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A Report on
**Nepal's Climate Justice
Landscape Study**

BLIND YOUTH ASSOCIATION NEPAL

NAB Complex, Sukedhara, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-4372160, 9801030751 | Email: info@byanepal.org | www.byanepal.org

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Dr. Sunit Adhikari
Team Leader

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Executive Summary

Context

Persons with disabilities suffer a disproportionate impact owing to existing barriers in mobility and communication, limited access to resources, and insufficient representation in vital decision-making forums of climate change actions. Compounding this challenge, systemic exclusion and social stigma exacerbate their vulnerability, hindering their effective participation in preparedness, adaptation, and recovery efforts. The absence of systematic disability mainstreaming within national climate policies and strategies thus creates profound gaps, preventing the achievement of true climate resilience and justice for the entire population. In order to strengthen disability inclusive climate justice initiatives in Nepal, BYAN conducted a study on ***Nepal's climate justice landscape***.

Desk review of the documents and key informant interviews with the stakeholders were the processes adopted to collect the information. Therefore, this report is based on the reviews and Key Informant Interviews.

Climate Justice Landscape Assessment

The National Climate Change Policy (2019), National Adaptation Plan (2021–2050), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), among others, are the key policy frameworks adopted by the government to address climate change impacts and associated disaster challenges in Nepal. Similarly, there exist international policy frameworks that are active to address climate change issues globally.

Despite having international and national frameworks, a question can be raised. Have all stakeholders been given equal opportunities to share both the benefits and the burdens of climate action while addressing the climate-induced challenges? In reality, the answer is often “No”. Those people who are rich in social, political and economic status—typically the elites—tend to have more access to resources, decision-making spaces, and protective measures that shield them from the impacts of climate change. Conversely, marginalized and vulnerable groups, who contribute least to the problem, are often the ones who suffer the most from its effects. This imbalance has highlighted a need for climate justice, which seeks to ensure fairness, inclusion, and accountability in climate responses.

Regarding persons with disabilities, the review of policy and legislative documents reveals that frameworks developed before 2015 offered limited space for their inclusion. These frameworks have generally recognized persons with disabilities under the GESI framework, alongside a wide range of groups such as women, Dalits, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized communities. As a result, the specific concerns and priorities of persons with disabilities are often overlooked or inconsistently interpreted by planners and decision-makers, leading to their exclusion from climate-related initiatives.

While talking about persons with disabilities with reference to climate change impact, a strong correlation exists between the impacts of climate change and their situation. The greater the severity of climate impacts, the more persons with disabilities tend to suffer. Besides, they are the most marginalized as compared with other climate vulnerable groups, when it comes to accessing resources and opportunities, though they are often expected to fulfill responsibilities without adequate inclusion or support.

To address the climate change impacts, both international and national policy frameworks and institutions have made considerable efforts. However, the question remains, “have these policy instruments succeeded to address the challenges and needs of persons with disabilities?” The answer could be “Yes”, but “to some extent”. This limited success is largely due to certain gaps and barriers that still exist. Some of those gaps and barriers are:

- Inadequate policy address.
- Limited strategy direction of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in climate action.
- Prevailing social stigma.
- Having resource constraints.

- Disintegrating human rights into climate justice.
- Coordination and communication gaps.
- Inadequate research and development on persons with disabilities

Conclusion and Way-Forwards

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate change hazards such as floods, landslides, droughts, and shifting weather patterns. Despite their heightened vulnerability, they remain largely excluded from climate justice policies, programs, and decision-making processes due to systemic barriers in mobility, communication, access to resources, and persistent social stigma. National frameworks on climate adaptation and resilience still lack strong provisions for disability inclusion, while key climate actors—from government institutions to civil society and development partners—often operate in isolation, with minimal coordination or shared accountability. This fragmentation has resulted in limited advocacy space, weak institutional collaboration, and the continued marginalization of persons with disabilities in climate action planning and implementation.

Therefore, the movement for climate justice in Nepal requires a shift away from solely technical solutions toward more radical socio-political and cultural changes. This must be accompanied by stronger enforcement of existing policies and the potential establishment of a dedicated climate law and specialized environmental courts to provide greater legal protection for the marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. For addressing the issues, a few recommendations are suggested, which are given as below.

- *The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) and the Environment Protection Act (2019) are two key legislations directly relevant to persons with disabilities. These acts should be reviewed through a Post Legislative Scrutiny (PLS²) process to assess the status of implementation.*
- *OPDs should actively lobby and advocate for the formulation and implementation of such laws, as mentioned in the above bullet, at both provincial and local levels.*
- *A comprehensive strategic framework should be developed and implemented. This framework will guide how OPDs or persons with disabilities should engage in climate-related actions and resilient building initiatives.*
- *Self-advocacy and mobilization are essential to raise the voice of persons with disabilities. Silence dissatisfaction will not solve inclusive climate justice-related problems. Therefore, empower persons with disabilities and educate other stakeholders about the importance of persons with disabilities in climate change actions.*
- *Forge a partnership or seek funding support from rural municipalities and/or municipalities to access locally available resources.*
- *Synergy, collaboration, and strong coordination among the OPDs and with other like-minded non-disability organizations should be encouraged.*
- *Since media engagement plays a crucial role in amplifying the initiatives undertaken by OPDs, strategic collaboration with media outlets is suggested.*

² This is a parliamentary process where the respective parliament committee will assess their effectiveness, implementation status, and impact of the acts and accordingly revise the act.

Abbreviation

BYAN	Blind Youth Association Nepal
CBO	Community Based Organization
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CRPD	Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DiDRR	Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
DRCN	Disability Research Center-Nepal
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
DRRMC	Disaster Risk Reduction Management Committee
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPCC	Inter-governmental Panel for Climate Change
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan for Action
LCC	Local Coordination Committee
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LDCRF	Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Framework
MoFE	Ministry of Forests and Environment
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDRRMA	National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority
NFDN	National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
R&D	Research and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCPRD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Blind Youth Association Nepal (BYAN) is a non-political, non-religious, not-for-profit Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) established by blind and partially sighted (BPS) youth in Nepal. It was founded in 2011, registered with the District Administration Office in Kathmandu in 2012, and affiliated with the Social Welfare Council of Nepal. Currently, BYAN has more than 850 members, organized into 10 district chapters located in Jhapa, Morang, Bara, Kathmandu, Chitwan, Kaski, Rupandehi, Banke, Surkhet, and Kailali districts. As a rights-based organization, BYAN intends to play a proactive role in formulating, amending, and implementing legal provisions related to youths with disabilities. It also focuses on organizing and capacity-building of youths with disabilities across the country. BYAN has strong networking and cooperation with different government and non-government stakeholders working in various domains of disability.

BYAN is implementing "*Resilience Together: Towards Climate Justice for Persons with Disabilities in Nepal*," an initiative focused on building the leadership capacity of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). The primary goal of the project is to mobilize these organizations to champion and achieve disability-inclusive climate justice nationwide. One of the core objectives of the project, to *promote participation, advocacy, and cross-sectoral collaboration for disability-inclusive climate justice*, is dedicated to guaranteeing the meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in Nepal's climate justice conversations.

1.1 Context

Ranked among the most climate-vulnerable nations globally, Nepal faces intensifying risks from floods, landslides, droughts, and shifting weather patterns, all of which compromise public health, livelihoods, and resilience. The effects of this crisis, however, are far from equitable. Persons with disabilities suffer a disproportionate impact owing to existing barriers in mobility and communication, limited access to resources, and insufficient representation in vital decision-making forums. Compounding this challenge, systemic exclusion and social stigma exacerbate their vulnerability, hindering their effective participation in preparedness, adaptation, and recovery efforts. The absence of systematic disability mainstreaming within national climate policies and strategies thus creates profound gaps, preventing the achievement of true climate resilience and justice for the entire population.

