

Advancing Sustainability and Social Justice in the Global South



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ABSTRACT

Harmful anthropogenic activities adversely affect Indigenous populations, such as the Inuit people and Nigeria's Ogoni people. Environmental degradation disparately burdens such communities, thus making them to seek for environmental justice. Tribunals at all levels have affirmed that failing to safeguard the environment violates human rights, especially for Indigenous people who need a healthy environment, food, and access to resources to survive. The Global South continues to grapple with a plethora of issues, including ecological unsustainability, poverty, and inequality, but issues of justice are often disregarded in sustainability-oriented projects. Therefore, there is a need for countries in this region to integrate social justice into environmental sustainability. The concept of environmental justice traces its origins to the US during the 1980s when scholars used it to describe the unequal effect of industrial pollution on the country's racial minorities. The idea has significantly blossomed during the last five decades, expanding historically and geographically to cover various global environmental struggles. This article explores why the concept of social justice has resonance and usefulness for advancing sustainability and why it is timely for the concept to be considered for the Global South. It delves into these issues with a specific focus on the Global South, examining case studies from various countries in the region and exploring key insights from the Global North.

Keywords: Environmental justice, Global South, Social justice, Sustainability, Indigenous communities

INTRODUCTION

Albert Einstein's argument that we cannot solve our issues using the same thinking that created them has never been more accurate than in today's pandemic and post-pandemic world as the world struggles with environmental-related challenges. In the Global South, societies continue to experience numerous challenges, particularly in the environmental sector (Rinaldi, 2022). Sustainable development is a critical challenge for humanity in numerous third world states. It is worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic

contributed to the disruption of socioeconomic life, compelling businesses and governments to reconsider their priorities.

Many people in Africa have low incomes and live in slums and informal settlements. Slum dwellers face challenges, such as government-supported evictions, precarious living conditions, and the lack of land tenure rights. Few empirical studies have been conducted on sustainability issues in the Global South in tandem with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The aim of this article is to shed more light on how sustainability has progressed, the challenges experienced in the quest for an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable society in this region. As the combined issues of environmental degradation, poverty, and urbanization increasingly become urgent (Beall, 2022), understanding the nexus between sustainability and social justice within the Global South is imperative. Despite sustainability efforts gaining momentum in the Global South, attention to its relationship with social justice remains scant. It is crucial to mainstream social justice into environmental issues since a sustainable future requires improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable.

Low-income and other vulnerable residents in the Global South are prone to an array of environmental burdens and are usually excluded from mainstream planning and development (Robertson,

2012). While communities have proven to be remarkably innovative and resilient, the issue of social justice still needs attention to ensure that their challenges are addressed, potential harnessed, and sustainable solutions oriented towards them.

This research is undertaken with consideration that developing states are increasingly becoming major players in the global economy. Thus, their influence in global institutions and development thinking has rapidly changed. Current literature vehemently challenges the perception that Global South states are only meant to receive aid and cannot contribute in creating rights and norms. Recent global research demonstrates that these countries have contributed tremendously to shaping and developing the post-war period's ideas. These states are increasingly determining the international development agenda, thus shape human development and sustainability and generating global norms (Abdenur, 2018; Acharya, 2016; Helleiner 2014). Nonetheless, this article begins by examining some of the challenges the Global South grapples with in the quest for sustainability.

CHALLENGES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Challenges

While the SDGs are global goals, their implementation is founded on action at the local level. Some of the major

challenges that the Global South grapples with are economics (SDG 8), poverty (SDG1), climate change (SDG 13), water and sanitation (SDG 6), energy (SDG 7), biodiversity (SDG 15), and urban sustainability (SDG 11). Currently, Global South states are among the most adversely impacted by climate change. Environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, ecological hazards, food insecurity, and deforestation negatively impact human development (Vasques et al., 2022).

The Pacific and Asia grapple with three main environmental challenges: air pollution, deforestation, and marine and water pollution. On the other hand, African states are grappling with land degradation, water resources management, desertification, energy supplies, and chemicals management. For example, in 2018, natural disasters, including cyclones, adversely affected more than 3 million people in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique (Yarnell & Cone, 2019). Ethiopia, similar to many states within the Global South, grapples with a rising population, increasing food scarcity, reducing access to bioenergy, energy and natural resources, and difficulty in ensuring that the rural poor have sustainable livelihoods.

