



Climate and Social Justice in Haiti

A Guide to Help those Impacted by Climate-Related Hazards in Haiti

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Foreword

- ▶ As a little insular state in the Caribbean and the poorest country in the America, Haiti is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world in regard to natural disasters. The past 30 years proved it. The country has faced consequential burdens of hurricanes, floods, droughts and so forth. Each year, a new face of natural catastrophe emerges in a country unprepared to deal with such gloom and doom realities.
- ▶ Local leaders, Civil Society Organizations and State Government Officials have been brought down to their knees in trying to circumvent the harsh weight of these events. They never achieve their goals because of the problem's dimension. The country's economic situation continues to deteriorate year after year, the population's life expectancy decreases, the death toll after each natural hazard is terrified.
- ▶ In our perspective, a clear understanding of the ongoing patterns of climate and our social justice aspiration as a nation, could be an opportunity to build better from past experiences and move forward into a meliorative way where our behavior could align with our natural environment to prevent ourselves and those around us from facing the preposterous consequences of our in consequence.



Understanding climate and climate change

- ▶ In its most simple version, climate is the average weather in a given area over a longer period of time whereas climate change could be understood as any systematic change in the long-term statistics of climate variables such as temperature, precipitation, pressure, or wind sustained over several decades or longer (Usually over 30 years).
- ▶ This definition from the Climate Europe did not present the difference between climate and weather. Most people could easily use them interchangeably. This weather, according to National Weather Service is the state of the atmosphere at a given time and place with respect to variables such as temperature, moisture, wind speed and direction, and barometric pressure. It varies rapidly from day to day or even time. That's why Mark Twain pointed out : "Climate is what you expect, weather is what you have". This quote presents the time contrast between climate and weather in terms of what is ongoing and what is contingent.
- ▶ This confusion is also perceived with climate change and global warming. However, these two terms are not interchangeable either. Global Warming as NASA explained it refers to long-term heating of Earth's surface observed since the pre-industrial period due to human activities, primarily fossil fuel burning, which increases heat-trapping greenhouse gas levels in Earth atmosphere.



What is climate justice?

- ▶ The impact of global warming on small developing countries is detrimental for their survival. The rise of the sea level, lasting droughts and extreme hurricanes exacerbate inequality among people in global south. It creates an imbalance between rich countries represented by Europe and North America (United States and Canada) and poor countries mostly found in Africa, Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean.
- ▶ The excessive use of the fossil fuel since the middle of the eighteenth century with the industrial revolution of the former creates a broken environment that is hard to grapple with in the latter. By recognizing their part in climate change, the United Nations urge developed countries to step up in supporting developing countries to deal with climate hazard in what is known as climate justice. It is a term or a movement, as reported by [Daisy Simmons](#) in 2020, to acknowledging that climate change can have disproportionately harmful social, economic and public health impacts on disinvested population. It entails, according to Mary Robinson in her book called Climate Justice in 2018, understanding that climate change is more than just the sudden violence of a hurricane or flood. It is also the gradually changing weather patterns and rising sea levels causing greater food shortages, pollution, and poverty putting decades of development advances at risk.



What is social justice

- ▶ A society is made of individuals with different and sometimes contradictory interest. Modern society creates many institutions to deal with these interests in its quest to create social justice. These institutions find their legitimacy in balancing people's interest in accordance with what it considers as right. Modern institutions question, adjust and modify rules as the society moves forward, innovates or regresses. They are different from past societies where the concepts of justice, truth and good were given by an external entities immanent to the world like God or gods. These societies called heteronomous societies are different from autonomous societies of the modern periods according to Cornelius Castoriadis because people questions authorities and define their own understanding of right, truth and justice.
- ▶ Government via modern institutions strives to create a better society through social justice which is a political and philosophical theory that focused on the concept of fairness in relations between individuals in society and equal access to wealth, opportunities and social privileges according to [CFI](#). In line with this, John Rawls in his book *A Theory of Justice* published in 1971 pointed out two principals encompassing justice: the first one is related to rights and liberties that are equal to those everyone else has to the fullest extent possible. The second principal is that socio-economic inequality is permissible only if it is attached to offices that are open to all and are of benefit to the least well-off in society.
- ▶ From the above, we can assume that the question of social justice is tied to climate justice because both tend to recalibrate human relationship in society and/or in the world to a better feature where the wealth of a few do not impede the ability for the least well off to enjoy a minimum dignity and respect. Both questions the social and world system to find a common ground of cohabitation.



