

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE



Photo credit: Reuters/Nacho Doce

DISPROPORTIONATE EFFECTS

- People in developing countries are more than 20 times as likely to be affected by climate-related disasters as those in the developed world⁴. Small island states, coastal regions, megacities, mountainous and Polar Regions are also particularly vulnerable¹.
- Lower-income communities continue to face the decision of choosing industrial development and jobs over their health—a trade-off that ends up ruining a community’s potential for prosperity in the long-run, particularly as climate change increases pressures and health risks. This trade-off means low-income communities and communities of color are particularly vulnerable³.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- Millions more people will be forced to leave their lands and homes due to the loss of clean water, housing, and food due to forces like rising sea levels, intense storms, floods, droughts, and deforestation².
- Violence increases when economic and livelihood security decrease. Disasters have been shown to result in spikes in physical and sexual violence against women and girls².
- Disaster situations often lead to militarism and the criminalization of survivors².

HEALTH, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DISEASE

- Extreme high air temperatures raise levels of ozone and other pollutants and contribute directly to deaths from cardiovascular and respiratory disease, as can pollen or other aeroallergens that worsen in heat, particularly among elderly people¹.
- Rising temperatures and variable precipitation are likely to decrease the production of staple foods in many of the poorest regions. This will increase the prevalence of malnutrition, which currently causes 3.1 million deaths yearly¹.

NATURAL DISASTERS

- More than half of the world's population lives within 60 km of the sea. Increased storms and rising sea levels results in destroyed infrastructure, displacement, and physical and psychological disease¹.
- By 2025, 40% of the world’s population will be living in countries experiencing significant water shortages, which in turn could worsen existing tensions over water in conflict-affected regions like the Middle East⁴.

Sources:

1. WHO Media Centre, “Climate Change and Health.”
2. NAACP, “Climate Justice Toolkit.”
3. Robert J. Bullard, “Environmental Blackmail in Minority Communities.”
4. Oxfam, “Climate Change Fact Sheet,” April 2010.

ECUMENICAL
MINISTRIES
of OREGON

Oregon Interfaith
Power & Light
Generate the Future