



POLICY BRIEF #4

MOVING TOWARDS GREATER REPRESENTATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN CLIMATE CHANGE DECISION-MAKING:

WHERE WE ARE AND HOW IT CAN BE IMPROVED

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable to the climate crisis, and they are best placed to provide expert insight into what disability-inclusive climate action should truly look like. After almost 30 years of global climate negotiations and 15 years of climate change action planning in the Philippines, persons with disabilities have received minimal acknowledgements in international decisions, national policies, and sub-national action plans. Though the last three years have seen some progress in terms of accessibility thanks to the efforts of disability advocates, there is still a long way to go to ensure the genuine and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making and action for climate change. Sign language and other communication-related services are the forms of reasonable accommodation for the d/Deaf

that have yet to be mainstreamed at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP). This Policy Brief accounts the progress achieved over the last few COPs, shares the experience of the Filipino Deaf community and other disability advocates at COP28, and presents the current status of representation of persons with disabilities in the Philippines

Given the complex nature of climate discourse and its importance to persons with disabilities, accessibility in climate-related events must be two-fold: providing **access to the spaces** and **access to the substance**. This Brief provides recommendations of disability advocates on how best to improve both succeeding COPs and other similar events.

KEYWORDS

Disability-representation, Climate negotiations, Reasonable accommodations, Sign language interpretation, Accessibility, Inclusion

INTRODUCTION



Over recent years, the global community has started to acknowledge that persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and that they are differently and severely affected by its adverse impacts (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019¹; UNHRC, 2020²). This was corroborated by the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which stated that climate vulnerabilities are exacerbated by the “inequalities and marginalizations” relating to socio-economic and

cultural realities of those communities (IPCC, 2023). The report takes it further by stating with high confidence that the effectiveness of climate governance and climate solutions are enhanced by utilizing more inclusive decision-making processes. Despite this, the disability community continues to face numerous barriers when participating in critical decision-making processes on climate change across all levels.



¹ [A/HRC/RES/41/21](#)

² United Nations Human Rights Council, [A/HRC/44/30](#)

DISABILITY SECTOR REPRESENTATION AT THE GLOBAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS



It has been almost 30 years since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—the multilateral treaty that sought to address the adverse impacts of climate change—has entered into force. Since then, the Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention and, after 2015, the Paris Agreement, have met annually to chart a course towards a more climate-resilient world by mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and addressing adaptation and loss and damage issues across the globe. During these COPs, decisions, agreements, and resolutions are made through State Parties and their negotiating blocks; whereas, non-government and civil society organizations played a significant role by representing the specific interests of their communities as observer organizations and constituencies. Specifically, some groups that are acknowledged as constituencies include the business and industry NGOs, environmental NGOs, indigenous peoples organizations, research and independent NGOs, trade union NGOs, and Women and Gender and youth NGOs. These constituencies are able to engage with the secretariat through their focal points for better coordination, and have also afforded some additional support for participation in meetings, workshops and other limited-access activities, as well as logistical support for their constituents and their constituency meetings (United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, 2023). Unfortunately, even within this evolving system that has engaged many sectoral groups, the disability community has yet to be acknowledged as a constituency, and be afforded the necessary accommodations to ensure their effective and meaningful participation in the global climate arena.

A Disability Caucus, or a coalition of disability-advocates and disability organizations, among others, was only created at COP26 in 2021 (Spannagel, 2021; Costley & de Miguel, 2022). In the same year, organizations of persons with disabilities were given observer status, thus forming their first “official” delegation at the COP (International Disability Alliance, n.d.). While this has provided disability advocates and persons with disabilities an opportunity to collectively advocate for disability-inclusion and justice, it is still considered an informal group. The Disability Caucus has yet to be elevated to the status

of a constituency, which would have given them more opportunities to engage at the COPs.

