**Call for inputs**

**Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights   
in the context of climate change**

**“Access to information on climate change and human rights”**

Acasia Broomes

Trinidad & Tobago

Research Officer

Geo-7 Fellow

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Climate change is a worldwide epidemic and its negative impact on human rights has been brought to the fore front for action by international organizations, world leaders, environmentalist, researchers and even policy makers. Climate change has undoubtedly become a serious threat to the enjoyment of human rights. The United Nations’ Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated in his 2020 speech in Geneva, paraphrasing, the climate crisis is the biggest threat to our survival as a species and is already threatening human rights around the world.

The objective of this call for inputs, seeks to explore how ensuring the human right to access information can enhance procedural rights related to climate change, prevent harm, and promote non-discrimination. It invites insights into the unique challenges in accessing climate change information, especially concerning international cooperation, compared to other environmental information areas.

The first question presented is: “What kind of information should be collected and shared to identify and prevent negative impacts on human rights arising from climate change and climate change response measures? What kind of information can be particularly challenging to access and why?”

To prevent adverse impacts on human rights from climate change, it is crucial to collect and share various types of information. This includes climate data, vulnerability assessments, human rights impact assessments, social and economic data, health data, and gender-disaggregated data. Climate data helps understand trends like temperature rise and extreme weather events, while vulnerability assessments identify communities or populations at risk. Human rights impact assessments examine how climate change and response measures may affect rights such as food, water, health, education, and housing. Social and economic data provide insights into local economies and demographics, helping to understand how climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. Health data reveals the connection between climate change and health issues, such as heat-related illnesses and vector-borne diseases. Gender-disaggregated data helps comprehend the differential impacts of climate change on different genders and informs gender-responsive policies.

To prevent negative impacts on human rights, collecting community feedback and participation is essential to understand their experiences, concerns, and needs regarding climate change impacts. Information on prior legal and policy frameworks related to human rights and climate change at different levels is also important. Incorporating Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge into climate assessments and planning ensures a holistic understanding and effective response.

However, accessing certain information can be challenging. Social and economic data, community feedback, health data, and indigenous knowledge may be scarce, especially in remote or marginalized areas with limited resources and infrastructure. Some information may be considered sensitive due to corporate activities or government policies, leading to confidentiality or transparency concerns. Vulnerability assessments, human rights impact assessments, and environmental impact assessments may have data gaps, hindering effective preparation and response strategies. Political constraints can also impede access to information, as some governments may restrict it to avoid scrutiny of their failures in addressing climate change or human rights violations related to climate policies. Overall, addressing these challenges is crucial to understand the human rights implications of climate change and ensure transparency and responsibility in its mitigation.

The second key question presented is: “Are existing approaches to collect, share and monitor information on climate change and human rights sufficient for the public to assess the magnitude of actual and potential negative impacts on their human rights, and the adequacy of States’ responses to these risks?”

Efforts to gather, share, and monitor information on climate change and human rights are often inadequate in enabling the public to fully comprehend the negative effects on their rights or evaluate government responses. Data gaps concerning climate change impacts and human rights violations hinder individuals from comprehending the risks they face and assessing the effectiveness of government actions. The intricate relationship between climate change, human rights, and government actions is not adequately captured by current methods. Governments and stakeholders may also lack transparency in terms of data collection and actions taken on climate change and human rights issues. To address these challenges, it is necessary to improve data collection, enhance transparency, and involve the public in decision-making. In Trinidad and Tobago, efforts to collect, share, and monitor information on climate change and human rights have been inconsistent. While some progress has been made, significant gaps remain that hinder the public's ability to evaluate the negative impacts on their rights and the adequacy of the state's responses. The availability and accessibility of data on climate change impacts may be limited to the public, and monitoring mechanisms may not adequately consider human rights. Furthermore, integrating human rights into climate change policies and responses in Trinidad and Tobago is lacking despite the existence of ratified human rights treaties and legal frameworks. Implementation and enforcement of national climate change policies and action plans are also weak in certain areas.

The third key question is: “Are there undue barriers to obtain access to information on human rights and climate change that is up to date? (eg, language and technical accessibility, use of technology, grounds for non-disclosure, other?”

