



**CLIMATE
JUST
COMMUNITIES**
Communities leading on climate justice



Belita Siasikabole, an Advocacy Champion from Sinazongwe district, and a woman with a disability

LESSONS LEARNT FROM CLIMATE JUST COMMUNITIES ZAMBIA:

How a disability inclusive approach to climate adaptation helps move from tokenism to transformation

“Heard and counted – now we are leaders of tomorrow”



“Before CJC we were discriminated against, not counted even if we attended. Since CJC, we feel very happy and see ourselves as “leaders of tomorrow”. People used to say, ‘Have you seen a person with disability pass by?’ Now they call me by my name.”

*Micho Siasulwe, Community Management Committee member,
Siyamenda*



“People used to think I needed to be helped, not that I could help. But CJC helped people understand that we all have a role to play. Now we work together - I contribute, they contribute, and we move forward as a community.”

*Prisca Tembo, Community Management Committee member and
beekeeper, Kaunga, Luangwa District*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This learning paper would not have been possible without the input of community members, volunteers and staff working to make CJC Zambia a model of inclusive climate resilience. Particular thanks for the technical input and advice from GEDSI team members, Bruce Chooma (Disability Rights Watch), and Patricia Mukumbuta (NIRAS), from local partners Mercy Gondwe, Joseph Mumba (Green Living Movement) and Rabecca Ngwane (ZAPD), and from Ursula Grant, Emma Symonds, Laura Parkes (CBM UK) and Mackenzie Klema (NIRAS), as well as the willingness of the community management committee members in Siyamenda, Luangwa District and Tekelo, Sinazongwe District, who so generously gave their time answering many questions and sharing their thoughts and opinions freely.

February 2026

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Queen Dibula, a single mother with a physical disability, has improved her livelihood with livestock management training and two goats from the CJC project

ACRONYMS

CJC	Climate Just Communities
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DRW	Disability Rights Watch
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ZAPD	Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

WORKING DEFINITIONS

Assistive Technologies¹	Any item, equipment or system used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.
Reasonable Accommodation²	Necessary and appropriate modification, adaptation and adjustments, not imposing undue burden, where needed in a particular case; to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
Universal design	The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people not as a special requirement, but as a fundamental condition of good design.

1. Definition in Zambia's National Disability Guidelines
2. Definition from The Persons with Disabilities Act 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change disproportionately affects persons with disabilities, who face heightened vulnerability due to systemic barriers to accessing information, services, planning and decision making spaces. Despite global commitments under the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#)³, the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)⁴, and official recognition of the [disability caucus at the UNFCCC](#)⁵, disability inclusion in climate adaptation often remains limited and tokenistic. This learning document shares insights from fieldwork and programme evidence from the [Climate Just Communities \(CJC\) Zambia programme](#) in Zambia, supported by selective comparative insights from CJC Rwanda and Malawi. It sets out what works, common bottlenecks, and actionable recommendations for donors, policymakers and implementers in embedding disability inclusion across climate adaptation initiatives.

Why Disability Inclusion in Climate Adaptation Matters: The impact of climate change is not experienced equally. People with disabilities living in low-income communities experience compounded risks from climate hazards: they are more likely to live in risk-prone settings, face increased mobility, information and attitudinal barriers

during emergencies, and can be up to four times more likely to die in disasters⁶ without inclusive preparedness and response. These barriers are further exacerbated when this intersects with gender, age and other marginalisations. Climate change also increases disability incidence through injury, disease and mental health impacts. Inclusive adaptation is therefore fundamental to climate justice and legally mandated under UNCRPD Articles 3 and 4 (Promoting non-discrimination, accessibility, and full participation) and 11 (Calling for protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters), the [Paris Agreement's participatory adaptation provisions](#)⁷, and the [Sendai Framework's requirement for disability disaggregated reporting](#)⁸.

Conceptual Framework: The paper draws on Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) principles, the twin-track approach (mainstreaming and targeted support), intersectionality, and inclusive locally led adaptation principles. These frameworks emphasise community-driven, rights-based strategies that dismantle barriers and promote meaningful participation and sustainable change.



Registration exercise for people with disabilities in partnership with the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD) in Sioma District

3. [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | OHCHR](#)

4. [THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development](#)

5. [IDA](#)

6. [Persons with disabilities face lack of support to cope with disasters. | UNDRR](#)

7. The Paris Agreement's participatory adaptation provisions are designed to ensure that adaptation actions are timely, scalable, and specific, taking into account the different degrees of climate change impacts experienced by countries and the unique vulnerabilities of specific groups of marginalised people.

8. The Sendai Framework requires disaggregated reporting of data on disability to ensure the needs and experiences of persons with disabilities are fully considered in disaster risk reduction efforts.



LESSONS FROM PRACTICE:

What worked:

1. Inclusive Planning and Governance

- Creating representative, community-owned leadership structures aligned with existing local governance structures, ensured decisions reflected diverse needs, strengthened accountability, and increased sustainability.
- Strengthening Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs), Advocacy Champions, inclusive management committees and leaders with disabilities to secure disability-specific considerations, increased their visibility, boosted their confidence and improved community acceptance of people with disabilities.
- GEDSI participation thresholds and integration into Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning systems enabled continuous monitoring and course corrections.

2. Responsive and adaptive programming and budgeting

- A responsive and flexible approach by the funder and contract manager meant that learning could result in positive adaptations to programme design and budget allocation.
- This was particularly beneficial for more marginalised groups where inadequate consideration of GEDSI by some partners at inception had resulted in low levels of awareness and therefore gaps in programme design and budget allocation. As understanding and capacity increased, interventions were adapted and budget allocated for what turned out to be some of the most impactful aspects of the inclusive approach.

3. Overcoming Barriers to Participation

- Practical accessibility solutions such as accessible venues, universal design infrastructure, flexible scheduling all contributed to reducing physical and logistical barriers.
- Inclusive budgets for reasonable accommodations (for example allocating up to 5% of operational spend) enabled partners to fund interpreters, assistive devices like wheelchairs, and accessible transport in hard to reach areas.



CJC distributes assistive devices in partnership with the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD) in Sinazongwe

- Continuous training, anti-stigma efforts and OPD partnerships challenged stereotypes, shifted attitudes, ensured rights-based advocacy, and built sustainable inclusion skills.

4. Supporting inclusive livelihoods and access to finance

- Climate smart livelihood training and inputs enabled households with people with disabilities to strengthen economic security and reduce food insecurity.
- Strengthened VSLAs and linkages to inclusive finance supported people with disabilities to build resilience and reduced exclusion.