Nevertheless, there has been a considerable amount of progress in the disability movement in the COP over the past three years through the efforts of disability advocates. Evidently, more attention has been paid towards disability-inclusion in terms of the substance and language adopted in COP decisions. At COP26, the disability caucus called for the inclusion of human rights, specifically for persons with disabilities and indigenous people, ensuring direct access to climate finance for the sector and the integration of disability rights in Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) and Loss and Damage (L&D)³. The following year, at COP27, they celebrated the importance of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the decision text on ACE⁴, which called for the provision of access to climate information, education, and public participation for all marginalized communities, specifically including persons with disabilities, in the decision and action plans (Youssefian, 2022). More recently, at the COP28 in 2023, the Disability Caucus acknowledged that the outcome text for critical workstreams like the First Global Stocktake⁵, Just Transition⁶, and the Loss and Damage Fund⁷ included textual references to persons with disabilities, or the respect and promotion of human rights, including those of persons with disabilities (Felix, 2023). The landmark declaration on Climate and Health endorsed by 123 State Parties, which was also launched at COP28, also acknowledges the health impacts of climate change (a documented concern of the disability sector in the face of the climate crisis, read Policy Brief 5⁸) and explicitly commits towards working in close partnership with persons with disabilities, among other vulnerable communities⁹. However, these positive accomplishments have yet to be translated to concrete action and strategies for persons with disabilities.

The lack of representation from the global arenas down to the national level is also evident in the far too limited emphasis on the disability community and their diverse needs and rights across decisions and solutions at the national plans and policies. Jodoin, et al. (2022)

³ [Disability Caucus High Level Speech at COP26](#)

⁴ [Action for Climate Empowerment 3b/CP.27: 3b/CMA.4](#)

⁵ [First Global Stocktake 4/CMA.5](#)

⁶ [Just Transition 5/CMA.5](#)

⁷ [Loss and Damage 10g/CMA.5](#)

⁸ The full policy brief series can be accessed through the Oscar M. Lopez Center’s website at

<https://www.omlopezcenter.org/our-work/project-sign/>

⁹ [COP28 Declaration on Climate and Health](#)

conducted a systematic study on international climate policies which revealed that of the 192 State Parties to the Paris Agreement, 81% do not refer to persons with disabilities in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and 76% do not refer to them in any way in their climate adaptation policies. Those that have textual reference to persons with disabilities have been noted as having varied or weak references that merely recognize their rights and importance of participation but do not identify concrete action benefiting persons with disabilities. According to the study, only 14 (for NDCs) and 15 (for climate adaptation policies) include concrete measures for disability-inclusion (Jodoin et al., 2022). Succeeding sections of this Policy Brief look into the narratives surrounding these global conferences and national policies in an effort to identify areas for action and improvement for better access and inclusion at all levels.



ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION AT COP28

The UNFCCC COPs have been criticized in the past for issues relating to accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities. Most of the critical issues include wheelchair access for persons with physical disabilities (Rabinovitch, 2021; European Disability Forum, 2022), and the provision of sign language interpretation and closed captioning for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing (EDF, 2022). The host country for COP28, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), took an innovative step forward and contracted accessibility consultants beforehand to conduct accessibility audits prior and throughout the conference, provide training for the venue personnel and staff and support for the identification of accessibility measures that would help improve access and inclusion for persons with disabilities.¹⁰ Among their successes

were the development of accessibility guidelines for the conference teams; improvement of physical accessibility throughout the venue through accessibility lanes and toilets and buggy systems; distribution of sunflower lanyards for people with hidden disabilities; and design of a more accessible online/digital platform for the entire conference, among others. Some of these initiatives were well noted by COP attendees with disabilities, particularly the increased physical accessibility of the venue, as well as the use of the sunflower lanyards which helped participants like the Deaf use the accessibility lane. On the other hand, some key areas of improvement included the buggy system which was not always available or conveniently located, and the accessibility of the virtual platform which still lacked closed captioning for the Deaf and audio or text descriptions for people with visual impairments, among others. Some also shared that it was quite difficult to find disability-related events on the online platforms.