Despite the growing acknowledgment of climate change as a significant development challenge in Nepal, the rights and voices of persons with disabilities are notably absent from most climate-related policies, programs, and platforms. Current national frameworks for climate adaptation and resilience infrequently incorporate disability inclusion, severely limiting the capacity of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and disability advocates to influence policy or practice. This challenge is compounded by the complex and fragmented landscape of stakeholders—including government bodies, civil society organizations (CSOs), OPDs, academia, and international partners—who frequently operate in silos. This systemic fragmentation undermines effective coordination, weakens collective advocacy efforts, and consequently heightens the risk of further marginalizing persons with disabilities from comprehensive climate action.

In order to strengthen disability-inclusive climate justice initiatives in Nepal, BYAN conducted a study on Nepal's climate justice landscape. The study generated the ***Nepal Climate Justice Landscape Study Report***. The Report has provided critical evidence and strategic direction necessary to advance the disability-inclusive climate justice movement in Nepal. Ultimately, this study will serve as a foundational resource for OPD leaders, government agencies, relevant civil society

organizations, policymakers, and advocacy coalitions dedicated to achieving equitable climate action.

1.2 Objective and Scope of Work

The key objectives of this particular study were:

- To analyze the climate justice landscape in Nepal, including policies, advocacy initiatives, and discourses.
- To generate actionable recommendations that guide OPDs and civil society towards inclusive advocacy and movement-building in inclusive climate justice.

The scope of work of the study included preparation of the Nepal Climate Justice Landscape Report and involved the key activities as follows:

- Review literature on climate justice at global and national levels.
- Analyze Nepal's climate justice discourses (equity, rights, disability inclusion, gender, indigenous perspectives, etc.).
- Examine existing policies, institutions, advocacy coalitions, and networks.
- Identify gaps and opportunities for inclusive participation and leadership.
- Document case examples of practices and challenges.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening inclusive climate justice advocacy and movement-building.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Study Design

Nepal is highly vulnerable to climate change, despite its minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. Studies have revealed a gap between high-level policy and grassroots implementation, where the most vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, bear a disproportionate burden. In this context, conducting the assessment of the climate justice landscape is important. Analyzing the climate justice landscape in Nepal involved examining the country's policies, advocacy initiatives, and the ongoing discourses. The whole assessment was guided by the disability justice principle of "*Nothing about us without us*". The core methodological pillars of the study included:

- Rights-based and critical disability frameworks
- Inclusive data collection and co-production with persons with disabilities and OPDs
- Justice-focused landscape analysis, including systemic exclusion (distributional, procedural, recognitional, and policy/actor analysis)
- Designing outputs and recommendations, including participatory validation and action-oriented recommendations.

1.3.2 Consultation Meeting with BYAN Team

The consultant had a formal briefing meeting with the BYAN team. In the meeting, unclear matters and uncertainty in the TOR were discussed and clarified. The discussion successfully clarified any unclear matters and ambiguities within the Terms of Reference. This consultation proved useful, as the information provided by the BYAN team directly contributed to refining the design of the data collection and checklists. The consultation also offered guidance for preparing the inception report. Additionally, the BYAN team provided the necessary documents and information required for the study.

1.3.3 Review of Documents

Following the consultation with the BYAN team, the study team conducted a review of a range of documents related to climate change issues, climate justice, inclusion, and persons with disabilities. This comprehensive review covered both national and international sources. The key documents thoroughly reviewed are listed in Annex 1³. The insights derived from this review were instrumental in developing the checklists for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), preparing the inception report, and drafting the final report.

1.3.4 Key Informant Interviews

Following the finalization of the inception report, the study team prepared a list of key informants for interviews, selecting them based on their relevance to the study objectives and suggestions from the BYAN team. The respondents included concerned government officials, representatives of international and national Non-Government Organizations (I/NGOs), organizations of persons with disability (OPDs), and individuals/experts involved in climate change and disability-inclusion activities. A total of 16 KIIs were conducted using prepared checklists (See Annex 2). These KIIs covered representatives of the key stakeholders identified during a simultaneous **Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis** study (conducted separately by BYAN) and those respondents suggested by the BYAN team during the consultation meeting.

1.4 Organization of the Report

This report is organized into three Chapters. Chapter 1 provides the background, context, objective and methodology of the study. Chapter 2 presents the findings of the Nepal climate justice landscape study, identifying gaps, barriers and opportunities for improvement, with a particular focus on persons with disabilities. The final chapter, Chapter 3, contains the study's conclusion along with recommendations to strengthen disability inclusive climate justice initiatives in Nepal.

1.5 Limitations of the Report

This study report should be interpreted in light of certain limitations. Firstly, the study primarily employed a qualitative approach, which inherently involves some degree of subjective judgment and interpretation. Secondly, the findings relied largely on key informant interviews, and document reviews. Nonetheless, this report offers a valuable reference for similar future studies, and its insights can be generalized and applied to other organizations.

³ All other references, mainly from websites, are cited in the footnotes.

2. Nepal Climate Justice Landscape: Key Findings

2.1 Understanding of Climate Justice⁴ and Inclusion

Climate change has increasingly become a part of everyday human life. No individual, community or country, irrespective of caste, ethnicity, political affiliation, or social and economic status, can escape from its impacts. Each year, countries across the globe have been suffering from devastating consequences, including the loss of human lives, property, and livelihoods.

Nepal is no exception. The country has continually faced recurring climate-induced disasters such as floods, landslides, droughts, and erratic rainfall patterns that disrupt lives and development gains. Even this year in early October 2025, the heavy and sporadic rainfall caused landslides in villages of Ilam district and killed at least 37 people⁵ within two days. Such incidents underscore the urgent need to address climate-related challenges and been started by the countries to address it. Many countries have already begun responding to these issues through various policies, initiatives, and both national and international commitments.

A UNEP (2023) analysis found that, between year 2000 and 2019, the world suffered at least \$2.8 trillion in loss and damage from climate change—costing around \$16 million per hour. (source:<https://www.unep.org/topics/climateaction/loss-and-damage/about-loss-and-damage>)

While addressing climate-related challenges, a fundamental question arises: Have all stakeholders been given equal opportunities to share both the benefits and the burdens of climate action? In reality, the answer is often “No”. Those people who are rich in social, political and economic status—typically the elites—tend to have more access to resources, decision-making spaces, and protective measures that shield them from the impacts of climate change. Conversely, marginalized and vulnerable groups, who contribute least to the problem, are often the ones who suffer the most from its effects. This imbalance has highlighted a need for climate justice, which seeks to ensure fairness, inclusion, and accountability in climate responses.

Despite having several meanings of climate justice existing on websites, the meaning that states that climate justice is an approach that places equity and human rights at the heart of all decisions and actions related to climate change is more logical⁶. When referring to the climate justice landscape, it conveys a broader and more meaningful understanding of how climate justice is shaped and practiced. The climate justice landscape describes the broader setting where actors, institutions, policies, and social movements that shape the understanding and implementation of climate justice within a specific context—such as a country, region, or sector. It also explores how these elements interact to promote or hinder fairness, inclusion, and equitable access to resources in climate change responses and decision-making.

It has been noted that climate justice is being governed by certain principles⁷, such as equity and fairness; inclusive participation; global solidarity; interconnectedness; accountability and responsibility; human rights; just transition; resilience and adaptation; and indigenous rights and

⁴ Climate justice also carries another dimension — it emphasizes that developed countries, which have historically contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions, should take greater responsibility for mitigating climate change and supporting developing and least developed countries that have contributed the least but often suffer the most. However, this report focuses specifically on climate justice for persons with disabilities, highlighting their unique vulnerabilities and the need for their inclusion in climate action and decision-making processes.

⁵ Source: Local newspapers

⁶ <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/climate-change-matter-justice-heres-why>

⁷ Changing Planet Justice, 2024. 10 principles of climate justice. Available from: <https://www.changingplanetjustice.org/principles-of-climate-justic>.

traditional knowledge. These principles are universal truth which has importance when we consider climate justice.

2.2 Interconnectedness between Climate Justice and Persons with Disabilities

A strong correlation exists between the impacts of climate change and the situation of persons with disabilities. The greater the severity of climate impacts, the more persons with disabilities tend to suffer. Evidence shows that Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate-induced disasters such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves. Their vulnerability—combined with limited access to resources, inadequate communication and early warning systems, mobility challenges, social stigma, and exclusion from climate planning and decision-making processes—further heightens the impacts they experience.

