



© Humna Sharif

Profile of a Conservationist Humna Sharif

Humna grew up in Islamabad, Pakistan with a view of the Himalayan foothills, and found her way to working on the coast and the ocean by way of mountain streams and rivers. She moved to the United States in 2013, and has lived in the Midwest, New England, and now, D.C.

Humna holds a master's degree in environmental management from the Yale School of Environment, and a bachelor's in environmental sciences and environmental thought and practice from the University of Virginia. At TNC, Humna's role is at the intersection of climate policy, nature-based solutions and equitable access to adaptation resources for coastal communities in Maryland.

"If we want to see lasting conservation and climate adaptation results, then communities must be centered," says Humna about how she approaches this work.

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Crisfield youth gaze upon the *Crisfield Seafood Workers Mural*, painted by artist Michael Rosato. © Jay Fleming.

A Community at Water's Edge

In the early 1900s, the port city of Crisfield was the second-largest city in the state of Maryland, next to Baltimore. It was then known as the "Seafood Capital of the World," where thousands of fishing vessels would unload their daily catch of oysters, crabs and fish. By the mid-1900s, the Chesapeake Bay's aquatic life, and the communities who depended on it, began to rapidly decline as our growing, industrialized population had been consuming natural resources at an unsustainable rate.

Today, Crisfield is still a proud seafood-producing community, but its relationship with the water looks different than it did a century ago. Nuisance flooding has become a way of life. Residents of Crisfield wake up in the morning and check the daily tide charts the same way most of us check our weather apps. These nuisance flooding events often close schools and businesses, and leave property owners with expensive damages

and losses. As in many small coastal communities, the severity of these impacts has been disproportionate to the resources available to address them. And based on the climate models and projections, flooding in Crisfield will only become more frequent and intense.

Over the past few years, The Nature Conservancy—with funding support from Lockheed Martin—and a variety of partners have been working with the City of Crisfield and members of its community to address these challenges. TNC's primary goal for the project is to create new collaborations between community leaders, residents and outside partners to increase local capacity to advance flood adaptation projects that benefit a range of community needs and goals. We are confident that this collaborative model can be replicated in other communities facing similar challenges.

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TOP LEFT: An aerial photo shows the vulnerability of the Turner Station neighborhood in Dundalk, Maryland—a community in which TNC is partnering. © Severn Smith/TNC; BOTTOM LEFT: Parishioners avoid floodwaters while approaching Shiloh United Methodist Church in Crisfield, Maryland. © Jay Fleming; RIGHT Raising houses up to seven feet has become a not uncommon practice on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland. © Jay Fleming

Supporting Equitable Access to Funding for Adaptation Resources

Climate change is here, and it's having real impacts on local communities. Underserved and overburdened communities—frequently communities of color—are disproportionately impacted by climate change, yet they often must overcome the greatest hurdles to access adaptation funds.

Climate adaptation laws and policies do not yet center climate justice goals. Legislative frameworks, solicitation language, and funding criteria are restricting community access to nature-based climate adaptation funding. These aspects of federal and state funding systems manifest in climate adaptation programs that perpetuate and even exacerbate systemic inequities.

The Nature Conservancy has organized an Advisory Committee of community leaders, environmental justice advocates, policy professionals and government officials to collaboratively identify and address inequities in funding systems. The Advisory Committee will recommend ways that legislative, regulatory and solicitation language, criteria and processes need to change to address inequities in funding allocations for nature-based climate adaptation. TNC has an ambitious 2030 goal of helping 100 million people at severe risk of climate-related emergencies by protecting and restoring the health of natural habitats. To reach this goal, we must direct funding to the areas where adaptation challenges are the most extreme.

To learn more, visit [Nature.org/SEAFARE](https://www.nature.org/SEAFARE)

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TNC hosts a community advisory meeting in Crisfield, Maryland © Matt Kane/TNC

A Community at Water's Edge, Continued

"Crisfield is a community with a lot of determination and big ambitions for their future, despite the flooding challenges they face," says Dr. Elizabeth Van Dolah, Environmental Anthropologist with the Maryland and D.C. chapter of TNC. "We hope the efforts we're supporting in Crisfield can be a model for empowering other communities in the region to self-define what community resilience looks like for them, and how to integrate those goals into planning for a future with a changing climate and more water."

As the flood adaptation projects begin to take shape, the community can be proud and confident that they have played a major role in creating these projects. And by combining flood adaptation strategies with community development goals, today's leaders are shaping the future they envision for the next generation of Crisfielders. TNC and our partners are looking at Crisfield as the new model for coastal resilience and flood adaptation as more and more coastal communities across the country and around the world are now grappling with similar issues.

Learn more at: [Nature.org/MDCoasts](https://www.nature.org/MDCoasts)