



THE WEEKEND READER

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Socio-Economic Justice"

A WORSENING CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE CASE FOR A JUST TRANSITION

The reality of Climate change is starting to set in for many across the globe as people continue to experience the effects of variability such as floods, droughts, cyclones, hurricanes and tsunamis etc. Since 1906, global average surface temperature has increased by more than 1.6 degrees or even more in sensitive polar regions.¹ Approximately 90% of disasters are now classified as weather or climate-related, costing the world economy. Global annual economic impact allied with disasters were estimated at around US\$ 75.5 billion in the 1960s, US\$ 138.4 billion in the 1970s, US\$ 213.9 billion in the 1980s, US\$ 659.9 billion in the 1990s, US\$ 374 billion in 2011, US\$ 117 billion in 2016, US\$ 75 billion in 2020 and US\$ 145 billion in 2021.²

Climate crisis has also been more visible in Zimbabwe with its detrimental effects undermining national development and human capital development. This can be exemplified by the Cyclone Eline floods of February 2000 which left approximately over 250, 000 people affected, 90 people dead and the destruction of about US\$ 7.5 million worth of goods.³ Approximately 230 dams burst, and 20 000 herd of livestock went missing. The World Food Programme Zimbabwe (WFPZ), citing Timber Producers Association, noted that 3340 hectares of timber was damaged valued at US\$10 000 000 which is one year's produce and this had a devastating impact on the livelihoods of the people.⁴ Infrastructure in Mutare and Chipinge was destroyed e.g. granaries, bridges, schools, telecommunications lines, roads clinics. Electricity and telecommunication lines are among other essential facilities that were affected by the cyclone. Estimation rehabilitation costs of irrigation schemes and water resources was US\$ 2 042 047.

In 2019 another recurring effect of climate change (Cyclone Idai) was witnessed with inimical and malignant effects on human security. Approximately 250 000 people were affected by the Cyclone Idai, 120 000 children affected, 154 deaths and 189 missing.⁵ Livelihoods and food security was undermined for instance, 30% of Zimbabwe's agricultural output typically comes from the three provinces that were most severely impacted by Cyclone Idai. It is imperative to note that, Cyclone Idai came soon after the 2018-2019 drought which had grave implications on the electricity and water sectors, causing widespread rationing and tariff adjustments to manage costs.

The continuous recurrence of climate induced droughts and food shortages speaks to the worsening climate crisis and has left half of the entire population vulnerable. A 2021 Report by the World Bank noted that, approximately 7.9 million Zimbabweans are in extreme poverty.

1. <https://www.globalchange.gov/browse/indicators/indicator-global-surface-temperatures>

2. Mutizwa, B. (2021). An Investigation into Organisation Capacity for National Disaster Management in Zimbabwe: The Case of the Department of Civil Protection. *International Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences*, 4 (1) 11-22

3. Zimbabwe National Contingency Plan 2012:9

4. <http://fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/1000050.pdf>

5. (UNICEF Zimbabwe Report: 1 2019:1).

A view which was validated by the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview for Zimbabwe which stated that, about “7 million people in 30 urban areas and 62 rural districts across Zimbabwe are estimated to be in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in 2020, compared to 5.5 million people in August 2019”. The 2022 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report reinforced the verdict that climate change was worsening food security by stating that, approximately 3.8 million rural households are food insecure. Interestingly, the effects of climate change in Zimbabwe are not only limited to the aforementioned effects but also include forced migration, enhanced unpaid care, dysfunctional family and they call for immediate redress.

As apparent as these changes are, there are still many who deny the immediate need for serious action to address climate crisis. While climate change is an equaliser as it occurs everywhere, the effects are felt more in the Global South. The World Bank reinforces this verdict by stating that in the absence of action, more than 140 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia will be forced to migrate within their regions by 2050⁶. This can be termed unfair on the poorer countries whose capacity for resilience is minimal especially as the burden of responsibility for causing this, lays on the industrialized nations who grew from the use of fossil fuels such as coal. Although developing countries may want to comply with climate change protection, they lack the resources to do so. Therefore, pro-poor position and climate justice stance is that the global north should bear the brunt of climate financing to ensure climate justice and a just transition. To form any position, below are a few considerations.

What is Climate Financing?

