



Abilis Manual on

Climate Change and Disability



The purpose of this manual is to support Abilis staff in mainstreaming climate resilience aspects into their work and Abilis-funded projects in order to support persons with disabilities and their livelihoods in adapting to the impacts of climate change.

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1

Abbreviations

CO = Country Office
CSO = Civil Society Organisation
DIDRR = Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction
DRR = Disaster Risk Reduction
MFA = Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland
NAP = National Adaptation Plan
NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation
OPD = Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
PO = Partner Organisation
SFDRR = Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SRHR = Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN = United Nations
UNCRPD = United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC = United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WASH = Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO = World Health Organisation

The purpose of this manual is to support Abilis coordinators and facilitators in mainstreaming climate resilience aspects into their work, and through this process, strengthen Abilis-funded projects. Abilis projects are already contributing to improved climate resilience through activities such as diversifying income sources of persons with disabilities and advocating for disability inclusion in planning and decision making of all societal concerns.

The manual is not meant to be the only source of information for climate action at Abilis. The manual offers general information on climate change and disability, and provides instructions on Abilis project facilitation processes. It guides readers to other resources and tools for more specific work in different country contexts, when necessary.

Climate change is a human rights issue as it affects the realisation of human rights through the threats it poses on health, safety, livelihoods and general well-being of people. Climate action can also have human rights implications when action is taken without listening to populations affected by the planned activities: Without the inclusion of persons with disabilities, women and girls, and indigenous people in planning and decision-making in climate action, the process can worsen existing inequalities in society. The safety, well-being and livelihoods of people and communities are at risk.

Climate resilience and environmental sustainability are considered at all levels of Abilis work. In this manual, the main focus is on what happens at the project and project management level. The manual describes the way climate change affects human rights, lives, and well-being of persons with disabilities; explains relevant terminology and concepts surrounding climate work, and gives examples and tools on how to strengthen climate aspects in Abilis projects.

2

Terminology and concepts related to climate action

Climate action refers to all work done to slow down climate change and control its adverse impacts at different levels.

Climate hazards are potentially dangerous climate and weather events or trends, which may cause loss of life, injury, or other health impacts, as well as damage and loss of property, infrastructure, livelihoods, service provision, ecosystems, or environmental resources. For example, heavy rains and floods, cyclones, or prolonged drought.

Coping mechanisms are short-term and unplanned measures that are taken to survive the immediate impact of climate hazards. They can be, for example, moving livelihood assets such as poultry to a safer place during a flood, or a temporary displacement of people during hazards.

Adaptation in the context of climate change refers to adjusting to actual or expected future climate and weather scenarios. Adaptation is planned action that aims to alleviate the short- and long-term negative impacts of climate change. Adaptation tries to decrease **exposure** of people, their livelihoods and assets to climate hazards, and/or strengthen their ability to avoid harmful impacts of these hazards. Essential in adaptation is to build the **adaptive capacity** of people to respond to climate related challenges. Adaptation means modifying livelihoods and ways of living to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

Adaptive capacity refers to the social and technical skills, strategies, and assets that groups or individuals have to help them cope with environmental and socioeconomic changes.

Climate justice refers to the social and ethical dimensions of climate change and climate action. It is closely related to human rights. Questions of equality

and inequality are strongly present in climate change: Often those who are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, are the least responsible for the emissions that accelerate it and have least resources to tackle climate related challenges, thereby creating injustices. Climate change can also further exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities. These injustices should be considered in climate work.

Climate resilience is the ability to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA), for example, defines it as follows: "The aim of climate resilience as a cross-cutting objective is to enhance climate change adaptation, to reduce vulnerability and to strengthen the resilience of people, ecosystems and societies to climate risks and the impacts of climate change. Climate resilience is one part of overall resilience that is affected by multiple other factors as well, such as environmental degradation, economic shocks, conflicts and pandemics."

Mitigation: Mitigation aims to limit global warming and its consequences so that the planet would remain safe for humans and other animals. Mitigation aims to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This is done by decreasing human-made greenhouse gas emissions or increasing **sequestration** of these gases from the atmosphere.

Greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by cutting down the use of fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, and substituting them with renewable energy sources such as biogas, wind and solar power.

Sequestration means removing the greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and capturing and storing them into carbon sinks. Sequestration can be increased by creating new nature-based **carbon sinks** through activities such as reforestation, agroforestry, sustainable forest management and soil improvement. Putting an end to practices that destroy forests or degrade soils is important in the efforts to decrease human made greenhouse gas emissions.

Adequate mitigation requires international agreement, political will, and high-level changes in industry and production. It should not be expected to be achieved by individual lifestyle choices alone.

3

General causes and impacts of climate change

Climate change refers to long-term changes in weather patterns: Areas where seasonal rains have been predictable, are now experiencing long periods of drought. Areas where warm seasons are usually mild, are now experiencing frequent heatwaves. Extreme weather events, such as destructive winds or very hot days

have become more common. Icecaps are melting and sea levels are rising, which threatens low-lying coastal communities and small island states. Snow is disappearing from mountain areas and rivers are drying up.