For the estimated 1.3 billion people with disabilities worldwide, of whom 80% live in developing countries, the climate crisis is accelerating, meaning that disability-inclusive climate action is urgently needed.

(Source:https://www.bond.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2025/04/2508_BOND-Disability_final_web.pdf)

Climate justice emphasizes that all voices—regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability, origin, or socio-economic and political status—should be heard and included in decision-making processes. In reality, however, the voices of women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged communities are often excluded from meaningful participation in planning and decision-making. Among these groups, persons with disabilities are comparatively the most marginalized when it comes to accessing resources and opportunities, though they are often expected to fulfill responsibilities without adequate inclusion or support. A review carried out by a group of researchers⁸ rightly pointed out that climate change disproportionately affects people with disabilities, threatening their livelihoods, health, and mobility and creating additional barriers that many climate policies fail to address. The challenges faced by people with disabilities are not simply a reflection of their impairments but are deeply rooted in systemic inequalities.

It has also been seen that people have poorly understood the link between climate and disability. In fact, climate action—both mitigation and adaptation—cannot get momentum without the participation of persons with disabilities. It is said that the climate justice movement⁹ and the disability movement share a common goal of social transformation, but in practice, their respective agendas do not yet coincide.

Across the globe, persons with disabilities experience mortality rates up to four times higher in natural disasters than people without disabilities

(Source:<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/climatechange/climate-change-highlights-need-disability-inclusive-adaptation>)

In case of climate-induced disasters, persons with disabilities are among the most severely affected groups, facing greater risks of injury and death while having limited access to emergency support. Climate change further intensifies their vulnerabilities, particularly for those with multiple and intersecting challenges. For example, a 2024 study published in *The Lancet*¹⁰ reported an increase in hospitalization rates among disabled individuals during heatwaves—far exceeding the rates for the general population.

Therefore, the country must adopt effective measures to address its specific needs and ensure their meaningful participation in disaster preparedness, emergency response, and access to health and humanitarian services in the face of climate-induced crises.

⁸ Price, R. et al., 2025. Climate justice and disability: Why including lived experience matters. Institute of Development Studies

⁹ Kett, M., Sriskanthan, G. and Cole, E. 2021. Disability and Climate Justice: A Research Project, Open Society Foundations

¹⁰ Park, J. et al., 2024. Association between heat and hospital admissions in people with disabilities in South Korea: A nationwide, case-crossover study. Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196\(24\)00027-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanph/article/PIIS2542-5196(24)00027-5/fulltext)

2.3 Climate Justice Landscape for Persons with Disabilities at the Global Level

2.3.1 Policy and Institutional Framework

- **The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** It was adopted on 9 May 1992 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The UNFCCC entered into force on 21 March 1994 and has been ratified by nearly all countries of the world. The UNFCCC has been serving as the foundational international treaty for global cooperation to combat climate change, aiming to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.
- **The Paris Agreement:** This is an internationally legally binding treaty aimed at combating climate change, which was adopted on 12 December 2015 during the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, with the participation of 195 Parties. The agreement has called on all member Parties to aim to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels. Not only that, but the Paris Agreement has also now become an important global framework guiding the actions of governments, the private sector, and civil society to address climate change¹¹. Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, countries around the world, along with global and regional multilateral organizations, such as UN Agencies, have been working collectively to address the challenges of climate change.
- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD):** This UN Convention is the first international, legally binding framework that establishes minimum standards for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. It affirms that persons with disabilities are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as everyone else and provides guidance to countries on how to safeguard and promote these rights through laws, policies, and practical measures. Although the Convention does not directly address climate change and its impacts, it encompasses critical areas such as mobility, food and water security, health, education, and employment opportunities, all of which are significantly influenced by the effects of climate change (UN, 2008).¹²

Articles 11 and 32 of the UNCRPD¹¹ are indeed the most critical legal pillars for climate advocacy. Article 11 of the UNCRPD serves as the cornerstone for disability-inclusive climate action. It mandates that States Parties take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters—events increasingly amplified by the climate crisis in Nepal. Although the government has integrated Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) into its latest climate frameworks (e.g., NDC 3.0), a significant implementation gap persists. Inaccessible early warning systems and Nepal's rugged topography continue to leave these communities disproportionately vulnerable to climate-induced disasters. As highlighted by leaders of Nepali OPDs at COP30 (November 2025), there is a growing demand for 20% of local disaster funds to be ring-fenced specifically for disability-inclusive climate resilience.

Furthermore, Article 32 of the UNCRPD provides the legal mandate for international cooperation. It focuses on the funding and resources needed to make that protection potential. This creates a legal obligation for global funding agencies, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and bilateral donors, to ensure that their climate investments do not inadvertently create new barriers. By linking Article 32 with climate action, Nepali advocates are calling for a twin-track approach:

¹¹ Act Alliance, 2022. *Climate Justice*. Available from: <https://actalliance.org/climate-justice/>

¹² UN, 2008. *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. United Nations.

dedicated funding for disability-specific resilience projects alongside the mandatory mainstreaming of disability across all large-scale climate adaptation and mitigation infrastructure.

- **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR):** This framework was adopted in 2015 when the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held Sendai, Miyagi, Japan. This SFDRR aims to achieve a significant reduction of disaster risk and loss of lives, livelihoods, and health, considering economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets. Regarding persons with disabilities, its guiding principles state that a gender, age, disability, and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices. Similarly, the priority of the framework also states that empowering women and persons with disabilities to lead in disaster response and recovery is essential to “*Build Back Better*” and ensure inclusive, resilient, and risk-informed development (UN, 2015¹³).
- **The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The seventeen SDGs, which were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Although the SDGs, except Goal 13, do not directly focus on climate change or climate justice, they provide important entry points for advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities across multiple areas. For instance, Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) have provided space for persons with disabilities. The Goal 13, which is titled Climate Action, is directly related to climate change issues. This goal has called for strengthening capacities for effective climate change–related planning and management, particularly focusing on women, youth, and marginalized communities (UN, 2021).¹⁴
- **The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):** The IPCC is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. This was created to provide policymakers with a scientific assessment report on climate change, its implications and potential future risks. Besides, the panel put forward adaptation and mitigation options. Similarly, the core function of the IPCC is to prepare comprehensive reports that assess the current state of knowledge on climate change. These reports include assessment reports, special reports, and methodology reports. To implement this work program, the IPCC organizes meetings of government representatives, held as plenary sessions of the Panel or its Working Groups, where reports are discussed, approved, adopted, and accepted.

2.3.2 Current Assessment

Despite various global efforts, progress in addressing climate issues for vulnerable countries, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalized communities remains limited. In 2023, a study¹⁵ carried out by the International Disability Alliance (IDA) and McGill University revealed that out of 195 parties to the Paris Agreement, only 39 countries have referenced persons with disabilities in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In other words, nearly 80% of countries have yet to make a single mention of persons with disabilities in their national climate plans. This gap highlights a persistent lack of attention to disability inclusion within climate change discourse—both at the national level and in international negotiations. This neglect stands in contrast to the obligations outlined in Article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹⁶, which requires nations to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in all situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and climate-induced disasters.

¹³ UN, 2015. *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015-2030*. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations

¹⁴ UN, nd. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Disability. United Nations.

¹⁵ IDA, 2022. *Persons with Disabilities and Climate Action*. International Disability Alliance (IDA).

¹⁶ GLAD Network, nd. *Promoting Disability-Inclusive Climate Change Action*. Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network. Available from: https://gladnetwork.net/sites/default/files/DICAGW_Accessible_06162021.pdf

On 23 June 2025, the ninth meeting of the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB), which was held in Bonn, Germany, the UNFCCC¹⁷ reached a critical breaking point. According to it, climate negotiations have systematically failed to deliver climate justice and undermined international law, from marginalizing vulnerable countries, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society, to allowing the richest countries and the largest historical polluters to avoid legal obligations and accountability. Similarly in the meeting, together with over 200 organizations from across the globe, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) calls for the urgent reform of the UNFCCC to ensure effective multilateralism that delivers climate action instead of risking back steps on climate justice and human rights.

