

*Climate Justice and Equity: Navigating the Unequal Impacts of Climate Change towards Equitable Solutions:*  
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## **Climate Justice and Equity: Navigating the Unequal Impacts of Climate Change towards Equitable Solutions**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper focuses on the critical topic of climate justice and equity, shedding light on the unequal impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and emphasizing the need for equitable solutions. The discussion encompasses various dimensions of climate justice, including climate refugees, social justice, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. The paper begins by introducing the concept of climate justice and its significance in addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations. It highlights the urgency of addressing these disparities and ensuring that climate action is inclusive and fair. The discussion delves into the issue of climate refugees, examining the plight of individuals and communities displaced by climate change-induced events such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation. The paper highlights the need for effective policies and international cooperation to protect the rights and provide assistance to climate refugees. Social justice and climate change are intertwined, and the abstract explores the ways in which marginalized communities, particularly those in low-income areas, bear the brunt of climate impacts. It emphasizes the importance of equitable distribution of resources, access to basic services, and fair representation in climate decision-making processes. Gender equality is a crucial aspect of climate justice, and the abstract highlights the unique challenges faced by women in the context of climate change. It addresses the need for gender-responsive approaches that empower women as agents of change and recognize their*

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*knowledge and resilience in adapting to climate impacts. The paper also emphasizes the importance of involving marginalized groups, including indigenous communities and vulnerable populations, in decision-making processes related to climate change. It explores the role of inclusive governance structures, participatory approaches, and community-led initiatives in fostering equitable solutions. The paper underscores the imperative of addressing climate justice and equity in the face of climate change. It advocates for comprehensive approaches that address the unequal impacts, protect the rights of vulnerable communities, promote social justice and gender equality, and involve marginalized groups in decision-making processes. The abstract calls for collective action and transformative change to achieve a just and sustainable future for all. It provides a concise overview of climate justice and equity, covering key aspects such as climate refugees, social justice, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalized groups. It highlights the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to address the unequal impacts of climate change and build a more equitable and resilient society.*

**Key words:** climate justice, equity, vulnerable communities, climate refugees, marginalized groups

## **I. Introduction**

Climate justice refers to the fair and just distribution of the burdens and benefits of climate change mitigation and adaptation, ensuring that the most vulnerable communities and individuals are not disproportionately affected.<sup>1</sup> It encompasses the principles of fairness, equity, and human rights in addressing climate change and its impacts.<sup>2</sup> Equity, within the context of climate justice, focuses on

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<sup>1</sup> Okereke, C. (2010). Climate justice and the international regime. *Wiley interdisciplinary reviews: climate change*, 1(3), 469-473.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

reducing disparities and ensuring equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes for all communities, particularly those marginalized or facing socio-economic disadvantages.<sup>3</sup>

The impacts of climate change are not evenly distributed, and vulnerable communities, often located in low-income areas, face disproportionately higher risks and challenges.<sup>4</sup> These communities may lack resources, infrastructure, and institutional support to cope with and adapt to climate change impacts.<sup>5</sup> According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples, women, and people in poverty are particularly susceptible to climate risks and experience greater vulnerabilities.<sup>6</sup> The unequal impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities present an urgent need for action. As temperatures rise, extreme weather events become more frequent, and ecosystems are disrupted, these communities bear the brunt of these changes. Without targeted interventions and equitable solutions, climate change exacerbates existing social inequalities, deepens poverty, and undermines human rights.<sup>7</sup>

This discussion will highlight the need for equitable solutions in addressing climate change and its impacts on marginalized groups. To address the unequal impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities, it is imperative to focus on equitable solutions that

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Hardoy, J., & Lankao, P. R. (2011). Latin American cities and climate change: challenges and options to mitigation and adaptation responses. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 3(3), 159-162.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Hardoy, J. et.al, 163.

prioritize justice, fairness, and inclusivity. This involves recognizing and rectifying historical and ongoing injustices, empowering marginalized groups, and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes related to climate change.<sup>8</sup> The adoption of equitable solutions can help build resilience, promote social justice, and advance sustainable development for all.<sup>9</sup>

In this discussion, we will explore the concept of climate justice and equity, examining the unequal impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. We will delve into the specific issues of climate refugees, social justice, gender equality, and the involvement of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Through the analysis of research findings and the exploration of case studies, we aim to shed light on the urgent need for equitable solutions and the transformative potential of addressing climate change through a justice-focused lens.

