

STUDY GUIDE



for the

Human Rights Council



Letter from the Chairs

Dear delegates,

It is a great pleasure for us to welcome you to our Human Rights Council at ŽilinaMUN. Bilingual Grammar School Žilina has a long tradition of organizing very diverse model UN conferences, and even though this year's edition must be held online due to the pandemic, we believe this will not diminish its quality and the experience you, delegates, will have earned.

We are very much looking forward to our fruitful debates, hoping for interesting and very thrilling discussions. In order to achieve this idea, it is strongly recommended to read this study guide thoroughly. Since this topic is quite resourceful, this document will be its brief description and introduction, and it will rather provide you with secondary sources of information. Nonetheless, we advise you to do some research also by yourself, especially on behalf of your country's position.

In case you are participating in such an event for the first time ever - do not worry. Obeying rules of procedure and participating in debates might seem pretty difficult at first sight, but chairs are here to lead your discussions and provide help, if necessary. Do not be afraid of mistakes, as these are a great opportunity to learn.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank you for choosing HRC and if you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to contact us here:

dominik.palkovic14@gmail.com

lamosova.lucia02@gmail.com

Yours sincerely,

Dominik Palkovič & Lucia Lamošová

Introduction of the topic

Despite the efforts outlined by the 2016 Paris Agreement aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and keeping the increase of global average temperature to less than 2°C over the century, in 2019 the average global temperature across both land and sea was 0.95°C above the twentieth-century average of 13.9°C, making it the second-warmest year on record. While a majority of carbon emissions come from The United States, China, and the European Economic Area, these are also states or areas that are best equipped to deal with the effects of climate change, representing the three largest economies in the world with trillions of dollars in wealth. In contrast, nations such as the Central African Republic and The Gambia who release almost no greenhouse gas emissions are least able to tackle climate change and the threats it poses. With economies that rely heavily on agriculture, rising temperatures and lower crop yields threaten the food security and livelihoods of millions.

Though this is a challenge the whole world faces together, poor communities are disproportionately affected by climate change and the numerous threats it poses to human rights across the globe. Whether it be food security and agriculture, refugee crises waiting in the wings, or education and public health, this committee will be focused on not only mitigating the ongoing effects of climate change on poor communities but finding a means of preventing what promises to be our generation's greatest human rights issue from spiralling out of control.

Climate Change and Poverty

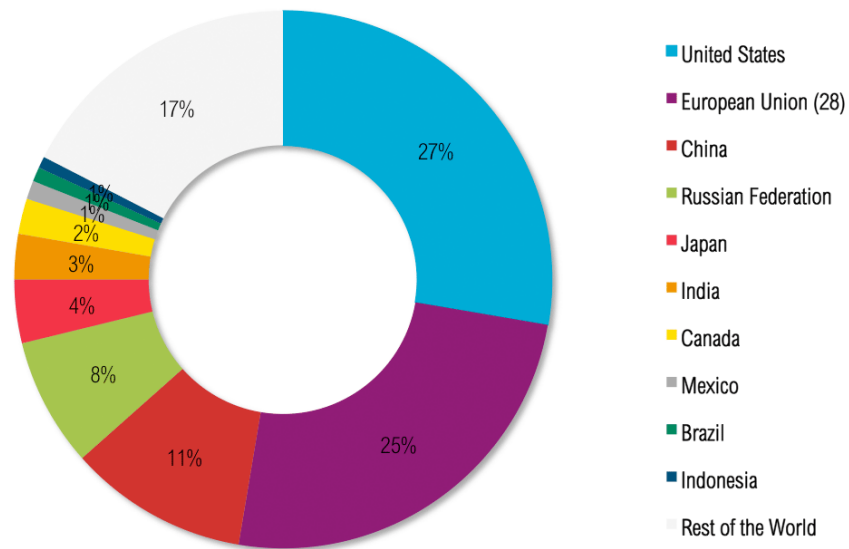
Climate change has not slowed down and its connection with human wellbeing and poverty is increasingly visible. Unchecked, it will push 132 million people into poverty over the next 10 years, undoing hard-won development gains. In addition, it is estimated that between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 extra deaths per year. That is from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress alone, says the World Health Organization.

