

THE CLIMATE CRISIS

AS SEEN BY THOSE LIVING THROUGH IT

TESTIMONIALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A JUST ADAPTATION

POLICY BRIEF



ENSEMBLE,
CONSTRUIRE
UN MONDE JUSTE
ET FRATERNEL

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PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE STUDY



CARITAS BRAZIL

Caritas Brazil is an organization based in Brazil that promotes solidarity with people in situations of vulnerability and social exclusion, with a view to the recognition and exercise of their rights. It carries out advocacy work to defend the rights of traditional peoples and communities, people affected by socio-environmental disasters, migrants and refugees, children and young people, as well as the rights of nature. Founded in 1956 under the inspiration and impetus of Dom Hélder Câmara, it focuses its mission on caring for life and all creation, drawing inspiration from the values of justice, fraternal love and solidarity.



TUNISIAN FORUM FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

FTDES – Tunisia is committed to working alongside Tunisian civil society to defend the demands of social movements in Tunisia, both nationally and internationally, and to promote an alternative model of development that is fair and respectful of people and their environment. Through various projects, activities and advocacy actions, it works on four main themes: workers' rights, women's rights, environmental rights and migrants' rights.



SAF/FJKM

SAF/FJKM – Madagascar is the Development Department within the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, a registered national non-governmental organization. Founded in 1974, SAF/FJKM is present in 21 of Madagascar's 24 regions through 54 branches. Its mission focuses on human dignity with a programmatic vision that places human beings at the centre, considering them both as actors and the ultimate goal of development. The NGO works on five main themes: health, food security and nutrition, environment and climate change, drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, and risk and disaster management.

CLIMATE CHANGE: A HUMAN AND SOCIAL EMERGENCY

All over the world, we are facing extreme weather events – heat waves, floods, droughts, fires, storms, cyclones – which are becoming increasingly frequent and intense as a result of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions. **The number of annual weather-related disasters has increased fivefold over the past fifty years¹.** Every 0.5°C of additional warming is likely to result in an increase in the intensity and/or frequency of extreme events such as forest fires, floods and cyclones².

These phenomena are no longer the exception, but rather the reality of our times. And **in France as elsewhere, their impacts reveal and amplify existing inequalities.** The most vulnerable populations are often those who are least responsible for climate change, yet they are the ones who suffer the most severe consequences and have the most limited means to cope with them.

This reality imposes urgent action on two fronts: drastically reducing greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change but also adapting to changes that are already under way as well as those yet to come. However, current adaptation policies are struggling to respond to the scale of the challenges. Resources remain limited, with fragmented measures that often do not meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations. Which begs the question: How can we respond and develop an adaptation strategy that leaves no one behind? This is the very question we sought to answer through this study. A wealth of scientific data and technical reports exists to provide an essential framework for analysis. **What is rare and harder to find is input from the people directly affected by climate change – those who are living through these upheavals and are thus best placed to devise the solutions that have the best chance of helping them cope. Thus, our aim is to highlight the reality of the climate crisis as experienced by individuals, giving a voice to those whose realities too often remain invisible. The aim is to ensure that support for people affected by climate shocks and the way territories adapt are based on the specific needs, knowledge and capacity for action of those on the front line.**

1 World meteorological organization, "Les catastrophes météorologiques se sont multipliées au cours des 50 dernières années, causant plus de dégâts, mais moins de décès", 31 August 2021, [wmo.int/fr/news/media-centre/les-catastrophes-meteorologiques-se-sont-multipliees-au-cours-des-50-dernieres-annees-causant-plus](https://www.wmo.int/fr/news/media-centre/les-catastrophes-meteorologiques-se-sont-multipliees-au-cours-des-50-dernieres-annees-causant-plus).

2 Ministry for Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, Data Lab, France, key figures on natural risks, 2023, statistiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/edition-numerique/chiffres-cles-risques-naturels/35-impacts-du-changement-climatique.

AN APPROACH ROOTED IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

While climate change affects each territory in its own specific way, it also reminds us that we are all part of the same world, exposed to shared risks but with different capacities to respond – whether economic, institutional or technological. To best understand this reality, which is both local and global in nature, we have worked hand-in-hand with three partner organizations – SAF/FJKM in Madagascar, FTDES and Caritas Brazil – to gather testimonies in a variety of contexts all united by the same climatic and social challenges. The people whose testimonies we collected were all affected by major climatic events, some occurring slowly (coastal erosion, drought) and others rapidly (floods, storms, cyclones, fires, heat waves), causing damage to people, ecosystems and infrastructure. These events all took place in the relatively recent past, ranging from a few months ago to the past five years.

