

At a crossroads: disability inclusion in Ghana's migration and internal displacement laws and policies

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Climate change and environmental hazards are increasingly shaping patterns of internal migration and displacement across many parts of the Global South. In Ghana, recurrent flooding and other climate-related events have contributed to growing levels of internal mobility and displacement. While such events affect entire communities, persons with disabilities often experience heightened risks because of pre-existing social, institutional, and environmental barriers that restrict their access to information, mobility, services, and participation in disaster response. Despite growing recognition of disability rights within international development frameworks, the extent to which national governance systems on migration and displacement address disability inclusion remains uneven. This article examines the extent to which migration and internal displacement laws and policies in Ghana incorporate disability-inclusive principles. Using a qualitative desk-based policy analysis, the article reviews key national legislation and policy documents and assesses their alignment with relevant international and regional frameworks, including the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the African Union's Kampala Convention, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The findings indicate that although Ghana has developed several legal and policy instruments relevant to migration and disaster management, disability inclusion remains limited. Disability is often framed primarily through vulnerability rather than human rights and participation, and key national policies provide limited guidance on addressing the specific needs of persons with disabilities in displacement contexts. Furthermore, Ghana has not yet ratified the Kampala Convention, which provides important legal safeguards for internally displaced persons, including those with disabilities. The article argues that strengthening disability inclusion within migration and displacement governance requires rights-based legal reform, stronger institutional coordination, meaningful participation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, and improved disability-disaggregated data to inform planning and response.

Keywords: Migration; Internal Displacement; Disability Rights; Climate Displacement; Ghana.

Introduction

Human mobility has become an increasingly central issue in global development and humanitarian policy debates. Migration and displacement are shaped by complex interactions among economic pressures, environmental change, political instability, and social inequalities (Adger, de Campos, & Mortreux, 2018). In recent decades, climate change has intensified the frequency and severity of environmental hazards such as floods, droughts, storms, and heatwaves, which has increased the likelihood of forced migration and internal displacement across many parts of the world (UNDP, 2022). Global evidence shows that disasters and climate-related hazards are now among the major drivers of population movements, particularly in low income countries where adaptive capacity and social protection systems are often limited (Donatti et al., 2024). By the end of 2024, the world witnessed record-high levels of internal displacements, with disaster-related events triggering 45.8 million new displacements during the year (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2025), highlighting the growing importance of migration governance within climate and development policy frameworks. These developments have prompted increased scholarly and policy attention to the intersection of climate change, migration, and vulnerability.

Within these debates, the situation of persons with disabilities has increasingly emerged as a critical but often overlooked dimension of mobility and displacement governance. Persons with disabilities constitute approximately 16 per cent of the global population, with the majority living in low- and middle-income countries (UNDRR, 2024). Evidence shows that they frequently face disproportionate risks during disasters and displacement because of structural barriers such as inaccessible infrastructure, limited access to information, exclusion from emergency planning processes, and weak social protection systems (UNDRR, 2024). In many contexts, these barriers limit the ability of persons with disabilities to evacuate during emergencies, access humanitarian assistance, or participate in recovery processes. Recent global surveys further reveal that disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction remains limited, with many persons with disabilities reporting that they are unaware of national disaster preparedness plans or lack the resources required to respond effectively to disasters (UNDRR, 2023). As a result, disasters can exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities and deepen marginalisation for persons with disabilities.

Climate change is expected to intensify these vulnerabilities. Emerging research shows that persons with disabilities experience disproportionate impacts from climate-related hazards due to the interaction of environmental risks with social exclusion, poverty, and institutional barriers (Chukwudum et al., 2025). In many low-income countries, environmental shocks disrupt livelihoods, destroy homes, and undermine social services, forcing affected populations to either move temporarily or permanently (Adger et al., 2018). For persons with disabilities, these processes can create additional challenges related to mobility, access to healthcare, and social required to provide support during displacement (Gartrell et al., 2020). Studies have

therefore increasingly emphasised the need for disability-inclusive approaches to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and migration governance (see Grech & Weber, 2025; Stein et al., 2025). Such approaches recognise that disability is not merely a condition of individual impairment but is shaped by social, institutional, and environmental barriers that limit participation and access to opportunities.

Despite growing recognition of these issues in international policy frameworks, disability remains inadequately addressed within many migration and displacement governance systems (Mahlungulu & Khalema, 2025; Berghs, 2017). International instruments such as the CRPD emphasise the rights of persons with disabilities to protection and safety in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, and natural disasters (UN, 2006). Similarly, global disaster governance frameworks such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 call for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery processes (Lillywhite & Wolbring, 2022). However, empirical studies suggest that national policies often frame persons with disabilities primarily as vulnerable beneficiaries of protection rather than as rights holders and active participants in decision-making processes (Grech & Weber, 2025). As a result, disability considerations are frequently marginalised within migration governance systems.

In Africa, the relationship between climate change, environmental hazards, and human mobility is becoming increasingly significant (Hoffman, 2022; Martin et al., 2021). Many countries across the continent face recurrent flooding, drought, desertification, and land degradation, which arguably contribute to patterns of internal migration and displacement (Hoffmann, 2022). Scholars have argued that environmental stress interacts with poverty, weak infrastructure, and limited social protection systems to heighten vulnerability among marginalised groups, including persons with disabilities (Stein et al., 2025). Although regional frameworks such as the Kampala Convention recognise the rights of internally displaced persons and emphasise protection for vulnerable populations, the practical implementation of disability-inclusive displacement governance remains uneven across the continent. Ghana provides an important context for examining these issues. The country has experienced increasing internal mobility that is linked to both economic opportunities and environmental pressures (Abu et al., 2025). Flooding, coastal erosion, and other climate-related hazards have affected several regions, particularly urban flood-prone areas and environmentally fragile zones (Abu et al., 2025). Ghana has also adopted a number of policy frameworks aimed at governing migration and addressing environmental change. These include the Ghana National Migration Policy and the Ghana National Climate Change Policy. Also, Ghana has enacted legislation to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, most notably the Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) of 2006. These developments suggest an emerging policy environment that could potentially support disability inclusion in migration and displacement governance. However, the extent to which migration and displacement policies put in place by Ghana effectively incorporate disability inclusion remains unclear.

