

# **Narrative Change Around Disability & Climate Change:**

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**Insights and Recommendations  
from Stakeholders and Community  
Members in the Niger Delta**

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 **NEW MEDIA  
ADVOCACY  
PROJECT**

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**To everyone who spoke to the research team, participated in a focus group or interview, or helped us clarify our findings — thank you**

# Acronyms

## **CSO**

Civil Society Organization

## **MAJI**

Media Awareness Justice Initiative

## **NMAP**

New Media Advocacy Project

## **PWDs**

Persons with Disabilities \*

\* Nota bene: Terminology used in this report is consistent with Section 57 of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 (“the Disability Act”). Other terms used in direct quotations from focus group discussions and expert interviews were left in their original form.\*

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# Executive Summary



Woman fetching drinking water from a polluted stream

## Persons with disabilities disproportionately experience the harshest effects of changing climate and environmental degradation.

In partnership with the Ford Foundation, NMAP undertook research to identify opportunities to create new narratives that shift attitudes and mindsets about the interconnection between climate activists and the disability rights movement in the Niger Delta. The goal of this research was to build up a picture of the narrative landscape pertaining to disability rights and climate justice in the region, and to explore opportunities to advance cross-cause solidarity through collaborative narrative building. NMAP conducted this research in partnership with Niger Delta-based MAJI in the latter part of 2022 through to the Spring

of 2023 in the Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and Rivers states of the Niger Delta region. Research participants included persons with disabilities (PWDs) and those working for climate civil society organizations (CSOs), and MAJI conducted both focus groups and listening sessions with these groups to gain insight into their experiences.

As the impact of climate change intensifies, not only do persons with disabilities disproportionately experience the harshest effects, more people are becoming disabled due to the short-and long-term impacts of changing climate and environmental degradation. This research has revealed the importance of investing the necessary resources, time, and dedication to remove barriers to a greater intersectional approach developing between these two movements. These will not only strengthen climate action, but will also further the cause of disability justice, which currently is disproportionately under-supported and granular.



Dead fish, by Milieudefensie – Flickr

**As the impact of climate change intensifies, not only do persons with disabilities disproportionately experience the harshest effects, more people are becoming disabled due to the short-and long-term impacts of changing climate and environmental degradation**

# The following key insights were generated as a result of the fieldwork conducted in the Niger Delta:

- 1.** Persons with disabilities living in the Niger Delta face intense social discrimination which leaves them feeling isolated and undervalued as members of society.
- 2.** Climate change disproportionately affects persons with disabilities in the Niger Delta, further curtailing their freedom and leading to increased insecurity.
- 3.** More often than not climate action does not involve persons with disabilities, due to (perceived and real) gaps in accessibility and education.
- 4.** Persons with disabilities can be involved in both the disability justice movement and the climate justice movement.
- 5.** For the two movements to work together and be built on trust, persons with disabilities should be involved from the very beginning across all activities and processes.



**Woman in wheelchair with child.**

# Background



Polluted lake, by Milieudefensie, Akintunde Akinleye – Flickr

## Introduction

The intersection of climate change and disability rights is one that deserves more attention – and an area that the Ford Foundation identified as a missed opportunity for building movement power for change. NMAP and the Ford Foundation partnered to explore this field using narrative change strategies and community-engaged field research methods to gain insight into how existing narratives, values, and public discourse prevent an intersectional approach between climate activists and the disability rights movement in the Niger Delta. The research sought to identify opportunities to create new narratives that shift attitudes and mindsets about the interconnection of the two movements.

Our collaboration grew out of Ford’s commitment to apply a disability lens throughout its work, a crosscutting strategy that began in 2015. Since that time, Ford’s Natural Resources and Climate Change program went on a learning journey to understand “**what People with Disabilities have to teach about climate change**”.<sup>0</sup> Through a partnership with Global Greengrants Fund, which focused in part on the Niger Delta, Ford learned that while the issues of environmental justice and disability rights are entwined, their movements do not currently see one another as connected. This is a missed opportunity for building powerful intersectional narratives that could help advance the interests of both movements.

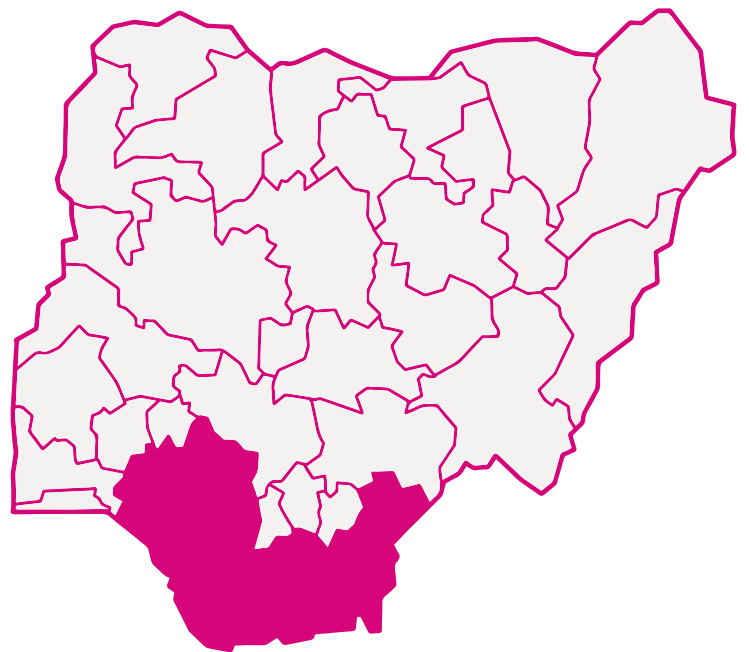


These movements have been siloed for complex reasons involving cultural factors, ableism, and narratives in the public discourse—all of which contribute to a landscape that is not conducive to intersectionality. As the impact of climate change intensifies, not only do persons with disabilities disproportionately experience the harshest effects, more people are becoming disabled due to the impacts of climate change. This work also highlighted complex difficulties, from confronting deeply ingrained ableism in how persons with disabilities are viewed in different localities, to identifying local momentum and leaders from both the climate movement and disability rights community that are working for greater inclusion.

## Why the Niger Delta?

Our many years of work and civil society networks in Nigeria led us to focus this exploration in the Niger Delta, a region suffering some of the worst impacts of climate change in part due to years of environmental devastation caused by the petrochemical industry.

**The area has enormous strategic importance.** The Niger Delta is one of the most populated natural ecosystems in the world, home to the most extensive mangrove ecosystems in Africa, which are essential to preserving the delicate climate balance of the area. More than 20 million people live along the coastlines for the mangrove forests, which also provide numerous goods and ecosystem services to these contiguous populations as well as a last line of defense for littoral communities. Additionally, the mangrove forests sequester an estimated 25.5 million tonnes of free CO<sub>2</sub> per year and provide habitats for myriad species —



Map of the Niger Delta

including for the at least 60 percent of commercial fish species in the Gulf of Guinea that breed in the mangroves of the Niger Delta. All this makes the work of protecting the region from the threats of climate change vital.<sup>1</sup>



Such threats to the regional ecosystem are grave and ever-increasing. Over the last 50 years, crude oil spills and gas flaring have resulted in significant pollution, with estimates of over 17 million liters of crude oil spilled.<sup>2</sup> These crude oil spills have led to the contamination of farmlands, air, creeks, water sources, and marine life. For the people who are predominantly fisherfolks and farmers – which is also an occupation for some persons with disabilities – the environmental degradation has often meant destruction of their livelihoods.<sup>3</sup> Response to these challenges has been compounded by serious institutional setbacks. These include mismanagement of public funds at the local, state, and federal governance levels; a severe lack of the required technical capacity and manpower within government agencies; and the overarching background of insufficient enforcement of environmental laws and policies. As a result, the already grave environmental issues within the Niger Delta keep escalating.

Concurrently, Nigeria is in a critical phase of advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2019, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act was signed into law<sup>4</sup> in the country, aiming to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. There are still, however, major obstacles to full implementation of the law – including ensuring full inclusion of PWDs in communities. Multiple self-organized groups, CSOs in the Niger Delta are working to advance disability rights in the region yet need support from both local and international partners to advance their work.

**Concurrently, Nigeria is in a critical phase of advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.**

## Why narrative change?

When we are thinking about social change, we often see tactics focus on immediate changes, like influencing a particular policy, but these are constantly in danger of being reversed. This can be because they are working against powerful narratives that are embedded in the overarching culture.

Narratives are how human beings make sense of the world. They are rooted in deeply held beliefs, expressed and reinforced by the stories we tell one another and hear in public discourse (including in the media, within community forums, and online). Narratives give deeper meaning to the stories, messages and experiences we have on a daily basis – and eventually come to feel like commonsense through repetition.

Narrative change is the process of examining commonly held ideas within our cultures and working out how they define our reality, and how we can influence them. It then works to construct and promote new narratives which challenge the existing ones to drive social change. Crucially, it is for those with direct experience of the harm caused by the existing, dominant narrative to define its replacement, so that problematic ways of thinking are not unintentionally reinforced.

For as powerful as narratives are in impacting our thinking and ultimately our actions, they are typically invisible and unconscious: they exist as a mental shortcut in our brains helping us to process, sort, and file information, giving us a quick way to decide what we think or feel about something. We approached this research through the lens of narrative change because revealing, challenging, and changing how people think and feel is what we believe ultimately drives social change.

To this end, our methodology centered around responsible community

**For as powerful as narratives are in impacting our thinking, and ultimately our actions, they are typically invisible and unconscious.**

engagement, with actively listening to communities at its core. In this research, the individuals and communities within the disability rights and environmental justice movements were the principal interests. As such, the research investigated any topics that participants cited as being consequential to their lived experience. Our listening-based qualitative methodology also included numerous stages throughout the project’s development where we went back to the research participants for their feedback and validation of the findings. The goal was to ensure that we could identify existing narratives – and then use what we heard, learned and verified to create meaningful insights that could be used to change thinking on these deep rooted issues.

*Our methodology is outlined in greater detail in the Appendices 1-6.*



Person standing in polluted water

**Our methodology centered around responsible community engagement, with actively listening to communities at its core.**



# Key Insights

Our research process focused first and foremost on listening. We sought to understand the lived experiences of the disability community and climate justice activists in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and Rivers states – and to integrate that understanding with how best to approach enhancing the intersectionality between the two. Below we offer five key insights, contextualized further by details drawn from our focus groups, interviews, media analysis, and desk research.

## Key Insight One

### Persons with disabilities living in the Niger Delta face intense social discrimination which leaves them feeling isolated and undervalued as members of society.

A major problem faced by PWDs in the Niger Delta is the tendency for society to discount their abilities and strengths because they have disabilities. This was a standout theme both in the disability-focused media coverage we analyzed<sup>5</sup> and across multiple focus groups and interviews conducted by our team. Research participants spoke of facing significant discrimination from others in society, including people actively trying to avoid interacting with them. Some participants spoke of discrimination and being seen as a burden from their own family.

**“You might be more intelligent than them but looking at you physically, they will just grade you as somebody who doesn’t have anything to contribute [because] maybe you cannot join them to do manual jobs and all the rest.”**

– PWD participant, Bayelsa State



**PWD focus group**

**“If they do anything, they will not carry persons with disabilities along, because they will say in my dialect, ‘awokpana’. That the person has an impairment. That the person cannot participate in any aspect of doing something in the community.”**

– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

Where people do attempt to help, they are, as one PWD participant from Akwa Ibom State put it, “often coming from a place of sympathy rather than empathy” and failing to treat PWDs as full human beings in their own right. This is also reflected in the media: even broadly-supportive coverage sometimes uses questionable vocabulary (e.g. “physically challenged people”<sup>6</sup>) or somewhat derogatory terms (“persons living with various types of deformity”<sup>7</sup>). This adds to the dehumanizing effect and further entrenches a feeling of underappreciation and separation from the rest of society.

