Connecting Climate Minds
Lived Experience
Working Group

Hearing from **youth, Indigenous communities,** and **small farmers** and **fisher peoples.**

Overview of Connecting Climate Minds

Over the last year, Connecting Climate Minds (CCM) convened the climate and mental health communities from research, policy, practice and lived experience across the globe to achieve two main goals:

1. **Develop an aligned and inclusive research agenda**, deeply grounded in the needs of people with lived experience, which outlines the evidence needed for policy and practice to safeguard mental health while enabling climate action.

2. **Nurture a connected, supported and engaged community of practice** with the right tools to enact this agenda, including greater knowledge sharing.

"Being in this space has allowed me to see and **understand how climate change impacts beyond what the eyes can see**, reaching depth emotionally and psychologically, and destabilising the potentials of people, especially the younger generation. And it's been a privilege to work with other amazing young people against this tide"

– Hope Lekwa, LEWG member
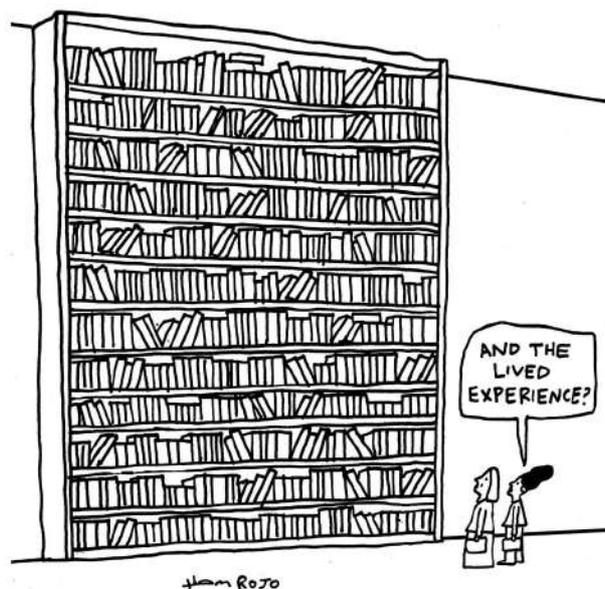
Lived Experience inclusion through CCM

Lived experience was central to the vision of CCM. Throughout every aspect of the project we sought to uplift, understand and serve the emerging mental health needs of populations affected by the climate crisis, while creating space to learn from the wisdom of people already adapting to these effects.

- The core CCM team included a Lived Experience Working Group (LEWG), comprising the Climate Mental Health Network, Force of Nature and Sustyvibes.
- Regional Community teams included regional Lived Experience Advisory Groups (LEAGs) and Youth Advisors (YAs), recruited and supported under guidance from the LEWG.

The LEWG also supported lived experience integration into the Regional Communities of Practice more broadly via:

- Training sessions for the Regional Community Convenors on decolonial approaches and trauma-informed practice
- Support check-ins with the LEAGs and YAs
- Creation of online groups for YAs to connect with each other across regions.

Project convenors and the LEWG made concerted efforts to ensure that participants were adequately compensated for their time and contributions and to establish safe spaces for collaboration.

From the beginning, the LEWG team was committed to creating processes that foster meaningful engagement of lived experiences across a range of individuals and perspectives – particularly where traditional research networks have previously fallen short. This strategy included creating new ethical processes around data and ongoing consent within review protocols (atypical for most institutional review boards), including integration of Indigenous data sovereignty protocols[1], collective consent processes and consent using fingerprints for participants from the Peruvian Indigenous Nations who couldn't sign their names. In addition to instituting these processes across the CCM project, the group also developed three guidance documents on the appropriate recruitment and involvement of people with lived experience of climate-related mental health challenges and worked with people with lived experience to share their insights, experiences and wisdom in the form of videos and audiograms (36 collected) to be featured on the Global Online Hub.