Around the world, smog levels are making it harder to breathe. Food is becoming scarcer and less nutritious. Rising rivers and raging wildfires make news headlines as they destroy neighbourhoods rooted for generations. In the United States alone, climate change doubled the number of large forest fires between 1984 and 2015.

But climate change does not affect everyone to the same degree. All around the world, the poorest people are often most drastically impacted. Wealthier nations and families have more power to shield themselves from the impacts of climate change, but at the same time bear the biggest responsibility for it. Impoverished families in developing countries are often the least to blame for man-made climate change, yet they typically bear the worst of the impact.

For more than a century, the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, in total as well as per capita, have been the big developed nations, most notably the United States and the countries of Europe, which grew their economies by burning fossil fuels and spewing carbon from their factories, homes and cars. Today they still emit carbon and other greenhouse gasses disproportionately into the environment, although other big countries such as China and India have caught up.

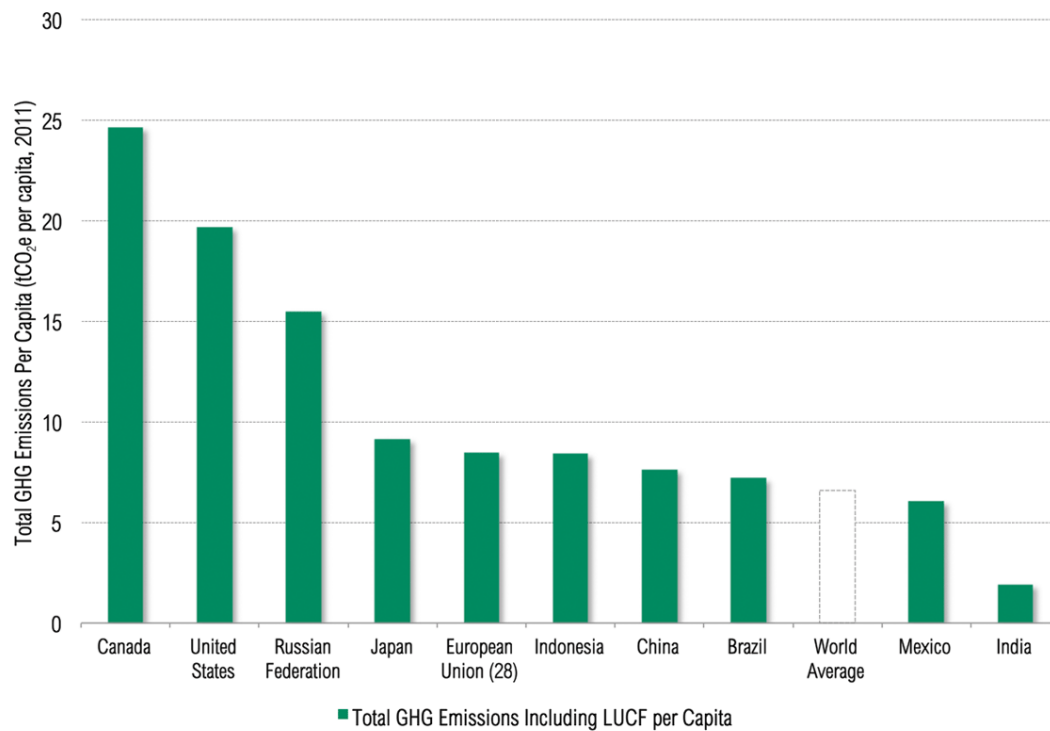
Cumulative CO₂ Emissions 1850–2011 (% of World Total)



<http://bit.ly/11SMpjA>

 WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

Per Capita Emissions for Top 10 Emitters



<http://bit.ly/11SMpjA>

 WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

The rising impact on people

In 2010, the United Nations declared that “climate change is inextricably linked to poverty and hunger.” Seventy-five per cent of the world’s poor living in rural areas count on natural resources such as forests, lakes and oceans for their livelihoods. And climate change is playing havoc with those resources.

The threat of climate change remains critical for countries – forcing people to evacuate homes, grapple with food insecurity or the impacts of deforestation and biodiversity loss – even as they also deal with the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

Natural disasters cost about \$18 billion a year in low- and middle-income countries through damage to power generation and transport infrastructure alone. They also trigger wider disruptions for households and firms costing at least \$390 billion a year.