**“We are still living on the charity model, which they said, “he is a disabled person now, let me just assist him.” And not from the citizen aspect of it that this person is a citizen of the state, this person is a citizen of this country. Let his rights be given to him.”**

– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

**“We see the society as a problem, the society that makes us lose the opportunity to participate equally with other knowledgeable people because their attitude is posing a barrier.**

– PWD participant, Bayelsa State

As well as bigotry experienced directly from fellow citizens, PWDs also face unnecessary challenges due to a lack of accessible infrastructure. For example, it was mentioned that there are very rarely wheelchair ramps provided in communal places like churches, or sign language or braille provided at Town Halls, despite it being a major information center.

**“Even in our churches ... there is no ramp for us to enter the church. They will put steps, five, seven steps which a person with a disability will not be able to climb inside the church.”**

– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

Communication barriers in particular lead to an information gap, whereby PWDs are excluded from accessing information they need to live their lives independently, causing them further need to rely on friends and family to relay important updates.

**“If there is any information for persons with disability, we channel it through phone calls and in most cases, we send messages and call for a meeting, although even that meeting is not actually inclusive... because of financial constraints. So it’s not that effective.”** – *PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State*

**“Persons with disabilities that are living in interior villages don’t even know what is happening. Most of them don’t even have phones. Even when they have phones, they don’t have a network until when they see a person one-on-one, that is when they will know that [some activity] is happening...”**

– *PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State*

Analysis of Nigeria’s media shows that the plight of persons with disabilities in the Niger Delta is also mostly ignored in the information space. The majority of disability-related coverage from the examined national-level outlets focused on, or included personal stories from, Abuja, Lagos, and the Northern regions of Nigeria. For regional and local outlets in the Niger Delta, disability was a rare topic of reporting. In addition, direct PWDs’ voices and experiences are still largely missing – or are victimized – in the coverage, with only occasional articles, TV programs, and social media projects engaging with PWDs as guest experts<sup>8</sup> or interviewees.<sup>9</sup>

Due to such widespread discrimination, PWDs reported feeling isolated from others, which can lead to a deep mistrust and a hesitancy to engage in civic life. This emotional strain can also lead to low self-esteem and an internationalization of the idea that they have nothing to offer society because they have disabilities.

**“Sometimes, I feel ashamed of myself. In certain places I will just judge that they will not consider me [for work] so sometimes I forfeit some of those places.”** – PWD participant, Rivers State

Focus group participants expressed a desire to see a shift in public thinking away from equating disability with lesser ability and instead recognize that PWDs have talents and ideas to contribute.

**“Let people stop seeing us as liabilities but as able people that can do something. As I am now, I can clean somebody’s house. I was a cleaner and I did it very well. I was baking. I am a baker. I can do those things. But right now, nobody can give me those things that I should go and do. No, they will not, [instead] they will look at me as less.”** – PWD participant, Rivers State

**“Like me: I produce paint, but how do I go about it? Even though I have paint, I haven’t registered my company. And even though I can produce it, people look at me as if I can’t make a good thing.”** – PWD participant, Rivers State

## Key Insight Two

### **Climate change disproportionately affects persons with disabilities in the Niger Delta, further curtailing their freedom and leading to increased insecurity.**

Climate change has a hugely negative impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. These impacts, broadly speaking<sup>10</sup> and on the Niger Delta communities in particular,<sup>11</sup> have been recorded extensively in the media and the press. Our discussions with experts and focus group participants further confirmed that such effects were disproportionately negative for PWDs in the region, curtailing livelihoods, exacerbating existing barriers to participating in society or creating brand new ones.

Most immediate consequences of major climate emergency events present profound challenges to PWDs. Their mobility restrictions – combined with the underdeveloped infrastructure in the region – often means they face greater dangers during flooding, erosion, and



other disasters. For example, focus group participants described how inaccessible roads caused by lack of government maintenance and exacerbated by adverse weather conditions may not be visible to someone with a sight impairment, or might make traveling difficult for someone who uses a wheelchair. This is made worse by PWDs being unable to prepare effectively for negative weather events because of a lack of effective communications channels available in communities.

**“During the rainy season, most of the time, [persons with disabilities] are not fully aware of how the roads and gutters are. Most times, they just walk, and they just fall inside the hole, maybe because there was no proper awareness or information about the right track they should follow so that they can be safe.”** –PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State



**Mangrove, by Jurgen – Flickr**

In addition to this, PWDs are often not actively supported by others in their communities. Some attempts at offering support, such as pushing wheelchairs or intrusively guiding persons who are blind, are done without PWDs’ consent. This is due to stigma, but also due to low awareness of the disability issues among the general population. Our media landscape analysis also shows that national and local media outlets rarely cover disability and climate-/environment-related issues simultaneously. The only thematic overlap uncovered through the media analysis was via the coverage of health issues among the population affected by oil exploration,<sup>12</sup> as well as their entitlement to the benefits from natural resources<sup>13</sup> and participation in extraction-related decision-making.<sup>14</sup> Impact of environmental hazards, pollution and disaster events on PWDs is discussed very rarely.<sup>15</sup> As a result, as one PWD participant from Rivers State reflected, “during times

of climate change when they see disabled people, some other people will just run and leave the disabled person behind.”

In a more long-term perspective, changing environmental patterns and continued pollution negatively affect biodiversity, fishing areas and community farmlands in the Niger Delta, resulting in less fish for fishing, fewer viable crops for farming, an increase in disease and other health related problems. As one community head and CSO representative from Rivers State shared with us,

**“I am from a community [where] you can just stroll from your house and go to the riverbank, get your catch, and go back. But because of environmental pollution, the point of fishing is farther, so to speak, very far. ... You have to get your canoe now and paddle it a very long distance. And you see that [persons with disabilities] cannot go on their own, except they go in the company of people. So, to that extent, they are affected by the environment.”**

The negative impact on the agricultural sectors continues to be felt very keenly by PWDs who often rely on the local environment in order to make a living. Without viable crops to harvest, some PWDs are finding that they are unable to make a sustainable income.

**“...during the rainy season... [PWDs] from the hinterlands find it difficult to access the urban city because of the nature of the road. And it has equally affected the limits and the time they actually attend to their farm since the majority of them are farmers ... when it rains and the road is not where they can actually pass to their farm it limits the way they attend to their crops.”** *—PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State*

Focus group participants expressed a desire to see special attention being paid to solutions for groups disproportionately affected by climate change, including PWDs. The overall feeling expressed in focus groups was that the deck is already stacked against PWDs, and the negative impact of climate change makes everything worse when targeted solutions are not developed.

## More often than not climate action does not involve persons with disabilities, due to (perceived and real) gaps in accessibility and education

Both PWDs and people active in the climate justice space confirmed that PWDs are very rarely involved in climate action. Across the board, PWDs are often ignored even in the most immediate emergency responses. A PWD participant from Bodo community reminisced that:

**“...there was a time that they said they were doing cleanup. But I must confess to you that... for the past how[ever] many years that they did it, they did not consider, they did not talk to [persons with disabilities]. ... And as I am talking to you now, nothing has been done in that.”**

Some representatives of environmental CSOs perceived their organizations as making some accommodations to include PWDs. For example, there was mention of adopting accessible language and using images to describe environmental destruction. However, PWDs on the whole noted that there were overall systemic barriers to them participating in the workforce, and also felt that much more could be done to welcome them into the climate movement. Research participants mentioned, for example, the need for removing barriers by ensuring ramps are available to access offices and information being shared in a variety of ways including braille and with the support of a sign language interpreter.

**“...just look at us, we want to come to the venue where these things will take place. [But] we don't come with ordinary [needs]. You come with a [car] drop, and you must look for somebody to assist you. It's not that we don't want to attend or it's not because we are always asking for money. No, when you take these things into perspective, you find out that these are the small things we need.” – PWD**

*participant, Akwa Ibom State*

Those working for CSOs that we spoke to expressed willingness to make changes to the way they work in order to remove barriers to engagement for PWDs, but they expressed concerns around the financial implications, as well as possible push back from community stakeholders.

**“Now we have a problem: how do you approach these organizations? You know, unlike Lagos and Abuja ... most CSOs here in Port Harcourt, we operate under capacity.”** –CSO representative, Rivers State

#### Key Insight Four

### **Persons with disabilities can be involved in both the disability justice movement and the climate justice movement.**

Both CSO and PWD focus group participants felt that they could work together as they see shared common goals between their respective areas of focus. Both movements want to create a better life for everyone, where everyone is included, and their rights are respected and upheld.

While there was agreement that voices of PWDs need to be represented to a greater extent in the discourse around climate change, there were differing opinions amongst participants with regards to how PWDs will be further incorporated into the climate movement. Several CSO comments seemed to suggest that as well as



**Person in oil field**

CSO organizations becoming more inclusive and accessible, PWDs themselves also need to come forward and express an interest in being involved. Some CSO representatives suggested that PWDs might be feeling too shy, have low awareness of climate change issues, or be too suspicious of potential exploitation to engage:

**“Many of them just feel shy of coming up to socialize with people... So, because of that they don’t feel like coming out, and again they don’t have much opportunity to be in charge.”**

*– CSO representative, Rivers State*

**“Considering people with disabilities, it then also means that the awareness is very low on their part. Because how can somebody raise a voice or talk against or for something he has no or little knowledge on what he wants to talk about?”**

*– CSO representative, Rivers State*

**“Majority of [PWDs] did not want to show up [to our events], because they feel that we are using them. So socially, I see that there is that issue of withdrawal: they don’t want to come out boldly to associate with what we are doing.”**

*– PWD participant, Bayelsa State*

Other CSO respondents thought that if PWDs were to feel welcomed and valued into the movement they would be much more likely to engage.

**“PWDs, I believe if they are given an opportunity they will talk. They need a platform, like coming together and forming a body so we can know them.”** *– CSO representative, Bayelsa State*

Disability community members themselves, however, reported a higher degree of caution about potential collaboration. They pointed out that unwillingness to engage is not due to shyness, but because of the conditioned isolation induced by societal discrimination, which fuels reasonable mistrust and makes PWDs want to self-withdraw. Thus, in addition to many existing structural barriers to participation which they reported to often not be considered by CSOs, PWDs stressed the need to invest in a process of trust-building before any meaningful collaboration could take place. In particular, PWDs noted that there are experts in different fields who also have disabilities, and that CSOs should more actively involve these individuals into their work.

“In order to build trust ... you have to bring the person close to you, you must bring the person to see [things] from your own perspective. You also bring in the person to see meaningful contributions, then allow whoever is your partner to know that whatever proceeds comes from that partnership will be shared. It is like [in a company, where a founder] is not the only owner. There are other owners, [the founder] just has a controlling share over the projects... I keep telling people, even on a radio program, I say: we have any kind of person you have in the other world, in the world of persons who are not physically challenged. We have doctors, we have anything you want, we are sound, so what we need is that bonding to create that perfect trust in whatever engagement we are.” – PWD participant, Bayelsa State

“...when they lack the belief and competence in us, there is no way we can thrive in the Niger Delta, even if we have everything we need here.” – PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State



PWD focus group

## **For the two movements to work together and be built on trust, persons with disabilities should be involved from the very beginning across all the activities and processes.**

Finally, while recognizing that including PWDs into the climate justice movement is important, it is not enough. Not only can PWDs be included, they should be, both because of their fundamental right to an equal opportunity in decision-making and collective action, and because of the unique experiences and insights they can bring to the table.

