Climate-Resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)



Climate Change is Putting WASH Systems Under Pressure

Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is essential for health and development. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of droughts, storms and floods, placing WASH systems under growing pressure.

Climate-resilient programs help communities anticipate, withstand, adapt to and recover from climate-related disasters while minimising environmental impacts.

It is built on:



- ✓ **Human rights and equity**



- ✓ **Community-led and inclusive approaches**



- ✓ **Climate adaptation and mitigation**



- ✓ **Integration with biodiversity and agriculture**

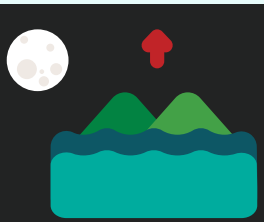


- ✓ **A focus on marginalised populations, especially people with disabilities**

People with Disabilities Face Greater Impacts

Climate-related disasters can damage water points, sanitation facilities and drainage systems, or contaminate water sources like tanks, streams or lakes.

People with disabilities already face barriers to accessing safe water, sanitation and hygiene. Climate change often makes these barriers worse, increasing risks to their health, safety and dignity.



For example, during recent King Tide in Papua New Guinea, people with disabilities faced increased challenges such as well water being contaminated and challenges accessing safe sanitation, sometimes relying on unsafe alternatives such as flooded toilets or contaminated water use.



Despite these heightened risks, disability inclusion is often overlooked in climate adaptation planning, limiting equitable access to WASH services.

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Disability-Inclusive WASH Strengthens Community Resilience

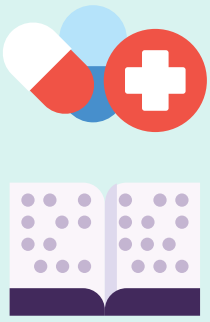
People with disabilities have a right to appropriate and dignified WASH services. Climate-resilient WASH is most effective when people with disabilities are included throughout the program cycle.

Program leaders, local government and community leaders need to work with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to:



- ✓ **Understand the needs, interests and capacities** of people with disabilities.
- ✓ Identify barriers and **ensure solutions meet diverse needs.**
- ✓ People with disabilities must be represented as decision makers and experts in all **needs assessments and program design.**
- ✓ Include people with disabilities in the design and implementation of **awareness raising and capacity building.**
- ✓ Work with OPDs to gather data to **understand the key barriers and enablers** for accessible climate-resilient WASH.
- ✓ Use a combination of **mainstream and disability-specific actions** in and outside of the WASH sector.

Inclusive climate-resilient WASH programs should also:



- ✓ **Collect gender and disability-disaggregated data** to support inclusive monitoring and planning.
- ✓ Ensure people with disabilities have **access to appropriate menstrual hygiene and incontinence products.**
- ✓ **Identify discrimination and reduce stigma** through awareness raising and education to ensure WASH programs benefit people with diverse needs.
- ✓ **Use accessible communications,** including sign language, braille, Easy Read, images and captioning for community information and messaging.

An Inclusive and Climate-Resilient Future

When people with disabilities are actively included in climate-resilient WASH planning and implementation, communities become stronger and more resilient.



This can result in:

- ✓ **Improved health and wellbeing**
- ✓ **Protected water resources and ecosystems**
- ✓ **Strengthened food security and livelihoods**
- ✓ **Locally led decision-making**
- ✓ **Dignity, safety and independence**
- ✓ **More equitable and resilient communities**

Key Message

By investing in climate-resilient and disability-inclusive WASH today, communities can create healthier, safer and more sustainable futures for everyone.

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