The added emphasis on accessibility was received well by the host country and the personnel and staff present at COP28 venue, however it was still perceived as an add-on service to their jobs and not a norm that must be considered a standard in all conferences and events. The accessibility consultants also conceded that while the venue did well in terms of physical accessibility, other reasonable accommodations, specifically the provision of sign language interpreters and closed captioning, a critical accommodation for the Deaf, were not provided during COP28 despite having been raised as an issue during previous COPs. The consultants shared that the budget allocations for reasonable accommodations were determined prior to their onboarding of the accessibility consultants and were thus not accounted for in the final budget. It was noted that the provision of sign language interpretation and closed captioning were, in fact, not included among the services that host countries are mandated to provide under the rules of procedure of the UNFCCC COP. These gaps in terms of information and communication accessibility were starkly felt by representatives of the Signs for Inclusive Governance and Development (SIGND) Project, a Philippine-based initiative focused on supporting the Deaf community to engage more actively on the issue of Climate Change.

¹⁰Information regarding the accessibility consultants and audits were gathered through virtual interviews with representatives of the contracted entity.



EXPERIENCE OF THE FILIPINO DEAF COMMUNITY

Relative to other persons with disabilities, d/Deaf individuals face unique challenges primarily because of their unique communication needs. While deafness is recognized as an impairment, and thus considered as a disability under most definitions, some advocate that the Deaf should be considered more as a cultural and ethnolinguistic minority by virtue of the visual sign languages that they use and the culture that they share within their community (Castro, 2015). Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) acknowledges that persons with disabilities have the right to “recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.” From this perspective, the use of and availability of sign language is seen as a right rather than merely a form of reasonable accommodation. Unfortunately, this view has yet to be widely adopted. The lack of sign language interpretation often becomes the biggest barrier that the Deaf face when participating in public events such as the UNFCCC COP. Project SIGND members who attended the COP28, which included a Deaf representative, a sign language interpreter (SLI), and other disability-advocates experienced this first-hand. The Project organized a side-event at the COP28 to raise awareness about Deaf inclusion in climate action at the Philippine Pavilion. In the team’s efforts to secure sign language interpreters for the event, there was evident confusion regarding interpretation services as the team was bounced between the accessibility help desks and commercial interpretation services to no avail. Despite early efforts of coordinating this request with the COP28 organizers prior to the event and on site, the request for interpreters was not

realized due to “short notice” of the request, as stated by personnel. Additional badges were provided, however, to allow for the team to accommodate their own SLI at their own cost.

With interpretation not being available throughout the COP venue, and only one personal Filipino Sign Language interpreter brought by Project SIGND present, the Deaf representative of Project SIGND had to strategically select only 2-3 events to attend that could effectively be interpreted by a sole interpreter. The team reviewed published side-events, and other events available on the website and digital application; unfortunately, it was still difficult to identify any events relevant to cross-cutting themes of inclusion and disability-rights. In the end, the team attended events on the topic of human rights, mental health, and a celebration of the UN day for persons with disabilities in which there were notably no other deaf participants. Organizers of the chosen side-events were accommodating, and allowed the team to make minor adjustments to the room arrangements for the effective provision of SLI during their session. When requested, they were also able to provide advanced copies of the material for review of the interpreters prior to the event, to ensure the quality and accuracy of their interpretation. However, it was still observed that many attendees are not aware or familiar of these accommodations, nor the etiquette surrounding them. Many attendees continued to walk in front of the interpreter and the Deaf participant, not taking into consideration that visibility of the interpreter is critical to the Deaf being able to understand the discussions. Even with these positive experiences, the language barriers and limited interpreter support significantly limited the participation of the Deaf participant and made it difficult to maximize the significant resources spent to attend the event.

