



YOUNG AFRICANS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

PROJECT REPORT



Gratitude

Many individuals have played crucial roles in bringing this project from its inception to its successful completion. We are deeply grateful to the Laidlaw Foundation for their unwavering belief in our project, demonstrated by their generous grant, which made its realization possible.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the individuals who provided invaluable support in the form of guidance, advice, knowledge, and an infectious enthusiasm for the project. Additionally, we must acknowledge those who assisted in compiling resources and meticulously editing the docuseries.

A special thank you goes out to VIDEA, who graciously partnered with us for the premiere of our inaugural episode. We also want to express our gratitude to Moses 'Ras' Mutabarkua, who came to our aid at the eleventh hour with video editing, ensuring our premiere was a success.

With the invaluable support and guidance of these dedicated individuals, alongside our young participant, we have truly embodied the spirit of Ubuntu, recognizing that we all influence and enrich one another, and, therefore, we must thrive together as a collective. This embodies the core values of Generation of Leaders.

Writer

Takudzwanashe Mundenga

Editor

Dr. Dobijoki Emanuela Bringi

Youth Participants

Abideen Oguntade

Alusine Bangura

Kerby Mentor

Léa Muamba

Vickey Natiki

Expert Contributors

Dr. Vishwas Satgar

Ferrada (Jacob) Lightning

Takudzwanashe Mundenga

Project Contributors

Auctavia Van Der Merwe

Nomfundo Ngidi

Project Coordinator

Veronica Bringi

Supported by

Laidlaw Foundation

LAILAW
FOUNDATION

ABOUT US

Generation of Leaders is a grassroots youth-led group that seeks to build the next generation of African leaders. Through community education, we aim to provide opportunities for young people to learn about themselves while addressing social issues that impact them.



About *Young Africans and Climate Justice*

Young Africans and Climate Change is a youth-led participatory action community-based research project which seeks to raise the voices of young Africans. Young people were spearheading this project through their stories, raising their voices and sharing their perspectives on the issue of climate change. Young people are the future leaders, so it is necessary to have them lead the discussion. We will be exploring the experiences and stories of African

Canadian youth and the impact that climate change has had on their homelands and in their lives. Additionally, we will highlight the importance of honouring land and encouraging our participants to make a pledge towards climate justice.

The goal of the project was to contribute and spark dialogue, discourse and discussions amongst young people and the community about the impact that climate change is having on the planet and in local communities. By contribute to this discourse, we encourage our participants and community to be part of the fight for climate justice by doing their part to save our heating planet.



THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Climate change refers to the slow yet significant changes in global temperature and weather patterns over time. These shifts extend beyond everyday weather, impacting the entire climate system. Primarily caused by human activity, such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes, releases excess greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These gases trap heat, leading to global warming and altering weather patterns and natural cycles. In addition to environmental impacts, such changes can cause direct or indirect disruption to living conditions. Moreover, climate-related phenomena like intense rainfall, flash floods, and extreme temperatures are becoming more frequent. The ongoing changes extend beyond the natural environment and influence the human-created environment. The regulation of greenhouse gases is challenging as humans produce them at a pace the atmosphere cannot naturally manage, leading to environmental imbalance.

KERBY MENTOR HATITAN-CANADIAN

Youth Participant

"Some seasons have become shorter or longer than usual, with extreme temperatures. Heatwaves occur more frequently. In my previous job as a field engineer, we had to take more water breaks and rest time during heatwaves."



BACKGROUND OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Vishwas Stagar, an associate professor at the University of Witwatersrand with a depth of experience in climate studies, explained that we have been living on an altered planet since 2015. This change results from global temperatures escalating beyond a crucial point – a one-degree Celsius increase since the pre-Industrial Revolution, ushering in the Anthropocene era.

“Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns, which can be natural. Human activities, particularly burning fossil fuels, have been the main cause of climate change”.

-Alusine Bangura, Sierra Leonian-Canadian

In highlighting the significance of this shift, he clarified that this shift indicates that before 2015, our world sustained a relatively stable environment and climate for almost 11,700 years, allowing human civilization to progress and flourish.

In this lengthy stable period, dubbed the Holocene epoch, humans could establish diverse communities, develop efficient agricultural practices, and create excess resources. However, with 2015 marking a critical departure from this Holocene era, we have ventured into an era dominated by unruly climate extremes that pervade our everyday life. Stagar encapsulates this era of change as a time characterized not by the steady climate of the past but rather by escalating environmental unpredictability, which influences every aspect of our lives. The issue reached a notable milestone with the 1.5 Degrees Celsius Report (IPCC, 2022). The study warned that we are propelling ourselves toward a catastrophic future without immediate and significant changes to our current emission rates.