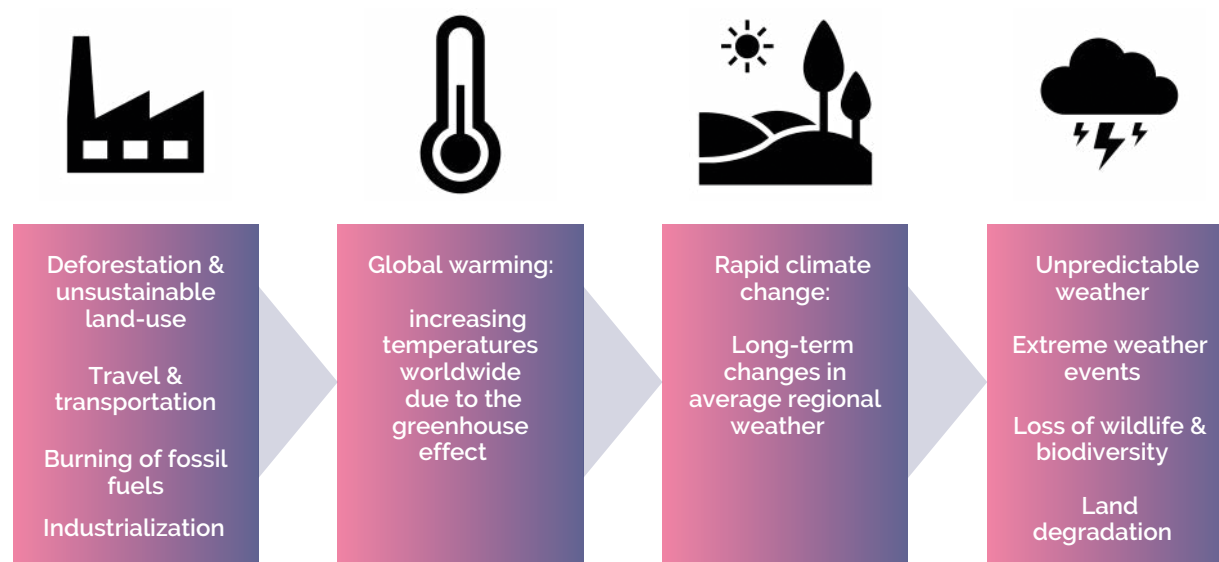
These changes are occurring at a continuously faster pace due to **global**

warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions from **human-made** industries and unsustainable land-use practices that are driven by over-consumption and endless growth. The destruction of natural carbon-sinks – such as forests – also significantly contributes to the problem, because carbon-sinks can capture carbon dioxide and prevent it from being released into the atmosphere.

Climate change has devastating impacts on health, livelihoods, ecosystems and human rights: Extreme weather scenarios such as prolonged droughts, storms, heavy rains and subsequent landslides have become more common. Ecosystems are affected: Many species do not have time to adapt to the changing climate, thereby posing a threat to biodiversity – many species are at the brink of

extinction or have already become extinct. People and communities are threatened with deepening food insecurity, malnutrition, water scarcity, extreme heat, floods, worsening and more frequent infectious diseases and other health concerns.

These climate hazards and related risks are often connected and can have compounded impacts. Hazards caused by the changing climate can be **sudden**, such as flash floods, or **slow onset**, such as desertification, taking place over months or years. Hazards and struggle for natural resources can lead to migration and displacement and multiple other social and economic challenges.



4

Climate change and persons with disabilities

Issues of disability, poverty, and climate resilience are deeply intertwined. Persons with disabilities are often disproportionately affected by the consequences of climate change, such as extreme weather events, disasters and natural hazards, food and water security issues. The existing barriers and discrimination persons with disabilities face in all areas of life also make them more vulnerable to climate impacts.

Climate change is likely to increase existing inequalities.

Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group. How climate change affects their lives may vary depending on geographical location, income level, level of education, age, type of disability, gender, minority status and other factors.

Persons with disabilities should not be considered only as victims

of climate change impacts – they should have an active role in planning and implementation of adaptation, mitigation and conservation efforts to assure that these efforts **do not leave anyone behind**. Including persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of climate action is likely to benefit societal well-being and equity overall.

Globally, data and statistics on the impact of climate change on persons with disabilities are lacking, and so is funding that targets specifically persons with disabilities in adaptation, or general climate-funding that is disability inclusive. Organisations of persons with disabilities (OPD) should play an important role in this type of research and data collection. Mainstreaming disability inclusion among climate actors is necessary.

The following sub-chapters examine some key areas in which climate change, environmental sustainability, and human rights intersect.

4.1 Environmental rights

The right to a healthy environment is enshrined in over 100 constitutions of the world. In **October 2021**, the human rights council of the UN, recognized the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, and appointed an expert to monitor human rights in the context of the climate emergency.