Existing studies on migration governance in Ghana have primarily focused on labour migration (Dzansi, 2018; Alhassan, 2017), remittances (Teye et al., 2019), and rural-urban mobility (Tanle, Ogunyele-Adetona & Arthor, 2020), while research on disability policy has largely examined social protection, education, and employment (Akyeampong, Ajonbadi & Mordi, 2025; Naami et al., 2023; Opoku et al., 2019). As a result, there is limited scholarly analysis of how disability is addressed within migration and displacement governance frameworks. This gap is significant because persons with disabilities may experience displacement differently from other groups due to barriers related to accessibility, health care, communication, and social support networks (Gartrell et al., 2020).

This article addresses this gap by examining the extent to which migration and internal displacement laws and policies in Ghana incorporate disability-inclusive principles. Specifically, the article analyses key national legal and policy frameworks alongside relevant international and regional instruments to assess how disability considerations are integrated within migration governance structures. The article contributes to emerging scholarship on inclusive migration policy in the Global South. It also highlights the importance of aligning national policy frameworks with international human rights standards to ensure that migration and displacement governance systems adequately address the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

Conceptual and theoretical framework

Understanding disability inclusion within migration and displacement governance requires a conceptual framework that recognises the evolving ways in which disability has been interpreted in policy and academic discourse. Traditionally, disability was understood primarily through the medical model, which views disability as a condition that is located within the individual and focuses on impairment, treatment, and rehabilitation (Andrews, 2016). Under this perspective, policy responses tend to emphasise welfare support and medical care rather than structural transformation of social systems (Shakespeare, 2017). Although the medical model contributed to early policy attention to disability, scholars have widely criticised it for overlooking the broader social and environmental barriers that restrict the participation of persons with disabilities in society (Hogan, 2019; Haegele & Hodge, 2016). As disability studies evolved, researchers increasingly challenged the medical model and called for approaches that recognise the social and institutional factors that produce disability-related exclusion.

In response to the critiques of the medical model, the social model of disability emerged as a dominant theoretical framework within disability studies (Hogan, 2019). This model argues that disability does not arise solely from physical or cognitive impairments but from the interaction between impairments and socially constructed barriers such as inaccessible

infrastructure, discriminatory attitudes, and exclusionary institutions (Shakespeare, 2017; Oliver, 1990). From this perspective, the difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities are not simply the result of individual limitations but are produced by social environments that fail to accommodate human diversity. The social model has had significant influence on disability rights movements and policy frameworks by shifting attention from charity-based or welfare-oriented responses to structural reforms aimed at promoting equality, accessibility, and participation (Hogan, 2019).

Building on the social model, contemporary scholarship increasingly adopts a rights-based approach to disability, particularly following the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. The CRPD reframes disability as a human rights issue and emphasises the obligation of states to remove barriers that restrict the participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of social, economic, and political life (UN, 2006). The CRPD explicitly recognises the rights of persons with disabilities to protection and safety in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters (ibid, 2006). This recognition is particularly relevant for understanding the intersection of disability with migration and internal displacement. The rights-based approach emphasises principles such as equality, accessibility, participation, and non-discrimination, which are essential for ensuring inclusive governance in contexts of environmental hazards and population mobility (Guzzi, 2024).

Recent research has extended the above discussed theoretical perspectives by examining the relationship between disability, vulnerability, and climate change. Scholars such as Grech and Weber (2025a) have argued that climate change can intensify existing social inequalities because its impacts interact with structural forms of marginalisation such as poverty, gender inequality, and disability. Persons with disabilities often experience heightened risks during disasters because they may face barriers in accessing early warning systems, evacuation routes, emergency shelters, and post-disaster services (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2024). These barriers are frequently institutional rather than individual, arising from planning processes that do not adequately consider the needs and capacities of persons with disabilities. Consequently, disability scholars increasingly emphasise the importance of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, which calls for the active participation of persons with disabilities in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery initiatives (Grech & Weber, 2025a).

Another important concept within the field of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction is intersectionality, which highlights how different forms of marginalisation interact to shape individual experiences of vulnerability (Grech & Weber, 2025a). Intersectionality recognises that persons with disabilities are not a homogeneous group. Rather, their experiences are shaped by factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (Stein et al., 2025). For example, persons with disabilities living in rural or environmentally fragile

regions may face greater exposure to climate-related hazards, while those living in poverty may have fewer resources to cope with displacement. Intersectional analysis therefore helps explain why certain groups of persons with disabilities may experience disproportionate impacts from environmental shocks and migration pressures.

The theoretical perspectives discussed are particularly relevant for understanding the governance of internal displacement. Internal displacement occurs when individuals or groups are forced to leave their homes but remain within the borders of their own country, often due to disasters, conflict, or development projects (Hansen, 2019). International frameworks such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement emphasise that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are entitled to the same rights and freedoms as other citizens and require protection from discrimination and marginalisation. However, Stein et al. (2025) note that displacement governance often treats vulnerable populations in broad and general terms without adequately addressing the specific needs of persons with disabilities. This gap can lead to policy responses that fail to provide accessible services, inclusive evacuation procedures, or appropriate support systems for displaced persons with disabilities.

Within migration governance more broadly, researchers such as Poddar (2024), and Lyster and Burkett (2018) have highlighted the importance of integrating disability considerations into policy frameworks that address environmental mobility and climate-induced displacement. Migration policies traditionally focus on economic migrants, labour mobility, and border management, often overlooking the experiences of populations displaced by disasters and environmental change (Poddar, 2024). When disability is recognised, it is frequently framed through a lens of vulnerability rather than rights-based inclusion (Mahlungulu & Khalema, 2025). This approach can inadvertently reinforce paternalistic assumptions that portray persons with disabilities as passive recipients of assistance rather than as active participants in decision-making processes.

Drawing on the theoretical insights discussed, this article adopted a rights-based and disability-inclusive governance perspective to analyse migration and internal displacement policies in Ghana. The framework emphasises four key principles derived from international disability rights and disaster governance literature: recognition, participation, accessibility, and protection. Recognition refers to the extent to which policies explicitly acknowledge persons with disabilities within migration and displacement frameworks. Participation examines whether persons with disabilities and their representative organisations are involved in policy development and implementation. Accessibility considers whether policies provide mechanisms to ensure that services, infrastructure, and information are accessible during migration or displacement situations. Protection focuses on legal safeguards that prevent discrimination and ensure the safety and dignity of persons with disabilities during emergencies and displacement.

