



Photo credit: Google (13 August 2019)

What is Climate Justice?

A term used for framing global warming as an ethical, political and economic issue, rather than one that is purely environmental or physical in nature. This is done by relating the effects of climate change to concepts of justice, particularly environmental justice and social justice and by examining issues such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate change. A fundamental proposition of climate justice is that those who are least responsible for climate change suffer its gravest consequences. In view of this, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) developed key principles to promote climate justice globally. Some of the principles include the Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) and the Polluter Pays Principle (PPP). The process of identifying climate injustices focuses on analyzing all UNFCCC general principles from the local perspective linking them to issues of justice, equality and human rights.

Studies show that many people are unaware of climate justice. The more some have been involved in climate change-related projects and activities, the more they have learned something about climate justice. However, many of them still have not yet grasped a broader understanding of the full climate change picture, which includes, causes (greenhouse gas emissions, global warming); consequences (flood, drought, disease); impacts on key sectors; adaptation mechanisms and practices. Perceptions of causes and effects of climate change are not well understood, albeit small proportion of citizens have a low to medium level of comprehension related to climate change. This highlights the importance of promoting awareness and capacity to address climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and improving understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change and its impacts on human rights, livelihoods and other social and economic factors to ensure there is climate justice.

Why concerned about climate injustices?

Climate change is a human rights issue, and anything that tampers with are human rights ought to be given attention. For coordinated efforts in taking climate change action, there is need for monitoring of both the ethical, moral and scientific aspects of climate change. Climate justice needs to become a legal matter within each government, as well as the global perspective.

What are the Human Rights associated with Climate Change?

Citizens have experienced various forms of climate injustice in their life time, and some of the human rights having been affected as consequences of climate change include:

i. Right to Shelter

The right to shelter or housing is a fundamental human right. Shelter is one of our most basic needs, and without it, it is almost impossible to carry on any other kind of activity. Government should have the role to ensure their people are provided with decent housing, but with the impacts of climate change, there is much destruction of housing and shelters are jeopardized.

ii. Right to Life

The right to life is moral principle based on the belief that a human being has the right to live and, in particular, should not be killed by another human being. Climate change has caused various disasters, including floods, landslides, and drought, which have repercussions on the livelihood as well as life and health of human beings. Due to climate change effects and impacts, many lives have been and can be lost.

iii. Right to Food

The Right to Food is a fundamental human right for people to adequately feed themselves in dignity, implying that food is available. The unavailability of food, as a result of climate change, therefore compromises this human right. This right protects all human beings from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. The right, however, does not oblige government to hand out free food unless people are in a deprived environment such as war or natural disasters.

iv. Right to clean water and sanitation

The Right to clean water is also fundamental all humans as it is each one's right. The human right to sanitation is closely connected to the human right to water since lack of sanitation reduces the quality of water downstream, so these are separate by equal. Climate change impacts include drought, strong winds, floods, etc. which affect the quality of water and sanitation especially at the community level.

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