Inequality is the other critical challenge affecting the Global South from achieving its targets. Economic, gender, citizens and migrants, urban and rural populations, or other inequalities related to religion,

disability, sexuality, caste as well as other markers of difference constitute barriers for sustainable development and human rights in this region. The allocation of few resources for addressing these inequalities (Palma, 2019) means that the poor incur higher costs compared to the received benefits (Lustig, 2018). In spite of some achievements made in terms of reducing inequality, the Global South still has uneven or unsustainable progress. Aid actors emphasize that interventions should target the poor, but increasing evidence demonstrated that it is difficult to eliminate poverty without tackling inequality simultaneously. Certain countries have introduced social protection policies or social insurance schemes to safeguard against adverse market effects (Hujo, 2021). According to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, social protection is a universal human right. In addition, various progressively-financed social protection schemes redistribute risks, incomes and resources in ways that benefit disadvantaged groups, contributing to equitable social outcomes. Notwithstanding, social programs (premised on their design, objectives and implementation), can perpetuate exclusions and inequalities or are devoid of a transformative impact. This is further explained in the next section on some of the efforts made in addressing inequality.

Current Efforts Addressing Challenges in the Global South

Various efforts seek to tackle these issues, which are crucial for attaining the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. South Africa, despite being among the most advanced nations, tops global rankings in wealth and income inequality, with a Gini coefficient of 0.68 in 2017 (Palma, 2019), and 50% of the population living below the poverty line, together with a protracted history and legacy of entrenched gender and racial-based inequalities (Plagerson *et al.*, 2017). Similar to Brazil, South Africa uses a liberal economic approach to strengthen the role of the state in social policy. However, with preference for work instead of transfers for combating poverty, South African policymakers have been unable to address persistently high rates of unemployment as well as labor market segregation. On its part, Kenya (with a Gini coefficient of 0.42 in 2017), was one of the first adopters of cash transfers in Africa (Ouma & Adesina, 2019), with a National Social Protection Policy entrenched in the new Constitution of 2010. The National Safety Net Program reached 5 million individuals in 2019, representing about 10% of the country's population (World Bank, 2019). Poverty remains high with about 17% (more than 8.9 million people) living below the international poverty line. Similarly, the CCT program Pantawid within the Philippines was rolled out to minimize

poverty (Singh *et al.*, 2016). The CCT focuses on raising the poor's social capital and income and to combat intergenerational poverty. However, it has not been successful as first anticipated. The Pantawid has led to a rise in stratification and fragmentation, whereas its objective of providing the poor with social protection remains quite elusive (Hujo, 2021). For the three cases, informal and formal institutions, especially for social governance and social provisioning, propagate inequalities and unequal power relations. The three case studies demonstrate that there is international commitment to holistic sustainable development and a rights-based transformative agenda. However, aid practices use a market-centered growth approach with little regard to equality of outcomes (Hujo, 2021). As a matter of fact, tackling inequalities and fostering inclusion through social security, universal public social services, and decent work has been dropped from this development equation, thus posing adverse repercussions for human rights, specifically significant socioeconomic rights, and social development (Hujo, Behrendt, & McKinnon, 2017).

Currently, China leads in solving global issues since its government has undertaken critical steps for addressing climate change. For example, China is currently considered the world leader in the use of renewable power due to substantial growth in wind, nuclear, hydro, and solar power at low cost