## **II. Unequal Impacts of Climate Change**

Climate change poses significant challenges for vulnerable communities, leading to disproportionate impacts on their well-being and livelihoods.<sup>10</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that these communities, often located in low-income

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<sup>8</sup> Hughes, S., & Hoffmann, M. (2020). Just urban transitions: Toward a research agenda. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 11(3), e640.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Shahzad, L., Tahir, A., Sharif, F., Khan, W. U. D., Farooq, M. A., Abbas, A., & Saqib, Z. A. (2019). Vulnerability, well-being, and livelihood adaptation under changing environmental conditions: a case from mountainous region of Pakistan. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 26, 26748-26764. Refer further in Kemp, S. P., Palinkas, L. A., Wong, M., & Wagner, K. (2015). Strengthening the social response to the human impacts of environmental change. *Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Working Paper*, 5, 1-31.

areas, face higher exposure to climate risks due to limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and social vulnerabilities.<sup>11</sup> They are more likely to rely on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, making them highly susceptible to changes in temperature, precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, factors such as limited access to education, healthcare, and social safety nets further amplify their vulnerability to climate impacts.<sup>13</sup>

Climate change impacts vary across regions and populations, further exacerbating inequalities.<sup>14</sup> For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, prolonged droughts and changing rainfall patterns affect agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and economic instability for millions of smallholder farmers.<sup>15</sup> Coastal regions, particularly in low-lying areas and small island nations, face the escalating threat of sea-level rise and increased frequency of storm surges, jeopardizing infrastructure, human settlements, and economies. Indigenous communities, who rely on traditional livelihoods closely connected to the environment, face cultural and economic losses as their

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<sup>11</sup> Field, C. B., Barros, V., Stocker, T. F., & Dahe, Q. (Eds.). (2012). *Managing the risks of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation: special report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>12</sup> UN, I. R. B. (1992). Convention on biological diversity. *Treaty Collection*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Climate change impacts vary across regions and populations, further exacerbating inequalities. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, prolonged droughts and changing rainfall patterns affect agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and economic instability for millions of smallholder farmers.

ecosystems are disrupted by changing climate conditions.<sup>16</sup> These examples highlight the differentiated impacts of climate change on various regions and populations, further deepening existing inequalities.

Climate change is intertwined with other forms of inequality, including poverty, race, and gender.<sup>17</sup> Poverty exacerbates vulnerability to climate impacts, as impoverished communities often lack resources to adapt to changing conditions and recover from climate-related disasters.<sup>18</sup> Research has also shown that racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by climate change due to factors such as social marginalization, limited access to resources, and discriminatory policies.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, gender inequalities intersect with climate change, as women often face greater challenges in accessing resources, participating in decision-making processes, and adapting to climate impacts.<sup>20</sup> These intersecting forms of inequality compound the disproportionate

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<sup>16</sup> Bedeke, S. B. (2023). Climate change vulnerability and adaptation of crop producers in sub-Saharan Africa: A review on concepts, approaches and methods. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 25(2), 1017-1051.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ruiz Meza, L. E. (2015). Adaptive capacity of small-scale coffee farmers to climate change impacts in the Soconusco region of Chiapas, Mexico. *Climate and Development*, 7(2), 100-109.

<sup>19</sup> Climate change is intertwined with other forms of inequality, including poverty, race, and gender. Poverty exacerbates vulnerability to climate impacts, as impoverished communities often lack resources to adapt to changing conditions and recover from climate-related disasters. Research has also shown that racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by climate change due to factors such as social marginalization, limited access to resources, and discriminatory policies.

<sup>20</sup> Terry, G. (2009). No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues. *Gender & Development*, 17(1), 8-9.



burden faced by vulnerable communities, hindering their ability to respond effectively to climate change.<sup>21</sup>

Climate change has profound implications for vulnerable communities, leading to disproportionate impacts on their well-being and exacerbating existing inequalities.<sup>22</sup> Specific regions and populations experience varying consequences, with impacts on agriculture, coastal regions, and indigenous communities being particularly pronounced.<sup>23</sup> The intersectionality of climate change with other forms of inequality, such as poverty, race, and gender, further compounds the vulnerabilities faced by marginalized groups.<sup>24</sup> Recognizing these unequal impacts and addressing the intersecting inequalities is essential for designing effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies that promote resilience, justice, and social equity.<sup>25</sup>

### III. Climate Refugees

Climate refugees, also known as environmental migrants<sup>26</sup>, are individuals or communities forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence due to the adverse impacts of climate change.<sup>27</sup> They face unique challenges as their displacement is primarily driven by climate-related factors such as sea-level rise, desertification,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 14