To augment the findings from the CCM region-specific dialogues and further ensure that research priorities for the climate and mental health field are informed by authentic lived experiences, we engaged with groups particularly vulnerable to the mental health impacts of climate change and with unique insights and sources of resilience: small farmers and fisher peoples, Indigenous Peoples and youth. Our interactions aimed to create safe spaces for these global lived experience communities to lead the priority setting for the climate and mental health field and to align with the principle "nothing about us, without us." An Indigenous Advisory Board supported this work, and partnerships were developed between the LEWG and key partners globally (for instance Waman Wasi, Claretian University and Conscious Food Systems Alliance).

Indigenous Peoples

data available from **35 virtual participants**

16
countries represented

10
hours of transdisciplinary dialogue

2
virtual dialogues

1
two-day in-person intercommunity dialogue

61
virtual dialogue participants

150
in-person dialogue participants

37
survey responses*
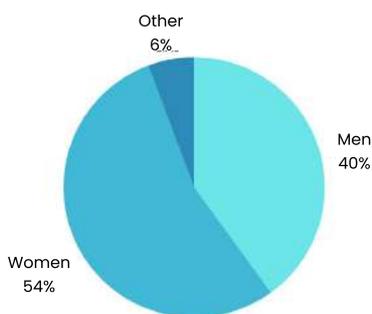
Gender
virtual dialogue participants

Other 6%
Men 40%
Women 54%

Region
virtual dialogue participants

Eastern and South-Eastern Asia 14%
Sub-Saharan Africa 37%
Europe and Northern America 11%
Oceania 6%
Latin America and the Caribbean 31%
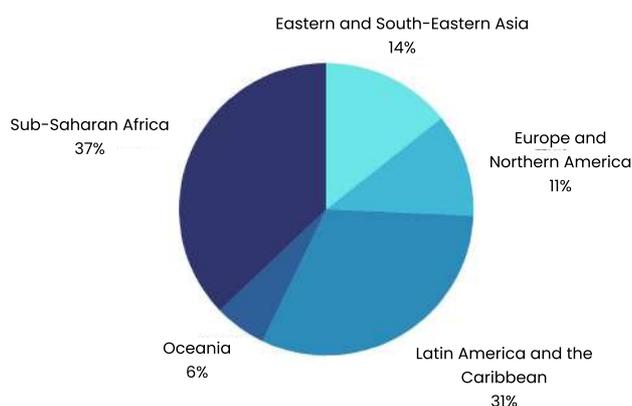
*Please note survey numbers are approximate and do not account for duplicate or incomplete responses.