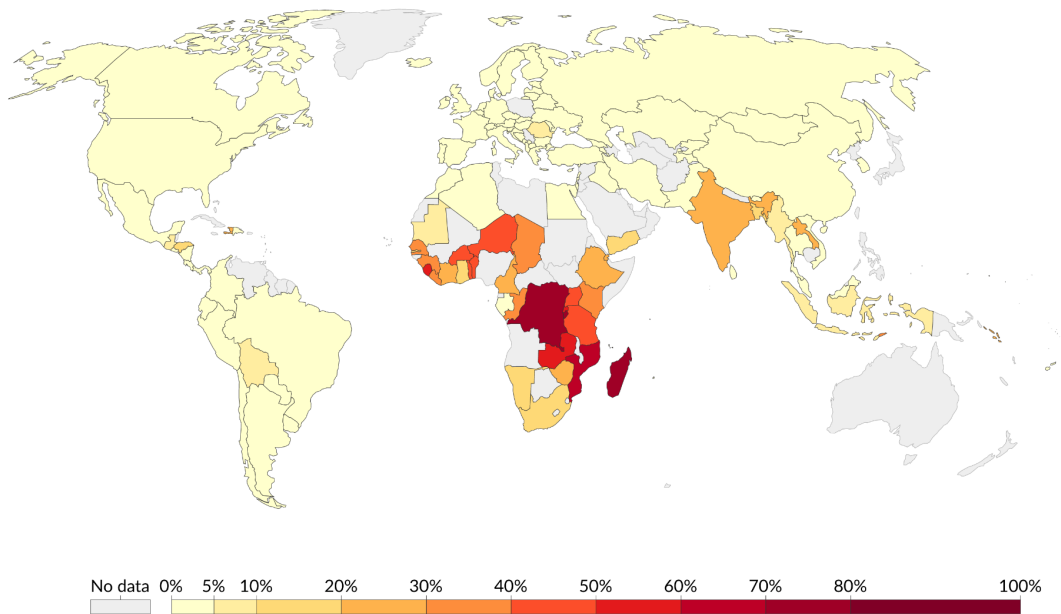
The most vulnerable countries are at particularly high risk of seeing their existing health systems overloaded or wiped out; having emergency funds depleted and replenishment more challenging in a constrained fiscal space; and, facing rising economic vulnerabilities of people and communities.

Today’s sustainable development trends could quickly become tomorrow’s global net-zero transformation and all countries – including the poorest and most vulnerable – can gain from this transition.

Share of the population living in extreme poverty, 2017

The share of individuals living below the 'International Poverty Line' of \$1.90 per day.

Our World
in Data



Source: World Bank

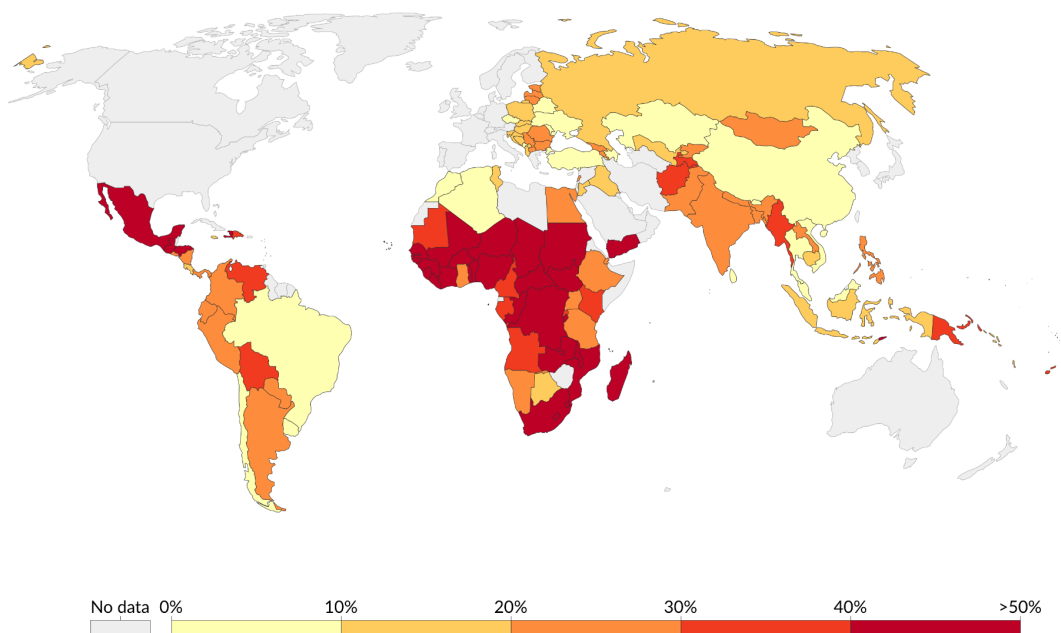
OurWorldInData.org/extreme-poverty/ • CC BY

