



## Climate change and social justice

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### Article History

Received: 28 August 2015

Accepted: 03 October 2015

Published: October-December 2015

### Citation

Amruta Smit Thakkar. Climate change and social justice. *Climate Change*, 2015, 1(4), 498-502

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### General Note



Article is recommended to print as color version in recycled paper. *Save Trees, Save Climate*.

### ABSTRACT

Climate change is an issue of social justice, particularly for developing countries like India. Being a developing country, while formulating the policies and implementation strategies for adaption and mitigation of climate change, we must not divert our developmental goals such as health, poverty, energy access and education. To overcome the problems of climate change both developing and developed countries need to work together and developed countries need to take initiatives to support developing countries to reduce the GHG emission at the same time achieve the desired development. Support in terms of fiancé, transfer of low carbon technologies etc. Responding to climate change will require the integration of adaptation into all aspects of policy development and planning for poverty reduction. This paper analyses the major international developments related to climate change and Indian perspective as a developing country focusing to the measures for mitigating climate change and social justice. Social justice in the International as well as National context important issue of uniformity in distribution of energy consumption/emission per capita is discussed in the paper.

**Keywords:** Clean energy, Uniformity of energy distribution, social vulnerabilities, Development banks

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a strong consensus that climate change presents an immediate challenge to the well-being of all countries. Climate related impacts are resulting to change in temperature, wind pattern, precipitation etc. which will further be resulting to migrations, change

in agriculture and fisheries and in a broad way affect the basic needs of people. Countries are under pressure to develop robust climate policy to address the climate change consequences. But, the cost of climate change is unevenly distributed among countries and is particularly high for developing countries, because of the high dependency on natural resources and climate.

The United Nations Framework Convention on climate change and Kyoto protocol represents the initiatives towards the climate change mitigation and adoption but the challenge is to engage both developed and developing countries. For engaging all the countries, we shall have a strong strategy, which will bind both developing and developed countries together to work on the climate change mitigation. Now, the question is why should developed countries participate? Why should developing countries bear the burden of emission by the developed countries? And very much similar to any collective actions, climate change mitigation has the fundamental dilemma that who will be in benefit and who will bear the losses? Though everyone understands that the aim is to achieve the collective goal. But the question of 'why should I initiate?' is still there. Because anyone who will be initiating is in a loss of something at the initial stage, though in long terms everybody is in benefit.

The developed countries will engage only if they found any interest may be in form of incentives, subsidies, legal benefits such as authority to sell the surplus emissions to the other countries, financial benefits, and or the assurance that though the initial cost is more, the ultimate cost, in long terms will be very less in comparison to the post disaster mitigation cost. But this, at the same time will be argued by developing countries, who may have to buy the emissions from the developed countries who has reduced the green house gas emissions with the help of advanced technology and efficient strategies to reduce the emission rate secondly, developing countries will contribute only if they found fair distribution of responsibilities.

There cannot be a single statement or formula, which will be applicable to all the countries so in a way it is a challenge to create a win-win situation. But the maximum participation is necessary to achieve the goal because more the participation, more are the opportunities for cost effectiveness and less will be the conflict, ultimately we will be able to derive a sustainable long-term strategy.

## 2. INVESTIGATING CLIMATE JUSTICE

There is no commonly agreed definition of climate justice so working definition drawn from the literature is used to structure the scope of the study: climate justice is about ensuring, both collectively and individually, that we have the ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from climate change impacts and the policies to mitigate or adapt to them by taking account of existing and projected vulnerabilities, resources and capabilities.

The Adaption to climate change presents a quest of justice to the international community. The discussions on climate change focuses more on the Green house gas emission levels but while addressing the issue of climate change adaption and mitigation we must not forget the social dimension of climate change i.e. Equity and Vulnerability. In broader terms, research on this indicates that the climate change is caused majorly by the green house gas emissions by developed countries while the consequences of it has to bear by the developing countries so here the developing countries are bearing a dis-proportionate impact and rises a quest for justice.

The literature on justice in mitigation generally discusses the allocation of emission rights and looked as a problem of distributive justice. But the term Social justice indicates a broader terrain than that of just distribution.

Commonly suggested ways to address the problem are:

- To allocate to each county equal per capita emissions
- To allocate to each country emission rights according to their historical responsibility
- To allocate emission rights according to the countries ability and willingness to pay
- To use a mixture of above

But still there is not a single way, which is accepted by the north-south community together. For the north-south collaborations, we presently do not have that robust strategy which will offer the interest to involve them. We must define the long term and short-term goals even, to achieve the desired results.

The aim for the upcoming climate negotiations must focus on the equity issue as well as the deep clarity of the strategies so as to engage all the countries.

The United Nation's global climate talks are now about 'the manifest injustice' the attempt is been made to understand the term 'Justice or Equity'.

Justice by dictionary meaning is being fair and impartial. Different notations have derived different opinions on 'what is fair' as it is a very subjective term.

