
People with Disabilities: Taking Action on Climate Change



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Self-Advocacy and Climate Change



Welcome, this book is for people with disabilities

- Earth's climate is changing.
 - Human caused climate change is making the Earth warmer.
 - Extreme weather happens more often.
 - People with disabilities have more injuries and deaths in harsh weather.
 - Climate change can harm our health.
 - It can be harder to get healthy food. And water that is safe to drink.
-
- This book includes ideas to help you take action on climate change.
 - You and your group will find out what problems your community faces.
 - Based on your concerns and ideas you will make an action plan and take action.

- ▶ You are a self-advocate when you speak up for yourself.
- ▶ When you work together with others, you can change society.
- ▶ **Now** is the time for people with disabilities to take action on climate change.



In this book you will learn:

- Why you should take action on climate change.
- What is climate change?
- About tools for disability climate change action.
- How climate change threatens your rights.
- How to adapt to climate change.
- How to limit climate change.
- How to make an action plan, and
- How to take action!

Chapter 1.

Why You Should Take Action on Climate Change



- ▶ Earth's temperature is rising.
- ▶ The Earth has warmed up by about 1.1°C (1.9° F).
- ▶ Climate change is altering the world around us.
- ▶ Climate change can harm people with disabilities like you.



Key Fact

Climate change is a change in weather patterns over many years.



Key Fact

Droughts occur when it does not rain.

Climate Change Causes: → This Results In:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Intense storms more often, | • Damage to homes, roads, and power cuts, |
| • hot weather, | • harms to health, injuries, and deaths, |
| • floods caused by intense rain, | • lack of food, and clean water, |
| • droughts, | • people migrating, and |
| • sea level rise, and | • harms to nature. |
| • weather pattern changes. | |

Climate Change Affects Our:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Health, | • Social support, |
| • Access to health care, | • And can force us to move. |
| • Clean drinking water, | |
| • Healthy food, | |
| • Decent housing, | |



What is Climate Change?

Understanding climate change is important because:

- It will help you decide what actions to take, and
- It will help you to convince others to take climate action.

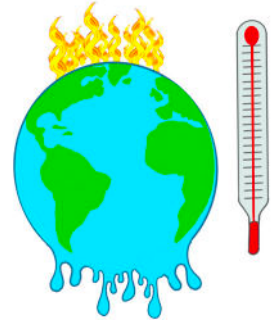
Climate



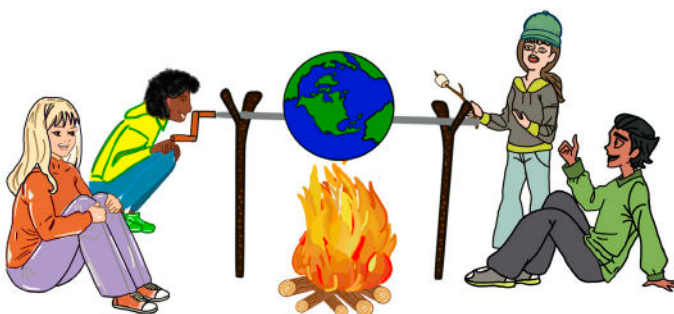
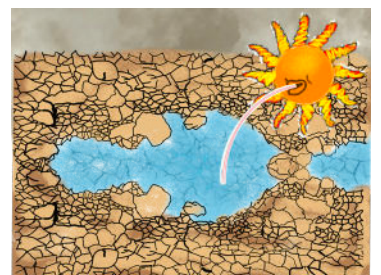
Weather



- Climate Change is a change in the weather over a long time.
- Earth's climate is changing.
- The Earth is warmer than it has been in 125,000 years.
- Scientists can tell that the world around us is changing.
- Our community may feel or see the change.



- Climate change is causing glaciers and ice sheets to melt. And sea levels to rise.
- People are making the planet warm at a speed not seen in thousands of years.
- This is an established scientific fact.
- The scientific evidence comes from long tubes of ice, tree rings, and rocks. As well as satellites and computer climate models.



What Causes Climate Change?



Key Fact

Atmosphere is the layer of gas around the Earth.



Key Fact

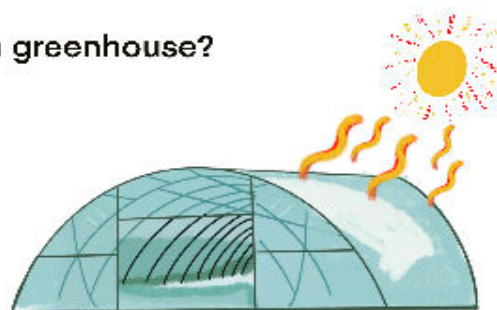
In 2019 carbon dioxide build up in the atmosphere was “higher than at any time in at least 2 million years.” (IPCC).

- People are burning fossil fuels called oil, coal, and natural gas.
- In our factories, ships, cars, planes, and in homes.
- Burning fossil fuels makes gases build up in the Earth's atmosphere.
- The Earth's atmosphere stops the Sun's energy from escaping. And keeps the Earth warm like a blanket. Or a greenhouse.

- **How people are living is adding too much of these gases.**
- Which is **like adding too many blankets. Trapping heat.**
- Warming the atmosphere.
- This is the **enhanced greenhouse effect.**
- These gases are **greenhouse gases** and include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.
- They are also called **greenhouse gas emissions.**

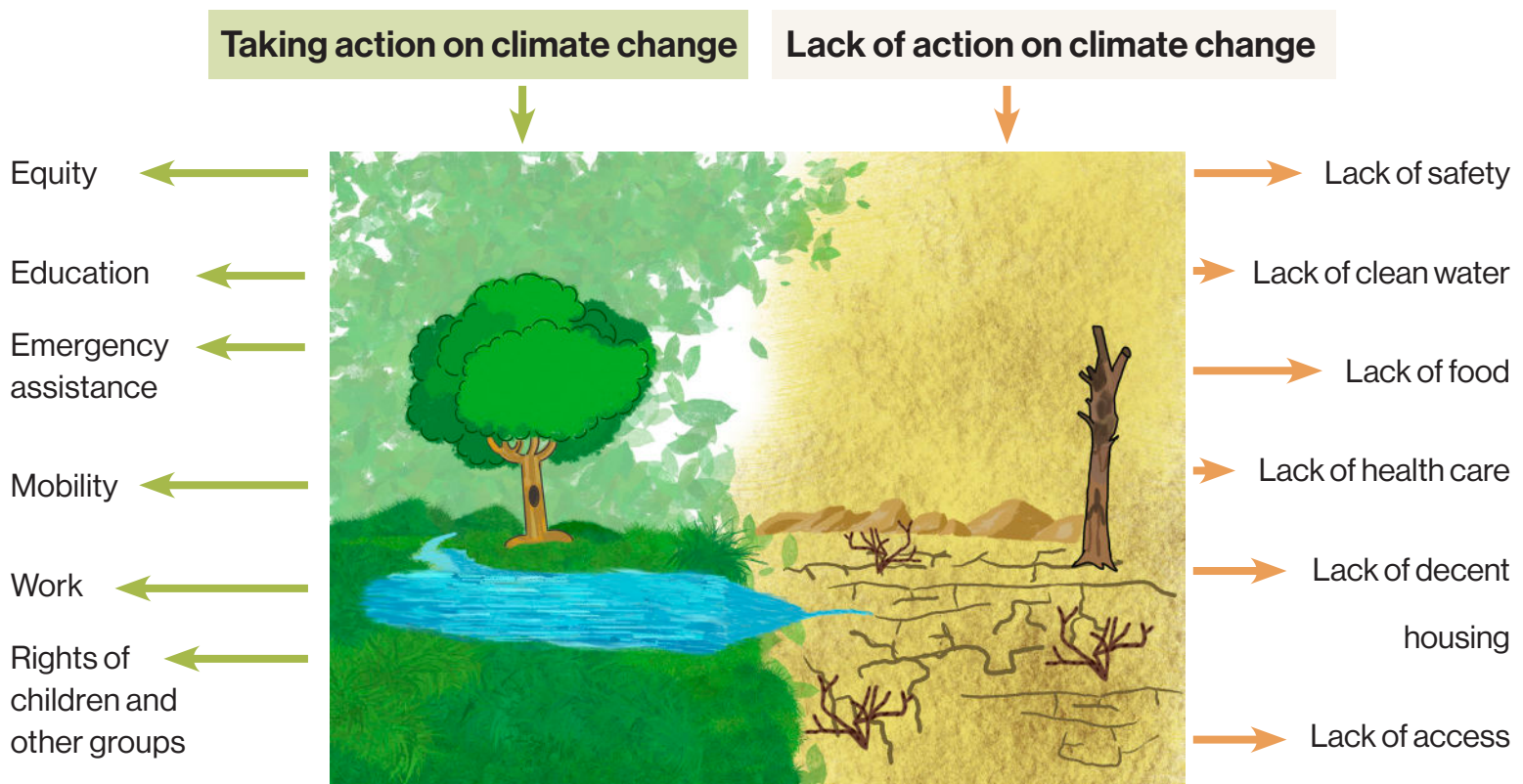
- Having a warmer atmosphere changes the weather. And the climate system. This changes the world around us.
- And our lives.
- People have caused nearly all the greenhouse gas emissions in the last 150 years.
- Activities that make greenhouse gases include using fossil fuels for heat, transport, and business. Also, burning forests, and big farms.