Methodology

This article adopted a qualitative desk-based policy analysis to examine the extent to which disability inclusion is reflected in migration and internal displacement governance frameworks in Ghana. Policy analysis is widely used in governance and public policy research to evaluate how legal and institutional frameworks respond to particular social challenges and whether they align with international norms and standards (Birkland, 2019). Within disability studies, policy analysis provides a useful approach for assessing whether national laws and policies recognise the rights of persons with disabilities and incorporate mechanisms that promote equality, accessibility, and participation (Shakespeare, 2017). This article analysed relevant legal and policy documents, to ascertain whether and how disability considerations are integrated into migration governance system in Ghana and identified gaps that may affect the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities in situations of migration and internal displacement.

The article employed documentary analysis as the primary research method. Documentary analysis involves the systematic review and analysis of written documents in order to obtain meaningful insights about policy priorities, institutional arrangements, and governance structures (Bowen, 2009). This method is particularly suitable for analysing public policies because official documents provide authoritative evidence of state commitments, policy objectives, and regulatory frameworks guiding government action. Through documentary analysis, the article identified references to persons with disabilities within migration-related policies, assessed the nature of these references, and evaluated the extent to which policies incorporate disability-inclusive principles within migration and displacement governance.

The documents analysed in this article were selected based on their relevance to migration governance, disability rights, and environmental displacement in Ghana. At the national level, the analysis focused on several key legal and policy frameworks that shape migration and disability governance. These include the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, which establishes the broader legal foundation for the protection of fundamental human rights, including provisions on equality and non-discrimination. The article also examined the Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715), which constitutes the primary legislative framework for promoting the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Ghana. In addition, the analysis considered the Ghana National Migration Policy (2016), which outlines the strategic approach of government to managing migration, as well as the Ghana National Climate Change Policy (2013), which addresses environmental risks that may contribute to internal displacement and migration.

In addition to national frameworks, the article also examined relevant regional and international instruments that influence migration and displacement governance. These include the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which provide normative guidance on the protection of internally displaced persons. The article also considered the African Union

Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), which represents the first legally binding regional instrument specifically addressing internal displacement in Africa. Furthermore, international human rights frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the Migration Policy Framework for Africa are analysed.

The analysis of these documents was guided by a rights-based analytical framework derived from international disability rights and disaster governance literature. Rights-based approaches emphasise the responsibility of states to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights of all individuals, particularly marginalised populations such as persons with disabilities (Grech & Weber, 2025; United Nations, 2006). Within this framework, the article evaluated migration and displacement policies according to four key dimensions: recognition, participation, accessibility, and protection. Recognition refers to the extent to which policies explicitly acknowledge persons with disabilities within migration and displacement governance frameworks. Participation assesses whether policies provide mechanisms that allow persons with disabilities and their representative organisations to contribute to policy formulation and implementation. Accessibility examines whether policy frameworks include provisions that ensure access to services, infrastructure, information, and emergency response systems for persons with disabilities. Protection focuses on the existence of legal safeguards that prevent discrimination and ensure the safety, dignity, and well-being of persons with disabilities in situations of disaster and displacement.

Limitations

Although documentary analysis provides valuable insights into policy frameworks, the article has certain limitations. Firstly, the research focused primarily on the content of policy and legal documents, rather than on the implementation of these frameworks in practice. Consequently, the findings reflect the commitments and priorities expressed within official documents rather than the lived experiences of persons with disabilities during migration or displacement. Also, the article did not incorporate primary empirical data, such as interviews with policymakers, practitioners, or persons with disabilities, which could provide additional perspectives on policy implementation. Moreover, the availability of disability-disaggregated migration data in Ghana remains limited, making it difficult to fully assess the scale and characteristics of disability-related displacement. Despite these limitations, the article offers important insights into the extent to which disability inclusion is embedded within Ghana's migration governance framework and highlights areas where policy reforms may be necessary to strengthen inclusive displacement governance.

Migration and internal displacement governance in Ghana

Human mobility has long been an important feature of the socio-economic landscape of Ghana (Li & Samimi, 2023). Migration within and across national borders has historically been shaped

by economic opportunities, environmental conditions, and regional development disparities. Internal migration in particular has played a significant role in the development trajectory of Ghana, with large numbers of people moving from rural areas to urban centres in search of employment, education, and improved living conditions (Awuse, Offi & Acakpovi, 2020). These movements are often influenced by structural inequalities between the northern and southern parts of the country, where differences in economic development, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities have historically encouraged labour migration toward more economically dynamic regions.

In addition to economic factors, environmental conditions have increasingly contributed to patterns of migration and displacement in Ghana. Climate variability, flooding, coastal erosion, and land degradation have affected several parts of the country and have sometimes forced communities to relocate either temporarily or permanently (Nguyen et al., 2023). Flooding in particular has become a recurrent challenge in urban areas such as Accra and Kumasi, where rapid urbanisation and inadequate drainage infrastructure increase vulnerability to extreme rainfall events (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). Environmental pressures are also evident in coastal communities facing erosion and sea level rise, as well as in the northern regions where drought and land degradation can undermine agricultural livelihoods (UNDP, 2022). These environmental stresses often interact with poverty and limited adaptive capacity to create conditions that encourage migration as a coping strategy.

Disasters and environmental hazards can also lead to internal displacement, which occurs when individuals or communities are forced to leave their homes but remain within the borders of their own country (Adger, De Campos & Mortreux, 2018). Internal displacement is increasingly recognised as a significant humanitarian and development issue globally, particularly in regions that experience recurrent natural hazards (Lyster & Burkett, 2018). In Ghana, internal displacement has frequently occurred in response to flooding, dam spillage, and other environmental shocks that affect vulnerable communities. For example, periodic flooding associated with the spillage of the Bagre Dam in neighbouring Burkina Faso has displaced populations in parts of northern Ghana, affecting housing, livelihoods, and access to basic services (Atubiga et al., 2023). These events highlight the need for policy frameworks that address not only disaster response but also the protection and long-term recovery of displaced populations.

