

'International law recognises that global warming will most affect those least responsible for it. Individually, nationally and globally how can global warming be effectively tackled in a way that recognises this injustice?'

By Sai Sarvagna Thota

The consequences of global warming must not be dismissed as belonging to the distant future. From the inhabitants of the sinking island of Kiribati to the deprived BAME population of London, the greatest victims of global warming are already those who are least responsible for it. This blatant injustice concerning the plight of these voiceless members of society can only be solved if those in positions of authority acknowledge that (a) global warming is already having a massive impact on people's lives and (b) not everyone has the resources to adequately deal with this problem. This also means that international law with respect to global warming must undergo a dramatic reform in order to adapt to the current situation; it must recognise that individuals who contribute most to global warming must be held directly responsible when others bear the consequences of their actions.

In the case of global warming, historical responsibility must be taken into consideration. Deindustrialised western countries have significantly contributed to the climate emergency through producing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the past. For example, the United Kingdom's per capita emissions have been amongst the highest in the world since the 1850s [1]. Whilst present generations may not have had any control over historical GHG emissions, it is still justified to hold responsible developed countries which have contributed to this climate crisis in the past as they are still benefiting from the economic growth due to industrialisation; these countries are also more capable of tackling global warming effectively as they have the economic means to do so. However the precise attribution of responsibility for global warming currently is difficult to discern. For example, the Group of 20 major economies (G20) accounts for over 78% of GHG emissions [2]. Out of these, China emits over 10 tCO₂e per capita, which is a significant amount [3]. The country's status as a manufacturing centre means that transnational corporations (TNCs) profit from constructing factories and combustion of fossil fuels, which are activities that release GHG emissions. Furthermore, foreign consumers often purchase products which have been manufactured in Chinese factories and then shipped to their country. In this situation, it is difficult to ascertain whether the Chinese government, TNCs or the actual consumer should be held responsible. A better way to calculate GHG emissions for a country is to measure them in terms of 'consumption rather than production' [4]; many developed countries can claim to be reducing their GHG emissions while merely outsourcing overseas. This would mean that national carbon footprints would be calculated by taking into account the consumption of imported goods, which are often produced and transported through carbon intensive processes in foreign emerging economies. Assigning responsibility for global warming without taking into account consumption is unjust, as deindustrialised developed countries take advantage of manufacturing sectors internationally.

Some countries are already facing the large-scale effects of global warming; this issue is already most affecting those least responsible for it. One example of this is the island of Kiribati, which is being submerged due to rising sea levels [5] despite only contributing to 0.0002% of global GHG emissions [6]. Therefore, global warming must be tackled immediately on an international scale in order to protect those who are currently at great risk due to their geographical location; those in positions of authority must first recognise that global warming is not a distant threat, but rather an extremely current issue that is already having huge impacts on the least privileged members of

global society. Whilst international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, have succeeded in encouraging countries to work together in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the lack of consequences for not combatting this issue as well as the ability of developed countries to merely offshore emissions whilst claiming to be tackling global warming means that they are not the most effective method to tackle this problem.

One solution to this problem should be establishing an international court that deals with climate issues as well as criminalising climate-based offences, such as mass deforestation. This would hold the greatest emitters of greenhouse gases accountable for the impacts of global warming, as it would recognise that those who contribute the most towards this issue are also responsible for its devastating consequences. Holding individuals such as Jair Bolsonaro, who is currently enabling the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest [7], accountable for their actions would act as a significant deterrent and encourage businesses and governments to act in a manner that does not accelerate global warming. This court would be run in a similar model to the International Criminal Court, with countries signing a statute stating that they recognise its authority. However, the greatest obstacle with this solution would be that not all countries would recognise such an international court; this may result in carbon leakage, which is when businesses transfer production to other countries with laxer emission constraints [8]. Another solution which would require worldwide support in order to be fully effective is implementing carbon taxes, which can be defined as 'directly set[ting] a price on carbon by defining a tax rate on greenhouse gas emissions'[9]. This would hold polluters responsible for their GHG emissions, as well as encouraging them to operate in a way that is least harmful to the environment in order to avoid economic loss. Implementing carbon taxes on a national level would not be sufficiently effective, as it would encourage businesses to participate in carbon leakage. However, this problem could be solved if every country agreed to a uniform tax rate for GHG emissions. From a pragmatic standpoint, worldwide participation in criminalising climate based offences as well as implementing carbon taxes may sound impossible. The solution to this would be to introduce tariffs against countries that choose not to participate in these measures to tackle global warming. This would effectively tackle issues such as outsourcing GHG emissions, because the cost to import products made in countries with lax environmental laws would be too high.

Furthermore, even in developed nations such as England, the effects of global warming are disproportionate; the poorest communities, who contribute the least to global warming, often do not have the resources to tackle this issue. With data suggesting that BAME inhabitants are 50% more likely to face the highest climate risk within London, the government should focus on both mitigation and adaptation strategies in order to ensure that underprivileged communities will be able to cope with the consequences of global warming, such as 'flooding, exposure to toxic air' and 'heat risk'[10]. For example, many of the most disadvantaged groups in London tend to live in areas with cheap housing that is close to sites of pollution, such as busy roads; Ella-Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, was a black girl who was the first person in the UK to have air pollution listed as a cause of death. This heightened the debate around social equity, as the poorest in the UK are often privy to the lowest quality air [11]. Air pollution is linked to global warming, as an increase in GHG emissions further exacerbates this problem. Therefore, when tackling global warming, the deeply entrenched inequality considering its consequences must be taken into account. This should be done through identifying areas which are most vulnerable to global warming as well as considering social factors such as deprivation. Local governments should use adaptation strategies in order to improve the climate resilience of homes in such areas in order to reduce surface water flood risk for example. Furthermore, mitigation strategies should also be employed in order to reduce GHG emissions in order to protect these disadvantaged communities. Transport accounts for 27% of the UK's

emissions, with the majority coming from road transport vehicles [12]. This problem must be solved by implementing a new scheme in which drivers are charged per mile in order to reduce road usage. These rates should be based on factors such as income in order to ensure that the poor are not disproportionately affected as well as ensuring that this scheme acts as a sufficient deterrent towards the wealthy. By implementing these strategies, the national and local government in England can effectively tackle global warming whilst also ensuring that people who are at the highest risk of being affected by this climate emergency are protected.

Global warming is currently affecting the most vulnerable people in society who are least responsible for it and least capable of dealing with its consequences. This means that those in positions of authority must take initiative in order to aid those who are already being affected by global warming whilst also putting into place measures in order to decrease GHG emissions so as not to exacerbate this problem. Furthermore, there should be increased cooperation between nations; international law should criminalise climate-based offences and a global carbon tax should be put into place. This is because currently, the biggest contributors to this climate crisis are free from the consequences of their actions; holding them accountable is the only way to tackle global warming in a way that is both effective and just.

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