“Human rights cannot be enjoyed without a safe, clean and healthy environment, and sustainable environmental governance cannot exist without the establishment of and respect for human rights.”

– UNEP: What are environmental rights?

Currently, there are no general conventions regarding environmental rights specifically. This is because environmental rights are intertwined and related to most other human rights conventions. Economic, social and cultural rights that are closely related to the environment include for example, the right to food and adequate standard of living, and access to religious sites. In these rights,

the environment has a direct effect on the existence or the enjoyment of the right itself.

4.2. Advocacy and collaboration for disability inclusion in climate action

Separate streams of action and funding within civil society often cause gaps between those working on environmental action and OPDs that are focused on rights of persons with disabilities. This is witnessed at country levels, but also at high-level political forums. The topics of inclusive environmental work and OPD participation in climate action planning have received increased attention only during recent years, thus lessons learned from existing initiatives are still rare. In politics, both are areas that were historically more marginal, but now demand for their mainstreaming in all actions is growing. Change is happening at a rapid pace, which is why up-to-date information of different country contexts should be the starting point when planning advocacy and collaboration.

The United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(UNCRPD) mandates participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making and it is widely ratified by countries of action and donors. This includes decision-making in planning of climate action and disaster management, which is also in-line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). Furthermore, the processes and agreements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) identify persons with disabilities as one of the segments of the population whose human rights are acutely affected by the impacts of climate change.

In order to be in-line with the mentioned frameworks and conventions, all related action should be disability inclusive with a participatory approach that requires input from OPDs at the country level. UN member countries have **National Adaptation Plans** (NAP) that are a key part of the UNFCCC processes. Visibility is required at the local level to improve the disability inclusion of the NAPs and the participation of persons with disabilities in their implementation. NAPs have to address disability inclusion by mandate, thus they are not something that can be left aside.

Persons with disabilities have to be included in the planning and implementation of climate action.



Climate change affects the quality and availability of food.

4.3. Impact on livelihoods and food security

The global majority of persons with disabilities live in rural areas and in poverty. This means that they often depend on natural resources for their subsistence and livelihoods, or that they may lack access to natural resources and other vital resources to begin with. When natural resources are scarce and threatened by climate change, so is the subsistence of persons who directly rely on them for survival.

Due to lack of access to education and employment, persons with disabilities often have few opportunities for diversification of their income sources, or alternative sources of employment and income-generation which could be less vulnerable to climate change.

When areas become inhabitable, with less and less livelihood opportunities,

and populations start to move to other regions, persons with disabilities may not be able to migrate due to barriers, or they might be left behind by their family members who choose to leave the area. Even when migration is possible, persons with disabilities face additional communicational and physical barriers in seeking livelihoods in new communities.

Diversity of income sources and access to education and information have an important role in climate change adaptation.

Though livelihood options such as farming and keeping livestock can be extremely vulnerable to climate change, they can also be important in strengthening local food security, depending on the context. Climate change threatens food security through its adverse impact on farming and other food production, making these activities harder and high risk. To sustain production and **food security** in communities, farmers and

food producers need accessible and adequate resources and information. What matters is what kind of agricultural inputs and methods are used, how are risks managed, how animal grazing is controlled, and most of all: are the resources, know-how, and related programmes available and accessible to persons with disabilities.

To support sustainable livelihoods, it is necessary to support **sustainable practices** in agriculture and animal husbandry, and to **diversify sources of income** through access to education and vocational training.

4.4. Disasters, environmental migration and displacement

It is estimated that without concrete climate and development action, 216 million people in six regions of the world could migrate internally by 2050. Even if action is taken, migration at a

large scale will still take place. Making migration routes and procedures safe and accessible for everyone is one of many requirements to make migration a positive adaptation strategy.

The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) establishes that persons with disabilities and their organisations are legitimate stakeholders and actors in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices. Often, government, NGOs, and relief organisations lack information and knowledge about the issues, concerns, needs, and aspirations of persons with disabilities. Participation of persons with disabilities in different phases of the disaster management cycle is still weak. However, it is essential that persons with disabilities are included at all stages of the cycle (planning and preparedness for disasters, during a disaster, after a disaster), not just as recipients of the final response.

Persons with disabilities face significant risks and barriers to inclusion before, during, and after



Assistive devices can break or be lost during disasters.

disasters and displacement:

- **Before:** Information is not given in an accessible format. For instance, sound alerts from early warning systems may not be useful for persons who are deaf; Persons with physical disabilities may not be able to move out of harm's way and thus might be swept away by floods or be trapped inside buildings;
- **During:** Emergency shelters and transit points can be inaccessible or hard to find, including inaccessible WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) and health facilities;
- **After:** Displacement often takes place between two climate-vulnerable areas, thus climate-related vulnerability does not stop after displacement: Environmental and climate risks may cause additional needs in hosting areas, particularly for persons with disabilities.

