

CHILD RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Pic: A trio of young girls fishing in a heavily silting local river, in Chimanimani district affected by Cyclone Idai in 2019



Twelve-year-old Tendai* sells fruits and vegetables at a common market in Chimanimani Rural District, in eastern Zimbabwe. This is not the choice of profession she had envisaged for herself at this tender age. While most children her age are acquiring from education through learning at school, Tendai is receiving informal socialization to life, with frequent encounters of brutal or vulgar exchanges with disrespectful customers. As a breadwinner herself following the death of her parents, she has three younger siblings who food and school fees.

When Cyclone Idai struck on the night of March 19, 2019 claiming hundreds of lives and destroying livelihoods, Tendai also lost both her parents from the climate disaster. “I always wanted to be a nurse and help others. Now I cannot afford to go to school because my mother’s children should go to

school first,” she said with mature brevity beyond her age. In this part of Zimbabwe, more children were similarly forced to take the responsibility to head families, as parents perished in the natural disaster.

Children in Chimanimani are being over-worked by circumstances, others have ventured into artisanal gold mining just to support their siblings therefore abandoning school. In some instances, children also engage into transactional sex or prostitution in a bid to generate income for survival. It is without doubt that the manner in which children affected by Cyclone Idai are taking responsibility and the burden of care of traumatic, emotionally and physically challenging.

Climate change has been demonstrated to have both a direct and indirect impact on a wide range of human

rights, including the rights of the child. The effects of climate change are mostly felt by children, and other key populations which are more vulnerable. Furthermore, it has been noted that if there is no significant reduction in emissions over the next decade, by 2050 there will be major climatic changes that will complicate human socio-economic activity.

On a daily basis, the effects of climate change are increasingly doubling their impact on children’s fundamental rights to survival and development. These are enshrined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Children (UNCRC) Article 24 which is right to healthcare, Article 27; the right to a standard of living, Article 28 and 29; on the right to education, Article 31; the right to rest, play recreation and leisure. In the wake of climate change, the rights of children are violated including

the right of freedom from abuse and exploitation. Whilst the climate change effects can be said to be affecting everyone globally, its effects are more engraved in the children's discourses. When extreme environmental events displace people, children are often pulled from school, led away from accessible healthcare facilities, and compelled to work in order to survive and help their families. This is the plight of orphaned Mukudzeyi**, a 14-year-old girl, forced out of school because her last surviving parent also died in the Cyclone Idai disaster. ‘Cyclone Idai left me an orphan and I was forced to stay with distant relatives who are abusing me. Every day I have to walk 15km to go and fetch water as there are shortages in our area. The area where we get water always has a long queue and sometimes I come back from fetching water in the night. If not fetching water, we wake up early in the morning around 3am to go and fetch firewood before forest rangers start their monitoring rounds,’ she said.

The plight of children in the wake of climate change impacts including water shortages, food shortages, searching for firewood is heightened and calls upon the need to ensure urgent child sensitive interventions by state and non-state actors. Green Governance Zimbabwe Trust (GGZT) implores responsible government institutions to conduct a livelihood risk assessment for children in climate change prone areas and develop policies and interventions to save the future generation. GGZT also similarly implores development partners and non-state actors to develop child sensitive interventions when implementing projects in areas that are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Global South banks on climate finance for a just transition

Gazing through the Chimanimani horizon, light golden deep gushes of feline like scars on the sweeping mountain ranges evidence vestiges of a natural disaster. And driving through curves and turns, road rehabilitation and repair works barriers only shield vehicles. The eye sweeps through deep crevices, huge fallen trees, rocks and boulders on the roadside telling a story of the destructive force of nature.

When Cyclone Idai hit the eastern parts of Zimbabwe in 2019, it had swept through Malawi and Mozambique with ferocious fatality. Back home, it affected 270 000 people leaving 341 dead and many others missing. Masvingo, Midlands and Mashonaland East provinces were also affected by the tropical depression which originated on the east coast of Mozambique and swept through as a category 2 storm moving at above 105mph.

A final report by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Danish Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, British Red Cross, details the impact of Cyclone Idai. In the report, IFRC states road infrastructure was grossly damaged with above 90% of road networks in Chimanimani and

Chipinge damaged and 584 km of roads being damaged by landslides.

Furthermore, IFRC shows that in agriculture, more than 50% land under maize crop, banana plantation and tubers like yams was wiped away, 18 irrigation schemes affected, at least 362 cattle and 514 goats and sheep, 17000 chickens were lost, whilst 86 dipping facilities were damaged. A World Bank report, estimates the economic cost of direct damages at \$US622 million, of the destroyed infrastructure, properties, crops, and livestock. It is estimated that to “build back better” requires up to \$US1.1 billion.

Recovery efforts have also been eased by international humanitarian assistance as well as the World Bank's response to developmental assistance required by the most affected communities, with an allocation of \$US72 million to the Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (ZIRP). ZIRP aims to “address the early and medium-term resilient disaster recovery needs of cyclone-affected people”.

In the backdrop of Zimbabwe's non-accrual status with the World Bank, the ZIRP was processed and financed on an exceptional basis, through the International Development Association grant. Notably, the World Bank notes this as underscoring the unprecedented humanitarian crisis caused by Cyclone Idai. National efforts to promote better development planning and disaster preparedness going forward.

It is also indicative of the financial weaknesses of Global South and South

American nations faced with climate change induced disasters, estimated to affect the weak nations threefold in comparison to Western nations.

A rethink of current benevolent, humanitarian and reactionary financial models calls on robust discussion under the COP26, as the inequalities have also been further exposed by the COVID 19 pandemic. The delayed 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which binds over 190 Parties, will take place in Glasgow from 1 to 12 November 2021 under the presidency of the United Kingdom. It will be one of the pivotal events of 2021, with a focus on countries increasing the ambition of their commitments to tackle the climate emergency.

