



SAURI GROWTH INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

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PROJECT TITLE:
**EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH
DISABILITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVE
CLIMATE ACTIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change adaptation refers to the changes and adjustments that individuals, communities, and governments make in response to the impacts of climate change. As the planet continues to warm, extreme weather events such as heat waves, droughts, floods, and hurricanes are becoming more frequent and severe. These events not only threaten human health and safety but also put stress on ecosystems, agriculture, and economies. Climate change adaptation refers to the process of adjusting to the current or expected impacts of climate change in order to reduce harm or take advantage of potential benefits. It involves making changes to systems, infrastructure, policies, and behaviors to help individuals, communities, and organizations better cope with changing environmental conditions.

In order to mitigate the effects of climate change, it is crucial to adapt and prepare for the changing climate. This can be done through a variety of strategies, including building resilient infrastructure,

implementing sustainable land use practices, and investing in renewable energy sources. By taking proactive measures to adapt to climate change, we can minimize its negative impacts and build a more sustainable future. Adaptation can occur at various levels—local, national, and global—and across different sectors such as agriculture, water resources, health, and infrastructure.

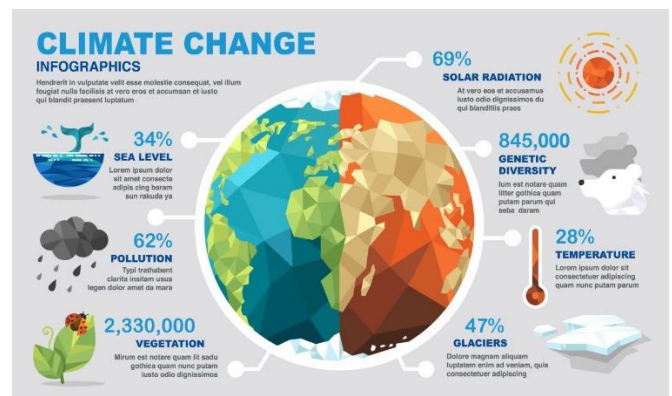
Examples of climate change adaptation include:

- Building **flood defenses** or creating more resilient infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events.
- Implementing **drought-resistant crops** and improving water management in agriculture.
- **Modifying building codes** and urban planning to account for rising temperatures and sea levels.
- Strengthening **health systems** to manage increased risks from heatwaves, diseases, or other climate-related health issues.

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures, weather patterns, and atmospheric conditions, primarily driven by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. These activities release large amounts of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane, into the atmosphere, trapping heat and causing global temperatures to rise. This phenomenon, known as global warming, leads to changes in climate patterns, resulting in more frequent and severe weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, floods, and storms. Over time, climate change also contributes to rising sea levels due to melting polar ice caps and glaciers, which threaten coastal communities and ecosystems.

The impacts of climate change are widespread, affecting natural ecosystems, human societies, and economies. Agriculture faces declining crop yields in some regions due to changing rainfall patterns and extreme weather, leading to food insecurity. Water resources are also

strained as some areas experience prolonged droughts or excessive rainfall. Climate change exacerbates health risks, with rising temperatures contributing to heat-related illnesses and the spread of vector-borne diseases. Vulnerable populations, particularly in developing countries, are disproportionately affected by climate change, facing increased risks of poverty, displacement, and loss of livelihoods. In response, governments and communities around the world are working on mitigation and adaptation strategies to reduce emissions and enhance resilience to the changing climate.



Climate Change Infographics

Climate change is a global phenomenon that is impacting every corner of the world, including Benue state in Nigeria. The effects of climate change are being felt by all segments of society, but certain groups

are more vulnerable than others. Climate change is a pressing issue in Benue State, Nigeria, where erratic weather patterns, floods, and droughts have become more frequent. These environmental challenges significantly impact the livelihoods and well-being of the people in the state, especially those who are vulnerable. Among the most affected are women and girls with disabilities, who face unique challenges when adapting to the changing climate. Their physical, social, and economic conditions make it harder for them to access resources and respond to climate-induced crises effectively. In this material, we will explore the impact of climate change adaptation and resilience strategies for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state, examining the historical context, key events, influential figures, and potential future developments in this area.