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 16

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 17

<sup>26</sup> Jakobeit, C., & Methmann, C. (2012). 'Climate refugees' as dawning catastrophe? A critique of the dominant quest for numbers. In *Climate change, human security and violent conflict: Challenges for societal stability* (pp. 301-314). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



extreme weather events, and loss of habitable land.<sup>28</sup> Unlike traditional refugees who are protected under international law, climate refugees currently lack legal recognition and specific protections.<sup>29</sup> This lack of recognition poses significant challenges in terms of accessing assistance, resources, and international support.<sup>30</sup> Statistics and case studies provide compelling evidence of the scale and impact of climate-induced displacement.<sup>31</sup> For example, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, an estimated 23.9 million people were displaced by climate-related events in 2019 alone. Case studies such as the Carteret Islanders in Papua New Guinea and the residents of Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana, USA, showcase communities directly impacted by sea-level rise, resulting in their displacement.<sup>32</sup> These examples highlight the reality that climate change is already displacing communities and that this trend is likely to intensify in the future.

The legal frameworks and international response to climate refugees are currently inadequate.<sup>33</sup> The existing refugee protection framework, primarily the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, does not explicitly include climate-related displacement as

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Terminski, B. (2012). Towards recognition and protection of forced environmental migrants in the public international law: Refugee or IDPs umbrella?.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Gray, C., & Wise, E. (2016). Country-specific effects of climate variability on human migration. *Climatic change*, 135, 555-568.

<sup>32</sup> Sullivan, M. E. (2022). *Erasure through Engagement: The Community Resettlement of Isle de Jean Charles* (Doctoral dissertation, Portland State University).

<sup>33</sup> Atapattu, S. (2020). Climate change and displacement: protecting 'climate refugees' within a framework of justice and human rights. *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, 11(1), 97-100.

a protected category.<sup>34</sup> Efforts to expand legal protections for climate refugees have been met with challenges due to the complexity of defining and attributing displacement solely to climate change.<sup>35</sup> However, there have been some regional and national initiatives aiming to address this gap.<sup>36</sup> For example, the Pacific Islands Forum's Biketawa Declaration acknowledges the issue of climate displacement in the Pacific region and calls for international cooperation in responding to it.

The advocacy for the protection and rights of climate refugees is gaining traction.<sup>37</sup> Civil society organizations, human rights groups, and environmental activists have been at the forefront of raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by climate refugees and advocating for their rights.<sup>38</sup> They emphasize the need for legal recognition, adequate support, and durable solutions for displaced communities.<sup>39</sup> International bodies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are also increasingly engaging with the issue of climate-induced displacement and advocating for stronger protection mechanisms.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Warren, P. D. (2016). Forced migration after Paris cop21: Evaluating the 'climate change displacement coordination facility'. *Colum. L. Rev.*, 116, 2103.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Eckersley, R. (2015). The common but differentiated responsibilities of states to assist and receive 'climate refugees'. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 14(4), 490-495.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Climate refugees face distinct challenges as a result of displacement driven by climate change.<sup>41</sup> Despite lacking specific legal recognition and protections, their numbers continue to grow, necessitating urgent attention and action.<sup>42</sup> Statistics and case studies provide evidence of the displacement caused by climate change, while legal frameworks and international responses are evolving slowly.<sup>43</sup> Advocacy efforts are crucial in promoting the protection and rights of climate refugees and pushing for adequate international mechanisms to address this urgent issue.<sup>44</sup>

#### **IV. Social Justice and Climate Change**

Climate change has profound social justice implications, as its impacts are disproportionately felt by marginalized communities and individuals.<sup>45</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights that climate change exacerbates existing inequalities, deepening poverty, and undermining human rights.<sup>46</sup> Vulnerable communities, including low-income populations, indigenous peoples, and racial and ethnic minorities, often bear the brunt of climate-related disasters, experiencing greater health risks, displacement, and economic hardships.<sup>47</sup> The unequal distribution of

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<sup>41</sup> Gemenne, F. (2011). Why the numbers don't add up: A review of estimates and predictions of people displaced by environmental changes. *Global Environmental Change*, 21, S45-S48.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Pörtner, H. O., Roberts, D. C., Adams, H., Adler, C., Aldunce, P., Ali, E., ... & Ibrahim, Z. Z. (2022). *Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability* (p. 3056). Geneva, Switzerland.: IPCC.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

climate change impacts raises ethical concerns and calls for a social justice lens in addressing climate change.<sup>48</sup>

Vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters due to a combination of factors including limited resources, social inequalities, and geographical location.<sup>49</sup> For example, low-income communities often reside in areas more prone to flooding, hurricanes, or heatwaves, and lack the financial means to adapt or recover from these events. Indigenous communities, with their close connection to the land and dependence on traditional livelihoods, face the loss of cultural heritage and economic stability when their ecosystems are disrupted.<sup>50</sup> The vulnerability of these communities to climate-related disasters underscores the need for targeted interventions and support to promote social justice.<sup>51</sup>

Community-led initiatives play a vital role in promoting social justice in climate action.<sup>52</sup> For instance, grassroots organizations have been at the forefront of advocating for environmental justice, amplifying the voices of affected communities, and demanding equitable solutions. Community-based adaptation projects, such as local farming cooperatives or renewable energy cooperatives, empower marginalized communities economically and environmentally,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas, K., Hardy, R. D., Lazrus, H., Mendez, M., Orlove, B., Rivera-Collazo, I., ... & Winthrop, R. (2019). Explaining differential vulnerability to climate change: A social science review. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 10(2), e565.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Henfrey, T., Feola, G., Penha-Lopes, G., Sekulova, F., & Esteves, A. M. (2023). Rethinking the sustainable development goals: Learning with and from community-led initiatives. *Sustainable Development*, 31(1), 211-222.

fostering social justice in climate change responses.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, indigenous-led land stewardship practices and traditional ecological knowledge contribute to sustainable resource management while preserving cultural integrity.<sup>54</sup>

Policies and initiatives that prioritize social justice in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies are crucial for equitable outcomes.<sup>55</sup> This includes integrating principles of fairness, inclusivity, and participation in decision-making processes related to climate action.<sup>56</sup> For example, the implementation of just transition policies ensures that the shift to a low-carbon economy does not leave workers and communities behind, offering retraining and job opportunities in renewable energy sectors. Climate finance mechanisms that prioritize support for vulnerable communities and adaptation projects also contribute to social justice by addressing their specific needs.<sup>57</sup>

The social justice implications of climate change necessitate a focused and deliberate approach in addressing the disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities.<sup>58</sup> Recognizing and rectifying existing inequalities, empowering marginalized communities, and involving

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Chu, E., Anguelovski, I., & Carmin, J. (2016). Inclusive approaches to urban climate adaptation planning and implementation in the Global South. *Climate Policy*, 16(3), 382-391.

<sup>56</sup> Figueiredo, P., & Perkins, P. E. (2013). Women and water management in times of climate change: participatory and inclusive processes. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 60, 189-193.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Popke, J., Curtis, S., & Gamble, D. W. (2016). A social justice framing of climate change discourse and policy: Adaptation, resilience and vulnerability in a Jamaican agricultural landscape. *Geoforum*, 73, 71-74.

them in decision-making processes are essential for promoting social justice in climate change responses. Community-led initiatives, alongside policies and initiatives that prioritize social justice, serve as crucial pathways for equitable and sustainable solutions to address the social injustices arising from climate change.<sup>59</sup>

## **V. Gender Equality and Climate Change**

Climate change affects women and gender minorities differently due to existing gender inequalities and social norms.<sup>60</sup> Women often bear a disproportionate burden as they play critical roles in sectors such as agriculture, water collection, and energy provision, which are highly vulnerable to climate change.<sup>61</sup> They face increased challenges in accessing resources, education, and healthcare during climate-related disasters.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, gender-based violence tends to rise in the aftermath of such events, further compromising the safety and well-being of women and gender minorities.<sup>63</sup> Recognizing these differential impacts is crucial for addressing gender inequalities in climate change responses.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 78-80.