Why a greenhouse?



What is Climate Justice?

- People with disabilities face greater harm from climate change.
 - Climate change threatens our rights. Including our right to be safe.
 - Even when we have done little to cause climate change.
 - This is because we face discrimination.
 - If we face discrimination based on more than one identity, we can face even greater harm. Identities include disability, age, gender, race, and being Indigenous People.
- **Climate justice means that we need to take action on climate change in ways that are fair to all people.**
 - **Taking action on climate change can allow us to build fair communities. To be included in the community. And make our rights real.**



Chapter 2.

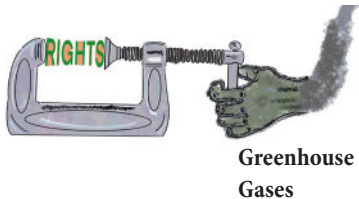
Tools for Disability Climate Action



Human rights are powerful.

Human rights:

- help us build self-respect.
- help change our lives, families, and communities for the better.
- let powerful people say, “This is our human right!”
- let us report when people with disabilities are treated badly.



We can speak up.

We can work together to make life better.

The Power of Human Rights

- In 2006, the United Nations adopted a law which says that all people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.
- This includes women and children with disabilities.

► **The law is called the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD).**

- This law has been agreed to by nearly every country.

► **These countries have promised to:**

- **Make our rights real. (Article 1)**
- **Assist people with disabilities in emergencies. (Article 11)**
- **Make sure people with disabilities have the basic needs of life including water, food, and housing. (Article 28)**
- **Governments have promised to take action to end discrimination based on disability. (Article 5)**

- Climate change threatens all our human rights!
- Climate change is the greatest challenge to making our human rights real.
- Climate change threatens to roll back progress made to improve our lives.
- We have not been included in making decisions about climate change.
- This is changing. We will take action on climate change!

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international law adopted in 1992.

- Nearly every country signed on.
- The goal is to limit human caused climate change.
- Wealthy countries are to lead. Money and support are to be provided to the other countries.

Learn more about
your human rights:

Read “We Have
Human Rights”

Paris Agreement

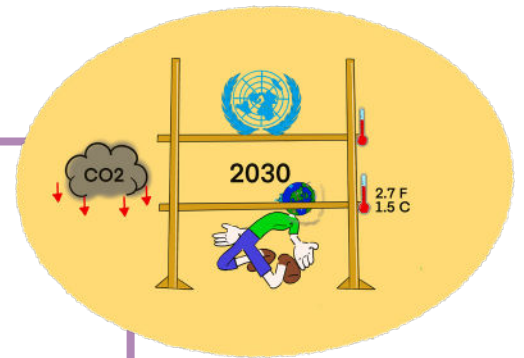
- The **Paris Agreement** is a climate change law.
- That was passed in 2015.
- This agreement has been signed by nearly every country.



Goal

The Paris Agreement's goal is:

- To support efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C (2.7 °F).
- To help governments adjust to climate change.
- To aid low greenhouse gas emissions.
- The agreement is to be carried out fairly. (Article 2)
- Countries are **not** on track to make real the Paris Agreement.
- Urgent action is needed to limit warming to 1.5°C.



Next,

we will consider how climate change threatens our human rights.



Chapter 3.

How Climate Change Threatens Your Human Rights

Key Fact

Access to Health Care

People with disabilities' access to health services can be reduced by extreme weather.

Health

Our Voices

- “There were several days where I don’t remember what I did, I was just lying on the floor unable to get up.”
Woman with a Disability from Vancouver, heatwave survivor (HRW).

Our Lives

- Doctors don’t talk to me about how to cope with heatwaves.
- For people with albinism like me, sunscreen is life and death.
- Racism means other people have access to clean air.
- I can’t get into the health clinic.
- Discrimination means I am less healthy. I do not have enough money. And I have poor housing.
- How do I protect myself? And my growing baby?
- I live near a highway. I and many of my friends have asthma.



Our Rights

- Doctors and nurses must treat us equally.
- Our health care should not cost more.
- The quality of our health care must be the same.
- We should not have to travel farther to get care.





Activity

- ▶ Make a list of your health care questions. Pretend to talk to your doctor.
 - ▶ Ask your doctor, for example, “How do I stay safe in hot weather?”, “Do I need a hot weather action plan?”
- You can also ask about other health care needs like asthma.



Group Activity

- ▶ Teach what health care services your disability community needs.

In a group, consider:

- What community health measures does your disability community need?
 - What do children with disabilities need?
 - What do women with disabilities need?
 - How about other groups?
- ▶ Do you need access to a cooling center? And health visits in hot weather?
 - ▶ Decide who to share this information with.



Action Ideas

- Distribute health messages. Such as how to stay healthy in hot weather.
- Be a community health worker for the disability community.



We have the right to the best possible health care.



Key Fact

Clean water means water that is safe to drink and bathe in.



Key Fact

Indigenous People

The United Houma Nation, United States, are losing land. And Indigenous knowledge. This community once lived off the land. Pollution means they now drink bottled water. And soda. They are more likely to have diabetes.

Clean Water

Our Voices

- “I remember that on several occasions we had to end up at hospital due to diarrhea, that later the doctors told us was caused by the consumption of dirty water from that river... This [accessible] water source is making it easier because I can fetch water without depending on anyone. Now we’re drinking good water.”
David from Mozambique (World Vision).

Our Lives

- Our water is not safe so we must use bottled water.
- I can not afford bottled water.
- It is hard for us to bathe.
- We must go farther to get water.
- I can not access our bathroom.
- I can not access the public toilets.