Moreover, Dr. Stagar underscored the report's key prediction that failure to reduce emissions by at least 45% by 2030, we risk the global temperature escalating beyond the dangerous threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius. This critical projection epitomizes humanity's pressing challenge in addressing, mitigating, and ideally reversing the course of climate change.

CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION



Climate-induced migration refers to the movement of people due to significant changes in their local climate. For many immigrants coming to Canada from Africa, this movement results from an increasingly unstable climate in their home nations that can no longer support their traditional ways of living. In large part, individuals and communities are being driven away from their homes due to the direct effects of climate change. These include rising sea levels and coastal erosion, making certain land uninhabitable, and extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, and droughts that damage infrastructure and destroy livelihoods. Climate change leads to shortages of essential resources like water and food, which strain societies heavily dependent on agriculture.

Traditional livelihoods like farming and fishing can be thrown off by altering ecosystems and reducing productivity. In turn, these drastic changes drive people to migrate for new opportunities. Indirect causes include economic instability from reduced agricultural output or disruptions in resource-dependent industries. Tensions over land, water, and food within communities may intensify and cause displacement. Muamba, a young Black professional in health and community services with roots in the Democratic Republic of Congo, shared their perspective on climate change. They mentioned experiencing the political and systemic effects of climate change through decisions made by individuals in positions of power.

Migrants, upon arrival in Canada, often face portrayals in mainstream media as job and home takers from Canadians. However, such a view ignores the complex reasons behind their migration—the dire struggle for survival and the search for safe environments with access to necessities such as fresh water and food. Broadening the understanding of mainstream Canadians about these issues, including the nuances and gray areas, is paramount to ensuring these migrants' stories are heard and appreciated. Emphasizing each other's shared humanity, where everyone deserves the right to safety and happiness.

CLIMATE IMPACTS ON AFRICA

Climate change has substantially affected Africa, leading to significant shifts in migration patterns. Our research found that in many parts of the continent, it has dramatically impacted the agricultural sector, where farming practices remain unmodernized, and the broader understanding of climate change and its effects on these practices is not as well known as it should be. Climate extremes are becoming a normal part of our world, accompanied by devastating consequences and impacts. These often target the most vulnerable populations in poorer countries, illustrating a pressing need for action within a rapidly closing window.

Many individuals from East and West Africa have migrated to Canada seeking asylum and better opportunities. For instance, climate change factors such as constant flooding, severe drought, and unstable weather conditions resulting in food insecurity and disease surges have forced many South Sudanese to leave their homeland. Similarly, due to unfavourable environmental and political conditions in Congo, many inhabitants were compelled to seek comfortable lives outside their home countries, including Canada. All these factors intersect with the impacts of climate change.

Increasing incidents of droughts, flooding, beach erosion, windstorms, high temperatures, and erratic rainfall, like that experienced in Sierra Leone in 2017 and 2023, led to widespread devastation, as explained by Alusine Bangura. Such severe climate phenomena encourage people to relocate their homes and families to safer, less climatically challenged cities. However, as these cities become overpopulated and opportunities become sparse, people migrate overseas in a quest for safer living conditions and stability. The figure below shows an illustration of the impacts of climate change.