Trust building came out as a key requirement in any effort to support greater solidarity between the disability rights and climate justice movements. When PWDs feel their involvement is tokenistic, feelings of mistrust are deepened and collaboration is further hindered.

**“They do it in the mindset of ‘let me just include him’. But in the real sense, they find it difficult to actually make the place where it ought to have been.”** – PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

PWD respondents expressed a desire for CSOs to be more transparent and to ensure PWDs are seen and treated as equal – and special – partners. They also argued that PWDs are better-placed to deal with their communities’ issues because of their lived experiences and vested interests in the well-being of fellow PWDs.

**“...if we are involved ... we will know that we can deal [with] our people very sincerely.”** – PWD participant, Rivers State

To establish better levels of trust, focus group participants acknowledged the importance of PWDs being involved in the planning stages of any project and not just involved at a later stage to fulfill a ‘diversity’ metric or as a means of attracting additional funding.

**“Number one thing is for the association advocating for these persons to involve them in their day-to-day activities so that they can be part and parcel of the advocacy and create an impact.”**

– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State



# Opportunities for a Narrative Shift

When considering how disability is understood within the Niger Delta region, we should consider the deeper beliefs which underpin and give resonance to the remarks we observed in the media and the comments we were hearing from focus groups participants about their lived experience. Based on the research findings and key insights, below we identify three narrative shifts which we believe would help to foster greater solidarity between the disability rights and climate justice causes in the Niger Delta. These narratives have been validated by our focus group participants.

## Narrative Shift One

### **There is ability in disability: PWDs are capable members of society and valued contributors to their communities.**

Currently, the predominant narrative across Nigerian society is that PWDs are not valuable citizens and do not have anything to offer in civic life. This is evident in the testimonies given by PWDs about their lived experience in community today, examples of the media analyzed, as well as the lack of consideration given at the State and government levels to the best ways of removing barriers currently hindering the freedom of PWDs. A number of statements were made during focus groups discussions which mentioned that although Nigeria is a signatory to international legislation on disability rights, as well as having its own policies developed, there is not the political will to see them implemented. Furthermore, there is a lack of organizations proactively supporting and advocating for PWDs to see their rights recognized in full. All of these examples point towards a deep narrative held across society which suggests that persons with disabilities are not as worthy as persons without disabilities and so can be disregarded.



**“If you want to go and ask somebody something now, for example, they will say: ‘she’s coming for money’. They will not listen to what you want to say. They will conclude that you are coming to beg them for money because of your impairment, that you have turned into a beggar.”**

– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

In order to see greater commitment to and instantiation of disability rights, as well as PWD involvement and leadership in the fight for climate justice, the public narrative needs to shift towards seeing PWDs as citizens with abilities and not solely defined by their disability. Instead of being viewed as people who need charity, they would be seen as people with ideas and talents to share.

**“We have things to deliver, we have talents to showcase.”**

– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

## **Climate change is a disability rights issue**

The second narrative shift we have identified is making apparent the interconnection between climate change and disability rights. Currently, climate change is understood as an entirely separate issue to disability rights. This is evidenced by the lack of media reporting which speaks of both climate and disability justice and the fact that there is very limited collaboration between the two movements.

**“You can’t separate [the two]. Because they live in the environment. And if the environment is unsafe or insecure for them to stay, you can imagine ...the trauma they pass through, the challenges they pass through.”**

– CSO representative, Rivers State

**“I support the co-participation because I believe that nobody can tell the story better than them. ... And I believe that over the years they have made several efforts in order to speak and tell their own stories by themselves. So it’s important that we note this and ensure that PWDs are not just represented but they’re participating.”**

– *Community Representative, Bayelsa state*

By building power for a new narrative which acknowledges that not everyone experiences climate change equally, and that the impacts of changes in weather patterns and ongoing pollution have a multiplying effect on disabilities, we would be able to ensure that climate solutions pay particular attention to solutions which work for PWDs.

### Narrative Shift Three

## **Caring for our earth means caring for each other**

The final narrative shift we will look at in this report is the chance to center a narrative of care both for our natural world and for each other. It was first inspired by our literature review, which unveiled a young, but rich body of publications which promoted rights-based participatory approaches to disability and the added value of the lived disability experience in informing climate-resilient development. Specifically, we saw a refreshingly positive take on PWDs’ dependency relationships being compared to the desirable relationship between humans and the environment.<sup>16</sup> This positive narrative of interdependence is juxtaposed with the “fallacy of misplaced concreteness” in our current economic development model, which is unsustainable and exclusionary<sup>17</sup> – ideas which were echoed by our research participants.

A narrative of care would center and recognize everyone’s personhood, as well as the interconnection between human beings and the wider ecosystem of which we are only one small part. This care, human-centeredness, and solidarity thus become not tokenistic goals, but rather means to a common prosperity through appreciation of our shared vulnerability.

“...this disability thing... I have a friend, just four weeks ago I called him – now he is blind. This lady that came here said four years ago she was a normal person. ... It is just a thin line, but a lot of people do not understand.” – CSO representative, Rivers Statee

This new narrative would foreground the deep connection between the values of care underpinning both disability rights and climate justice, paving a way for greater synergy between these two movements and thus helping to more effectively tackle discrimination against PWDs and gain wider support for climate justice.

**A narrative of care would center and recognize everyone’s personhood, as well as the interconnection between human beings and the wider ecosystem**



Man showing oil on hand, by Milieudefensie – Flickr



# Recommendations

Developed alongside focus group participants, the recommendations below will help to further the cause of disability justice and climate action in the Niger Delta, by building power for new solidarity between the two movements. We foresee them helping to create greater capacity to advocate for the implementation of existing policies around disability rights and to ensure that climate action can be taken by anyone for everyone.



PWD focus group

## Table 11: Summary of Recommendations

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Funders</b>	<b>CSOs</b>
<p><b>1.</b> Ensure persons with disabilities are able to claim their seat at the table</p>	<p><b>1.1.1.</b> Support monitoring and data collection activities with PWDs</p>	<p><b>1.2.1.</b> Assess mobility barriers, design plans to tackle them</p>
	<p><b>1.1.2.</b> Provide core funding for PWD inclusion, make inclusion and accessibility a funding criterion</p>	<p><b>1.2.2.</b> Review for gaps in communication strategies</p>
	<p><b>1.1.3.</b> Fund training programs on accessibility</p>	<p><b>1.2.3.</b> Engage with a local disability rights organization</p>
	<p><b>1.1.4.</b> Invest in PWD education</p>	<p><b>1.2.4.</b> Include PWDs from early project stages</p>
		<p><b>1.2.5.</b> (<i>Disability Justice CSOs</i>): ensure that disability rights CSOs are inclusive of people with a range of disabilities</p>

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Funders</b>	<b>CSOs</b>
<p><b>2.</b> Prioritize initiatives that underline the intersectionality of climate change and disability justice</p>	<p><b>2.1.1.</b> Educate other funders</p>	<p><b>2.2.1.</b> Organize a Forum for PWD CSOs, Climate CSOs and PWDs</p>
	<p><b>2.1.2.</b> Fund field-building work across the two movements</p>	<p><b>2.2.2</b> Develop a framework of intersectionality, open to signatories</p>
	<p><b>2.1.3.</b> Sponsor “train the trainers” programs</p>	<p><b>2.2.3.</b> (<i>Climate Justice CSOs</i>): Setup PWD advisory board</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Build power for a new narrative on disability</p>	<p><b>3.1.1.</b> Resource a narrative change campaign</p>	<p><b>3.2.1.</b> Ensure the language and messages in communications are inclusive and respectful of PWDs</p>
	<p><b>3.1.2.</b> Ensure the language and messages in communications are inclusive and respectful of PWDs</p>	<p><b>3.2.2.</b> Show solidarity to PWD activists by supporting their cause</p>
	<p><b>3.1.3.</b> Fund trainings for journalists</p>	

Table 11: Summary of Recommendations

## **Ensure persons with disabilities are able to claim their seat at the table.**

Through our research we heard very clearly that not enough is being done in the Niger Delta to effectively listen to and involve persons with disabilities in climate activism and civil society more broadly. To ensure PWDs' **full** and **regular** participation in the climate movement, a number of proactive steps should be taken to remove existing barriers and introduce practices that go beyond simple tokenism.

While the research yielded a lot of suggestions regarding expectations to be fulfilled by the government, CSOs and funders have the opportunity to put into practice their belief in the importance of PWD engagement and leadership by investing time and resources into pursuing several key activities.

Above all – and integrated within the outlined recommendations – climate actors and PWDs will need to invest in a series of trust-building activities that are pivotal to any meaningful collaboration. CSOs need to fully come to recognize the talents and abilities of PWDs, and PWDs need to feel that climate activists genuinely want to include them in their work. Additionally, when seeking out guidance from PWDs, CSOs need to ensure that they are engaging with PWDs on a mutually-beneficial basis, either fairly compensating or ensuring other benefits for the PWDs for their work and assistance.

### **1.1. Funders:**

**1.1.1. Support monitoring activities that facilitate tracking and updating information about persons with disabilities in different communities. We heard that it can be difficult for CSOs to engage PWDs in their work simply because they have no information about these people, especially in more remote communities. In addition to focusing on persons with physical disabilities, these activities should also pay special attention to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as they are often ignored or dismissed.**

**1.1.2. Make core funding available for CSOs** to mainstream inclusion and accessibility into their work. This could be done by making regular consultations or collaboration with PWDs a mandatory element of the project proposals pursuing funding, provided that sponsorship for such activities and infrastructure required can be granted.

**1.1.3. Resource training programs**, which should be co-designed with PWDs, and make the training programs available to CSOs in order to support them in becoming fully accessible organizations. In addition to training, it would be useful to co-create together with PWDs a CSO-facing best practice guidebook and other supporting materials with case studies of how other organizations are ensuring full involvement of PWDs.

**1.1.4. Invest to a greater extent in PWD education programs** across the region in order to continue bridging education levels amongst PWDs, which are still low due to social discrimination and economic poverty. This would increase PWDs' confidence about their ability and right to participate fully in CSO climate advocacy and broader civic activities. Also consider sponsoring PWD-supporting programs that address climate change issues (e.g. training PWDs in climate-resilient farming).

## 1.2. CSOs:

**1.2.1. Assess where your organization may have mobility barriers** to PWD participation and design an action plan to address these. For example, are the facilities where your organization hosts its activities physically accessible to everyone? If possible, retain a PWD as a consultant in this regard and have them formally advise on facilities or planned events.



**1.2.2. Review your existing communication approaches** and consider, in consultation with PWDs, other formats you could adopt in order to reach more people (e.g. braille, audio, sign language, simplified language).<sup>18</sup> You could create a communications accessibility guidelines document to be circulated amongst all your staff, so that everyone knows how best to make their communications accessible.

**1.2.3. Engage with a local disability rights organization** which could provide further training and longer-term support to colleagues and volunteers on PWD inclusion.

**1.2.4. Ensure PWD involvement from the earliest stages** of planning in any project. We heard from PWDs that both PWD-facing CSOs and climate change organizations should create and follow clear co-design principles to ensure PWD engagement is meaningful. This will be vital to creating greater trust not only between the two movements, but also between persons with disabilities and those directly engaged in PWD advocacy.