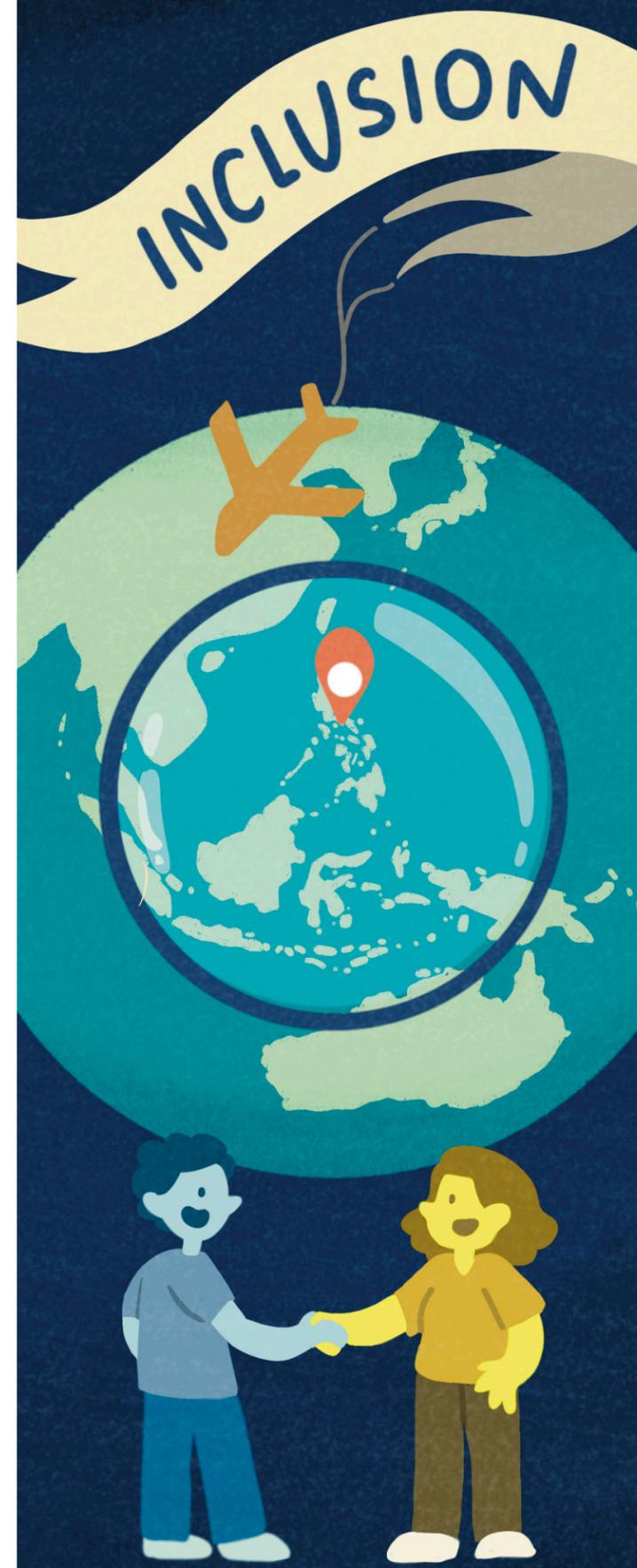
While the ad hoc system wherein Deaf participants bring their own sign language interpreters worked for side-events, the lack of official sign language interpreters and English closed captioning at the COP meant that majority of the official events, such as the negotiations and plenary sessions, were inaccessible for the Deaf.

The fast-paced and often unpredictable nature of the COP negotiations make the more formal decision-making processes inaccessible for the d/Deaf. Decision documents are primarily text-heavy, technical in nature, lack visuals to aid the d/Deaf and often with nuanced wording that are by nature incomprehensible for the d/Deaf. Simply imagining a sign language interpreter taking part in this type of system does not seem feasible if only one will be available throughout, and will undoubtedly lead to overtiredness and ineffective interpretation. Representatives from Project SIGND with experience in participating in other UN conferences note that there are standards and best practices being implemented across UN agencies that can be adopted by the UNFCCC. Among these practices include providing resources for the attendance of country interpreters per delegation, providing at least three (3) interpreters per day for six (6) hours of interpreting, as well as other standards put forth in the UNCRPD or in the UN disability-inclusion strategy.

It is also important to note that, to the best of the team's knowledge, there were only two Deaf attendees at the COP. However, the real number of Deaf attendees at the COP could not be confirmed because no data was being collected or processed

regarding persons with disabilities attending the COP, much less the nature of their disabilities. This was particularly concerning because the lack of such data is often the reason (or excuse) for not being able to provide the appropriate accommodations because there is not enough information to inform the forms of reasonable accommodations needed, nor to support the need to prioritize and allocate the necessary resources for its provision ([read Policy Brief 1 on disability disaggregated data in the Philippines](#)).

