


Chapter 7

Climate Change and Its Implications on School Education in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is the greatest challenge of the 21st century. It is threatening all aspects of societal life. The right to education of children is negatively impacted by these climate-induced challenges. This chapter presents findings of a study on the effects of climate change on the education of the younger generation. The study used a mixed research design method and was done within Kisii Municipality, Kenya. The findings were that climate change and its effects have brought about increased waterborne diseases, reduced available income for families, and compromised living standards, thereby negatively impacting on children's education. To address the effects of climate change, however, provision of appropriate education can go a long way in mitigating these climatic challenges. Secondly, topics on climate change should be included in the school curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is the greatest challenge of the 21st century which is threatening all aspects of societal life (Campbell-Lendrum et al., 2018) and globally, every creature is at a high health risk (Watts et al., 2018). Warming of the globe and subsequent climate change has brought about various effects on the environment whereby

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majority of them are severe (IPCC, 2014). These impacts include but not limited to deaths, high rise of sea levels, temperature increase, severe droughts, floods, rampant wildfires, emigrations and immigrations, among others, that often cause havoc. Humanity and other organisms worldwide are experiencing extraordinary effects on their ecosystems. These climate hazards are undoubtedly affecting human mobility and migrations as they go about in search of water, food for themselves and their animals (Christian Aid, 2007; Biermann and Boas, 2010). These migrations have caused cross-border displacements and it is projected that come 2050, it will affect a human population of between 25 million and 1 billion (IOM, 2012). What we are certain of is that climate change is with us and causing far-reaching effects in many regions, including large numbers of people and animals being displaced. For example, in 2019, about 24 million people were displaced by weather related disasters across 140 countries worldwide (IDMC, 2020).

The right to education of our children is negatively impacted with these climate induced migrations (UNICEF, 2021). In fact, children are at risk of not only losing in education but also their homes and shelter. Therefore, accessing education which is key in opening opportunities for their future is compromised (OECD, 2022). The inclusion of climate change education is key because currently the status of its inclusivity is marginal (UNICEF, 2019). The pledge “to leave no one child behind” which is well articulated in the 2030 Global Development Agenda, and particularly the Sustainable Development Goal 4, are devoted to an all-inclusive education which addresses disasters, pandemics and conflicts, resultant cross-border displacement and uneducated populace (UNESCO, 2015). Because of these, all nations are called upon to have it as their responsibility in developing inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems which will meet the needs of children, youth and adults in climate-crisis-affected contexts.

Among others, classrooms are becoming hotter, thereby affecting meaningful and progressive learning (Lala and Hagishima, 2023), while teachers and learners are missing the essential commodity (water) of life at a time when it is needed most. Waterborne diseases such as typhoid, salmonella, schistosomiasis, and vector-transmitted diseases like malaria, leishmaniasis and trypanosomiasis are on the increase and so is displacement of several communities from their habitable locations (UNDP, 2017).

Indeed, all these effects are associated with climate change, and the world is greatly disturbed. So, what next? Will provision of relevant education help? Yes, education will play a key role. But, the pertinent question remains “is education provision under threat from climate change?” This question can best be answered if two critical issues are taken into account. It needs to be borne in mind that while education is key to ending climate change, it remains one of the biggest threats to education as well. The threats are many, for example, climate change and poverty exist

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