**Written submission by**

**International Labour Organization**

**to the questionnaire in relation to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/41/21 on human rights and climate change**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) welcomes the opportunity to submit observations on the envisaged study on the promotion and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change.

**Questionnaire**

*1. Please describe the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of persons with disabilities. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.*

How trends in the future world of work, including climate change, play out for persons with disabilities will be determined largely by the local and national policies of governments and social partners. If the principles of a just transition are done right by, the world of work will move towards a more inclusive and empowering situation for persons with disabilities. They would have equal opportunities at benefitting from new or upgraded green jobs and the economic empowerment those jobs can offer. For example, skills development initiatives in the renewable energy sector that are disability-inclusive could pave the way for an effective match of green jobs with applicants with disabilities. Similarly, education and training systems focused on conservation agriculture, renewable energy, sustainable tourism or green urban design, among others, could direct efforts at including trainees with disabilities and in doing so, equip them with the knowledge and competencies to compete in the emerging green job market. Furthermore, inclusive social protection systems could also play an important role in minimizing threats faced by persons with disabilities from both climate impacts and climate actions. In turn, these could contribute towards creating an atmosphere that enables people to invest in their own productive capacity, giving them the potential to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship, both of which are vital for strengthening climate action and building a low-carbon economy.

It is noteworthy that in addition to the greening of the economy, other forces such as those of technological innovations, demographic trends, and globalization are also having a profound impact on the nature and future of work.[[1]](#footnote-1) For example, exponential technological change, often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, is transforming every aspect of life and in the world of work is leading to new opportunities (e.g. the home-based gig economy and new tools for accessibility) and at the same time exacerbating inequality (e.g. through job automation and increased demand for highly skilled labour). People living longer has led to an increased demand for life-long learning opportunities and calls for redefining the thresholds of ‘retirement’. Cultural attitudes to work are also changing and in some parts of the world are translating to increased emphasis on establishing time sovereignty and work-life balance.[[2]](#footnote-2) In formulating just transition plans, keeping these factors in mind will also prove to be relevant, as some aspects will pose challenges to strengthening climate action, while others could be leveraged and built upon for shaping a low-carbon economy.

*2. Please describe any relevant commitments, legislation, policies and other measures that you have taken, in compliance with applicable international human rights law, in particular the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to promote an approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation that ensures the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of persons with disabilities. Please also note and identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments including their means of implementation.*

ILO. 2015. Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (Geneva). Available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/publications/WCMS_432859/lang--en/index.htm>

*3. Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected persons with disabilities, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e. discrimination based on a combination of multiple grounds, including disability, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, nationality and migration status).*

With respect to the world of work, persons with disabilities have historically faced serious challenges hampering their ability to contribute equally, which is not only a violation of their rights but a loss for our societies and economies. Many persons with disabilities continue to face discrimination with respect to opportunities, treatment and outcomes in the world of work. This is evident from both the quantitative and the qualitative angles.

Quantitatively, there is disproportionately low representation of persons with disabilities in the global labour market. Across eight geographical regions, the employment-to-population ratio (EPR) for persons with disabilities aged 15 years and older is 36 per cent on average, whereas the EPR for persons without disabilities is 60 per cent.[[3]](#footnote-3) In the European Union, about 47 per cent of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 72 per cent of persons without disabilities.[[4]](#footnote-4) A staggering 70-80 per cent of working-age people with disabilities across Africa are unemployed.[[5]](#footnote-5) In India - home to 15 per cent of the global population - almost three out of four persons with disabilities are excluded from the labour force.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Second, in terms of quality, even when persons with disabilities are employed, they face obstacles such as poor promotional prospects and poor working conditions. They are also more likely to be in contingent, part-time and low-paid jobs. This is mostly not out of choice but as a consequence of a lack of opportunities in the formal economy and in the absence of other means of livelihood. Consequently, they also face a lack of social protection.