The migration governance framework of Ghana has gradually evolved in response to changing migration dynamics. Historically, migration policy in Ghana focused primarily on labour mobility, diaspora engagement, and border management (Kandilige et al., 2023). However, growing recognition of the developmental implications of migration led to the adoption of the National Migration Policy in 2016, which represents the country's first comprehensive policy framework for managing migration. The policy aims to promote the positive contributions of migration to national development while addressing potential risks associated with irregular

migration, human trafficking, and labour exploitation (Government of Ghana, 2016). The policy also acknowledges the importance of protecting the rights of migrants and improving institutional coordination among government agencies responsible for migration governance. Beyond migration-specific policies, several other national frameworks influence the governance of displacement and disaster risk in Ghana. The National Climate Change Policy (2013) recognises that climate variability and environmental degradation pose significant threats to livelihoods, infrastructure, and human security. The policy highlights the need for adaptation strategies that strengthen resilience to climate-related risks, including flooding, drought, and coastal erosion. In addition, disaster management in Ghana is coordinated primarily through the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), which is responsible for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. These institutional arrangements play an important role in responding to environmental hazards that may lead to displacement.

Despite these policy developments, migration and displacement governance in Ghana still faces several structural challenges. One of the major issues is the limited availability of reliable data on internal displacement and migration patterns, particularly data that captures the experiences of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities (Mahlungulu & Khalema, 2025). Without comprehensive data, it becomes difficult for policymakers to design targeted interventions that address the needs of displaced populations. Furthermore, migration governance often involves multiple institutions with overlapping responsibilities, which can create coordination challenges in the implementation of policies and programmes (Abutima & Kandilige, 2026). Another challenge relates to the limited integration of social inclusion considerations within migration and disaster governance frameworks (UNDRR, 2024). While national policies frequently recognise vulnerable populations in general terms, they often lack specific provisions that address the unique barriers faced by persons with disabilities during migration and displacement. These barriers may include difficulties in accessing evacuation systems, emergency shelters, health services, and information during disasters (ibid, 2024). As a result, persons with disabilities may face heightened risks during displacement situations, particularly when emergency response systems are not designed to accommodate diverse needs.

Understanding the governance of migration and internal displacement in Ghana therefore requires attention not only to policy frameworks but also to how these frameworks address issues of social inclusion and vulnerability. Although Ghana has adopted several legal and policy instruments aimed at managing migration and environmental risks, the extent to which these frameworks incorporate disability-inclusive principles remains unclear. Examining how disability is addressed within migration and displacement policies is therefore essential for assessing the inclusiveness of the migration governance system of Ghana. The section that follows analyses the legal framework of Ghana on disability to assess how national legislation addresses the rights and protection of persons with disabilities within broader governance

structures.

Disability inclusion in Ghana's legal framework

The protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in Ghana are primarily anchored in the constitutional and legislative framework of Ghana. Over the past two decades, Ghana has made notable progress in recognising disability rights through national legislation and policy commitments aligned with international human rights standards. These developments reflect a growing shift from charity-based approaches toward rights-based frameworks that emphasise equality, participation, and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2017). Within this broader legal context, the Constitution of Ghana and subsequent disability-specific legislation provide the foundation for addressing disability inclusion across various sectors, including social protection, education, employment, and access to public services.

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana establishes the fundamental legal framework for the protection of human rights and freedoms in the country. Article 12 affirms that the fundamental human rights and freedoms contained in the Constitution shall be respected and upheld by the executive, legislature, and judiciary, as well as by all state institutions and individuals (Republic of Ghana, 1992). In addition, Article 17 guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on several grounds, including gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed, and social or economic status (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Although disability is not explicitly listed among these grounds, the broader principles of equality and non-discrimination provide an important constitutional basis for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities within the legal system of Ghana. These provisions reinforce the responsibility of the state to ensure that all citizens enjoy equal access to opportunities and protection under the law.

The Constitution also contains specific provisions addressing the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities. Article 29 recognises the rights of persons with disabilities to protection against discrimination and calls for measures that ensure their integration into social and economic life (Republic of Ghana, 1992). The provision emphasises the responsibility of the state to provide appropriate facilities and support systems that enable persons with disabilities to realise their full potential. In addition, Article 21 guarantees freedom of movement, which is particularly relevant in the context of migration and displacement (Republic of Ghana, 1992). These constitutional provisions collectively establish a normative framework that supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities within broader governance structures, including policies related to migration, disaster response, and environmental management.

Building on these constitutional principles, Ghana enacted the Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) as the primary legislative framework of the country for promoting the rights and

welfare of persons with disabilities. The Act represents an important milestone in Ghana's efforts to advance disability inclusion by establishing legal provisions aimed at improving access to education, employment, healthcare, and public services for persons with disabilities. It also includes provisions requiring public buildings and facilities to be accessible and promotes the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream society. Scholars have noted that Act 715 marked a significant step toward aligning the disability governance of Ghana with international human rights standards (Shakespeare, 2017).

The adoption of the Persons with Disability Act also reflects broader global developments in disability rights, particularly the emergence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD emphasises that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal or environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society (Un, 2006). Ghana ratified the Convention in 2012, thereby committing to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with international human rights principles. The ratification of the CRPD has reinforced the importance of adopting rights-based approaches to disability policy and has influenced national efforts to strengthen legal protections for persons with disabilities.

Despite these legal advances, several scholars and policy analysts have identified gaps in the implementation and scope of Ghana's disability legislation. While the Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) establishes important principles for accessibility and social inclusion, its provisions are often criticised for lacking detailed enforcement mechanisms and clear institutional responsibilities for implementation. For example, although Act 715 requires public buildings to be accessible to persons with disabilities, compliance has been uneven, and many public spaces remain inaccessible (Grech & Weber, 2025). These challenges highlight the broader difficulties associated with translating legal commitments into practical outcomes that improve the everyday experiences of persons with disabilities.

