



Climate Justice in the Arab Region

Key Findings from AFSC’s study, “Bridging the Gaps Between Governments and Civil Society”

CLIMATE CHANGE drives violence, socioeconomic disruption, and displacement around the world, including in the Arab region. It also disproportionately harms groups that already face marginalization and oppression.

In 2023, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) published the research report: “Climate Justice: Bridging the Gaps Between Governments and Civil Society.” The report grew out of a Dialogue and Exchange Program held in Amman, Jordan in March 2023 to bring together the knowledge and experience of people from multiple countries in the region.

Here are some key takeaways from our exploration of how civil society can support communities impacted by climate change.

Climate justice in the Arab region

Our world is interconnected. A complex relationship and feedback system exists between climate change impacts, mitigation, and adaptation. The lifestyles and actions of some can determine the environmental conditions, livelihood, and well-being of others. Areas that contribute the least to emissions are prone to be hit the hardest by climate change. From this issue, the concept of climate justice arises.

The Arab region has had its share of climate change-related challenges and is considered one of the most climate-vulnerable regions. Increased average temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, sea-level rise, and changes in water supply are being exacerbated in a region that already suffers from aridity, recurrent drought, and water scarcity.

These impacts have disproportionately affected the most vulnerable populations. These populations lack the means to cope with changes, have less capacity to recover, and are usually more exposed. Taking action to overcome the challenges that make it harder for them to recuperate from the impacts of climate change is part of the road to climate justice.



PHOTO: AFSC

KEY FINDINGS

Our study included a literature review and interviews with civil society actors in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. We looked at three broad categories of climate impacts. For each, we identified actions that civil society can take now to help advance climate justice.

1 The climate crisis undermines peace.

To support communities in preventing conflict, civil society can:

- Contribute to research on climate change impacts at regional, national, and local levels and help disseminate this information.
- Invest in adapting and developing technologies to cope with climate change impacts.
- Address the knowledge gap that policymakers face regarding climate justice and inequality issues.
- Ensure the prioritization of women and youth in climate change issues and related goals as well as in national strategies and action plans.

2 The climate crisis contributes to economic injustices.

To mitigate these impacts, civil society can:

- Build capacity and technology transfer programs for farmers, especially women farmers.
- Promote climate-smart agriculture as well as the use of smart irrigation and improved farm irrigation management.
- Take time to understand socioeconomic and environmental trends as they relate to climate justice and engage local communities and civil society.
- Encourage youth and women's political and economic participation.
- Ensure that environmental projects are rights-based to satisfy the needs and the struggles of the community in a sustainable manner.
- Promote knowledge of different funding mechanisms and ways civil society organizations can access funding.

3 The climate crisis is a driver of forced displacement and migration.

In response, civil society can:

- Advocate for ending hostilities and violence that lead to forced displacement. There can be no sustainable recovery without peace, nor can conflict-affected countries achieve such progress alone.
- Promote and expand short-term coping mechanisms.
- Strengthen regional collaboration, especially between countries facing similar risks or those that can complement and support each other. This can include regional cooperation on climate risk management and emergency preparedness as well as the establishment of dedicated regional projects.
- Encourage governments to increase investment in climate adaptation and the rehabilitation and maintenance of infrastructure, especially water and sanitation facilities.
- Promote rights to water access and food sovereignty during times of conflict.
- Promote greater investments from multilateral entities and donor countries in local and national capacity.
- Support countries to more effectively and sustainably manage and prevent risks.

Faces of climate justice in the Arab region

The application of climate justice in the Arab region can be viewed through five dimensions.

Multidimensional poverty and economic inequality

Climate change could push an additional 100 million people in the Arab region below the poverty line by 2030 (US Global Leadership Coalition, 2021). People who are “multidimensionally poor” suffer the most from climate change impacts.

Inadequate water supply and sanitation

Nearly 55 million people in the Arab region don’t have access to an improved drinking water source. Nearly 66 million people don’t have access to improved sanitation (ESCWA, 2021b). The situation is worsening. That will further reduce water availability, alter agricultural production patterns, threaten livestock production, harm forests and wetlands, and more.

Food insecurity and loss of livelihoods

Climate change has severely affected the agricultural sector and fueled food security. Extreme climatic events harm the livelihoods of rural people as well as those who rely on animal production and agriculture.

Conflicts, political instability, and migration

Climate change can indirectly increase the risk of conflict by exacerbating factors that lead to it. Droughts, for instance, can intensify conflict over agricultural resources.

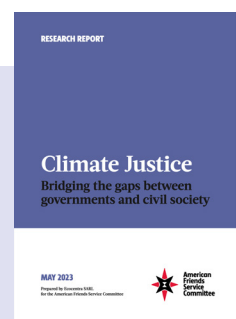
Generational inequality

Climate change impacts are felt disproportionately by youth, children, and the elderly. Younger generations will bear the cumulative impact of the climate change crisis. School-aged children experience its impacts on access to education, housing, water and sanitation, nutrition, and health (UNDP/OPHI, 2020). The elderly are more likely to have health conditions that make them more sensitive to climate hazards.



Want to learn more?

Read the full report at afsc.org/ClimateJusticeME



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