5. Strengthening referral pathways to government services

- Collaboration with local government was strong (and essential from the earliest stages of the programme). Pathways to national systems and allocations took a little longer. Once collaboration had been established with government services, this enabled people with disabilities to obtain official ID cards, improving access to welfare allowances and strengthening long term financial security.
- Increased provision of context appropriate assistive devices improved mobility, access and well-being.
- Cataract surgeries restored sight for older people with visual impairments, and increased independence and participation in community resilience activities.

6. Disaggregating data and building evidence for learning

- Participatory monitoring increased confidence and enhanced ownership. Quarterly community-led reviews ensured marginalised voices shaped intervention design, budgeting and annual planning.
- Indicators on inclusion, disability-disaggregated monitoring and community validation helped identify gaps, enforce GEDSI guidelines and strengthen adaptive management.

Challenges:

1. Limited technical capacity of staff, partners and local government

- While disability inclusion was embedded as a cross-cutting priority from inception, varying levels of understanding among delivery partners, staff, and local government early on in the programme meant that awareness of disability rights and application of GEDSI guidelines was initially inconsistent and needed to be progressively strengthened over time.

“GEDSI can’t be optional. Right from the start it needs to be a high consideration at organisational level by creating mechanisms that influence and hold accountable mainstream plans and field activities, but also at leadership and budgetary levels.”

**Patricia Mukumbuta,
NIRAS GEDSI lead**



Project field officer handing over a white can to a beneficiary with visual impairment in State Ranch Ward, Shangombo District

2. Attitudinal barriers and stigma

- Persistent stigma and charity-based perceptions limited meaningful participation and communication, leaving some people with disabilities uninformed or excluded.
- Women and girls with disabilities faced intersecting discrimination and were often overlooked even in women’s groups and local planning spaces, though sensitisation and empowerment efforts began shifting attitudes.

3. Physical and geographic barriers

- Long distances, inaccessible venues and centralised activities restricted participation, especially for those with mobility challenges.
- Time pressures led to choices (e.g., district level events) that reduced accessibility, highlighting the need for longer implementation timelines.

4. Inadequate provision of assistive devices and reasonable accommodation

- Assistive technology and reasonable accommodation were not sufficiently planned early on, leading to delayed and under-resourced support.
- Demand for devices exceeded project capacity, and accommodations like interpretation or transport were applied inconsistently.

5. Lack of consultation and adaptation

- Limited consultation meant some interventions were unsuitable or inaccessible, requiring later fixes e.g. retrofitting latrines.
- DRR activities also lacked disability specific strategies, leaving people with disabilities underserved in preparedness and decision-making.

6. Data gaps

- Disability-disaggregated data was inconsistently collected, limiting the ability to track equitable participation or tailor support.

7. Limited Linkages to Inclusive Finance

- Despite training, many people with disabilities lacked capital, financial services, and follow-up support to sustain enterprises. Links to inclusive finance schemes improved over time but remained an underdeveloped area with greater untapped potential.

Recommendations for inclusive climate action:

Disability inclusion is fundamental to achieving climate justice and resilience. Sector actors must move beyond tokenistic participation to co-create solutions that empower persons with disabilities as active agents of change.

1. Embed inclusion from inception and throughout **programme design, implementation and monitoring** through co-design with community members with disabilities⁹, establishment of programme-wide GEDSI guidelines and clear minimum targets for participation of people with disabilities in interventions and governance. Ensure early and ongoing capacity strengthening of staff and partners on inclusive practices to **increase awareness and understanding** (see [Advancing disability inclusive climate action](#), a practical guide that provides actionable entry points across the programme cycle). **Invest in community roles** (management committees and advocacy champions) and **budget for sustainability measures (supervision, refresher training, incentives)**. Plan community sensitisation to **reduce stigma and address attitudinal barriers**.
2. **Formalise partnerships with OPDs** for technical advice, outreach and advocacy, including budgetary allocation, and with local and national government officials, community leaders and existing community structures. Raise awareness and build capacity of these actors on GEDSI, including through transformative tools such as [Gender Action Learning System \(GALS\)](#)¹⁰.
3. **Apply a twin-track approach** to inclusion. Purposefully consider – with OPD partners - how disability can be mainstreamed across the project but also identify the targeted interventions that are required to address specific needs. **Remove practical and communication barriers** by allocating time and resources to **improve accessibility** of programme sites, information and facilities (see [AccessibilityGo: A Guide to Action](#), which offers practical support for delivering a whole-of-organisation approach to accessibility) and by training duty bearers on universal design. In addition, provide **reasonable accommodation** to support meaningful participation by people with disabilities e.g. sign language interpretation, assistive devices, transportation.
4. **Integrate livelihoods / finance** by facilitating access for people with disabilities to climate resilient livelihoods (e.g. drought-tolerant crops, kitchen gardens and livestock), as well as linking them with skills training, inclusive finance opportunities (e.g. microfinance, market access), and social protection programmes.
5. **Strengthen referral pathways** to expand access to government services, including provision and maintenance systems for assistive technology. Integrate rehabilitation and health services into adaptation programmes. Work with government to connect device provision to national insurance and social protection systems, including through disability registration and ID cards.
6. **Invest in data and accountability** by collecting and using disability-disaggregated data across all programme components to track participation and outcomes, and close gaps. Consider setting qualitative indicators that measure transformative change beyond inclusion in project activities; include these anticipated impact pathways in the project Theory of Change. Use participatory monitoring to strengthen accountability and publicise inclusion data.
7. **Support community-led advocacy** to influence policy change and resource allocation. Build partnerships with OPDs, aligning local plans with national and global frameworks such as CRPD, Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement. **Recognise and formally value lived experience as evidence**, particularly OPD expertise to shape policy dialogues.
8. Change takes time, particularly where it is addressing deep seated attitudes and beliefs. **Commit to long-term, flexible funding** with longer inception phases and adaptive, multiyear programming, with specific inclusion criteria including the involvement of OPDs. Capture and share learning to guide future investments.

9. See lessons learnt on how to include people with disabilities and OPDs in [Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction \(DiDRR\)](#) and anticipatory action.

10. [Step by Step Guide to GALS integration in humanitarian and development programmes.pdf](#)

INTRODUCTION



Belita Siasikabole tends chickens distributed by CJC in Sinazongwe District.

Climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges of our time, disproportionately affecting communities that are already marginalised. Persons with disabilities experience heightened exposure and sensitivity to climate risks due to inaccessible services, limited mobility, communication barriers and exclusion from planning and decision-making spaces. Climate-related hazards such as floods, droughts and extreme temperatures compound existing inequalities, further limiting opportunities for participation and increasing health risks, food insecurity and loss of income¹¹.

