Invisibility of people with disabilities and their animals in access to human and animal health in the context of climate change

Focus on Research Findings in Gulu (Uganda)



CONTEXT ①

Climate change (CC) disrupts the resilience of various systems, including socioeconomic and health systems. Specifically, during climate events (changes in temperature trends, precipitation, wildfires, extreme winds, floods, and others), access to human and animal health services is hindered. Furthermore, these changes have consequences on the physical and mental health of affected populations. Indeed, CC exacerbates health inequities, particularly for populations in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities (PWD). On a daily basis, PWD and their surroundings, including their animals, face multiple discriminations and barriers (physical, communicational, attitudinal, and structural) to access.

PWD REPRESENT...

World
16% PWD (2022)



Canada
27% PWD (2023)

- Floods
- Wildfires
- Snowmelt, freeze-thaw
- Others

According to study findings, the animals in contact with PWD are:

- Companion animals
- Assistance animals

Uganda
16% PWD (2018)

- Floods
- Abnormal rainy seasons with disrupted intensity
- Prolonged abnormal hot seasons
- Others

According to study findings, the animals in contact with PWD are:

- Livestock
- Companion animals (for security)

STUDY OBJECTIVE

Explore the intersection between access to healthcare services for people with disabilities and their animals in the context of climate change in Quebec (Canada) and Gulu (Uganda). Specifically, we sought to explore the different perspectives of intersectoral stakeholders regarding this intersection.

METHODS

A total of **53 people were interviewed** in Quebec **(24)** and Gulu **(29)**, including 34 women / 19 men and 31 PWD. We adopted a qualitative approach combining different data collection methods.

- **Community mobilization** with local leaders and key informants (Quebec and Gulu).
- **Individual interviews with intersectoral experts** (disability, human health, animal health, climate/environment, agriculture) (Quebec and Gulu).
- **Focus groups** with hearing and non-hearing PWD (Quebec and Gulu) and service providers (Gulu).

RESULTS: FOCUS ON THE QUALITATIVE STUDY FINDINGS OF UGANDA

For results related to Quebec, please consult the infographic in French.

CC IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF HUMANS AND ANIMALS

"During dry seasons, there are many outbreaks **affecting both animals and humans, such as ticks and swine fever**. This happens when there is too much sun [temperature rise], it is hard... for PWD."

Focus Group_3, Uganda

"**Most PWD raise animals such as goats, cows, and pigs.** It is their source of income. But **due to climate change, this is changing**. The pasture dries up, slash-and-burn practices continue, extreme weather conditions cause animals to die and get sick. It is too hot. They lack food and water. Some animals perish, and PWD have to walk long distances to follow them [so they can eat]."

Interview_2, Uganda

INVISIBILITY OF PWD AND BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH SERVICES

"**Rainy seasons affect PWDs' access to medical care due to poor roads leading to healthcare facilities.** There are informational and mobility barriers. There is no [adapted] transportation. PWD are already in a vulnerable situation (including financially), and leaders do not reach out to them, claiming a lack of transportation for themselves."

Focus Group_2, Uganda

INTERSECTION BETWEEN CC AND HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH

"**Climate change is a cross-cutting issue**. No one can think of managing it alone. We need a sectoral approach to integrate climate change into our routine services, awareness campaigns, and education efforts to improve the health and well-being of humans, animals, and agricultural crops. **We must adopt a holistic approach**."

Interview_1, Uganda

RECOMMENDATIONS OF STUDY RESPONDENTS

"**Establish animal health service** points directly in villages or at the homes of PWD [to promote disability-sensitive services]."

"**Count** [collect data on] **PWD** in communities **to understand their needs**."

"**Use existing legal frameworks** and policies to support PWD."

Focus Group_2, Uganda

"Train service providers in sign language… and **ensure that PWD have access to information** on managing the health of their animals and diseases affecting agricultural crops… while also making sure to replant trees."

Focus Group_1, Uganda

"**People should be planting trees that must be made compulsory**. Replanting trees during the onset of rainy seasons. The District does carry out seed distributions and should have a central nursery bed so that persons with disabilities can also access at zero cost..."

Interview_5, Uganda

IMPLICATIONS

At the program level: 1) promote awareness and training for service providers on the rights of PWD, and 2) remove barriers to accessing human and animal health services by adapting them and making them more inclusive.

At the research level: 1) document, investigate, and collect more data on the intersection between CC, disability, and access to health services, and 2) inform policymakers in light of the collected evidence.

At the policy level: 1) promote normative mechanisms for more partnerships and intersectoral collaborations, and 2) facilitate inclusive climate adaptation policies for PWD and their animals.

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