



# The impact of climate change

From people with disabilities  
in the places we work

**Life is precarious for people with disabilities living in developing countries, where people face unprecedented land degradation, water scarcity, extreme weather, and desertification driven by the climate crisis. Our work with communities is affected by climate change and we have witnessed and heard stories about how it is directly impacting people's lives - their food, water and communities.**

**In this document, you will find perspectives from the people that we work with and how CBM Global is responding.**

CBM Global recognises that climate change disproportionately affects 1.3 billion people with disabilities living around the world in complex and interconnected ways. Yet they are often excluded from climate adaptation plans.

By working through our field programs, providing advisory support, and advocating for change, we are committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are not left behind in the fight against climate change.

Cover: Record breaking floods leaves millions of people in Bangladesh in desperate need of food, shelter, and emergency relief.

In the sweltering heat, CBM and partners huddle under the shade of tree to discuss the impact of the drought in Kenya.



## Field programs



Addressing on-going discrimination, stigma and poverty associated with disability is an essential part of our work.

We know that people living in poverty are most impacted by the climate crisis. We support people with disabilities and other at-risk communities to adapt so that their livelihoods can be more resilient in the face of climate change. We work with Organisations of People with Disabilities to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change specific to people with disabilities.

We work with people with disabilities to help them access support services – such as mobility devices, hearing and vision aids, sign language and various government benefits. These services are an important way for people with disabilities to be more autonomous and participate in climate adaptation activities. Unfortunately, access to these support services is often limited and can be further disrupted during extreme weather events and climate-induced disasters.

Our field programs make sure that early warning systems and disaster preparedness activities are disability inclusive – so that everyone gets warnings and alerts when they need it.

## Advocacy



We advocate for climate policies and plans that are inclusive of people with disabilities. We do so by supporting people with disabilities and their representative organisations to demand that their voices be heard in decision making processes related to climate change.

We support research that identifies gaps in disability inclusion and climate change, documents how communities want to engage, and proposes ways of achieving inclusion of people with disabilities in climate action. We also work with disability organisations to hold their governments to account on their obligations and commitments towards disability-inclusive climate action.

## External advisory



We provide advice and support to donors, governments, UN agencies, and non-governmental organisations on how to be inclusive of people with disabilities in their climate work.

We share our experience and documented evidence to make a positive impact on people with disabilities beyond our field programs. Through our advisory work, we support organisations to support people with disabilities in ways that CBM Global would not be able to reach if working on our own.

# Nepal

Climate change has made winters warmer, monsoon rains heavier and is melting the Himalayan glaciers. This is causing increased flash floods and landslides, destroying homes, crops and infrastructure, and has put pressure on governments to support emergency and recovery programs. As the climate changes, diseases like dengue fever are more common in areas that have never been affected before, putting strain on the poorly resourced health sector.

**“The biggest issue for us is climate change. We’ve had huge floods which have come down the valley and destroyed villages. People’s houses totally wiped out. We are raising up our voices [asking] why should we be facing these challenges? We are not the big consumers in the world. It is developed countries that are responsible.”**

– LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADER IN HELAMBU MUNICIPALITY, WHERE CBM AUSTRALIA IS SUPPORTING A LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

Durna has a small plot of land and a modest house in the hills. Since he had an industrial accident that damaged his arm, he’s

been working on the farm and is part of a CBM-supported self-help group. He’s now growing cauliflowers, cabbages and chilli.

Climate change is a concern for everyone in the area.

“It’s a problem. There’s now a lot of diseases affecting our grain crops. And there’s landslides. We are always worried. The earthquake in 2015 unsettled the land, and now when there’s more rain, there’s more chance that our house will be wiped out,” said Durna.

“The government wants to relocate us because of the landslide risk, but there’s nowhere to go. We’re prepared – and have thought about what we’d do if this land started to move again.”

“When it rains, I worry all night. Sometimes I get up and check that it’s still ok”, said Durna’s wife.

## Our support

CBM Australia is supporting projects in Nepal that assist communities to adapt farming approaches to climate change. Our work helps set up self-help and savings groups that include both people with and without disabilities, and supports people with disabilities to develop vocational skills that will enable them to move out of poverty.



↑ Durna’s wife



For poor rural farmers in Nepal like Durna, increased rainfall causes landslides, which wipes out valuable agricultural land, and puts families at risk.



CBM and a project partner visiting drought affected communities in Kenya.