Despite international commitments under frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), disability inclusion in climate adaptation remains limited and often tokenistic. Many programmes fail to address the intersecting marginalisations of gender, age, and disability, resulting in adaptation strategies that fail to understand or meet the needs of some of the most traditionally marginalised community members.

This learning paper aims to bridge that gap by capturing practice-based insights to support sector actors to embed disability inclusion in climate adaptation. It draws primarily on field evidence and programme learning from the Scottish Government-funded [Climate Just Communities \(CJC\) Zambia project](#) (2023-2026), complemented by brief comparative examples from the CJC projects in Rwanda and Malawi. Building on early learnings from the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Fund, the £24 million CJC programme, led by NIRAS in Zambia, by SCIAF in Rwanda, and by DAI in Malawi, sought to promote a people-centred, human-rights based approach to climate action, in line with the [three pillars of climate justice](#): procedural, distributive, and transformative justice. In seeking to empower marginalised communities to lead their own climate responses based on their local needs and priorities, the programme supported community-led planning and action and inclusive participation, especially of women, youth, and people with disabilities, with the goal of achieving systemic change – supporting everyone in the community to thrive despite the changing climate. Having identified insufficient focus on marginalised groups in the earlier round of Scottish Government funded climate programming, an inclusive approach was a core component of the CJC, meaning that gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) were a priority focus throughout the programme.

The aim of this brief is to provide practical guidance that enables a shift from tokenistic participation by marginalised groups to meaningful engagement in climate adaptation responses, thereby addressing a long history of failure to recognise persons with disabilities as agents of change within climate resilient communities.

11. Grant, U (2025), CBM UK: [Locating Disability Inclusion in Climate Action](#)

METHODOLOGY

The insights presented in this paper are grounded in a mixed methods approach combining desk review and field-based evidence gathering. Sources include programme documentation, evaluation and learning reports, and synthesised stakeholder perspectives. Core references are:

[Climate Justice in Practice: Learnings from the Climate Just Communities Programme in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia](#), which consolidates programme learning on inclusive, locally led climate action.

Zambia Bottlenecks report, [Disability Rights Watch](#): synthesising barriers and practice improvements observed in CJC Zambia project delivery.

[CBM UK policy paper on locating disability inclusion in climate action](#), which anchors recommendations in global obligations and policy levers.

Field evidence gathering involved site visits, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with community members in Zambia, targeting persons with disabilities, caregivers, champions, government officers, implementing staff and local leaders involved in the CJC Zambia programme. This participatory approach ensured that lived experiences informed the analysis, alongside quantitative data on programme outcomes. Triangulation of qualitative accounts with programme data was done to strengthen reliability and relevance for implementation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Climate Justice connects climate action with social justice, recognising that those least responsible for climate change often bear its greatest impacts. CJC's approach to climate action is guided by the [three pillars of climate justice](#) as elaborated below:

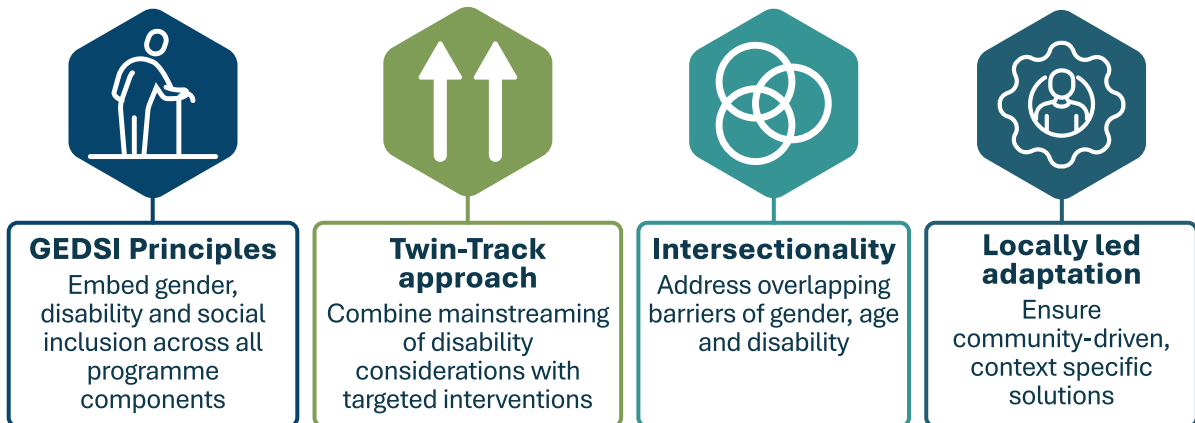
Disability inclusion is integral to all three pillars because it addresses historic inequities in terms of fair and equitable decision making, access to and sharing of resources and benefits, and shifting dominant power relations that reproduce inequities through enabling persons with disabilities to claim their rights.

Disability inclusion ensures that adaptation efforts do not perpetuate exclusion. It incorporates a number of other concepts:



Registration of people with disabilities in Luangwa District.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



1. Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

The GEDSI framework ensures that climate adaptation initiatives are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all people, particularly those marginalised by gender, disability, age or social status. It emphasises:

- **Removing systemic barriers** that limit participation and access to benefits.
- **Promoting meaningful engagement** of marginalised groups in decision-making processes.
- **Embedding inclusion across all programme components**, from planning to monitoring.

2. Twin-Track Approach

The twin-track approach, widely recognised as a necessary strategy for disability inclusion, combines:

- **Mainstreaming disability considerations** into all climate adaptation activities to ensure equal access.

- **Targeted interventions** that address specific needs of persons with disabilities, such as assistive devices, reasonable accommodation, and tailored livelihood support.

3. Intersectionality

Climate vulnerability is shaped by overlapping factors such as gender, age, disability, and socio-economic status. Intersectional analysis helps identify compounding barriers and design interventions that respond to the diverse realities of marginalised groups.

4. Inclusive Locally Led Adaptation

Effective inclusion requires adaptation strategies that are:

- **Community-driven**, enabling local actors to define priorities and lead implementation.
- **Flexible and context-specific**, recognising that barriers to participation vary across settings.
- **Empowering**, building capacity for advocacy and leadership among persons with disabilities and their representative organisations.

A community-level meeting with persons with disabilities and their households in Chiyabi Ward, Sinazongwe District.