(Ahmad, 2020). It also continues to put a price on carbon emissions, which can potentially reduce emissions (Ahmad, 2020). The government has also prioritized on energy efficiency by setting aggressive efficiency targets. Costa Rica is the other country leading in providing climate change solutions. This demonstrates how to balance between financial constraints and curb emissions (Ahmad, 2020). Its 2019 *National Decarbonization Plan 2018-2050* incorporates strategies for all economic sectors and defines steps like electrification of the transport system and embracing energy sustainability in construction, industry, and transport. Some of its climate-related policies are a carbon neutral certification scheme for municipalities and businesses, the National Energy Plan, and mitigation measures in agriculture. The country's electricity generation consists of a high proportion of renewable resources. It aimed to reach 100% renewable generation by 2021 after generating 98 percent electricity from renewable sources between 2015 and 2018. On the other hand, Morocco has constructed the largest concentrated solar facility in the world, spreading over 6000 acres. More than two million of its citizens are provided with renewable energy, and Morocco aims to generate 52% of its energy from renewable energy by 2030 (Climate Investment Funds 2019). The *Carbon Tax Act 2019* of South Africa seeks to minimize emissions by 33% by 2035 (Ntombela et al., 2019). On its part, Nigeria

aims to reach a target of 30% by 2030 using decentralized and grid-based investments (Corfee-Marlot et al., 2019; Vassiliades et al., 2022). Despite all these efforts, gaps still remain in the social justice domain since it has not been adequately embedded into sustainability issues.

Environmental Justice in the Global South

Global economic activity might jeopardize economic carrying capacity and deter the actualization of sustainable development. While legal instruments for preventing environmental degradation exist, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources continues unabated, hence exacerbating inequality among and within Global South countries (Reid, 2005). Unsustainable resource consumption is a major contributor of environmental degradation, especially the wealthiest citizens, many who live within the global North or within the global South's large cities (Reid, 2005). Since colonialism to-date, the North has used natural resources from the South to boost economic development, devastating environmental and economic conditions, trapping Southern countries within vicious poverty and environmental cycles, as well as generating environmental issues that will limit the development alternatives of future generations. Export-oriented production and unsustainable resource use by global firms has harmed the Global South's environment (Gonzalez, 2015).

Political marginalization, poverty, poor health, and social exclusion adversely affect southern communities through climate injustice (Klugman, 2011). According to environmental justice advocates and scholars, there are four unique environmental injustice aspects faced by historically marginalized communities experience. They are corrective injustice because of inadequate enforcement of environmental laws and legislations, and distributive injustice attributed to disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards as well as constrained access to environmental amenities. The other aspects are social injustice due to environmental degradation being inextricably entangled in deeper structural ills, including racism and poverty, and procedural unfairness attributed to exclusion from environmental decision-making (Kuehn, 2000).

Environmental justice issues are prevalent globally (Walker, 2012), including climate justice issues experienced by indigenous peoples of the Pacific and Arctic Islands (Tsosie, 2007), resistance of indigenous and local communities against environmental degradation caused by oil drilling (Himley, 2015), and transnational agrarian movements, including La Via Campesina (McMichael, 2008). Numerous legal practitioners and scholars have attempted to frame the demands of environmental justice movements both on the global and national stage from a human rights angle (Agyeman *et al.*, 2012).

Human rights tribunals have ascertained how it can infringe on the rights to water, food, life, privacy, property, as well as the indigenous people's collective rights to their ancestral resources and lands (Knox, 2009). Environmental degradation infringe on various agreements, including the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (Kravchenko & Bonine, 2012). Also, two regional human rights treaties (the *Arab Charter on Human Rights*, and the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*,) and the *ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights*) embed the substantive right to a healthy environment (Boyd, 2011).

For this article, the environmental human rights concept encompasses procedural environmental rights, substantive human rights, and the right to a healthy environment due to environmental negligence (Knox, 2014). The safeguarding of environmental rights by human rights institutions has led to their embedment within national legislations, judicial decisions, and constitutions (Boyd, 2011), with at least 147 countries entrenching environmental rights and responsibilities within their regulations and constitutions (Gonzalez, 2006). Thus, human rights laws have historically been and continue being a crucial asset in achieving environmental justice. The human rights laws have helped environmental actors to safeguard vulnerable communities and individuals.

