

# Climate Change and its Impact on Learners with Disabilities

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## Context of Climate Change

Climate change is a pressing global issue that impacts everyone as seen in Figure 1, but its effects are particularly severe for individuals with disabilities. We know that when floods, heatwaves, cyclones or droughts occur, children's learning is impacted. Their schools are closed, their routes to school too risky to traverse, their classrooms often damaged or destroyed<sup>1</sup>. As the frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters increase, children with disabilities often face disproportionate risks and barriers. These barriers can range from physical inaccessibility to information and services, to social and economic vulnerabilities.<sup>2</sup> It is well established that climate disruptions have the potential to halt education especially among learners with disabilities, displace populations, and wreck infrastructure<sup>3</sup>, as can be seen in Figure 2<sup>4</sup>.

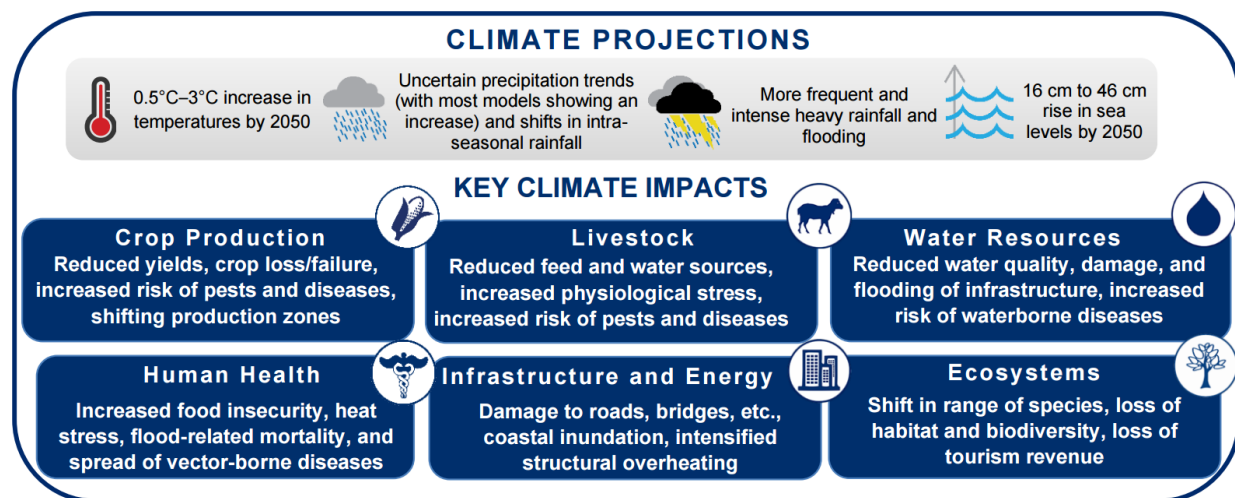


Figure 1: Climate projections and likely impact in Uganda<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Save the Children (2025). Education for Climate Action: Integrating education into Nationally Determined Contributions

<sup>2</sup> EnableMe: Inclusion Action For Climate Change and Disability

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Mugeere et al. Climate Change and Young People in Uganda, 2021

<sup>4</sup> Atyang Agnes and Caxton Etii (2024): Uganda Climate Change Appraisal Report

<sup>5</sup> Climate Risk Profile: Uganda (2020): The World Bank Group



*Figure 2: Flooded school in Butaleja District*

## **Policy Analysis**

1. **National adaptation programmes of action for Uganda - NAPA (2007)** does not prioritize education in its priority ranking and did not consider education for children with disabilities as in the table below. Priority adaptation activities identified were in sectors such as forestry, agriculture, water resources, health, and weather and climate information, not education.