Note: Depending on the country and year, the poverty rate relates to either income or consumption. Figures are given in international-\$. This means they are adjusted for price differences between countries and adjusted for inflation to allow comparisons between countries and over time. Income/consumption is measured at the household level, and is assumed to be divided equally among all household members.

Share of population living in poverty by national poverty lines, 2017

National poverty headcount ratio is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty lines. National estimates are based on population-weighted subgroup estimates from household surveys.

Our World
in Data

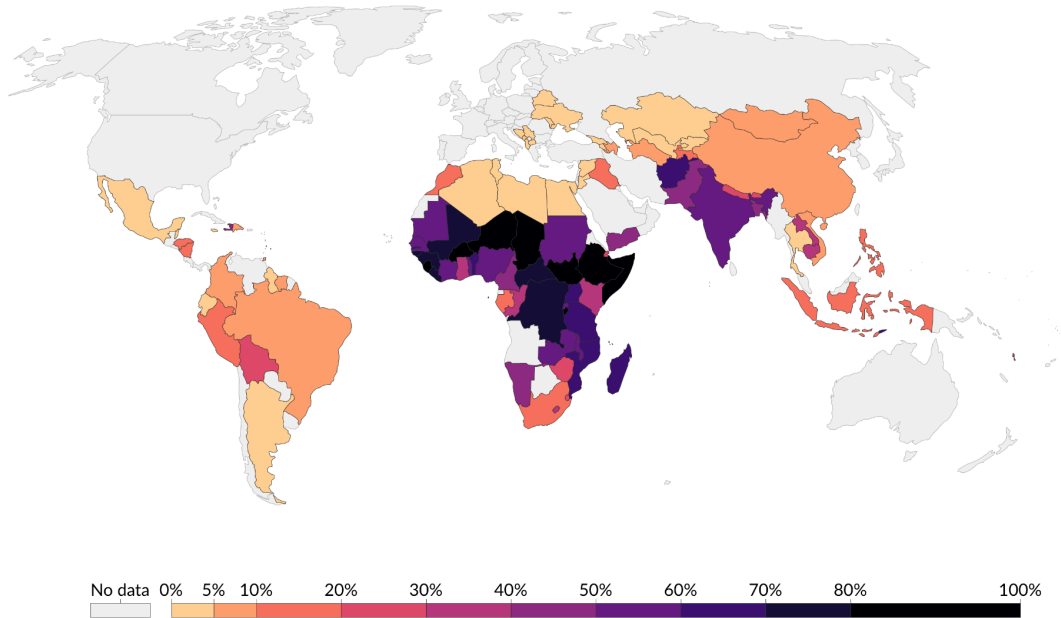


Source: World Bank

CC BY

Share of population living in multidimensional poverty, 2014

Proportion of people who are poor according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The MPI weights ten indicators of deprivation in the context of education, health and living standards. Individuals are considered poor if deprived in at least one third of the weighted indicators (see source for more details).



Source: OPHI Multidimensional Poverty Index - Alkire and Robles (2016)

OurWorldInData.org/extreme-poverty/ • CC BY

Sources: [How Climate Change Impacts Poverty](#) (adapted) [Climate Change Overview](#) (adapted) [Editorial: Wealthy countries are responsible for climate change, but it's the poor who will suffer most](#) (adapted)

Practical Instances of Climate Change Effects on Poor Communities in Relation to Human Rights

Here is how climate change is impacting families and communities in some of the world's poorest countries today in shortcut:

- Prolonged droughts **devastate food supplies and dry up water sources.**
- Withered crops and starving animals **destroy families' livelihoods.**
- Hurricanes, floods and landslides **flatten or sweep away people's homes.**
- Strife can occur within communities, as **families compete for available arable land.**
- Families become separated, as **relatives relocate to search for work.**

Yet even as the wealthy nations drive the world toward ecological disaster, it is clearly the poor countries that will face the gravest consequences and have the most difficulty coping. For instance, low-lying Bangladesh, already battered by increasingly powerful cyclones, could lose 10% of its territory to the ocean within a few decades, displacing 18 million people.