Notwithstanding, the North-South disparities jeopardize environmental justice in countries (Gonzalez, 2015). Global South environmental inequities manifest through corrective, procedural, distributive, and social injustice. The North is a major contributor to global environmental degradation, while the South suffers from distributive injustice due to environmental hazards in their surroundings. Anand (2017) contends that some of the factors contributing to this disparity in the South are the weak regulatory bodies, industrial localization, and unsustainable natural resource extraction to meet the needs of Northern consumers, as well as the transfer of hazardous wastes and polluting industry to the South. Furthermore, procedural injustice is another feature of the North-South relations because the North makes the major decisions. For example, institutions, such as the IMF, World Bank, the World Trade Organization, make major decisions since they wield more political and economic power (Hossay, 2006). On the other hand, corrective injustice manifests in the small island countries' lack of capacity to get redress for their lands' imminent annihilation as a result of climate-change-induced rise in sea levels (Wallsgrove, 2013). In addition, the environmental conflicts between the North and the South are intimately entangled with post-colonial aid, investment, finance, and trade policies that led to the impoverishment of Southern nations. Gonzalez (2006) emphasizes that it also allowed the North

to leverage the South's resources while externalizing both the environmental and social costs.

Social justice is a critical tool for enabling historically marginalized communities to resist their governments' abuses of vulnerable populations and nature. The social justice language insinuates that human rights should, from a theoretical standpoint, trump other considerations, including economic efficiency (Agyelman *et al.*, 2012). Contrary to international environmental law, Bratspies (2015) contends that human rights law obligates states to respond to domestic harms or issues. This enables the victims of both procedural and substantive human rights infringements to use citizenship complaint measures and expose them to international scrutiny. Notwithstanding, environmental human rights should not be viewed as an object of admiration. Rather, it should be perceived as an instrument for achieving environmental justice that has both benefits and drawbacks. Implementing human rights using a top-down approach differs from the bottom-up ecological approach, as illustrated by local environmental justice movements. Despite institutionalization being critical for environmental human rights' implementation, advocates and scholars should identify and challenge policies and practices that jeopardize their effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Case Studies from the Global South

Inuit People in the Arctic Region

It is worth noting that political rhetoric and the media often center on the effects of climate change when people reflect on this issue. However, climate change stakeholders argue that beyond the impact on Indigenous culture, the homes and lives of many northern communities are the true consequences of climate change. Unfortunately, the human impact of climate change has been sidelined or disregarded in discussions about the issue. Nonetheless, there has been a significant shift in the discourse surrounding the debate. Increasingly, international conferences in both academia and politics are acknowledging that the changes occurring in the Arctic have immediate and tangible effects. More significantly, it violates northerners' human rights, including food, health, and cultural and social rights to foster personal development. Coppes (2016) emphasizes that people are relying on Traditional Knowledge (TK), which many northern Indigenous peoples know as Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) together with Western scientific knowledge for solving what is now predominantly acknowledged as a human rights issue. This issue was vehemently presented by Ms. Sheila Watt-Cloutier, in 2007 to the *Inter-American*

Commission on Human Rights. She argued that besides climate change being a human rights issue, states facilitating it, including the U.S, infringed on the Inuit people's rights. The petition was quite significant in influencing the way people perceived climate change. This was reflected in a foreword by John Knox, UN Special Rapporteur, stating that the petition by the Inuit people substantially influenced climate change perceptions globally. This demonstrated the recognition that climate change threatens the capacity for Inuit peoples to do well within their culture of hunting and withstanding the changing and dangerous ice. The Inuit recognize that this has been an infringement on their rights for more than 15 years. TK has the ability to mitigate and facilitate climate change adaptation impacts, and remains one of the major ingredients of Inuit culture that could disappear as a result of climate change. Climate change leads to the loss of the capacity to harvest animals because of the loss of ice, loss of wisdom of the land and elders. The loss of TK has reduced their ability to flourish safely within the north. For example, climate change has made it difficult for them to rely on snowdrift as a safe mode of transport. More specifically, climate change has led to the change in the direction of the winds, resulting in hunters being stranded away from home, and being unable to rely on their TK of the land. Moreover, ice thinning jeopardizes hunters' lives since they can fall in freezing waters that can cause immediate death.