There are indeed many barriers that prevent peoples from accessing up-to-date information on human rights and climate change which includes the use of technology. Even though technology can enhance access to information, it can also constitute as a barrier for who lack access to the internet or digital devices. Language is another major barrier, as information may be inaccessible to some who do not speak the language in which it is reported. Governments, corporations, or other entities can also withhold information on human rights or climate change for many reasons, such as national security concerns, proprietary interests, or avoidance of accountability. This is done via the terminology grounds for Non-disclosure and this can create gaps in knowledge and hinder efforts to address human rights and climate change issues effectively. Censorship and suppression is also a barrier in some cases where information related to human rights abuses or the ramifications of climate change may be censored or suppressed by governments or other authorities, preventing public access to pivotal data. Another barrier is, limited data sharing collaboration between stakeholders involved in collecting and managing data on human rights and climate change thus causing siloed information and difficulties in accessing comprehensive data sets. Addressing these barriers requires efforts that promotes transparency, improve accessibility, and ensure that information on human rights and climate change is available to all.

The fourth key question is: “Are there examples in which international cooperation effectively supported public access to information on climate change and human rights? What are the challenges in implementing UNFCCC Articles 4 (public access to information) and 6 (public awareness), and Paris Agreement Article 12 (public access to information), and other international instruments and processes that can support/contribute to international cooperation on access to information on climate change and human rights?”

International cooperation has played a critical role in enabling public access to information on climate change and human rights. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the UNFCCC are prime examples of this. The IPCC assesses scientific research on climate change and its impacts, with its reports being widely available to the public. These reports provide valuable information on climate science and its potential effects on human rights. Additionally, the UNFCCC fosters international collaboration on climate change through initiatives like the Climate Change Information Network and the Climate Technology Centre and Network, which improve access to information.

The Paris Agreement is another instance in which international cooperation supports public access to information. This agreement includes provisions for transparency and accountability, requiring countries to regularly report their greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation efforts, and support. This information is made publicly available, enabling stakeholders to assess countries' progress in addressing climate change and its impact on human rights.

International research collaborations, such as the European Union Horizon 2020 program and the Global Environment Facility, also contribute to public access to information on climate change and adaptation strategies. These collaborations often involve knowledge sharing and capacity building activities that benefit the public.

Civil society organizations and non-governmental initiatives, such as the Climate Action Network and Human Rights Watch, play a vital role in promoting public access to information. They produce reports, advocate for change, and raise awareness through community engagement, ensuring informed decision-making.

However, challenges hinder the implementation of mechanisms for public access to information and awareness on climate change and human rights. One major challenge is the lack of capacity and resources, particularly in developing nations. Legal and institutional frameworks may also be inadequate, hindering access to information. Transparency and accountability pose challenges as governments often hesitate to share certain information due to concerns about accountability, national security, or economic interests.

Data quality and availability are crucial for effective public access, but incomplete or inaccessible data can hamper awareness-raising efforts. Language and cultural differences also present barriers to effective communication and awareness. Public engagement and participation face challenges, particularly for marginalized groups, due to factors such as lack of representation, education, or resources.

Political will and prioritization at national and international levels are important for overcoming these challenges. Governments, civil society, international organizations, and stakeholders must work together to strengthen legal frameworks, improve capacity, enhance transparency, and ensure inclusivity in decision-making processes. By addressing these challenges, public access to information on climate change and human rights can be enhanced, empowering communities, individuals, and governments to take meaningful action.

The fifth key question is: “Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges for business to communicate information on risks, including in different countries, in relation to climate change and human rights? What are the barriers for the rights holders to access to this information and to evaluate the adequacy of an enterprise’s response to these risks?

Businesses face multiple challenges when communicating information on climate change risks and human rights, particularly across different countries. Global supply chains that operate in multiple countries with varying legal, cultural, and regulatory environments pose a major challenge. Within the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, businesses struggle to track and communicate climate-related risks and human rights impacts throughout their supply chains due to varying environmental and social contexts. Collecting accurate and comprehensive data on climate change and human rights impacts is also difficult across various regions. Accessing reliable information on these risks, especially in countries with limited transparency or underreported human rights violations, is another challenge.