It can now be hoped that with this thinking of positive shift in the international framework being translated into action, the long-overlooked agenda of including Persons with disabilities in decision-making processes and ensuring their access to resources, such as climate finance, will gain stronger recognition and tangible action. This change signifies an important step toward ensuring that climate policies and programs are inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the needs and rights of Persons with disabilities. Therefore, meaningful inclusion from local planning to global negotiation will strengthen climate justice and help build more resilient and equitable societies.

2.4 Climate Justice Landscape for Persons with Disabilities at National Level

2.4.1 Legislative Framework

This section aims to inform persons with disabilities about their entitlements and the extent to which they are eligible to actively and meaningfully participate in the development process—including policy formulation and decision-making—regardless of thematic area or subject matter.

The Constitution of Nepal, 2072 (2015) is the first national framework to guarantee the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. The Articles 18 (clauses 1, 2, and 3), 30 (clauses 1 and 2), and 42 (clauses 1 and 3) explicitly ensure the rights of persons with disabilities to live free from discrimination, to enjoy a clean and healthy environment, to participate in state mechanisms based on the principle of proportional inclusion, and to live with dignity and respect.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2017): Interestingly, the Act remains silent on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), as it does not provide for their representation even in the Federal Disaster Management Council. However, building on this Act, the Gandaki Provincial Government has set a positive precedent by including the Chairperson of the Provincial Federation of the Disabled as a member of the Provincial Disaster Management Council, as stipulated in the *Gandaki Disaster Management Regulation, 2020*.

These provisions have been backed up by the “Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2074 (2017)”. Section 12 of the act has clearly mentioned that persons with disabilities have right to participate on their own or through their related unions, organizations in the process of development of important policies that may affect them. Similarly, the section 24 (2) of the Environment Protection Act (2019) has clearly expressed that, while preparing the adaptation place referred to in sub-section (1), special priority must be accorded to women, persons with disabilities, children, senior citizens, and other vulnerable groups. Last but not the least, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, 2017 has also directed the Executive Committee to ensure for development and implementation

¹⁷ FIDH, 2025. Reclaiming climate justice: A united call for urgent reform of the United Nations climate talks ahead of COP30. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). Available from: <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/business-human-rights-environment/reclaiming-climate-justice-united-call-for-unfccc-urgent-reform>

of specific plans and programs for women, children, senior citizens, Dalits, marginalized groups and communities, and persons with disabilities.

These provisions made by the acts signify a progressive step toward institutionalizing inclusion of Persons with disabilities along with other vulnerable groups within the disaster governance framework. If these legislative provisions are effectively implemented, Persons with disabilities will be ensured equitable access to participation, resources, and opportunities within climate-related planning, implementation, and decision-making processes. Such action not only upholds their constitutional and legal rights but also strengthens the inclusiveness, effectiveness, and sustainability of climate actions being done in the country. Besides, their meaningful participation can contribute valuable perspectives on resilience, accessibility, and community-based adaptation—ensuring that climate policies and programs leave no one behind.

2.4.2 Policy Framework

The National Climate Change Policy (2019), National Adaptation Plan (2021-2050), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), among others, are the key policy-level frameworks that have been adopted to deal with the climate change issues. These documents were therefore reviewed to assess the extent to which they recognize and include the concerns and participation of persons with disabilities.

National Climate Change Policy (2019): This is one of the key policy documents that explicitly deals with the country's climate change issues and outlines strategic actions for mitigation and adaptation. While coming to the concern of persons with disabilities, the policy document has included a dedicated chapter titled "Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Livelihoods and Good Governance" under the section of Inter-Thematic Areas. This chapter recognizes the importance of inclusion and equity in climate actions.

Subsection (a) of the "Strategies and Working Policy" explicitly addresses persons with disabilities. This sub-section, along with those concerning other groups, emphasizes that the concerns of persons with all disabilities will be addressed in matters related to climate change, indicating a clear policy commitment. Although this commitment is significant, the real challenge lies in translating these provisions into practice through inclusive planning, resource allocation, and monitoring mechanisms that truly empower persons with disabilities to engage in climate action and decision-making.

National Adaptation Plan (2021-2050): This strategic document, issued by the Government of Nepal in alignment with the Paris Agreement, outlines a total of 64 priority adaptation programs to be implemented in three phases: short-term (by 2025), medium-term (by 2030), and long-term (by 2050). The total indicative cost for implementing these priority programs is estimated at USD 47.4 billion up to 2050.

The Plan identifies persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group and seeks to address their needs under the principle of "leaving no one behind." To reflect this, the plan features a dedicated thematic chapter in Section 6.9. This chapter acknowledges that persons with disabilities, along with children, women and girls, pregnant women, and the elderly, face higher levels of mortality and morbidity due to climate change impacts. In this context, the plan is progressive; however, the overall priority accorded to the issue appears to be inadequate.

Despite having a dedicated thematic chapter, the proposed programs addressing this theme total only four, which represents just 6% of the overall initiatives. Quantitatively, this low priority is reflected in the budget: the indicative allocation for these four programs is a mere 0.07 billion USD, constituting

less than 1.4% of the total funding. Qualitatively, the plan generalizes the concerns of persons with disabilities under the broader category of vulnerable populations, which also includes women, children, Dalit, Madhesi, Indigenous groups, and others. Crucially, the plan does not propose any specific initiative that directly addresses the unique challenge of persons with disabilities. Therefore, it can be concluded that the plan remains silent on recognizing this group as active stakeholders in climate change action. Overall, the document treats persons with disabilities primarily as beneficiaries, not as agents of climate change¹⁸.

The Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 3.0: The NDC 3.0 is Nepal's national commitment document, prepared under the framework of the Paris Agreement, outlining national targets, policies, and measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, enhancing adaptation and resilience, and addressing loss and damage resulting from climate change for the period up to 2035. Regarding disability, a separate chapter on "Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)" has been included among the key considerations for NDC 3.0 implementation. This integration reflects a stronger focus on persons with disabilities. By integrating disability within the GEDSI framework, the NDC 3.0 ensures equitable access to resources, services, and decision-making, and considers the diverse needs and perspectives of all individuals in implementing climate actions. Furthermore, the document clearly emphasizes that persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups will be involved in climate initiatives.

Marginalized and vulnerable groups, including youth, women, children, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, diverse genders, and other minority groups, will be involved in climate initiatives. Likewise, the NDC 3.0 also outlines that local governments will implement climate-resilient and GEDSI-responsive adaptation plans by 2030. Progress will be tracked through GEDSI outcomes, budgeted action plans, and annual GEDSI audits, with full measurement to be completed by 2035. Additionally, the capacity of persons with disabilities to participate meaningfully in climate action will be strengthened by 2030. This commitment presents a significant opportunity for persons with disabilities to leverage the policy framework and ensure their voices are heard.

By engaging in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of climate initiatives, persons with disabilities can help ensure that policies and programs are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to their unique needs. Such participation not only empowers persons with disabilities but also strengthens the effectiveness and sustainability of climate interventions, promoting a more just and resilient society for all. The critical question, however, is how well-equipped persons with disabilities are to effectively utilize this opportunity.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategic Plan of Action (2018-2030): Nepal suffers from climate-induced disasters annually, with estimated losses totaling nearly 1 billion USD between 2021 and 2024¹⁹. From this perspective, the Strategic Plan of Action is crucial for managing these climate-induced disasters and building national resilience. This plan is grounded in the priorities set by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), tailored specifically to Nepal's disaster context.

This plan holds particular importance for persons with disabilities, as they are disproportionately affected by disasters due to physical, social, economic, and institutional barriers. However, the Action Plan appears to have considered persons with disabilities primarily under the broader category of gender and social inclusion, rather than recognizing them as a distinct group requiring specific, targeted interventions.