# Kenya

Three years of drought has caused a huge drop in food production. It has dried up over 90% of the open water sources in the country's arid and semi-arid areas, and threatened over 5.4 million people with hunger.

**“There used to be droughts, but not like this current drought. We get water from the local borehole but now it's salty. So now we have to buy water – and the price of water has doubled in a year.”**

– WOMAN WITH A DISABILITY

When prices rise, life is more challenging for everyone, especially for people with disabilities who often live farthest from markets and are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks and resource scarcity.

**“Those who can move have already left for places with water and food. It is us who cannot move that have remained.”**

– LOCAL PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

Jennifer is blind, and through her involvement in a savings group set up with CBM Australia's support, she is selling beans and maize in her village. But climate change is starting to have an impact.

“The drought is having a huge impact because food is more expensive. Because my business is not that big, I can only buy small amounts of stock at a time, the price increase has a huge impact. The food is coming from further away and there is less available,” Jennifer said.



← Jennifer used to purchase whole sacks of maize to sell. Now she only buys small quantities because the price of food has increased so much due to climate change.

**Our support**  
 CBM Global works with local partners to respond to these challenges by providing cash transfers, food relief, and assistive devices so that people with disabilities who have set up small businesses can continue their business. We are also working with communities to support livelihoods that can thrive despite climate change.

# Vanuatu

The small Pacific island nation of Vanuatu is prone to cyclones and extreme rainfall. It is seen as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change, and the government has made strong commitments to becoming carbon neutral. Rising ocean temperatures are having negative impacts on fish stocks. Two large cyclones in the past seven years have significantly affected the economy and wiped out food crops.

As sea levels rise, the natural and man-made barriers that keep communities safe are being washed away.

Anna (opposite, top) is a member of the Vanuatu Disabled People's Association (VDPA), and leads their advocacy and lobbying work.

"Sea levels are rising in the community that I live. There used to be a seawall here but now there's hardly anything left. It is slowly being eroded by the seawater," Anna said.

"Around here, people with disabilities and their carers rely mainly on backyard gardens for food. With more frequent cyclones, the risk of food insecurity is high. And yet, people with disabilities have limited access to livelihoods support. We are linking in with organisations who are helping us to adapt our livelihood practices – like vegetable growing – to be resilient to climate change.

"I want my government to include VDPA in awareness raising activities on climate change – so that the messages reach people with disabilities.

**"And we want countries like Australia to provide support to local organisations like mine. We can then do advocacy work and community adaptation programs such as livelihood programs that are resilient to a changing climate."**

## Our support

CBM Australia is supporting an organisational strengthening program with the Vanuatu Disabled People's Association (VDPA), which is supporting them to be able to work with government and other organisations responding to climate change, and make sure the perspectives and issues faced by people with disabilities are not overlooked.



As sea levels rise, the natural and man made barriers that keep communities safe are being washed away.



Nelly, who is blind, is worried about the changing climate. Making sure people with disabilities are able to be included in disaster planning processes is important in Vanuatu.

# Bangladesh

Recently, Bangladesh experienced record-breaking floods with 7.2 million people affected, and it is estimated that by 2050, one in seven people will be displaced by climate change. In addition to floods, the country also frequently experiences droughts, cyclones, tornadoes, landslides, and much more.

People with disabilities are seeing the impact of climate change on a very personal level.

**“It is the rainy season now in Bangladesh. But I am in a room which is very hot - around 36 degrees, which is unusual and nearly unbelievable. This is because of climate change that is happening. During the high tide, our city is submerged under water. It has been happening for five years. Because of climate change, the sea level has increased. I am personally highly impacted by climate change.”**

- DISABILITY ACTIVIST AND ORGANISATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (OPD) ORGANISER FROM BANGLADESH\*

“I belong to one of the flood affected areas of Bangladesh so I experienced the last flood that occurred in Bangladesh. And the most difficulty I faced was that I couldn't move at all. I couldn't go to my office or markets.

Due to these problems my family income and business failed, and we faced financial crisis\*,” said a disability activist and person with a disability from Bangladesh.

While the government and the international community recognise and are planning responses to climate change in Bangladesh, the issues of people with disabilities are often hardly considered.

“The people who are implementing [policies], they thought ‘okay, climate change is an environmental issue, it is not really related to people with disabilities, and maybe people with disabilities are not an active part of it’. Even though there are many projects implemented by the government for climate change adaptation, people with disabilities are not much engaged with them\*,” said a disability activist and OPD organiser from Bangladesh.