Our Rights

- We have the right to a decent life.
- We have the right to clean water.
- We have the right to accessible clean water.





Activity

1. Look at the news to see how safe the water is in your community.
2. In a group discuss:
 - After a disaster could you get clean water?
 - Do you have access to clean water?
 - Does everyone in your disability community have access to clean water?



Action Ideas

- **Talk to lawyers or officials.**
About how your community can get clean water.
- **Make a plan to join the local water committee.**
Help people with disabilities to get clean water.
- **Make a fish pond.**
To increase access to water and food.



Key Facts

- Climate change can make it harder to access fresh water. By causing harsh droughts and floods.
- Flood water is more than rainwater.
- It often contains waste matter and chemicals. That can make you ill.
- Flood water may also contain germs. That can make you sick.





Enough Food

Our Voices

- ▶ “There’s now a lot of diseases affecting our grain crops. And there’s landslides.”
Durna, Nepal (CBM).

Our Lives

- I don’t have enough money to pay for food.
- I rely on canned food, and packaged food.
- Floods destroyed the crops.
- The shops are far.
- Fresh food is hard to carry. And I don’t have an accessible kitchen.
- We were forced to move. Now we have no land to grow food on.

Our Rights

- We have the right to enough food.
- We have the right to affordable food.
- We have a right to healthy food.



Key Facts

- People with disabilities need to eat healthy food and to exercise. Or they can get diseases like heart disease.
- Most Indigenous women with disabilities in Nepal face hunger.
- Food grown with higher levels of carbon dioxide contains less nutrients.





Activity

- Develop a food action plan.
- Think of the ways you could increase your family's access to healthy food.
- Draw a picture or write down your ideas.
- Do you need training in smart agricultural practices? Do you need a water pump? Would you like to learn how to grow a community garden? Do you need help carrying food?
- What support and resources would you need?

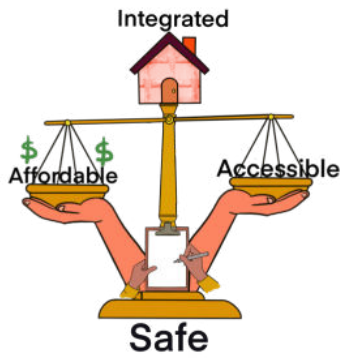


Group Activity

- Teach your local food bank, organization, or local government about how to make food accessible to people with disabilities.
- Practice by having a pretend meeting.
- Set up a meeting and discuss your ideas.



We have a right to a decent life with equal access to enough food.



Key Fact

“People with disabilities already face huge obstacles securing accessible, affordable housing. Some people with disabilities are just one extreme weather event away from facing institutionalization.”
Sascha Bittner,
United States
(NCD).

Decent Housing

Our Voices

- ▶ “Some of my friends lived in places...that perhaps should never have been rented due to the vulnerability of their buildings in floods.”
Australian with a disability.

Our Lives

- I am homeless.
- The shelters are inaccessible.
- “It’s accessible after you go up the stairs.”
- “How do I know you will pay the rent?”
- “Who would look after you?”
- We live next to a bus station, I have asthma.

Our Rights

- We have the right to accessible housing.
- We have the right to affordable housing.
- We have the right to safe housing.

Activity

- ▶ **I have the right to a decent life.**
- 1. Think of words or draw a picture that describes how you would like to live.
- 2. What is stopping you from living this way?
- 3. What supports would let you live this way?



We have a right to a decent life with equal access to decent housing.

Safety

Our Voices

- ▶ “The water is rushing in,” said Benilda, New Orleans, United States. Benilda was found drowned, beside her wheelchair, after the paratransit system failed to evacuate her (NCD).

We have the right to protection and safety.

Our Lives

- I was told I had to leave my wheelchair.
- “Our shelters are not for them...We can’t hardly serve the **INTACT** people....” (as in original), employee from American Red Cross headquarters.
- I didn’t go to the shelter. It isn’t safe for women.

Our Rights

- We have the right to life.
- We have the right to protection and safety.
- We have a right to equally benefit from humanitarian assistance



Activity

1. Hold a service to honor people with disabilities who have died in climate disasters. And all those who, like you, work to ensure we do survive.
2. Do you have access to an alert system?
Can you get into and use your local evacuation shelter?
If not,
Decide who to share this information with.



Sendai Framework

People with disabilities and their organizations are important partners for designing and carrying out disaster responses.



Key Fact

Humanitarian assistance helps to save lives in disasters and wars.

IASC Guidelines

These humanitarian guidelines were developed by and with people with disabilities and their organizations.

We have the right to protection and safety.

Moving or Staying

Our Voices



► “The government wants to relocate us because of the landslide risk, but there’s nowhere to go.”

Durna, Nepal (CBM).

Our Lives

- It is our land. But they forced us to leave.
- We don’t want to leave. But the world is not acting fast enough. Our land is sinking into the sea.
- There are only people with disabilities, women, and older people living here now.
- We must walk a long way for water and fuel.



Key Fact

30.7 million people moved within countries because of disasters in 2020. Nearly all moved due to “weather and climate” (IFRC).

► People with disabilities who must move often live in camps or shelters. Access is difficult. They may experience climate effects. Such as not being able to get clean water.

Our Rights



- We have the right to move independently.
- We have the right to safety.
- We have the right to a nationality.
- We have a right to change nationality.
- We have the right to enter our own country.



Action Ideas

1. **Tell lawyers if you have been forced off your land.**
 - First write down. How is denial of land harming people with disabilities in your community?
 - Do you get social assistance?
 - Do you need help to get citizenship? Or other papers?
 - Make an action plan. Find a disability group or nonprofit organization to help.



Key Facts

- People with disabilities in Kiribati, a Pacific Island, must move every two to three years. Because the sea level is rising. This makes the water not drinkable.
- Indigenous villages in Alaska are being washed away as permafrost (rock or soil with ice) melts.

We have the right to move independently.

We have the right to a nationality.





Environmental Hazards and Stress

Our Voices

- “The rain comes as black liquid,” says Prisca. “...Everyone’s eyes burn from the fumes, and some have gone blind.”
Prisca, Niger Delta, Africa.

Our Lives

- My drinking water is unsafe. This is because of fracking, a way of extracting oil and gas.
- I have a lot to say about environmental justice.
- I find it harder to catch fish.
- Air pollution from wildfires makes it hard for me to breathe.
- I don’t get to go outside.
- It is harder for my community to grow crops.
- I remember when there was a forest here.

Our Rights

- We have the right to a clean healthy environment now and forever.



Key Fact

In Harris County, United States, people with disabilities are more likely to live near pollution sources.



Key Fact

People with disabilities in the United States are at greater risk of exposure to air pollution.





Pollution

- Around the world most children breathe polluted air each day.
- Growing up living with traffic and other air pollution can harm our lungs. And breathing.
- Oil and gas extraction can harm our health.



Heat Islands

- Roads, sidewalks, and buildings can make cities hot. Compared to nature, like forests and lakes.



Mental Health

- The natural world is good for our physical and mental health.



Indigenous People

- Many Indigenous People view the land, air, water, and beings, as sacred. And connected.



Activities



How I Want My Community to Be

- Ask yourself, “What do I want my community to be like?”
- Draw a picture. Or use a map.
- What change would have to occur?
- What support would you need to live like this?
- Can you get the support you need?

Our Voices

“The planting of just one tree has benefits for everyone,” says Heartcell Paborada, an Indigenous woman with a disability from the Philippines.