Between March and June 2025, we met with 152 people in total across 14 territories: mainland France, French Guiana, Mayotte, Réunion, as well as Tunisia, Madagascar and Brazil. Among them were 119 people who had been directly affected by recent climate events, as well as 33 other key field stakeholders (community leaders, organizational/non-profit representatives, local elected officials, experts).

These testimonies were analyzed using a cross-referenced approach, i.e. by comparing experiences in different territories to identify both local specificities and shared issues. The undertaking was enriched by a week of collective work that brought together around forty participants from the territories in which the study took place and from the Secours Catholique network. This exchange provided an opportunity to compare points of view, identify common ground and collectively develop the messages and recommendations presented in this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING 1. INSUFFICIENT, UNEQUAL AND INSUFFICIENTLY INCLUSIVE PREPAREDNESS

The first lesson to be gleaned from this research is that our societies and individuals are ill-prepared to deal with increasingly severe climate events. Testimonies show a lack of clear and accessible information on risks and existing measures, poorly coordinated emergency management and a struggle to get aid to the most vulnerable. In some cases, this lack of preparedness can be explained by the fact that, with the intensification of climate change, certain areas that were previously exposed very little or not at all are now affected significantly, while others are experiencing increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. In these contexts, risk culture – understood as shared awareness of the threat and practices to prepare for it – remains limited, which reduces the capacity of local authorities and residents to anticipate and respond effectively. In countries in the Global South, preparedness capacities are also dependent on financial and technological support provided under international climate agreements. However, this situation also reflects a major difficulty, or even a lack of political will and commitment, to fully integrate climate and social issues into land-use planning and management. Beyond the emergency response, the lack of preparedness is evident in development choices, which are often made without genuine consultation with local communities and without taking their economic and social vulnerabilities into account. And yet, such individuals themselves have a thorough understanding of their environment and needs. The lack of participation leads to solutions that are poorly adapted or unsuitable, fuelling the feeling among certain populations that their viewpoints are not being considered in public policy.

"It is necessary to consult the people, because each branch of the river is different. Each community has its own way of thinking and acting." Terezinha, leader of the Gavião community, Brazil.

In order to better protect populations, it is now essential to move from a reactive approach to a genuine strategy of anticipation and adaptation. This means, first and foremost, strengthening planning but also enabling and supporting the actions of institutions and civil society at the local level. It also means using knowledge gained from the experiences and practices of local populations, as well as citizen participation (often including individuals with the greatest distance from public decision-making), as real levers for public action. **Only then can adaptation policies become more just, more effective, truly transformative and protective.**

FINDING 2. THE CLIMATE CRISIS EXACERBATES EXISTING FORMS OF PRECARIETY AND CREATES NEW ONES

In all the territories studied, a dual dynamic of climate insecurity is at play. On the one hand, there is a vicious circle in which **people who are already vulnerable or living in precarious conditions find themselves even more vulnerable to climate shocks, which in turn further serve to exacerbate their situation.** People who are already struggling – for example, those who are homeless, living in substandard housing, on low incomes, or who have an irregular administrative status – are more likely to live in areas that are more exposed. Their housing, which may be precarious or poorly insulated, are less resistant to hazards. When a climate event occurs, their limited economic resources, social or administrative isolation, and lack of access to support mechanisms make it particularly difficult for them to return to a more stable life. This is especially true when they face other vulnerabilities, such as their those linked with age or gender.

"Single women, single individuals and retired people are much more vulnerable than young people, who bounce back more quickly. [...] It's as if these people aren't included as part of society." Marie-France, resident of Saint-Martin-Vésubie, Alpes-Maritimes, France.

Moreover, there is an 'extension effect' as **climatic shifts push new segments of the public – characterized by modest incomes or precarious stability – into states of vulnerability,** generating novel forms of insecurity. Rising expenditure on housing and food, falling incomes – particularly for farmers – and inadequate insurance schemes are undermining the social security of individuals who were previously relatively stable. All this, in a context where the cost of living is rising and public assistance and services are becoming more limited.