**1.2.5. (PWD CSOs) Ensure that disability rights CSOs are inclusive of a range of persons with disabilities.** One point that came up during the research process was that some PWDs do not feel that disability rights organizations were fully representing the needs of the local PWD community. To ensure better representation and trust, we recommend PWD CSOs pursue regular in-person engagement via community events to identify persons with disabilities across the whole range (including e.g. i.e., physical and intellectual or developmental disabilities)

## **Prioritize initiatives that underline the intersectionality of climate change and disability justice**

This report has been written with the view that intersectionality is crucial to the success of social and environmental justice movements. As well as making each other stronger through the cross-pollination of ideas and tactics, movements become more likely to succeed when they recognize that the values which inspire public concern about different instances of oppression are the same. In other words, the values which are likely to engage someone on disability rights are the same or very similar to the values which are likely to inspire someone to engage in environmental activism.

To further strengthen the recognition of the interconnections that exist between the disability rights and climate justice movements, both in terms of policy overlaps but also in terms of deeper values and narratives, we have developed the following recommendations:

### **2.1. Funders:**

**2.1.1.** Commit to **educating other funders** about the intersectionality between climate change and disability. This should include connections at the level of policy change, but should also include the connections at a deeper narrative level that underscore the need for organizations working in the field to internalize that these issues are irrevocably intertwined.

**2.1.2.** Invest in greater **field-building work between the two movements**, supporting them to form greater levels of trust, understanding and solidarity. This could take the form of regular Forum meetings where climate and PWD activists can identify shared values and a vision of the changes they want to see, and generate collaborative solutions to achieve this vision. It is important that such engagements do not remain limited to the narrow circle of existing activists, but are used as the opportunity to find and engage with new voices from the PWD and broader civil society.

**2.1.3. Sponsor “train the trainers” programs** in social inclusion and accessibility for persons with disabilities. The goal of such programs would be to equip these individuals with the skills to further train and provide expertise to CSOs and the government on systematic inclusion of PWDs in decision-making. Such programs could simultaneously help reduce unemployment among PWDs and put them at the helm of driving the change needed in their communities.

## 2.2. CSOs:

**2.2.1. Organize a Forum** whereby climate and PWD activists can meet at regular intervals throughout the year to discuss joint objectives and campaign strategies. See a note on the importance of regularly attracting new voices to such Forums in **2.1.2.**

**2.2.2. Develop a framework of intersectionality** including having forum consortium members make a written commitment to integrate disability rights within the climate change movement, and to make the movement accessible to all who must participate. Signatories to this pledge would hold each other accountable for demonstrating this commitment via PWD inclusion and leadership.

**2.2.3.** Climate CSOs in particular could consider **setting up a PWD advisory board** or focusing their board growth strategies on attracting new PWD board members who can help guide the organization to becoming more inclusive. Respondents in focus groups indicated that many CSOs do not have the basic knowledge that needs vary amongst PWDs and so ensuring representation of persons with different disabilities will be hugely important.

## Build power for a new narrative on disability

As discussed earlier in this report, currently there exists a negative narrative around disability in the Niger Delta, which reinforces the idea that PWDs have limited abilities and worth as citizens. Investment should be made in ‘building power’ for a new alternative narrative to take root, so as to see durable shifts in the way that citizens of the Niger Delta understand disability. Building power for a new narrative consists of creating imaginative and engaging stories to seed across various aspects of a culture. These stories, messages, and images need to be consistently repeated to see them picked up by other cultural actors within the region. Only when we achieve a particular level of message-saturation can we expect the narrative to take root.

### 3.1. Funders:

**3.1.1. Resource a narrative change campaign** to be led and designed by PWDs in the Niger Delta, focused on shifting the narrative around disability and disability justice as a climate activism priority. Narrative work requires commitment from an ecosystem of different actors to be truly successful. In order to see greater alignment between the climate justice and disability rights movements in the Niger Delta, the campaign needs to focus on communications campaigns across civil society organizations, solutions journalism strategies for reporters, and other methods that would help displace negative narratives to make space for a hope-based messaging strategy pursued by all the key stakeholders shaping the discourse on PWDs in Nigeria.

**3.1.2. Ensure all messages in communications are inclusive and respectful of PWDs**, in alignment with the Nigerian PWD communities’ preferences and best international standards. This equally concerns the formal language and terminology used, the content of communications, as well as the accessibility of the forms and channels used. Work could also be done to support other funders and grantees to review their communications in this light, too.

**3.1.3. Sponsor training programs for journalists and media organizations in the Niger Delta / Nigeria to address the issue of offensive and derogatory language that is often used in reference to PWDs.**

### 3.2. CSOs:

**3.2.1. Ensure all messages in communications are inclusive and respectful of PWDs, in alignment with the Nigerian PWD communities' preferences and best international standards. This equally concerns the formal language and terminology used, the content of communications, as well as the accessibility of the forms and channels used.**

**3.2.2. Show solidarity to PWD activists by supporting their cause. This could include sharing their calls to action on your own platforms, offering them logistical support (e.g. meeting spaces) or publicly adding your name, as an organization, to their campaign and asking your supporters to do the same.**



PWD focus group

## Conclusion and Next Steps



Children swimming in Ikot Ada Udo, by Milieudefensie / Akintunde Akinleye – Flickr

### Conclusion

Communities in the Niger Delta face significant challenges due to climate change, and the findings of this report demonstrate that these challenges are further exacerbated for persons with disabilities. While this is rooted in systemic exclusion, what we have seen throughout our research process is a willingness for CSOs and PWDs to work together to try to improve this situation – both by ensuring that the voices of PWDs are being heard and integrated in the climate conversation and by striving to make conditions better overall.

This report outlines suggested steps for funders and CSOs to take toward ensuring greater levels of solidarity and collaboration between the disability rights and climate justice movements. With that said, this work is difficult – especially when the individuals working to improve societal conditions are those most impacted by them – yet in bringing to life new narratives of care and solidarity, we can advance the knowledge that it is possible to mobilize allies to stand together and become more than the sum of their individual parts.



Everyday life in Bodo Chris McMorrow, Creative Associates International – Flickr

## Recommendations for Future Narrative Change Work

Beyond the recommendations for funders and CSOs in the region, we see a number of additional opportunities to build on this work. Looking at how to move forward with the insights gained from the research, we can leverage the findings to continue building narrative power and fostering local collaboration at the intersection of environmental justice and disability rights. Due to feelings of frustration and fatalism expressed in focus groups, it is key to note that the overarching guidance for any work going forward would be to anchor it in a solutions-oriented and hope-based framework in order.

## **1. Opportunities for more research**

The current body of work has opened several pathways for additional research into this subject area. This includes: (1) conducting similar research in other Niger Delta states to determine if their experiences align; (2) further research of this nature with a focus on individuals within the disability community who have cognitive, learning and neurological disabilities; (3) more narrative analysis of the campaigns and content produced by the climate justice and disability justice organizations; (4) the role of foreign and domestic energy corporations in shaping the narratives of climate change responsibility, on the national level and within the Niger Delta; and (5) an in-depth exploration of government actions and interactions with both the disability rights and climate change communities.

## **2. Direct engagement with local advocacy groups**

We see a benefit to launching an advocacy mentorship cohort that would work with civil society groups and with members of the disability rights movement to further develop ways to advance the identified alternative narratives. This would enable local voices to collaborate and craft communications campaigns on these local issues, forming a truly grassroots movement to advance environmental justice and disability rights.

## **3. Deployment of communications campaigns**

While the research has identified three potential narrative shifts that could be infused in a messaging campaign, the further work would involve actually deploying narrative change campaigns around those narratives. This would involve developing stories and messages that could advance each identified narrative, testing them in the market, and then identifying the best medium for each one.



# About Us



New Media Advocacy Project — Facebook

## New Media Advocacy Project (NMAP)

NMAP changes narratives to advance human rights and environmental justice. We share our research on narratives and values, and our expertise in impact storytelling, with people on the frontlines of global crises. Working as co-producers, we assemble cohorts of creative changemakers, mentor them through our narrative change curriculum, and make grants to realize their visions for a better future. We envision a world where everyone can access their inherent rights as human beings in a society that exists in harmony with nature.



Media Awareness and Justice Initiative – Facebook

## Media Awareness and Justice Initiative (MAJI)

The mission of the Media Awareness and Justice Initiative is to work with marginalized groups and social movements working together for social, economic, cultural, and environmental justice by helping them use media and communication technologies to inform, organize, mobilize, and further strengthen their efforts to create a better, equal, and more just world. MAJI focuses on four thematic areas namely Environment, Human Rights, Digital inclusion and Gender. Our work is based on a culmination of a number of years of disparate participatory media, ICT, and capacity building training for marginalized groups and indigenous communities. To achieve maximum impact, MAJI uses ground level research, low cost human centered FLOSS technologies, and interactive strategies to fully democratize information dissemination, increase awareness, and provide the platform for sustainable interactions betgroups and stakeholders.

## **Evrima Research**

Evrima Research, LLC, is a research firm focused on social change. For twenty years and in over 100 countries, our women-owned small business has delivered insights and results to support positive change worldwide. Evrima’s focus is on providing evidence and recommendations that link donors, implementers, and local stakeholders to the communities they serve, utilizing adaptive approaches and leveraging complexity-aware data for responsive implementation throughout the program cycle. The Evrima team is adept at synthesizing, communicating, and visualizing data and research findings into insightful and accessible recommendations to strengthen program effectiveness. Evrima applies the most rigorous qualitative, quantitative, and evaluative methods to answer challenging research questions within a data equity framework.

## **Ruth Taylor**

Ruth Taylor is an independent narrative strategist with a particular focus on “deep narrative”. She works with a range of social and environmental justice organizations across the world to identify and shift narratives in order to create the cultural conditions for a more equitable and regenerative world. Ruth also works part time for the Common Cause Foundation.

# Appendices



CONSTRUCTION OF SOLAR POWERED  
WATER SCHEME  
IKC/ ADA UDO

CLIENT:  
THE SHELL PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT  
COMPANY OF NIGERIA LIMITED

Solar powered water tower, Milieudefensie – Flickr



# Appendix 1: TECHNICAL REPORT

## Research Process

Our research process took around 12 months and consisted of several stages. During the first stage, we conducted desk research, itself split into two activities: literature review and media landscape analysis. The former provided us with insights into the academic debates on the intersection of disability and climate justice, as well as the frontline practices that various NGOs, donors, governments and activists have been successfully pursuing in various geographies. The media landscape analysis of Nigerian newspapers and audio-visual outlets allowed us to see the big picture of reporting on disability and climate change in the Niger Delta, and identify the most common narratives used to characterize issues in these two domains. You can find further information on the methodology used for this stage in Appendices 2, 3, and 4.

Having equipped ourselves with these insights, we launched the fieldwork stage, conducted by the MAJI team with research participants in three Niger Delta states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, and Rivers, selected due to the high levels of climate change impact and existing connections and partner networks. Overall, we hosted interviews and discussions with 58 experts; six focus groups with 33 participants (altogether); and one validation session with 28 participants. Our research participants included representatives of PWD CSOs, climate change CSOs, and individuals with disabilities who had no institutional affiliations. You can find all the methodology-related documents – breakdown of focus group compositions, as well as the interview and focus group guides – in the Appendices 2, 5, and 6.

## Values Underpinning Research Design

While the intent of the research was to examine the intersectionality of the disability rights and environmental rights movements in order to find opportunities for narrative shifts, the findings extended beyond that. Because this topic is unique – and because few are focusing on this type of research in the Niger Delta – we also learned quite a bit about how to approach research in this sphere.