Taking Action on Climate Change to Change Society

Chapter 4. How to Adapt to Climate Change

How can I adjust
my life to my
condition?



Our Voices

► “When I’m taking action, I don’t feel like I am helpless and that things are hopeless, because then I feel like I’m doing everything I can”; “And that gives me very much hope, especially to see all the other people all around the world, the activists, who are taking action,”
said Greta Thunberg in an interview in October 2021.

Key Fact

In 2022 almost no evidence was found for the inclusion of people with disabilities in efforts to adapt to climate change (IPCC).

- Adapting to climate change (also called climate adaptation) is adjusting to climate change. So as not to be harmed. Or to benefit from the change.
- We are used to adjusting to change.
- We change our support networks or homes.
- We use problem solving.
- Now our communities must adjust to climate change.



- When we adjust to climate change, we can make our rights real.
- We can be included in all areas of life.
- And make societies fair for all people.
- Adapting to climate change can change your life.
- And save your life!

Our Rights

- We have the right to protection and safety.
(Article 11)
- We have the right to be included in climate change plans and climate action.



Legal Cases

- ▶ People with disabilities say their human rights are harmed. They are bringing legal cases.



Action Ideas



Nationally

- Explain your country's climate change plans in plain language. So people can learn what your country is doing and NOT doing.
- Talk to people with disabilities about what your country is doing and NOT doing. Tell decision makers what they are NOT doing.
- Show how people with disabilities are harmed by climate change where you live.
- Make climate change plans for your community.
- Take part in legal cases.



CRPD

- Write a report that says how your government harms your human rights.



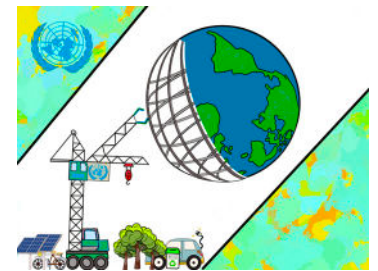
Internationally

- Join other disability groups. And get involved in the Conference of the Parties. Or COP. This is a meeting of countries that have joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Have a community event. Attend online. Or in person.



Key Fact

Adapting to climate change (climate adaptation) is adjusting to the climate. So as not to be harmed. Or to benefit.



For each right we include Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Rights, and activities and action ideas that you and your group can carry out.



Raise Awareness



Our Voices

- ▶ We are “able to amplify the voices of persons with disabilities against discrimination.”
Sombati, Nepal (HI).

Our Lives

“Earlier I was alone and nobody thought ever that I could do anything good for me and for my community.

After becoming the Task Force member, I got training on First Aid and now I am confident to extend support to my fellow villagers.”

Mr. Basudev Behera,
India (HI).

Our Lives

- They are not aware of the link between climate change and disability.
- They say they will include us. But they do not really include us.
- I speak up for climate action that includes people with disabilities. So that we are not left behind.

Our Rights

- **CRPD**

Governments have agreed:
To change attitudes about people with disabilities.
(Article 8)

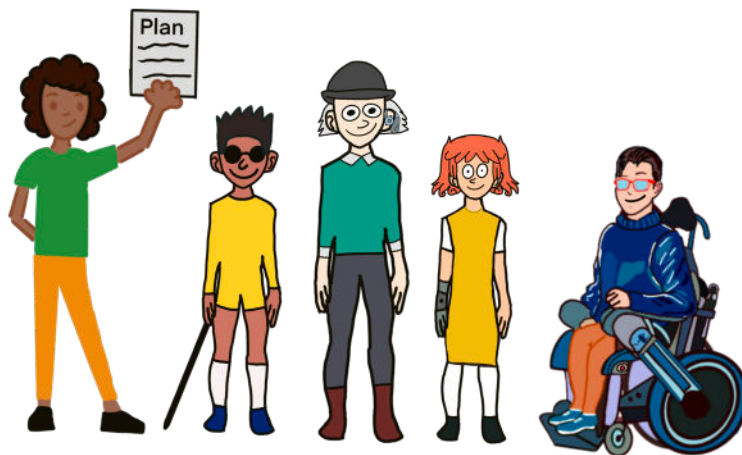
- **Paris Agreement**

Countries have agreed to teach us about climate change. Also, to raise awareness about climate change. And to provide information about climate change.



Action Ideas

1. **Teach your community about how climate change harms people with disabilities.**
 - Hold a meeting.
 - Put on a play for a school.
 - Write to your local or national government.
2. **Raise awareness of how people with disabilities are helping your community.**
 - Give them awards during a community meeting.



Key Term

Action for Climate Empowerment

(ACE) must teach us about climate change. To speak up so that we can adjust to and limit climate change. And to raise awareness about disability and climate change.

- ▶ Governments have agreed to change attitudes about people with disabilities.
- ▶ Governments have agreed to provide climate change education and raise public awareness.



Being Involved in Politics

Our Voices

- ▶ “I may appear weak, but I have more guts than others as it has been a matter of life and death for me,” stated Mr Funago, who has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). He was elected to Japan’s parliament in 2019.

Our Lives

“We are looking at a number of states that are putting restrictions on ballot drop boxes, rolling back curbside voting, preventing the passing out of food and water in lines, adding new ID requirements,” said Sarah Blahovec, United States (NCIL).

Our Lives

- I have a disability. So, I don’t get to vote.
- They invited us. But we did not get to speak.
- The meeting was not accessible.
- I had to attend online.
- We need to be involved in the conversation, so we are not left behind.

- ▶ “I think people are definitely horrified at the lack of accessibility,” said climate activist Scarlett when discussing COP 26.

Our Rights

- We have an equal right to vote.
- Voting sites must be accessible.
- We have the right to a secret vote.
- We have the right to work in organizations that are involved in politics.
- We have the right to be voted into office. And to work at all levels of government.





Action Ideas

- Write and circulate a petition to show public support and present it to decision makers who have the power to give you what you want.
- Write to decision makers like your mayor. Or meet with them.
- Form your own disability group.
- Work with other disability groups.
- And with other organizations with the same goal.

► “Disabled people have a right to advocate for ourselves in the negotiations that directly affect our lives and futures,” said Jason Boberg (SustainedAbility).

Our Lives

“We advocate with the government. All our work is done in collaboration and communication with women, disability, and Indigenous Peoples Organizations,” says Pratima Gurung (NIDWAN).



Key Fact

A Conference of the Parties or COP is a meeting to decide how to take action on climate change. This meeting includes countries that have joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Organizations of people with disabilities have been releasing statements at COPs including IDA, PDF, and NIDWAN.

We have an equal right to vote.



Assistance in Emergencies

Our Voices

- ▶ “Our fate used to get sealed in disasters as mere victims. Now, we have become first responders and equally important for all preparedness activities.” Ms. Urmila Majhi, woman with a disability, Odisha, India (HI).

Our Lives

- “My daughter shared the equal responsibility with her team members and alerted us for the flood coming in and this has doubled her respect inside the village and in the family,” said Jharana’s father, India (HI).