In the context of migration and displacement governance, the limitations of Ghana's disability legal framework become particularly evident. While constitutional provisions and disability legislation establish broad rights and protections, they do not specifically address the experiences of persons with disabilities during situations of disaster, displacement, or forced migration. For instance, the Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) of 2006 contains limited references to emergency preparedness, disaster response, or displacement protection. As a result, the legal framework provides only a partial basis for addressing the unique vulnerabilities and needs that persons with disabilities may face during environmental disasters or migration processes. These gaps are significant because disasters and displacement often expose persons with disabilities to heightened risks. Barriers related to mobility, communication, and access to services can make it more difficult for persons with disabilities to evacuate during emergencies, access temporary shelters, or obtain humanitarian assistance (UNDRR, 2024). Without explicit legal provisions that address these challenges, policies

related to disaster management and migration may fail to adequately protect the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

The legal framework of Ghana demonstrates an important commitment to disability rights through constitutional protections and dedicated legislation. However, the existing framework provides limited guidance on how disability inclusion should be operationalised within migration and displacement governance systems. Understanding these limitations is essential for assessing the extent to which national migration and climate policies address disability inclusion. The next section examines how disability considerations are incorporated within the migration and climate policy frameworks of Ghana in order to evaluate the degree to which these policies align with national and international commitments to disability rights.

Disability inclusion in migration and climate policies

In addition to constitutional provisions and disability-specific legislation, the migration and climate policies of Ghana play an important role in shaping the governance of human mobility and environmental risks. These policy frameworks guide the Ghana's approach to managing migration, responding to climate-related hazards, and strengthening national resilience to environmental change. Given the increasing recognition of the relationship between climate change, disasters, and population mobility, the integration of disability considerations within these policies is essential for ensuring inclusive governance. However, as observed in many countries, disability inclusion within migration and climate policy frameworks often remains limited or framed primarily in terms of vulnerability rather than rights-based participation (see Grech & Weber, 2025).

The Ghana National Migration Policy (2016) represents the first comprehensive policy framework for managing migration in Ghana. The policy was developed to provide strategic guidance for addressing both the opportunities and challenges associated with migration while promoting the positive contributions of migration to national development (Government of Ghana, 2016). It seeks to improve coordination among institutions involved in migration governance and to strengthen mechanisms for protecting the rights of migrants. The policy also acknowledges the importance of addressing irregular migration, human trafficking, and labour migration while encouraging engagement with the Ghanaian diaspora. Within the National Migration Policy (2016), references to vulnerable populations are present, and the document recognises that certain groups may face heightened risks during migration processes. These groups include women, children, and persons with disabilities. The policy emphasises the need for social protection measures that address the vulnerabilities of migrants who may experience exploitation, discrimination, or limited access to services. The recognition of persons with disabilities within the policy reflects an awareness that migration governance should consider the needs of marginalised populations. Such recognition aligns with broader international policy discussions that emphasise the importance of inclusive migration governance systems.

Despite the recognition of persons with disabilities in the National Migration Policy (2016), it provides limited detail on how disability inclusion should be operationalised in practice. For instance, while persons with disabilities are mentioned as part of broader vulnerable groups, the policy does not provide specific strategies for addressing accessibility barriers, ensuring participation of persons with disabilities in migration decision-making processes, or providing targeted support during displacement situations. Scholars have observed that migration policies in many contexts tend to categorise persons with disabilities as vulnerable populations without establishing mechanisms that enable their active participation in policy design and implementation (Stein et al., 2025). As a result, the recognition of disability within migration policies does not necessarily translate into concrete measures that address the unique challenges faced by persons with disabilities during migration.

Climate policy frameworks also have significant implications for migration and displacement governance. Environmental hazards such as flooding, drought, and coastal erosion are increasingly recognised as drivers of internal mobility and displacement in many low-income countries. In Ghana, the National Climate Change Policy (2013) provides the overarching framework for addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation. The policy emphasises the need to strengthen national resilience to climate variability while promoting sustainable development and environmental protection (Government of Ghana, 2013). It also recognises that climate change poses significant risks to livelihoods, infrastructure, and human security. The National Climate Change Policy (2013) acknowledges that certain populations may experience greater vulnerability to climate impacts due to social and economic inequalities. Vulnerable groups mentioned in the policy include women, children, and marginalised communities whose livelihoods depend heavily on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and fishing. While these provisions highlight the importance of social inclusion within climate governance, references to persons with disabilities are limited. This reflects a broader trend observed in many national climate policies where disability is either briefly mentioned or omitted entirely from policy frameworks addressing environmental risks (Chukwudum et al., 2025).

The limited integration of disability considerations within climate policy frameworks can have important implications for disaster preparedness and displacement governance. Climate-related hazards often require rapid evacuation, access to emergency shelters, and timely dissemination of early warning information. When disaster management systems are not designed to accommodate diverse needs, persons with disabilities may face significant barriers in accessing these services. Research has shown that inaccessible infrastructure, lack of assistive technologies, and communication barriers can prevent persons with disabilities from receiving early warnings or evacuating safely during disasters (UNDRR, 2024). Consequently, the absence of explicit disability-inclusive provisions within climate policies may increase the risk of exclusion during emergency responses.

Furthermore, climate adaptation policies often emphasise community resilience and livelihood diversification as strategies for reducing vulnerability to environmental change (Mohammed et al., 2021). While these strategies are important, they may not adequately address the structural barriers that limit the participation of persons with disabilities in economic and social activities. For example, persons with disabilities may face limited access to land, credit, or employment opportunities, which can restrict their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Without targeted policy interventions, climate adaptation programmes may therefore fail to reach persons with disabilities or address their specific needs.

From the analysis, the migration and climate policy frameworks of Ghana demonstrate an emerging recognition of the relationship between environmental change, human mobility, and social vulnerability. However, the integration of disability inclusion within these policies remains limited and largely symbolic. Persons with disabilities are often mentioned as part of broader vulnerable groups, but policies rarely provide detailed mechanisms for ensuring accessibility, participation, and protection during migration or displacement processes. These gaps highlight the need for stronger alignment between migration, climate, and disability governance frameworks in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are fully included in national strategies addressing environmental risks and population mobility. To better understand these gaps, it is also necessary to examine how national policies of Ghana align with international and regional legal frameworks that address internal displacement and the rights of persons with disabilities. The next section analyses relevant international and regional instruments, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention, in order to assess the extent to which Ghana's policy frameworks reflect global standards on disability-inclusive displacement governance.