"The situation is very difficult from a financial standpoint. Everything we had cultivated to generate income was destroyed. The crops that allowed us to make money, such as beans and bitter greens, were wiped out by the floodwaters. That was our main source of income, and everything was destroyed." Larria, resident of Antsirabe North, Madagascar.

Faced with this dual dynamic, **adaptation must shift into greater protection for the most vulnerable people and those who risk becoming vulnerable.** This includes guaranteeing access to basic needs (such as water, housing, health and food), developing universal and unconditional protection mechanisms, supporting small producers, and ensuring sufficient climate financing that is truly accessible to local communities. **A sustainable response also requires building more resilient societies overall – in other words, reducing precarious situations altogether.** The fewer vulnerable people there are, the fewer people will be overex-

posed to the consequences of climate change. This vulnerability must be understood in a broad sense. It refers to the multiple dimensions of poverty, which is not limited to economic aspects but also encompasses isolation, institutional and social abuse, deprivation of rights, deterioration of health, and the resulting fears and suffering of such experiences³. We must therefore radically overhaul our welfare systems so that everyone has access, in all circumstances, to food, water, health-care, housing and all their rights. By building fairer and more inclusive societies, we can truly strengthen our resilience in the face of future crises.

FINDING 3. THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS UNDERMINING ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE

Climate change is not limited to material or economic losses; it affects all aspects of human life. The testimonies collected reveal a host of problems: difficulties accessing drinking water, food or healthcare; deteriorating health (water or heat-related illnesses); disruption to children's schooling, etc. For many, these upheavals result in significant disruptions to their lives (change of residence, abandonment of a profession, etc.) and a loss of freedom of choice, as economic and social constraints ultimately dictate personal and collective trajectories.

"We have often had to give up some of our own basic needs to feed the livestock, especially with the rise in fodder prices and the persistent drought. The cattle must not go without food, otherwise we will starve." Zahra B., resident of Ouled Soula, Tunisia.

These challenges can accumulate and intensify, creating a spiral of vulnerabilities. As events repeat themselves, affected people see their physical, mental and economic capacities depleted. Stress, anxiety and psychological distress are becoming enduring realities that weaken individual and collective resilience. Thinking about adaptation thus requires taking all dimensions of human experience into account: material, social, health-related but also psychological.

"When you don't have the means to protect yourself against droughts and floods, it means that when it's hot, you sleep very poorly. Which means that the next day, you wake up and you're tired. Which means when you go to work tired, you will have a very hard time and be less productive. It also means that you are more irritable. More irritable at work means you might lose your job. It means you can get more annoyed with your family. This may also lead to domestic violence. All because of the climate. It is also important to note that when it gets too hot, we tend

to open the windows. Except that since there are more mosquitoes, it means we'll be more likely to catch dengue fever or chikungunya. [...] So, we can clearly see that there is a whole chain of events unfolding as a result of global warming." Bernard, community leader in Réunion, France.

These stories remind us that adaptation is not just about building infrastructure, but also about protecting and repairing lives. In the face of the proliferation of climate shocks, it is becoming essential to support the impacted individuals over the long term, by recognizing and compensating both the economic and non-economic losses they suffer. Strengthening social protection, supporting livelihoods and caring for people's physical and mental health are essential conditions for building truly resilient and inclusive societies.

MAKING ADAPTATION A LEVER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The results of this research call for a profound transformation in the way we think about adaptation to climate change. The urgent need is not only to strengthen infrastructure but also to ambitiously transform our public policies and modes of governance so that they fully integrate social, economic and human vulnerabilities. **Adaptation must become a lever for social justice based on the active participation of the populations concerned and on the recognition of their needs and knowledge.** It must be built on three complementary levels:

- ▶ Locally, by involving local communities in the effort to develop solutions tailored to each area and taking inequalities into account
- ▶ Nationally, by guaranteeing regions the material, financial and institutional means to implement fair adaptation, and by affirming and supporting their responsibility to plan for this adaptation over time in line with national guidelines
- ▶ Internationally, by recognizing that some countries bear varying degrees of responsibility for the climate crisis and prioritizing support for the most vulnerable regions and populations

To achieve this, we are making several recommendations that can be adapted to different levels of decision-making – local, national or multilateral – depending on the jurisdictions and scales involved⁴.

3 See ATD Quart Monde, Secours Catholique – Caritas France, Association des centres socio-culturels des 3 cités, Institut Catholique de Paris, "Comprendre les dimensions de la pauvreté en croisant les savoirs: 'Tout est lié, rien n'est figé'", 2019, atd-quart-monde.fr/publications/comprendre-les-dimensions-de-la-pauvrete-en-croisant-les-savoirs-tout-est-lie-rien-nest-fige/.

