

FROM CRISIS TO ACTION

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of the environmental, economic, and health impacts of climate change already being felt by vulnerable countries. It features personal stories from local pastoralists, peasant farmers, youth activists, and vulnerable workers worldwide, highlighting the human side of climate change. The book presents the work that the Climate Vulnerability Forum (CVF) and its V20 Finance Ministers (CVF-V20) have done to push for urgent global cooperation on the climate crisis. Detailed case studies from many CVF-V20 countries illustrate the need for adaptation and resilience and offer a blueprint for action that can be followed by others. The book offers invaluable insight for students of environmental studies and economics, Earth sciences, human and political geography, and political science, as well as for activists, policymakers, and concerned citizens. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

Abena Takyiwaa Asamoah-Okyere is a Technical Advisor (Sustainability) to the Finance Minister in Ghana. She leads initiatives on the Sustainable Development Goals and on climate finance. She has served as a Climate Finance Advisor supporting the CVF-V20 Secretariat and advocates for development-positive climate-resilient growth for developing countries. Abena coordinated the development of Ghana's Climate Prosperity Plan.

Christina Natalia Widjaja is a dedicated researcher focused on climate change impacts at the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security. She is working on various international projects to provide in-depth

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-60594-6 — From Crisis to Action

Abena Takyiwaa Asamoah-Okyere , Christina Natalia Widjaja , Tim Smedley
Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

qualitative and quantitative analysis and insights on climate-related disaster risks and ways to adapt/mitigate the impacts. Christina is passionate about translating science into accessible narratives to inspire action.

Tim Smedley is a book author, journalist, and ghostwriter, writing about environmental and social justice. His first book *Clearing the Air: The Beginning and the End of Air Pollution* (Bloomsbury, 2019) was shortlisted for the Royal Society Science Book Prize. His second book *The Last Drop: Solving the World's Water Crisis* (Pan Macmillan, 2023) was a Times Book of the Year.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-60594-6 — From Crisis to Action

Abena Takyiwa Asamoah-Okyere, Christina Natalia Widjaja, Tim Smedley
Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

'From Crisis to Action takes you straight to the front line of the climate crisis. It brings home in vivid detail the impact climate change is already having on people and communities around the world and paints a picture of what is at stake across 70 climate-vulnerable countries. It's also a call to action: to remind us that we have an opportunity to avert the worst impacts and build a resilient world for everyone. This is not just their crisis, but a shared challenge for the entire world that requires our collective action.'

Steve Howard, Vice Chair of Sustainability Temasek;
Founding Chair of the We Mean Business Coalition;
Founder of the Climate Group

'Ultimately, climate disasters morph into economic disasters, impoverishing our planet as each new natural disaster hits us. In-depth examples in the book – from different countries on the frontline of climate change – prove that austerity measures caused by the “mounting debt in climate-vulnerable developing countries” exacerbate the challenges of dealing with climate change. The authors challenge the mindset of wealthy nations to change from seeing climate financing as an “aid for poverty reduction” to instead seeing it as an investment into climate adaptation and resilience measures: suddenly opening up whole new avenues of action, including leveraging debt innovatively. This book is an excellent and essential read for all, giving us real routes to real action to deal with climate change, in collaboration with the very people who can take the action to mitigate its impact, if resourced well.'

Minni Jain, author of *The Language of Water*, and Director,
The Flow Partnership UK

'From Crisis to Action is a much-needed call for active hope in the face of the growing impacts of climate change. The authors repeatedly shatter lazy paradigms and always put people at the heart of their narrative, filling the book with specific examples of communities already suffering from climate impacts and illustrating positive responses with

specific examples of adaptive innovations. The three climate scenarios presented should be enough to jolt the most jaded reader – even the (now likely unachievable) 1.5-degree scenario makes for sombre reading, but at 2 degrees, and much worse at 3.6 degrees, the mathematics of climate disaster ratchets up exponentially across heat, health, and hunger impacts. Crucially, the authors make the case for rejecting any sense of victim narrative, instead promoting the idea of climate positive development, and explaining impacts and solutions primarily in economic terms. Voices from the front line remind us that the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts do not require a transition from high to low carbon but a human development pathway centred on access to energy and more equitable global financial dynamics. There also needs to be an acknowledgement that developed countries will not be immune from their own climate damages and from the implications of economic and human shocks around the world. We need to embrace pragmatic, active hope, and recognise that only respectful collaboration rather than aid will provide the most robust response.’