Flooding- One of the Effects of Climate Change in Benue State
KEY CONCEPTS

- **Climate Change:** Long-term changes in temperature, weather patterns, and extreme weather events, largely caused by human activities.
- **Adaptation:** Adjusting practices, processes, and structures to minimize harm caused by climate impacts.
- **Resilience:** The ability of individuals and communities to recover from climate-related disasters, reducing future risks.
- **Women and Girls with Disabilities:** Individuals who face intersecting challenges due to both gender and disability, making them particularly vulnerable during climate disasters.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), **disability** is defined as "an evolving concept resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." This definition acknowledges that disability is not solely a result of an individual's impairment but is also influenced by societal attitudes and physical or environmental barriers that prevent full participation and inclusion. Disability is a changing concept...those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The CRPD, adopted in 2006, is a landmark international human rights treaty that sets out the rights of persons with disabilities and calls for their full inclusion and participation in all aspects of society. The Convention recognizes that persons with

disabilities have the same inherent dignity and rights as everyone else and that they should be able to exercise those rights without discrimination.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Benue state is located in the North Central region of Nigeria and is known for its rich agricultural resources. However, the state has been experiencing the adverse effects of climate change in recent years, including erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged dry seasons, and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. These changes have had a significant impact on the livelihoods of the people in Benue state, particularly women and girls with disabilities who are already marginalized and face multiple barriers to accessing resources and services.

CASE STUDY: FLOODING IN MAKURDI, BENUE STATE

Benue State, often referred to as the "food basket of the nation" because of its agriculture-based economy, is increasingly vulnerable to the **effects of climate change**. The state has experienced:

1. **Flooding:** Heavy rainfall and river overflow have led to regular

flooding, displacing families and destroying farmland.

2. Drought and Desertification:

Prolonged periods of drought have impacted agricultural productivity, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity.

3. Unpredictable Rainfall:

Erratic weather patterns make farming more difficult, leading to lower yields and economic instability.

In recent years, Makurdi, the capital of Benue State, has been severely affected by flooding due to the overflow of the Benue River. Many communities, especially those in low-lying areas, have experienced displacement and loss of livelihoods. These climate challenges affect the entire population, but women and girls with disabilities face specific, compounded challenges in these situations.

For women and girls with disabilities in these communities, the floods present significant challenges:

- **Lack of Accessible Shelters:** Most emergency shelters in Makurdi

were not designed with accessibility in mind, leaving many girls and women with disabilities individuals stranded.

- **Inadequate Support Services:** After the floods, access to assistive devices, such as wheelchairs and crutches, became limited. Many women with disabilities faced increased isolation and dependency on others for basic survival.

Over the years, Benue state has witnessed several major climate-related events that have affected the lives of its inhabitants, including women and girls with disabilities. In 2012, the state experienced unprecedented flooding that displaced thousands of people and destroyed homes, farms, and infrastructure. This event had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, including women and girls with disabilities, who struggled to cope with the aftermath of the disaster. In response to the increasing climate-related challenges facing the state, the government and various organizations have implemented a range of

adaptation and resilience strategies to support vulnerable populations, including women and girls with disabilities. These strategies include improving access to climate information, promoting sustainable farming practices, providing livelihood support, and enhancing community resilience to climate shocks.

KEY FIGURES:

Several key figures have played a pivotal role in advancing climate change adaptation and resilience strategies for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state. Dr. Grace Ihejiamazu, a renowned environmentalist and disability rights advocate, has been at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in the context of climate change. Her pioneering work has helped to mobilize resources and support for vulnerable individuals in the state.

Another influential figure in this field is Mrs. Jummai Ahmed, a disability rights activist and community organizer who has been instrumental in promoting inclusive

and gender-sensitive approaches to climate change adaptation. Her grassroots initiatives have empowered women and girls with disabilities to participate in decision-making processes and access essential services that enhance their resilience to climate-related hazards.

In addition to key figures like Dr. Grace Ihejiamazu and Mrs. Jummai Ahmed, there are several other influential individuals who have contributed to the field of climate change adaptation and resilience for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state. These individuals include government officials, researchers, development practitioners, and community leaders who have collaborated to design and implement impactful interventions that address the specific needs of vulnerable populations.

One such individual is Mr. Emmanuel Ojima, the Director of Climate Change Adaptation at the Benue State Ministry of Environment. Mr. Ojima has been instrumental in mainstreaming disability-inclusive approaches into the state's climate change adaptation policies and programs,

ensuring that the needs of women and girls with disabilities are adequately addressed. His expertise and leadership have helped to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of climate change impacts.