Alignment with international and regional frameworks

Assessing disability inclusion within migration and internal displacement governance in Ghana requires situating national policies within international and regional legal frameworks. These frameworks establish normative standards for the protection of internally displaced persons and provide guidance on how states should address vulnerability, rights, and participation in situations of displacement. They are particularly important for evaluating whether national policies align with global commitments to human rights and inclusive governance. This section examines key instruments, including the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), and broader human rights frameworks such as the CRPD and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, with a focus on their implications for disability inclusion.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, developed in 1998, provide a widely recognised normative framework for the protection of internally displaced persons

(IDPs). Although not legally binding, the principles are grounded in existing international human rights and humanitarian law and have been widely adopted as a standard for national policy development (Bagshaw, 2021). The Guiding Principles emphasise that IDPs retain all rights enjoyed by other citizens and should not be subjected to discrimination on the basis of their displacement status (Schimmel, 2022). Importantly, the framework recognises that certain groups, including persons with disabilities, may require special protection and assistance during displacement (Schimmel, 2022). The principles call for measures to ensure access to basic services, protection from violence and exploitation, and support for durable solutions such as return, resettlement, or local integration (Bagshaw, 2022). Although the Guiding Principles acknowledge the need to protect vulnerable populations, their treatment of disability remains relatively general. References to persons with disabilities are often included within broader categories of vulnerable groups, without detailed guidance on how states should address accessibility, participation, or specific support needs (Crock & Ernst, 2017). Stein et al. (2025) argue that this broad categorisation may limit the effectiveness of the principles in promoting disability-inclusive displacement governance, as it does not fully engage with the structural barriers that shape the experiences of persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, the Guiding Principles provide an important foundation for integrating human rights considerations into national displacement policies.

At the regional level, the Kampala Convention, adopted by the African Union in 2009, represents a significant advancement in the legal protection of internally displaced persons. Unlike the Guiding Principles, the Kampala Convention is a legally binding instrument for states that have ratified it. The Convention establishes clear obligations for states to prevent displacement, protect and assist displaced populations, and promote durable solutions (African Union, 2009). It also explicitly recognises the need to provide special protection for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, during displacement situations (African Union, 2009). The Kampala Convention goes beyond general recognition by requiring states to take specific measures to ensure that vulnerable populations are protected during all phases of displacement, including prevention, response, and recovery. It emphasises the importance of non-discrimination, access to humanitarian assistance, and the protection of human dignity (African Union, 2009). In doing so, the Convention aligns more closely with rights-based approaches to disability inclusion. However, despite its relevance, Ghana has not yet ratified the Kampala Convention. This represents a significant gap in the country's displacement governance framework, as ratification could strengthen legal protections for internally displaced persons and provide a more comprehensive basis for integrating disability inclusion into national policy.

International human rights instruments also play a critical role in shaping disability-inclusive governance. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is particularly significant in this regard. The CRPD establishes a comprehensive framework for promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and emphasises their inclusion in all

aspects of social and political life (UN, 2006). Article 11 of the Convention specifically addresses situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, requiring states to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in such contexts. This provision is directly relevant to migration and displacement governance, as it highlights the obligation of states to incorporate disability considerations into disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. The CRPD also emphasises the principles of accessibility, participation, and non-discrimination, which are essential for inclusive migration governance. It calls for the removal of barriers that restrict the participation of persons with disabilities and promotes their involvement in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Compared to earlier frameworks, the CRPD provides a more detailed and rights-based approach to disability inclusion. However, translating these principles into national policy remains a challenge in many contexts. Specifically, although Ghana has ratified the CRPD, the integration of its provisions into migration and displacement policies remains limited. This suggests a gap between international commitments and national policy implementation.

In addition to the CRPD, broader regional human rights frameworks such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provide important normative guidance for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities (Juma, 2024). The African Charter emphasises equality, dignity, and non-discrimination, and it guarantees fundamental freedoms such as the right to movement and the right to security (Uwazuruike, 2022). These principles are relevant for displacement governance, as they reinforce the obligation of states to protect all individuals, including persons with disabilities, during situations of displacement. However, like many general human rights instruments, the Charter does not provide detailed guidance on how disability inclusion should be operationalised in practice.

The Migration Policy Framework for Africa, developed by the African Union, also provides guidance on migration governance across the continent (Abebe & Mundungwe, 2023). The framework encourages member states to develop comprehensive migration policies that promote development, protect the rights of migrants, and address emerging challenges such as environmental migration (Teye & Oucho, 2023). While the framework acknowledges vulnerable groups, it provides limited specific guidance on disability inclusion. This reflects a broader pattern in migration governance frameworks, where disability is often recognised but not systematically integrated into policy design and implementation.

The analysis of international and regional frameworks reveals a mixed picture regarding disability inclusion in migration and internal displacement governance. While instruments such as the CRPD and the Kampala Convention provide strong normative foundations for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in displacement contexts, other frameworks offer more general guidance with limited specificity on disability. Also, Ghana's national policies arguably show partial alignment with these frameworks, particularly in terms of recognising vulnerability and promoting human rights especially in situations of internal displacement.

However, significant gaps remain in translating these commitments into concrete policy measures that address accessibility, participation, and protection for persons with disabilities. These findings highlight the need for stronger alignment between national and international frameworks in order to ensure more inclusive migration and displacement governance.

Discussion

This article shows that disability inclusion within migration and internal displacement governance in Ghana remains limited and uneven. While national laws and policies acknowledge persons with disabilities, this recognition is often general and does not translate into clear strategies for inclusion in situations of migration or displacement. When viewed through the theoretical framework adopted in this article, particularly the rights-based and social model perspectives, it becomes evident that disability is still largely framed in terms of vulnerability rather than as a matter of human rights, participation, and structural inclusion. This supports recent literature which argues that policy systems often recognise persons with disabilities symbolically without addressing the deeper institutional barriers that shape their experiences (Grech & Weber, 2025).

One of the key findings relates to the way disability is conceptualised within Ghana's policy frameworks. Across the Constitution, the Persons with Disability Act, and migration and climate policies, persons with disabilities are typically grouped together with other vulnerable populations. While this classification can help draw attention to the need for protection, it also reflects a limited understanding of disability as primarily a condition of vulnerability. From the perspective of the social model of disability, this framing is insufficient because it does not address structural barriers such as inaccessible infrastructure, exclusion from planning processes, and lack of assistive services, that restrict participation of persons with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2017). Recent studies on disability and climate governance similarly show that framing disability mainly in terms of vulnerability can lead to policies that prioritise welfare support rather than empowerment and inclusion (Chukwudum et al., 2025).