¹⁸ Also see the article on "Climate Justice in Nepal: From Rhetoric to Reality" which was published on 15 July 2025 in *The Rising Nepal*.

¹⁹ Niroula, A, 2025: *The National Adaptation Plan: A Strategy Roadmap for Climate Resilience*, a paper published in MIMAMSHA.

Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA): The LAPA, introduced in 2011, serves as a national framework to help communities across Nepal identify and respond to local climate challenges. LAPA became more locally grounded following Nepal’s transition to a federal system in 2015. Consequently, rural/municipalities are now responsible for its implementation, integrating climate adaptation into their regular planning and development processes. It has now been institutionalized at the local level—embedded within municipal systems, budgets, and plans.

Regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in LAPA, the findings are mixed. Some of the recently prepared LAPAs have begun to acknowledge and incorporate persons with disabilities into their planning processes. For instance, in one example (see Figure 1), the disaster assessment table categorizes the level of impact on persons with disabilities, where a score of “3” indicates they are highly affected and “1” indicates minimal impact. This reflects a positive shift toward explicitly recognizing their specific vulnerability within local climate adaptation frameworks.

तालिका १४: प्रकोपका घटनाले लक्षित वर्गमा पुर्याउन सक्ने जोखिम पहिचान

प्रकोप	उमेर समुह				लिंग		आर्थिक स्तर				सामाजिक स्तर			जातजाति		
	बालबालीका	युवा	वयस्क	वृद्धवृद्धा	महिला	पुरुष	अति विपन्न	विपन्न	मध्यम	सम्पन्न	अपाङ्गता भएको	गर्भवती	एकल महिला	दलित	जनजाती	ब्राह्मण/क्षेत्री
बाढी	३	१	१	३	३	२	३	२	२	२	३	२	३	३	२	२
पशुरोग	१	२	२	२	३	२	३	३	२	१	२	२	२	३	२	२
रोगकिरा	१	२	२	२	३	२	३	३	२	१	२	३	३	३	२	२
खडेरी	१	२	२	२	३	२	३	३	२	१	३	३	३	३	२	२
पहिरो	३	२	२	३	३	२	३	२	२	१	३	३	३	३	२	२
हावाहुरी	३	२	२	३	२	२	३	३	२	१	३	३	२	२	२	२

Figure 1: Disaster assessment table categorizing the level of impacts on different socio-economic groups²⁰

However, other sources reflect that the explicit inclusion of persons with disabilities in LAPA remains limited. Muhammad (2025),²¹ for example, notes that adaptation plans in Nepal have increasingly integrated women, youth, and indigenous groups into climate governance from 2011 to the present. This indicates that although the process of inclusion has begun, persons with disabilities are yet to be systematically and comprehensively integrated into the LAPA framework—both in planning and implementation. Strengthening this inclusion is crucial to ensure that local adaptation processes truly reflect the principles of equity and “leaving no one behind.”

2.4.3 Institutional Framework

National Council on Environmental Protection and Climate Change Management: Article 32 of the Environment Protection Act (2019) provides for the establishment of a National Council on Environmental Protection and Climate Change Management. Chaired by the Prime Minister, this high-level body is tasked with effectively implementing activities related to environmental protection and climate change at the national level. Similar bodies can be formed in each province. Although the Council includes representatives from relevant line ministries, it currently lacks representation from civil society organizations, including persons with disabilities/OPDs.

National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA): Established by the government in November 2019, the NDRRMA is mandated to address disaster-related issues and

²⁰ Source: LAPA of Helambu Rural Municipality, Sindhupalchowk. Available from:

<https://helabumun.gov.np/sites/helabumun.gov.np/files/all%20cover%20and%20inner%202081.7.13red.pdf>

²¹ Muhammad, S, 2025. *Local adaptation plans in Nepal bring women, youths, and Indigenous groups into climate governance (2011-Present)*. New York University Center on International Cooperation.

their management. Its primary task is to implement the plans, programs, and decisions approved by the National Council.

Notably, the Authority has taken a significant step toward inclusive disaster governance by developing a *Strategic Action Plan for Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)*. This plan aims to foster attitudinal and behavioral change, promote non-discriminatory participation of vulnerable groups, and enhance their meaningful engagement and access in disaster risk reduction and management. Furthermore, the NDRRMA has reinforced its commitment to cross-cutting issues by including the Chairperson of the National Federation of the Disabled - Nepal (NFDN) as a member in the National Steering Committee, whose main task is to ensure the effective implementation of the strategic action plan.

However, a critical gap persists at the decentralized level. Currently, there is a lack of formal participation for persons with disabilities within the District Disaster Risk Management Committees (DDRMC) and Local Disaster Risk Management Committees (LDRMC). Despite this absence of mandated seats, these local committees remain the most vital entry points for influence. By leveraging the National Strategic Action Plan, OPDs can actively advocate for representation within the DDRMC and LDRMC to ensure that local disaster response and climate adaptation are truly inclusive. Without representation in the LDRMC, it is very difficult to ensure that the 20% ring-fenced funds are actually allocated or spent correctly. If persons with disabilities are not in the room when the LDRMC makes decisions, their needs will remain invisible.

2.4.4 Current Assessment

The National Climate Change Policy (2019), National Adaptation Plan (2021–2050), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), among others, form the key policy frameworks adopted to address climate change impacts and associated disaster challenges in Nepal.

Regarding the concerns of persons with disabilities, the review of policy and legislative documents reveals that frameworks developed before 2015 offered limited space for their inclusion. These policy frameworks generally recognize persons with disabilities under the GESI framework, alongside a wide range of groups such as women, Dalits, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized communities. As a result, the specific concerns and priorities of persons with disabilities were often overlooked or inconsistently interpreted by planners and decision-makers, leading to their exclusion from climate-related initiatives.

In recent years, continuous lobbying, advocacy, and awareness efforts by OPDs and stakeholders have successfully promoted government institutions to include persons with disabilities under the GEDSI framework. This is a positive sign. These progressive actions indicate that the government has provided institutional recognition of OPDs and the value of participation by persons with disabilities, along with other marginalized groups, in shaping disaster and climate actions and decisions. Overall, these efforts also demonstrate the government's growing commitment to mainstreaming GEDSI principles across disaster and climate governance frameworks.

However, a critical question remains regarding the actual extent of engagement of persons with disabilities and OPDs in the formulation and design of these policies. Equally critical is their level of participation and recognition during the implementation phase, which ultimately determines whether these frameworks truly embody the principles of inclusion and climate justice.

Therefore, continued capacity strengthening, institutional coordination, and collaboration among the OPDs, along with dedicated resource allocation, will be essential to translate these policy commitments into tangible outcomes that truly benefit persons with disabilities and other vulnerable

populations. Moreover, it is also equally important for OPDs and persons with disabilities themselves to strategically determine how to best utilize the opportunities that the government has created.

2.5 Advocacy Initiatives and Actors

The climate justice landscape for persons with disabilities in Nepal is an evolving but challenging domain, characterized by active advocacy from specialized organizations but with significant gaps in mainstream policy and implementation. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change impacts due to pre-existing barriers, yet their voices and needs are often marginalized.

2.5.1 Advocacy Initiatives and Focus Areas

Climate justice advocacy from a disability lens in Nepal focuses heavily on shifting the narrative from persons with disabilities as passive victims to active agents of change and ensuring disability inclusion is a non-negotiable part of climate action. The advocacy can be differentiated into the following five categories:

- a) Policy and legislative advocacy, where efforts are concentrated on lobbying the Government of Nepal to systematically integrate disability concerns into national frameworks like the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), climate policies, and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies. The advocacy points to existing international (UN CRPD) and national (Disability Rights Act, 2017) obligations.
- b) Capacity strengthening and leadership are other focus area, the key initiatives of which involve training persons with disabilities and their representative OPDs to engage in climate justice discussions. This includes developing their expertise in project management, policy advocacy, and understanding climate science to participate meaningfully at local, national, and international forums like COP events.
- c) The major thrust of Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) is ensuring that early warning systems, evacuation plans, and emergency response and recovery efforts are accessible and inclusive. This means advocating for preparedness and early warnings in accessible formats (sign language, easy-to-read, etc.) and physically accessible infrastructure like shelters.
- d) Advocacy is increasingly supported by targeted research and evidence generation to document the specific impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities, including how intersecting factors like gender and indigeneity compound vulnerability (e.g., indigenous women with disabilities). This evidence is crucial for making a case for inclusive policy and funding.
- e) Cross-sectoral collaboration is another initiative that seeks to build alliances between the disability movement, youth networks, and mainstream climate and environmental organizations, aiming to mainstream disability inclusion across the broader climate justice movement.