The examples above are not exhaustive, but give a general idea of the challenges faced.

In many parts of the world, extreme flood events are likely to increase due to climate change



In Mozambique, at the time of Cyclones Idai, Kenneth, and Eloise, it was found that persons with disabilities suffered more because response strategies and structures for accessible information and early evacuation were not in place to ensure that all at-risk persons with disabilities could be placed in secure locations.

Sometimes, **climate action** can also cause **forced displacement**: When large areas, such as forests, are chosen to be environmental conservation sites, communities living in the forest may be forced to move out. Due to communication barriers, or lack of access to land rights, persons with disabilities can be especially vulnerable to this type of activity. Without adequate information or inclusion in communal action, they might not have the necessary resources to defend their rights.

Adaptation and mitigation activities should always be planned by first learning about the needs and opinions of affected populations, such as forest communities. They should be the decision-makers and active participants in planning that concerns their living environments.

4.5 Health and safety

Climate change and global warming have negative impacts on human health. Climate change is considered as the greatest threat to human health in the 21st century by the World Health Organisation. For example, migration can result in crowded refugee camps, where proper sanitation and access to clean water are not guaranteed, contributing to increased risk of disease.

The prevalence of diseases is set to increase: Floods can result in an increase in water-borne diseases like cholera. Mosquitoes that spread malaria or dengue-fever, thrive in specific climatic conditions and thus cases may be on the rise, or might spread to new areas.

Persons with disabilities can have pre-existing health conditions that make them more vulnerable, for example medication that makes them less tolerant to extremely warm weather. In many places, healthcare is not accessible and access to clean water and proper sanitation is challenging. Climate change can further exacerbate these barriers. Access to health centers can be impossible if the roads are flooded, or if a prolonged dry season depletes the water resources affecting adequate hygiene practices. As the majority of the world's persons with disabilities also live in poverty, they often have few possibilities to invest in relief, such as air conditioners during heatwaves, or renovating houses to be more resilient during heavy rain, or self-organised evacuation before storms and hurricanes.

4.6. SRHR and family planning

Climate change also impacts Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). It can directly cause disruptions in provision of SRHR services due to extreme weather events, especially for groups that already face additional barriers due to disability, indigeneity, gender, or sexual orientation. Furthermore climate-sensitive diseases, heat stress, and extreme weather can have effects on pregnant persons, which can affect parental and child health.

When resources are scarce, providing adequate and accessible family planning services is important, so that families have better control over their household resources and how they want to utilize those resources. Empowering women, and strengthening women's rights and access to health services must be an essential part of climate change adaptation.

4.7. Gender and climate

Women and girls are often the first ones to experience the burden of climate change, and it is likely that women and girls with disabilities experience the impacts even more adversely.

In many countries of the Global South, women are often engaged in agriculture and other daily activities which are highly dependent on weather conditions and natural resources, such as gathering firewood for cooking, or fetching water. Thus, as natural resources become scarce, the workload

of women increases. When this work takes more time, women and girls have less time for education, leisure, and participation in decision-making, and the psychological pressure they experience increases. The active role of women and girls in climate action is a fundamental part of climate justice.

Though doing a large part of the labor, women face many issues when it comes to access, use and control over land and its resources: lack of secure tenure, lack of ownership of land, and discrimination in inheritance. These examples impact women's livelihoods, food security, economic independence, and physical security in general.

When climate change threatens livelihoods and income at household level, girls are often the first ones that have to drop out of school to stay home and help their families. This may also make girls vulnerable to forced early marriage for financial gains of their families.

When climate change leads to longer distances travelled for firewood and other resources, or migration and displacement, the likelihood of sexual abuse and harassment increases. Resource scarcity can also create general tension within households and families, which further increases violence and abuse.

During environmental migration, strange new places, such as crowded refugee camps or emergency shelters, are common sites of abuse. Due to communication barriers and stigma, reporting abuse or finding help is especially challenging for women and girls with disabilities in these situations. They are also more likely than their peers to experience abuse. In refugee camps, where their disabilities may not be recognized or understood by the camp managers, seeking help and support can be hindered by communication barriers.

Climate hazards often result in higher workloads for women.



4.8 Summary: Exclusion of persons with disabilities from climate action

Persons with disabilities are often excluded from climate and environmental action. They face barriers to participate in essential activities, whether it is planning for adaptation or disaster response, conservation work, environmental and climate activism, learning about sustainable farming, or participation in decision-making regarding communal natural resource management. It is clear that persons with disabilities, representing an estimated 15% of the global population, cannot be ignored when planning action to cope with the most significant threat of the century affecting livelihoods, health, and well-being overall.

Excluding persons with disabilities from environmental and climate action can have many consequences

- Climate risk assessment and other planning tools, methodologies and processes are not disability sensitive. Thereby, participation, specific climate vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity needs of persons with disabilities are not recognized.
- Persons with disabilities have little access to programmes that support climate change adaptation.
- Persons with disabilities cannot access locally specific climate change and weather information. This can include general information on climate change and its impacts, timely and

adequate weather information and early warning of disasters. As a result, they are not able to make informed decisions regarding coping and adaptation in the face of climate hazards. Misinformation and/or lack of information may seriously hinder preparedness to disasters, or needed adjustments in livelihood activities.