Tuvalu in the Pacific Ocean

In 2011, Tuvalu had a shortage of water supply for its population. As a result, the government declared a state of emergency, rationing each household to only 40 liters of water everyday. The water crisis was attributed to climate change, together with the La Nina weather pattern, thus posing wide ramifications for Tuvaluans' human rights (Boom & Lederwasch, 2011). The changing patterns of precipitation and higher sea levels have adversely impacted fresh water supplies, infringing on the right to water. The right to water is implicit within human rights, including a right to life and health found in articles 3 and 25, respectively, of UDHR. Tuvalu will be uninhabitable long prior to the land being submerged as food crops fail and becomes scarce. Social and political instability attributed to climate change may ultimately constrain the capacity of Tuvalu's government to meet its functions, including the protection of democratic systems and human rights. The right to a healthy environment acknowledges the right to live in a suitable and safe environment to ensure their mental and physical health. Upholding this right entails protecting the cultural life of Tuvaluans, and the traditional animals and plants on which they rely. Examining the water crisis using a human-rights-based approach illuminates the importance of Tuvaluan communities which actively participate in responding to adaptation needs of Tuvalu.

Indigenous peoples globally are fighting against the negative consequences associated with climate change. According to Tuvalu's Prime Minister, climate change will aggravate the existing economic inequality globally.

Nigeria: Ogoni People

The Ogoni minority ethnic community live in the Western Niger Delta area of southern Nigeria. They represent less than 0.05% of Nigeria's population. The *Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People* has played a critical role in fighting for the rights of the Ogoni People in Nigeria. The main threat the Ogoni people face is the decree promulgated by the Nigerian government on 1st March 2019 ordering Shell and other companies to resume their oil exploration within Ogoni. The other fundamental threat is the consistent pollution of the Ogoni environment, a threat attributed to the devastation of oil spills as well as other related activities that continue to drive the Ogoni people to extinction. The other critical threat is violence from oil organizations and the Nigerian government in an attempt to force their way into Ogoni. In 1990, when the Ogoni people made up their minds that what they had experienced was enough (due to continuous pollution of the environment and destruction of the means of their livelihood), they united to stand against these injustices. In 2014, Shell was found to have committed atrocities due to three oil spills that occurred in 2008. As a result

of the court's findings, it was declared that Shell would compensate, clean the environment, there would be remediation, and restoration. In spite of efforts to compensate, there are no efforts geared towards clean up, with Shell consistently failing to honor the court order. Violation of Ogoni people's human rights was also raised in *the Social and Economic Rights Action Center, et al. v. Nigeria* where the applicant claimed that the Nigerian government contributed to environmental degradation in the Ogoni people's territory due to activities of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company in disposal of hazardous wastes. The contamination of air, soil and water as a result of oil leaks resulted in health issues among the Ogoni people. The government was found culpable of neglecting to create and enforce standard safety measures. It availed the Nigerian military forces to them, which were used for attacking, burning and destroying Ogoni villages. Consequently, various rights violations of *the African Charter on Human and People's Rights*, including the right to health, life, and a clean environment were found. According to the Commission, there was violation of Articles 4 (right to life), 16 (right to health) and 24 (right to a clean environment) since the government failed to deter widespread killings of the Ogoni and environmental degradation and pollution. In addition, the other violation found by the Commission was the right to adequate housing derived from an amalgamation of the rights to property, family, and health. In failing to

deter oil firms from destroying and contaminating food sources, Nigeria infringed on the right to food. Finally, Nigeria has violated Article 2 that guarantees the freedom from discrimination. Thus, the Ogoni people are vulnerable to climate change as a result of violation of many of their rights.

South Africa

South Africa is among the most unequal states globally. Its government has been unable to tackle inequality. In addition, many South Africans still lack access to healthcare, quality housing, quality education, and basic services (Black *et al.*, 2020). The country's income inequality is among the highest globally, with coloured, black, and Indian South Africans as well as women being disadvantaged. The accumulation of social capital and upward social mobility remain low for black South Africans. Women continue being more severely impacted by poverty and unemployment, and South African women are severely exposed to gender-based violence. Apart from inequality, prejudice and discrimination premised on race, disability, nationality, and gender identity exclude numerous people from realizing their potential. This is despite the fact that it is only within a society where cultural and personal diversity is celebrated and tolerated that people can live a fulfilled life. Furthermore, South Africa's healthcare is severely underperforming due to detrimental mismanagement of its healthcare facilities

