Technical brief for the post-2015 consultation process

Disability, sustainable development and climate change

Introduction

This paper gives an overview of the interrelationship of climate change, sustainable development and disability. It highlights some of the challenges of this interrelationship for policy makers, research communities and development organisations. It also provides essential evidence for people advocating for high quality, inclusive outcomes relating to deliberations on sustainable development and climate change. It is useful for people working in policy, training, advocacy, project design, proposal writing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and research.

Issues of disability, poverty and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked. There are an estimated one billion persons with disabilities worldwide[1]. Persons with disabilities are particularly at risk from the effects of climate change, such as natural disasters and food insecurity. In order to be effective, any framework or action plan in relation to sustainable development and climate change must incorporate disability-inclusive development principles. CBM welcomes the explicit references to persons with disabilities in the final outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012[2], and supports ongoing efforts to ensure policy is translated into practice.

Key recommendations for future policy

1. **All programming for climate change financing, mitigation, or adaptation must be required to specifically address those particularly at risk due to environmental changes, including women, persons with disabilities, children and older people.**
2. **Goals, indicators, targets and reports relating to sustainable development and climate change must explicitly address persons with disabilities, and include data disaggregated in relation to disability (as recommended for gender and age).**
3. **Humanitarian responses to the effects of climate change (including natural disasters and food insecurity) must include persons with disabilities.**

Climate change, poverty and disability

- **Fifteen per cent of the world's population are persons with disabilities** – over one billion people[3]. Over one in five of the world's poorest people are disabled[4].
- **Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty.** The affirmation "that green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should…enhance the welfare of persons with disabilities"[5] recognises this.
- The impacts of climate change (extreme weather, sea level changes and agriculture productivity changes, leading to food insecurity) will affect the world's poorest people[6]. They are some of the most **vulnerable to environmental degradation** and changes.
- Climate related reports such as the IPCC and the Human Development Report 2007-08 do not identify persons with disabilities as **a group requiring particular focus or empowerment** in adapting to the changing environment[7].
- Most of the world's poor (800 million) live in ten countries, six of which are listed in the top 20 **countries**[8] **most at risk of extreme** weather in 2015: China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam (middle-income countries) and Bangladesh and Ethiopia (low income-countries).
- It is estimated there will be at least 200 million people **displaced by climatic events** by 2050, of whom at least **30 million are likely to be persons with disabilities** (15% of population). There are many others who are left behind to struggle for a livelihood in degraded environments[9].
- The health status of millions of people, including persons with disabilities and the **prevalence of disability** are projected to be affected by climate change through increased malnutrition; increased deaths, diseases and injury due to extreme weather events; increased burden of diarrhoeal diseases; and the altered distribution of some infectious diseases[10].

Sustainable agriculture, food and water security

- **Persons with disabilities and their families living in poverty are facing reduced access** to: clean water; fertile soils and suitable growing conditions for cropping and livestock; to fuel-wood and other energy sources; to wild foods, medicinal plants and other natural products related to their livelihoods[11].
- **Persons with disabilities and their families face real barriers in accessing food**[12]. **The gender dimension is being addressed by programmes increasingly working with women in:** improving food security; social protection through livelihood activities; sustainable, small scale, climate-smart food production; and improved access to markets[13]. These programmes also need to address the disability exclusion by ensuring active participation of persons with disabilities and their families.
- **Food insecurity and malnutrition** can lead to long term and/or permanent impairments. There are strong links between childhood malnutrition and acquiring impairments. Malnutrition is estimated to cause about 20% of impairments[14].
- **Conflict is a leading cause of physical and psychological disability.** Conflict attributable to climate change will increase[15] because food and water resources will become increasingly scarce or hard to access.
- The "responsibilities of States to respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedom for all" is now formally recognised in the final outcome document of Rio 2012[16]. This can be achieved by including persons with disabilities and **adopting a rights-based approach**. The right to food security, water rights and sustainable agriculture would assist in improving food quality; ensuring appropriate utilisation of food; and involving crisis prevention, preparedness and management.

- **Mechanisms for the assessment and monitoring of malnutrition and food crisis** need to be established as a minimum requirement in food security and humanitarian programmes.
- In addition, **indicators related to the capacities** of the affected population to participate in food chains, processing, and production need to include groups particularly at risk, such as persons with disabilities.