WHY FOCUS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES?

1. **Double Vulnerability:** Women and girls with disabilities are often marginalized in society due to both their gender and disability. This leaves them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, as they face barriers to accessing resources, support, and decision-making processes.
2. **Lack of Accessibility:** Many disaster preparedness and response strategies are not designed with accessibility in mind. For example, shelters, warning systems, and evacuation plans may be inaccessible for individuals with mobility impairments, hearing loss, or visual impairments.

3. **Increased Risk of Violence:** During times of displacement and disaster, women and girls with disabilities are more likely to face gender-based violence, exploitation, and neglect due to weakened social support systems and overcrowded living conditions.

4. **Health and Economic Disadvantages:** Women and girls with disabilities may rely on assistive devices or medical care, which can be disrupted during climate disasters. They are also more likely to live in poverty, limiting their ability to recover from climate impacts.

CHALLENGES IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

1. **Physical Accessibility:**
 - o Emergency shelters, evacuation routes, and relief centers are often inaccessible to women and girls with physical disabilities.

- Lack of accessible transportation makes it difficult for them to evacuate during disasters.

2. **Health and Safety:**

- Climate-induced disruptions to healthcare services affect women and girls with disabilities who rely on regular medical care, medications, or assistive devices.
- In disaster situations, women with disabilities may be unable to access hygiene products, clean water, or adequate food.

3. **Economic Marginalization:**

- Women and girls with disabilities are often economically dependent on others, making it harder for them to recover from the economic losses caused by climate events.

- Many face employment barriers, further reducing their ability to rebuild their lives after climate-induced shocks.

4. **Social Exclusion:**

- Women and girls with disabilities are often excluded from decision-making processes related to climate adaptation. Their unique needs are overlooked when designing resilience plans, limiting their ability to benefit from protective measures.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

To protect and empower women and girls with disabilities in the face of climate change, it is essential to develop inclusive strategies. These strategies must address the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities populations and promote gender equality.

1. **Inclusive Early Warning Systems:**

- Early warning systems for natural disasters should be accessible to everyone, including those with visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments.
- Use multiple communication channels, such as text messages, voice recordings, and visual alerts, to ensure that everyone receives the necessary information.

2. **Accessible Shelters and Infrastructure:**

- Design emergency shelters and infrastructure that are accessible to people with disabilities. This includes ramps, accessible bathrooms, and mobility-friendly layouts.
- Ensure that transportation services during evacuations are equipped to

accommodate wheelchairs and other assistive devices.

3. **Training and Education:**

- Provide education and training on climate adaptation for women and girls with disabilities. This will help them understand the risks they face and equip them with the knowledge to protect themselves and their families.
- Raise awareness in communities about the importance of inclusive climate strategies, encouraging local governments to integrate disability-inclusive planning.

4. **Health and Mental Health Support:**

- Ensure that health services are available and accessible to women and girls with disabilities, especially

during and after climate-related disasters.

- Provide mental health support to help them cope with the trauma and stress caused by displacement, loss of livelihoods, and other climate impacts.

5. Social Inclusion and Participation:

- Involve women and girls with disabilities in the planning and implementation of climate adaptation and disaster preparedness programs.
- Encourage community-driven solutions that recognize the strengths and capacities of women and girls with disabilities as contributors to resilience.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

There are various perspectives on the impact of climate change adaptation and

resilience strategies for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state. Some experts argue that these interventions have been effective in enhancing the adaptive capacity of vulnerable populations and reducing their vulnerability to climate-related hazards. They point to the positive outcomes of inclusive programs that empower women and girls with disabilities to cope with environmental stressors and build sustainable livelihoods.

However, others raise concerns about the limitations of current strategies, noting that women and girls with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing resources, services, and support systems. They emphasize the need for more targeted interventions that address the intersecting challenges of gender, disability, and climate change in a holistic manner. Additionally, they call for greater participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes and the implementation of policies that promote social equity and environmental justice.

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

The analysis of the impact of climate change adaptation and resilience strategies for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state reveals a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities. While significant progress has been made in mainstreaming disability-inclusive approaches into climate change initiatives, there is still much work to be done to ensure that vulnerable populations are adequately supported in their efforts to adapt to climate-related risks.