(Adams & Luiz, 2022). Also, more impoverished communities often experience more health issues hence tend to be more dependent on a weak public health system. Moreover, persons with disabilities do not get enough support required for fulfilling their potential because of lack of access to the necessary specialised support and services. At the same time, there is a lack of effective empowerment systems. The current social support systems fail to empower the susceptible persons to become self-sufficient. Indeed, many South Africans grapple with a plethora of hurdles from an early age, and lack access to the required nutrition for cognitive as well as other development, do not have access to decent sanitation, and experience substandard schooling. The gaps in infrastructural development implies that there are few economic opportunities available, and these may still be quite costly to access. It leads to a state where there is reliance on some form of state assistance.

Brazil

Brazil is engulfed in racial discrimination and prejudice. Racial inequality remains rampant, while racial discrimination is quite common, with non-whites' human rights consistently violated. Averagely, black and brown Brazilians earn 50% of the income of the white population (Ferreira, 2022). The elite and the middle class are almost wholly white, so that melting pot of Brazil only exists among the

poor and working class. A large proportion of discrimination within Brazil tends to be subtle, including aggressions, slights, as well as other informal practices, whereas consciously overt and egregious racism targets specific individuals, particularly through racial insults. While Brazil's anti-racism laws target such incidents that have been perceived as un-Brazilian, subtle institutional and individual practices maintain and reproduce racial inequalities (Wendt *et al.*, 2022). Racist thoughts whereby racial hierarchies are considered natural remain culturally embedded in the same way they are globally. Within societies such as the US, sociologists have unearthed the way racism continues reproducing racial inequalities, in spite of the end of race-based laws and regulations and the decline of egregious racism. Furthermore, economic inequality has reached extreme levels, in spite of being among the largest economies globally. While the last decade has had tremendous progress in terms of Brazil reducing economic inequality, the pace has been quite slow, and Brazil remains one of the most unequal states in the world. Such disparities adversely impact the marginalised, minorities, and women. Also, the Latin American giant still grapples with challenges such as police violence, environmental degradation, and corruption.

Case Studies from the Global North Canada

Canada is renowned as an inclusive and progressive country. Despite this, it also grapples with social injustice issues. Violence against women is among the current social issues bedevilling the country, with about 25% of the violent crime reported being family abuse. According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, more than 6,000 women and children spend their nights in shelters. There is also widespread racial discrimination targeting the first nations. The indigenous population continues to grapple with socioeconomic issues. The first nations population of Canada grapple with social issues, including addiction, health disparities, suicide, addiction, incarceration, poverty, and unemployment. Also, the rights of indigenous people and desires of industries, such as oil often conflict. Many of these issues are founded in discrimination and racism due to current high poverty levels. Whereas the government may have accepted responsibility for injustices, the issue persists. About five million people in the country also live in poverty. Poverty impacts people of all economic backgrounds, nationalities, and ages. It relates to unemployment, health policy, education and substandard housing. Economic inequality is a social justice issue that needs to be addressed for the country to make significant progress. Poverty costs the country since it negatively impacts health outcomes, educational achievement, and social inclusion.

Australia: Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

In spite of spirited attempts by numerous Australians and politicians to gloss over the brutal colonisation of the country, the brutal treatment of Aboriginal people in the country that continues today cannot be denied. The UN has in recent years handed down many scathing reports on the lack of effort by Australia regarding improvement of the shocking suicidal rates, education, health, and incarceration (Watt-Cloutier, 2015). The country has failed to respond to these reports since there is no pressure for them to do so. The Stolen Generation case where a group of indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in institutions or with non-indigenous families highlights the issues of cultural genocide and trauma faced by indigenous peoples in Australia.

Furthermore, the Torres Strait Islanders are also climate change victims. Islanders claim that changing weather patterns directly impact their livelihood and culture. For example, severe flooding attributed to the tidal surge has led to the destruction of family graves, and scattered human remains everywhere. This is important because they value ancestral graveyards and deceased relatives, thus have entrenched them in their cultural practices. In addition, they attach value to their ceremonies,

including initiation, if they practice them in the community's native lands.