4 These details are included in the relevant section of the full report. When no specific context is specified, it means that the recommendation is considered relevant in France as well as in other countries.

OUR PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. IMPLEMENT AMBITIOUS, INCLUSIVE AND FAIR ADAPTATION POLICIES

Climate change requires adaptation policies that are properly planned out, adequately resourced and designed for the long term – responses commensurate with the challenges we are facing. However, while the majority of countries now possess adaptation planning tools, these policies often remain underfunded and thus insufficient. To make them ambitious, inclusive and just, we must **ensure every region has a funded plan of action, that aid and information truly reach those on the ground, and that the needs of the most vulnerable are at the heart of every decision.**

1.1. Ensure financial and human resources for adaptation and loss and damage are commensurate with the challenges involved and ensure that funds go directly to the communities concerned.

- ▶ The adaptation needs of developing countries are estimated to be **14 times higher than current financial flows**⁵. The commitment made at COP 30 to triple funding for adaptation⁶ for developing countries must be implemented more ambitiously to **enable the mobilization of \$120 billion per year by 2030**. It is also critical that this support takes the form of secure and predictable public funding mobilized in the form of grants, so as not to generate additional debt.
- ▶ At the French level, state and local authorities must secure predictable and ambitious funding for adaptation policies but also ensure that the necessary human resources are available for their implementation.

1.2. Ensure public participation in adaptation policies, notably through the establishment of citizen adaptation committees with representative constituencies

that include local residents – including vulnerable individuals – as well as associations and economic stakeholders. These committees are intended to complement and support elected democratic bodies by participating in the development of national and local policies. They can be deployed on several levels: municipalities, inter-municipal authorities, departments or regions.

1.3. Identify and incorporate the specific needs of vulnerable populations into regional analyses.

- ▶ In France, this can be done at the municipal or inter-

-municipal level by incorporating environmental data into the social needs analyses carried out by municipal or inter-municipal social action centres (CCAS or CIAS).

- ▶ Overall, there is a need to systematically integrate participatory risk mapping into disaster risk reduction strategies, ensuring they account for local socio-climatic vulnerabilities.

1.4. Introduce a legal obligation for active, inclusive and multi-channel communication of strategic documents related to climate risks

to ensure that the entire population – including vulnerable groups, those with digital access, non-native speakers and people with disabilities – can access climate information.

- ▶ This can be achieved within France by regularly updating and communicating existing information systems (municipal information mechanisms on major risks, municipal safety plans, etc.) and by mobilizing local networks such as France Services centres, social centres, local associations and one-stop shops for accessing rights.

2. ENSURING ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND ESSENTIAL NEEDS

In the face of climate crises, it is essential to guarantee unconditional access to basic necessities – food, water, healthcare, shelter and support – for everyone without any administrative barriers or exclusions. The objective is to offer unconditional protection to local populations while fostering lasting solidarity everywhere, ensuring that no one is excluded from support measures.

To achieve this, we propose the following actions:

2.1. Ensure unconditional access to essential needs before, during and after climate disasters.

During crises

- ▶ Ensure and reinforce safety nets for populations (e.g. food systems, water supply, access to adequate shelter) and use these safety nets to provide support to particularly vulnerable individuals and groups. Such groups can be identified using the territorial analysis tools mentioned in the previous recommendations.
- ▶ Ensure dignified access to essential services and needs, prioritizing assistance in the form of cash transfers – except in cases of scarcity – in order to preserve the freedom of choice and agency of the individuals concerned.
- ▶ Ensure that aid is offered unconditionally in the context of extreme weather events by committing not to make aid or support measures conditional on identity checks or administrative checks.

5 UNEP, "2025 Adaptation Gap Report: Running on Empty", October 2025, [unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2025](https://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2025).

6 UNFCCC, "Global Mutirão: Uniting humanity in a global mobilization against climate change", November 2025, unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2025_L24_adv.pdf.

Around crises

- ▶ Secure and increase income protection (meaning, avoid imposing additional conditions on existing protection such as unemployment insurance, housing assistance, pensions and minimum social benefits in France).
- ▶ Improve access to sustainable, high-quality food in the long term and address the latent effects of the climate crisis.
- ▶ In France, this could involve capping profit margins on healthy and sustainable products, beginning with a requirement to sell a hundred priority health products at cost, based on public health recommendations⁷. In overseas territories, the implementation and effectiveness of price-quality protection measures (BQP) must also be strengthened.