In the LAC region, businesses encounter difficulties in collecting, verifying, and sharing information with stakeholders, especially in countries with limited data infrastructure or transparency. Language and cultural barriers further complicate effective communication, as understanding cultural nuances and speaking local languages is crucial. The diverse languages, cultures, and social norms in the LAC countries make it challenging to communicate effectively about climate change and human rights risks. Political instability, corruption, and weak governance in some LAC countries amplify these risks and violations, making it challenging for businesses to navigate complex political environments and communicate associated risks. Conflicts over land use, natural resource extraction, and other climate change and human rights issues strain community relations and stakeholder relationships, further complicating communication efforts.

Rights holders face multiple barriers when it comes to accessing and evaluating information regarding an enterprise's response to climate change and human risks. Lack of transparency is a major issue, with many companies failing to provide sufficient information about their operations, supply chains, and environmental and social impacts. This lack of transparency makes it challenging for rights holders to understand the associated risks and impacts. Complex supply chains spanning multiple countries and involving various suppliers further compound the problem. Gathering comprehensive information about these supply chains and their associated risks can be difficult for rights holders, especially when data is not readily accessible. Language, literacy, cultural, and social barriers also impede rights holders. The information provided by companies is often presented in technical jargon or languages that the rights holders may not understand. Limited literacy levels among affected communities further hinder their ability to access and comprehend this information. Cultural norms, social hierarchies, and gender inequalities within communities may restrict certain groups from accessing information or participating in decision-making processes, resulting in additional barriers. Power imbalances and fear of reprisals are also challenges. Rights holders may feel intimidated or powerless to challenge a company's practices or evaluate its response to risks. They may also fear retaliation from companies, governments, or other actors if they speak out against environmental or human rights abuses. Overcoming these barriers necessitates companies prioritizing transparency, engaging with stakeholders meaningfully, and providing accessible information in local languages and formats. Governments must also play a pivotal role in ensuring that regulatory frameworks promote transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights in business operations.

State regulations such as the European Union Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) and the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act (TISCA) have significantly improved access to information on climate change and human rights held by private actors. The NFRD requires large companies in the EU to disclose information on environmental and social matters, including climate change and human rights impacts, in their annual reports. This directive enhances transparency and accountability by mandating companies to provide relevant information to stakeholders. Similarly, TISCA mandates certain companies in California to disclose their efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking from their supply chains. While not specific to climate change, this regulation highlights the potential for state legislation to compel companies to disclose information on human rights issues.

Although the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region may not have as many regulations solely focused on climate change and human rights disclosure compared to other regions, there are still initiatives and regulations that indirectly contribute to improving access to information on these issues. For instance, Brazil's Forest Code requires landowners to maintain a certain percentage of native vegetation on their properties, indirectly contributing to mitigating climate change impacts and protecting biodiversity. Mexico's General Law on climate change mandates the government to develop and implement policies and programs to mitigate and adapt to climate change, indirectly encouraging private sector engagement and promoting transparency. Jamaica's Access to Information Act promotes transparency and accountability in environmental and development projects, which have implications for climate change and human rights. Additionally, regional initiatives in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) indirectly contribute to increasing transparency and awareness of climate change impacts.

While these examples do not directly address climate change and human rights disclosure, they provide frameworks and mechanisms that can be utilized to improve access to information held by private actors. By requiring companies to report on their impacts and efforts to mitigate risks, these regulations promote transparency, accountability, and responsible business conduct.

The sixth and final key question is: “What are the impacts on human rights of inadequate access to information from public authorities and/or business? Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges in, collecting and sharing information on disproportionate levels of actual and potential harm from climate change and climate change response measures (disaggregated data on Indigenous Peoples, women, children, local communities, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons living in extreme poverty, others)?”

Inadequate access to information from public authorities and businesses can have significant and wide-ranging impacts on human rights, including the right to health. When communities are not informed about environmental pollution or health risks, their right to health is undermined. For example, people living near industrial facilities may suffer from respiratory illnesses or cancer because they are not aware of the pollutants in their air or water. Similarly, lack of information about contamination or shortages can lead to waterborne diseases or a lack of access to clean water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene.