The findings of this article also reveal important gaps in relation to participation of persons with disabilities within migration and internal displacement governance in Ghana, which is a central principle of the rights-based approach to disability. Although national policies recognise the importance of inclusive governance in general terms, there is little evidence of formal mechanisms that ensure the involvement of persons with disabilities or their representative organisations in migration or disaster-related decision-making. This absence is significant because participation is not only a normative principle but also a practical requirement for effective policy design (Berghs, 2017). Without the input of persons with disabilities, policies may fail to identify and address the specific barriers they face during displacement (King, Edwards, Watling, & Hair, 2019). Empirical research on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction shows that when persons with disabilities are excluded from

planning processes, emergency responses are often poorly adapted to their needs (UNDRR, 2024). The limited attention to participation within Ghana's policy frameworks therefore reflects a broader governance gap.

Another important finding concerns accessibility, particularly in relation to disaster preparedness and response systems. This article reported that while the Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) of 2006 promotes accessibility in areas such as public infrastructure and services, migration and climate policies provide little guidance on how accessibility should be ensured during emergencies or displacement. This gap has important implications in practice. During disasters, access to early warning information, evacuation routes, and temporary shelters is essential for survival and safety (Šakić Trogrlić et al., 2022). However, evidence shows that persons with disabilities often face significant challenges in accessing these services due to communication barriers, mobility constraints, and lack of inclusive planning (UNDRR, 2024). The absence of explicit provisions on accessibility within migration and climate policies suggests that these frameworks may not be adequately prepared to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities during situations of internal displacement.

The findings of this article further highlight limitations in relation to protection and legal safeguards of persons with disabilities in situations of internal displacement or disaster-induced migration. Although Ghana's legal framework includes general protections against discrimination, there are few provisions that specifically address the rights of persons with disabilities in contexts of internal displacement or disaster-induced migration. This contrasts with international frameworks such as the CRPD, which explicitly require states to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk. The gap between international commitments and national policy implementation reflects a common challenge in many low-income countries, where legal frameworks may formally recognise rights but lack the institutional mechanisms needed to enforce them. This finding aligns with broader literature on policy implementation, which emphasises that the existence of legal provisions alone is not sufficient to ensure effective protection without adequate resources, coordination, and accountability structures (Schimmel, 2022; Ferreira, 2022).

The findings also point to broader institutional and governance challenges that shape disability inclusion in migration policy. Migration and disaster governance in Ghana involve multiple institutions with overlapping responsibilities, including agencies responsible for migration management, disaster response, and social protection (Ibrahim, Salifu & Peprah, 2023). While this institutional diversity can provide opportunities for collaboration, it can also create coordination challenges that limit the effectiveness of policy implementation. In such contexts, disability inclusion may be treated as a cross-cutting issue without clear institutional ownership, leading to gaps in accountability. Recent studies on climate and migration governance in Africa highlight similar challenges, noting that fragmented institutional arrangements can hinder the integration of social inclusion considerations into policy

frameworks (Stein et al., 2025).

Another key issue emerging from the findings is the limited availability of disability-disaggregated data within migration and displacement systems. Data plays a crucial role in informing policy design and resource allocation (Brock & Mugeru, 2023), yet the absence of reliable data on persons with disabilities in migration contexts makes it difficult to assess the scale and nature of their needs. This finding reflects broader global challenges, as many countries lack systematic mechanisms for collecting disability-disaggregated data in disaster and migration contexts (Mitra et al., 2023). Without such data, persons with disabilities may remain invisible within policy processes, and their needs may not be adequately addressed in planning and response efforts.

Finally, the findings highlight the importance of aligning national frameworks with regional and international instruments. While Ghana has ratified key human rights instruments such as the CRPD, it has not yet ratified the Kampala Convention, which provides a comprehensive legal framework for addressing internal displacement in Africa. The absence of such a framework arguably limits the extent to which disability inclusion can be systematically integrated into displacement governance. Evidence from other African countries suggests that the domestication of regional frameworks can strengthen national policy responses by providing clearer legal obligations and institutional guidance (Mitra et al., 2023). In this regard, Ghana's current policy framework can be seen as being at a transitional stage, where commitments to disability inclusion exist but have not yet been fully translated into comprehensive and coordinated policy action.

Policy implications

The findings of this article highlight the urgent need to strengthen the integration of disability inclusion within Ghana's migration and climate policy frameworks. Although existing policies such as the National Migration Policy and the National Climate Change Policy acknowledge vulnerable groups, they do not provide clear and actionable strategies for addressing the specific needs of persons with disabilities in situations of migration and displacement. A key policy implication is therefore the need for a comprehensive review and revision of these frameworks to embed disability inclusion as a core principle rather than a peripheral concern. This requires moving beyond general statements of intent to the development of detailed guidelines on accessibility, inclusive service delivery, and protection mechanisms during emergencies. For example, policies should specify standards for accessible evacuation procedures, inclusive early warning systems, and disability-responsive humanitarian assistance. Integrating such measures into policy frameworks would ensure that disability inclusion is systematically considered across all stages of migration and displacement governance, from preparedness to response and recovery. It would also help align national policies more closely with international human rights standards, particularly those outlined in

the CRPD.

Another important implication concerns the development of a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for internal displacement. The absence of a dedicated national law on internal displacement in Ghana arguably limits the ability of state institutions to respond effectively and consistently to situations of displacement, particularly those driven by environmental hazards. Ratifying and domesticating the Kampala Convention would provide a stronger legal basis for protecting internally displaced persons, including persons with disabilities in Ghana, by establishing clear obligations for prevention, protection, and durable solutions. Beyond ratification, there is also a need to translate these legal commitments into national legislation and operational guidelines that explicitly address disability inclusion. Such a framework should outline institutional responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and accountability structures to ensure effective implementation. It should also incorporate provisions that address the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities during displacement, including access to healthcare, assistive technologies, and social support systems. Strengthening the legal framework in this way would enhance policy coherence and provide a clearer foundation for inclusive displacement governance.