Nigel Topping, Founder of Ambition Loop,
and UN Climate Champion, COP26

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-60594-6 — From Crisis to Action

Abena Takyiwaa Asamoah-Okyere , Christina Natalia Widjaja , Tim Smedley
Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

From Crisis to Action

Climate Change Through the Eyes of the Most Vulnerable

ABENA TAKYIWAA ASAMOAH-OKYERE

Ministry of Finance, Ghana

CHRISTINA NATALIA WIDJAJA

*United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human
Security*

TIM SMEDLEY

Freelance writer



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-60594-6 — From Crisis to Action
Abena Takyiwaah Asamoah-Okyere , Christina Natalia Widjaja , Tim Smedley
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi - 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009605946

DOI: 10.1017/9781009605960

© United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, with the exception of the Creative
Commons version the link for which is provided below, no reproduction of any part
may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press &
Assessment.

An online version of this work is published at doi.org/10.1017/9781009605960 under
a Creative Commons Open Access license CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO which permits
re-use, distribution and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial purposes
providing appropriate credit to the original work is given, any changes made are
indicated, and the new work is published under the same licence terms. When the
licensor is an intergovernmental organisation, disputes will be resolved by
mediation and arbitration where possible. To view a copy of this license, visit
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009605960

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-60594-6 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
remain, accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1º, 28003
Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-60594-6 — From Crisis to Action

Abena Takyiwaa Asamoah-Okyere , Christina Natalia Widjaja , Tim Smedley
Frontmatter

[More Information](#)

***Dedicated to the memory of Prof. Saleemul Huq, for
his invaluable contributions to the beginnings of the
Climate Vulnerable Forum***

CONTENTS

Foreword	page xi
<i>H. E. Mohamed Nasheed</i>	
Our Oceans, Our Future World	xiii
<i>Nakeeyat Dramani Sam</i>	
1 INTRODUCTION: MONITORING THE IMPACT	1
2 THE CLIMATE HAS ALREADY CHANGED	28
3 CLIMATE SCENARIOS: A TALE OF THREE FUTURES	44
At 1.5 °C, the ‘Adaptation Remains Possible’ Scenario	57
Below 2 °C, the ‘Widespread Loss and Damage’ Scenario	61
At 3.6 °C, the ‘Global Devastation’ Scenario	66
4 WHO IS MOST AT RISK?	74
5 NOBODY IS SPARED	93
6 HEAT, HEALTH, AND HUNGER	111
7 THE ECONOMICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE	143
8 WHAT WE MUST DO	176
9 CONCLUSION: IT IS NOT TOO LATE	208
Acknowledgements	221
Glossary	225
References	229
Index	257

FOREWORD

As I read this book, I am struck by the sheer breadth and detail of human experiences woven into the fabric of our changing climate. From the mountains of the Colombian Massif to the sunny shores of Saint Lucia, the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas in Nepal and the northern savanna zones of Ghana, the voices of people such as Víctor Yalanda, Jevanic Henry, Sweta Koirala, and Nakeeyat Dramani Sam echo with urgency, resilience, and hope.

In the Cauca Department of Colombia, Víctor Yalanda, an indigenous leader, paints a picture of a once-predictable world now transformed by uncertainty. The rhythms of nature that guided generations have faltered, leaving communities grappling with the harsh realities of unpredictable weather patterns and dwindling harvests.

Across the ocean, in the Caribbean Island of Saint Lucia, Jevanic Henry bears witness to the erosion of coastlines, the bleaching of coral reefs, and the diminishing returns of a once-thriving fishing industry. For island nations like Saint Lucia, the existential threat of climate change looms large, casting an immense, ominous existential shadow over livelihoods and cultural identities.

Meanwhile, in the heart of the Himalayas, Sweta Koirala observes the creeping changes that have transformed her beloved Kathmandu. What was once a city of cool breezes and mild winters now swelters under relentless heat. Even the remote mountain villages of Mustang are not immune, as erratic rainfall triggers landslides and threatens age-old ways of life.

And then there is Nakeeyat Dramani Sam, a young climate change champion from the northern part of Ghana, which is experiencing more droughts resulting in desertification with

unpredictable occurrences of storms with strong winds – Nakeeyat whose impassioned plea at COP27, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, resonated with the unmistakable sense of urgency that has defined the voice of her generation. For Nakeeyat and millions like her, the climate crisis is not an abstract debate but a stark reality unfolding before their eyes, portending either a dark and unpredictable future or one where peace, prosperity, and fairness thrive.