Political instability and violence, influenced in part by droughts and poor harvests, have already driven millions of people from their homes in sub-Saharan Africa and Central America.

A recent study from Stanford University found that climate change is exacerbating global income inequality between wealthy nations in cooler regions, and poor nations in hotter parts of the world. This is due, at least in part, to the relative inability of poorer countries to pay for the projects necessary to mitigate the effects of climate change, including more extreme weather events and the deterioration of arable land in subsistence economies.

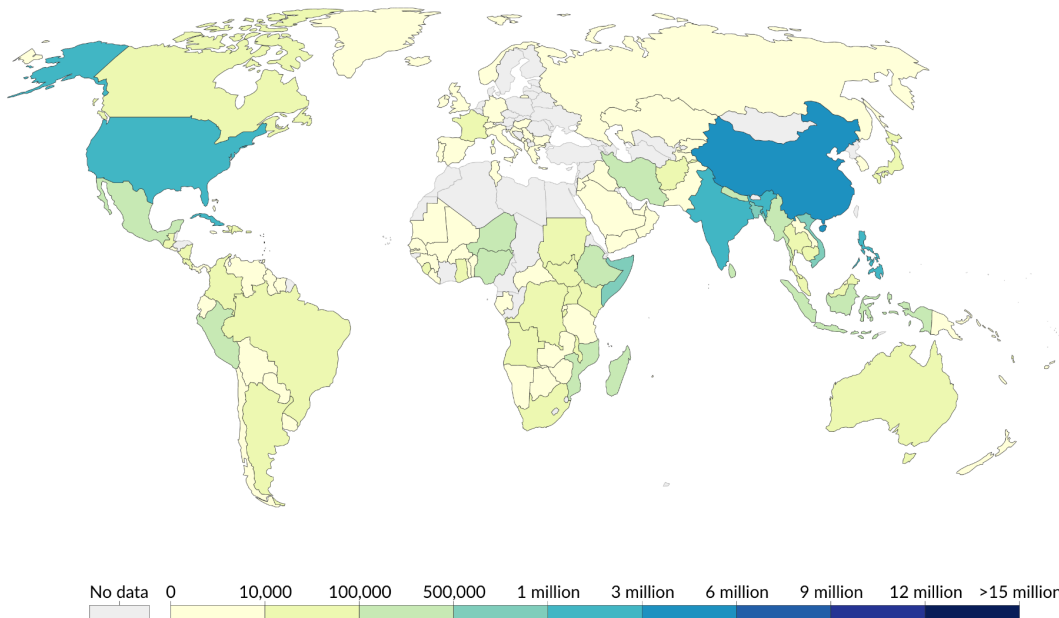
A report found that extreme weather displaced 7 million people from their homes during the first half of 2019, especially in Asia and Africa. That set a new

record, but researchers warned that the number of such events would increase as the climate continues to change.

Internally displaced persons from natural disasters, 2017

Internally displaced persons are defined as people or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an international border.