In the context of climate change, it can be considered in terms of possesses, which largely relate to emissions issues, and outcomes that relate to impact, vulnerability and adaption. Justice can also be observed in to its distributive- where the issues like benefits and responsibility distribution are addressed and procedural- where the theoretical framework issues like who will take the decisions, how the strategy should be formed etc., are addressed. Equity in its five dimensions i.e. Responsibility, Equal entitlements, Capacities, Basic needs and comparability of efforts, are described as the five dimensions of equity; each has sufficiently broad appeal to have attained legitimacy in the eyes of many. Together they define it notional 'equity space'. Any propositions in the negotiations locate uniquely in its space according to its projection in each direction. Equity indicates notion of and or sometimes have to do sacrifices for the sake of others. An interest on the other hand represents what is best for individuals; in the international context, the individual nation. In most societies the equity is always linked with the politics across community. The success of the political judgments lies in the efforts to balance the equity and interest.

### 3. TOWARDS EQUITY

Developed countries: Assistance to developing countries Under the UNFCC, developed countries pledged to support the climate change mitigation efforts of developing countries. Below mentioned can some of the initiatives by developed countries to help developing countries in dealing with climate impacts:

- To provide new and additional resources and to promote technological transfer. For example, low carbon technology transfer.
- Adaption assistance to developing countries, vulnerable to climate impacts.
- Providing financial aids.
- Investment in capacity building.
- Assistance in weather related disasters/relief funds
- Development of affordable clean transport options

Why should developed countries assist developing countries?

Below mentioned are some of the interests, which may prove to be drivers of developed countries to assist developing countries:

- Climate account: the developed countries can sell the reduced emissions to other countries
- Incentives / subsidies
- Trading benefits

In this process, the participation of developed countries is necessary as they are the major emitters, and developing countries are not less responsive for the problem but also they are less capable to solve it and less equipped to deal the results.

### 4. CLARITY AT POLICY LEVEL

Presently there is very less clarity at climate mitigation policy framework level. The provision of Climatic account: Which emissions should be considered? Only green house gas or other hazardous emissions also? On what basis?. If historic emission basis then from which era?. From industrialization or from later date? Or according to current emissions? What about countries those manufacture goods those are used elsewhere in the world? For example, pharmaceutical products; In case of adaption assistance, how to decide which countries are more vulnerable? Which should get priority in the assistance? What are the measures to calculate the same? UNFCC parties agreed in 2001 to raise funds to help developing countries for climate change mitigation. But there were no commitments to particular level of funding. The funds are not yet operational and no disbursals have taken place. There is a need of clarity of strategy in terms of exact percentage and level of contribution as well as disbursals in case of failing to contribute the commitments.

### 5. EQUITY: NATIONAL LEVEL

The equity issues at National level; in context with the climate change strategies are often neglected. Climate change mitigation strategies for the cities are presently generalized and have a less clarity in many areas. Secondly, we are not yet clear about whether the mission will fulfill the international aspirations or domestic or both. There are no targeted emission reduction guidelines. To achieve the cities development goals, emission goals might not be fulfilled. To balance both the parameters, a robust strategy is necessary.

The emission of industrialized cities and the changes in micro climate is affecting the neighboring cities who say are majorly involved in agriculture or any other climate dependent economy.

To avoid the problem shifts between regions, it is essential to complement the analysis of individual cities with the larger scales. The individual cities must have rights to make changes up to certain extent in the National policies having broad common visions; as per the local context, looking at the potential of individual cities, So that the feasibility increases and can prove as a sustainable policy. All the adaptation measures are going to be executed at local level and all of them will have local impacts. The policies should be designed in such a way that all the local bodies will find interest and promote active, meaningful participation of representatives in national and internationally coordinated adaptive measures. Presently there is a very little participation and provision for local and individual adaptive responses. All the equity measures are equally necessary for the successful urban sustainable development.

## 6. EQUITY: INTERGENERATIONAL

The above argument was focused on the present living generation but, to achieve the intergenerational equity, we must understand the issues those may arrive tomorrow in context to climate change mitigation strategies like future generations might not agree on the proportions of burden of efforts. The policies made today on the present context and tomorrow with the change in time, the context may also change and the future generations may not accept the policy foundations. Observing these intergenerational issues of equity, offering a five dimensional equity can be assumed as a sustainable deal for future generations.

## 7. CONCLUSION

All the countries across the globe has been under pressure to develop a robust climate policy that addresses its rising green house gas emissions as well as the issues of equity so as to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Reorientation of the climate policy should be addressed. Inputs more than outputs should be concentrated. Presently we are more focusing on outputs i.e. green house gas emissions and wastes but now onwards we should be more focusing on inputs like forest conservation, recycling of waste etc. Up till now, no issue regarding climate change adaption and mitigation strategies is addressed to all dimensional aspects. Clarity and depth in strategies will help increasing the participation and get the desired results. There should be space provided for individual nations to make their own action plan looking at the interests and benefits. Understanding the past, injustice at various levels, we can say is the answer why north – south climate negotiations have gone on for decades without producing any substantial results. Our success in confronting the challenge of global climate change, depends in large measures on the ability of national governments to form an effective global strategy which is addressing to the issues of environment, equity and affordability.

Finally, addressing the issues of equity and interest might lead us to update Heraclitus "there is nothing permanent except climate change" in a very positive way.

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