Overall, it was noted by most that COP28 exhibited significant progress and innovation in improving access and increasing inclusion for persons with disabilities at the climate conference, but there is still a long way to go towards genuine and effective inclusion of people of all disabilities in climate action. The Disability Caucus continues to call for the secretariat to “guarantee the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the UNFCCC processes and decisions” and the improvement of accessibility at COPs (e.g. sign language interpretation and captioning, and multiple formats for navigation), including the push for a human rights approach to climate action, the allocation of resources for loss and damage (Felix, 2023).



LOCALIZING REPRESENTATION:

STATUS OF INCLUSION IN NATIONAL AND SUB-NATIONAL CLIMATE POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has been a Party to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement since 1994 and 2017, respectively, and has played a significant role in advocating for the positions of vulnerable countries for support for adaptation and loss and damage, among others. However, on the issue of disability inclusion, the Philippine delegation has not included representation from the persons with disabilities community, nor the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) or Commission on Human Rights (CHR), which are the government agencies representing the disability sector and their rights under the UNCRPD, as evidenced by the COP28 delegation. While it is by no means the only reason, the lack of reference to persons with disabilities in international climate agreements and decisions may be associated with the reflection of the same at the national and sub-national levels. Philippine climate plans and policies mirror the language of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, and their obligations therein, by emphasizing the importance of addressing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups while remaining inconsistent in identifying persons with disabilities explicitly as among the vulnerable and marginalized groups. Republic Act No. 9729 (“Climate Change Act of 2009”), the primary climate law of the country, does not mention the differential impacts of climate change to persons with disabilities. It is supplemented by two documents, the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan (NCCAP)¹¹, which includes a priority agenda on Human Security that aims to reduce risks of men and women and other vulnerable groups (children, elderly, and persons with disability, etc.), and the country’s NDCs¹² which have noted the importance of meaningful participation of vulnerable sectors including the “differently abled”. However, it is important to note that neither document outlines concrete strategies or guidance on how to engage the sector or address the vulnerabilities or accessibility issues of the disability-sector.

The same law also fails to include a representative from the disability sector, or the appropriate disability affairs agency, as a member of the

advisory board on climate change. Similarly, national guidance for the crafting of sub-national climate action plans, such as the DILG Memorandum Circular 2014-135 (“Guidelines on the Formulation of Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAP)”) and DILG Memorandum Circular 2015-77 (“Guidelines on Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk in Local Development Plans”) have also failed to include any guidelines for assessing vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities, nor do they include persons with disabilities among the recommended sectors to be consulted.

A series of consultations with various government and non-government organizations, conducted by Project SIGND, confirmed that indeed the national climate and disaster-related consultations have thus far not included any representation from persons with disabilities, nor their sub-groups such as the d/Deaf. This has been attributed by most agencies to various reasons including the lack of experience or contacts to engage the disability sector, and the lack of resources to provide reasonable accommodation for the different sub-groups.

Persons with disabilities have continued to be misrepresented as a homogenous group, which fails to take into account the varied vulnerabilities and specific needs of people with different disabilities (e.g. sight, hearing, physical mobility, etc.), and the layers of marginalization that they may experience due to age, gender, economic status, among others. In the Philippines, what little representation there is for persons with disabilities often favors those with specific types of disabilities (e.g. physical), as opposed to those like the Deaf, whose barriers are specifically-related communication challenges. This is a critical issue because, as has been relayed time and again by disability advocates, this often leads to decisions that overlook the specific needs of people with different disabilities. Some

examples that exemplify this can be seen in the Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (“Accessibility Law”) which emphasizes spatial access without mention of bridging language barriers for the Deaf, people with visual impairments, among others. Ongoing efforts to amend the law can consider integrating provisions that address and mandate the provision of reasonable accommodations for others, and this can be better outlined with the participation of persons with disabilities and their organizations. The rights and needs of the Deaf have only recently been highlighted through the Republic Act 11106 (“Filipino Sign Language Act”) which only recently acknowledged Filipino Sign Language as a national language in 2018, and continues to face an uphill climb in implementing the training and mainstreaming the use of the language widely across public offices at all levels. When asked regarding the provision of sign language interpretation for climate- and disaster-related consultation, most answered that limitations in budget line-items or budgetary allocation for such services was not

sufficient, or for others noting that resources were allocated elsewhere due to prioritization of other important needs.