Our World
in Data



Source: World Bank

OurWorldInData.org/natural-disasters • CC BY

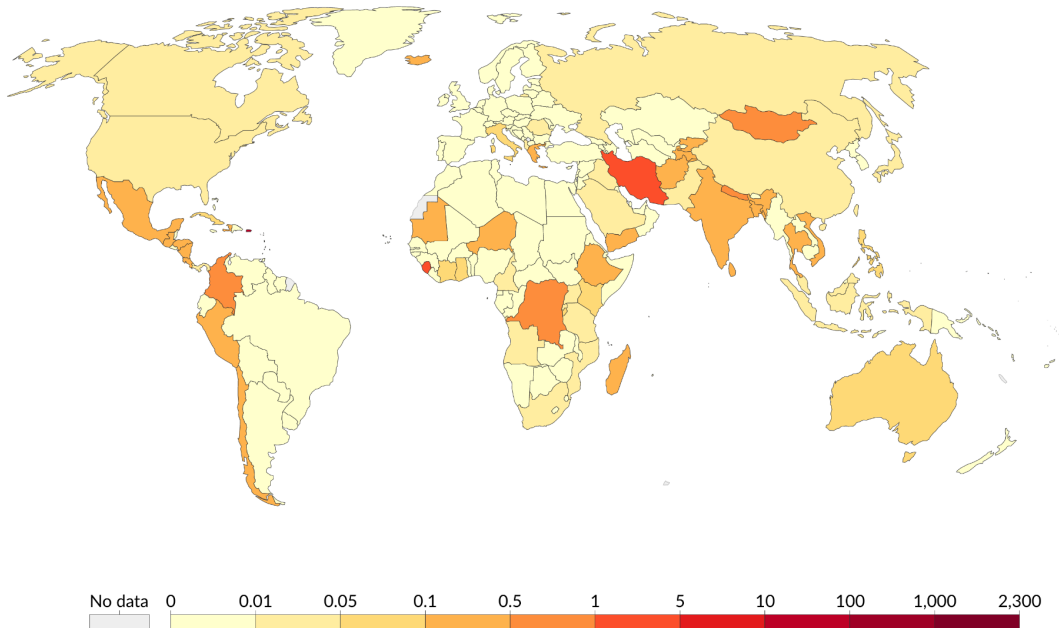
So whose problem is this to fix? The simple answer, of course, is that the responsibility for mitigating climate change belongs to all of us: A global problem requires a global solution. We must all change our behavior and our policies.

The poorest countries in the world need help finding the money, resources and technology to move toward a sustainable future without plunging themselves much further into crushing poverty and inequality. The richer countries, though they will have enormous costs of their own, have a moral obligation to step up.

Death rate from natural disasters, 2017

The annual number of deaths from all forms of natural disaster per 100,000 people.

Our World
in Data



Source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease

Note: To allow comparisons between countries and over time this metric is age-standardized.

OurWorldInData.org/natural-disasters • CC BY

Sources: [How Climate Change Impacts Poverty](#) (adapted) [Editorial: Wealthy countries are responsible for climate change, but it's the poor who will suffer most](#) (adapted)

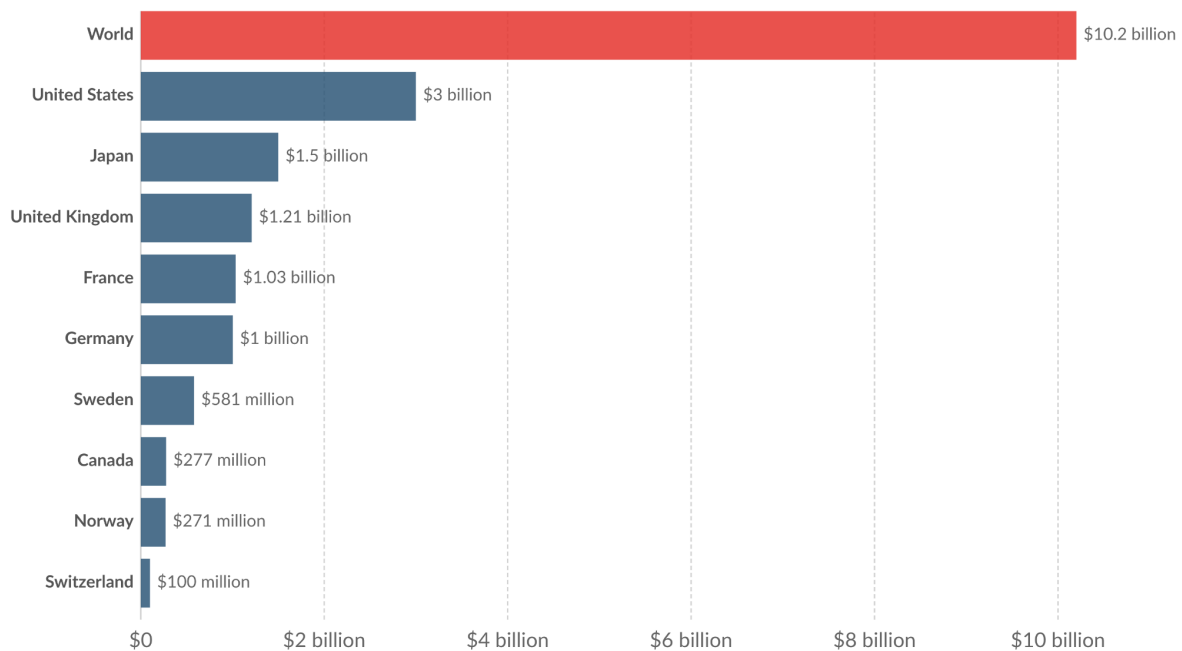
Undertaken Actions and Possible Solutions