- Persons with disabilities are at high-risk during disasters, such as floods and cyclones, if early warning systems and emergency response plans are not inclusive. Emergency shelters may not be accessible, or existing accessible infrastructure can be destroyed. Furthermore, personal aids might be easily lost, or broken in the midst of a disaster. Post-disaster activities do not accommodate or consider the needs of persons with disabilities.
- When climate action or solutions to environmental problems are not disability inclusive and do not consider the reality of persons with disabilities, the actions might even have adverse effects on the lives of persons with disabilities.
- There are already examples of efforts to control natural resources, such as new dams, that have ignored the needs and wishes of local communities, leading to involuntary and forced displacement, and even conflict. Due to communication barriers and isolation, persons with disabilities have even fewer opportunities to participate in, or hear about initiatives in their home area and community.



A Workshop on Climate Change and Persons with Disabilities in Mozambique brought together the National Institute of Disaster Management, OPDs, and other stakeholders.

General recommendations on action to be taken for inclusive climate action

1. Increased involvement of persons with disabilities in climate related issues at national, district and community levels.
2. Awareness raising on climate change and its effects on persons with disabilities with relevant stakeholders, such as disaster management and environmental authorities.
3. Demand information on climate change and climate action that is accessible to persons with disabilities. Adaptation and mitigation programmes must include persons with disabilities in planning and implementation.
4. More data and research on the impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities is needed. Disaggregated data in general (disability, gender, age) is needed to organise effective advocacy and provide solutions of good quality.
5. Development of participatory and disability sensitive tools and methodologies for climate risk assessment and adaptation planning that ensure formulation of inclusive adaptation strategies.

5

Climate change and Abilis projects: Supporting persons with disabilities in adaptation

Many of the beneficiaries of Abilis projects are already experiencing the negative impact climate change has on their livelihoods and safety. Hazards and risks created or worsened by rapid climate change can be what motivates a group to apply for a project in the first place.

OPDs and persons with disabilities should be supported in adapting to the changes that their communities and surroundings are experiencing. Therefore, from a climate resilience perspective, the focus of Abilis projects should be on adaptation

when it is relevant for the project content.

Simultaneously, extreme weather events can stop or delay funded project activities, and make monitoring visits difficult and unsafe, if not impossible. Guidelines on how Abilis CO/PO staff plans and prepares for these events is elaborated in the **Abilis Safety and Security Policy** and **Risk Matrices** of each Country Programme.

With good adaptation actions, lives can be saved and livelihoods protected.



Climate change threatens food security through its adverse impact on farming and other food production, making the activities harder and high risk.



When it comes to climate change mitigation efforts, Abilis funds groups and projects that generally contribute very little to global greenhouse gas emissions, which is evident in the size and scale of projects. Abilis projects do not include large-scale construction or industry.

In terms of general environmental sustainability, making sure that projects do not have immediate negative impacts on the surrounding environment through waste and

Climate hazards and their impacts vary depending on the context. Local experts should be consulted when planning for better climate resilience.

natural resource management, guides Abilis-work as it is in line with the Do no harm -principle.

It is important to keep in mind that countries and contexts differ in terms of waste management systems and possibilities for recycling, and availability of clean energy sources or other materials. Ideal situations and solutions may not exist. When they cannot be completely avoided, negative environmental impacts, or vulnerability to climate change of project activities, should be minimized and managed, keeping in mind what is realistic and justifiable.

Climate resilience as a cross-cutting issue means that projects that do not directly focus on climate change should still be screened from a climate resilience perspective. Projects that have climate change adaptation as their main theme should be prioritized and supported.

Groups should be encouraged to consider what materials they use in projects:

Are the materials locally sourced, recyclable, and how are they stored, or discarded as waste.

Groups should consider when new equipment is really necessary for long-term use, and when borrowing or sharing equipment might be a better option.

Project beneficiaries know their needs and challenges best and are the most important source of information when reflecting on the project's relationship with climate change: What has changed in their surroundings in the last years? What is the current situation? Although beneficiaries can best reflect on their daily lives, they may need support in finding solutions to the climate-related challenges they are facing, or scientific information about future predictions for the area.



Indigenous knowledge should also be valued. **Indigenous communities** are often extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change due to their livelihoods being based on use of natural resources. However, often their livelihoods are based on sustainable practices and they have valuable, dynamic knowledge on sustainable use of natural resources. Indigenous peoples are also disproportionately likely to experience disability in comparison to the general population and indigenous persons with disabilities face multiple discrimination due to their indigenous status and disability.