LESSONS FROM PRACTICE

What works

Inclusion is not accidental—it requires deliberate strategies and enabling conditions. The following factors underpin the success of inclusive climate adaptation practices:

1. Inclusive planning and governance

- From the start, CJC Zambia placed community ownership at the centre of project design and implementation. As inclusive decision-making bodies did not exist, Community Management Committees (CMCs) were created at Ward (District sub-division) level, ensuring representation of people with disabilities, women, youth and representatives of other key local community governance structures and government institutions e.g. Traditional Leaders and agricultural extension officers. Ensuring alignment with existing governance structures like Ward Development Committees built local legitimacy and accountability. Minimum quotas for each group were applied for these leadership roles e.g. a CMC with 10-15 members included at least 2 of each category elected by the community (persons with a disability, female youths, male youths, older women, older men).

- The CMCs led climate justice planning and project oversight, regular meetings to ensure interventions were relevant and sustainable, and clear roles supporting accountability and ensuring selection of participants with representation quotas for interventions. GEDSI/ Advocacy Champions self-nominated to support the work of the CMC by creating awareness on the importance of inclusion in CJC interventions at community level and engaging in dialogues to overcome attitudinal barriers and cultural practices that hindered participation.

“It’s the duty of the CMC members to explain our decisions to help people, that not everyone can have same level of help.”

Onita Muleya, CMC member, Siyamenda, Luangwa

“Previous projects by INGOs and Government gave sporadic responses like emergency food or roofing, but without the systems change and structures of CJC.”

Castrol Syameenda, Ward Development Committee Representative and CMC member



Beneficiaries of assistive devices now able to participate in community meetings in Luangwa

- The success of these inclusive governance structures is demonstrated by local government agreeing that the CMCs will continue to operate after the project ends, maintaining their focus on climate justice, and reporting to the Ward Development Committees, a government mandated body. The CMCs will also work with community Advocacy Champions to ensure climate justice plans help inform community applications for funding from the government.
- OPDs in the participating districts received training in advocacy and inclusion skills and were linked to the champions to enhance coherence in advocacy across interventions. The training provided in assertiveness and leadership to CMC members and champions with disabilities also helped to boost their abilities to speak for their constituency and lobby for disability specific considerations in project activities and in community activities.

“CJC does not discriminate – everyone is included: persons with disabilities, women, youth and the elderly. As persons with disabilities, we now feel valued and capable ... we’ve been able to actively participate and contribute to CJC’s interventions ... I’ve learned that even we, persons with disabilities, are capable of leading people without disabilities.”

GEDSI/Advocacy Champion with a disability, Sinazongwe District.

- As a result of representation in CMCs and GEDSI/Advocacy Champion groups, programme participants reported increased visibility of and acceptance of persons with disabilities in community decisions. This included increased awareness and understanding by community members without disabilities as well as increased confidence by programme participants with disabilities.

“My mind has changed a lot. I am part of the savings groups and I used to fear that if we put people with disabilities in role of treasurer, if something went wrong, how are they going to replace the money? But since they joined they are doing very well and money is just the same.”

Zipporah Sidimbila, CMC member, Tekelo, Sinazongwe District



- Interview with CJC participant, DRW, GLM and CMC members in Sinazongwe

“Problem was not just in the community but in people with disabilities themselves. They used to accept stigma and think they should not be present. Since the training they see that they are free to come forward and participate. The project has addressed self-stigma as well as changing the minds of the community.”

**Kenny Siantanga,
Headman and CMC
member, Tekelo,
Sinazongwe District**

- **Participation targets:** Introducing participation guidelines¹² for marginalised groups as defined in the GEDSI strategy, and ensuring structured links to Ward Development Committees, helped mainstream inclusion. CJC Zambia introduced GEDSI guidelines with minimum participation thresholds for persons with disabilities. By tying these measures to the project’s Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning systems, it was possible to track the extent of inclusion by intervention and make course corrections where representation was lower than expected.

2. Responsive and adaptive programming and budgeting

- While GEDSI considerations were not fully embedded at inception (e.g. a full disability assessment was not carried out due to the short inception period), multiple barriers for a fully inclusive approach to climate resilient livelihoods at community level were identified as the project progressed. Learnings from year one and from a bottlenecks study carried out by OPD partner DRW identified limited technical capacity,

attitudinal barriers, physical and geographic, accessibility and transport constraints, lack of government welfare provision, and poor financial linkages.

- **A responsive and flexible approach by the funder and contract manager** meant that learning could result in positive adaptations to programme design and budget allocation.
- This was particularly beneficial for more marginalised groups where inadequate consideration of GEDSI at inception had resulted in low levels of awareness and therefore gaps in programme design and budget allocation. As understanding and capacity increased both with implementing partners and community members, **interventions were adapted and budget allocated** for what turned out to be some of the most impactful aspects of the inclusive approach (e.g. acquisition of assistive devices and linkages for government services for this and for other social protection such as disability certification; OPD strengthening, cataract surgery, increased emphasis on Traditional Leaders taking leadership roles in accountability for inclusion etc.)

3. Overcoming barriers to participation

- CJC adopted a range of ways to overcome multiple barriers faced by people with disabilities, drawing on early lessons learnt during implementation and from key findings like the Bottlenecks study carried out by DRW.
- **Improving physical accessibility:** Flexible, context specific design, for example accessible venues and adapted scheduling, addressed real participation barriers in remote rural Wards. Successful interventions adapted to local realities to address practical barriers like mobility constraints by moving meetings to later in the day or rotating meeting venues away from centralised locations or using one of the five bicycles allocated to the 15 member CMC to go and collect the member with a disability.
- **Accessible infrastructure:** Latrines designed according to universal design principles (called “VIP toilets”) were installed in homes identified by the CMCs as well as in central locations like a market to serve as a model for communities, development actors and government. Support was provided to local masons to enable them to interpret the inclusive designs to ensure that they were suitable for all.

12. Having guidelines which could be varied was helpful when a humanitarian relief intervention became necessary where the vulnerability of households with persons with disabilities was rated much higher.

- **Ensuring budget for reasonable accommodation:** Sign language interpretation, assistive devices, accommodation for personal assistants and accessible transport were budgeted for (although not always able to meet all identified needs — for instance, one participant from Mweezya, Sinazongwe described only one accessible toilet and five mobility trikes available for the whole Zone). Delivery partners began to allocate up to 5% of their operation budget to reasonable accommodation. This enabled them to meet costs that could not be met traditionally (e.g. hire of ox-driven transport in difficult terrain such as in Shangombo).
- **Continuous capacity building:** Training for programme staff, traditional leaders, local government and GEDSI/Advocacy Champions shifted attitudes and built skills for inclusive governance. Tools like Gender Action Learning System (GALS) helped address intersecting barriers of gender and disability. Continuous capacity building sustained behaviour change and inclusion norms.