2.5.2 Key Actors of Climate Justice Advocacy

A range of actors, predominantly civil society organizations, OPDs/Association-Federation and individuals drive the climate justice agenda for persons with disabilities in Nepal.

- The grassroots persons with disabilities engaged in community-level programs, who provide direct evidence of their lived experiences and adaptation needs, are the foundation of the movement. In addition, Individual advocates or activists like Umesh Balal Magar (youth

climate and disability activist) play a visible role in national and global platforms, amplifying the intersectional perspective.

- Organizations of Persons with Disabilities are the primary drivers of the climate justice movement, ensuring the agenda is rights-based and user-led. For example:
 - BYAN has been actively involved in implementing projects focused on inclusive DRR and climate action, including conducting studies on the climate justice landscape.
 - National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal (NIDWAN) focuses on the intersectional challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples with disabilities, advocating for the recognition of their traditional knowledge in adaptation efforts.
 - National Federation of Disabled Nepal (NFDN), as an apex body of OPDs, plays a critical role in national-level policy advocacy and coordination among various OPDs.
- International and Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs/NGOs) provide essential technical expertise, funding, and platforms for advocacy. For example, CBM Global is an international partner working with OPDs to develop and implement a climate advocacy roadmap and contribute to capacity-strengthening programs. Similarly, Humanity and Inclusion (HI) conducts extensive research on the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities in Nepal and advocates for pathways for inclusive climate action and humanitarian response.
- Government Authorities and Agencies: Although inclusion is often noted in policies under the GESI umbrella, implementation remains weak. The GoN's presence at international forums like COP provides a platform for disability advocates to push their agenda.
- Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies like the Global Green Grants Fund and others provide project funding that enables OPDs and NGOs to carry out specific climate justice and inclusion initiatives.

2.5.3 Key Challenges of Advocacy Initiatives

Despite the dedicated advocacy, significant challenges persist in achieving true climate justice for persons with disabilities in Nepal. The key challenges include:

- **Systemic exclusion and stigma:** Deep-rooted societal stigma and negative perceptions of disability, often compounded by intersectionality (caste, gender, poverty), lead to the systemic exclusion of persons with disabilities from decision-making at all levels.
- **Inaccessible infrastructure and information:** Widespread inaccessibility of physical infrastructure (roads, shelters, evacuation routes) and communication (early warning systems lack formats for sensory disabilities) poses a direct threat during climate-induced disasters.
- **Policy-implementation gap:** Although the GoN has some inclusive policies, there's a significant disconnect between policy commitment and the practical, resourced implementation of disability-inclusive measures in climate action and DRR plans.
- **Lack of disaggregated data:** There is a scarcity of robust, disaggregated quantitative data linking climate impacts with specific disability types and intersecting identities, hindering evidence-based policy development and targeted programming.
- **Limited funding:** OPDs and disability-inclusive climate projects often face challenges in accessing dedicated climate finance, which remains largely focused on broader sectoral approaches, overlooking the specific costs of reasonable accommodation and full inclusion.

2.6 Discourses and Narratives

The climate justice landscape in Nepal currently presents a battleground of narratives, wherein the activist movement strives to replace the traditional, deficit-based lens with one fundamentally rooted in human rights, dignity, and inclusive leadership to ensure a truly just and resilient future. The climate justice discourse concerning persons with disabilities is characterized by a critical transition. Although the narrative of exclusive vulnerability still dominates mainstream discussions, the focus is shifting towards championing inclusive agency and intersectionality. The prevailing discourse, particularly in government policy documents and general media, accurately emphasizes the heightened vulnerability of persons with disabilities to climate change impacts and disasters. However, this narrative is incomplete, as it often focuses exclusively on deficits.

The primary narrative highlights how pre-existing barriers (attitudinal, physical, and communication) are exacerbated by climate hazards, such as floods, landslides, and droughts. This dynamic means that persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected due to factors like inaccessible information and infrastructure, as well as their exclusion from essential relief and health services.

The climate justice discourse often utilizes a “Victim” lens, which typically positions persons with disabilities as passive recipients of aid or victims of circumstance, instead of recognizing them as rights-holders or active participants in solution-building. This framing reinforces systemic ableism and ultimately limits their meaningful participation.

A counter-narrative, vigorously led by OPDs and their allies, is also gaining traction within the climate justice movement. This emerging perspective effectively frames the issue as one of justice, rights, and capacity, marking the most crucial shift from viewing persons with disabilities as victims to agents of change. Key disability activists and OPDs actively argue that persons with disabilities are not merely vulnerable but are essential contributors to policy and implementation for an equitable and sustainable future, leveraging their experiential knowledge of barriers and unique adaptive strategies.

The climate justice movement grounds the demand for inclusion in national and international human rights obligations, notably the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Consequently, it reframes exclusion from climate action as a violation of rights rather than a logistical oversight. For persons with disabilities, climate justice fundamentally entails the right to life, safety, and meaningful participation.

A vital and increasingly evidence-based discourse focuses on the intersecting layers of oppression that compound vulnerability beyond disability alone. This shift in narrative spotlights specific groups defined by the intersectionality of identity, including indigenous women with disabilities, and those compounded marginalization due to caste and poverty. This emerging narrative highlights the severe impact of climate change on mental health and psychosocial well-being, arguing that the stress, loss of livelihoods, and disruption of support systems are often overlooked in humanitarian and climate response, particularly for persons with psychosocial disabilities.

Despite the progress in advocacy, several critical gaps in the discourse and narrative remain. The key gaps include:

- Scarcity of evidence: Scarce robust, disaggregated quantitative data linking specific climate impacts with diverse disability types, making policy general lacking the necessary specificity and targeted funding.
- Policy-practice disconnect: Inclusion is mentioned in policy, but the discourse fails to adequately translate to resourced local implementation and budget allocation.

- Much of the narrative centers on sudden-onset disasters (floods), often neglecting the slow-onset impacts of climate change (e.g., shifting livelihoods) and the long-term impact on health, food security and livelihood autonomy for persons with disabilities.
- The disability discourse often remains siloed within humanitarian and disability-focuses organizations, failing to meaningfully infiltrate the mainstream climate discussions.

2.7 Gap, Barriers and Opportunities

2.7.1 Inadequate policy address

Over the past decade, the government has made noteworthy progress in formulating policies and legal framework including strategies to deal with climate change issues. Still, these frameworks have not sufficiently addressed the prominent issues of persons with disabilities and ensured climate justice for them as well. Most climate-related policies and legal documents lack explicit provisions to ensure inclusive participation, representation, and protection of these groups within decision-making and implementation processes. For instance, the *Environment Protection Act, 2019*, does not include provisions for the representation of persons with disabilities or other marginalized groups in the Environment Protection and Climate Change Management National Council, which plays a central role in guiding climate and environmental governance. This absence reflects a broader policy gap where the intersection of disability inclusion and climate justice remains overlooked.

Simple example of policy implementation gap: Public buses in Kathmandu have provisions to reserve certain seats for persons with disabilities, which is a positive step. However, the overall design and structure of these buses make them inaccessible to many categories of persons with difficulties.

2.7.2 Limited strategic direction of OPDs in climate action

It has been noticed that OPDs have yet to establish a clear strategic direction to address climate-related issues. This framework is important as it works as milestone and that also guides the OPDs to progress and sustain the institution for the welfare of its members. Most OPDs primarily focus on disability rights, accessibility, and social protection, with limited engagement in climate governance, adaptation, or disaster risk reduction processes. The absence of a dedicated strategy or framework restricts their ability to influence climate policies, mobilize resources, and advocate for disability-inclusive climate actions.