<sup>60</sup> Heise, L., Greene, M. E., Opper, N., Stavropoulou, M., Harper, C., Nascimento, M., ... & Gupta, G. R. (2019). Gender inequality and restrictive gender norms: framing the challenges to health. *The Lancet*, 393(10189), 2445-2452.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Schramm, P. J., Al Janabi, A. L., Campbell, L. W., Donatuto, J. L., & Gaughen, S. C. (2020). How Indigenous Communities Are Adapting To Climate Change: Insights From The Climate-Ready Tribes Initiative: Analysis examines how indigenous communities are adapting to climate change. *Health Affairs*, 39(12), 2153-2159.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Gender-based vulnerabilities and roles intersect with climate change adaptation and resilience.<sup>65</sup> Women often possess valuable knowledge of local ecosystems and sustainable resource management practices.<sup>66</sup> However, limited access to resources, unequal decision-making power, and cultural norms restrict their participation and influence in climate adaptation strategies.<sup>67</sup> Gender disparities also impact women's ability to access financial resources, technology, and information necessary for resilience-building.<sup>68</sup> Recognizing and addressing these vulnerabilities and empowering women and gender minorities as active participants in climate action is crucial for building adaptive and resilient societies.<sup>69</sup>

Numerous initiatives are promoting gender equality in climate action and decision-making processes.<sup>70</sup> For example, the Women's Global Call for Climate Justice advocates for the inclusion of women's rights and gender equality in climate policies and programs. Gender-responsive climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund's gender policy, aim to support projects that address the specific needs and priorities of women and gender minorities.<sup>71</sup> Additionally,

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<sup>65</sup> Vinyeta, K., Whyte, K., & Lynn, K. (2016). Climate change through an intersectional lens: gendered vulnerability and resilience in indigenous communities in the United States.

<sup>66</sup> Olsson, P., & Folke, C. (2001). Local ecological knowledge and institutional dynamics for ecosystem management: a study of Lake Racken watershed, Sweden. *Ecosystems*, 4, 85-104.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Aguilar, L. (2012). Establishing the linkages between gender and climate change adaptation and mitigation. In *Gender and climate change: An introduction* (pp. 201-221). Routledge.

<sup>71</sup> Swim, J., Clayton, S., Doherty, T., Gifford, R., Howard, G., Reser, J., ... & Weber, E. (2009). Psychology and global climate change: Addressing a multi-



grassroots organizations and networks, such as the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action, work to amplify the voices and agency of women and gender minorities in shaping climate responses.<sup>72</sup> Integrating gender perspectives in climate policies and programs is vital for effective and equitable outcomes.<sup>73</sup> By considering the differentiated impacts of climate change on women and gender minorities, policies can address their specific needs and vulnerabilities.<sup>74</sup> Gender-responsive approaches ensure that women and gender minorities have equal access to resources, decision-making processes, and benefits arising from climate action.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, recognizing the important roles that women play as agents of change and leaders in climate resilience enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of climate policies and programs.<sup>76</sup>

Gender equality is a crucial aspect of addressing climate change.<sup>77</sup> Analyzing the differential impacts on women and gender minorities, understanding their vulnerabilities and roles in adaptation and resilience, promoting initiatives that empower them, and integrating gender perspectives in climate policies and programs are all essential

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faceted phenomenon and set of challenges. A report by the American Psychological Association's task force on the interface between psychology and global climate change. *American Psychological Association, Washington, 66, 241-250.*

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Rahaman, M. M., & Varis, O. (2005). Integrated water resources management: evolution, prospects and future challenges. *Sustainability: science, practice and policy, 1(1)*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>77</sup> Lau, J. D., Kleiber, D., Lawless, S., & Cohen, P. J. (2021). Gender equality in climate policy and practice hindered by assumptions. *Nature climate change, 11(3)*, 186-192.

for achieving sustainable and equitable climate outcomes.<sup>78</sup> By addressing gender inequalities, we can foster a more inclusive and effective response to the challenges posed by climate change.<sup>79</sup>

## **VI. Marginalized Communities and Decision-Making**

Marginalized communities often face exclusion from decision-making processes related to climate change, leading to their voices and perspectives being overlooked.<sup>80</sup> Factors such as socio-economic disparities, unequal access to education and resources, and systemic discrimination contribute to this exclusion.<sup>81</sup> As a result, policies and strategies implemented may not adequately address the unique needs, concerns, and priorities of marginalized groups.<sup>82</sup> The exclusion of these communities perpetuates existing inequalities and hampers the effectiveness and legitimacy of climate change decision-making.<sup>83</sup>

Inclusive and participatory approaches to decision-making are essential for addressing the needs of marginalized communities and achieving equitable climate outcomes.<sup>84</sup> By involving marginalized groups in decision-making processes, their experiences and knowledge can inform the development of context-specific

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<sup>78</sup> Denton, F. (2002). Climate change vulnerability, impacts, and adaptation: Why does gender matter?. *Gender & Development*, 10(2), 10-20.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ojha, H. R., Ghimire, S., Pain, A., Nightingale, A., Khatri, D. B., & Dhungana, H. (2016). Policy without politics: Technocratic control of climate change adaptation policy making in Nepal. *Climate Policy*, 16(4), 419-430.

