations. The lack of skills and knowledge within OPDs about climate change has been mentioned multiple times.
- A lack of opportunities to meaningfully engage in the public debate about climate change has not fostered a strong involvement on this matter, with a government strategy poorly considering persons with disabilities in this conversation and policy-making so far. Some informants mentioned the negative attitude of local government representatives toward persons with disability and their representative organizations, with the perception that they cannot make meaningful contributions to society. Negative perceptions are worsened for discriminated people under Nepal's caste system such as Dalits. This power imbalance between local governments and OPD representatives has not created an enabling environment to seize the topic and take part in climate action planning and implementation.



**“Very frankly speaking, persons with disabilities are not included in decision making, and their input from a human rights perspective is not recognised, particularly by local governments who are less supportive of including them in policy making.” - OPD representative**

---

Yet, there is increasing willingness to engage and to become well versed in the subject, in a global context where more and more advocates are being more vocal about the uneven impacts of climate change on marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. While not officially reflected in social missions or actions plans yet, and despite limited exposure and working experience on the topic, most leaders are willing to advocate for inclusive climate action, in accordance with the “nothing about us without us” motto. Some

have already started to push doors and think about possible initiatives, especially national umbrella associations and women-focused organizations. Feedback based on limited engagement to date is that the challenges of persons with disabilities in the face of climate change is not being raised in any platform in Nepal, and that those voices are critically needed in the fight for climate justice.

Most OPD representatives called for active engagement through targeted advocacy, but also demanded help and strategic support to develop impactful advocacy plans to influence policy at the central level, which would automatically impact local and provincial governments. Following the principle of “stronger together”, one idea often put forward by OPD representatives interviewed is to work more collectively and in a coordinated manner across the disability movement, acknowledging that advocacy efforts for disability inclusion usually tend to be fragmented and thus less visible and impactful. It is acknowledged that the scale of the climate crisis requires joining forces.



**"OPDs should shout a loud to ensure disability inclusion at various stages of climate action. A collective advocacy campaign should be led by OPDs." - OPD representative**

---

In addition, OPDs consulted are keen to reaffirm the positive role they can play as frontliners and implementers to be mobilized to address climate change impacts on persons with disabilities, such as provision of tailored support in the aftermath of climate-induced disasters through disability-inclusive emergency and rehabilitation packages, provision of support to design disability-friendly communications, etc.

#### **Opportunities and enablers for increased participation and engagement:**

Significant progress has been made in Nepal in developing critical policy provisions on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management that prioritize the engagement and participation of women and vulnerable groups in different processes, as well as the collection and use of disability disaggregated data to improve understanding of disaster risk. This policy-level commitment to inclusion, fostered by an important mobilization of concerned stakeholders and proactive efforts from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) to engage persons with disabilities, can serve as an example to advocate for disability-inclusion in climate action. NDRRMA was established under the Ministry of Home Affairs to coordinate, facilitate and operate DRRM related activities in the country. An indigenous woman with a disability was appointed to coordinate efforts to strengthen Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) in DRRM policy frameworks. While implementation can remain challenging, the process is promising.



**"We started engaging leaders with disabilities of NDFN (National Federation of the Deaf Nepal) to discuss GEDSI and develop a GEDSI resource book to take these elements into account in the governance of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management"** - Reema Chowdhury, Coordinator GEDSI, NDRRMA, Ministry of Home

---

The Climate Change Management Division (CCMD) established under the Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE) was formed in 2018 and is currently the central agency on all things climate change in Nepal. Its responsibilities include facilitating the formulation of climate change-related policies, plans, and programs, supporting implementation and monitoring in coordination with federal ministries, provincial governments, municipalities, and non-government organizations. It also works as a focal point for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Ever since the Government of Nepal (GoN) engaged in the climate change agenda in the years 2000, a number of policy frameworks have been developed including but not limited to the expanded National Adaptation Plan of Action, the National Climate Change Policy, and the National Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action. Climate resilience is also integrated into sectoral development plans and programs such as agriculture, energy, forest sector plans, and disaster risk management programs. Mechanisms are established for stakeholder engagement, such as the Multi-stakeholder Climate Change Initiatives Coordination Committee (MCCICC) formed in 2009, which has provided an enabling environment for local Civil Society Organizations in Nepal to engage in regular dialogue and consultations about local climate change response. Yet, as developed above, evidence of meaningful participation of Civil Society Organizations from the disability movement in climate change policy-making has been limited, as opposed to experiences with Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. One key informant stressed that increased coordination and collaboration between NDRRMA and CCMD, currently limited, could support the advancement of disability inclusion into climate action, with the latter building on the experience of the other. In addition, stronger representation and participation of households of persons with disabilities in LAPA processes, and climate resilience programmes in general, was emphasized.