Key to our fieldwork was adoption of a participatory approach, which we pursued by hosting regular consultations and being transparent with our participants about our findings at each research stage. Effectively, we strived for our participants to become co-owners of the report and its recommendations. NMAP entered this project influenced by oral historians that have created written documents outlining co-ownership in formal terms, with clear expectations for keeping participants informed and involved in the process of sharing their stories and insights. This practice is one that many narrative researchers have shown interest in adopting with good motivation—they seek to move beyond statements of values to concrete and transparent agreements that balance the power dynamics between researcher and participant. However, in the context of the Niger Delta, MAJI wisely counseled us against this practice. They knew from experience that presenting written documents to community members who have dealt with extractive companies attempting to get them to sign away their rights. For us, this was a helpful learning experience in not defaulting to a well-intentioned practice that, in this context, would undermine the key goals and values of the project.

Community validation sessions became central to this goal of continued engagement and co-ownership from a methodological viewpoint. They allowed us to authenticate research findings with regards to its presentation, language and form via a two way communication strategy between the research target groups and the research team. This helped us build trust with research participants and communities that often report research fatigue and frustration with being excluded from what happens with the insights they provide.

## Limitations and Biases

There are, of course, limitations and caveats to be considered.

- **Underrepresentation of different types of disabilities.** Our final selection of research participants is admittedly limited. In particular, while PWD community representatives had various forms of physical impairments, no individuals with cognitive, learning and neurological disabilities were represented. This was largely a second-hand omission, likely dictated by existing prejudices which often result in non-recognition of the more “invisible” types of disability..
- **Underrepresentation of the regional ethnolinguistic diversity.** With over 40 ethnic groups and about 250 different languages spoken, Niger Delta is a region characterized by an impressive diversity, which could not be captured in our arguably modest selection of states, civil society and community representatives. The findings thus inferred from the data collected might not resonate with all demographics in the region.
- **Exploratory approach to the research.** Since no comparable research has been conducted in the Niger Delta before, we adopted an exploratory and semi-structured approach in order to not miss out important information. This meant that, while guided by a bespoke research design and developed methodologies for each research activity, we allowed for some modifications when facing unexpected findings worth further exploration. For example, upon discovering the disproportionate discrimination and exclusion experienced by our PWD community representatives, we somewhat diverted from our original discussion guides to listen to the lived experiences our participants wanted to share.

- **Project team’s biases and prejudices.** We are cognizant of the fact that this project has been developed through a partnership of organizations and researchers most of whom come from the global north. We are also sensitive to the fact that nobody on the research team identifies as a PWD. Where possible, we strived to seek external guidance and validation of our analysis by experts with lived experiences of disability.

Due to the limited project timeframe and resources, as well as the continued constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic for in-person research, we had to accept these limitations and proceed with caution when carrying our analysis and making recommendations.

To counteract potential biases, we maintained continued engagement with our participants and conducted formal and informal validations of our analysis and recommendations. Nonetheless, we are aware that the resulting analysis and messaging may not resonate equally with all the various populations within the region and remain open to further discussions and feedback.

**We are also sensitive to the fact that nobody on the research team identifies as a PWD.**



Dead forest, Sosialistisk Ungdom – Flickr





# Appendix 2: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

## 1.1. Initial Research Questions

Keeping in mind the urgent need to look at these two issues in consort, this research was intended to be an intersectional approach to the narrative landscape in the Niger Delta around natural resource extraction and disability rights. Through our research we sought to uncover where existing momentum and opportunity for forging new alliances between these movements may already exist.

### **Overarching questions that guided the research included:**

1. What can we learn from the lived experiences of the Disability community in the Niger Delta?
2. What inherent beliefs and viewpoints do communities in the Niger Delta have related to Disability and climate change?
3. Which communities are most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change? How are communities of persons with disabilities uniquely affected by natural resource extraction and oil pollution? And what are the barriers to intersectionality among these communities?
4. Whose voices are heard on issues related to oil pollution and climate change? Whose voices and perspectives are excluded?
5. What are the overlaps in the goals of the climate and disability rights movements in the Niger Delta? What are common points of interest and how can these groups best collaborate?
6. What stories and perspectives resonate the most among these communities and have the potential to shift narratives around the disability and climate change movements?

## 1.2. Research Ethics and Community-Centered Approach

The research was designed with the concept of reciprocity, co-ownership and responsible community engagement at its core. It included numerous stages throughout the project's development where the feedback and validation of research participants was sought. This open and transparent research approach, which worked to uphold the dignity and empowerment of the individuals and communities involved in the study, was of crucial importance and seen as a way to ensure problematic existing narratives were not unintentionally reinforced.

In this research, the individuals and communities within the Disability rights and environmental justice movements and the effect of natural resource extraction on people's lives are the principal interests. As such, the research investigated any topics that participants cited as being consequential to their lived experiences. We were careful not to oversimplify findings and pursued an open-ended approach, which allowed us to explore lines of inquiry fully.

## 1.3. Data Collection

**The research was split into two stages, which together were composed of five activities:**

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Our literature review sought to assess what is already known about the intersectionality between Disability rights and climate activism within the Niger Delta, as well as to map trends in the wider academic debate and identify best practices from around the world. It is based on 15 academic articles, 10 reports by development and humanitarian actors working in the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change adaptation (CCA) areas, as well as 5 international climate action and disability rights agreements and action frameworks. Key databases used to source this literature include Science Direct, Scopus, Medline, FirstSearch ELDIS, JSTOR, ReliefWeb, PreventionWeb, SOURCE.

Search terms used (individually and in various combinations) include “Disability”, “Disaster”, “DRR”, “CCA” “Rights-based approaches”, “CRPD”, “Climate Resilient Development”, “DIDRR” and some thesaurus equivalents. The final breakdown of the sources used can be found in Appendix 3.

## MEDIA LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The analysis, which was based on 88 individual pieces of media, sought to find out more about how the media currently cover (or do not cover) climate change, oil pollution, disability rights and other related movements in the Niger Delta. Among the written outlets, we analyzed 64 articles from the regional, national and international online newspapers. Audio-visual materials included 17 featured reports and interviews from 4 TV channels. We also identified a relevant radio program “Disability Not Inability” which ran regularly on the radio channel Nigerian Info 99.3 FM, but only obtained secondary comments on its contents. Considering existing data reveals that social media is a major source of news across many demographic groups in West Africa, especially younger people in Nigeria, we also assessed 7 materials from two established YouTube Channels (one by a Nigerian news platform and the other by a disability rights non-profit organization).<sup>19</sup> Search terms used (individually and in various combinations) include: “PWD,” “PLWD,” “disability,” “physically challenged,” “impaired,” “Niger Delta,” “Bayelsa,” “Rivers,” “Delta,” “climate change,” “environment,” “degradation,” “natural disaster,” “pollution,” “oil,” “natural resources”. You can see the final breakdown of the pieces analyzed in Appendix 4.

## EXPERT INTERVIEWS

During the first phase of research, formative and exploratory interviews were conducted with 58 key stakeholders, seeking to better understand the overall landscape of the Niger Delta in regards to the complex factors that impact communities. Semi-structured interview questions were drafted by the Evrima research team and the MAJI team to be used during these qualitative sessions. The MAJI team conducted group interviews across three States – Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa State and Rivers State – selected due to the level of climate impact experienced by these communities. Interviewees were invited based on their first-hand experience of climate change and how this has affected their lives and livelihoods. They represented PWD-supporting organizations, CSOs working on environmental justice, as well as media outlets. The majority of interviewees themselves are people with disabilities. You can find the expert interview guide we used in Appendix 5.

State	Persons with disabilities & PWD-supporting organizations	Environmental CSOs and community leaders	Media, news reporters and journalists
Akwa Ibom State	11 Participants	5 Participants	2 Participants
Bayelsa State	10 Participants	6 Participants	2 Participants
Rivers State	10 Participants	8 Participants	4 Participants

## FOCUS GROUPS

After a short period to pause and reflect on findings in the first phase of the research, the MAJI team then carried out a series of focus groups within the three identified Niger Delta States, intended to further explore the impact of climate change and environmental pollution on persons with disabilities. Two focus group discussions were held in each State – the first with PWDs and PWD-supporting organizations, and the second with CSOs and community leaders working to reduce the impacts of climate change. You can find the focus group guide we used in Appendix 6. The below table shows how many people attended each discussion:

State	Persons with disabilities and PWD-supporting organizations	Environmental CSOs and community leaders
Akwa Ibom State	6 Participants	5 Participants
Bayelsa State	5 Participants	6 Participants
Rivers State	6 Participants	5 Participants

## COMMUNITY VALIDATION SESSION

The final stage of the research process involved validating what we thought we had heard in focus groups and interviews with participants. The validation was a day-long event consisting of two phases. First, a PowerPoint presentation with a summary of findings was presented to all the participants. After that, participants were split into CSO and PWD groups to provide feedback and discuss findings slide-by-slide. This helped to ensure our final findings adequately portray what was discussed in focus groups earlier.

Community Validation	Persons with disabilities and PWD-supporting organizations	Environmental CSOs' Representatives.
	18 Participants	10 Participants



# Appendix 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Key Observations

### Academic research (15 pieces)

Formal academic research which explores the intersections between the disability rights and climate activism goes back to at least 2006 and has been predominantly conducted on the basis of Western European and North American institutions (at least in English language).

To date, two major known literature reviews have been undertaken to map scholarly knowledge on the topic (Smith, Jolley and Schmidt, 2012; Kett et al., 2017). Two smaller and less formal literature reviews can be found in Abbott and Porter (2013) and Gutnik and Roth (2018). Combined with the OHCHR 2020 study, these can serve as the go-to overviews of the existing research and policy action on PWDs and climate resilience. An analysis of the 10 most-cited publications from the mentioned literature reviews and 6 additional pieces published in the last 5 years shows two prevalent themes:

- The disproportionate risks and discrimination PWDs face during both the sudden and slow-onset events, aggravated by the structural inequalities resulting from the failure to include PWDs into disaster planning (Fjord and Manderson, 2009; Gutnik and Roth, 2018), and
- The benefits of the rights-based participatory approaches to disability and the added value of the lived disability experience in informing climate-resilient development (Leipoldt, 2006; Alexander et al., 2011; Jodoin et al, 2020; Eriksen et al., 2021).

Some papers zoom into national contexts and survey disaster resilience among the domestic communities with disabilities (Australia: Villeneuve et al., 2021; Canada: Spannagel, 2021; Uganda: Ssenoga et al., 2022). No research dedicated to this topic in the context of Nigeria and/or Niger

Delta region has been found. At least one author critically examines the role of communication channels in failing or succeeding to connect with the PWD communities to ensure awareness-raising and disaster preparedness of PWDs (Harris, 2014; Harris, 2020).

## **Development and Humanitarian Sector (10 pieces)**

Most literature produced by NGOs and development actors takes the form of project reports and action frameworks. These tend to cluster in two capacity-building areas: disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). Limited comparative research shows that CCA action is currently behind DRR in adopting an integrated approach (Kett and Cole, 2018).

Action frameworks or models developed by these international and local actors, informed by their long-term field experience with the affected communities, provide helpful insights into how “abstract” values are translated into action-points. Key recommended documents to consult include CBM’s Gaibandha Model, ActionAid’s Resilience Framework, IFRC’s Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment methodology (VCA). These models adopt several common approaches, including holistic/inclusive vulnerability and risk analyses, commitment to long-term confidence and credibility building measures, and community based/locally owned solutions.

Furthermore, there are a number of valuable reports on project cases which implement innovative practices including PWDs (DiDRR and CBM, 2013 ; CBM, 2013; ASB et al., 2022; OHCHR survey contributions). Finally, two surveys of PWDs’ disability experience in disaster situations (UNISDR, 2014; Handicap International, 2015) offer first-hand insights into the biggest challenges of structural discrimination in disaster preparedness and response activities.