Impacts from climate change are exacerbating both the quantitative and qualitative challenges confronted by persons with disabilities in the world of work. For instance, when there are reduced job opportunities due to economic losses from climate disasters, persons with disabilities may especially struggle to find work as employers harbor misconceptions about their work capacities. On the other hand, those with mobility limitations and health conditions may find heat stress causing their manual labour to become hazardous, or difficult for them to continue doing. Extreme weather events can have multiple effects on the lives of persons with disabilities, including injury, loss of accessibility, or damages to assistive devices, which can severely impact their livelihoods and employment. Furthermore, poorly designed action to combat climate change can exacerbate exclusions and worsen conditions for persons with disabilities in the world of work, while at the same time weakening climate action and sustainable development.

*4. Please describe mechanisms and tools that can be used to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of persons with disabilities.*

N/A

*5. Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of persons with disabilities in the context of the adverse effects of climate change. Please include examples that highlight multilateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented in close consultation with and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.*

The Gaibandha Model in Bangladesh: disability-inclusive resilience

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries with respect to climate change. Water stress, sea level rise, cyclones and flooding are just some of the hazards the country is faced with. In Gaibandha district in northern Bangladesh, flooding is a recurring hazard which, apart from risking loss of life, is also proving to be extremely expensive for the communities.

CBM in collaboration with a local NGO called GUK, intervened at three levels: at the household level, people with disabilities were identified and supported individually with rehabilitation measures and livelihood support. At the community level, self-help groups of people with disabilities and community-based Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC) were established. At municipal level, formal DPOs were established for the first time, consisting of representatives from all self-help groups.

Every member of the self-help groups received individual guidance and counselling to find themselves an appropriate livelihood and get the necessary assistive devices to enable them to sustain their employment or business. At the same time, a community plan was developed for leaving no one behind in case of flooding. A system was developed whereby when a flood is expected, persons with disabilities who are likely not to receive the early warning are alerted through individual house visits to ensure that no one is left behind. The Gaibandha Model encompasses both targeted employment support for persons with disabilities as well as inclusive governance mechanisms that ensure that persons with disabilities are not bearing the brunt of climate change.

Targeted capacity-building and transparency by Siemens Gamesa Renewable

Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy, based in Spain, is the world’s second-largest wind turbine company and provides onshore and offshore wind services around the world.

In Hull, UK, Siemens Gamesa partnered with Pathway Plus in 2017 to offer internships to students with disabilities and subsequently provide them employment at Siemens Gamesa in the UK. Interns were given work placements in various departments in the wind turbine blade factory to build their capacity and develop skills necessary for factory employment. This kind of targeted capacity-building can ensure that the skills persons with disabilities gain are aligned with the needs of the sector.

In Canada, Siemens Gamesa publicly announced a multi-year accessibility plan for 2017–2021 that aims to remove accessibility barriers for its employees and customers and to align its operations with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA). The accessibility plan focuses on concrete steps to remove barriers and enhance the experience of both employees and customers with disabilities. Making such a plan public can increase transparency and accountability for a business and ultimately inspire trust and goodwill.

Électricité de France, an emerging actor in renewable energy and disability inclusion

The French electric utility company Électricité de France (EDF) was the first producer of renewable electricity in Europe. It currently produces 8 gigawatts (GW) of renewable electricity but aims to amplify its production to over 50 GW by 2030 to become ‘an efficient, responsible electricity company that champions low-carbon growth’.

EDF is also a member of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN). The company’s foray into disability inclusion began over 25 years ago when it signed an agreement with trade unions on professional inclusion for persons with disabilities. With the help of experts across multiple fields, EDF has established multi-stakeholder networks to support employees with disability issues and monitor progress against disability action plans. This kind of disability-specific governance mechanism is a go-to resource for employees with and without disabilities, thereby creating a more enabling environment for informed and disability-sensitive decision-making and implementation across the board.