One of the key strengths of current interventions is their emphasis on building the capacity of women and girls with disabilities to respond to climate change impacts through sustainable practices and innovative technologies. By focusing on empowerment, education, and economic empowerment, these programs have the potential to transform the lives of vulnerable individuals and create more resilient communities in Benue state.

On the other hand, the analysis also highlights several gaps and shortcomings in existing strategies, such as the lack of adequate funding, limited outreach to remote communities, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders. These challenges impede the effectiveness of climate change adaptation efforts and hinder the meaningful participation of women and girls with disabilities in decision-making processes.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Looking ahead, there are several potential future developments related to climate change adaptation and resilience strategies for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state. One promising trend is the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive approaches that prioritize the needs and rights of marginalized groups in shaping climate policies and programs. This shift towards a more participatory and rights-based approach holds promise for advancing social justice and environmental sustainability in the state.

Another key development is the increasing collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and research institutions in designing evidence-based interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls with disabilities in the context of climate change. By leveraging the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders, these partnerships have the potential to enhance the effectiveness and impact of adaptation initiatives and build more resilient communities in Benue state.

To address these challenges, inclusive climate change adaptation strategies must be implemented. Early warning systems should be accessible to all, including those with disabilities, through the use of multiple communication channels such as text, audio, and visual formats. Emergency shelters and evacuation routes should be designed to accommodate physical disabilities, ensuring that women and girls with disabilities challenges can evacuate safely. Local authorities should collaborate with Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) to

ensure that the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities individuals are considered in climate planning.

Empowering women and girls with disabilities in Benue State is key to building resilient communities. They must be included in decision-making processes related to climate adaptation and disaster preparedness. Providing economic support through climate-resilient livelihood programs, such as training in adaptive agricultural practices, will also help them recover from disasters more quickly. By addressing these issues through inclusive policies and community-driven solutions, Benue State can ensure that all its citizens, regardless of gender or disability, are better prepared to face the challenges of climate change.

In conclusion, the impact of climate change adaptation and resilience strategies for women and girls with disabilities in Benue state is a critical issue that requires urgent attention and concerted action. By acknowledging the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations and adopting

inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates can promote social equity, environmental sustainability, and human rights in the face of climate change. Through collaboration, innovation, and solidarity, we can build a more resilient future for all residents of Benue state, regardless of their gender, disability status, or socio-economic background.

Women and girls with disabilities in Benue State are among the most vulnerable to climate change, but they also have the potential to contribute significantly to community resilience. By developing inclusive adaptation strategies—focusing on accessibility, participation, and economic empowerment—Benue State can become more resilient to the effects of climate change while ensuring that its most vulnerable populations are protected and empowered.

Local NGOs partnering with government authorities and international organizations to develop inclusive disaster response plans. They trained community leaders on

disability-inclusive planning and ensured that shelters were retrofitted to accommodate women with disabilities. These efforts demonstrated that when women and girls with disabilities are included in planning, more resilient and inclusive communities emerge.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Climate change has a disproportionate impact on women and girls with disabilities in Benue State.
- Physical, social, and economic barriers prevent them from accessing essential services during climate events.
- Inclusive adaptation strategies, such as accessible shelters, financial empowerment, and participation in decision-making, are crucial for building resilience.

SAURI GROWTH INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES PHOTO GALLERY



Day 1 of the Two Days Training of 30 Women and Girls with Disabilities on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategies in Otukpo Benue State



Day 2 of the Two Days Training of 30 Women and Girls With Disabilities on Climate Change Adaptation And Resilience Strategies in Otukpo Benue State



10 Local Disability Organisations Have Been Successfully Trained to Incorporate Inclusive Climate Actions into Their Work



Advocacy Visit on Inclusive Climate Change Policies and Interventions to The Office of The First-Class Chief of Otukpo, Benue State His Highness Oche Odu.



A Productive Meeting with Key Stakeholders at The Ministry of Humanitarian and Disaster Management in Benue State, including the Commissioner, Executive Secretary of the Rehabilitation Board, DG of Sustainable Development Goals and National General Secretary of the Ableism Association of Nigeria.



Courtesy Visit to The Office of The Personal Assistant to The Governor on Disability Matters, Discussing the Impact of Climate Change on Woman and Girls with Disabilities.



Visit to the Benue Rehabilitation Board to explore collaborative supporting girls and youths with special needs, particularly those in the Internal Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.