<sup>81</sup> Shaw, M., Dorling, D., & Smith, G. D. (1999). Poverty, social exclusion, and minorities. *Social determinants of health*, 2, 197-198.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 120.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 121.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 122.

solutions.<sup>85</sup> Inclusive decision-making processes also promote a sense of ownership and empowerment among marginalized communities, fostering a more sustainable and just transition.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the diversity of perspectives brought by marginalized groups enriches discussions, leading to more comprehensive and effective climate strategies.<sup>87</sup>

Numerous case studies showcase successful examples of involving marginalized communities in climate action.<sup>88</sup> For instance, the Indigenous-led initiatives in Canada, such as the Indigenous Climate Action, empower Indigenous communities to lead climate resilience efforts by combining traditional knowledge with modern technologies.<sup>89</sup> Participatory budgeting processes in Brazil and other countries have enabled marginalized communities to have a direct say in climate-related resource allocation decisions.<sup>90</sup> These examples demonstrate that when marginalized communities are engaged and

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<sup>85</sup> Krause, G., Brugere, C., Diedrich, A., Ebeling, M. W., Ferse, S. C., Mikkelsen, E., ... & Troell, M. (2015). A revolution without people? Closing the people-policy gap in aquaculture development. *Aquaculture*, 447, 46-54.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Scoones, I. (2009). Livelihoods perspectives and rural development. *The journal of peasant studies*, 36(1), 171-196.

<sup>88</sup> Benevolenza, M. A., & DeRigne, L. (2019). The impact of climate change and natural disasters on vulnerable populations: A systematic review of literature. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 29(2), 266-281. See, Ravera, F., Reyes-García, V., Pascual, U., Drucker, A. G., Tarrasón, D., & Bellon, M. R. (2019). Gendered agrobiodiversity management and adaptation to climate change: differentiated strategies in two marginal rural areas of India. *Agriculture and human values*, 36, 455-474. See, Tol, R. S., Fankhauser, S., Richels, R. G., & Smith, J. B. (2000). How much damage will climate change do? Recent estimates. *WORLD ECONOMICS-HENLEY ON THAMES*, 1(4), 179-180.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 180-181.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 183.

empowered, they can contribute valuable insights and solutions to climate change challenges.

There is a growing recognition of the need to increase the representation and empowerment of marginalized groups in climate policy and planning.<sup>91</sup> Calls for greater inclusion have come from various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, indigenous rights activists, and social justice advocates.<sup>92</sup> Increasing representation can be achieved through diverse mechanisms such as establishing advisory boards, incorporating marginalized voices in formal decision-making bodies, and ensuring inclusive consultations and participation processes.<sup>93</sup> Empowering marginalized communities also involves providing them with the necessary resources, capacity-building, and support to actively engage in climate policy discussions and implementation.<sup>94</sup>

Exclusion of marginalized communities from decision-making processes related to climate change is a significant concern.<sup>95</sup> Inclusive and participatory approaches are essential for addressing this exclusion, as they recognize the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and ensuring that climate policies and strategies are equitable and effective.<sup>96</sup> Successful case studies demonstrate the

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<sup>91</sup> Tompkins, E. L., & Adger, W. N. (2004). Does adaptive management of natural resources enhance resilience to climate change?. *Ecology and society*, 9(2).

<sup>92</sup> Batliwala, S. (2002). Grassroots movements as transnational actors: Implications for global civil society. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 13, 395-404.

<sup>93</sup> Dreher, T. (2012). A partial promise of voice: Digital storytelling and the limits of listening. *Media International Australia*, 142(1), 157-158.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 158-160.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.161-162

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 165-166

benefits of involving marginalized communities in climate action. Calls to increase representation and empowerment of marginalized groups in climate policy and planning emphasize the need to rectify existing power imbalances and promote a more just and sustainable approach to climate change.