In 2010 and then again at the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change, wealthier nations pledged to donate to the so-called Green Climate Fund, building up to \$100 billion per year by 2020. The fund was created under the auspices of the United Nations to help developing countries reduce the emissions that lead to climate change and adapt to the inevitable effects of it that are already underway. The goal of the fund is to use “public investment to stimulate private finance” for climate-related projects. It is governed by a board of representatives from 24 nations.

Green Climate Fund (GCF) signed pledges, 2018

National signed pledges to the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The GCF is a global fund created to support lower-income countries in climate mitigation and adaptation. Figures represent the signed pledges of contributions to the GCF per year. Advanced economies formally agreed within the Paris Agreement to mobilize at least 100 billion US\$ per year by 2020.

Our World
in Data



Source: Green Climate Fund (2018)

CC BY

But in 2018, Oxfam found that the donor nations had fallen behind in meeting their pledge. The organization’s senior climate change policy advisor called the money moving from rich countries to the least developed and most vulnerable “sadly inadequate.”

So far, donor nations have coughed up only \$10.3 billion and the Green Climate Fund has committed \$5.2 billion of that to 111 projects around the world.

President Trump, true to form, has vowed to “terminate” American contributions to the fund; to date, the U.S. has only sent \$1 billion of the \$3 billion that President Obama had pledged.

Further, there is no official mechanism for determining how much different countries should provide. Like a farmer’s roadside stand, the Green Climate Fund seems to be based on an honor system. As the World Resources Institute noted, the initial \$10.3 billion in commitments was “a good start,” but “more accidental than the product of a deliberate and transparent logic.”

Even as they change their own energy policies, the world’s wealthier nations must also help developing countries create sustainable energy grids. Possible scenarios are to confront China’s counterproductive practice of building coal-fired power plants in developing nations to curry political influence or offering aid and policies to reverse deforestation in the Amazon, Indonesia and other vital forests that remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Heavily populated low-lying regions — such as India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Thailand — need help from the rich nations to prepare for the inevitable loss of habitable land, and the resulting human migration that will follow.

Mitigation efforts need to be helped as well. Bangladesh, for instance, needs financial assistance for a program developing a salt-resistant strain of rice, in anticipation of seawater intrusion. African nations, where 600 million people do not have access to electricity, need help creating that power from renewables rather than fossil fuels. Sub-Saharan nations face longer and more severe droughts that will sharply reduce crops; the region needs biotechnology help and investment to create new hybrid crops that can thrive in harsher, drier climates.

There is no doubt that this will be expensive. But the cost of inaction would be astronomical, both in dollars and in human suffering. All too often, possible solutions to critical problems face headwinds from people who cannot see beyond the dollar



STUDY GUIDE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

signs. But in the case of global warming, we have little choice. The investment here is in our continued survival — and it must be undertaken collectively with other nations around the world. To turn away would be catastrophic.

Sources: [*Editorial: Wealthy countries are responsible for climate change, but it's the poor who will suffer most*](#)
(adapted)

Recommended reading

Highly recommended:

[Why Climate Change and Poverty Are Inextricably Linked](#)

[Climate change and poverty](#)

[How Much Should Countries Contribute to the Green Climate Fund's Replenishment?](#)

[Climate Change Overview](#)

[How More Carbon Dioxide Can Make Food Less Nutritious \(Published 2018\)](#)

[Climate change aid to poor nations lags behind Paris pledges](#)

[Our World in Data](#) - extremely useful website with data sources and comparisons

Practical instances:

[Climate change is pushing Central American migrants to the US | Lauren Markham](#)

[Sub-Saharan Africa's forcibly displaced population hit new high in 2017](#)

[How Bangladesh Is Preparing for Climate Change](#)

[Climate-driven migration in Africa – European Council on Foreign Relations](#)

[Wildfires and Climate Change](#)

Studies/complex reading:

[Climate Change and Social Inequality](#)

[Global warming has increased global economic inequality](#)

[Poverty and Climate Change](#)