

Systems Change: Inclusive Climate Action

Issue Paper

Executive summary

The climate crisis, alongside conflicts, is increasing insecurity, displacement and humanitarian needs across Africa. People with eye conditions and disabilities experience exacerbated barriers and challenges in the face of the climate crisis.

Light for the World, together with local and international partners, focuses on climate adaptation and disaster risk management to better prepare for and respond to increasingly severe and unpredictable extreme weather events. We also take our own organisational climate actions seriously and are committed to walking the talk to address climate change in our own work.

In this issue paper, we outline our unique inclusive climate approach. As part of our Strategy 2030, we share four priority areas and three targets we have set to ensure we deliver impact, at scale, sustainably.

Why inclusive climate action is key

At Light for the World, we believe in a world where people with disabilities and eye conditions can fully exercise their rights to health, education, work – and protection in emergencies. The climate crisis, alongside conflicts, is increasing insecurity, displacement and humanitarian needs across Africa. People with eye conditions and disabilities experience exacerbated barriers and challenges in the face of climate crisis. During climate-related disasters, the risk is heightened through widespread inaccessibility of infrastructure, transportation, early warning systems and emergency procedures.¹ Health and eye health specifically also deteriorate due to effects of the climate crisis, such as from heat, dry conditions and air pollution.²

Light for the World, together with local partners, including organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and women's rights organisations, focuses on climate adaptation and disaster risk management (DRM) to better prepare for and respond to increasingly severe and unpredictable extreme weather events. At the same time, we integrate climate approaches into eye health programming and advocate for disability-inclusive, gender-responsive climate action, building on Paris Agreement commitments.³

Our unique climate inclusive approach

At Light for the World, we focus on:

Climate Mainstreaming

We integrate climate action across our programmes by strengthening community resilience and addressing climate impacts to foster equitable and sustainable development. This reduces the risk of climate-related disasters disrupting progress in other areas, safeguarding investments and reinforcing long-term resilience.

Innovation and co-creation

Together with youth and people with disabilities of all genders, we co-create innovative, impactful and accessible programmes in which climate action is fully embraced as a crosscutting issue and critically considered throughout. Through direct small-scale funding approaches of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) we learn and ensure inclusive and localised solutions to the climate crisis are implemented.

Advocacy for inclusion of people with disabilities and of all genders

We advocate for inclusion and with an intersectional approach through our partnerships, coalitions and strategic communication, with the goal to transform systems and policies. We amplify the voices of people with disabilities and eye conditions by working with local partners and support their participation in decision-making at national, regional and global levels.

We are also committed to walk the talk in our organisational role, reducing carbon emissions and contributing to compensation.

1 Bond Disability and Development Climate Working Group (2025). *Unequal Climate Justice for People with Disabilities. Insights and Evidence from Communities and Civil Society.* IDDC, Bond.

2 World Economic Forum (2023) Here's why climate change is a major threat to eye health. See: (<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/02/climate-change-eye-health-threat/>) [accessed 09.12.2025]

3 United Nations (2015) Paris Agreement. UNFCCC

Our priorities

To address climate change, we have four priorities:

1. Climate-resilient and inclusive programming. We mainstream climate adaptation and resilience in eye health and disability rights programming.

- ▶ **Eye health:** We implement the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) recommendations to work with our partners on environmentally sustainable procurement policies. This includes training in maintenance and repair; buying locally when possible; emphasising solar energy generation; introducing waste hierarchies ('reduce, reuse, repair, recycle'); and promoting the use of rainwater and leakage minimisation. We support essential-travel-only policies and increase training and awareness on climate justice among eye-health professionals.
- ▶ **Disability rights:** In the area of economic empowerment, we emphasise environmentally sustainable and gender-just livelihoods, such as green jobs and climate-smart agriculture. We are committed to mainstream climate education in our inclusive education programmes and increase our expertise in education in emergencies. In the face of extreme weather events, we apply DRM and address loss and damage through humanitarian action.

2. Listen, learn and share evidence

- ▶ As part of our commitment to shift power and narratives, the inclusion of diverse knowledge systems (e.g. local technologies) and the lived experiences of people with disabilities, especially women and girls, in climate discourse is essential. We collect and share learnings and promote knowledge justice.

3. Advocacy on disability inclusive climate action

- ▶ Guided by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), we co-develop policy briefs and toolkits with our partners⁴ and use evidence and learnings in our advocacy. For example, we advocate for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to be disability inclusive and for more climate funding for OPDs.

4. Partnerships and localised climate leadership

- ▶ We prioritise cross-sectoral partnerships, including with the Climate Action Network Europe and Pan African Climate Justice Alliance. We support climate capacity-strengthening of OPDs and partners by experts and trained youth such as Disability Inclusive Facilitators (DIFs) and support strengthening direct, local funding approaches.

We are also committed to carbon accounting, emission reduction, climate mitigation and awareness raising on climate justice within our organisation.

⁴ International Disability Alliance (IDA), International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), the Climate Disability Caucus and Global Action on Disability (GLAD) network

Our targets

We are committed to walking the talk, and have identified the following targets as part of our Strategy 2030:

1. Climate markers for our programmes and increasing by 20 % the share of environmentally sustainable programmes

- ▶ **Eye health:** We will put at least six of the ten key areas of action for sustainable eye health⁵ into practice by 2030.
- ▶ **Disability rights:** We will focus on capacity strengthening, co-creation and innovation for environmentally sustainable programmes.
- ▶ **Communication and evidence:** We will gather climate learnings in eye health and disability rights in collaboration with local partners and co-create two publications.
- ▶ **Advocacy:** We will use our evidence and advocate with our partners for disability inclusive (and intersectional) climate action on international (disability constituency), regional and national levels (NDCs/NAPs) annually ahead of and at Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP).
- ▶ **Disaster risk management:** By 2030, we have implemented an intersectional approach (disability and gender) to DRM in Mozambique, Uganda and South Sudan and have published six learning documents on the topic.

2. Prioritising strategic partnerships with key coalitions and organisations and our staff capacity

- ▶ **Global:** International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network Climate Action working group (through IDDC), IAPB climate action working group.
- ▶ **Regional:** Climate Action Network Europe, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance.
- ▶ **National:** e.g. Climate Alliance Austria, Kenya Platform for Climate Governance, Women in Development Europe (WIDE) - Austria Women and Climate working group, Bond Disability and Development Climate Subgroup.

3. Walking the talk

- ▶ We will use carbon accounting to assess our carbon footprint and ensure a reduction of 25 % in carbon emissions by 2030, including by reducing non-essential air travel. Additionally, we will offset carbon emissions by supporting decarbonisation projects.

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5 IAPB, Call To Action for Environmentally Sustainable Practices in The Eye Health Sector. See: (<https://www.iapb.org/learn/resources/call-to-action-for-environmentally-sustainable-practices-in-the-eye-health-sector>) [accessed 09.12.2025]

Disability inclusion in flood-induced crisis management and response

Floods can have devastating effects on communities, and people with disabilities and eye conditions are particularly vulnerable during such disasters. With support from Light for the World, the Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs) in Bor, Jonglei State capital, South Sudan, worked to rapidly act during flood-induced crises. They identified urgent needs of people with disabilities in their communities and connected them to humanitarian agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Food for Hungry and ZOA Dorcas, which provided mobility devices. Other organisations donated food and non-food items, set up temporary shelters and provided medical care.

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