2.7.3 Social Stigma

Despite the progress in recognizing and providing space for persons with disabilities by Nepalese society, deep-rooted social stigma and misconception still exist. Many people still do not believe that such persons with disabilities can equally contribute to the development sector; rather, they perceive persons with disabilities as individuals who need sympathy, not genuine engagement. Even when people are aware of the issues, persons with disabilities are often excluded from consultations and meaningful engagement when it comes time for actual participation. Likewise, although policy makers or decision makers are aware of rights of persons with disabilities, they unintentionally exclude these vulnerable groups when it comes to policy formulation, program design, and implementation. In most cases, even when persons with disabilities are engaged, it is often noticed their engagement is either tokenistic or superficial. As a result, their needs and priorities are often overlooked or excluded from policies and programs.

2.7.4 Resource Constraints

Around 10 representative OPDs covering different category of persons with disabilities and their federation organization are functioning at the moment for betterment of persons with disabilities. These OPDs are often facing challenge for resource mobilization, hindering their ability to engage

effectively in climate action initiatives. In many cases, they have to heavily depend on donor funding, which is slacking at present circumstances in Nepal due to donor's funding context. In long run, such dependency undermines the long-term sustainability and their strategic roles in climate governance.

2.7.5 Disintegrating of Human Rights into Climate Justice

The primary challenge for most persons with disabilities today lies in ensuring their basic survival needs within the prevailing political, economic, and social context of Nepal. These challenges differ across various categories of disabilities. Although many persons with disabilities are now aware of their constitutional and legal rights and the government's limited efforts to address their needs, they are consequently compelled to focus on immediate livelihood and survival concerns, rather than on climate concerns. Consequently, climate change and environmental issues are receiving lower priority among persons with disabilities, despite the fact that they are among the groups most severely affected by climate change impacts and associated disasters.

“Survival is more important than climate justice”

One person with disabilities interviewed during the KII strongly emphasized that “Climate concerns are their lowest priority, because their primary challenge is meeting daily survival needs (right-based needs)”.

2.7.6 Coordination and Collaboration Gaps

During the key informant interviews, a serious concern raised by the key informants is about the inadequate coordination and collaboration among OPDs. This is also noticed between OPDs and other stakeholders, including governments, International Non-Governmental Organizations, and environmental-related organizations. Such coordination and collaboration are often underdeveloped, limiting the impact of OPDs in climate discussions. This fragmentation has resulted in overlapping efforts, weak representation, and limited collective influence of OPDs in national and local climate dialogues. Besides, this lack also limits the sharing of information, pooling of resources, and development of a joint advocacy agenda on climate initiatives. Therefore, there is a need for a structured collaboration and coordination mechanism in OPDs.

2.7.8 Inadequate research and development on persons with disabilities

The review of documents revealed that this part has not been given that much priority. On the contrary, research and development (R&D) focused on Persons with disabilities is essential to identify their specific needs, challenges, and opportunities for inclusion in all aspects of climate actions and initiatives. Evidence generated through research helps design informed policies, programs, and technologies that promote accessibility, equity, and empowerment so that Persons with disabilities can fight the climate change agenda. While reviewing, it was noticed that there is “the Disability Research Center-Nepal (DRCN)” and it is working on a publication on disability issues, which is good. Unfortunately, the center is even facing challenges due to limited resources.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusion

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by climate change hazards such as floods, landslides, droughts, and shifting weather patterns. Despite their heightened vulnerability, they remain largely excluded from climate justice policies, programs, and decision-making processes due to systemic barriers in mobility, communication, access to resources, and persistent social stigma. National frameworks on climate adaptation and resilience still lack strong provisions for disability inclusion, while key climate actors—from government institutions to civil society and development partners—often operate in isolation, with minimal coordination or shared accountability. This fragmentation has resulted in limited advocacy space, weak institutional collaboration, and the continued marginalization of Persons with disabilities in climate action planning and implementation.

Nepal's climate justice discourse emphasizes its severe climate vulnerability and minimal contribution to global emissions, framing climate change as a human rights violation rather than just an environmental issue. This discourse, driven by both international advocacy and the local experiences of marginalized groups like women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and other ethnic minorities highlights the disproportionate impacts of climate change and calls for global responsibility and robust domestic action to protect vulnerable communities. Although Nepal is active in international climate forums and has developed policies, its discourse also critiques the technocratic nature of official policies. It demands greater integration of local realities, stronger enforcement, and dedicated legal frameworks to address the gap between policy and practice on the ground.

Nepal's climate justice movement highlights its unique position as a mountainous, Least Developed Country (LDC) that contributes minimally to greenhouse gas emissions but faces disproportionate and devastating climate impacts, such as melting glaciers and extreme weather. This is framed as a profound injustice, where the country is punished for a problem it did not create. There's a strong emphasis on viewing climate change through a human rights lens, focusing on the differential impacts on vulnerable groups like women, children, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities, who often lack the resources and capacity to cope with climate events.

Nepal has leveraged its vulnerability in international forums, notably by submitting a compelling argument to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to hold developed nations accountable and demand climate justice. Domestically, the discourse emphasizes the need to move beyond purely technocratic policies by incorporating local knowledge and the lived realities of affected communities. Efforts like community mapping are used to understand and address how climate change affects access to essential services like water and healthcare.

Critically, the discourse also highlights that Nepal's domestic policies are often top-down, lacking enforcement mechanisms, and failing to adequately protect vulnerable populations or prioritize climate victims. Therefore, the movement for climate justice in Nepal requires a shift away from solely technical solutions toward more radical socio-political and cultural changes. This must be accompanied by stronger enforcement of existing policies and the potential establishment of a dedicated climate law and specialized environmental courts to provide greater legal protection for the marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities.

3.2 Recommendations

The findings of this study have implications for the Nepal Government; organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs); national and international non-government organizations, donor agencies and development partners working in the field of inclusive climate action; persons with disabilities themselves; and other institutions involved in the inclusive climate justice movement, both in Nepal and globally. The results of this study point to a number of important recommendations to improve the inclusive climate justice landscape in Nepal, which are presented below.

3.2.1 Addressing the Inadequate Policy Gap

Recommendation 1: As climate impacts increasingly drive national development priorities, the government should prioritize the comprehensive revision of existing climate policies to ensure they are robust and inclusive. Rather than creating separate legislation, it is vital to integrate clear, enforceable provisions that safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups within the current legal framework. This approach ensures that institutional responsibilities for climate justice are explicitly defined across all sectors. To achieve this, persons with disabilities and their OPDs must engage in strategic lobbying and advocacy to ensure that "inclusive climate action" is not just a policy statement, but a mandatory requirement in all national and local climate implementation plans.

Recommendation 2: The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) and the Environment Protection Act (2019) are two key legislations directly relevant to persons with disabilities. These acts should be reviewed through a Post Legislative Scrutiny (PLS²²) process to assess status of implementation. Although the Disability Policy 2080 (2023) has introduced a more modern framework, a critical review is required to ensure it sufficiently addresses the intersection of disability and climate justice. Currently, the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC) is formulating a 10-Year Action Plan based on the 2080 Policy. This presents a vital opportunity for OPDs to advocate for the inclusion of specific, climate-resilient provisions within this plan. Therefore, OPDs should sensitize and engage members of both federal and provincial parliaments to institutionalize the PLS process, while simultaneously lobbying MoWCSC to ensure that the 10-Year Action Plan includes clear mandates for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation.

Recommendation 3: Under the Constitution of Nepal, provincial and local governments have a clear mandate to develop and implement their own acts and regulations. Although some progress has been made—notably Gandaki Province, which has endorsed its own Disability Act, and Sudurpaschim Province, which has developed a dedicated Disability Policy—significant legislative gaps remain across other provinces, particularly regarding environment-related laws.