For many people, navigating flood waters can be difficult if disaster preparedness plans are not inclusive.

← People with disabilities must be included in disaster preparedness plans if they are to be able to escape safely.

## Our support

CBM Australia supports community-based programs in Bangladesh that focus on people with disabilities and their families to be resilient as the climate changes. CBM program partners work with local government disaster preparedness units to make sure that their disaster planning processes are inclusive, so that no one is left behind when a flood or cyclone hits.

\*Quotes supplied by CBM Global at <https://cbm-global.org/resource/missing-in-climate-action>



# Indonesia

The World Bank ranks Indonesia in the top-third of countries in terms of climate risk, particularly due to increased flooding, extreme heat, and sea-level rise. In the next 70 years, they estimate over 4.2 million people could be exposed to permanent flooding in coastal areas, and river flooding in cities. Rice, the main staple of Indonesia, is particularly vulnerable to the changes in climate.

Yapas (opposite, right) is a leader in a local Organisation of People with Disabilities (OPD) based in West Timor, Eastern Indonesia.

“Our OPD, which is based in West Timor, did a simple survey last year of 100 people with disabilities in four villages. We found that people didn’t understand anything about climate change, or about why there are more natural disasters happening.

“There is not a lot of focus on preparing for disasters in villages around here, and certainly people with disabilities themselves are not involved at all - it’s really only the VIPs.

“When you’ve got a disability you don’t get a lot of information about what you should do during a natural disaster. Those with a disability are pretty much overlooked.

“The role of an organisation like ours is to get people with disability more involved in policy-making. Currently they have no seat at any table.”

The OPD is involved in a CBM-supported project targeting people in poor rural villages, providing advice on how people with disabilities can be most appropriately involved.

## Our support

CBM Global is supporting a project in Eastern Indonesia that focuses on resiliency and inclusion. We are working with poor subsistence farming communities. We know that the cost of living for families that include a person with a disability is much higher - so we will be focusing on them particularly for support and training. CBM is making sure that families that will be most affected by the changes have ways to get through the tough times.



Yapas (right), who is a leader in an Organisation for People with Disabilities, is working with Adriana (middle) and Abe (left) on a project to ensure that rural people with disabilities and their families have ways to adapt to the changing climate.

# Philippines

The Philippines is one of the most cyclone-prone countries in the world. It lies on what is described as the 'typhoon belt' and is one of the top five countries affected by climate change, as per the Global Climate Risk Index 2021. Approximately 20 cyclones hit the Philippines annually and this is increasing. The agriculture sector is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and people with disabilities continue to be the hardest hit due to existing inequality and poverty.



Joan is the President of a local Organisation of People with Disabilities in central Philippines. Her leg was removed in 2008 to prevent the spread of a tumour. Her family own a small farm, and her husband makes a small income as a tricycle driver.

In recent years, running a small farm has become a risky undertaking. Unpredictable weather, with flooding and then drought, has meant that production is erratic. Poor families like Joan's can't risk spending money on growing crops without the surety of a harvest, and the income it will generate to support the family.

**"Five to seven years ago we were harvesting between 30 and 50 sacks of rice, but the last time we farmed our land, we only harvested about 10 sacks."**

"This is caused by climate change affecting farmers. Even the occurrence of typhoons is changing – usually we get typhoons in June and July. But in November 2021, it was the strongest typhoon that I've ever experienced - our village was flooded for two weeks.

**"I was very vulnerable due to my disability. I couldn't do anything outside and was confined in our house".**

← The destruction caused by Super Typhoon Rai (Odette) in December 2021.

## Our support

CBM Australia is currently supporting a project with local partners that will ensure that humanitarian responses nationally and in selected provinces are responsive to the needs of people with disabilities. Given that the Philippines is one of the most at-risk countries in terms of disasters, it's important that government disaster preparedness and response policies and programs think about disability issues.



Climate change makes life even more challenging for Joan.



## **Please stay in touch**

Sign up for our regular email at [cbm.org.au/subscribe](https://cbm.org.au/subscribe)

**cbm.org.au**

1800 678 069

PO Box 196, Richmond, VIC, 3121

**f** [facebook.com/CBMAustralia](https://facebook.com/CBMAustralia)

**t** [@CBMAustralia](https://twitter.com/CBMAustralia)

**in** [linkedin.com/company/cbm-australia](https://linkedin.com/company/cbm-australia)



CBM Australia is a member of the CBM Global Disability Inclusion Federation.



CBM acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)