**In focus: NCCSP** - The Nepal Climate Support Programme (NCCSP) was initiated in 2013 by the Government of Nepal to ensure the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Nepal are able to adapt to the effects of climate change. The programme piloted local adaptation plans (LAPAs) to address urgent and immediate needs, with a particular focus on gender equality. The programme is now in its second phase, yet there is no evidence of inclusion of persons with disabilities in Climate change adaptation and resilience building activities. Strengthening inclusion in such flagship programme could provide a strong foundation to pave the way for disability-inclusive action in Nepal.

---

## Part 5 – Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, a set of recommendations can be proposed for disability-inclusive climate action to be achieved in Nepal. Some were put forward directly by study participants, others are proposed by the research team based on findings. Inclusive climate action can generate benefits to tackle both climate change and social and economic inequalities. In practice, it can be implemented at many different levels in the country (from national level policymaking to local projects and local policy implementation) and take different forms. The following recommendations are structured around a selection of key actors that can contribute meaningfully to enhance disability inclusion in climate action in Nepal.

### 1. General inclusion principles for all stakeholders

Inclusion gaps are generally the result of<sup>21</sup>:

- Inadequate policies not adapted to specific needs, not implemented, not funded and/or not monitored.
- Lack of capacities of the service providers, either insufficient, not adapted, or nonexistent.
- Insufficient participative approaches in decision-making processes. Negative attitudes and stance within communities, societies, and even institutions and governments, stigmatizing specific groups and individuals.
- Insufficient and/or inadequate funding levels to address the needs and priorities of most at risk groups.
- Lack of data to assess the situation of vulnerable people and persons living with disabilities. This situation limits the capacity of public services and/or private actors to understand and address their specific needs.
- Lack of individual opportunities for persons with disabilities and vulnerable people to develop the skills and self-confidence they need to be actively involved in their own empowerment.

To close this gap, a general inclusion framework can be applied at all levels by a diversity of stakeholders, promoting the following dimensions and “must do” actions<sup>22</sup>:

- Ensuring the **full and meaningful participation in decision making of all at risk groups** and individuals in alignment with the “leave no one behind” principle.
- **Acknowledging diversity** (of people, risks, barriers, sectors and levels of intervention) **by disaggregating data** for monitoring inclusion.

---

<sup>21</sup> [Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction](#), Policy brief, Humanity & Inclusion, 2017

<sup>22</sup> [Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#), IASC guidelines, July 2019

- Empowering persons with disabilities and supporting them to develop their capacities, using the wide range of capacity development tools and approaches.
- Contributing to resilience for everyone by removing barriers that keep excluded people out.

These four dimensions, when working together, have been found to generally strengthen inclusive approaches across an array of sectors and initiatives. Examples of how they can be applied to climate action in Nepal by different stakeholders are outlined below.

## 2. To institutional stakeholders

In line with obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and building on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda agreed by the Members of the United Nations including Nepal, the following recommendations for Nepali institutional stakeholders are proposed:

- Promote meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in climate change policy-making, from consultation, planning, and design at the national level down to local governments, especially through ensuring Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA) mechanisms are inclusive. This means:
  - Providing reasonable accommodation to ensure physical accessibility of buildings and infrastructure where policymaking happens;
  - Making information and communication materials accessible and in a variety of formats, for example easy-to-understand formats with *pictorial* representation for persons with intellectual disabilities or low literacy rates;
  - Making proactive efforts to identify and consult OPDs representing a diversity of disabilities;
  - And challenging attitudes and mistaken assumptions within government staff at federal, provincial and local levels by strengthening their knowledge and skills on inclusion.