2.2. Establish a local one-stop shop dedicated to helping citizens understand and defend their rights against the impacts of climate change.

- ▶ This physical and identifiable one-stop shop would serve as an accessible entry point for everyone – for example, in Town Halls, France Services centres, or social centres – and would be mobile if necessary (such as a travelling van for rural or isolated areas). Its role would be to inform, guide and support individuals in their administrative procedures and compensation or prevention processes, while strengthening the capacity of regions to adapt.

3. SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RECONSTRUCTION IN THE LONG TERM

Climate change is affecting lives everywhere. Homes have been destroyed, crops lost, health weakened and spirits crushed. However, protection systems are struggling to keep pace with the speed and nature of current climate impacts. In light of this, it is urgent to ensure that everyone is protected, supported and accompanied over the long term.

To achieve this, we propose the following actions:

3.1. Ensure effective, equitable and sustainable access to insurance and compensation for all.

3.2. Protect and support agroecology, a sustainable and practical adaptation solution essential to guaranteeing the right to food.

- ▶ At the multilateral level, this means supporting agroecology within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by allocating dedicated funding, especially given that only 1.5% of public climate finance aimed at food systems is directed toward sustainable and agroecological alternatives⁸.
- ▶ In France, providing support for the next generation of farmers is crucial to sustaining local production in the face of a declining number of farms. This support must be designed to guide them toward adopting agroecological practices⁹.

3.3. Integrate mental health into health and adaptation policies and ensure accessible and sustainable psychological support mechanisms.

- ▶ Integrate measures dedicated to the mental health of people affected by climate change into each national adaptation plan.
- ▶ Establish free, accessible, long-term psychological support services for people affected by climate events, including appropriate care for children and young people, as a complement to emergency measures.
- ▶ In France, ensure the appropriate deployment of medical and psychological emergency units throughout the country in the event of extreme weather events.

At the multilateral level:

- ▶ Recognize the psychosocial impacts of climate change as a form of non-economic loss, in order to make such cases eligible for loss and damage funding.
- ▶ Integrate mental health and psychosocial support not only into emergency response actions but also into disaster risk management actions, in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. This would, in particular, strengthen the resilience of communities.



7 "Exigeons 100 aliments bons pour la santé à prix coûtant dans les supermarchés!", Secours Catholique, Foodwatch, rural families, October 2025 [foodwatch.org/fr/sinformer/nos-campagnes/alimentation-et-sante/malbouffe/exigeons-100-aliments-bons-pour-la-sante-a-prix-coutant-dans-les-supermarches](https://www.foodwatch.org/fr/sinformer/nos-campagnes/alimentation-et-sante/malbouffe/exigeons-100-aliments-bons-pour-la-sante-a-prix-coutant-dans-les-supermarches).

8 The Global Alliance for the Future of Food, "Public Climate Finance for Food Systems Transformation", November 2024, futureof-food.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ga_climatefinancereport_2024.pdf.

9 Secours Catholique et al., "Municipales 2026 : recommandations pour un accès digne à l'alimentation durable et de qualité pour toutes et tous", September 2025, [secours-catholique.org/sites/default/files/03-Documents/Recommandations_VNUM%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.secours-catholique.org/sites/default/files/03-Documents/Recommandations_VNUM%20%281%29.pdf).



ÉRIC

FARMER IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

On 19 September 2020, unprecedented floods swept through the Gard region, devastating the land of a local farmer named Éric. In just four hours, 600 millimetres of rain came down. By the evening, his land was torn apart. "The stones, the low walls, the path... everything was washed away." The family terraces, built by his grandfather, yielded 8,000 square metres of sweet Cévennes onions and 1.5 hectares of Rennet apples. Today, he has only 3,000 square metres of onions and 0.5 hectares of apples left. 5,000 square metres of crops were wiped out, representing a loss of 25 tonnes. His income has therefore fallen dramatically, and the estimate for rebuilding the walls and paths is €300,000. "At 44, no one is going to issue us a huge loan," he says. He and his wife thus decided to shut down their farm. "We've been working our fingers to the bone for twenty years. Losing everything in four hours was very rough."