“CMC members have received a lot of training that they can use long after the project is over.”

**Kenny Siantanga,
CMC member, Tekelo,
Sinazongwe**

- **Attitudinal change:** Anti-stigma campaigns targeted traditional leaders and local officials, purposefully involving persons with disabilities in various interventions. Innovative approaches such as individuals with disabilities acting as role models and taking on leadership functions like Advocacy Champions or management committee members, all helped challenge stereotypes around people with disabilities, which traditionally limit their participation in civic life, including in leadership roles.

“There was no culture of inclusion. They (people with disabilities) were moving alone. Through the training of CJC, we have seen people with disabilities taking on farming and leadership roles including in the CMC. We can see they have potential rather than just receive handouts.”

**Webster Siansalu, CMC
Chair, Siyamenda,
Sinazongwe**

“I didn’t think I could do much to help my community and was just trying to find ways to get by. But the CJC trainings helped me realise that my disability doesn’t limit my ability to contribute.”

**Community Management
Committee representative,
CMC member**



A community member being provided with a pair of crutches to improve mobility and support independent living, Mandombe ward, Luangwa District

- **Role of OPDs:** Formal partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) were critical in accessing technical expertise and advocacy leverage. Supported by CBM UK, Disability Rights Watch (DRW) led the implementation of all disability inclusion aspects, providing technical guidance and advocacy support, ensuring interventions addressed accessibility and policy gaps and mentoring local partners and community leaders to strengthen outreach and anchored advocacy in rights frameworks. Engagement with locally based OPDs was a key part of our sustainability/exit planning strategy for the next phase. With improved capacity, local OPDs are better able to identify and reach their members and ensure that appropriate linkages are made to service providers and promote contextually appropriate local innovation around rehabilitation using local materials and skills.

CASE STUDY:

INSTALLING VIP LATRINES

In Zambia’s Luangwa District, a critical step was taken toward ensuring that sanitation infrastructure serves all members of the community—especially those often left behind. In June 2025, local masons and builders involved in the construction of Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines participated in a dedicated workshop focused on universal design principles. Facilitated by DRW, implementing partner the Council of Churches in Zambia, and the Luangwa District Council, the training aimed to embed disability-inclusive approaches into the construction of sanitation facilities.

Through practical demonstrations, group work, and technical input from the national disability statutory coordination body, Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD)—who shared key provisions from the 2024 Cabinet Circular on Accessibility—participants gained hands-on experience in designing accessible VIP latrines. Builders learned how features such as ramps, grab bars, and wider entryways can make latrines safer and accessible for everyone, including persons with disabilities, older people, and children.

A man with a disability examines a newly built VIP latrine featuring inclusive design, ensuring accessibility for all community members

4. Supporting inclusive livelihoods in climate-smart practices and access to finance

- 80–90% of persons with disabilities in low-income countries work in the informal sector or do not work at all¹³. They are traditionally excluded from economic opportunities with little access to vocational or financial literacy training, inputs or credit.
- **Climate-resilient livelihoods:** Linking climate adaptation with income generation strengthened household resilience, delivering immediate benefits while building long term capacity. Training in tree nurseries, drought-tolerant crops, kitchen gardening, and small livestock rearing helped households adapt to climate shocks. This included households led by or including people with disabilities who had not previously been engaged in livelihoods training or access to inputs. In addition, they were prioritised in emergency food distribution during a period of severe drought. These combined measures strengthened household resilience and reduced food insecurity during hunger gaps.^{pion, Zambia.}

“This achievement has not only made food more accessible but has also strengthened our confidence as a community.”
CJC Advocacy Champion



13. [CBM-UK-Project-Evidence-Brief-3-VSLA-Uganda.pdf](#)
14. [CBM-UK-PEB-4-SaveAbility-Rwanda.pdf](#)

- **Linkages to finance:** CJC supported the capacity strengthening of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and facilitated access to the Government of Zambia’s Constituency Development Fund. Persons with disabilities who had not previously been involved in savings schemes used these resources to start micro-enterprises such as goat rearing and basket weaving.
- **Community attitudinal change:** An inclusive approach to inclusive livelihoods requires not only climate smart- agriculture, training and financing but also improved access to services and communication, but also an attitudinal shift from community members and from finance providers¹⁴. Solar powered pumps and water storage units, irrigation schemes and community farms were developed as joint initiatives with a minimum number of participants with disabilities who had previously never been invited to be members of these initiatives. Where people with disabilities were not able to contribute to physical labour such as preparing land for planting, they took on other roles such as keyholders for shared boreholes.

CASE STUDY:

SUPPORTING FARMERS WITH DISABILITIES

Using the CJC-supported Fallow Irrigation Scheme, Christopher Siabeenzu, a 64 year old farmer with disabilities, multiplied 10 kilograms of maize seed into a thriving source of food and income. The 54 bags produced was enough to feed his family, sell surplus, and share seed with 15 fellow farmers. The income allowed him to buy a solar-powered irrigation engine, expand his fields, and even support his child’s university education. “When you have more, you help others grow too,” he said, capturing the ripple effect his success created.



5.Strengthening referral pathways to government services

Social Protection

CJC Zambia works in geographically marginalised parts of Zambia that lack basic infrastructure and basic government services. Initially, there was not enough emphasis on anchoring programme design in the broader framework of government’s policy and programmes.

“We spent a lot of time in the scoping phase talking to potential beneficiaries about what they expected but didn’t talk enough to the government to understand what they were already doing and how best what we were proposing to do would supplement their effort.”

Bruce Chooma, DRW

However, this was recognised and addressed resulting in DRW collaborating closely with ZAPD and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) to raise awareness about available social welfare and to conduct disability registration. Certification enabled people with disabilities to receive official recognition from the government for the first time. 1,300 individuals with disabilities obtained an official disability ID card¹⁵ making them eligible to access social protection such as welfare support programmes, including securing monthly government allowances. This process was useful for ensuring objective targeting and for increased financial security in the long term.

14. [CBM-UK-PEB-4-SaveAbility-Rwanda.pdf](#)

15. [cjc-learning_final.pdf](#)

Cataract surgery

Cataracts remain the leading cause of avoidable blindness globally, accounting for an estimated 51% of all blindness, affecting over 20 million people¹⁶. Despite being treatable with a straightforward surgical procedure, many individuals in low-income countries do not access timely care due to systemic health delivery gaps.

Zambia’s National Eye Health Strategic Plan 2017–2021 identifies cataracts as the most common cause of blindness and severe visual impairment in the country. The prevalence of visual impairment due to cataracts increases with age, especially affecting people over fifty. However, access to quality cataract services is unevenly distributed, particularly disadvantaged rural and underserved districts.