Relevant authorities should be consulted when necessary. For example, local regulation might prohibit the storage and use of heavy machinery near waterbeds. In agriculture and livestock projects, it is also important to secure land rights to avoid conflict, or loss of livelihoods due to land grabbing.

5.1. Understanding local context

Climate change affects geographical regions, countries, areas, and landscapes differently. The first step to understanding climate resilience in Abilis Country Programme work is understanding the context one is working with. There is no one size fits all solution.

The National Adaptation Plans or Processes of each country are a good place to start forming an overview of the climate hazards of chosen

Country Programme areas. There are also additional resources **available online** focusing on specific countries (see 'Resources' section of this manual). Guiding applicant groups and beneficiaries to reflect on their **own observations** and experiences of climate hazards, is a good starting point for groups who wish to strengthen their climate resilience and understanding, and this type of reflection is asked from groups in Abilis application forms.

In more specific contexts, such as a single district or province, groups should consult local experts, especially when the project is

particularly vulnerable to climate hazards, or specifically aims to increase climate resilience of beneficiaries. This type of expertise can be found in local research institutions, relevant government departments or CSOs/ NGOs specialized in climate action, or agricultural associations, such as local agroecology groups.

Local expertise is needed, because even in an activity as simple as tree planting, it is important to know what one is actually doing: What type of tree to plant and where. Otherwise, the likelihood of the tree dying, or the tree having adverse effects on the soil and other plants around it, increase.

5.2. Screening and assessing a project from the perspective of climate resilience

Many livelihood project activities, such as farming and animal husbandry, can be very vulnerable to the **climate hazards** like prolonged drought. On the other hand, some project activities can have a **negative impact** on the surrounding environment: Lack of proper waste disposal of chemicals used at hair salons, or soap-making workshops, might cause the chemicals to contaminate local water bodies, or

unsustainable agriculture practices might lead to soil degradation.

When these **risks** and **impacts** are **identified and addressed**, a project can be more sustainable overall and support the beneficiaries in adapting to climate change and creating feasible coping mechanisms.



MFA GUIDELINE ON CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVES – “DO NO HARM”	PRACTICE IN ABILIS WORK
1. Climate-related risks and impacts of climate change on the intervention are screened, if necessary assessed, and then avoided or minimized and managed.	Assessing climate risks of the project activities: Staff reviews each project proposal from a climate resilience perspective. If a proposal does not adequately address possible risks and vulnerabilities to climate change, staff discusses them with the applicant group. If plans for avoiding, minimizing or managing the risks and vulnerabilities do not yet exist, grantees are supported in developing them.
2. Adverse impacts on climate are screened, if necessary assessed, and then avoided or minimized and managed.	Assessing climate impacts of the project: Staff reviews each project proposal to assess whether project activities could have an immediate negative impact on the environment or an adverse impact on climate change. If the proposal does not adequately address these impacts, staff discusses them with the applicant group, and plans are created for avoiding, minimizing or managing the impacts.

Assessing climate risks of the project activities:

1. Step one: Identification of climate hazards: A general identification of the main climate hazards of the geographical areas included in each Country Programme should be included in the Country Profile Paper and updated when new areas are included. Applicants are also asked to identify the main hazards of the project area in the **application form** based on their own experiences, observations, or other kind of information.
2. Step two: After identifying the hazards, the project activities' **sensitivity and exposure** to the hazards should be specified: Who and what are in danger? Which project target groups, project activities, and assets are exposed to these hazards? Are there characteristics or conditions that are making them more likely to experience harm or damage caused by the hazards? These are also reflected on in the application forms.

These steps and questions support Abilis staff in assessing project proposals and applicant groups in identifying the actual risks. For example, if a training project is planned to take place during a season when rains can be unpredictably heavy or long and cause floods in the project area, the proposal should explain how safety of participants is secured when attending and travelling to the training location.

Assessing climate impacts of the project:

1. Does the project significantly impact the surrounding environment? This is assessed by considering how much and what kind of resources are used, what kind of waste is produced, and what type of activities are involved in the project overall. Groups are asked to reflect on this in the application form. An organisational capacity building workshop most likely will not have a significant impact on the surrounding environment, but an agriculture or animal husbandry project has a direct impact on soil, for example.

Does the project involve cutting of trees from large areas?
Are harmful chemicals used, disposed and stored safely?
What kind of agricultural methods and inputs are used?

Once **the most significant risks and impacts** of the project have been identified, the next step is to see how the risks and/or adverse impacts of the project could be **avoided, minimized, or managed**.

Farming project proposal example: Reducing risk and vulnerability in a flood prone area

- If the beneficiaries' seed storage, nursery, or vegetable garden is located in a flood prone area close to a riverbed, could the location be changed to higher ground? (**Risk avoided**)
- Could the seed storage foundations be elevated, so that the water levels would not reach the storage? Could the excess water be diverted through an improved ditch and culvert system? Could the timing of farming activities be changed to less flood prone times? Could varieties or species be diversified to water-resistant ones? (**Risk minimized / managed**).