Our Rights

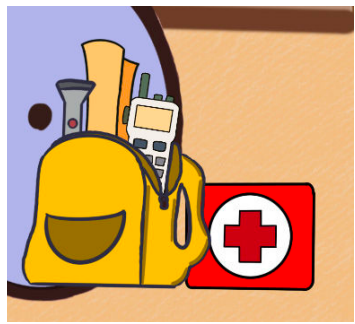
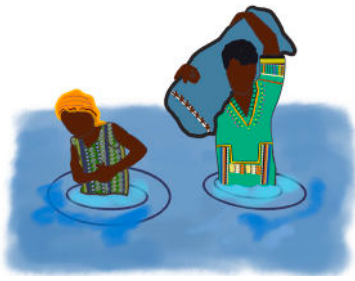
- We have the right to protection and safety.
- We have a right to protection and safety from violence and sexual abuse.



Action Ideas

Community Based Assistance in Emergencies

- Use alert systems that give access to all. Use many types of warnings.
- Make sure we can get into and use emergency shelters. And that they are safe for everyone.
- Give out information in more than one form. This includes sign language, braille, and easy-to-read. Use more than one language.
- Make sure decisions are made by and with organizations of people with disabilities.





More Action Ideas

- Have trainings and practice drills. Make sure we are included.
- Store things people with disabilities need in a disaster.
- Make sure we are included in search and rescue.
- Get your family ready for the next disaster.

▶ **Locally**

- Use early warnings that all can access. Give out information in more than one way. This includes sign language and closed captioning.
- We must be able to get to, into, and use shelters.
- Give us medical care if we need it.
- Use stable emergency power.
- Make sure we can get into and use housing and healthcare during recovery. And that we have access to education and employment.

▶ **Nationally**

- Speak up for plans that include people with disabilities.
- Make sure we can get into and use new buildings and rebuilt buildings.
- Speak up for data on disability. So we know how many people with disabilities were hurt in disasters.

▶ **Internationally**

- Teach disaster relief organizations how to include people with disabilities.



Key Fact

Climate disasters

include storms, floods, and hot weather. Human caused climate change can make extreme weather happen more often.



We have the right to protection and safety in disasters.



Key Fact

About 80% of working age people with disabilities are unemployed in Africa.



Work

Our Voices

- ▶ “I felt so good to have learned these skills,” says Nupur, who received computer training in Bangladesh (BRAC, UNICEF, ILO).

Our Lives

- I want a good job that can make a difference.
- They will not hire me.
- My land is not good. Everyone else is moving.

- **We can:**
- Grow vegetables. We can compost with worms.
- Aquafarm which is to grow fish, shellfish, algae, or aquatic plants.
- Use agroforestry. That is to grow trees and food together.
- Get training in farming, and marketing.
- Make our present job greener.
- Learn about technology. To help limit climate change.
- Educate people about climate change.

- ▶ Climate change also causes workers to be exposed to heat stress and extreme weather. They need protection.

Our Rights

- We have an equal right to work.
- We have a right to safe working conditions.
- We have the right to an inclusive workplace. And an accessible workplace.

- Local and national climate plans must make sure that people with disabilities have fair access to training. So, we can have green jobs.



Key Fact

Green jobs are good for the environment.

Examples of green jobs include sustainable tourism, renewable energy, and sustainable approaches to agriculture.



Action Ideas

- What is your dream green job?
- Do you need training in farming?
- Can you make your current job greener?
- Would you like to develop an action plan to work? Or get job training for a green job?



We have an equal right to work.



Education



Our Voices

- ▶ “With awareness and understanding come inclusion and acceptance,” said Mya, a student in the United States.

Our Lives

- I can not get a meaningful green job without an education.
- We can not learn about climate change if we are not in school.
- No one taught me about climate change.
- The school said no to my accommodations.
- They won't let me take the admissions exam.



Our Rights

CRPD

- We have the right to equal education.
- We have the right to be in a regular classroom as much as possible.
- We have the right to a quality education that is as good as other children's.

Paris Agreement

- Governments must make sure we get to learn about climate change.





We can:

- Teach people with disabilities about climate change.
- Teach about disability and climate change.
- Get students to think up ways to help people with disabilities adapt to climate change.
- Spread new attitudes about disability.
- Speak up so that people with disabilities can attend all levels of education.



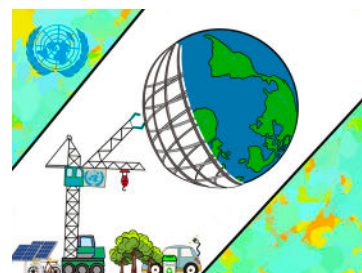
Action Ideas

- Teach people with disabilities about climate change.
You can use this book to help.
- Teach people with disabilities about nature.
- Speak up so children with disabilities can go to school, including after disasters.
- Make a plan so that you can keep learning.



Key Fact

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) must teach us about climate change. And to speak up so that we can adjust to and limit climate change.



We have an equal right to education.



Key Fact

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international law for every child.

Children and Youth with Disabilities

Our Voices

- ▶ “The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you. We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line,” said Greta Thunberg at the UN Climate Action Summit 2019.

Our Lives

- No one talks to me about climate change.
- I study hard so I can have a meaningful green job.
- I took part in a climate meeting.
- I put up petitions and lots of people signed them.



Our Rights

- We have the right to participate and make our views known.
- We have the right to take part in community decision making.
- We have the right to take part in family decision making.
- We have the right to take part in policy making.
- All children with disabilities have these rights.



- Children and young peoples' lives are being harmed by climate change.
- Children will live through more hot weather and strong storms than ever before.
- Youth with disabilities demand their right to take action on climate change.



Action Ideas

▶ **You can look for action ideas to inspire you throughout this book. Here are some:**

- Give a talk to your school or community.
- Grow vegetables. And eat them!
- Write a story about climate change. And share it with your friends and community.
- Put on a play about disability and climate change.
- Hold a climate meeting.



We have the right to participate and make our views known.

Right to a Healthy Environment

Our Voices

- ▶ “I feel stronger that I know what to do in case of a fire,”
Mr. Nutt, United States.

Our Lives

- Air pollution makes it hard for us to breathe.
- Our house floods during storms.
- Our drinking water is making us sick.
- There are wildfires.

Our Rights

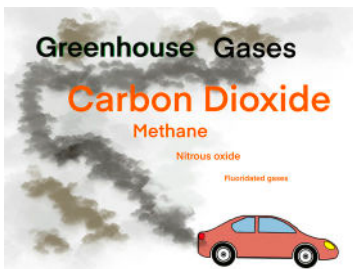
New Human Right

- In 2021, the United Nations said that we have a human right to a clean, healthy environment. Now and forever.



Activity

- ▶ How is your environment being harmed? Get information.
- ▶ Talk to lawyers and decision makers. Speak up for a clean, healthy environment.





Action Ideas



In your community

- Grow an accessible sensory garden.
- Make sure people with disabilities can use the garden.
- Collect trash from parks, or the side of the river, if this is safe.



Nationally

- Teach an environmental or green group about disability and climate change.
- Start your own environmental group.
- Speak up for research that includes people with disabilities.
- Speak up for new nature reserves. And national parks.
- Make sure people with disabilities can use them.



Key Term

Environment is all the things around us. Both the living and things that are not alive. This includes the air, water, plants, and animals.



We have a right to a healthy environment.

Chapter 5.

How to Limit Climate Change

Mitigation



Reduce



How can I reduce the severity of my condition?