At the local level, the Local Government Operation Act (2017) grants municipalities the authority to enact laws that address local needs. Therefore, OPDs should strategically lobby provincial and local governments to replicate the successful models of Gandaki and Sudurpaschim. Advocacy must focus on:

- Provincial level: Ensuring all provinces enact disability-specific legislation that integrates climate-resilience and disaster risk management.

²² This is a parliamentary process where the respective parliament committee will assess their effectiveness, implementation status, and impact of the acts and accordingly revise the act.

- Local level: Securing formal representation for persons with disabilities within Local Disaster Risk Management Committees (LDRMC). This is essential to institutionalize the demand for 20% of local disaster funds to be ring-fenced for disability-inclusive climate action.

3.2.2 Limited Strategic Direction of OPDs in Climate Action

Recommendation: It is suggested that OPDs should prepare a comprehensive strategic framework that guides how OPDs or persons with disabilities should engage in climate-related actions and resilient building initiatives.

3.2.3 Social Stigma

Recommendation 1: Continuation of disability inclusive education and sensitization programs for the general public is crucial to challenge the existing stigma and misconceptions. Simultaneously, strategic engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative OPDs in climate actions needs to be ensured either through appropriate policy and legislative frameworks. These frameworks should promote and operationalize the principle of *“Nothing About Us Without Us”*. Additionally, an advocacy and lobbying mechanism needs to be developed and operationalized so that OPDs can effectively influence policymakers and decision makers.

Recommendation 2: Self-advocacy and mobilization are essential to raise the voice of persons with disabilities. Silence dissatisfaction will not solve inclusive climate justice related problems. No one is going to raise voice on persons with disabilities’ behalf. The Constitution has given you the rights, but it is up to persons with disabilities how to use them and they must take initiative to seek engagement, as opportunities will not automatically materialize.

3.2.4 Resource Constraints

Recommendation: Since donor funding is for short term solution, OPDs should proactively explore for a long-term funding solution. For this, the following opportunities are suggested.

- Forge partnership or seek funding support from rural municipalities and/or municipalities to access locally available resources. The Local Self Governance Act (2017) includes such provisions in the act. For example: Section 11 of article 3 of the act states the local government (rural municipalities and municipalities) shall establish disaster management fund, its operationalization, and resource mobilization as well.
- Encourage to run micro- and social enterprises that generates income for persons with disabilities and their families. Rural municipalities and municipalities also have provisions for such support.
- Build partnership with business houses, financial institutions, accredited entities or private sectors. These organizations could be a good funding source as they have mandate for corporate social responsibility (CSR). They can be good supporting partners.

3.2.5 Disintegrating of Human Rights into Climate Justice

Recommendation: This gap highlights an urgent need to link disability inclusion with climate resilience, ensuring that both individual and institutional capacities of persons with disabilities and OPDs are strengthened. This capacity building must enable them to participate meaningfully in climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and policy formulation and implementation/advocacy. To achieve this, the government and OPDs should prioritize integrating livelihood security with climate resilience for persons with disabilities. This can be accomplished by encouraging collaboration between OPDs, local governments, and development partners (I/NGOs) to design and implement context-specific, disability-inclusive resilience programs.

3.2.6 Coordination and Collaboration Gaps

Recommendation 1: Synergy, collaboration, and strong coordination among the OPDs and with other like-minded non-disability organizations should be encouraged. Such actions not only strengthen their level of working capacity but also create a unified voice that can effectively engage policymakers and influence climate governance. To achieve this, a structured coordination and collaboration mechanism or strategy should be developed and implemented.

Recommendation 2: Persons with disabilities are part of every community, regardless of caste, ethnicity, or occupational sector. Their needs and challenges are therefore cross-cutting and should be addressed through inclusive community and development initiatives by other organizations as well. For example, non-governmental organizations led by representatives of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and other groups often work closely with vulnerable populations. Engaging and collaborating with these organizations can strengthen the capacity to fight against climate issues that have affected persons with disabilities. Such collaboration also supports effective resource mobilization and helps prevent duplication of efforts and fosters a more integrated and inclusive approach to climate action and initiatives.

Recommendation 3: Media engagement plays a crucial role in amplifying the initiatives undertaken by OPDs. Strategic collaboration with media outlets can help highlight the positive contributions and achievements of OPDs, while also raising awareness about the challenges and impacts that Persons with disabilities face due to climate change. Such partnerships can serve as powerful advocacy tools to influence public perception, inform government policies, and draw the attention of international organizations and development partners. Moreover, effective media engagement can help attract financial and technical support by showcasing the relevance and impact of OPD-led initiatives, thereby strengthening their capacity to implement inclusive climate actions and community resilience programs.

3.2.7 Inadequate research and development on persons with disabilities

Recommendation: Any climate-related intervention focusing on Persons with disabilities should be data-driven rather than assumption-based to ensure more effective and inclusive outcomes. Therefore, a dedicated research center should be promoted with a clear mandate for research and data management on disability and climate issues. Since a research center already exists, it would be more strategic to strengthen the existing DRCN, enhancing its capacity and mandate to generate evidence, manage data, and inform inclusive policies and practices.

Annex 1: List of Key Documents Reviewed

1. Global level climate policy and institutional frameworks
 - The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
 - The Paris Agreement
 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)
 - The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
 - Sustainable Development Goals
 - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

2. Legislative framework at national level
 - The Constitution of Nepal
 - Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2074 (2017)
 - Environment Protection Act (2019)

3. Policy frameworks
 - National Climate Change Policy (2019)
 - National Adaptation Plan (2021-2050)
 - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0)
 - Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategic Plan of Action (2018-2030)
 - National Framework on Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA)
 - NDRRMA Strategic Action Plan for Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI).

Annex 2: Checklist for Key Informant Interview

A. Informant and Institutional Status

- Could you please describe your current role and how your institution/organization is involved in climate change action and/or disability inclusion in Nepal?
- How does your work specifically intersect with the issue of climate justice for persons with disabilities? If your organization is not working in this area, how do you see the importance of climate justice and inclusion?
- From your perspective, what is the single biggest challenge persons with disabilities in Nepal face in the context of climate change impacts (e.g., floods, landslides, droughts)?
- How would you rate the general awareness and technical knowledge regarding the link between disability rights and climate action within your sector/institution?
- What opportunities exist for persons with disabilities and OPDs to formally participate in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of local-level CCA and DRR projects?
- What are the key barriers preventing the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in climate governance forums (e.g., climate and disaster committee meetings, policy consultations) at the national, provincial, and local levels in Nepal?
- How is the unique knowledge and lived experience of persons with disabilities regarding climate resilience and adaptation (e.g., local coping strategies, accessible solutions) valued and documented in Nepal's climate strategies?
- Do existing climate narratives and public awareness campaigns in Nepal visibly represent persons with disabilities as active agents and rights-holders, rather than just as vulnerable victims? Please give examples.
- To what extent do climate policies and programs acknowledge the intersectionality of disability with other marginalized identities (e.g., caste, gender, geography, indigeneity) when defining climate vulnerability and response?
- In your view, is the right of persons with disabilities to a safe and sustainable environment recognized as a fundamental human right within Nepal's climate justice discourse?

B. Synthesis and Recommendations (Climate Justice)

- What are the top three priority actions needed to advance climate justice for persons with disabilities in Nepal? (e.g., policy, funding, data, technology, or attitude change)
- What are the three major gaps or hurdles that needed to be addressed to include persons with disabilities in climate change sector?
- Can you share any examples of innovative, accessible technologies or communication methods being used or needed to ensure persons with disabilities have access to climate information and early warnings?
- How can climate finance, both international and domestic, be made more accessible and responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and DPOs?
- In your ideal vision for a climate-just Nepal, how would the inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities be fully realized within all climate change initiatives?
- What concrete recommendations would you propose to OPDs, the Government of Nepal, and development partners to strengthen disability-inclusive climate justice in the next five years?
- Based on your experience, what are the most promising practices or "quick wins" for local governments in Nepal to immediately enhance the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in their climate initiatives?