Note that solutions for risk reduction and management should always be planned to be **accessible** for the beneficiaries in question!

OPDs should be supported and encouraged in finding local organisations or experts to support and train them in sustainable farming and livestock practices.



Reducing environmental impact & minimizing harm in projects:

Even small-scale farming and animal husbandry can involve practices that are unsustainable and lead to soil erosion and desertification, or arguments and conflict over land and natural resource use.

If the project proposal does not address these issues, assess and discuss with the applicant, how the **adverse impacts** could be avoided or minimized and managed;

- Could the applicant OPD contact a local group or agricultural

Identify organisations, networks, institutions, or authorities that work with topics related to environmental sustainability and climate change in the Programme areas: Do they have capacity to offer trainings? Are persons with disabilities participating in their activities? What kind possibilities are there for collaboration with OPDs, or the Abilis Country Programme?

experts that have experience in good practices that result in increased soil fertility and well-managed grazing?

- Are land tenure and user rights clarified, enabling land-use planning and sustainable land management, while minimizing risks of resource-related conflicts, such as those caused by grazing on someone else's land?
- Are trainings facilitated by experts such as agronomists, or veterinarians, included in the plan? Does the plan consider general well-being of animals (see 6.2.)?

Adaptive capacity

The applicant group's **adaptive capacity** should be discussed, especially when the risks and impacts are significant. What kind of assets such as social networks, skills, or plans, does the group have to help them prepare for the hazards? Or to protect participants or equipment from them? What kind of social networks, resources and skills are needed for preparedness, adaptation, and resilience? This discussion can take place after consideration of how to avoid, minimize or manage the risks, but strengthening adaptive capacity can also be a way to minimize and manage risks.

In Country Programme work, CO/PO staff should consider if organising training on climate change and environmental sustainability for themselves, or applicant groups, could be a priority. Networking with actors who work in the field of climate action or environment, or advocacy in regards to disability inclusion in national adaptation, mitigation and DRR planning should also be considered as opportunities.

5.3. Added benefit: Strengthening climate resilience in Abilis projects

Even when a project does not have a clear vulnerability to climate change impacts, or adverse impacts on climate, it is good to consider if a proposal could benefit and be strengthened from climate resilience aspects, or contribute to climate action.

- Could inclusion of persons with disabilities in DRR planning and decision-making be part of the agenda of advocacy projects?
- Could environmental issues and climate change be included as discussion topics in peer support clubs?
- Could OPDs consider environmental groups or institutions as collaboration partners and new contacts and networks in general? These groups could learn about disability inclusion and human rights from OPDs, for example.

It is important to remember that applicant groups decide what type of project they want to apply for, but these are points that can be discussed with OPDs during training workshops, or when discussing possible project ideas with groups.

6

Agriculture and animal husbandry: Climate risks and adaptation actions

Abilis funds many different types of livelihood projects. In many of them, the activities' do not have very clear climate risks, or direct negative impacts on the environment. However, in agriculture and animal husbandry projects this relationship is more obvious.

With unpredictable weather patterns, the timing of rainy seasons might no longer be compatible with the natural cycle of vegetation. Heavy rains can cause crop damages, erosion, and harm infrastructure. Increased humidity in storage units of harvested cereals and maize can develop fungal infections. Similarly, animal diseases can increase due to vectors that thrive in moist habitats.

When long spells of droughts become more common, desertification will increase. Drought will harm both trees and edible plants and lead to food and water scarcity, which will also impact livestock. Furthermore, rising temperatures increase heat stress of animals which affects their health. Together with increased emergence of animal diseases, feed and water

scarcity, this contributes to increased animal mortality.

What can be done to address these risks in agriculture and animal husbandry? Here are just some examples of general options. How these are put into practice can look very different depending on the local context and ecosystem and the hazard the area is facing.

If it is an **agricultural project**:

- Does the applicant plan on learning about environmentally sustainable approaches to farming, such as water conservation, agroecology or agroforestry, non-toxic repellents and organic fertilizers?
- Has the applicant identified the most significant climate hazards, such as extreme weather events, of the project location? Have they reflected on how the project surroundings, such as rivers, or extreme weather events, affect the farming activities?
- Has the group considered how the activities impact the

surrounding environment: trees, plants, waterbodies and soil? For example, do the activities involve cutting down trees?

- How are seeds, tools, and other agricultural inputs stored and protected?
- Could drought- or water-resistant species or varieties be more viable in the project context?

If it is an **animal husbandry project**, could the group consider:

- Improved cattle sheds and henhouses to keep the animals protected during hazards and in hygienic conditions to prevent diseases
- Moving animals to safer grounds during hazards
- Ensuring access to veterinarian services
- Finding local solutions to securing continuous supply of water
- Growing fodder and preparing silage (different kinds of animal feed, including preserved, stored feed) to secure feed for animals
- Using food supplements
- Support networks, such as response teams between neighbors during a hazard, or challenging times.