## **Intergovernmental agreements and action frameworks (5+ pieces)**

On the international institutional level, disability rights and climate action have long existed in silos. Nonetheless, the fundamental legal frameworks, such as the 2008 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), encode the main universally accepted values and principles frequently referenced by both researchers and practitioners working with disability and climate action.

Efforts to synergize the two areas institutionally have only emerged recently. OHCHR's analytical study, conducted in 2019-2020 with the contributions from multiple stakeholders, gives a comprehensive overview of the existing international normative frameworks on the rights of PWDs from the climate action perspective. Supplemented with the World Institute on Disability's Directory of Rights Instruments for PWDs in disaster contexts, these two provide useful references to specific provisions from the legal instruments applicable to PWD-inclusive climate action.

In Africa specifically, the 2015-2030 Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework is an important regional instrument to examine national commitments to adopting “whole-of-society approach” to disaster preparedness and mitigation. While Sendai Framework was devised as a guiding framework for policy change, respective policy implementation remains lagging and fragmented in many African countries due to the low participation of PWDs in decision-making and inadequate capacity for the collection of disaggregated, intersectionality-sensitive data (Nairobi Declaration, 2021; Programme of Action (Phase II); DiDRR, 2022: 9). On the national level, Reports by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) can provide valuable insight into Nigeria's progress in disability rights as prescribed under UNCRPD and its optional protocol. The latest State Party's report is a relevant source of self-reported state of domestic policy implementation in the field of disability in Nigeria (OHCHR, 2021).

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Author	Piece	Year	Type
Leipoldt E.	Disability Experience: A Contribution from the Margins Towards a Sustainable Future – Journal of Futures Studies	2006	Academic paper
Polack, E.	A Right to Adaptation: Securing the Participation of Marginalised Groups C17	2008	Academic paper
Fjord, L., and Manderson, L.	Anthropological Perspectives on Disasters and Disability: An Introduction	2009	Academic paper
Alexander, D., Gaillard, JC and Wisner, B.	"Disability and Disaster" – in Wisner, Kelman and Gaillard (eds.) The Routledge Handbook of Hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction (Ch. 34)	2011	Book chapter
Smith, Jolley and Schmidt	Disability and disasters: The importance of an inclusive approach to vulnerability and social capital	2012	Literature Review
Abbott D & Porter S	Environmental hazard and disabled people: from vulnerable to expert to interconnected – Disability & Society	2013	Academic paper

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Author	Piece	Year	Type
Harris, Usha Sundar	Communicating climate change in the Pacific using a bottom-up approach	2014	Academic paper
Kett, M., Cole, E., Twigg, J., Simard, M.	“Disability and climate resilience: a literature review”	2017	Literature Review
Gutnik, Alyssa and Marcie Roth	“Disability and climate change: how climate-related hazards increase vulnerabilities among the most at risk populations and the necessary convergence of inclusive disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation”	2018	Report
Harris, Usha Sundar	“Bottom-Up Networks in Pacific Island Countries: An Emerging Model for Participatory Environmental Communication”, in Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change	2020	Book chapter
Jodoin, S. Ananthamoorthy, N., Lofis, K.	"A Disability Rights Approach to Climate Governance" – Ecology Law Quarterly	2020	Academic paper

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Author	Piece	Year	Type
Eriksen, S.H. et al.	On CRDPs and CRPD: why the rights of people with disabilities are crucial for understanding climate-resilient development pathways – Lancet Planet Health	2021	Academic paper
Spannagel	Record Canada Heat Harms Older People and People with Disabilities: Climate Crisis Requires Inclusive Heat Action, Planning, and Response	2021	E-magazine entry
Villeneuve M, Abson L, Pertiwi P, Moss M.	Applying a person centered capability framework to inform targeted action on disability inclusive disaster risk reduction. Int J Disaster Risk Reduct	2021	Academic paper
Ssennoga, M., Kisira, Y. Mugagga, F. and Nadhomi, D.	Resilience of persons with disabilities to climate induced landslide hazards in the vulnerable areas of Mount Elgon, Uganda	2022	Academic paper

## DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

Author	Piece	Year	Type
DIDRR for Asia and the Pacific and CBM	Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Management: Voices from the Field and Good Practices	2013	Report
CBM	Disability inclusive Disaster risk Management: Voices from the field & good practices	2013	Report
IFRC	Integrating climate change and urban risks into the VCA	2014	Report
UNISDR	Living with Disability and Disasters: UNISDR 2013 Survey on Living with Disabilities and Disasters – Key Findings	2014	Survey
Handicap International	Disability in humanitarian context: Views from affected people and field organizations	2015	Survey
ActionAid	Through a Different Lens: ActionAid's Resilience Framework	2016	Framework

## DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

Author	Piece	Year	Type
Kett M & Cole E	Disability and climate resilience research project – London: Leonard Cheshire (UKAID-sponsored project)	2018	Project Report
CBM	“Saving lives and leaving no one behind. The Gaibandha model for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction”	2018	Framework
OHCHR	Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change	2020	Study
ASB, CDD, CBM, IDA, MI	Including Persons with Disabilities in Disaster Risk Reduction: A Research Study from Eight Countries of Africa, Asia and South/Central America	2022	Report

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND ACTION FRAMEWORKS

Author	Piece	Year	Type
United Nations	Convention On The Rights Of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD)	2006 (adopted)	Intergovernmental Agreement
African Union	Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Africa	2017	Strategic Program
United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee	IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action	2019	Guidelines
United Nations	United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy	2019	Strategic Program

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND ACTION FRAMEWORKS

Author	Piece	Year	Type
[Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction in Africa]	The Nairobi Declaration (Declaration of the seventh high-level meeting on disaster risk reduction)	2021	Intergovernmental Declaration
Republic of Nigeria	Initial report submitted by Nigeria under article 35 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities- Advance Unedited Version (CRPD/C/NGA/1)	2021	Government report





## Appendix 4: MEDIA LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

### Breakdown of the media sources used

Outlet / Broadcaster	Based in	Pieces analyzed
<b>NEWSPAPERS</b>		
Niger Delta Today	Warri	11
GbaramatuVoice News	Warri	6
The Cable	Lagos / Abuja	14
Premium Times	Abuja	8
The Guardian	Lagos	8
The Nation	Lagos	8
Vanguard	Lagos	3
The Punch	Lagos	5
Sahara Reporters	New York	1

<b>Outlet / Broadcaster</b>	<b>Based in</b>	<b>Pieces analyzed</b>
<b>TELEVISION</b>		
Africa Independent Television (AIT)	Abuja	4
TVC News	Lagos	8
Channels Television	Lagos	2
ARISE News	London	3
<b>RADIO</b>		
Nigerian Info 99.3 FM	Lagos	(1)
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>		
Legit TV	YouTube	5
DRAC	YouTube	2

You can access the full list of the articles, reports, and videos here:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1naqoPF\\_sZDGN-Ex77piDxJH9zyAD9JGfa/edit#gid=167031427edit?usp=sharing&oid=102239441141518270371&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1naqoPF_sZDGN-Ex77piDxJH9zyAD9JGfa/edit#gid=167031427edit?usp=sharing&oid=102239441141518270371&rtpof=true&sd=true)

# Appendix 5: EXPERT INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Date:** .....

**Venue:** .....

**Respondent  
name and title:** .....

**Interviewer:** .....

**Interview no:** .....

**Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today.**

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this project is to speak with experts and stakeholders on the topics of climate change generally and its impact more specifically on persons with disabilities within the Niger Delta. We are here to listen and learn from you so we can be better informed in our work to support programming on these important topics.

## **EXPLANATION OF USE OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECORDING:**

We are audio-taping this conversation to remind us what you said later when we write a report, but unless you give us permission, your personal identity will never be shared. We will conduct interviews with several experts like you and a report will be written based on what we learn during all these discussions. We may use what you say in the report,

but nothing you say will be associated with your name or any identifying information, so please speak freely and openly and be as specific as possible with real-life examples whenever possible. Is it okay with you if we record our conversation?

### **ESTIMATED TIME:**

We should need about an hour for this discussion.

### **FURTHER QUESTIONS:**

Feel free to ask me any questions now or at the conclusion of our interview. You can also contact me later if you think of questions or additional comments after our talk. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

### **Interviews with PWD Stakeholders**

1. First of all, can you please tell us about your professional and personal background? (Probe: Where do you work? What is your role? What is your specialization etc.)
2. I would like to learn a bit more about the lived experience of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Niger Delta. Can you tell me about what life is like for PWD here? [If the respondent themselves is a PWD, ask:] What is it like for you personally being a person with a disability here in the Delta?
3. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing PWDs in the Niger Delta? How do these challenges differ for different groups? [Prompt for: different kinds of disabilities, different locations, men/women/children, etc., if respondent is a PWD, ask about their own challenges specifically]

4. Do you know of any organizations or groups that are currently working to help overcome these challenges or advocating for the rights of PWDs?
  - a. Who in particular do each of these groups serve? [Prompt for different kinds of disabilities, different locations, men/women/children, etc.]
  - b. Are there non-official or grassroots groups that are advocating for or talking about issues for PWDs? If so, what are they and how do they differ from more official groups?
5. How are these groups working to support and advocate for PWDs? What strategies do they use in their activism or advocacy work?
6. Our study is focusing specifically on how environmental issues affect PWDs in the Niger Delta. What do you think of when I say “climate change?” (Allow for open response, listen for themes such as resource extraction, pollution, carbon emission etc.)
7. How do the impacts of environmental pollution and climate change affect lives and livelihoods in your community? (Prompt for specific examples: health, safety, jobs, inflation, corruption etc., if respondent is a PWD, asking about their own life and their own community)
8. How do you think climate change affects PWDs specifically? How do you think the impacts of climate change affect PWDs differently than the rest of the population? How are they similarly affected?
9. Do you know of any groups or individuals that are addressing the impacts of climate change on PWDs? If so, who are they? What kinds of actions are they taking?
  - a. Are there any environmental rights groups you are aware of that have incorporated PWDs into their activism? If so, who are they and what are they doing?

10. Is there an existing narrative about the impacts of climate change on PWDs? How would you describe that narrative? (This may prompt an answer about media coverage, discussions on community radio, on messaging Apps or other platforms that form the public discourse around the issue. If the interviewee can identify an existing narrative, try to get a sense of WHERE this narrative is taking place).
11. Are there narratives around the impacts of climate change on PWDs that take place person-to-person, in community gatherings and meetings, or other places? How are they similar or different from media narratives?
12. Whose voices are not being heard when it comes to the effect of climate change on PWDs? Why do you think their voices are marginalized?
13. What do you think has to happen to reduce the harmful effects of climate change facing PWDs in the Niger Delta? How do you think PWDs should be supported to ensure that they are not as vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the Delta?
14. Do you think it is possible for groups advocating for PWDs and environmental rights groups to work together toward common goals? Why or why not?
  - a. What does their activism have in common?
  - b. What might be some challenges in their working together?
15. Who do you personally trust to represent the climate change affected and disability communities within the Delta? Are there any individuals or groups that you think are trustworthy?

16. Are there any other experts you would recommend I talk to about these issues?
17. The next phase of our research includes discussions with groups of PWDs. We want to make sure that we are respectful of those we talk to, both in terms of the language we use and the accommodations we provide. We want to make sure people with different kinds of disabilities are able and feel welcomed to participate and given the chance to have their opinions heard. Based on your expertise, are there any suggestions or guidelines you might be able to offer us so that we do that correctly?
18. Is there anything I missed that you would like to tell me about? Any other final comments?