To increase independent living for people with severe visual impairment and to address barriers arising from the intersectionality between disability and ageing, cataract surgeries were supported in partnership with the Ministry of Health and other local health delivery partners. These resulted in restoration of sight to older people with disabilities and enabled them to better participate in community activities aimed at resilience building.

Assistive technology (AT)

In low-income countries, only 5-15% of people have the AT they need. This often results in people with disabilities being excluded not just from education, health and livelihoods but from many aspects of

community, social, cultural, religious life, risking an ongoing cycle of exclusion, poverty and inequity.

As part of a twin-track approach ensuring targeted support in addition to mainstreaming, CJC Zambia worked closely with ZAPD and MCDSS to increase their awareness of the high level of need in our target areas.

Developing these referral pathways resulted in ZAPD providing wheelchairs, crutches and adapted tools for nearly 85% of those that needed assistive devices, while targeted advocacy resulted in sunscreen (essential for people with albinism) being added to MCDSS’ list of free items/medications for people with disabilities. The above enabled increased participation in meetings and livelihoods for people with disabilities who had previously been excluded and often confined at home. While some gaps in maintenance and replacement cycles persisted, indicating the need for stronger linkages to mainstream health and social protection, the connections to government services have laid the foundations for continuity beyond project timelines.

“Before, I had to rely entirely on others to move around. It was difficult and sometimes I stayed indoors for fear of falling or getting lost,” an older participant with sight impairment in Luangwa District who had not previously had access to an assistive device.

¹⁶WHO, 2023



Life-changing cataract surgery in progress in Sinazongwe.

CASE STUDY:

A WHEELCHAIR SUITABLE FOR ROUGH TERRAIN

On 28 March 2020, Kalombe was involved in a devastating road traffic accident that left him with a permanent disability. After being discharged from the hospital, Kalombe moved in with his brother, who has since been his caregiver. Over the years, Kalombe faced immense difficulty in navigating his environment with a broken wheelchair that had just one working wheel.

In March 2025 a team from DRW, local implementing partner Green Living Movement, and ZAPD provided him with a new wheelchair designed specifically for the rough terrain of Mudodili Village. “With this wheelchair, I can finally move around freely, tend to a garden, and take part in activities that were impossible for me before,” Kalombe says.

Kalombe’s need was first identified during a disability registration and certification exercise conducted under CJC. Through a functional assessment, health experts prescribed a suitable wheelchair, and Kalombe expressed his dream to regain his independence. His household also received relief food in response to the ongoing drought and was provided with goats to help boost their income. In addition, a borehole was drilled, and water tanks were installed to ease access to safe water in the community. The project also allocated a gardening plot to Kalombe under an irrigated agriculture intervention, along with reasonable accommodation measures to support his full participation in economic activities.

6. Generating and using data and evidence to inform decisions

- **Indicators on inclusion:** The project embedded disability indicators in monitoring and used community level validation to track inclusion which increased accountability. Data visibility helped identify misapplication of GEDSI guidelines which supported adaptive management and informed corrective action during implementation. Ward level review tools included specific monitoring questions covering disability specific parameters such as participation levels, barriers identified and addressed, numbers of persons with disabilities

accessing inclusive services, and modifications or adjustments done to key infrastructure and amenities. The CMC representative for persons with disabilities was required to keep an updated register of persons with disabilities in their Wards.

- **Participatory monitoring:** Community-led tracking of climate justice plans ensured accountability and visibility of marginalised voices. For instance, community quarterly review meetings involving representatives of people with disabilities fed learnings on successes, challenges, and gaps into intervention design and budgeting as part of annual work planning.

CJC distributes assistive devices during the commemoration of the 2025 International Day for Persons with Disabilities.



Challenges and Bottlenecks

Despite notable progress in integrating disability inclusion into climate adaptation projects, several systemic and operational challenges arose in the CJC programme. These barriers, that have the potential to limit effectiveness and reduce potential for sustainability of inclusive approaches, were identified, reflected and acted upon by ongoing monitoring and targeted review processes like the production of a bottlenecks report by DRW at mid-point in the programme:

1. Limited technical capacity of staff, partners and local government

- Barriers faced by people with disabilities were at first perpetuated by the **low levels of awareness by key stakeholders such as staff and partners**, as well as in the community on the rights and capacities of persons with disabilities which resulted in persistent negative attitudes. While GEDSI principles were embedded in programme design, there was insufficient capacity strengthening of key stakeholders and staff, leading to initial misunderstanding of the guidelines and inconsistent adherence. Implementation fell short when quotas were treated as a target rather than a minimum standard. The guidelines also lacked institutionally based enforcement from leadership with an absence of senior-level GEDSI accountability (could advise and attempt to influence practice of other work areas but not enforce).

“Inclusion must be designed into the programme architecture—not added once implementation begins.”

Bruce Chooma, DRW

- FGDs revealed **gaps in translating policy into practice, with belated formalisation of institutional change (policies, standards, guidelines) within development partners**. Staff did not take active steps to promote inclusion early enough e.g. in the baseline survey or in early partner capacity strengthening.
- Despite the above, lessons learnt from year one analysis, and particularly a report by DRW on the bottlenecks to inclusion, led to **significant strengthening of the GEDSI focus**. As awareness and understanding increased, **community-led inclusion sometimes outpaced programme design**, creating success despite structural gaps, and an adaptive approach to programming and budgeting enabled very positive amendments to be introduced such as a greater focus on government collaboration on disability card registration, refresher training and confidence building to reinforce capacity of partners and community representatives, and the introduction of cataract surgery.

2. Attitudinal Barriers and Stigma

- Entrenched negative perceptions of disability among community members and some implementers reinforced exclusion and hindered participation. Even where stigma was less persistent, traditional views confined understanding of participation to the charity model whereby individuals with disabilities were seen as recipients of emergency food or accessible latrines but not agents of change. *One community member with a disability in Sloma District explained, “They think we cannot run businesses. They don’t include us in groups”* participant with a disability, Sioma¹⁷.
- In addition, poor communication strategies further excluded people with disabilities from being included in community-driven initiatives.

“I heard about the tree seedlings after they were all distributed. No one thought to inform me.”

A visually impaired youth, Shangombo¹⁸

17. Ibid

18. Ibid

- This was exacerbated for women and girls with disabilities, who faced intersecting discriminations, and gender-responsive approaches were not always sufficiently integrated to ensure that women with disabilities were meaningfully included and supported and they were not actively encouraged or supported to join some groups, even those formed by other women. Their participation was constrained by gendered expectations, mobility limitations, low self-confidence and a general lack of consideration in local development dialogues.¹⁹
- Physical and geographic constraints were significant. Long distances to training venues and points of distribution of livestock in the more remote locations prevented persons with disabilities from fully engaging in project activities which resulted in tokenistic rather than meaningful participation.