This article also points to the need for stronger institutional coordination and governance arrangements. Migration, disaster management, and disability policy in Ghana are currently managed by different institutions, often with overlapping mandates and limited coordination. This fragmentation can result in gaps in policy implementation, particularly in relation to cross-cutting issues such as disability inclusion. Addressing this challenge requires the establishment of more effective coordination mechanisms that bring together relevant stakeholders across sectors. For instance, inter-agency platforms or task forces could be created to facilitate collaboration between ministries responsible for migration, environment, social protection, and disability affairs. Such platforms would enable the sharing of information, alignment of policy priorities, and development of joint strategies for inclusive governance. In addition, clear institutional leadership on disability inclusion within migration governance should be established to ensure accountability and sustained attention to the issue. Strengthening coordination would not only improve policy implementation, but also enhance the overall effectiveness and responsiveness of governance systems in addressing complex challenges related to migration and displacement.

A further critical policy implication relates to the promotion of meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in disaster-induced migration and displacement governance. The findings show that while participation is often mentioned as a general principle, there are limited mechanisms in place to ensure that persons with disabilities are actively involved in policy development and implementation. This gap undermines the effectiveness of policies, as it excludes the perspectives and lived experiences of those most affected by disaster-induced migration and displacement. To address this,

policymakers should institutionalise participation by creating formal channels through which Organisations of Persons with Disabilities can engage in decision-making processes at national and local levels. This could include representation on policy advisory committees, involvement in disaster planning and response initiatives, and participation in monitoring and evaluation processes. In addition, efforts should be made to address barriers to participation, such as lack of accessibility, limited resources, and social stigma. Ensuring meaningful participation would not only enhance the relevance and effectiveness of policies but also promote a more inclusive and democratic approach to governance.

The findings also underscore the importance of improving data collection and evidence-based policymaking. The lack of reliable disability-disaggregated data within migration and displacement contexts remains a significant challenge for policy design and implementation. Without accurate data, it is difficult to assess the scale of displacement among persons with disabilities, identify their specific needs, or allocate resources effectively. To address this gap, national statistical systems and disaster response mechanisms should incorporate disability indicators into data collection processes. This includes integrating disability-related questions into population censuses, migration surveys, and disaster assessments. In addition, collaboration with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities can help improve data accuracy and ensure that data collection methods are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of respondents. Strengthening data systems would support more informed decision-making and enable policymakers to design targeted interventions that address the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities in migration and displacement contexts.

Finally, this article highlights the need to strengthen capacity and resource allocation for implementing disability-inclusive policies. Even where policy provisions exist, their effectiveness depends on the availability of financial resources, technical expertise, and institutional capacity. In many cases, limited funding and lack of training can hinder the implementation of inclusive policies, particularly at the local level where disaster response often takes place. To address this challenge, there is the need for targeted investment in capacity-building initiatives for policymakers, disaster management personnel, and local authorities. Training programmes should focus on disability inclusion, accessibility standards, and inclusive service delivery, to ensure that relevant actors have the knowledge and skills needed to implement policies effectively. In addition, adequate funding should be allocated to support the development of accessible infrastructure, provision of assistive technologies, and delivery of inclusive services during emergencies. Strengthening capacity and resources in this way would help bridge the gap between policy commitments and practical outcomes, ensuring that disability inclusion is realised in practice rather than remaining a stated objective.

Conclusion

This article has examined the extent to which disability inclusion is reflected in migration and

internal displacement laws and policies of Ghana, with particular attention to the growing influence of climate-related displacement. The findings demonstrate that Ghana has made important progress in recognising the rights of persons with disabilities within its constitutional and legislative frameworks. Provisions within the 1992 Constitution and the Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) of 2006 establish a foundation for equality, non-discrimination, and social inclusion. In addition, national policies such as the National Migration Policy and the National Climate Change Policy reflect an emerging awareness of the relationship between environmental change, human mobility, and vulnerability. However, despite these positive developments, the article finds that disability inclusion within migration and displacement governance remains limited in scope and depth. In many cases, disability is acknowledged only in general terms, without clear guidance on how inclusion should be operationalised in practice. As a result, there is a gap between policy recognition and actual preparedness to address the needs and rights of persons with disabilities in situations of migration and internal displacement.

A key finding of this article is that disability within the migration governance framework of Ghana continues to be framed largely through the lens of vulnerability rather than human rights and participation. Although the recognition of vulnerability can help draw attention to groups that may require support, it can also lead to policy approaches that focus on protection without addressing the underlying structural barriers that produce exclusion. The theoretical framework highlights the importance of moving beyond the medical model to adopt a rights-based approach that is grounded in principles of accessibility, participation, and equality. The analysis shows that current policies do not adequately provide for the active involvement of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, nor do they sufficiently address issues such as accessible infrastructure, inclusive communication systems, and targeted support during emergencies. These gaps are particularly concerning in the context of climate-related disasters, where timely access to information, safe evacuation, and inclusive recovery processes are essential. Without deliberate efforts to address these issues, persons with disabilities may continue to face disproportionate risks during displacement situations.

The article also reveals broader institutional and policy challenges that affect the integration of disability inclusion within migration governance in Ghana. These include fragmented institutional arrangements, limited coordination among agencies responsible for migration, disaster management, and disability policy, and the absence of comprehensive legal frameworks specifically addressing internal displacement. The lack of disability-disaggregated data further constrains effective policy planning and resource allocation, as it limits the ability of policymakers to understand the scale and nature of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. In addition, while Ghana has ratified key international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the translation of these commitments into national policy and practice remains incomplete. The absence of ratification of the Kampala Convention also represents a missed opportunity to strengthen the legal and

institutional basis for inclusive displacement governance. These challenges highlight the need for a more coordinated and integrated approach that brings together legal reform, institutional strengthening, and improved data systems.

Looking ahead, the findings underscore the importance of rethinking migration and displacement governance through a more inclusive and rights-based lens. As climate change continues to intensify environmental risks and shape patterns of human mobility, the need for policies that address the diverse experiences of affected populations will become increasingly urgent. For Ghana, this presents an opportunity to build on existing legal and policy frameworks by embedding disability inclusion more systematically across all aspects of migration and disaster governance. This includes revising existing policies to incorporate clear disability-inclusive measures, strengthening institutional coordination, promoting meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, and investing in accessible infrastructure and services. More broadly, it requires a shift in how disability is understood within policy discourse, that is from a condition of vulnerability to a matter of rights, agency, and social justice. Taking these steps will see Ghana move towards a more inclusive and resilient system of governance that ensures that no one is left behind in the face of environmental change and displacement.

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