Key Fact

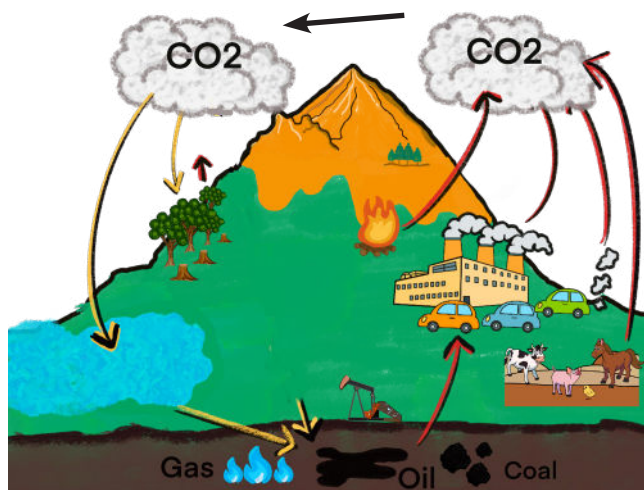
Forests and the ocean take in more carbon than they release.

Oceans and Climate Change

- Oceans are warming up causing sea level rise and ocean heat waves.
- Coral reefs, fish, and other sea life can not shelter from the heat.
- Many people get food and work by catching fish.

The Science Behind Climate Action: The Carbon Cycle

- Carbon is an element of life.
 - Carbon is stored in places such as fossil fuels, plants, and oceans. The carbon cycle is the process by which carbon moves between the places where it is stored.
- How people live changes how carbon moves.
 - ▶ **Burning fossil fuel makes carbon go up into the atmosphere.**
 - ▶ **People are burning so much fossil fuel that carbon is building up in the atmosphere.**



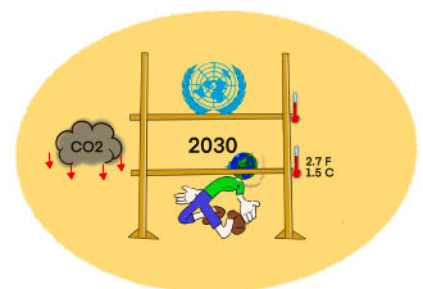
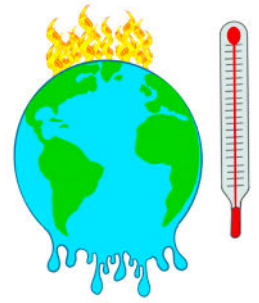
- ▶ **Plants take in carbon dioxide and store carbon.**
 - ▶ **This removes carbon from the atmosphere.**
 - Trees, parks, green open spaces, and wetlands store carbon in urban areas. Wild places such as rainforests, forests, and grasslands store carbon.
- Carbon is taken up by the ocean. Burning fossil fuels makes the oceans take up more carbon. This is bad for sea life.

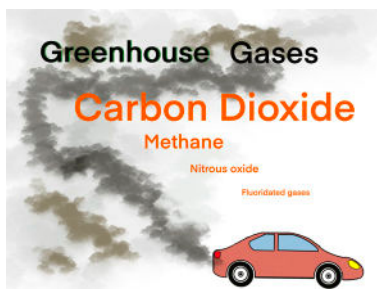
We Need to Race to Limit Climate Change

- There is not a lot of time to lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- The more the Earth warms up, the more harm humans and all life experience.

- To limit Earth's warming to no more than 1.5°C (2.7 °F).
- And avoid more severe climate change.
- **Greenhouse gas emissions need to stop rising by 2025.**
- **And greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by about half by 2030.**

- Around the world disability groups are speaking up for climate action. That limits climate change.
- Climate action must be fair for people with disabilities.
- So, we must take part in making climate change decisions.



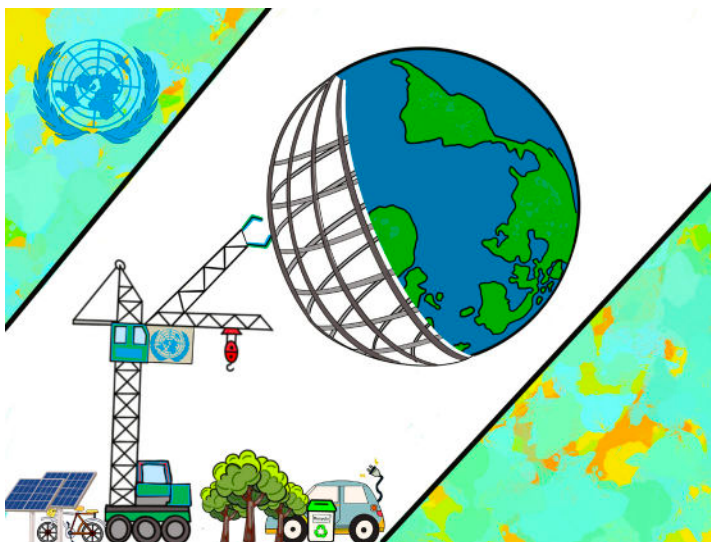


Our Voices

- ▶ “You don’t really hear about disabilities and the climate crisis being connected at all,” says Elleonora, a Swedish disability rights and climate activist.

Our Lives

- I do not have access to renewable energy.
- I have to use cooking fuel.
- Walking and biking are not options for me.
- My public transportation system is not accessible.
- The new bike lanes make access to transport harder.
- I need to advocate for accessible green public transport.
- Electric vehicles are dangerous for me. I cannot hear them.
- I have a special diet for my health.



Our Rights

- We have the right to be included in climate plans and climate action.

How to Limit Climate Change

► Energy

- Using renewable energy such as wind or solar energy to generate electricity means fossil fuels can stay in the ground.
- How can you get access to renewable energy?

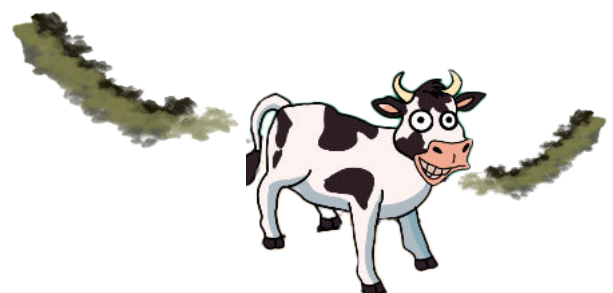


Key Term

Renewable energy is also called green energy. It comes from energy that there is plenty of and is all around us like sunlight. And wind.

► Forestry, Farms, and Food

- When we protect forests and grasslands. We lower greenhouse gases and stores carbon.
- When we stop logging that is not legal. We lower greenhouse gases and stores carbon.
- When we change diets, if we can, to a plant-based diet. We lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- Indigenous People have Indigenous Knowledge of how to live sustainably with the land, air, and water.
- Can you help to limit climate change, in a way that works for you?
- Can you get your community to limit climate change?





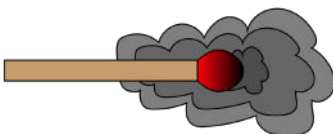
Building Sustainable and Accessible Cities



Key Facts

- Households do not add equally to greenhouse emissions.
- Worldwide 10% of households with the highest emissions per person add 34-45% of consumption-based household emissions (IPCC).

45%



10%

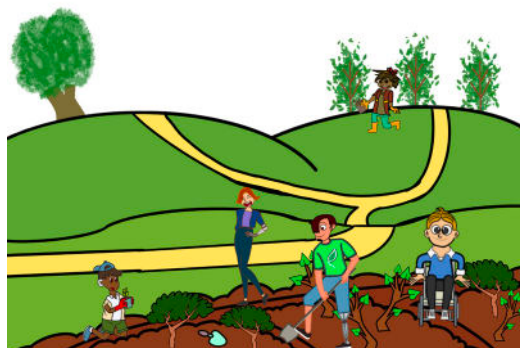
- Currently cities are responsible for a large portion of greenhouse gas emissions.