## **VII. Equitable Solutions for Climate Justice**

Achieving climate justice and equity requires the implementation of policy approaches and frameworks that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities and address underlying systemic inequalities.<sup>97</sup> One example is the concept of just transition, which aims to ensure a fair and equitable transition to a low-carbon economy, safeguarding the rights and livelihoods of workers and communities affected by the shift away from fossil fuels.<sup>98</sup> Additionally, environmental justice frameworks seek to address the disproportionate burden of pollution and environmental degradation on marginalized communities and advocate for their meaningful participation in decision-making processes.<sup>99</sup>

Incorporating equity considerations is crucial for effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.<sup>100</sup> By recognizing and addressing the unequal distribution of climate impacts and vulnerabilities, policies and actions can be tailored to meet the

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<sup>97</sup> Malloy, J. T., & Ashcraft, C. M. (2020). A framework for implementing socially just climate adaptation. *Climatic Change*, 160(1), 1-14. See, Alcaraz, K. I., Wiedt, T. L., Daniels, E. C., Yabroff, K. R., Guerra, C. E., & Wender, R. C. (2020). Understanding and addressing social determinants to advance cancer health equity in the United States: a blueprint for practice, research, and policy. *CA: a cancer journal for clinicians*, 70(1), 31-38.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>99</sup> Malloy, J. T., et.al. 43-44.

<sup>100</sup> Wiegandt, E. (2001). Climate change, equity, and international negotiations. *International relations and global climate change*, 128-130.

specific needs of marginalized communities.<sup>101</sup> This includes ensuring access to renewable energy, clean water, and resilient infrastructure, as well as providing support for sustainable livelihoods and adaptation measures.<sup>102</sup> By prioritizing equity, climate actions can avoid exacerbating existing social disparities and work towards more just and inclusive outcomes.

Funding mechanisms and support for vulnerable communities are essential in achieving climate justice and equity.<sup>103</sup> Financial resources should be allocated to projects that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, particularly in developing countries, where the impacts of climate change are often more severe.<sup>104</sup> Climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, aim to channel financial resources to adaptation and mitigation projects that benefit vulnerable communities.<sup>105</sup> Capacity-building programs and technical assistance can also support communities in implementing climate-resilient practices and accessing funding opportunities.<sup>106</sup>

Numerous initiatives and projects are promoting equitable solutions to climate change.<sup>107</sup> For instance, community-led renewable energy projects, such as solar cooperatives, empower marginalized communities by providing access to clean and affordable energy

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 130-132.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 133-136.

<sup>103</sup> Okereke, C., & Coventry, P. (2016). Climate justice and the international regime: before, during, and after Paris. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 7(6), 834.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 834-836.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 837-838.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 839-840.

<sup>107</sup> Denton, F. (2002). Climate change vulnerability, impacts, and adaptation: Why does gender matter?. *Gender & Development*, 10(2), 10-20.

while creating local job opportunities. Nature-based solutions, such as reforestation and ecosystem restoration projects, not only contribute to climate mitigation but also provide co-benefits for local communities,<sup>108</sup> such as improved water resources and biodiversity conservation. Indigenous-led land stewardship initiatives, which integrate traditional knowledge with modern practices, highlight the importance of preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable resource management.<sup>109</sup>

Achieving climate justice and equity requires the implementation of policy approaches, frameworks, and initiatives that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities and address systemic inequalities.<sup>110</sup> Incorporating equity considerations in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, along with the provision of funding and support for vulnerable communities, is essential.<sup>111</sup> By promoting equitable solutions to climate change, we can work towards a more just and sustainable future.<sup>112</sup>

## **VIII. Conclusion**

In this discussion on climate justice and equity, this paper has explored the unequal impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. It has examined the challenges faced by climate refugees, the importance of social justice and gender equality in

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<sup>108</sup> Martin, E. G., Costa, M. M., & Máñez, K. S. (2020). An operationalized classification of Nature Based Solutions for water-related hazards: From theory to practice. *Ecological Economics*, 167, 106460.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ciplet, D. (2021). From energy privilege to energy justice: A framework for embedded sustainable development. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 75, 101996.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



climate action, and the exclusion of marginalized groups from decision-making processes. Throughout our exploration, the paper emphasized the need for equitable solutions that address the specific needs and experiences of marginalized communities.

It is crucial for policymakers, organizations, and individuals to prioritize climate justice and equity in their efforts. This requires integrating the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and social responsibility into climate policies, programs, and initiatives. Policymakers should develop and implement policies that explicitly address the needs of vulnerable communities and ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Organizations and individuals should advocate for equitable solutions, support community-led initiatives, and foster partnerships that promote climate justice and equity.

Addressing the unequal impacts of climate change is essential for building a sustainable and just future. Climate change exacerbates existing social and economic disparities, further marginalizing already vulnerable communities. By recognizing and addressing these inequalities, we can create a more resilient and equitable society. This requires addressing the root causes of vulnerability, empowering marginalized communities, and promoting inclusive approaches to decision-making and action. It is only through concerted efforts and a collective commitment to climate justice and equity that we can overcome the challenges of climate change and create a future that is sustainable, just, and inclusive for all.