Despite these challenges, some proactive local government units have displayed some innovative solutions that can be considered good practices, such as the allocation of one seat on all special decision-making bodies for persons with disabilities which is being practiced in Pasig City; the designation of a persons with disabilities focal point in disaster risk reduction and management offices and other relevant offices which is being practiced in Iloilo City; the formation of local councils for disability affairs and the allocation of resources for disability-led projects and programs which is being practiced in Naga City; and managing active and dynamic communication channels with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPD) or Deaf organizations to ensure smooth flow of information and participation which is also practiced in all the cities mentioned prior.



¹¹ National Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2028

¹² Philippine Nationally Determined Contributions 2021

PURSuing MORE INCLUSIVE CLIMATE ACTION AT ALL LEVELS



It is interesting to observe that many of the barriers for accessibility at the international level are mirrored by the realities at the national and sub-national levels in the Philippines. From lack of language accommodation, lack of data, limited resources and resource allocation, and even the attitudinal or siloed approach to disability-issues, these barriers seem to be consistent in contributing to a stark lack of representation of persons with disabilities in governance and climate action. While these challenges are prevalent, there are pathways to inclusion that can be followed, starting with building awareness of the barriers that exist and taking the necessary steps to make things more accessible for persons with disabilities (read the Governance and Policy Environment Analysis Report produced by Project SIGND). In the case of climate conferences, the kind of accessibility needed is two-fold: **access to the spaces** and **access to the substance**.

Persons with disabilities have a right to participate in critical climate-related decision-making events at all levels and the first critical step is ensuring that they are able to **access the spaces**, in terms of venue and facilities (e.g. meeting rooms, toilets, information desks, etc.) and the activities (e.g. presentations, discussions, information materials, processes, etc). There has been progress in this regard over recent years, albeit mostly for those with physical disabilities. More work has yet to be done to ensure that this continues to improve in succeeding sessions to accommodate the needs of those whose disabilities affect communication. Some recommendations to improve and sustain the accessibility of spaces include the following:

- **Creating a system for collecting data that can track and monitor the participation of persons with disabilities at the UNFCCC** with particular attention to the nature of their disabilities and the support and reasonable accommodations that they would need to meaningfully participate at the COP and other climate events. This information can help guide the prioritization of services and allocation of resources, and may also be a means of monitoring the improvement of accessibility at COP which may be evident in the increase of participation among persons with disabilities.
- **Incorporating access and inclusion early in the planning process** will help ensure that the appropriate scheduling, personnel, resources, and types of accommodation are duly provided for during the events. SLI, closed captioning, and other forms of communication-related accommodations have significant personnel and budgetary considerations, and oftentimes the concern is a lack of resources. This can be remedied by partnering with persons with disabilities, who are best placed to guide accessibility services and support, as well as the incorporation of those recommendations into the budget as early as possible.
- **Increasing focus and resources for the provision of information and communication related reasonable accommodations** such as SLI, closed captioning, inclusive facilitation and audio-descriptions for visual materials. These are critical accommodations that can help ensure that people with hearing and visibility impairments are able to understand information, materials, and events more effectively. It is critical to allocate resources for the provision of such accommodations, whether this is in the form of hiring sign language interpreters and personal assistants, or through the provision of documents in alternative formats such as easy-read versions and visual documents.