Yet amidst tales of hardship and loss in this book, there is also resilience and hope. The stories shared within these pages bear testament to the indomitable spirit of humanity in the face of adversity. They remind us that while the challenges posed by climate change are daunting, they are not insurmountable.

The cost of delay or inaction is a price we cannot afford to pay. If we can't adapt, our people will continue to suffer. If we don't have the capital to pursue net zero, global temperatures will go up. We must now prioritise development-positive climate action. For CVF countries, achieving climate prosperity – which includes zero-carbon economies, with resilient societies, well adapted to a hotter world – is climate justice. Nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

As we delve deeper into the book's pages, I hope readers will heed the lessons of those who bear the brunt of our changing climate, as well as recognising the interconnectedness of our world and the urgent need for collective action.

I hope this book, in spite of its difficult subject matter, ultimately becomes a source of hope and inspiration – that humanity has within its power the ability to halt global warming; that there are no limits to human ingenuity in the face of this challenge; and that a better future is not only possible, but within reach.

H. E. Mohamed Nasheed

Secretary-General, CVF-V20 Secretariat

Former President of the Republic of Maldives

OUR OCEANS, OUR FUTURE WORLD

By Nakeeyat Dramani Sam

My great people of the World
My Sisters and Brothers
Humankind
Look yonder
See the beautiful handiwork of the Creator
The beautiful foamy waves of the sea
The beautiful blue expanse of the sea.
With its roaring waves
And great pulsing heart to behold
It is awesome and breath-taking.
Yet the susurruration of the waves
Supplants the heat and heaves a sigh of relief for the
grieving heart.
The mighty ships plying thereon for a catch
To tame the pangs of hunger.
Our Ocean,
How beautiful and expansive you are.
You are not a mere body of water.
You are the source of life on Earth.
You are the lungs of our planet,
Providing most of the oxygen we breathe
(Healing our bodies and our minds as you rejuvenate
yours.)
Our health is intimately tied to your health.
More than three billion people depend on you
For you are their primary source of protein.
Your marine and coastal biodiversity
Serves as livelihood for so many people.

You help soak up the carbon dioxide produced
Thus reducing the impacts of global warming.
You make up most of our planet
And sometimes I wonder why
We do not call our Earth the Ocean planet

But where cometh thee
You – you, human, you, with your plastics and your filth
Why do you dump these into the sea, choking it to death?
Why do you use unconventional ways to ransack the seas?
You – you, human, you scour and scrape our Mother
And beneath the wounds are scars
As you dynamite and dig to wound our Mother
Our Mother, who you mine, just so a few can wine and dine
Leaving nothing but open wounds and empty seas
For the rest of us.

My people, you see the wealth, the beauty and promise of
the oceans.
Why are we strangling our Mother, our Friend, our Sister,
and our Daughter?
For our elders say, ‘Where you have your daily sustenance
you don’t ruin it.’
Infuse the Ocean with joy instead of poison, cruelty, and
disdain.
Treat our Ocean with decorum and embrace it with love.
So, people of the world, it’s time we all come together,
mobilise, and unite.
For the sustenance and stewardship of the oceans.
Our Ocean,
Our Mother,
Our Sister,
Our Daughter,
Our Loyal Friend.

Nakeeyat Dramani Sam is a Ghanaian poet and climate activist. At the age of 10, she addressed the Plenary Session of COP27 in Sharm El-Sheik,

Egypt, as a Youth Ambassador for the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), where she highlighted the urgent issues of loss and damage from climate change and called for immediate action. She continued her advocacy by speaking at the V20 Ministerial Dialogue X in Washington, DC, where she emphasised that 'It is not too late' to respond to climate-vulnerable countries' call to action.

Disclaimer

This book is a product of the staff of the Climate Vulnerable Forum and its V20 Finance Ministers (CVF-V20) and the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) with external contributions. The views, opinions, and conclusions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of UNU-EHS, CVF-V20, or the governments they represent.

The book was written in 2024, and all information, titles, roles, and designations of individuals referenced reflect their positions and responsibilities as of that time. While the book is being published in 2025, no retrospective updates have been made to account for subsequent developments, role changes, or institutional shifts that may have occurred after the time of writing. Readers are encouraged to interpret the content within the temporal context in which it was originally developed.

While reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented, use of any data or information from this book is at the user's own risk and under no circumstances shall UNU-EHS, the CVF-V20 Secretariat, or any of its partners be liable for any loss, damage, liability, or expense incurred or suffered which is claimed to result from reliance or misuse of the information contained herein. The content is provided on an 'as is' basis, and readers are encouraged to verify the information independently.