Haiti and the climate change

- ▶ Haiti is a tropical country in the Caribbean with a territory estimated at 27 750 square kilometer. It shares the Haitian island with the Dominican Republic. Its position in the latitude 19°00' N and longitude 72°25' W makes it the most vulnerable little developing island in regard to global warming. Many departments in this country experienced cyclones every year while others experienced droughts. This situation exacerbates extreme poverty and inequality characterizing the population for a long time.
- ▶ The phenomena such as El Nino and La Nina have tremendous impacts on Haiti's economic sector. They create a climatic fluctuation preventing farmers from harvesting. El Nino presents a rain deficit that impacts the growing of plants. La Nina with its extreme humidity and heavy rain cause costly damages to farmers and coastal communities. During their trajectory, many farmers lose their livestock and farm, and many people lose their home.
- ▶ According to the World Risk Report in 2020, in terms of climate hazards, Haiti is one of the most vulnerable countries as it was ranked 22nd among nations around the world. To understand its degree of vulnerability, we select two of the most consequential indicators of the global warming below: cyclones and droughts.



Cyclone

- ▶ According to the online Encyclopedia [Britannica](#), a hurricane or cyclone is any large system of rain that circulates about a center of low atmospheric pressure in a counterclockwise direction north of the equator and in a clockwise direction in the south. It also defines tropical cyclones as an intense circular storm that originates over warm tropical ocean. They are characterized by warm temperature and low atmospheric pressure, strongest winds and heaviest rainfall. During cyclonic seasons from June to November, Haiti recurrently faces enormous challenges coping with the cyclonic impacts. In the context of gang violence and economic hardship of this year, the World Food Program alerted about the extreme vulnerability of Haiti during the trajectory of about 17 cyclones that could exacerbate its situation.
- ▶ Among the most devastating hurricanes in Haiti for the last twenty years are:
 - ▶ Jeanne: In line with the Foundation of Knowledge and Liberty, It was a catastrophic hurricane killing more than 3 000 people and causing property damages to more than 300 000 individuals in September 2004, especially in the Artibonite department.
 - ▶ Hannah and Ike. They hit the Artibonite department in September 2008 resulting in 793 dead, 548 missing and affected more than 800 000 people according to the Haiti Post Disaster Needs Assessment report of the World Bank, Haitian Government, the United Nations and the European Union in 2008.
 - ▶ Matthew: In October 2016, this cyclone hit the South department of Haiti as a category 4 hurricane causing landslides, heavy flooding, infrastructure destruction. It killed 564 people while putting more than 1.4 million people in need for humanitarian assistance in accordance with the World bank report called Rapidly Assessing the Impact of Hurricane Matthew in Haiti in 2017.