**Thank you so much for your time and insights!**



# Appendix 6: EXPERT INTERVIEW GUIDE

## Focus Group Guide — PWDs Discussion Best Practices

**Date:** .....

**Venue:** .....

**Interviewer:** .....

**Group no:** .....

The moderator should aim to get specific and detailed answers through probing and follow-up questions, and by encouraging a true exchange of views among the participants. It is important that the moderator conduct a group discussion, not a group interview. Please ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak, but whenever possible, do NOT go around the table in order. Instead, encourage different people to speak to make the conversation as free and spontaneous as possible.

So long as the moderator investigates the issues in this guide, he/she may combine questions, change questions, omit questions that do not seem to be well understood, and add questions in response to interesting trends as they become apparent. The moderator may also prompt the participants if they need help getting started. However, the moderator should let the participants respond spontaneously initially and should not over probe or plant answers.

Allow participants to use any terminology they are comfortable with, but ask them to explain any slang terms.

Please ensure the introductions are thorough enough to allow the group to become comfortable interacting.



Throughout the discussion, do not ask “Do you agree?” Instead, ask open-ended questions like “Tell me more,” and “Does anyone think something different?” to stimulate deeper organic responses. Finally, please strive to control dominant talkers by acknowledging their input and reminding them that the moderator’s role is to get everyone’s input.

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE** **Introduction (5 minutes)**

The purpose of today’s conversation is to understand the experiences and lived realities of persons with disabilities, particularly as regards their experiences with climate change.

- Please also know that you are free to answer any question but also if there are some questions that you would rather not answer, that is okay too. Let’s please just be respectful of each other and hold space for whatever our fellow participants share with us here. Please also remember that what is shared here is anonymous so please don’t share what you have heard with others outside of this space.
- There are no right or wrong answers and no right or wrong opinions. We want to hear your honest thoughts.
- Your comments and your identity are anonymous and confidential. We will be talking to many people throughout this part of Nigeria and in the end, we will write a report based on what we have learned. However, we will not use names or any identifying details in our report.
- I have some colleagues observing and taking notes. We are also recording the session so that we can write an accurate report—not of who said what, but of the ideas that were exchanged.
- Please try to speak one at a time for the note-takers, but feel free to jump into the discussion if you have thoughts to share without raising your hand or waiting for me to call on you.

- You can engage in discussion with each other – your responses do not all have to be directed at me. I would like this to be more like a conversation than a question and answer session.
- Please switch your mobile phones to silent and mute your microphone if you need to take a phone call or send a message.

At this time, do you have any questions?

If you are ready, we will begin.

**Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today.**

1. I would like us to get to know each other a little bit. Let's please go around and share our first name, where we are from and what we like to do for fun. (Moderator start and share about themselves first before inviting the participants to join.)
2. Thank you all for being here, we really appreciate your time and are looking forward to learning from you. You have all been invited here because we are working on a project to help better support persons with disabilities (PWD) in this community and want to learn more about your experiences, opinions and ideas. Is "persons with disabilities" a term that everyone here is comfortable with? Is there another term that might be better for me to use? Please let me know if I ever use language or framing that doesn't capture your experience or identity in any way.
3. In particular we would like to learn a bit more about your lived experiences here in the Niger Delta. For any of you that are comfortable doing so, can you please tell us what it is like for you personally being a person with a disability here in your community?
4. What are the hardest things for you all personally in dealing with disability in your own community?

5. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing PWDs in the Niger Delta?
  - a. How do you think these challenges differ for persons with different kinds of disabilities? How so?
6. What aspects of disability experience do you think are the most misunderstood or the least talked about in your community? In the media?
  - a. Whose voices are not heard there?
7. What communication channels (media, TV, radio, community town halls...) do you use to learn about what is happening in your community?
  - a. Are there any communication channels or media you use to learn about issues affecting PWDs in particular?
8. Who are people or organizations that you rely on in your community for different kinds of support that you need as a PWD?
  - a. [Prompt for what people or organizations off what support, if applicable]
  - b. Where do you learn about different types of support that might be available to you?
9. Where do you find comfort, support, community or solidarity in the challenges you face as a PWD?
10. Do you have a community or group of other persons with disabilities with whom you can discuss your experiences and challenges you face? If so, can you tell me more about them [who is included, how they found the group, size, etc.]
  - a. Do you ever advocate for the support you and other PWDs need with this group? How so?
  - b. Who would you/do you go to for support and resources when you need them?

11. Do you know of any organizations or groups that are currently working to help overcome these challenges or advocating for the rights of PWDs?
  - a. Are you involved with any of these groups?
  - b. Who in particular do each of these groups serve? [Prompt for different kinds of disabilities, different locations, men/women/children, etc.]
  - c. Are there non-official or community groups that are advocating for or talking about issues faced by PWDs? If so, what are they and how do they differ from more official groups?
12. What are some steps that could be taken that would allow for the inclusion of PWDs in advocating for themselves on the challenges facing them?
  - a. Who do you think could help to oversee those steps?
  - b. Would you want to be personally involved in making sure these steps are taken? Why or why not?
    - How might you be personally involved?
    - What form of participation would accommodate your needs?
13. Our study is focusing specifically on how environmental issues affect PWDs in the Niger Delta. What do you think of when I say “climate change?” (Allow for open response, listen for themes such as resource extraction, pollution, carbon emission etc.)
14. How do the impacts of environmental pollution and climate change effect lives and livelihoods in your community? (Prompt for specific examples: health, safety, jobs, inflation, corruption etc., if respondent is a PWD, asking about their own life and their own community)
  - a. How do you think climate change affects PWDs specifically? How do you think the impacts of climate change affect PWDs differently than the rest of the population? How are they similarly affected?

15. Are there conversations about the impacts on climate change on PWDs that take place person-to-person, in community gatherings and meetings, or other places?
  - a. What particular aspects of climate change do these conversations tend to focus on?
  - b. Do you know of any groups or individuals that are addressing the impacts of climate change on PWDs? If so, who are they? What kinds of actions are they taking?
  - c. Are there any environmental rights groups you are aware of that have incorporated PWDs into their activism? If so, who are they and what are they doing?
16. What do you think has to happen to reduce the harmful effects of climate change facing PWDs in the Niger Delta? How do you think PWDs should be supported to ensure that they are not as vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the Delta?
  - a. Who is in the best place to oversee these actions in order for them to have a tangible effect on your life? (government, CSOs, PWD organizations, climate advocacy/environmental rights groups)?
17. Would you want to be personally involved in helping shape these measures? If yes, what would be the most comfortable format of participation that would accommodate your needs? If not, whom do you personally trust to represent the climate change affected and PWDs in your community?
18. Is there anything I missed that you would like to tell me about? Any other final comments?

**Thank you so much for your time and insights!**

# Focus Group Guide — Climate Activists

**Date:** .....

**Venue:** .....

**Interviewer:** .....

**Group no:** .....

## DISCUSSION BEST PRACTICES

The moderator should aim to get specific and detailed answers through probing and follow-up questions, and by encouraging a true exchange of views among the participants. It is important that the moderator conduct a group discussion, not a group interview. Please ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak, but whenever possible, do NOT go around the table in order. Instead, encourage different people to speak to make the conversation as free and spontaneous as possible.

So long as the moderator investigates the issues in this guide, he/she may combine questions, change questions, omit questions that do not seem to be well understood, and add questions in response to interesting trends as they become apparent. The moderator may also prompt the participants if they need help getting started. However, the moderator should let the participants respond spontaneously initially and should not over probe or plant answers.

Allow participants to use any terminology they are comfortable with, but ask them to explain any slang terms.

Please ensure the introductions are thorough enough to allow the group to become comfortable interacting.

Throughout the discussion, do not ask “Do you agree?” Instead, ask open-ended questions like “Tell me more,” and “Does anyone think something different?” to stimulate deeper organic responses. Finally, please strive to control dominant talkers by acknowledging their input and reminding them that the moderator’s role is to get everyone’s input.

## **DISCUSSION GUIDE** **Introduction (5 minutes)**

- The purpose of today’s conversation is to understand the work being done by climate activists and community leaders in the Niger Delta.
- Please also know that you are free to answer any question but also if there are some questions that you would rather not answer, that is okay too. Let’s please just be respectful of each other and hold space for whatever our fellow participants share with us here. Please also remember that what is shared here is anonymous so please don’t share what you have heard with others outside of this space.
- There are no right or wrong answers and no right or wrong opinions. We want to hear your honest thoughts.
- Your comments and your identity are anonymous and confidential. Please respect the confidentiality of what is said in the group.
- I have some colleagues observing and taking notes. We are also recording the session so that we can write an accurate report—not of who said what, but of the ideas that were exchanged.
- Please try to speak one at a time for the note-takers, but feel free to jump into the discussion if you have thoughts to share without raising your hand or waiting for me to call on you.
- You can engage in dialogue with each other – your responses do not all have to be directed at me. I would like this to be more like a conversation than a question and answer session.
- Please switch your mobile phones to silent and mute your microphone if you need to take a phone call or send a message.

At this time, do you have any questions? If you are ready, we will begin.

### **Interviews with climate change activists, experts and community leaders**

1. I would like us to get to know each other a little bit. Let's please go around and share our first name, where we are from and what we like to do for fun. (Moderator start and share about themselves first before inviting the participants to join.)
2. Thank you all for being here, we really appreciate your time and are looking forward to learning from you. You have all been invited here because we are working on a project to help better support leaders working on environmental issues in your community and want to learn more about your experiences, opinions and ideas.
3. When I say climate change, what do you think of? (Allow for open response, listen for themes such as resource extraction, pollution, carbon emission etc.)
4. What is the cause of climate change?
  - a. Who do you think is most responsible for climate change? (Prompt for oil companies, Nigerian government, other governments, multinational businesses, citizens, all of the above...)
5. How do the impacts of environmental pollution and climate change affect lives and livelihoods in your community? (Prompt for specific examples: health, safety, jobs, inflation, corruption etc.)
  - a. Do you think these challenges affect people equally? How do these challenges differ for different groups?
  - b. What groups and communities are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the Delta? Why?



6. How are you all working on the issue of climate change in the Delta?
  - a. Who works together with you on these issues?
  - b. What role(s) do you play in this group/organization?
  - c. Is there a particular community you serve?
7. How specifically does your group work to reduce the effects of climate change in the Niger Delta? What strategies do you use in their activism or advocacy work?
8. What other groups and organizations (official and grassroots) do you know that are working on the issue of climate change? How do they differ from each other and from the group you work with?
9. Whose voices are not being heard when it comes to the effect of climate change in the Delta? Why do you think their voices are marginalized?
10. Who do you personally trust to represent the oil pollution and climate change affected communities within the Delta?
11. Our study is also focusing on how environmental issues affect persons with disabilities in the Niger Delta. Do you know anything about this topic? What do you think of when I say “persons with disabilities”?
  - a. Do you think that persons with disabilities might be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change? How so?
12. Does your group or organization address the impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities in the Niger Delta? If yes, how?
  - a. If yes, does your group include members who are PWDs?

13. Do you know of any groups or individuals that are addressing the impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities in the Niger Delta? If so, who are they? Do you know what kind of work they do?
  - a. Are there any environmental rights groups you are aware of that have incorporated persons with disabilities into their activism? If so, who are they and what are they doing?
14. What are ways that groups advocating for persons with disabilities and environmental rights groups to work together toward common goals?
  - a. What might their activism have in common?
  - b. What might be some challenges in their working together?
15. Is there anything I missed that you would like to tell me about? Any other final comments?

**Thank you so much for your time and insights!**

# Consent Form

## **Climate Change and Its Impacts on People with Disabilities in The Niger Delta**

I have been informed of the study on “**Climate Change and Persons with Disabilities in the Niger Delta**”. The written information has been read to us. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. I have been able to think about our participation in the study, and we understood that it is completely voluntary. I also understood that I have the right to withdraw our consent and quit from the study at any time without needing to give a reason.