Emissions can be lowered by climate change responses including:

- Biking, living close to work, or using electric transport powered by renewable energy. Do you need to speak up for access to transport?
- Creating community gardens, green open spaces, green roofs, and parks that provide food, cool cities, lower air pollution, and store carbon. Do you need to speak up for access to green space?
- Protecting wetlands helps slow flood water and lowers emissions. Does your community need to protect nature?
- **Importantly, constructing green buildings, renovating, and rebuilding after disasters provide an opportunity to increase access for people with disabilities.**



If we advocate together with others, we can change society to a low carbon society that is equitable for people with disabilities.





Activities

1. **People with disabilities hold knowledge on how to change systems in their communities to lower greenhouse gas emissions.**
 - Make an action plan to join a committee working on climate change in your community.
2. **Planting trees, gardens, and other plants.**
 - Does your community need trees or a community garden?
 - Having people with disabilities lead and assist these efforts can change how your disability community is viewed.
 - Together, if each of us plants a tree, we can grow a huge forest, and lower greenhouse gases emissions.
 - If we work together with others, we can change society.



Key Term

• **Limiting climate change (climate mitigation)** is to take action so there is less climate change. People can make less greenhouse gases. By burning no or less fossil fuels. We can also make sure that carbon is stored in places like forests.



Chapter 6.

Take Action!



Ten Steps to Advocacy

► Would you or your group like to take action on climate change?

The steps below can help you:

- 1) Learn about climate change in your community
- 2) Identify what problem to work on
- 3) Decide what action to take
- 4) Gather resources
- 5) Organize
- 6) Make an action plan
- 7) Practice
- 8) Spread your message
- 9) Take action!
- 10) How did you do? What next?



1) Learn about climate change in your community

Exercise 1

- **Aim:** Learn about how climate change can be harmful to you. And your community.
- Carry out one or all of these activities.

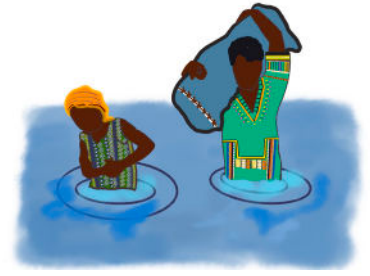


Activity

- Ask each person, “How can climate change, like extreme weather, harm you?”
- Draw a picture.

▶ **Would you like to try Activity 2?**

- Talk to your family, friends, and neighbors.
- Ask, “What changes in climate have you seen over your life?”
- And “How can climate change, like extreme weather, harm our community?”



▶ **Would you like to try Activity 3?**

- Get or draw map(s) of your community.
- Ask, “How can climate change, like extreme weather, harm different parts of our community?” Draw this on the map.
- Ask, “What do people with disabilities need to cope with climate change?” Draw this on the map.
- Ask, “Do people with disabilities have what they need to cope with climate change?”

▶ Consider how is climate change affecting our access to:

- safety,
- water,
- food,
- health services,
- housing,
- education, and
- work.

▶ **Would you like to try Activity 4?**

- Read about climate change where you live, or around the world. Use trust sources of information like those in this book.
- Write or draw what you learn.

Activity 5:

- ▶ Ask, “How are people with different disabilities, harmed by climate change?”
- ▶ Ask, “How are people facing discrimination based on age, gender, race, and as Indigenous People harmed by climate change in our community?”



Voices

“I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment, I still have a dream.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., American civil rights activist, “I Have a Dream” speech.

2) Identify what problem to work on:

► Think about: “What problem is most important to you?”



Task

- Tell or write down the problems you and your community face because of climate change.
- What do you think are the most important problems to solve?
- Put a mark next to those.
- Think about: “What problem is most important to you?”
- Decide what problem you want to work on. You might decide by carrying out the exercise “How I Want to Live” (pg. 47).

2b) Learn who/what is causing the problem by answering the questions below.

Optional: Use 2c) (pg. 48) for a detailed study.



Task: Tell, write, or draw

- What is the problem you have decided to work on?
- Who is affected by the problem?
- What/Who is causing the problem?

► Problems can be caused by governments, institutions, your communities, families, businesses, teachers, doctors, media like television, or organizations.

► **Would you like to do this exercise?**

How I Want to Live

Aim: Find out what you want your life or community to be like.



Task:

- Think about what you want your life or community to be like.
- What change would have to occur in your community and life?
What support would you need to live like this? Is that support available?



How I Want to Live

What change needs to occur?

Glue or draw picture here.



What support would you need?





2c) Optional: Learn in detail who/what is causing the problems and think about possible actions to take. Write down your answers.



Disability Knowledge

What are the challenges you face? We are used to thinking up new ways to adjust to our lives. Can you think of ways to solve this issue?



Social

How does your community view people with disabilities. How would this change? Do you feel safe at home and in public spaces?



Resources and Money

Could your work produce a product to eat or sell such as seedlings, plants, trees, food, fish, mushrooms, or compost? Could you train for a green job? Can you argue that it costs less to solve the problem? What funding is available?



Political

Is your government making sure that people with disabilities are included when taking action on climate change?



Environment

How are plants and animals key to your food, culture, and safety from weather being harmed by climate change? Are you losing your forest? Which laws relate to this problem?



Indigenous Knowledge

Can you use Indigenous knowledge to help solve this issue?
How can you protect your Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices?



Supplies/Technology

Do you have supplies, tools, or training to help with this issue?

2d) Find the human right you want to work on.



Aim: Learn what human rights are being denied.



Task:

- Tell or write which human rights are connected to your problem.



► **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) says you have human rights, including the right to:**

- Be treated as equals (Article 5)
- Equal treatment for women with disabilities (Article 6)
- Equal treatment for children with disabilities (Article 7)
- Change attitudes about people with disabilities (Article 8)
- Access (Article 9)
- Life (Article 10)
- Assistance in emergencies (Article 11)
- Be treated equally by the law (Article 12)
- Access to justice (Article 13)
- Be free and safe (Article 14)
- Not be tortured or treated cruelly (Article 15)
- Not be used or abused (Article 16)
- Be free from medical exploitation (Article 17)
- Move around freely (Article 18)
- Independent living and being part of the community (Article 19)
- Get around (Article 20)
- Be free to say what you want and to get information (Article 21)
- Respect for your privacy (Article 22)
- Marry and have children (Article 23)
- Education (Article 24)
- Health (Article 25)
- Services to help you be independent (Article 26)
- Work (Article 27)
- A decent standard of living (Article 28)
- Be involved in politics (Article 29)
- Be involved in sports and leisure (Article 30)

▶ **Would you like to do this Group Activity?**
Learn about Our Human Rights!

- Find the human right chosen in 2d in the CRPD.
Read a few words out loud at a time. What does it mean?
Take turns.

3) Decide What Action to Take



Task:

- Tell or write down all the possible actions you and your community could take.
- Actions you can take include:
educating people with disabilities about climate change,
teaching people like service providers how to work with you,
preparing your family for an emergency,
and growing food.
- What action do you want to take? Think about:



1. Your Strengths

- “What am I good at doing?”
- “What is our disability community good at doing?”

2. Your Opportunities

- “Who can help?”
- “Is climate change creating new opportunities?”
- “Can we partner with another organization?”



3. What Obstacles Do You Face?

- Has a group tried to work on this problem in the past? Find out what challenges they faced.
- Is another group working on this problem?