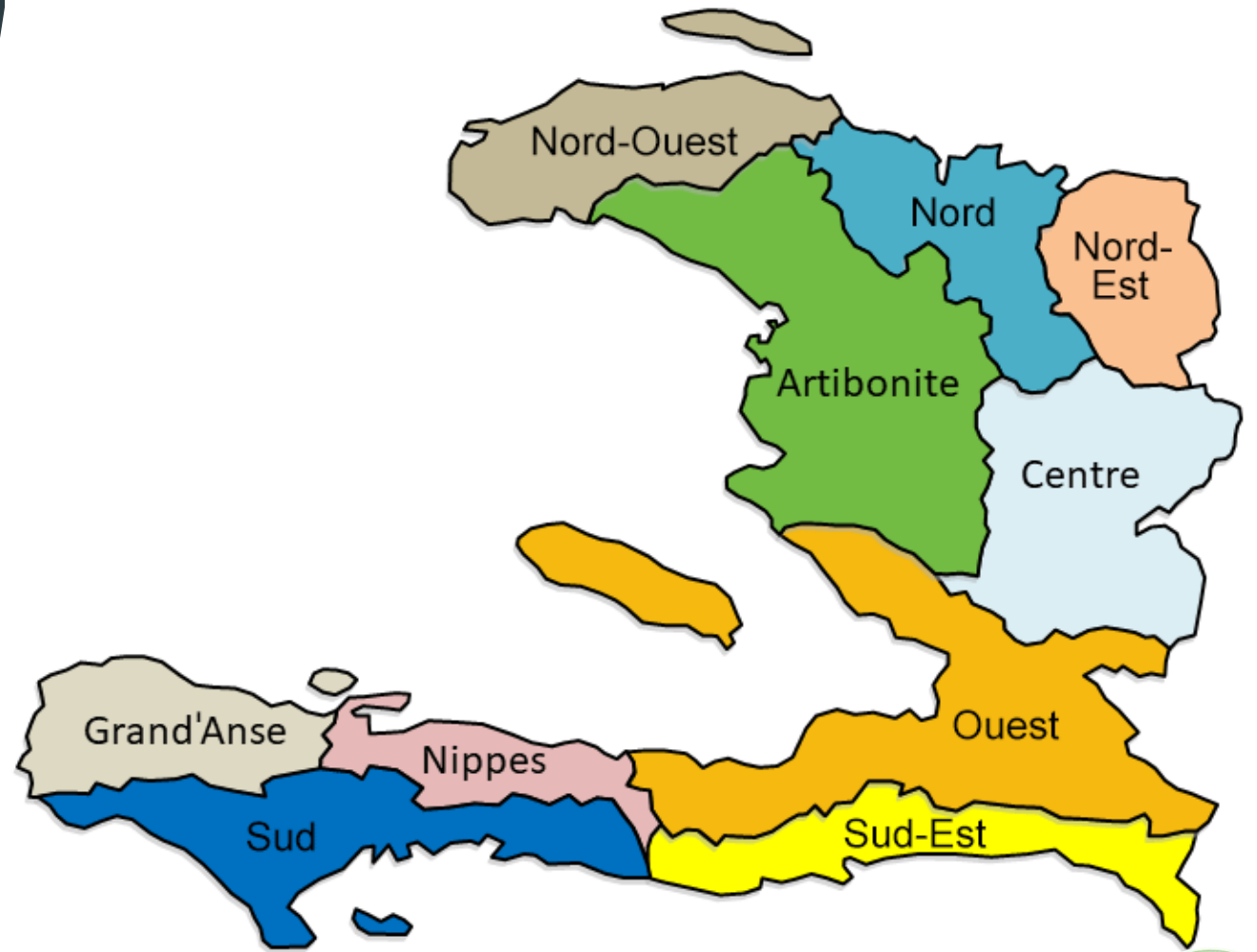
Droughts

- ▶ The global warming does not only affect Haiti by causing heavy rain and extreme wind. It also decreases the precipitation's intensity in most part of the country. Hence, it reduces the ability of farmers to grow their crops in an environment conducive to agricultural production. Drought as manifested in most part of the northeast, northwest, southeast and center departments of Haiti, is one of the most prominent threats to agricultural production.
- ▶ According to the Nationally Determined Contribution report, water scarcity becomes a major environmental issue in some areas where people rely on unclean water for consumption. More than 4 million people make use of unclean water for daily activities. Water scarcity causes so many rivers run dry. This phenomenon is known as Atmospheric Thirst. According to a [New York Times](#) article citing Solomon Gebrechorkos, a hydroclimatologist at the University of Oxford, atmospheric thirst is a factor that has made drought more frequent, more intense and has caused them cover larger areas. It also pointed out that a hotter world is a thirstier one. In such a situation, global warming will continue to fray away farmers' ability to cope with the ongoing pattern.



Climate Change impacts on people in Haiti

- ▶ Climate change, at this current pace, already creates so much tension between and within different countries around the world. In Haiti, many youth-led organizations and scholars constantly raise their voice to do their part in living in harmony with the nature by promoting sustainable agriculture, green energy and so forth.
- ▶ Each year spawns a new wave of natural disasters that continue to hamper people's lives. Let's take a look on the impacts of climate change in different sectors such as Economy, Politics, Health and Social.