Climate Finance refers to resource generation and allocation in a bid to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while increasing resilience and adaptation of humans and the environment to the effects of climate change. Central to climate finance is the difference in ability to put together resources between the global north and south. As such, the primary responsibility lies with the north to organize resources as they benefitted through the industrial revolution of the 1800's using fossil fuels. This is also acknowledged by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and most recently, the Paris Agreement of 2016. While over 150 countries are signatory to this instrument, little has changed in establishing significant change in emissions.

Europe Reverting to Coal?

The failure above should lie squarely on the global north and most recently European countries who are even now considering reverting back to the use of coal as a substitute to gas whose supply line was affected by the Russia Ukraine war.⁷ One writer remarks, “And in fact, they are running several coal plants that they had previously planned to decommission or entirely retire.”⁸ While preaching to developing countries the need for reduction of greenhouses, the developed themselves are using coal again, deliberately going against the UNGCCC & Paris Agreement. As a result, global coal consumption increased by 1.2% in 2022 compared to the previous year according to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) Annual Coal 2022 Study. What hope then is there to defeat climate change?

6. Mutizwa, B. (2021). An Investigation into Organisation Capacity for National Disaster Management in Zimbabwe: The Case of the Department of Civil Protection. *International Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences*, 4 (1) 11-22

7. <https://www.marketplace.org/2022/10/19/coal-comeback-europe-avoid-energy-emergency/>

8. <https://www.marketplace.org/2022/10/19/coal-comeback-europe-avoid-energy-emergency/>

Trade in Carbon Credits

Carbon loosely refers to waste produced from use of pollutants and fossil fuels that destroy the ozone layer and result in climate change. Carbon credit is the amount of allowable pollution that is then traded on carbon markets where, “Companies or individuals can compensate for their greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing carbon credits from entities that remove or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”⁹ This industry is valued at US\$2 Billion¹⁰ and has now generated interest from governments across the world as it has remained largely unregulated. In Zimbabwe for example, government has expressed interest in regulating to regulate the markets which are presently controlled by registration of participating companies to local authorities. Central government hence seeks involvement to ensure “communities benefit from the proceeds of this trade.”¹¹ This raises questions of its own as the proposed 50% share targeted by government can reduce the desire of locals to engage in the conservation projects. In the same vein there are ethical questions around trading credits because they continue to perpetuate the enrichment of developed countries through pollution while negatively affect developing countries through natural disasters. Therefore, given the above scenario, it is critical to reflect on the whether the globe can achieve carbon emission reduction, climate adaptation and resilience targets, if the right to pollute can be bought?

Recommendation

A just transition refers to “...greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.”¹² Proponents for a just transition recognize the need for a social justice oriented methodology in addressing climate variability and ZIMCOPP identify with this mantra. It is a mantra that speaks squarely to the principles of losses and damages and the responsibility to achieve this goal is a collective one involving governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSO)s, Academia and citizens. A concerted effort will ensure sustainability as there will be ownership across the board. Cognizant of the challenges above, a just transition will be supported by the below:

- **Climate Finance:** Developed countries should provide primary (bulk) resources to fund climate action efforts.
- **Compliance with treaties and conventions:** Developed countries should develop political will to comply and not do so when convenient.
- **Research:** Significant resources generated should be directed towards finding sustainable methods of utilizing the environment whilst not compromising future prospects.
- **Climate Smart Budgets:** Governments should set aside funds for preservation and reclamation efforts.
- **Curbing corruption:** Governments are selling away the environment to unsafe environmental practices due to greed and corruption. Stiff punitive measures must be imposed on the guilty.
- **Climate change community education awareness campaigns:** the government must robustly spearhead community education awareness campaigns. This must be institutionalised by establishing Community Climate Change Officers.

9. <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/what-are-carbon-markets-and-why-are-they-important#:~:text=In%20a%20nutshell%2C%20carbon%20markets,or%20reduce%20greenhouse%20gas%20emissions>

10. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/zimbabwe-regulate-carbon-credit-market-curb-greenwashing-2023-05-23/>

11. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/zimbabwe-regulate-carbon-credit-market-curb-greenwashing-2023-05-23/>

12. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS_824102/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=A%20Just%20Transition%20means%20greening,and%20leaving%20no%20one%20behind



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