

# Why assistive technology matters for climate action

People who use assistive technology are often severely affected by climate-related events. Sometimes their assistive devices are lost or damaged, and they become vulnerable to the dangers of extreme weather.

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Assistive technology users, including persons with disabilities, can be most acutely affected by climate change. Assistive technology that enables people to move, communicate, hear and see better is crucial, sometimes for survival, during climate-driven disasters. When people migrate and become displaced, it is often extremely hard to access the assistive products and services they need. Climate change amplifies existing inequities between those who can access assistive technology and those who cannot, and creates new barriers for people who may require assistive devices.

The global **mortality rate** of persons with disabilities in disasters is



## 4 TIMES HIGHER

than for the rest of the population.



In low-income countries, only

## 10%

of people who need assistive devices can get them. Climate crises exacerbate problems of access.

Globally,

## 2.5 BILLION

people need at least one form of assistive technology, growing to

## 3.5 BILLION BY 2050.

# Why assistive technology matters for climate action

**There can be no climate justice without universal access to assistive technology.** With increased need for assistive technology as a result of injuries and disease due to extreme climate events, access to assistive technology is a crucial part of inclusive climate action.

**Climate-related extreme weather events and disasters can destroy or damage assistive devices, and disrupt services and supply chains.** Events such as floods, storms and fires can lead to damaged, destroyed or lost assistive products. Disruption to services and supplies make it harder for people to replace what they have lost.

**People who use assistive technology are often overlooked in preparedness and early response phases of emergencies and face difficulties in accessing rehabilitation and assistive technology services.** Emergency and humanitarian responses to climate crises need to address users of assistive technology directly. Raising knowledge and awareness about assistive technology among aid workers and organizations, and integrating assistive technology into preparedness planning are crucial.

**Localized production of assistive products could forge new directions for more environmentally sustainable models of product design, manufacture and service.** Context-specific solutions and essential service components like repair and maintenance can be beneficial to current climate-related challenges. Assistive product design should address these challenges, while avoiding environmental harm. Sustainable assistive technology solutions include use of recycled materials and renewable energy, as well as opportunities for effective refurbishment.



*Inclusion is key to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and leave no one behind. There will not be full inclusion while people are unable to access assistive technology. Assistive technology cuts across all 17 SDGs and is particularly relevant to some.*

**Assistive Technology** is an umbrella term for assistive products such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, prostheses, eyeglasses or digital devices, and their related systems and services.

**ATscale** is a cross-sector global partnership with a mission to improve people's lives through assistive technology. It catalyzes action to ensure that, by 2030, an additional 500 million people in low- and middle-income countries get the life-changing assistive technology they need.

**Together, let's ensure assistive technology for climate action.**