Sustained sensitisation, inclusive awareness campaigns, leadership modelling and empowerment programmes that targeted both the community and institutional actors helped to shift some of these entrenched social attitudes and in the short project duration, significant changes in mindset were evident.

3. Physical and Geographic Barriers

- **Physical and geographic constraints** were significant. Long distances to training venues and points of distribution of livestock in the more remote locations prevented persons with disabilities from fully engaging in project activities which resulted in tokenistic rather than meaningful participation.
- **Venue accessibility:** The Bottlenecks Report cited inaccessible infrastructure e.g. some training and distribution sites lacked ramps or adapted facilities. In addition, often due to time pressure to ensure budget spend within the financial year, some distributions, trainings and events were centralised at district level which made them less accessible in terms of distance.
- **Transport limitations:** Persons with disabilities and older participants faced mobility challenges due to lack of accessible transport.

Longer project timeframes are necessary to properly deliver a fully disability-inclusive approach. Accessibility of venues, communication methods, and training styles along with reasonable accommodations such as transport funding and budget for assistants, all increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to participate.

4. Inadequate Provision of Assistive Devices and Reasonable Accommodation

In the early stages of the project, there was **inadequate consideration of inclusion as a cross-cutting issue**, resulting in inadequate consultation on and adaptation to the needs and preferences of people with disabilities. As a result, the disability registration, provision of assistive devices and reasonable accommodation support were not in the original GEDSI strategy. While these activities were introduced after evidence-based gaps and lessons from the first year of implementation, this understandably resulted in belated and budget-constrained decisions. The significant learning throughout the programme resulted in strong connections with local social welfare schemes and the intention is to strengthen these linkages in future programming.

- **Demand outstripped capacity:** The project took practical steps to address the challenges in procuring assistive devices in the catchment areas. Whilst many people with disabilities received some form of targeted support, demand for assistive technology, in particular, outstripped what the programme could provide. Access was limited by the available resources, and linkages to government support only began to yield results towards the end of the project. Similarly, accommodations such as sign language interpretation and accessible transport were inconsistently applied across activities.

5. Lack of consultation and adaptation

- A failure to include people with disabilities in consultations on the design of some interventions, meant that accommodations were sometimes not appropriately planned or adapted from the needs' identification and design stages:

¹⁹Uncovering Systemic Bottlenecks: A Qualitative Study on Barriers Faced by Persons with Disabilities in the CJC Programme, DRW

In Sinazongwe, a youth beneficiary with a physical disability described inaccessible WASH facilities and infrastructure being built, *"They built boreholes, but none are adapted. We need ramps and handrails."*²⁰

The same challenge was experienced in DRR interventions:

*"Despite the existence of DRR frameworks in all districts, persons with disabilities consistently reported the approach taken did not go far enough to ensure that targeted strategies for ensuring persons with disabilities were reached were put in place in as far as early warning systems, emergency preparedness, and decision-making processes were concerned."*²¹

In some cases, this meant that adaptations had to be made retrospectively e.g. changing the width of doors and the height of handrails in VIP latrines.

7. Data gaps

- Disability-disaggregated data was not systematically collected across all interventions. Data was disaggregated by gender and people with disabilities but not consistently further disaggregation to male, female, youth and older people. This made it difficult to monitor equitable benefit and adapt strategies specific to needs of individuals. Where data collection and monitoring systems existed, they were often resource-intensive and vulnerable to errors.

8. Limited Linkages to Inclusive Finance

- Although livelihood training was provided, people with disabilities often lacked access to start-up capital, credit and financial services, follow up support and business planning to translate skills into sustainable income. Opportunities to connect with existing microfinance schemes or social protection programmes, including those which prioritise people with disabilities such as the National Trust Fund for Persons with Disabilities Constituency Development Fund, were successfully explored with potential for sustainability.

*"There was little effort to make specific follow-ups to households of persons with disabilities to check on how they were applying the knowledge acquired and utilising their inputs to boost their productivity"*²²



Assistive device enables woman with a disability to be part of community meetings in Sinazongwe

20. Ibid

21. Ibid

22. Ibid

*“We were trained, yes,
but there was no capital.
People with disabilities
need more support to turn
skills into income.”*

***CMC member and a
woman with a disability,
Sinazongwe***



With support from the CJC Project, Belita Siasikabole can access clean water right near her home, making daily life easier despite her disability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECTOR ACTORS

Disability inclusion is fundamental to achieving climate justice and resilience. Sector actors must move beyond tokenistic participation to co-create solutions that empower persons with disabilities as active agents of change. An inclusive approach to climate resilient livelihoods requires not only programming that is co-designed with people with disabilities from inception and throughout, but the need to overcome barriers and ensure accessibility, partner with OPDs and government, strengthen referral pathways, include advocacy on multiple levels, and long term flexible funding, combined with continuous capacity building and data informed course correction.

1. Embed inclusion from inception

- Develop a theory of change that supports **long term, systemic change and creates an enabling environment**²³ for equal access to programmes, services, opportunities and everyday life. **Co-design interventions, frameworks and tools with persons with disabilities from the earliest stages** of needs assessments, planning and budgeting to **identify how disability can be mainstreamed** across the project rather than retrofitted later. See [Advancing disability inclusive climate action](#), a practical guide developed by CBM Global's Inclusion Advisory Group that provides actionable entry points across the programme cycle – from strategy and design to procurement, budgeting, stakeholder engagement and monitoring – to help ensure climate action is inclusive, rights-based and responsive to the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

- **Frontload disability needs assessments to inform design** rather than mid-project adjustments. Ensure baseline studies are designed with GEDSI input and include disability questions. See [Disability in GEDSI Analysis: Quick Reference Guide](#) which provides a structured but flexible set of guiding questions and suggested data sources to ensure disability equity and rights are fully considered within GEDSI practices.
- **Ringfence budgets for accessibility and reasonable accommodation** to cover the targeted interventions that are required to address specific needs, including sign language, accessible transport solutions and universal design reviews for infrastructure and training venues. A helpful resource is [AccessibilityGo: A Guide to Action](#), which offers practical support for delivering a whole-of-organisation approach to accessibility across environments, communications, procurement, programmes and more.
- **Invest in community roles** (management committees and advocacy champions) and **budget for sustainability measures (supervision, refresher training, incentives).**
- Set explicit **participation thresholds with minimum quotas** and make these auditable. Apply clear GEDSI guidelines and train implementers on their use at the start of the programme to ensure minimum quota representation in selection of participants for programme activities, governance structures and decision-making bodies.