©Annie Hans / HI

- Take stock of rather successful experiences of disability-inclusive policymaking in the country, such as efforts to strengthen inclusion in DRRM processes. To this effect, consider enhancing collaboration and coordination between NDRRMA and CCMD.
- Invest in strengthening inclusive approaches into high impact sectors that offer greater potential for building climate-resilient and inclusive societies:
  - Continue promoting and monitoring inclusive DRRM policies, with an emphasis on expanding accessible and inclusive early warning systems and promoting safe and accessible shelters. Comprehensive disaster risk reduction strategies play a vital role in increasing resilience to climate risks.
  - Support the expansion of social protection for persons with disabilities as well as shock responsiveness within social assistance, and to this effect, strengthen intergovernmental coordination between the social protection, disaster management and disability institutions.
  - Embedded in wider efforts to support a just transition, support an enabling environment for persons with disabilities and their households to be able to access climate-resilient economic opportunities;
  - Promote inclusive health in all its dimensions as well as continuity planning for the health care delivery system, including mental health services.
- Adopt an intersectional perspective towards disability inclusion that acknowledges the multiple barriers faced by individuals experiencing intersecting factors of exclusion such as gender, ethnicity, and age.

### **3. To humanitarian and development donors**

- Promote a programmatic approach to climate resilience that is holistic and equitable, integrating social, economic, health and climate considerations and generating far-reaching benefits for all vulnerable groups;
- Ensure mainstream climate funding supports the active and meaningful participation of organizations of persons with disabilities, encouraging partnerships with diverse OPDs, knowledge transfer, intersectional analyses of climate vulnerabilities and capacities in needs assessments, and data disaggregation;
- Dedicate targeted funding for disability-inclusive climate action, placing organizations of persons with disabilities at the center of design, planning, implementation and monitoring of the actions.
- Support actions that strengthen inter-governmental coordination processes and further implementation of decentralization, particularly for decentralizing climate finance to reach the most vulnerable;

## **4. To Local NGOs and iNGOs implementing climate actions**

- Proactively seek to connect with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations throughout the project cycle to inform design, planning, implementation and monitoring, ensuring barriers to active participation are addressed, especially in LAPA processes;
- Assess vulnerability and capacity to climate change at community level using participatory and inclusive methodologies that will help understand the root causes of exclusion and vulnerability to climate change, and enable persons with disabilities to voice their specific needs, perspectives and suggested solutions;
- Implement capacity-building activities on climate change and climate response that include persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in order to transfer knowledge and empower them to advocate for their rights;
- Ensure full accessibility of project activities, from physical and virtual accessibility of events (training, meetings) to accessibility of project materials and outputs;
- Disaggregate beneficiary data (disability, gender and age) to collect information on at risk and excluded groups: disaggregating data helps to expose hidden trends, it can enable the identification of vulnerable populations for instance, or it can help establish the scope of an issue and can make vulnerable groups more visible to climate change policy makers in order to leave no one behind.
- Conduct awareness-raising activities within staff to transform organisational culture and operations and encourage disability-inclusive approaches.

## **5. To organisations of Persons with Disabilities**

- If within current priorities, embed work on climate change in strategic priorities and action plans, and consider adopting a twin track approach to design and implementation;
- Seek strategic partnership opportunities with mainstream climate actors and climate justice groups to participate in programs, to build knowledge and capacity about climate change and climate governance, and to foster cross-learning about advocacy tactics;
- Consider joining climate change networks managed by civil society organizations and if interested/have the capacity, request to co-lead the networks;
- Raise awareness about climate change among members to mainstream knowledge and foster potential engagement capacity in climate action at multiple levels;
- Actively engage in evidence-based advocacy initiatives at country level, building on strengthened internal coordination among OPDs and exploring joint campaigning, with a focus on promoting a conducive and enabling policy environment that acknowledges the differentiated impacts of climate change, the allocation of targeted resources to address them, accessible and equitable treatment of persons with disabilities by service providers.
- Provide capacity-building and training activities on disability inclusive climate action for climate change practitioners and policy-makers at all levels, with a particular focus on local governments given their power under Nepal's structure.

