**Climate reparations**

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Monday, Mar 07, 2022

“A brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future”. That’s the sobering assessment made by scientists on the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which earlier this week published its latest report, on the impacts of the climate crisis. In it, the IPPC argues that roughly 3.5 billion people – 45 percent of the world’s population – currently live in areas of ‘high vulnerability’ to climate change, meaning they will be heavily impacted by floods, droughts or extreme weather in the decades to come.

Yet even more striking than the sheer scale of these impacts is their inequality and unfairness. The vast majority of those 3.5 billion people are in ‘west-, central- and east Africa, south Asia, Central and South America, small island developing states and the Arctic’. These regions – which have some of the lowest per capita carbon emissions in the world – are now suffering the effects of a crisis that has been driven and exacerbated by the looting of their lands for wealth and natural resources.

Not only are these countries and communities faced with displacement, food shortages, water insecurity and more, unless there is concerted global action, the report also asserts that many losses are already happening now, and are irreversible. This situation is a result of the failure (or perhaps more accurately, refusal) of rich countries to support the Global South against the climate crisis in UN negotiations. Not only have these ‘Annex 1’ countries, including the US, UK, Canada, Australia and most of the EU, repeatedly resisted ambitious, binding targets on emissions reductions, they have also repeatedly broken promises on financial assistance.

Last November, at COP26 in Glasgow, the Global South had three key demands on finance: greatly increased climate finance grants; far more funding for climate adaptation; and a new pot of money to compensate for the loss and damage already being suffered by frontline communities. This week’s report highlights that, despite a 2009 pledge (at COP15) to commit roughly half of $100bn a year in climate finance to adaptation, only 4-8 percent of funding has supported projects that help vulnerable communities live with the impacts of the climate crisis (and some of those projects actually increase climate vulnerability). Those communities are now being sacrificed to the selfishness of rich governments that resist paying for the crisis they have caused every step of the way.

The demand for loss and damage compensation has also been heavily resisted at every previous COP. At COP26, the establishment of a new funding pot was rejected and almost all references were removed in the final agreement, the Glasgow Climate Pact. Campaigners have hailed the promise for further discussions on loss and damage as a small win, and will push hard to make it a key issue at COP27 in Egypt this coming November. Yet, insiders have now raised concerns that there was significant pressure from the Biden administration to remove any mention of loss and damage from the latest IPCC report.

Meanwhile, frontline communities, such as in Sub-Saharan African, South East Asia and small island states in the Pacific and Caribbean, continue to lose homes, livelihoods and families to the climate crisis. For example, just before Christmas, while it also dealing with a steep rise in COVID-19 infections, the Philippines was hit by super typhoon Rai (also called Odette), which displaced half a million people and impacted nearly five million in total.

Just a few weeks ago, tropical storm Ana affected nearly 200,000 people across several countries in southern Africa. Without adequate finance, countries often need to take out loans to rebuild, forcing them further into a colonial debt trap that forces them to prioritise debt payments over protecting their citizens. Research suggests that lower income countries spend five times their climate adaptation budgets on external debt payments.

Take Mozambique, which, after devastating cyclones in 2019, was forced to take on a $118m loan from the International Monetary Fund. World Bank data suggests that an average person in Mozambique contributes 76 times less carbon emissions than their US counterpart, yet it is Mozambicans and other frontline communities who are paying – with their wallets and their lives – for this crisis. Increasing the transfer of finance from the Global North to the Global South is therefore an important element of limiting the devastation, and moving towards climate justice, but it alone cannot repair all the damage done by capitalist extractivism.

Excerpted: ‘The Need for Climate Reparations Is Now Undeniable’.

Courtesy: Commondreams.org