

United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), Glasgow UK

## COP26: HI calls States to protect and include people with disabilities in the face of climate change



Ottawa, 29 October 2021. The rate of disasters linked to natural hazards has increased by 5 times in the last 50 years, exacerbating humanitarian needs worldwide. The rising threat of climate change has long been a critical concern for Humanity & Inclusion (HI). Since 1970, natural disasters caused over 2 million deaths, and people with disabilities are among the most exposed. In an effort to combat the issue and promote collaborative global climate action, the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties is hosting its 26<sup>th</sup> summit (COP26) in Glasgow from October 31 - November 12, 2021. For the first time, HI will be in attendance, calling states and policymakers to include people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and climate action protocol.

- As a result of climate change, **the rate of disasters linked to natural hazards has increased by 5 times in the last 50 years<sup>1</sup>**. There have been over 11,000 disasters linked to weather, climate or water hazards since 1970, causing **over 2 million deaths**, and **over \$3.64 trillion USD in economic losses**. Weather, climate and water-related disasters make up half of all disasters. Droughts, storms, floods and extreme temperatures caused over 1.8 million deaths between 1970 and 2019.

<sup>1</sup> <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/weather-related-disasters-increase-over-past-50-years-causing-more-damage-fewer>

- In the over 11,000 disasters linked to natural hazards that occurred between 1970 and 2019, more than **91% of resulting deaths occurred in middle to low income countries**<sup>2</sup> due to reduced ability to cope with disaster.
- **15% of the world's population lives with a disability, with a disproportionate number living in middle to low income countries. People with disabilities are at increased risk** of morbidity and mortality during a disaster as compared to the general population. In a global survey from 2013, **only 20% of people with disabilities reported being able to evacuate without difficulty**. 71% reported having no preparation plan for emergencies. 50% of people with disabilities reported that they wish to participate in disaster risk reduction efforts.
- People with disabilities are rarely included in disaster planning. A United Nations global survey among 5,450 people with disabilities in 126 countries reported that **only 17% were aware of disaster management plans in their communities, and only 14% had been consulted** regarding these plans<sup>3</sup>. People in wheelchairs or with assistive devices are unable to access evacuation routes or shelters. People with low vision are not given adapted risk education materials. These oversights mean **people with disabilities are left behind**.
- The impacts of climate change including climate-induced disasters are **even more severe on individuals experiencing multiple forms of marginalization** and exclusion based not only on disability but also gender and age.
- Climate change negatively impacts the lives, health, well-being and economic status of people with disabilities. Severe weather or temperatures can lead to **loss of livelihoods, shelter, and food security**, affecting individuals long after the event has passed. Malnutrition and undernutrition resulting from agricultural deterioration and drought can result in **developmental delays or disabilities in children**. Following a disaster, there is an increase in the number of people with physical, sensory and psychosocial impairments. It is estimated that **for every death in a disaster, an additional three people are injured or disabled**.

#### Quotes:

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.undrr.org/news/un-global-survey-explains-why-so-many-people-living-disabilities-die-disasters>



“In the Philippines, when there is a typhoon, we see older people and people with disabilities struggle to navigate flooded streets. There are no facilities to pick them up and take them to safety. Shelters are not accessible. So, we worked with families and local authorities to identify a suitable evacuation route and an accessible school that could welcome people during emergencies.”

“HI has a strong presence on the ground where we implement projects directly with communities. By attending COP26, we are eager to provide the perspective of a disability and inclusion NGO who is really hands-on and can testify regarding the impacts of climate change on the ground and what it means for vulnerable groups. Then we can share our experience in the field and some operational and practical recommendations to address it.”

“Across the whole disaster risk management project cycle, there is a lot of room to strengthen disability inclusion. It starts by making sure that we have representatives of all groups, and then meaningfully fostering their participation. Organizations do not always have the reflex to proactively seek to include people with disabilities, the elderly, or isolated women. Evacuation plans rarely consider people with limited mobility. Shelters are often inaccessible to people using wheelchairs. If we don't include people from the beginning, we miss out on providing life-saving opportunities for them.”

-Jennifer M'VOUAMA, HI Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Policy & Development

**HI will have 3 staff representatives in attendance and spokespersons for the topic:**

- **Jennifer M'VOUAMA** (Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Policy & Development Advocate) (EN, FR)
- **George GRAHAM** (Chief Executive, HI UK) (EN)
- **Ruby HOLMES** (Inclusive Governance Technical Advisor). (EN)

## HI's role



- Today, HI experts worldwide prepare for and respond to droughts, cyclones, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, among other events- all of which create or magnify vulnerability.
- HI offers the unique **expertise of both inclusive humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction in a wide range of global contexts**. Decades of experience working alongside communities and persons with disabilities have contributed to a foundation of knowledge and practices that ensure the meaningful participation and consideration of vulnerable populations and people with disabilities in emergency preparation and response settings.
- Currently operating **disaster risk reduction actions in 17 countries** and **humanitarian projects in 46 countries**, HI aims to share its inclusive practices with other global actors, and improve its understanding of how vulnerability is compounded by climate change to ensure that nobody is left behind.
- On **November 5<sup>th</sup>** (15h30-17h30), HI will be speaking at the event “**An inclusive planet: inclusion, mental health and climate change**” with CBM UK. The event aims to highlight the impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities, advocate for climate change action to include participation from people with disabilities, offer suggestions on inclusive resilience measures, and foster an inclusive mentality in climate action approaches. It will be available in-person to the general public and livestreamed on the COP26 YouTube Channel.
- In attending events, exhibits, and panel discussions throughout the COP26 summit, HI is advocating for:

- **The inclusion of people with disabilities and their representative organizations** in disaster planning processes, climate governance processes and humanitarian programs.
  - The **accessibility of information**, education and communication (IEC) materials on climate change
  - The **collection of data** to better document the impacts of climate change on under-represented groups, including persons with disabilities;
  - Efforts to **increase disaster risk reduction and adaptation financing** and ensure it is disability-inclusive
- In preparation for the COP26 event, HI has been partnering with the **Voices for Change** campaign to collect messages for global policymakers advocating for equal treatment, meaningful participation, inclusion and protection of people with disabilities amid climate change action.

### **About Humanity & Inclusion**

HI is an independent international aid organisation. It has been working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for nearly 40 years. Working alongside people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our actions and voice are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was founded in 1982, Humanity & Inclusion (formerly Handicap International) has set up development programmes in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. There are eight national associations within the network (Germany, Belgium, Canada, United States, France, Luxembourg, UK and Switzerland), working tirelessly to mobilise resources, co-manage projects and increase the impact of the organisation's principles and actions. HI is one of six founding organisations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize and winner of the Conrad N. Hilton Award in 2011. HI takes action and campaigns in places where "living in dignity" is no easy task."

**More information on [www.hi-canada.org](http://www.hi-canada.org)**

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