Climate change has also led to heavy rainfall and storms, thus destroying land and trees. Consequently, the quantity of food available from traditional farming and fishing has significantly reduced. For instance, the rising sea level on Masig Island has made saltwater seep into the soil, and simultaneously resulted in the contamination of coconut trees with disease, thus leading to death of the fruit, which is a crucial part of the traditional diet of Islanders. Since Islanders have a close, spiritual connection with traditional lands and culturally depend on the health of surrounding ecosystems, Australia's failure to protect them from climate change infringes on their freedom from arbitrary intrusions into their family, home, and private life. According to the United Nations (2022), states that are unable to protect their people from adverse climate change effects violate their human rights under international law. This was found by the Committee that investigated the pleas presented by Islanders about the violation of their rights. The Committee also established that in spite of a series of actions undertaken by Australia, including new seawalls for the four islands by 2023, there is need for more appropriate and timely measures to deter potential loss of life. One of the solutions proposed is that there is a need for strong international and national efforts to mitigate climate change effects. To remedy the current situation, Australia has been asked to

compensate, understand their needs, and secure communities' existence on islands.

INSIGHTS FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH

Importance of Strong Institutions

Global North countries have robust institutions which enable them to tackle the issue of social justice. What the Global South needs are resilient and durable institutions that advance justice and take on inequality. Organisations that are providing general support for current institutions should be strengthened to drive social change. Countries such as the UK and the US have strong institutions that enable them to address social justice issues (Anderson *et al.*, 2022). Such strong institutions governed by the principles of the rule of law can help to promote inclusive and peaceful societies, provide access for justice, and develop accountable, effective, and inclusive institutions. They can help improve access to justice and practice of the rule of law for resolving conflicts between the vulnerable and the powerful by tackling issues of discrimination, corruption, and impunity. This is in tandem with Sustainable Development Goal 16 which is a crucial driver for the attainment of all other goals (Anderson *et al.*, 2022). Countries in the Global South should strive to build strong institutions for peace and justice, empower women and girls, fight corruption, strengthen

accountability, and promote inclusive economic growth. Thus, they should emulate countries in the global north that have strong institutions, such as independent judiciaries and free media, which can help to promote justice and accountability.

Education

Education is a key factor in promoting social justice, as it can help to reduce inequality and empower marginalized groups. Many countries in the global north have well-funded and accessible education systems, which the global south can emulate. A pedagogical model that incorporates social justice education has numerous benefits. Students can get a better understanding of power dynamics, developing respect for other cultures, and how to effect positive change within their communities. Social justice education is ultimately a way of teaching that supports high-level thinking and learning in people's lives (Castro Torres, & Alburez-Gutierrez, 2022). Some benefits are the transformation of the classrooms into collaborative communities, creation of a safe space for application of academic knowledge to real-world issues, and increasing the ability of students to tell the difference between opinions and facts. Overall, education is an influential tool that can be used for promoting equality and social justice. It inculcates skills, values, and knowledge required for understanding and challenging systems of injustice and

inequality, and assists to build more equitable and inclusive societies by offering equal access to resources and opportunities for all community members. Through education, southerners can gain a better understanding of the causes and roots of social injustices, and gain insight on how to advocate for change and work towards more equitable and just societies. Ensuring that all community members access quality education and creating welcoming and inclusive environments in educational institutions can enable the Global South to work to a more equal and just world. Thus, education in the Global South should be improved to challenge the systems of injustice and inequality, promote social justice, enhance equity, and engage citizens.

Importance of Addressing Historical Injustices

Many countries in the global north have had to confront and address historical injustices, such as colonization, slavery, and discrimination, in order to move towards greater social justice. The global south can learn from these experiences in dealing with similar issues. More importantly, countries in the Global South should develop effective policies and programs to address historical issues of social justice, such as anti-discrimination laws, affirmative action programs, and social welfare policies. These can serve as examples for the global south to consider in addressing similar issues. Addressing these injustices is the first step for these

countries to understand the underlying causes. Some of the causes include economic disparities, social disenfranchisement, and underdevelopment. The root causes of discrimination, repression, and other social injustice issues in these countries stem from more complex and deeper socioeconomic, and political issues. It is only by these countries understanding and addressing these root causes that social justice can be truly achieved.