Reduction of greenhouse emissions, cannot be steered by the highest pollutants, when the impact of this is felt three times more in the Global South. Even when Nationally Determined Contributions were at zero emissions, African footprint in the global emissions would account for merely 2–3 percent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions from energy and industrial sources.

Climate finance is referred to by the UNFCCC as "local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change." COP26 predecessors, The Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agree-

ment, calls for financial assistance from Parties with more financial resources to those that are less endowed and more vulnerable.

For the Global South this is, at a twofold level, important for mitigation by investing in early warning systems and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). On the other hand adaptation, after the natural disasters, significant financial resources are needed to adapt to the adverse effects and reduce the impacts of a changing climate.

In accordance with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities” set out in the Convention, developed country Parties are to provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties in implementing the objectives of the UNFCCC. Parties have established two special funds—the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), both managed by the GEF—and the Adaptation Fund (AF) established under the Kyoto Protocol in 2001.

What remains missing is the involvement of the Global South in the structure of COP, which decides on its policies, programme priorities and eligibility criteria for funding. In the meantime, those in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe are still yet to fully recover from the loss of livelihoods property. The cost of repairing the damage is way beyond prioritisation as the economies are heavily indebted, ironically mostly to World Bank, International Financial Institutions.




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Nyasha Frank Mpahlo
Executive Director
Green Governance
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Director's Remarks

Welcome Dear Reader,
We are pleased to share again this edition of our flagship publication as Green Governance Zimbabwe Trust (GGZT), which provides nuanced content in climate change and natural resource governance. The scope also ventures into environmental protection as well as conflict resolution.

These thematic areas inform our work as an organisation seeking to advance participation and inclusion of communities in natural resource governance.

GGZT's strategic intervention is based on the 4'Es approach, to engage, equalize, eradicate and educate; to engage communities for transformative change in the broader governance matrix. Our belief is that using a people to people approach has more incremental advocacy gains and sustainability.

Notwithstanding, efforts to enhance public sector accountability and



Pic: Part of the Green Governance Zimbabwe Trust (GGZT) team during a strategic planning exercise in Manicaland province, Zimbabwe.

governance systems are burdened by glaring corruption and gross mismanagement. For the mining sector, the extent is pervasive and draining revenue from the national purse.

Investment trends in the mining sector are a cause of concern. Across the country, communities face arbitrary eviction to pave way for mining investments. Chinese mining concerns have been fingered for violations of human rights, environmental degradation and poor labor rights.

In Mutoko, granite mining epitomizes the paradox of the resource curse, of poverty in the midst of plenty. Poorly drafted contracts with non-disclosures clauses are also being negotiated in the dark.

In amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities and human rights advocates in civil society, we are guided by the UN business and Human Rights, a set of guidelines for States and companies to prevent, address and remedy

human rights abuses when they occur. Often, multinational corporations and investors in the Global South operate aware of that their social license to operate (SLO) is built on perceptions of local stakeholders in a given area or region of operation.

In spite of this mining investors violate these standards, including disregarding local community's traditions and culture. Mining operations, including the agreed rehabilitation plans are often violated with impunity.

Communities are left with a legacy of environmental degradation, deep craters and excavated swathes of unproductive lands. In resource rich areas the rural poor are left more vulnerable, to socio-economic hardships as well as increasing impacts of climate change. Read and enjoy this edition, focusing on climate justice for the vulnerable in rural communities.

Regards
GGZT Director, Nyasha Frank Mpahlo



5th October 2021

Statement on The Climate Crisis Ahead of CoP26

The climate crisis is one of the most critical challenges of our times, and one where we can literally see our world and livelihoods disappearing before our eyes. The greatest burden is undoubtedly borne by communities, households, the working class, young people and women in the Global South.

We are aware and greatly concerned that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) continues to produce scientific evidence and reports on the dire state of the ongoing climate emergency, but many countries in the Global North continue to ignore such reports at worst or just give tokenistic acknowledgment at best, without any commitment to real action.

As the entire African continent we contribute only 4% of global CO₂ emissions but suffer some of the worst consequences of climate change. In Zimbabwe our people continue to experience the most adverse impacts of the breakdown of our planet including rising food insecurity, declining water resources, rise of diseases, flooding, cyclones, tropical storms, heatwaves and droughts. The majority of our people live in rural areas and in communities where the infrastructure does not ensure adequate adaptation to the impacts of the climate crisis.

As the state parties, observers, and members of the media meet in November 2021 in Glasgow for the UN Climate Change Conference (CoP26) we make the following demands:

- Rich countries must make a serious commitment and take action to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030.
- Governments and businesses must be held accountable and made to accelerate the phase-out of coal and other carbon forms of energy.
- Deforestation must be contained and confronted.
- Rich countries must own up to the commitment made under the Paris Agreements and provide funds for loss and damage and for assisting poor countries to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis.
- There must be support for investment in renewable energy and a green, community-centric economy.
- Our biodiversity, species, and ecosystems must be restored and protected.

- There must be capacity building and technology transfer to enable civil protection units and vulnerable communities to have early climate disaster warning systems and resilient infrastructure.
- Women and youths must be fully involved in decision-making processes related to climate adaptation, mitigation, and a just, green transition.

We have no time to waste, We have no Planet B. We need action now!

Issued By:

Climate Alliance ZW

Climate Alliance ZW is a coalition of progressive organisations in Zimbabwe fighting for climate justice and social justice. The coalition comprises Magamba Network, GreenGovZW, Advocates4Earth, Manica Youth Assembly, African Youth Initiative on Climate Change and MyTrees