**Table 5.1 Prioritized interventions issues (areas)**

Intervention area	PRA Rating		First Tier Rating				
	Proportion (%)	Rank	PEAP	MEAs	Equity	Scores	Rank
IK documentation and awareness creation	20	1	3	2	1	6	6
Farm forestry	18	2	4	3	3	10	2
Water resources	16	3	3	3	3	9	3
Weather and climate information	11	4	3	3	1	7	5
Policy and legislation	11	4	2	2	1	5	7
Land and land use	9	5	4	4	3	11	1
Health	2	6	4	2	2	8	4
Infrastructure	2	6	2	1	1	4	8
Total	100					60	

**2. Ministry of Water and Environment (2014): Guidelines for the integration of climate change in sector plans and budgets** recommends that the climate change vulnerability assessment should focus on various dimensions namely, health, agriculture, environment, transport and energy. The guideline does not reflect a clear focus on education especially for children with disabilities which may not guide the educational planners in the planning process. The policies should be aligned to include;

- a. Physical vulnerability to and influence on weather patterns. Warnings and public information should be provided in formats accessible to people with visual, hearing, and intellectual disabilities.
- b. Social vulnerability and community resilience. The representation of groups led by persons with disabilities in all climate planning forums and DRR committees are lacking and this needs to be emphasized during policy processes.
- c. Governance. Persons with disabilities are frequently left out of local Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate adaptation planning. This should be reviewed to match the needs of children with disabilities.

**3. National Climate Change Communication Strategy for Uganda (2017/2021).** The strategy emphasizes access and utilizing the information, education and communication materials, tools, channels, and information products. The policy does not focus on children with disabilities as critical and they are left out from designing communication and awareness strategies that target the children with disabilities.

**4. The Uganda National Climate Change Policy (2015)** has a number of priority areas including health, agriculture, environment, transport and energy among others. No mention is made of integrating climate change in education with particular focus on children with disabilities among the priority sectors.

## Priorities for Action

### EiE partners:

A brief survey among member organizations of the Education in Emergencies Sector Working Group in Uganda in October - November 2025 demonstrated that two organizations have existing programming that addresses climate change. Out of these, only one addresses the impact of climate change on learners with disabilities.

Therefore, there is need for EiE partners to do the following;

- Strengthen mainstreaming of climate change adaptation into programmes, strategies and plans at the district local government level including sub-county and parish level as per the National Climate Change Act of 2021. The District Education Officer together with Special needs officer to ensure schools invest in climate proofing, especially the learning spaces for children with disabilities. Financing should be provided to districts to improve locally appropriate climate adaptation plans with climate awareness as a priority targeting children with disabilities.
- Support schools to understand and effectively and inclusively implement, develop the national and community-based Early Warning Systems to mitigate the impacts of climate change at local level. Example: rain gauge, wind vane. Schools should be supported to enforce the use of [Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards \(BRMS\)](#) to enforce use of weather instruments in schools. For instance, all schools should acquire weather instruments and install them on the school compound. This should be accessible by all learners including children with disabilities.

### Schools can do:

- Curricular and pedagogical reform - The National Curriculum Development Centre has approved and implemented climate change readers for primary school students in the upper primary classes (P4-P7), however, it lacks guidelines on how children with disabilities will access the materials. Therefore, emphasis on pedagogical reform, such as teaching about climate change in accessible ways such as using audio visual materials with high contrast, tactile materials, transcribing the information into Braille for learners who are blind and integrating climate learning across disciplines, that would embed disability inclusive practices in climate education.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Camilla H. Chaudhary](#) and [Nidhi Singal](#) | Oct 23, 2024 | [Climate Change, Education and Disabilities](#) Ministry of Education & Sports, April 2009|Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards Indicators for Education Institutions.

- Infrastructure and services: In school premises design evacuation routes, shelters, and emergency services to be accessible to all individuals, regardless of their physical abilities.

**Children with Disabilities:**

- Train students with disabilities in Disaster Risk Reduction. Students with disabilities must be involved in disaster risk reduction activities & be part of the mitigation measures as a way of dealing with the impact of climate change.
- Ecosystem Restoration: Support students/learners with disabilities to participate in tree planting and other ecosystem restoration activities to enhance local resilience to climate change.
- Waste Management: Students with disabilities should be involved in proper waste disposal practices as a way of promoting responsible waste management practices, reducing the environmental impact of their actions.