## Part 6 – Conclusion

Climate change is not affecting everyone equally. It is being increasingly recognized that the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities is compounded by poverty, discrimination, stigma, as well as intersecting vulnerability factors placing them at higher risk. Data and evidence highlighting the links between disability and climate change is still limited yet steadily growing. In Nepal, one of the most climate change impacted countries in the world, communities highly dependent on natural resources for livelihood are facing significant climate risks such as floods, landslides, and droughts. This report, informed by communities on the frontline, expert opinions, and outside documents and research studies, is a contribution to highlighting the disproportionately negative impact of these climate-related hazards on persons with disabilities in Nepal. Limited capacity to prepare and protect themselves from hazards, to recover, to adapt to livelihoods effects of climate change, to cope with impacts on their health and on the healthcare delivery system, and to simply participate in climate decision-making, threatens their right to life and well-being, and to economic and social security.

While climate change affects people and planet globally, solutions should be locally-led, inclusive, and bottom-up, informed by those experiencing its worst impacts. Over the last two decades, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has taken substantial steps to address impacts of climate change. The country's National Adaptation plan (NAP) is a key roadmap setting out national priorities, that fits within an ambitious overarching institutional and policy framework for a climate-resilient development. To support adaptation at the local level, GoN designed the LAPA Framework to integrate climate adaptation and resilience aspects into local development planning, placing the participation of local stakeholders such as Village Development Committees at the heart of the formulation and implementation of local priorities. This participatory and socially inclusive approach helps design solutions addressing local needs, taking stock of Nepal's diverse topography, ecosystems, and climate zones. The Government of Nepal has made significant progress in mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion in climate change within its array of plans, policies, strategies, programmes and mechanisms, including LAPA processes.

Yet, while undeniable efforts and progress have been made to strengthen gender sensitive or responsive climate action, addressing inequality among socially excluded groups such as persons with disabilities remains overlooked. As evidenced by this report, serious gaps remain to ensure persons with disabilities are protected in the face of climate-induced disasters, opportunities for economic empowerment are limited, preserving their health capital is challenging, and participation in decisions that affect their climate resilience is anecdotal. The situation is made worse for persons with disabilities belonging to historically, socially and religiously discriminated caste and ethnic groups such as Dalits.

To truly implement locally-led, inclusive, and bottom-up climate action in Nepal, the disproportionate impact of climate change hazards on persons with disabilities should not be ignored. For instance, there is a template for disability-inclusive climate action available through the body of previous inclusive disaster risk reduction work undertaken in-country, in the region or even globally. Stronger cooperation and coordination between relevant ministries and federal institutions can play a vital role to distribute the benefits of climate action equally among all population groups. Bold and courageous actions are needed across Nepal's three-tier federal structure, to propose plans and programs that understand and challenge existing power structures, to dedicate resources for those routinely excluded, and to build staff awareness and capacity on disability inclusion. Donors are encouraged to support disability-inclusive climate funding through opportunities that either principally or significantly promote the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities in Nepal. Implementing partners and OPDs are encouraged to work hand in hand in a mutually beneficial manner that will help advance climate justice and build a more inclusive society.



# Appendices

## References

### Country specific resources:

- [Climate Change Impacts on Health and Livelihoods: Nepal Assessment](#), IFRC, April 2021.
- [Disability Inclusive Development Nepal Situational Analysis](#) June 2020 Update, IDS and Inclusive Future, June 2020
- [Gender and Social Inclusion in Climate Change Issues and Opportunities in Federal Nepal](#), Srijana Shrestha and Dibya Devi Gurung, March 2022
- [Analysis: How decentralisation in Nepal is undermining climate action](#), Kushal Pokharel, July 28, 2022
- [A report on disability in Nepal, University of Canterbury](#), Mukti Prakash Thapaliya, College of Education, Health and Human Development Christchurch, New Zealand, Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF), 2016
- [Pathways to mental health care in Nepal: a 14-center nationwide study](#), International Journal of Mental Health Systems volume 15, Article number: 85 (2021)
- Positioning paper: Options for an Inclusive Shock Responsive Social Protection system in Nepal, Sarah Blin, Partage Consulting for Humanity & Inclusion Nepal, October 2022
- [Women with disabilities in Nepal: Photovoice study on the barriers and enablers to social, economic and political inclusion](#), Dr. Christine Bigler, Dr. Sony KC and Yamila Pita, Interdisciplinary Centre on Gender Studies (ICFG) at the University of Bern. 2022
- [An innovative model for disability screening and issuing disability ID cards](#), European Union, Save the Children, UNICEF, UK Aid, January 2023

