Impacts of Climate Change on Vulnerable Groups

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We Know it but we Ignore it
OUTLINE

• Effects of climate change: Setting the Stage
• Who is vulnerable to climate change impacts?
• Impacts of Climate Change on Vulnerable Groups
• Big Picture: Eminent Crisis
• What needs to be done?
• Way Forward: Questions
“Vulnerable People Suffer First and Worst”

Ban Ki-Moon
Effects of climate change

- Short-term – Erratic Climate and weather extremes - natural hazards.

- Long-term - Altered ecosystems and habitats - gradual degradation of the environment.

- Risks to human health and society. Threaten development gains and hinder the implementation of SDGs.
Effects of climate change—Violation of Rights

- Right to life
- Right to health
- Right to housing
- Right to food
- Right to water
- Right to breath clean air
- Right to sanitation
- Right to property
- Right to self-determination
- Right to existence
Effects of climate change

- CC has a different meaning for different people

- CC is unjust—real injustice is that those who have contributed least to its causes are suffering most from its effects.

- CC is unfair.

- CC is a threat to global peace, security, and prosperity
What is vulnerability?

What is vulnerability? degree of inability to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impacts of disasters [WHO]

What is Climate Vulnerability?

What is Climate Vulnerability? degree to which geophysical, biological and socio-economic systems are susceptible to, and unable to cope with, adverse impacts of climate change [IPCC]

Climate change is undermining the enjoyment of human rights, especially of the people on the frontline of the climate crisis who have contributed least to the causes of climate change
Who is Vulnerable to CC Impacts?

- Children
- Elderly and Disabled People
- Indigenous People or Extremely Poor People
- Women

women and children are 14 times more likely to die or be injured during a disaster than men
Impacts of CC on Children

- **Health**: Children are more vulnerable to vector-borne diseases than adults. 20% increased Asthma since 2007.

- **Natural Disasters**: small size and relative inability to care for themselves.

- **Malnutrition**: Parched, cracked earth and crop failures undermine the survival and nutrition of children.

*Inequality and Poverty*: a vicious cycle- a child living in poverty or deprived of adequate water and sanitation before a crisis will be more affected by a flood, drought or storm, less likely to recover quickly and at even greater risk in a subsequent crisis.
Impacts of CC on Children

Nearly 160 million children live in high or extremely high drought severity zones - More than 88% of the existing global burden of disease due to CC occurs in children less than five years of age.
Impacts of CC on Elderly and Disabled

- **Diminished Ability to Adapt:** difficult to regulate body temperature and to adapt physiologically to heat.

- **Resistance in Seeking Assistance:** social isolation and fear

- **Detrimental Physical Impacts:** dehydration and the worsening of existing health problems; and malnutrition

- **Loss of Access to Infrastructure:** power-cuts can impact on life support equipment - affect mobility (wheelchairs and ramps)
Impacts of CC on Elderly and Disabled

emergencies have increased by four times and affected people increased to 254 million from 174 million in the past 20 years
Impacts of CC on Poor and Indigenous People

- **IPs living Conditions:** tend to live in places that are worst hit – their poverty and discrimination against them exacerbates their vulnerability

- **Proximity to Nature:** The close relationship of many IPs to their environments - sensitive to the impacts of climate change

- **Violation of Human Rights:** right to self determination

- **Biofuels Connection:** seen as a solution - leading to human rights violation.
Impacts of CC on Poor and Indigenous People

- **Economic Growth**: CC impacts will slow down economic growth throughout the 21st century - making poverty reduction more difficult - “further erosion of food security” and “creation of new poverty traps”

- **Increased Inequality**: wage dependent poor households affected by increased food prices, especially in regions with high food insecurity and high inequality.
Mind the gap: climate change, minorities and indigenous peoples

In some cases, peoples’ ways of life and even their very existence are being threatened by climate change
Impacts of CC on Women

- Crop Failure
- Fuel Shortage
- Water Scarcity
- Natural Disasters
- Disease
- Displacement

*Majority of World’s Poor coupled with Unequal Access to Resources*
an average of 77% of the fatalities were women
some of whom drowned as a result of not being taught how to swim after Tsunami in 2004

300% increase in new domestic violence cases after two tropical cyclones hit Tafe Province in Vanuatu in 2011
Big Picture-Eminent Crises

- Hunger, Diseases- UNPRECEDENTED DEATHS
- Mass Migration
- Violence
- National Security Crisis
- Grave Injustice

“Climate change is the biggest threat to human rights in the 21st century.”
What needs to be Done?

- Improve basic public health measures
- Increase capacity for disaster preparedness and response
- Alleviate poverty
- Promote inclusive growth
- Inclusive planning and decision making
- Awareness Raising

Women Agents of Change: Women are not only vulnerable to CC but they are also effective actors or agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation
What Judges can Do to Lessen the Impacts?

- **Access to Justice:** judges proactive response will facilitate most vulnerable

- **Judicial Response:** as simple as:
  - EIA consultation, Licensing matters, land entitlement issues,

- Or as complex as
  - Claims for refugee status.
  - Human rights- Rights to sovereignty, right to continued existence.

*The human cost of global warming has a name: climate injustice.*
Way Forward-Questions?

✓ How can the different needs of men and women be integrated into CC policies?

✓ How can we move away from largely scientific, market-based CC responses to a more people-focused, gender-aware approach?

✓ How can we ensure human rights are at the centre of CC responses?

✓ How can we ensure women play an equal role in decision-making around CC?

✓ What successful strategies are already adopted by men and women?
Thank You

“From little things big things grow”

Paul Kelly