Furthermore, insufficient information about land rights or development projects can result in violations of the right to housing and land. Communities may be displaced or lose their homes and livelihoods without proper consultation or information about these projects. In addition, the lack of access to information prevents individuals and communities from participating in decision-making processes that impact their lives. Without relevant information, people cannot effectively voice their concerns or hold public authorities and businesses accountable.

Moreover, inadequate protection of personal information or transparency in data collection practices infringes on the right to privacy. Overall, inadequate access to information exacerbates inequalities, leaving individuals and communities vulnerable to harm and exploitation. To protect and fulfill human rights, it is crucial for governments and businesses to prioritize transparency, accountability, and the right to information.

There are challenges in collecting and sharing information on the disproportionate harm faced by vulnerable groups due to climate change. Indigenous communities, such as those in the Arctic, are experiencing rapid environmental changes that negatively impact their hunting, fishing, and cultural practices. Women often bear the brunt of climate change due to factors like limited resources and traditional caregiving roles. In rural areas of developing countries, women may face water scarcity, increased workloads, and food insecurity due to climate-related events. Children are at risk of malnutrition, displacement, and health issues caused by climate change. Local communities, especially those in coastal areas, are threatened by rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and loss of biodiversity. Persons with disabilities face additional difficulties in accessing information and services during climate-related disasters. Older individuals are more vulnerable to heatwaves and extreme weather events, and may suffer from social isolation. Those living in poverty lack access to adequate housing, clean water, and healthcare, exacerbating the impacts of climate change. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the needs of vulnerable groups, improves data collection and analysis, fosters collaboration, and tailors policies to specific communities.

ANNEX 1

Introduction

The following article title “Why Climate Change and Human Rights are Connected” gives an insight on the correlation on climate change and human rights. This article provides detailed insights and complements our findings on providing background information and giving a brief understanding of the topic research.

Full Report

Below is a link to the complete article by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. All rights and credits for the content belong to the original authors. 2023, Human Rights and Development. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

[https://geneva.fes.de/e/why-climate-change-and-human-rights-are-connected.html#:~:text=Many%20areas%20are%20becoming%20uninhabitable,and%20the%20right%20to%20livelihood](https://geneva.fes.de/e/why-climate-change-and-human-rights-are-connected.html" \l ":~:text=Many%20areas%20are%20becoming%20uninhabitable,and%20the%20right%20to%20livelihood)

ANNEX 2

Introduction

The following report title “Climate Change and Human Rights” shows the impact of climate change and its profound effect on the enjoyment of human rights for individuals and communities across the planet. This report provides detailed insights and complements our findings on providing background information and giving a brief understanding of the topic research.

Full Report

Below is a link to the complete report by United Nations Environmental Programme. All rights and credits for the content belong to the original authors.

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9530/-Climate_Change_and_Human_Rightshuman-rights-climate-change.pdf.pdf?sequence=2&amp%3BisAllowed=>

ANNEX 3

Introduction

The following report title “The Status of Climate Change Data: A Case Study for Trinidad and Tobago” shows the This study reviews the current data used in climate change adaptation programs in Trinidad and Tobago, aiming to identify gaps and make recommendations for greater efficiency. It focuses on adherence to UNFCCC guidelines and standards, the role of collaborating systematic observation bodies, and the potential for regional downscaling of international data models, such as those from the IPCC. This report provides detailed insights and complements our findings on providing background information and giving a brief understanding of the topic research.

Full Report

Below is a link to the complete report by Joanne Chin Sang- Fellow. All rights and credits for the content belong to the original authors.

<https://www.niherst.gov.tt/files/Fellowship_Report(Final)-JoanneChinSang.pdf>

ANNEX 4

Introduction

The following report title “At the Nexus of Human Rights and Climate Change: A Rights-Based Approach to Environmental Impacts and Policy Responses” provides an overview of the nexus between human rights and climate change. This report provides detailed insights and complements our findings on providing background information and giving a brief understanding of the topic research.

Full Report

Below is a link to the complete report by United Nations Development Programme. All rights and credits for the content belong to the original authors.

<https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/nexus-human-rights-and-climate-change-rights-based-approach-environmental-impacts-and-policy-responses>