Over the past twenty years, Éric has seen the effects of climate change, as his mountain was transformed by heatwaves, droughts, hailstorms, new diseases and more. "We are heading towards greater extremes: torrential rains, incredible droughts and so on. We no longer know when to start, or what will fall," he explains. In addition to economic instability and the increased physical difficulty of agricultural work, there is also damage being done to morale. Even coming from a long line of farmers, Éric has urged his children not to follow in his footsteps. Éric's story illustrates the fragility of certain professions in the face of climate change. When such land, inherited and worked on by generations, becomes uninhabitable, an entire life collapses with it.



PORTRAIT

PORTRAIT



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Hnia,

LIVESTOCK FARMER IN TUNISIA

For thirty years, Hnia has been living in the heart of a rural region of Tunisia. The region has experienced persistent drought for over five years, disrupting her daily life. A widow for two years, she is raising four children on her own. The few cows she owns are the family's only source of income. "In the past, my husband and I could fill one or two carts of grass per day to feed the cattle," she recalls. Today, the pastures have disappeared and Hnia has to buy industrial fodder. "I find myself buying five to ten bales of hay, but it's not enough." Prices are skyrocketing, while the price of milk remains unchanged, since the government subsidizes milk for consumers without considering the impact on farmers, who continue to lack support. In order to prevent her cows from starving, she had to go into debt and then sell part of her herd.

The consequences are also being felt in terms of livestock health. "The heat makes my cows ill," she explains. Without suitable shelter, the animals fell ill one after the other, resulting in veterinary costs as well as lower production of quality milk. No help was provided to her. "I ask them for some fodder, but they don't give me anything. The cooperative does not supply fodder to those who do not have surplus milk to deliver," she explains, disillusioned.

This economic crisis is accompanied by profound moral distress. Stress, fear of the future and the responsibility of feeding four children on her own are exhausting Hnia. "I find it more difficult to manage my business as a widow. I alone must deal with this responsibility. When my husband was alive, he helped me. [...] My children do not contribute to the family budget because of the precarious nature of their jobs. Since my husband passed away, I can no longer pay the water and electricity bills."

Like many women farmers, Hnia finds herself on the front line of climate change. In Tunisia, drought has a particularly strong impact on women, who often bear the sole economic burden of providing for their families. Whereas some can count on the support of a partner to anticipate or adapt, others like Hnia face the crisis alone, with no margin for error.

PORTRAIT



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MARIE,

RESIDENT OF NORTHERN FRANCE

In November 2023, Marie's house in Pas-de-Calais was flooded and her whole family had to evacuate. After spending the night in a sports hall, they moved to a hotel room. With all four sharing a space without a kitchen, they were left with nothing but the provided breakfast. Ten days later, she returned to a house that had been cleaned with the help of the Red Cross. But in January 2024, another flood forced her to leave again. Evacuated as a precautionary measure without official rehousing, she moved from hotel to guesthouse to mobile home on a campsite for two months. "The heating was too expensive, and we had to make a trip to feed our animals every day," she explained. By springtime, the family had moved back into a house that was not quite habitable and had no heating.

A year later, Marie had obtained social housing but remained under great financial strain – with a mortgage on the damaged house, double water and electricity bills as well as moving costs and household appliances to replace. "For insurance companies, five hundred euros is nothing. For us, it's an enormous cost," she explains. Access to the Barnier Fund (a scheme that finances the government purchase of houses and property in areas at risk of erosion or flooding where people can no longer live safely) was denied because the damage did not amount to a sufficiently large sum. This left her with an unsolvable dilemma: "How can I sell it like this? I wouldn't be able to make a cent out of it. Renovating means continuing to pay for two houses. And returning would mean living with a sword hanging over our heads. Honestly, I don't know what to do."

At the same time, her husband lost his job. "It's hard on morale because it feels like we're constantly struggling," she confides. Meanwhile, her children "lost everything: their toys, their treehouse, their playroom." In addition to the spike in expenses and administrative and insurance difficulties, there is also the factor of psychological exhaustion for the family, for which no support is granted.

Between material losses, debt and trauma, Marie's story shows how the intensification of extreme weather events is becoming a lasting social and psychological crisis. Beyond the cracked walls, there is intensive moral exhaustion and a lack of support that leave families with no real possibility of rebuilding their lives.