I consent to my interview being audio recorded and understand that unless I provide clear written permission, my personal identity will never be shared. I also understand that what I say in the interview may be used in a report, but nothing I say will be associated with my name or any identifying information.

I have agreed to participate in the study.

**Name:** .....

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....



# Appendix 7: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT

## Background

In the course of our fieldwork, we heard many specific calls for action directed at government authorities in Nigeria. These were expressed equally strongly by persons with disabilities, PWD community organizations, and climate change activists across all three Niger Delta states that were included in the research activities. While this research engagement primarily focuses on exploring opportunities for synergies between the climate and disability justice movements, we would be remiss not to include the demands for government action in these realms as ultimately the government of Nigeria holds responsibility for fulfilling certain obligations to all citizens within its borders.

Furthermore, it is essential that the government fulfill obligations that it has already signed on to. This includes fully adhering to the 2019 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, and resourcing initiatives mandated by it.

The concerns and calls for government action that were voiced during the research period are grouped below into five areas of desired change: decision-making, education, livelihoods, public infrastructure, and social inclusivity.

**1. Decision-making: Improve PWDs’ access to public offices and establish clear accountability for failed law enforcement/implementation**

One of the most common issues and sources of distrust towards the government and state institutions noted by research participants lay in the exclusion of PWDs from decision-making processes. The infrequent instances when the government proactively reached out to PWDs were seen as extractive and politicized – and primarily linked to electoral campaigns.

**“Government rarely engages with our target group and would rather approach us only during election periods.”**

*– Disability CSO representative, Rivers State*



Site of first oil well, Rhys Thom – Flickr

**It is essential that the government fulfill obligations that it has already signed on to. This includes fully adhering to the 2019 Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, and resourcing initiatives mandated by it.**

Research, including examples from other countries, shows that more persons with disabilities should participate in the policy-making and implementation processes as formal office holders or members of special government bodies. Some participants mentioned this as an opportunity to properly implement the Disability Act, which mandates that all public organizations in Nigeria must allocate 5% of their employment opportunities to PWDs.

**“I want [people at the top] to put us in their decision-making. While they are making decisions, they should consider people with disabilities. Because if they do not make decisions from that angle, they cannot reach us.”** – *PWD participant, Rivers State*

**“The governor should have aides working under him from different clusters of people with disabilities... A deaf person, a physically challenged person ..., [persons with] albinism and persons affected by leprosy and spinal cord injury [should channel their problem]. We’ll have a person that feeds the SSA to the governor with information then the SSA to the governor will direct this information to the governor. For proper feedback and proper implementation.”**  
– *Disability CSO representative, Akwa Ibom State*

**“The law says that an office must have at least 5% [places] given to people with disabilities. [But] executive leaders, like a governor or president, have not even implemented up to 2% of that law ... a PWD office in the government house should be established.”**  
– *PWD participant, Rivers State*

The government must become more proactive in regularly seeking out and integrating PWD voices, as well as making public employment opportunities available and accessible to PWDs.

## **2. Education: invest in accessible schools, train the teaching personnel, and include climate and disability into the curriculum**

Many research participants conveyed that the most acute problems in both disability and climate justice in Niger Delta are rooted in the inadequate education system. Two broad concern areas surfaced in this regard: physical and cognitive accessibility barriers, and lack of disability and climate education.

Schools face numerous infrastructure related barriers which the government should prioritize addressing, such as inaccessible buildings and classrooms and absence of assistive technologies and equipment. Participants noted a severe lack of teachers trained to accommodate students with disabilities. Such issues plague even special needs schools, presumably designed with PWDs' needs in mind.

**“I have not seen any public school in Rivers State that is taking persons with disabilities into consideration when it comes to facilities in the school.”** – CSO representative, Rivers State

**“In that [special] school [for PWDs] you discover that they have many people that are visually impaired who are students with few teachers... In most cases these persons who are there are not even a disability-friendly [group] of persons ... Even the environment right now is not disability-friendly, but that is where it is being called a special school.”** – PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State

Curriculum has also been mentioned as a gateway to a more informed and inclusive society. Participants noted that both climate and disability issues should be taught in schools in an action-oriented and learner-centered manner. This would help raise a more responsible and climate- and disability-literate generation, equipped with the skills to adapt to climate change, more attuned to their peers' various needs, and more capable of cooperating with PWDs. They also noted that curricula should include practical classes, such as sign language, to promote inclusivity in and beyond the classroom.

**“There is no school in Nigeria that teaches climate change on a blackboard. I have not seen [any].”** – *Climate CSO representative, Rivers State*

**“In our schools in the Niger Delta, they should make a curriculum where sign language can be taught in our classes, so that students with normal hearing [abilities] can also have a fair or basic knowledge of sign language. So that if they see a deaf person, it will not be strange to them.”** – *PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State*

The government should ensure that education across the country is supporting the broad goals of disability rights and climate justice, and remain accountable to fulfilling this need.

### **3. Livelihoods: provide employment opportunities and support for the self-employed PWDs**

Issues of employment emerged as one the biggest sources of worry for persons with disabilities. The government has a key role in consistently ensuring sustainable livelihoods and helping PWDs escape precarious conditions and protracted dependency on welfare and the good will of their families.

While participants praised some individual training initiatives for PWDs in The Niger Delta, they said the number of persons who received help via those is limited. Thus, it is crucial that employment support should be regular in nature and properly documented, so that local offices and NGOs operate with up-to-date information about persons with disabilities and their needs even in the most remote communities.

**“I want them to have some kind of empowerment. Employment where necessary. They should employ those with disabilities so that they ... can earn. And lastly, I also want everybody who is in the position of trust to put those with disability [into employment] not only for self-pity.”** – *PWD participant, Rivers State*



**“There [should] be a database for the number of persons around each community... We need a platform where we should have the data concerning people living with disabilities. We should also do some analysis on the rate of employment of persons with disabilities in the state.” – PWD participant, Akwa Ibom state**

In addition to assisting with employment directly, the government should pursue regulatory action to protect PWDs’ interest vis-à-vis international oil companies (IOCs). As stated by research participants, considering the profits made by IOCs off the natural resources from the Niger Delta and the negative environmental impact from their extractive activities, IOCs should be required to invest into the well-being of the local PWD communities, including by providing employment opportunities to PWDs.

**“International Oil Companies should create an enabling environment for all. There should be ... deliberate legislation that will give PWD a voice. [IOCs] should also be compelled and held accountable.**

*– Expert, Bayelsa State*

Participants also stressed the precarious conditions facing persons with disabilities who are self-employed or whose livelihoods depend on the environment, for example in the agricultural sector. We have heard cases when ever more frequent extreme climate events, such as floods, severe storms, and droughts destroy farms or severely hurt farming productivity, leading to loss of livelihoods.

Farmers with disabilities, who often already struggle financially to invest into the required equipment and seeds, find it especially difficult to start anew following destructive climate events. With all this in mind and considering best international practices, Nigerian government authorities should provide additional support to PWDs. Exposed to such risks via, for instance, special emergency funds.

**“When deaf people have a farm, they don’t have equipment, they don’t have hoes, cutlasses, and they also don’t have seeds like, for example, maize. And sometimes they may want to get land to farm.**

**Sometimes [it] is very expensive, so the government should fund [initiatives to help] buy seeds and land for farmers [with disabilities].”**

– PWD CSO representative, Akwa Ibom State

**“The government can set aside funds for emergencies, like when disasters happen. How swift are they to respond to a disaster? Like [was mentioned, pipeline] explosions do happen. So, when such things happen, they can send a rescue team for persons who are physically challenged, you know, to move them out of that place.”**

– PWD participant, Rivers State

This must be a priority for the government, because the lives and livelihoods of the Niger Delta population hinge on individuals being able to work and to provide for themselves.

#### **4. Public infrastructure: improve physical infrastructure, and provide inclusive communication formats and channels**

The research has shown that inclusive infrastructure, such as accessible buildings and transportation, is key to greater cooperation between the climate and disability justice movements. It is also at the core of any healthy society.

However, climate activists, PWDs and disability CSO representatives have frequently mentioned that, despite existing obligations under the law, the government and local authorities across the Niger Delta are not providing adequately accessible public infrastructure. Due to budget limitations, CSOs often cannot create accessible environments on their own, which is why the government, as the primary provider of public goods, should prioritize this area of action.

**“There is a policy that requires that public buildings be made accessible to both able and physically challenged persons. Even after the passing and enacting of that law, less than 5% of public buildings and places have remodeled their spaces. And, to make matters worse, there have been no consequences.”** – Expert, Rivers State

**“Governments, individuals, and organizations [should] invite bus shuttles so they should have a bus stop where persons with disabilities can assemble and [be transported] to their destinations.”**

*– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State*

In addition to physical infrastructure, the government should ensure that all communications under their responsibility reach persons which might have additional difficulties accessing information. This might include, but not be limited to, employing special interpreters or officers responsible for communications with PWDs in towns and remote villages, providing sign language in TV broadcasts, offering important official communications in braille, and other improvements in accessible communications.

**“Actually, they do not have an interpreter going about the town criers. [Only] if somebody is by the side of a [person with disability], he can talk to him or her about what is happening.”**

*– PWD participant, Rivers State*

The right to accessing information and to freedom of movement are fundamental human rights, and it is critical that the government ensure that all citizens are able to access these inherent freedoms.

## **5. Social inclusivity: create conditions for human connection and public participation**

The government has a big role to play in addressing the social isolation PWDs experience as a result of stigma and discrimination. This starts from countering stigma within the government institutions themselves. Several experts and CSO representatives suggested the Nigerian government on all levels adopt the Social Model of Disability as the standard framework for assessing, mitigating and removing attitudinal, institutional, communication and environmental barriers to inclusivity.

**“[The government] should take into consideration the Social Model of Disability. We see society as a problem, the society that makes us lose the opportunity to participate equally with other knowledgeable people because of their attitude is posing a barrier.”**

*– PWD participant, Bayelsa State*

Several examples of social initiatives to nurture a more disability-inclusive  
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society in Nigeria were offered by our participants, such as opening recreation centers for PWDs and designing TV and radio programs to teach sign language and educate the public about disability – and climate – issues.

**“The government, a parastatal or individual [should create] a Recreation Centre that can bring [persons with disabilities] from their homes. Because some of the [PWDs] at home, their brothers, their mothers, did not allow them to go out. And only that one alone can kill them. Because if you don’t associate with people, you will think that you are not part of this world. ” – PWD participant, Rivers State**

**“Talking about voice, how many times have our TV and radio stations [taken] an opportunity for people to learn sign language?”**

*– PWD participant, Akwa Ibom State*

It is only with an inclusive and connected society that harmony can be found. It would be of great benefit to everyone living in Nigeria if the government made significant strides to enhance public participation and inclusion of all.



**Oil pollution, Milieudefensie – Flickr**

While not exhaustive, these recommendations were given by our participants with specific communities in mind. Echoing the community-engaged approach adopted in this project, the often hyperlocal experiences shared with us confirm the importance of consulting PWDs and activists in solution-generating deliberations. Such consultations should be the starting point for government authorities striving to address any issues.

Furthermore, many of the issues and recommendations mentioned earlier in the report should also, where appropriate, be addressed by the government. This addendum reflects the limited supplementary guidance that is government-specific, which emerged as a byproduct of the research. To provide a more nuanced and comprehensive landscape of issues and opportunities for change on the policy design and implementation level, further dedicated community-centered research is required.



**Men paddling on lake, Milieudefensie – Flickr**



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