Note that support networks for climate hazards are relevant to all types of projects and activities!

If an applicant is planning an animal husbandry project, how will they avoid over-grazing? Do they have plans for fodder, silage, or water conservation, in case there's a dry spell or when feed resources are scarce? Are the animals' shelters safe in case there are hailstorms or unpredicted prolonged rains? Has the group consulted experts?

Local extension services and farmer organisations, agriculture research institutes, universities, or for example, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), can provide expert training on these methods, and be important contacts and networks for more sustainable rural livelihoods.

Some countries may also have farmer research networks or farmer field schools. When organising training on new methods, participatory exercises, demonstration plots and examples



from the experiences and successes of other farmers are important. Local agroecology groups usually develop their methods by continuous learning and experience sharing.

6.1. Animal well-being

Farm animals are reared for small-scale, family farming, and commercial purposes. In order to safeguard their well-being and health, a number of needs must be fulfilled. This list is a simple guideline on the basic things which need to be taken into consideration when undertaking a project where animal management is a major component. These can be used for poultry, cattle, goats and sheep.

- A housing or shed for animals must be designed and constructed in such a way that it offers enough room for the movement of the



floor can be kept soft by usage of straws or grass. These are similarly essential components of hygiene and health, which keep diseases from spreading.

- Abilis requires the engagement of knowledgeable stakeholders, veterinary officers and/or agriculture officers for guidance and usage of appropriate medication on animals to avoid losses due to disease.

Abilis recommends that implementing organisations include an aspect of training on animal management for the beneficiaries in the project. The training can include topics such as marketing of farm products, housing, breeding/reproduction, proper handling, health management, record keeping, routine animal husbandry practices, feeds & feeding, managed grazing, use of manure and other added benefits that animal husbandry can have on soil fertility and agriculture in general. This can be done in collaboration with the appropriate knowledgeable stakeholders, such as local veterinary and/or agricultural officers who have skills in animal husbandry. This is to ensure that the beneficiaries are empowered and acquire adequate skills to take care of the animals by themselves.



animal(s). This is important so that the animal(s) will have room for feeding, drinking, walking and sleeping. Especially with chicks, free movement is important to avoid the chicks from trampling on each other, which can even lead to loss of life. Enough room also ensures proper ventilation and access to cleaning, which are essential for good hygiene and prevention of diseases.

- The floor of the house should be constructed in such a way that it allows for easy movement of the animals to avoid injuries. There should be provision for a drainage system to keep the animal(s) dry and comfortable. For poultry, the

Resources

Tools for staff:

Climate Sensor (FINGO, formerly Kepa), PDF-file download:
<https://fingo.fi/julkaisut/climate-sensor-a-tool-for-climate-sensitive-planning/>

Climate & Disaster Risk Screening – Key Terms:
<https://climatescreeningtools.worldbank.org/content/key-terms-0>

World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal:
<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>

Country Profiles:
<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country-profiles>

USAID: Climate Links <https://www.climatelinks.org/>

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General background on climate change, environment and related themes:

#NoNaturalDisasters: <https://www.nonaturaldisasters.com/>

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Ideas for Abilis-funded projects that support climate-resilience

(inspired by Fingo’s Climate sensor)

Livelihoods:

- Diversifying income sources: when households have different sources of income, which are not all subject to weather conditions for example, it makes their livelihoods more resilient to climate change
- Strengthening support networks and capacity of persons with disabilities; small setbacks are easier to overcome when there is a support network
- Securing land rights
- Protecting and proofing houses and equipment (from floods, rains)
- Considering biodiversity in agriculture through agroforestry, agroecology

When thinking of livelihoods and their vulnerability to climate change, it is good to consider the future and the predicted changes in climate, health, food security, and other areas. What services will be needed? What resources will be available? The Abilis Sustainable Livelihoods Guideline supports project planning in this regard.

Education & health:

- Training on climate change: its impacts, related risks, adapting, mitigating
- Accessible sanitation and hygiene facilities
- Health campaigns: use of mosquito nets, properly cooked food, handwashing & other hygiene measures
- Participation in climate and environmental work: accessible information on shocks and stresses, local risks and adaptation activities
- Inclusive disaster risk reduction, disaster response and management

Sustainable use of water bodies, forests, and land

- Harvesting rainwater, protecting community water sources from contamination
- Drought-resistant crops
- Community forest management
- Seed banks in case of crop failure
- Forest conservation and tree planting
- Combatting desertification and soil erosion
- Sustainable use of natural resources, protecting biodiversity
- Training on sustainable land management

Energy consumption:

- Advocacy for public transport: reduces the use of private car rides, reduces carbon dioxide emissions, and improves air quality. Naturally goes hand in hand with advocacy for improved accessibility of public transport.

The purpose of this manual is to support Abilis staff in mainstreaming climate resilience aspects into their work and Abilis-funded projects in order to support persons with disabilities and their livelihoods in adapting to the impacts of climate change.



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