



Climate Change & Disability: Understanding Climate Change Adaptation Policy & Practices in Ethiopia



Amelework Emirie, Dr. Allison Goebel², Dr. Menberu Teshome³
Queen's University¹ University of Gondar²

Background & Rational

- Climate change represents one of the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations in the Global South (IPCC, 2023).
- Ethiopia, ranked among the most climate-vulnerable nations globally, faces escalating drought cycles, erratic rainfall, and food insecurity that threaten livelihoods across its diverse agro-ecological zones (Conway & Schipper, 2011; WB, 2021).
- Failure to engage with people with disabilities in contemporary climate adaptation planning, disaster relief, and recovery efforts overlooks their potential as knowledgeable and powerful agents of change (Bell et al., 2020).
- Current research lacks knowledge of the context-specific impacts of climate and environmental change on persons with disabilities (Kosanic et al., 2022).

Research Questions

1. To what extent is the Ethiopian climate change adaptation policy and DRM strategies inclusive of persons with physical disabilities?
2. How are disability concerns reflected in the planning and implementation of adaptation programs and efforts?
3. What are the barriers and opportunities for meaningful participation of persons with physical disabilities in climate change adaptation planning and implementation?

Research Methodology

Research Design: Qualitative Multiple Case Study Design (Yin, 2018), to explore complex phenomena within real-world policy and implementation contexts.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews: With policymakers, practitioners, DPO representatives, environmental experts, and persons with physical disabilities.

Sampling technique: Purposive and snowball sampling will be employed.

Data Analysis

Policy Document Analysis: Systematic analysis of Ethiopia's CRGE, NAPA, DRM policy, and related government policy documents, guidelines, and strategies using the Policy Triangle Framework (Walt & Gilson, 1994).

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) — a six-phase process emphasizing researcher reflexivity and iterative engagement with data, examining how institutional, social, and environmental barriers influence disability inclusion.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the **Social Model of Disability** (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2014), which locates disability not in individual impairment but in societal structures and barriers that produce exclusion. This theoretical orientation enables analysis of how climate adaptation systems — rather than physical impairments — create vulnerability.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Disability-Inclusive Climate Adaptation: Adaptation strategies that actively recognize, accommodate, and prioritize the needs of persons with disabilities across the policy cycle (Jodoin et al., 2020).

Social Model of Disability: A paradigm that understands disability as produced by social, attitudinal, and environmental barriers rather than individual medical conditions (Oliver, 1990).

Policy Triangle Framework: An analytical tool examining the interactions among context, content, process, and actors in health/social policy (Walt & Gilson, 1994).

Expected Contributions & Limitations

Contributions

- This study will provide valuable insights into disability-inclusive policy design and implementation to policy-makers, practitioners, and stakeholders
- Contributes to the academic knowledge gap on inclusive climate change adaptation

Limitations

- lack of disability-related climate change literature in Ethiopia

Research Agenda Alignment

This study directly contributes to multiple national and global policy agendas:

- SDG 13 — Climate Action:** Strengthening adaptive capacity by ensuring the most vulnerable are not left behind.
- SDG 10 — Reduced Inequalities:** Addressing structural exclusion in climate governance and development planning.
- SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities:** Promoting inclusive, accessible urban adaptation in Addis Ababa and comparable cities.
- UNCRPD, Article 11:** Obligation of States Parties to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including climate-related disasters.
- Sendai Framework for DRR:** Priority for emphasizes disability-inclusive disaster preparedness and recovery (UNDRR, 2015).

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Contact Info:
Amelework Emirie
20ame6@queensu.ca