Role of Civil Society

Civil society, including NGOs, community groups, and activists, can play a vital role in promoting social justice and holding governments accountable. Countries in the global north have a rich history of civil society engagement, which can serve as an example for the global south. Civil society organisations, CSOs, can offer both immediate and long-term transformative change by providing solidarity mechanisms and enhancing participation, increasing accountability and defending collective interests and influencing decision making (Milburn, 2012). CSOs can also carry out research to enhance the profile of excluded groups. Civil society in these countries should recognise the significance of developing alliances and platforms across the state to connect change champions.

United States: 350.ORG

350 is an international movement working towards creating a community-led renewable energy world. A group of university friends and Bill McKibben, an author, collaborated to create it in 2008, with an aim of building a global climate movement. Today, the company works on grassroot campaigns internationally: from opposing mega-pipelines and coal plants, to supporting renewable energy initiatives, and reducing the funding of fossil fuels. All its activities are aimed towards social justice and leveraging the power of people to dismantle the impact as well as fossil fuel industry's infrastructure. Some of the recent, notable achievements include campaigns against Dakota Access pipelines and the Keystone XL in the US; halting fracking in many cities in Argentina and Brazil; and being part of historic grassroots mobilizations such as the Global Climate Strike and the *People's Climate March*. The movement believes that the decline of the fossil fuel sector will reduce environmental pollution and culminate in environmental justice. The other notable achievement of the movement is the 2019 Tennessee Valley Energy Democracy Tour, which concentrated on developing an equal energy future in areas affected by the New Deal projects. The tour was a great reminder of reasons to heed to historical legacies of socioeconomic marginalization and unequal development.

United States: Urban Area Interventions

Climate justice interventions that relate to urban areas include the resolution by the Miami City Commission directing city managers to establish measures of stabilizing property tax rates and urban gentrification within the lower income areas found in the more inland areas (Drugmand, 2018). This example demonstrates that city governments in the Global South can institutionalize other ways of fostering healthy urban ecosystems. For example, the Boston City Council enacted a *Good Food Purchasing Program* for an equitable food purchasing system in 2019. At the same time, other cities, including Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and Chicago, have embraced similar policies that help urban populations to reduce their dependence on imported food items that leave a detrimental carbon footprint. Democratization of urban governance by ensuring that urban residents have an impactful say in the management of ongoing affairs is a critical prerequisite for the incorporation of social, environmental, and climate justice related concerns into urban imaginations.

Belgium: La Via Campesina and IEN

La Via Campesina was established in 1993 in Mons, Belgium by 182 organizations as an international farmers organization. As a

transnational social movement, Campesina promotes food sovereignty and agroecology by engaging relevant actors such as the UN at the international level as well as peasant federations at the subnational level. They have played a critical role in the successful enactment of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas* (Kashwan, 2021). Such a movement can be widely embraced in the Global South to seek for social justice for marginalized communities and groups. The other renowned grassroots network is the *Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN)* established in 1990 in Bemidji, MN, to tackle economic and environmental justice issues (Kashwan, 2021). It has been among the major actors within the global climate justice movement, predominantly through its involvement in the yearly UN Climate Change meetings. Recently, it launched the *People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy: Protect, Repair, Invest and Transform* to prioritize indigenous values and sovereignty and mainstream efforts geared towards a just and sustainable future. These examples demonstrate the interventions from several agencies and actors in the quest for climate justice and tackles a specific programmatic and policy area relevant to people's daily lives at the frontline of social justice. The emphasis is that collective efforts geared towards addressing climate change are not likely to succeed if people fail to minimize consumption, particularly those related to luxury emissions.

CONCLUSION

The case studies presented demonstrate that climate change is a fundamental human rights issue, one that unevenly and negatively affects the lives of Indigenous people often because of their more remote traditional locations. The discussed groups and countries are examples of social justice issues and the denial of fundamental social rights. While these rights are still talked about on the international stage, they are still under-appreciated as demonstrated by the *Paris Agreement*. Indigenous people have the right to maintain their cultures, and the right to life. In case climate change impedes that, governments have a social responsibility to ensure that this comes to an end.

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