### Thematic resources:

- [Disability and Climate Change: How climate-related hazards increase vulnerabilities among the most at-risk populations and the necessary convergence of inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation](#). GUTNIK Alyssa; ROTH Marcie. Lyon: Humanity & Inclusion, 2018
- [Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction](#), Policy paper, Humanity & Inclusion Technical Resources Division, 2017
- [Climate change and the right to health of people with disabilities](#), Penelope J S Stein, Michael Ashley Stein, HPOD, Lancet Glob Health 2021, December 2021.
- [Promoting Disability-Inclusive Climate Change Action](#), Secretariat of the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network, 2021

- [How Can Climate Action Be Inclusive?](#), October 2019, By Wendy Jaglom, Logan Pfeiffer for ClimateLinks.org
- [Status Report on Disability Inclusion in National Climate Commitments and Policies](#), June 2022, McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, Disability-Inclusive Climate Action Research Program
- [Thematic brief, Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction](#), United Nations (OHCHR), 2020.

**Methodological resources:**

- BRUS Aude. [How to conduct a qualitative/quantitative study? From planning to using findings](#). Lyon: HI, 2017, 256 p. + How to conduct or oversee a study (poster)
- BRUS Aude. [Studies and research at Handicap International: Promoting ethical data management](#). Lyon: HI, 2015, 38 p.
- BRUS Aude. [Planning and conducting focus group discussions: how to do it and be inclusive about it!](#) Module e-learning, HI, 2020
- VALLUCCI Elsa. [How to integrate data protection within our operations](#). Lyon: HI, 2021

## List of organisations Interviewed

1. National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal.
2. Disaster Risk Reduction Authority.
3. CBR/CBID Network in Nepal
4. UN-Nepal, Gorkha
5. CBM Global
6. JICA Nepal Office,
7. UN Habitat in Nepal.
8. Humanity & Inclusion,
9. FCDO, British Embassy.
10. National Federation of the Disabled (NFDN).
11. Disabled Human Rights Forum (DHRF).
12. Community Development and Environment Conservation Forum (CDECF).
13. Disability Human Rights Centre, DHRC-Nepal.
14. Federation of Women with Disability Nepal (FWDN).
15. Nepal Red Cross Society Bariya.
16. Jugal Rural Municipality.
17. Changunarayan Municipality.
18. KOSHISH, Psychological survivors' OPD.

## List of Organisations and Groups who participated in Focus Group Discussions

1. Women with disabilities of Federation of Women with Disability Nepal (FWDN).
2. Parents of intellectual and neurodevelopmental disability, Kathmandu.
3. Group of elderly/senior citizen, Kathmandu Nepal.
4. Special School for Disabled and Rehabilitation Centre, Kathmandu.
5. A group of youth Dalits for equality, SAMATA, Bhaktapur
6. OPD Forum for Human Rights and Disability (FHRD) Dang Nepal
7. A group of psychosocial disability, KOSHISH
8. Forest User Group, Sindhupalchok, Jugal Rural Municipality



## Persons with disabilities and climate change in Nepal: Humanitarian impacts and pathways for inclusive climate action

---

This report intends to inform how persons with disabilities in Nepal understand and perceive climate change, what is their experience of dealing with climate extremes, what is the impact on their health, livelihoods and support system, and their actual level of inclusion in climate adaptation planning. To capture those perspectives, HI surveyed 388 persons with disabilities across Nepal's 7 provinces, consulted 20 key informants from the disability movement, government institutions, and the aid sector, and conducted 8 targeted focus group discussions to hear from women, youth, and persons representing diverse disability types. This report is a contribution to the growing evidence base documenting the disproportionate impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities and calling for strengthened disability-inclusive climate action at all levels of governance, from national to global mechanisms.