data available from
28 virtual participants

10

countries represented

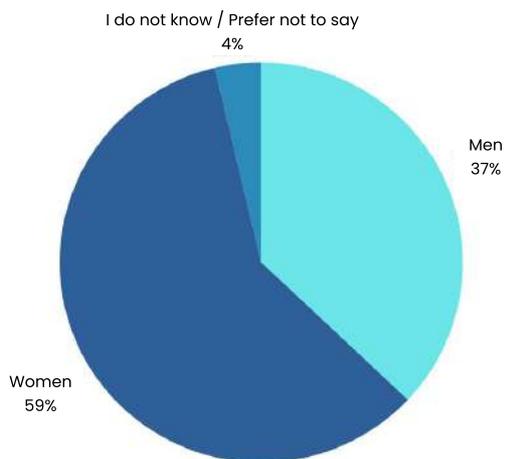**2**

hours of transdisciplinary dialogue
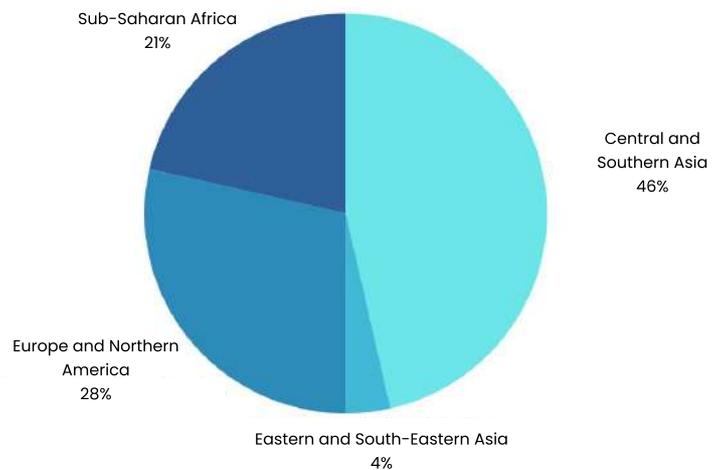
1

virtual dialogue

28

virtual dialogue participants

20

survey responses*

Gender
virtual dialogue participants

I do not know / Prefer not to say
4%

Men
37%

Women
59%

Region
virtual dialogue participants

Sub-Saharan Africa
21%

Central and
Southern Asia
46%

Europe and Northern
America
28%

Eastern and South-Eastern Asia
4%

*Please note survey numbers are approximate and do not account for duplicate or incomplete responses.

data available from
57 virtual participants

24
countries represented

6
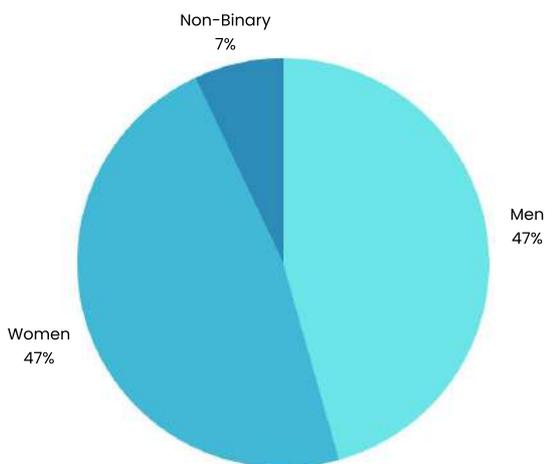**hours of transdisciplinary dialogue**

1
virtual dialogue

2
in-person dialogues
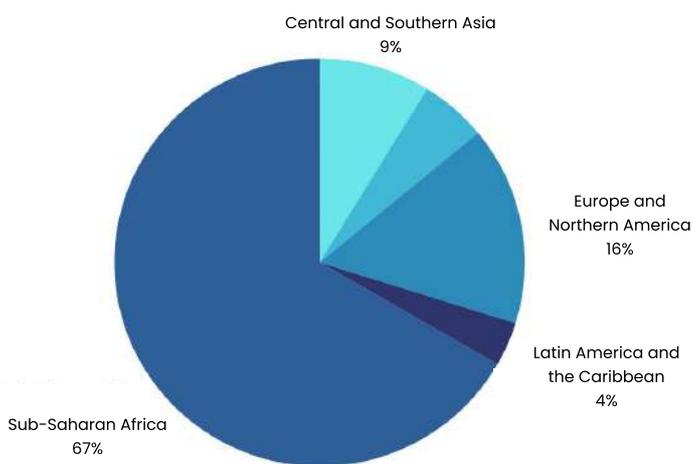
57
virtual dialogue participants

38
in-person dialogue participants

341
survey responses*

Gender
virtual dialogue participants

Non-Binary
7%

Men
47%

Women
47%

Region
virtual dialogue participants

Central and Southern Asia
9%

Europe and
Northern America
16%

Latin America and
the Caribbean
4%

Sub-Saharan Africa
67%

*Please note survey numbers are approximate and do
not account for duplicate or incomplete responses.

Global Lived Experience outputs

3

global lived experience research and action agendas

3

global lived experience research and action agenda summaries

106

priority research themes

Youth declaration

Lived Experience inclusion toolkit for researchers

3

guidance documents for the Regional Communities of Practice

"We really enjoyed the breakout rooms and it's a **fabulous experience to be connected with a lot of people all over the world.** Finally we can say, we are the world, we are the people!"

Small Farmers and Fisher Peoples

"It was such a blessing to share this space. These are the stories, **the wisdom that is really going to carry us forward and enable us to start healing not only ourselves but our planet.** When we sit and appreciate that, it's so important."