Voices

“Impossible is an opinion – not a fact,” said Paul. The first person with an amputated arm to reach the top of Mt. Everest.

Optional:

- Tell or write down: What action could be taken to make “How I want to Live” a reality?
- Need help with ideas for your action? Choose your favorite ideas from this book. Tell or write down these ideas in your own words.

4. Decide What Action to Take



4) Gather Resources

- ▶ Find information, people, and supplies that can help you take action. For instance:
 - Learn more about your issue. Find information to help explain your issue to others and write it in your own words. Collect data. Learn what the government is doing and not doing. Find out what your national law(s) says.
 - Find peers, family, friends, and people in authority that will help you.



5) Organize



► Working with other people can help you achieve your goals.

» Organizations of People with Disabilities

- Join or create a disability group. Find other groups you can work with. If more than one group work together on an issue they are called a coalition. Building coalitions creates strong movements.



» Nongovernmental Organizations

- Find other groups that work on the same issue. Like green, youth, women's, and Indigenous Peoples groups. And humanitarian groups that save lives in disasters and wars. Ask for their support and share knowledge.

» National Human Rights Institutions

- Find out if your country has a National Human Rights Institution. Ask them for help. They can help people to claim their human rights.

6) Make an Action Plan



► Write down the answers to these questions:



Action Ideas

► What issue are you working on?





► **Specific Action**

» **What** do you want to do?

» **Who** will take action?

» **Where** will this action happen?

» **When** and for how long?



7) Practice

► Does everyone understand what they are going to do? Role-playing can help you practice taking action. Role-playing is a type of acting. People are given a role. They practice taking action. The audience tells them how they did. Have fun, and be kind.

Aim: Practice speaking up.



Task:

- Role-play speaking to officials, an NGO, or school. Explain your issue, and your human rights. You can use this book to help.

Aim: Practice your action.



Task:

- For example, if you are going to talk at a meeting, role-play to practice. Have people pretend to listen and ask questions. After, ask for suggestions. What worked and what did not? Be respectful when giving suggestions.



8) Spread the Word



- Spread the word to involve people in your action. Tell your family, friends, and neighbors.
- The more people you can involve, the greater the change you can make.
- How can you best spread the word? Can you safely use social media, ask other groups, put up signs, or invite a reporter?
- Have you included people with different disabilities, ages, genders, and races? This can help you make a greater change.



9) Take Action!



- **Carry out your action plan!**

Voices

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Gandhi,
Indian leader.

10) What Happened? What is Next?

- If possible, measure how you did. For example, count how many trees you planted, or how many people went to the meeting.
 - Did you achieve what you wanted?
 - What could have gone better?
- ▶ Repeat steps 3-9 to decide what further action should be taken.
- ▶ **Don't give up if things don't work out exactly how you planned.**

Keep trying!



Chapter 7.

Resources

Word List

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) must teach us about climate change. To speak up so that we can adjust to and limit climate change. And to raise awareness about disability and climate change.

Adapt means to change in order to live in a particular place.

Agroforestry is to grow trees and food together.

Aquafarm is to grow fish, shellfish, algae, and aquatic plants. It is also called aquaculture.

Atmosphere is the layer of gases around the Earth.

Carbon sinks take up more carbon than they release. They include forests and oceans.

Climate adaptation is adjusting to the climate so as not to be harmed. Or to benefit.

Climate change is long term change in Earth's temperature and weather patterns. The Earth is warming. This is causing glaciers and ice sheets to melt. And sea levels to rise. Burning fossil fuels causes gases to build up in the Earth's atmosphere. Trapping heat. Warming the Earth. These gases are called greenhouse gases. They include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Climate disasters include storms, floods, and hot weather. Human caused climate change can make extreme weather happen more often.

Climate justice means to take action on climate change in ways that are fair to all people.

Climate mitigation is to take action so there is less climate change. People can make less greenhouse gases. By burning no or less fossil fuels. We can also make sure carbon is stored in places like forests.

Conference of the Parties or COP is a meeting to decide how to take action on climate change.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international law for every child.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD) is an international law that protects people with disabilities.

Data is information gathered by measuring and observing, and can be numbers or graphs.

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person or group.

Equity is fairness.

Enhanced greenhouse gas effect is caused by the build up of gases in the Earth's atmosphere.

They act like a blanket. Trapping heat. Warming Earth. These gases are called greenhouse gases.

Environment is all the things around us. Both the living and things that are not alive. This includes the air, water, plants, and animals.

Fossil fuels are coal, oil, and natural gas.

Greenhouse gas emissions trap heat in the atmosphere. This causes the Earth to warm.

They include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.

Green jobs are good for the environment or use less resources.

Humanitarian assistance helps to save lives in disasters and wars.

Indigenous Knowledge are beliefs and ways of life. Passed on by Elders in stories and songs.

It is important for protecting the natural world. And Indigenous rights.

Microfinance provides bank services to people when banks do not.

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) should allow countries to adjust to climate change. These plans should be participatory. People with disabilities should be involved in their development.

These plans must be based on human rights, including disability human rights. They must include people with disabilities.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) say how countries plan to adjust to climate change. These plans must include people with disabilities.

Older people are people aged 60 or 65 and older.

Paris Agreement is an international agreement on climate change.

Pollution makes the air, water, or land unhealthy.

Renewable energy is also called green energy. It comes from energy that there is plenty of and is all around us like sunlight. And wind.

Getting Help

The following resources may help you.

- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):**
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>
- <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>
- **The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):**
<https://www.ipcc.ch/>
- **UNFCCC:**
<https://unfccc.int/>
- **Paris Agreement:**
<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
- **UNFCCC National Focal Points:**
<https://unfccc.int/process/parties-non-party-stakeholders/parties/national-focal-point>
- **UNFCCC National ACE Focal Points:**
<https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/national-ace-focal-points>

▶ **Learn more about your human rights:**

- Use “Change Your Life with Human Rights” available here:
<https://hpod.law.harvard.edu/resources/publication/change-your-life-with-human-rights>
- Use “We Have Human Rights” available here:
<https://hpod.law.harvard.edu/resources/publication/we-have-human-rights>
- Use “Human Rights. Yes!” available here:
<https://hpod.law.harvard.edu/pdf/Human-Rights-Yes.pdf>

▶ **Useful Disability Organizations:**

- Harvard Law School Project on Disability: <http://www.hpod.org>
- UN DESA: <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability>

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- Authors of *Human Rights. Yes!*: Janet E. Lord, Katherine N. Guernsey, Joelle M. Balfe, Valerie Karr, and Editor Nancy Flowers.
- Activities were adapted from: *We Have Human Rights* and *Human Rights. Yes! Ten steps to Advocacy* was adapted from *Change Your Life with Human Rights*. The list of human rights was adapted from the International Agreement on Human Rights, United Nations Enable.

We Have Human Rights

This book is for people with developmental disabilities. You can use this book to learn about your human rights. You can also use this book to talk with others about your human rights.

We Have Human Rights by the Harvard Law School Project on Disability.

<https://hpod.law.harvard.edu/resources/publication/we-have-human-rights>

To learn more about disability rights, get this companion book:

Human Rights. Yes! is a human rights curriculum on the rights of persons with disabilities. It was written by people with a wide range of experience in human rights and disability. It will be valuable to human rights workers, advocacy groups, and people working on human rights education.

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People with
Disabilities:
**Taking Action on
Climate Change**



 Harvard Law School Project on Disability (www.hpod.org)

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