Climate justice and equity must be at the forefront of our efforts to address the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. By acknowledging the unequal burden faced by marginalized groups,

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**Dynesius Nyangau**

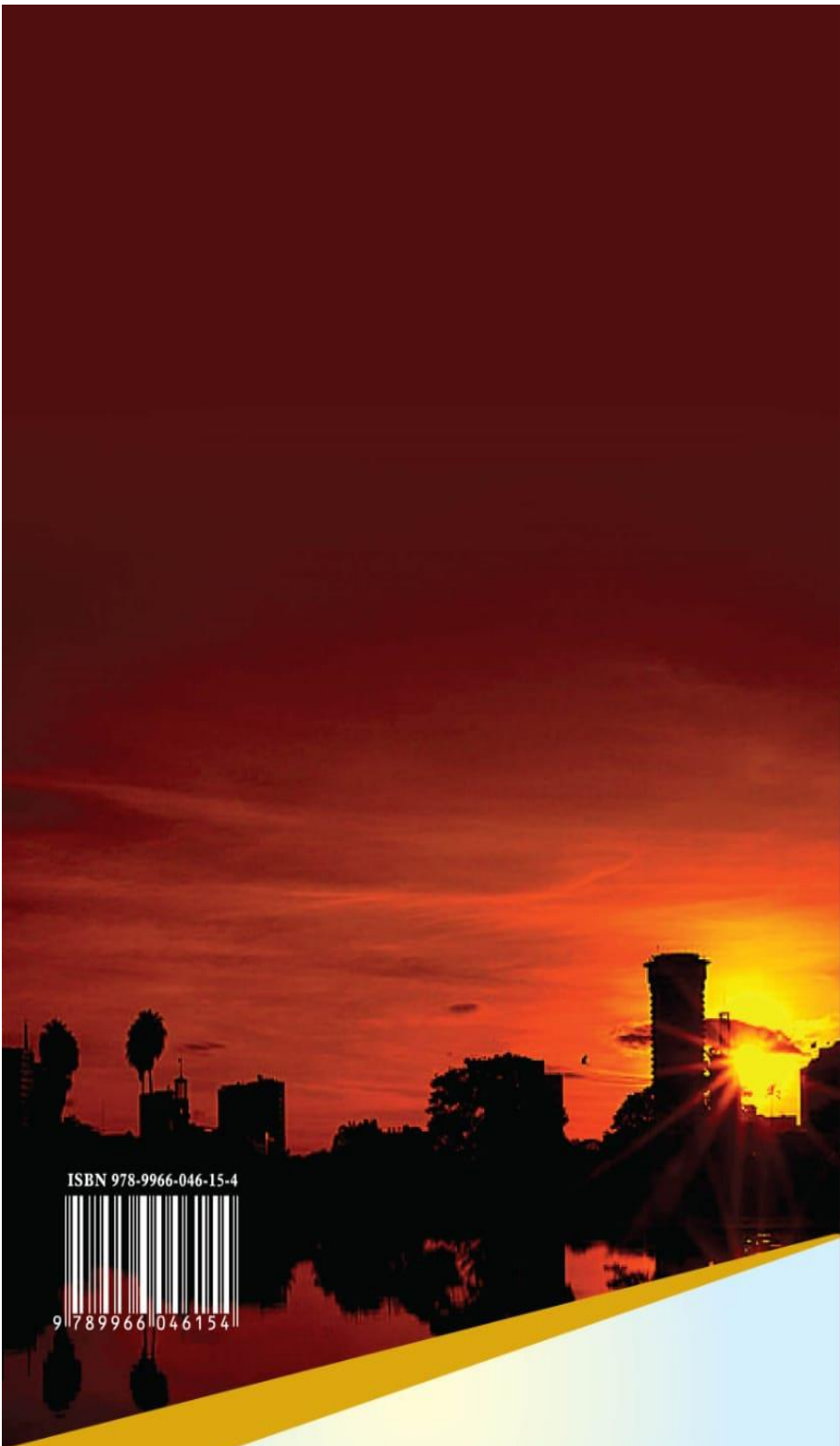
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including climate refugees, and recognizing the intersections with social justice, gender equality, and decision-making processes, we can work towards equitable solutions. Let us join together in taking action, advocating for change, and prioritizing climate justice and equity as we strive for a sustainable and just future.

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