Indigenous Peoples

"I just love this **feeling of community and collectiveness** which sometimes gets lost in daily day-to-day living."

"**I felt very comfortable during the sessions,** and I saw the care the team was taking to have me as comfortable as possible in order to contribute effectively."
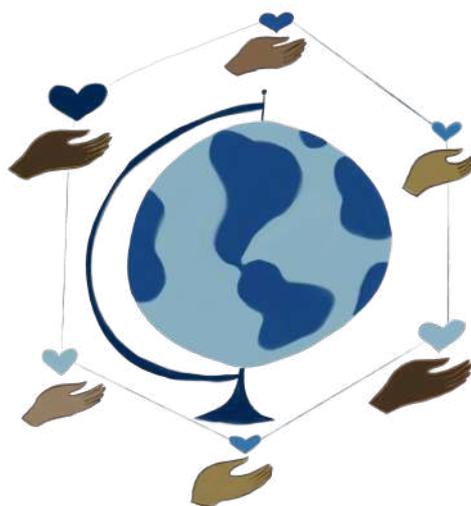
Youth

Emerging impacts from the global lived experience workstream

CCM has built a diverse, engaged global community committed to understanding and addressing the effects of climate change on mental health. While the production of research and action agendas was a key first step for this community, our work is just beginning and the ripple effects from the project continue to emerge.

LEWG members and other lived experience advisors have highlighted the personal and professional benefits of their involvement with CCM. Those who participated in the youth dialogue, in particular, reported that hearing from a diverse and motivated group of young people was inspiring; though this group is one of the most affected by climate change, they also have great resiliency and the potential to find solutions. Engaging with experts in this field also allowed contributors to expand their professional networks and skillsets. One YA, for instance, used the information and methodology from the project to run a climate change and mental health event at her school in Bhutan.

Contributors from the global communities who engaged in the dialogues expressed gratitude for being meaningfully engaged in the research process – a space where these groups are often excluded or included in a tokenistic fashion. Participants from the youth dialogue, in particular, spoke of the power of the opportunity to speak and be heard on a topic that so deeply affects their communities.

We are excited to see the continued impact of the project and the hard work of the LEWG, YAs and participants and contributors from these global communities. There is a strong appetite from these groups to further engage with one another and take this important work forward. With continued commitment and investment, CCM is poised to lead the way to a future that safeguards the mental health of all in a changing climate by ensuring that lived experience is central to research and action going forward.

"...Sometimes these big projects include youth as partners or contributors just for the sake of saying they work with youth; but **I felt that the different actors of the CCM project do believe that youth perspectives [are] important** and offered these meaningful spaces [to engage]."

Youth Advisor

"As a young person, it is easy to often feel powerless in the changing world around us. However, working in this field has allowed me to see that climate change and mental health doesn't just reveal the vulnerabilities of young people, but **also opens the door to the incredible resilience, energy and expertise that youth can bring.**"

Sacha Wright, LEWG member

"**Our research process shouldn't be unique to this project; it should be standard.** All research concerned with climate-mental health should strive to reach the highest levels of inclusion and active participation of people and communities too often left out."

Lian Zeitz, LEWG member

References

¹ Kukutai, T. & Taylor, J. (2016). Data sovereignty for Indigenous peoples: Current practices and future needs. In T. Kukutai & J. Taylor (Eds.). Indigenous data sovereignty: Toward an Agenda (pp. 1–22). Canberra: Australian National University Press.

² Smith, D.E. (2016). Governing data and data for governance: The everyday practice of Indigenous sovereignty. In T. Kukutai & J. Taylor (Eds.), Indigenous data sovereignty: Toward an agenda (pp. 117–135). Canberra: Australian National University Press.

³ First Nations Information Governance Centre. (2014). Ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP™): The path to first nations information governance. Retrieved 28 June 2023, from https://achh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/OCAP_FNIGC.pdf