[This Photo](#) has been taken online from an unknown author



Economic impact

- ▶ The global warming in Haiti has tremendous impacts on the economy because it encompasses all aspects of life. The Haitian economy is not an industrial-based one. It is a capitalism economy based on free market which requires investment and human resources to innovate and prosper in a competitive economy. According to the Nationally Designated Contribution report, 65% of the Haitian employment is in the agricultural sector. To survive, this sector relies on regular rainfall and climatic condition. With events such as El Nino and/or La Nina, the country receives either too much rain or longer period of droughts that heavily affect its economy.
- ▶ In cyclonic periods, most farms are devastated, infrastructures such as homes, schools, churches are damaged or crumbled. At these alarming events follows an economic duress where people struggle to survive. After the passage of the Matthew cyclone in 2016, the tourism sector presented a deficit of more than 2 billion US dollars according to the ministry of tourism and creative industries.



Policy impact

- ▶ In its comprehension, the term policy must be understood as the material dimensions of politics. It delineates objectives and roles through which political solutions are to be found to specific problems. It must be differentiated from politics related to debate and campaign to win election or polity which is the body deciphering how politics operates in a specific system.
- ▶ Because policy is an endeavor to carry out solutions to specific problems, the global warming tends to strand these endeavors. It acts as a counterforce that undermines every productive government program. As a result, governmental actions most often cope with reactions against natural catastrophe.



Health impact

- ▶ According to [Le Nouvelliste](#), a national newspaper in Haiti, the problematic of global warming and health is crucial in Haiti as the country experiences a surge in the number of patient developing cancer relating to the impact of the climate change. At the same time, Dr. Jean Hugues Henrys pointed out the fact that the climate change presents direct impact on the environment, the food chain and the health. As a result, most people will develop new forms of unfamiliar illness.
- ▶ Global warming worsens the situations of people with cardiovascular diseases and the malnourished. Through droughts and heavy rain, climate change creates a dire situation in the lives of those who cannot cope with air pollution and those affected by crop failures.



Social impact

- ▶ Climate change has detrimental consequence on the society. By degrading the environment, it makes room for food insecurity and poverty. According to the Nationally Designated Contributions, fisheries, agriculture, livestock, tourism, energy, education... are hit by the consequences of climate change.
- ▶ During cyclonic period, many houses are deteriorated, several schools are crumbled and other important infrastructures are broken. As a result, people have been killed, their economy is ruined and the prospect for a better future is vanished. Facing climate change requires living in harmony with the environment.





What you can do!

- ▶ As citizen, leader or patriot, it is important to engage in the fight for a better future by embracing the climate justice movement. Here are some steps you can take to do your parts.

Adapting

- ▶ According to the NDC, adaptation is the main priority for the Haitian government to deal with climate change. This term adaptation, in line with Barry Smith and Olga Pilifosova, is adjustment in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts.
- ▶ Adaptation as priority entails livestock, agriculture, education, fisheries, water management, infrastructure. They are the bedrock upon which the government relies to turn the country from economic insecurity to self-independence.





Advocating

- ▶ Advocacy is an important element to reduce the climate change consequence in Haiti. Most of the time, people are unaware of events happening around them. By sharing a flyers, participating in a broadcast related to the global warming or attending a meeting where one can sensitize the most vulnerable people about the issue could save lives.
- ▶ Never underestimate the power of little actions in the movement for a better planet.

Volunteering

- Volunteering is very important to stay engaged in things that really matter. By joining a group of young people or senior around your area, you can have a significant impact in reducing the greenhouse gas emission and contribute to clean the air. Thus, you will participate in reducing air pollution that has detrimental consequence on people dealing with respiratory issues.



Fair World Builders in action

- Our organization, created in June 2019, strives to build a better society by bridging the gap between climate and social justice movement. We believe that the Haitian society's future remains inextricably link to its ability to adapt to the global warming reality.



Join the movement

- ▶ To join our movement and stay updated to our climate-related actions, please visit or contact our office via these following means:
- ▶ <https://www.fairworldbuilder.org/>
- ▶ +509 36815848
- ▶ +1 561 942 7855
- ▶ info@fairworldbuilder.org



Conclusion

- ▶ Climate change has huge impact on the quality of life in Haiti. Year after year, the country faces the challenges of coping with heavy rain and long-lasting droughts with detrimental consequences on economic sectors, health system, political actions and so forth.
- ▶ As a developing country and one of the most vulnerable ones in the world, Haiti could not tackle those challenges without a clear vision of its immediate environment, drastic and ambitious actions to divert itself from the current trend.
- ▶ Through this document, I hope each and everyone of you feels the impulse to act in such a way that could alleviate the annual burden (droughts and cyclone) facing vulnerable communities every year.