- **Consider the inclusion of sign language among the official UN languages, in acknowledgement of the language rights of the deaf, and ensure accessibility of critical information of global importance.** Noting that there are many different visual languages, international sign may be considered to ensure some level of accessibility across deaf cultures.
- **Continue the provision of disability-sensitivity and -inclusion training for COP personnel and UNFCCC staff, and consider its implementation for country parties and negotiators** to strengthen their understanding of disability inclusion as a cross-cutting concern similar to gender and youth. This must be done in partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities.
- **The development of accessibility and inclusion standards, guidelines and/or frameworks and a system for coordination between past and present COP presidencies** can help ensure that the best practices of each COP can be carried over to the next despite the changing country hosts. Though there is still much work to be done to make these events more accessible, the positive steps forward made during COP28 and lessons learned should be carried over in the preparations for COP29. This would also contribute to including accessibility early on in the planning process to ensure sufficient resources for the services and reasonable accommodations necessary for the conferences.
- **Increasing coordination between other UN agencies, UNFCCC, and the host countries regarding accessibility standards** can help pave the way for a more improved provision of reasonable accommodations at the COPs by carrying over best practices from UN conferences more familiar with the participation of persons with disabilities, such as United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and of course, the UNCRPD. According to some attendees, these conferences have already been implementing some good practices regarding the provision of SLI services, such as providing at least two UN-funded interpreters per day, with a maximum of six (6) interpretation hours, or allowing for country delegations to bring their own interpreters.



Beyond having access to the venues and activities, access for persons with disabilities that can enable their full and meaningful participation also calls for access to the substance so they can engage in the actual decision-making and technical dialogues. Persons with disabilities should be provided with the necessary support to ensure that they are able to adequately understand and engage on the topics of climate change and the negotiations and planning processes. Some recommended actions that can be considered include the following:

- **Capacity building for persons with disabilities** on climate change concepts, issues, actions, and the decision-making processes is critical so that they have a deeper understanding of how they can effectively engage and advocate for their rights and needs. Such capacity building should begin at the local level, and must be provided with sufficient financial support to ensure that its implementation is done so with the necessary accommodations for people with various disabilities.
- **Provide funding mechanisms to support the participation of persons with disabilities** in fora like the COP, considering the high cost of travel, accommodations and other expenses related to securing reasonable accommodations and support for their disabilities (e.g. SLIs, personal assistants for people with visual impairments). This is a key step to enable their participation in decision-making bodies.
- **Institutionalize coordination mechanisms between organizations of persons with disabilities and national governments** to ensure their meaningful participation at all levels. Including persons with disabilities and their organizations must also start at the country level to ensure that their rights are accounted for in all country positions, plans, and policies. In the Philippines, this would mean engaging organizations of persons with disabilities in all CSO consultations prior to COP events. Institutionalizing their participation through including a disability-sector representative on local and national decision making bodies, and in the country delegation for the UNFCCC, could also pave the way for greater engagement with the sector in the long run. It is also important to note that representation for persons with disabilities must consider diversity in terms of different disabilities, age (youth with disabilities), gender (women with disabilities), and geographical location.
- **Strengthening language on the participation of persons with disabilities within decision-texts is also critical to institutionalize their participation** at the international level. This moves beyond text that merely acknowledges their vulnerabilities, which has been the case in recent decisions, and instead aims to encourage the increase of disability sector representation on negotiating teams, party delegations, and constituted bodies at all levels. This may be similar to text that has been approved previously regarding the increase of women representatives in the same bodies.



These critical kinds of access are interrelated and equally as important for persons with disabilities, and would benefit other marginalized communities as well in the long run. The recommendations merely skim the surface of the issues and solutions that need more attention and support in the climate change arena. In fact, addressing these accessibility issues are just the beginning of the pathway towards genuine disability-inclusion. With greater access to these discussions, the d/Deaf and other persons with disabilities would have more opportunities to influence decisions and policies, and pave the way towards the actual implementation of inclusive climate action programs and strategies, which must always be the end goal. The call of the disability sector must always shine through, “nothing about us, without us,” from decision making to implementation.

Finally, for persons with disabilities who are keen to engage in climate-related decision-making processes, provided below are key learnings of the Project SIGND team and other persons with disabilities who participated at the COP28:

- Engaging with your government agencies or country delegations early through national or subnational processes is an important first step to effectively engaging in global climate negotiations. This can ensure a clearer understanding of the issues, challenges, and possible solutions that can be elevated to other platforms, including international negotiations.
- When participating in the UNFCCC COP, it would be helpful to engage with established disability organizations present at the COP and the Disability Caucus to create meaningful participation through increased visibility, connections with active attendees and advocates, and support in securing access or accessibility services at the COP.

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