Disaster risk reduction, adaptation and climate-resilient development

- **Persons with disabilities are differently affected—and often at higher risk—in all phases of a disaster**, from exposure to risk and risk perception; to preparedness behaviour, warning communication and response; physical, psychological, social and economic impacts; emergency response; and ultimately to recovery and reconstruction[17].
- Disaster risk reduction strategies need to include assessing the **capacity of persons with disabilities in preparedness** strategies and measures protecting existing assets (seeds, cattle, tools, etc.) in order to facilitate the recovery of their own food production.
- Critical factors shaping the adaptive capacity of individuals (including persons with disabilities), households and communities are their **access to and control over natural, human, social, physical, and financial resources**.
- CBM calls for the development of a holistic framework that **integrates disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation.**
- In addition, **disaster risk reduction is a key element of sustainable development** and, as such, needs to be mainstreamed in forthcoming action plans or frameworks addressing sustainable development.
- Persons with disabilities are typically amongst the **most 'resource poor'** within a community as a result of a lack of income, poor education, social exclusion and exclusion from decision-making authorities or structures. They will therefore have **little access to, or control over, the resources that would facilitate adaptation**. Recognition of the "need for ensuring equal access to education for persons with disabilities" can be found in the Rio 2012 outcome document[18].
- Poor communities, including persons with disabilities, can be especially vulnerable, in particular those concentrated in high-risk areas. They tend to have more **limited adaptive capacities** to cope with fluctuations in availability of climate-sensitive resources such as local water and food supplies[19].
- Persons with disabilities living in poverty have **limited ability to adapt** to change thereby increasing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.
- Persons with disabilities (as well as other marginalised groups) often have **less access to information, resources** (or control over resources), and services. Their ability to adapt to change is therefore reduced, and their resilience to climate change diminished[20].
- CBM welcomes the reference to "participation and **access to information** and judicial and administrative proceedings for promotion of sustainable development", as agreed at the Rio sustainable development conference in 2012[21].
- CBM promotes 'C**ommunity-Based Rehabilitation'** as a strategy that is locally owned and enables persons with disabilities to claim their rights in relation to information, resources and services.[22]

Population growth, urbanisation and climate change

- In poor regions of the world population growth rates continue to place **pressures on the poorest people for food and other resources**. In sub-Saharan Africa the population growth rate was 2.54% in 2010 (global rate 1.16%).
- In 2010 approximately ten million children were added to Africa's population[23]. The **prevalence of children with disabilities** in Africa is 4.6%, which equates to an additional 460,000 children with disabilities in 2010, many of whom may have **extra requirements in terms of food and social protection**[24].
- Large numbers of environmental refugees and internally displaced people move to **urban low-income settlements** with very poor basic services.
- Worldwide, approximately 900 million people live in **low-income settlements**. Assuming these settlements house the poorest of the poor, **180 million are likely to be persons with disabilities** (20% of poorest people)[25].
- Higher food prices due to climate change combined with urbanisation trends will lead to more households being **net food consumers**; this too will affect (urban) poor people more[26].
- Those living in urban low-income settlements **lack improved water, sanitation, and durable housing;** all three are harder to access for persons with disabilities.
- CBM welcomes the commitment of the United Nations "to **promote an integrated approach** to planning and building sustainable cities and urban settlements, and commit to promoting sustainable development policies that support inclusive housing and social services; a safe and healthy living environment for all, particularly, disabled persons"[27].
- 884 million people worldwide do not have **access to safe drinking water.** Assuming these people are the poorest of the poor, at least **177 million are likely to be persons with disabilities** (20% of poorest)[28].
- 2.6 billion people worldwide lack **access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets and latrines.** Assuming these people are the poorest of the poor, at least **390 million are likely to be persons with disabilities** (20% of poorest)[29]**.**
- Existing sanitation services in the poorest communities are **seldom accessible** to persons with disabilities and the elderly.

CBM's commitments:

- **CBM works in partnership** to ensure persons with disabilities are included in food security emergency response programmes in the 'Horn of Africa' and Sahel Region of West Africa, where over 20 million people have been in need of assistance from the worst droughts experienced over the last 60+ years.
- In 2010, CBM's partners **provided services to over half a million people** in situations of risk and humanitarian emergency.
- CBM works in all of the six countries where both the poorest people and **those most at risk of extreme weather** live: China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Ethiopia.

Case Study: The 'Survival Yard' programme in Niger, West Africa

The 'survival yard' programme in Niger was developed by CBM and a disability-specific partner organisation following the 2005 drought and food crisis. The local mainstream rural development NGO 'Karkara' is now partnering with CBM in this programme and has broadened it out to create resilience

not only for persons with disabilities, but also for whole communities in a region with declining food security.

Niger is one of the world's poorest countries, according to the UN Human Development Index. Many rural people are trapped in the cycle of poverty and disability. They lack nutritious food; clean water and sanitation; food for livestock; firewood for cooking; and access to education, immunisation, health and rehabilitation services and wider employment opportunities. Climate appears to be changing, with the growing season for crops becoming shorter, prompting many people to leave rural Niger. They travel to the capital, Niamey, or to the West African coast seeking alternative employment opportunities.

The 'survival yard' programme works together with persons with disabilities, their families and communities. Careful selection and training of clients and families is key to encouraging innovation in developing a 25m x 25m survival yard, with a water well and simple watering canals. A border of productive bushy trees creates a micro-climate against harsh winds off the Sahara. Gardening and trees (fruit and other) provide vegetables and fruit to eat and sell, fodder for livestock and firewood – and therefore the means and incentive for people to stay in their communities.

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[5] http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/727The%20Future%20We%20Want%2019%20June%201230pm.pdf , Paragraph 58(k).

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