Chuma Soko, a woman with a disability, stands outside her newly constructed home, now safer and more resilient to extreme weather

23. [Preconditions for inclusion overview](#)



Participants in Mweezya ward, Sinazongwe District engaged in discussions on the challenges faced by people with disabilities and prioritised the most critical barriers.

2. Formalise partnerships and build sustainable capacity

- Ensure **government bodies** (social welfare, education, health, agriculture) **are involved from the start**. This helps validate assumptions about barriers, numbers, and distribution of people with disabilities, but also strengthens government engagement at inception, which can be a major cause of lack of sustainability and alignment). Embed interventions within their existing systems for sustainability and linkages.
- **Establish MOUs with OPDs and budget provision** for technical advice, outreach, monitoring and rights-based advocacy.
- **Provide early and repeated training GEDSI, intersectionality, universal design and reasonable accommodation** to staff, project committees, district officials and traditional leaders, and include disability focal persons within local government structures.
- Implement **community sensitisation campaigns** to challenge stigma and promote positive attitudes towards disability, including strengthening the role of traditional leaders with clear expectations around advocacy, mobilisation and accountability - moving them from passive recipients to active drivers of inclusion.
- Use **transformative tools** such as Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) to address intersecting barriers of gender and disability.

- **Train local OPDs on climate action and advocacy** to build sustainable local accountability mechanisms.
- **Support peer learning and sharing of good practice** between Districts, OPDs and community structures to replicate successful models.

3. Apply a twin-track approach to inclusion

- Purposefully consider – with OPD partners - how disability can be **mainstreamed across the project to remove practical and communication barriers**.
- **Allocate time and resources to improve accessibility** of programme sites, information and facilities (see AccessibilityGo: A Guide to Action, which offers practical support for delivering a whole-of-organisation approach to accessibility). This includes **conducting accessibility audits** identifying corrective measures for venues, routes and facilities, and ensuring **universal design standards** for WASH facilities, housing, agricultural sites, distribution points and public infrastructure.
- Provide **reasonable accommodations** tailored to need to support meaningful participation by people with disabilities, including assistive devices, accessible communication formats (Braille, audio, sign language interpretation) and modified training approaches.
- Introduce **transport stipends or community transport arrangements** in remote areas where distances are a known constraint. **Decentralise meeting and distribution points** to reduce travel distance and cost.
- Integrate **childcare solutions** into training and labour-intensive activities to enable participation of parents and caregivers, particularly parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities.

4. Integrate livelihoods and finance more intentionally

- **Treat people with disabilities as economic actors and leaders**, not primarily as recipients of aid. Ensure livelihood choices reflect their stated priorities, capacities, and risk profiles.
- Connect people with disabilities to **microfinance schemes** (e.g. VSLAs), **social protection schemes, government agricultural services and any local available funds**.

- Promote **climate-resilient livelihoods** suitable for diverse abilities such as drought-tolerant crops, kitchen gardening, and small livestock rearing (additional inputs may be necessary to buffer food security during e.g. drought cycles). To **avoid livelihood interventions that are not accessible by design** (labour intensive conservation farming, distant tree planting sites, unsafe beekeeping, central distribution points etc.) build the capacity of technical staff and trainers in local implementing partners, government and finance institutions.
 - Combine livelihood support with **skills training, market linkages, adaptive tools and start-up capital** to increase viability and ensure sustainability.
 - **View quotas as minimum standards rather than targets** that inadvertently limit benefits (e.g. applying a 5% quota for people with disabilities in livestock distribution which results in 1/20 goats being given to people with disabilities).
- 5. Strengthen referral pathways to government and essential services**
- Scale up **referral pathways to create sustainable provision of assistive devices, rehabilitation, education, mobility services, and social protection.**
 - Establish mechanisms to **link with mainstream health and social protection services for assistive device maintenance, replacement and follow up**, including advocating for inclusion of assistive devices in **national health insurance schemes.**
 - Integrate **rehabilitation and health services** into climate adaptation and livelihoods programmes where feasible, particularly for nutrition and mobility support.
- Support people with disabilities to **acquire disability IDs and link them to national health insurance, social protection, and targeted government schemes.**
- 6. Invest in robust data systems and accountability**
- Embed **disability-disaggregated data** collection and analysis from the start across all programme components to track participation and outcomes.
 - Embed **Washington Group short set screening** or equivalent to identify disability prevalence and track disability disaggregated participation and outcomes.
 - Ensure **baseline and evaluation frameworks, tools and approaches are designed involving people with disabilities and GEDSI expertise** to ensure they are fully inclusive and avoid having to retrofit. Embed **inclusive indicators** in monitoring systems that measure qualitative transformation, capturing empowerment, agency, leadership and reduction in stigma, not just numeric participation.
 - Adopt **participatory monitoring approaches** that inform adaptive management, support course correction by empowering people with disabilities to co-validate data and track progress.
 - Enhance local accountability e.g. **publish inclusion dashboards.**
- 7. Strengthen advocacy and policy influence**
- Support **community led advocacy** to influence District and national climate policies, accessible service provision and budget allocation for inclusive climate action.

Participants at the OPD capacity strengthening workshop in Sinazongwe District



- Align Ward plans to **international frameworks** (e.g. UNCRPD Articles 4 and 11, Paris Agreement Article 7.5, Sendai framework) and **national plans and acts** (e.g. Disability Acts, National Adaptation Plans, etc). **Reference commitments in local dialogues** to strengthen leverage.
 - Establish (or reinforce) **District Disability Inclusion Plans** in partnership with local government.
 - **Recognise and formally value lived experience as evidence**, using testimonies, community audits, and OPD expertise to shape policy dialogues.
 - Build coalitions between OPDs, specialist organisations, and government agencies to align efforts on inclusive climate adaptation and share resources.
- 8. Commit to long term, flexible funding**
- Structure programmes with **longer inception phases, multi-year horizons and built-in adaptive management cycles**.
 - Require **disability inclusion criteria and accessibility standards in climate finance**, including **localisation that gives OPDs direct access to resources for community defined priorities**.
 - Maintain **budget flexibility** to pivot towards emerging needs as an enabler of inclusion (e.g. assistive technology, accessible livelihood trials, additional capacity building, OPD engagement, linkages with government provision) without lengthy approvals.
 - **Systematically capture and share learning** to inform future investments and avoid repeating challenges and design gaps.

Participants after an OPD strengthening meeting, Luangwa District.