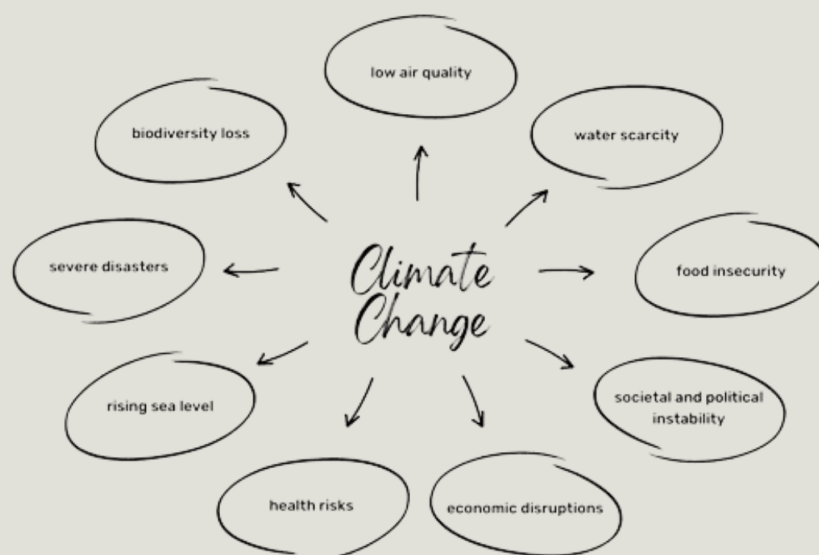


Figure 1. Climate Change Impacts

EVIDENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Daily, the impacts of climate change might not appear pronounced. However, events such as yearly floods in a particular region due to rising sea levels and record cold or hot temperatures during winter and summer are glaring indicators of climate change. Abideen Oguntade, a Nigerian student in Canada, noted that while he doesn't experience the daily effects of climate change, but can identify moments in his life that connect with it. For example, yearly floods in Lagos due to rising sea levels and extreme temperatures in winter and summer. Vishwas Satgar highlights how climate change significantly affects food systems. Emphasizing the crisis faced in South Africa, he recounted how droughts linked to climate change brought hunger and starvation to society, causing spiralling food prices. These challenges initiated a societal process of understanding and acting on the reality of climate change. Mobilizing communities to spread awareness about the connection between drought and climate change became part of the strategy.

Takudzwanashe Mundenga, a CREATE Climate Smart-Soils scholar at the University of Guelph, labelled climate change a “latent threat,” describing that it cannot be noticed in everyday weather. This also explains why it is hard to determine if one can be impacted by climate change in their daily lives.

"Climate change feels like a silent threat. While I don't experience it daily, I notice its effects in seasonal weather patterns, like unusually warmer winters in recent years," stated Vickey Natiki, South Sudanese legal assistant from Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Climate change threatens ecosystems, human well-being, and the planet, including more severe disasters, rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, food and water scarcity, health risks, and economic disruptions. It disrupts precipitation patterns, causing droughts and floods, and alters habitats and species migrations. Extreme weather events have negative impacts on health and well-being. Climate change also exacerbates social and economic inequalities, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. Due to poverty, lack of resources, and reliance on rain-fed agriculture, Africa is particularly susceptible to these effects, including droughts, desertification, flooding, decreased agricultural productivity, water scarcity, and the spread of diseases like malaria. Examples of impacts include devastating flooding and mudslides in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and more frequent heat waves across Africa.

Extreme and irregular weather patterns cause alterations in both the duration and intensity of seasons, affecting agriculture and daily routines. A project participant, Kerby Mentor, shared climate change's impact in his native country, mentioning how droughts and floods destroy agriculture, homes, and livelihoods. These extreme events are becoming more frequent and intense. Impacts also reach community health, as the First Nations activist Ferrada Lightning highlights that climate change influences mental health through the stress and anxiety caused by the loss of homes, livelihoods, and community stability. Moreover, changes in water availability can significantly affect daily activities, agriculture, and access to clean drinking water.

CLIMATE JUSTICE, JUST TRANSITION & DEEP JUST TRANSITION

Climate justice focuses on the disproportionate impact of climate change on certain societies, particularly those that are not responsible for causing the problem. It recognizes that certain regions, like Sub-Saharan Africa and the Cryosphere, are experiencing the effects of global warming faster than the global average, greatly disrupting their ways of living.

A key principle of climate justice is addressing the root causes of climate change and prioritizing the needs of those most affected. It acknowledges that not all countries share equal responsibility for the current climate crisis. Industrialized nations in the northern hemisphere have historically used oil, coal, and gas for over 150 years, significantly contributing to climate change. Additionally, recently industrializing countries like China and India need to reconsider their developmental strategies, given their increasing use of fossil fuels in the past few decades.

Climate justice also involves confronting issues of inequality. It recognizes that addressing inequality is crucial in tackling climate injustice. The idea of a "deep just transition" has emerged within the concept of climate justice. Originating from trade unions, it has become part of global discourse and policy frameworks. This transition aims to create systemic change and supports poorer countries' journey towards renewable energy. It strives to meet the needs of everyone in society, promoting equality and collective action to address climate change.

The discourse in South Africa provides an example of the struggles related to climate justice and just transition. They have crystallized their solutions in the Climate Justice Charter, which provides a visionary path toward addressing apartheid legacies, current policy crises, and the impending climate crisis. The Charter outlines 14 systemic alternatives, such as democratic planning, clean energy, climate jobs, and rights of nature, providing a roadmap for the deep transformation of socioecological systems. Thus, the concept of climate justice not only identifies climate change as a significant crisis but also provides solid, practical, and fair strategies to address it.

Climate justice is a key concept encapsulating the ethical and political issues related to climate change, linking social justice and environmental sustainability. One of the core principles of climate justice is intergenerational justice, which establishes that current actions should center on securing justice for younger generations, including those yet to be born. Intertwined with this is the idea that climate justice is a part of social justice, presenting both as essential facets to guide a just transition process.

REFERENCES

IPCC. (2022). Global Warming of 1.5°C: IPCC Special Report on Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-industrial Levels in Context of Strengthening Response to Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157940>



GENERATION OF LEADERS