*6. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities.*

Key ILO recommendations to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in a just transition to a low-carbon economy:

Governments can:

* Formulate national plans for a just transition, creating decent work as well as green jobs, in line with the ILO “Climate Action for Jobs” initiative presented by the UN Secretary-General at the 2019 Climate Summit and ensure space for persons with disabilities in the plans.
* Ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and in just transition strategies and plans, including through consultation and engagement with disabled people’s organizations (DPOs) and networks.
* Ensure mainstream public employment services, including any specialized green job employment services, are accessible for persons with disabilities.
* Ensure all green skills development, including TVET systems, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship programmes, are accessible to persons with disabilities.
* In plans to manage and reduce the adverse impacts of climate change through social protection programmes, ensure that persons with disabilities are prioritized.
* Review public legal frameworks to ensure that green jobs and green contracts promote disability inclusion, e.g. by adding a requirement of employing a locally determined percentage of persons with disabilities.
* Collect disability-disaggregated data on labour markets, including new and emerging green sectors.

Enterprises can:

* Implement the ten principles of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network Charter designed to create equal opportunities at the workplace for persons with disabilities.
* Develop traineeship-to-employment programmes for persons with disabilities that are aimed at meeting the demand for green skills.
* Conduct an accessibility audit of their physical and virtual spaces and be prepared to make reasonable adjustments based on individual needs, where required.
* Connect with DPOs, community groups, disability advocates and experts to promote disability inclusion, including through strengthening the hiring pipelines.
* Join employer-led national networks on disability to benefit from peer-to-peer support and to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in workplaces.

Trade unions can:

* Include disability inclusion issues in their promotion of a just transition.
* Include just transition issues in their promotion of the labour rights of persons with disabilities.
* Strengthen partnerships between the workers’ movement and the disability sector.
* Enhance awareness about green jobs and opportunities in a low-carbon economy for persons with disabilities.
* Support training of persons with disabilities on climate change related issues to enhance engagement at national and international levels.

UN and international organizations can:

* Develop and continue to update guidance on making climate change strategies disability-inclusive with a focus on just transition, and ensuring coherence between national climate action plans and national disability strategies.
* Develop guidance on adjusting existing national disability strategies to account for climate change impacts on the labour market and implications for workers and entrepreneurs with disabilities.
* Facilitate exchange, dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders on just transition and disability.
* Integrate concerns and needs of persons with disabilities in climate change and disaster risk reduction related discussions at international and regional levels.
* Promote the collection of internationally comparable, reliable and valid data on people with disabilities’ access to labour markets, including new green sectors.

Non-governmental organizations can:

* Those working in the areas of climate change and green livelihoods should ensure interventions are disability-inclusive.
* Those working on disability should engage in the climate change and just transition discussions at the global, regional and national levels.

Development partners can:

* Make disability inclusion a priority while funding just transition initiatives and incentivize disability-sensitive programme design, monitoring and reporting.

**ILO resources**

* [Policy brief: Persons with disabilities in a just transition to a low-carbon economy](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/disability-and-work/WCMS_727084/lang--en/index.htm)
* [World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs](https://www.ilo.org/weso-greening/)
1. See also ILO. 2019*. ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work* (Geneva). Available at https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/108/reports/texts-adopted/WCMS\_711674/lang--en/index.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See also ILO. 2019*. Work for a Brighter Future* (Geneva). Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms\_662410.pdf and ILO. (forthcoming). *Making the Future of Work inclusive for people disabilities [Working title]* (Geneva). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2018. *Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities* (New York). Available at https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/07/disability-report-chapter2.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gramenos, S. 2013. *European comparative data on Europe 2020 & people with disabilities*. Available at https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1569&context=gladnetcollect [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. African Studies Centre Leiden. (n.d.). *Disability in Africa*. Available at https://www.ascleiden.nl/content/webdossiers/disability-africa [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, National Sample Survey Office. 2017. *India - Employment and Unemployment Survey 2011-2012, with ILO standard variables*. Available at https://www.ilo.org/surveydata/index.php/catalog/1351/related\_materials [↑](#footnote-ref-6)