PAMELA,

RESIDENT OF FRENCH GUIANA

Pamela lives and works on the banks of the river in the village of Camopi. A local councillor, volunteer in several associations and multi-skilled staff member at the secondary school, she is both an active participant in local life and a first-hand witness to the changes affecting her area. She has been observing a worrying change in the climate for the past several years. "Flooding and drought are worse these days than they used to be," she says. Once few and far between, floods now occur at an unprecedented rate; up to five in a single year. The water level rises suddenly, often at night, without warning, leaving no time for residents to prepare. Homes have been overrun, food plots – a vital source of sustenance – destroyed, and animals swept away. "People here have suffered greatly," she said, "especially with heavy losses of essential staples."

Pamela witnessed families in distress, with their problems exacerbated by the rising cost of living. Food is more costly and travelling is more dangerous. Broken branches and uprooted tree trunks in the river make navigation dangerous. Several canoes have capsized. "The people living on the river did not receive enough help," she laments, deploring the limited relief efforts for isolated residents.

Now, drought has become another issue on top of the floods. Canoes can no longer always navigate the river when the water levels drop too low, leaving small hamlets isolated. School transport has been suspended, meaning some children have been unable to attend. Pamela took part in a local initiative to ensure that lessons would be provided to these isolated young people.

For her, these upheavals are tangible proof of the effects of climate change. "Polluting less means more life on the planet," she says, calling on elected officials to pay more attention to the voices of the indigenous peoples of French Guiana, who are on the front line of these upheavals

PORTRAIT



PORTRAIT



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SOALEHY, FARMER FROM NORTHEASTERN MADAGASCAR

Soalehy lives in Bemanevika in northeastern Madagascar, where he grows cocoa, vanilla and coffee, the main crops of the region. In recent years, the climate has changed profoundly. The increasingly heavy rains had devastating effects on his crops. When Tropical Cyclone Gamane struck, the community had to take action. "The mayor commissioned teams and everyone helped divert the water that had accumulated in the village to the Bemarivo River." Despite these efforts, a large part of the crops was lost. The economic consequences were severe, and buyers took advantage of the situation. "The floods have brought about great change. Harvests have become sporadic and buyers are no longer willing to negotiate on prices. They impose their prices and the farmers, lacking resources, are forced to accept them." Soalehy explains that he received no assistance despite the presence of humanitarian organizations. "At first, the World Food Programme surveyed the population to identify vulnerable individuals. Records were created at the time and some people even received assistance. But to be honest, I admit that I have not received anything personally." Soalehy's story illustrates the fragility of a peasant economy dependent on the climate in a context where the climate is in crisis. Extreme rainfall, poverty and lack of access to aid form a vicious circle that undermines adaptation efforts. In Bemanevika, as elsewhere in Madagascar, farmers are struggling to survive as their once-bountiful land becomes more unpredictable every year.



TEREZINHA, LEADER OF THE GAVIÃO COMMUNITY, BRAZIL

Terezinha is the leader of the Sateré-Mawé indigenous community in Gavião on the outskirts of Manaus in the Brazilian Amazon. Long committed to nature conservation and the rights of indigenous people, she has borne witness to the profound changes taking place in her region: increased alternation between droughts and floods, recurring forest fires and the gradual disappearance of local flora and fauna. "Today, the indigenous peoples no longer have the right to live as we did before – among nature, our plants and our trees. [...] Our trees are being destroyed, knocked down and thrown away. Yet, it is nature that gives us shade and makes our lives good," she explains.

The unprecedented drought affecting the region is having a particularly disruptive impact on daily life in the community. The rivers and small streams that connect the village to the main roads have dried up, making travel extremely difficult, especially for accessing emergency care. "When a child falls ill at night, you have to walk through sand and mud to reach the road, which is a real ordeal," she explained. Extreme heat exacerbates health problems and makes agricultural work more difficult. Water quality is also a major concern. The water in the stream, once a source of life, has now been polluted by industrial activities. Faced with this situation, the community dug a 53-metre deep well which now supplies families with drinking water. To make ends meet, the families of Gavião also practise diversified family farming: bananas, cassava, cocoa, coffee, açai and beekeeping.

Through her commitment, Terezinha calls on the authorities to listen to and involve indigenous communities in the sustainable management of the Amazon rainforest: "The authorities must listen to us and engage in dialogue with us. We are the ones who know what we need," she reminds us. For her, preserving the forest means above all preserving the lives and dignity of those who depend on it. Her words serve as a warning, but also a message of hope: "Let nature live, so that we may survive."



PORTRAIT

France 



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