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"

June 2024

Elaborated by the Global Platform for the Right to the City members, notably:

Instituto Pólis (Brazil), Kota Kita (Indonesia) and DW Angola.

1. **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?**

   Climate change adverse impacts are not felt the same way by different social groups, and also, not in the same way in different regional and local contexts. In that way, considering the specific impacts felt in urban and rural contexts, information and data on the **territorial dimensions** should be considered and collected, since different local communities have differentiated climate vulnerabilities. This kind of territorial information on climate change effects is not usually produced nor provided by local governments or national statistical agencies, which can harm a proper analysis of the human rights impacts caused by climate change and, consequently, prevent de formulation of adequate ways to address them.

   In addition, climate data collection of the local context should comprise not only quantitative human impacts produced by those climate adverse events but also **qualitative information** that can provide the interconnected dimensions of the climate change impact and its effects in a middle-term and long-term perspectives - this includes, for instance, impacts on the right for adequate housing, physical and mental health problems, forced mobility, food insecurity, among others. The access of this type of information also implies the production and monitoring of **disaggregated data,** mainly in terms of gender, race, and class.

2. **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? How can these approaches be improved?**

Current methods for gathering, disseminating, and monitoring data on climate change and human rights often fall short of enabling the public to thoroughly evaluate the negative effects on their rights culminating in insufficient governmental responses, as they do not adequately include the actual experiences and qualitative insights from impacted communities. These approaches often lack comprehensive data, accessibility, and engagement with local communities, which limits their effectiveness. In that sense, to change this context, three community-based and participatory approaches being carried out in Indonesia, Angola and Brazil can be relevant examples on how to collect and monitor information on climate change and human rights.

Firstly, we can mention **"Participatory Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments (CCVA)"**, a comprehensive data collection and open information exchange initiative led by Kota Kita, an Indonesian non-governmental organization. By communicating information in user-friendly formats and actively engaging communities, the methodology includes community surveys, discussion groups and mapping, ensuring the information accurately reflects real-world situations and challenges. By blending quantitative data with qualitative insights, such as personal narratives and community feedback, CCVA can provide a holistic view of climate change's impact on human rights.

In Angola, for instance, the non-governmental organization DW Angola is also implementing **"Participatory Risk Mapping"**, a methodology that, similarly to CCVA, involves local communities in identifying and mapping risks, ensuring that the data collected is relevant and grounded in real-world experiences. Integrating participatory risk mapping into broader climate and human rights monitoring frameworks makes the information more accurate and reflective of on-the-ground realities.

In Brazil, it is possible to mention the realization of **"Reporting Missions"**. Organized by the National Urban Reform Forum (FNRU), a national articulation that brings together popular and social movements, class associations, NGOs and research institutions - such as Instituto Pólis -, those missions aim at empowering communities so they can advocate for their demands and needs in urban and territorial planning processes and instruments. This methodology was also carried out in coastal communities intensely affected by floods and subsequent landslides, where hundreds of people who were already in vulnerable conditions were left without adequate housing and began to live in extremely precarious situations, having their basic human rights violated. The missions are carried out by diverse delegations representing national and local organizations, social and popular movements, and include public meetings with local public authorities (e.g. City Hall, Public Defender's Office, Public Prosecutor's Office, among others). Each mission ends with a public hearing, with the aim of mobilizing civil society and making the cases and produced documents visible. The missions' results will be gathered and systematized in a National Denunciation Report of Violations, that will be delivered to authorities of the executive, legislative and judicial branches at the national level.

Finally, inclusive participatory approaches should also be enhanced to **adapt to the diverse social groups**. Kota Kita, for instance, developed workshops to enable people with disabilities and the elderly to voice their daily challenges and aspirations, helping define their needs for inclusive public spaces considering flood and fire risks and future sustainability. While participatory and inclusive approaches are valuable, there is a need for continuous improvement in inclusivity, data collection, impact on policy, and capacity-building to ensure that they are sufficient for the general public to assess the magnitude of climate change impacts on human rights and press for the adequacy of States' responses and governmental accountability.

3. **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?)**

Firstly, **language barriers** significantly impact access to reliable and relevant information. Much of the available data and research on climate change and human rights is produced by international organizations and consequently published in English or other "major" languages, while a large portion of the Latin American, African and Asian population only speak and understand their own national/local languages. This linguistic disconnection limits the ability of the general public and local communities to access and comprehend critical information. Additionally, those communication barriers also encompass the absence of information in other language formats such as braille and sign language.

Secondly, **technical language** and the use of specific climate or human rights jargon can also harm the full comprehension of information by the general public or even discourage the search for reliable sources of information. Usually the information provided by acknowledged sources are too technical, and inserted in a dense and tiresome-reports format, requiring a previous knowledge, or at least, familiarity, with the topic. Alternative ways of providing and conveying information - including not written ones - should be enhanced, considering different audiences and levels of knowledge.

Third, **digital inaccessibility** is also a major issue. In Angola, for example, a great part of the population, especially those in poorer, high-risk areas, lack access to the internet and the necessary technology to retrieve and use information on climate change and human rights. The digital divide in Angola means that even if relevant information is available online, it is inaccessible to those without internet access or digital literacy. Additionally, the need for using advanced technology to produce local information can also be a barrier. Advanced technologies for monitoring and sharing climate data, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing, are often inaccessible to local communities or smaller organizations due to their complexity and cost. DW Angola has identified that poor urban planning and the lack of early warning systems are partly due to insufficient data sharing and transparency.

Finally, the **lack of transparency** from governmental and institutional bodies, especially on topics concerning their noncompliance with climate and human rights responsibilities is also a greater challenge to guarantee proper access to information. There should be citizen-friendly ways to access and/or demand for public information concerning climate and human rights. In addition, the information should also be periodically updated.

4. **Are there examples in which <u>international cooperation</u> 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 scrutiny can press for public access to information and transparency. Nevertheless, international instruments and processes often **fail to include a comprehensive civil society participation**. This means that they do not actively engage and partner with civil society stakeholders and community-based organizations in what concerns the production and diffusion of this type of knowledge, invisibilizing the population's own experienced knowledge, and their main demands in terms of access and production of information. In that way, when the information is finally produced, it gets restricted only to a technical and academic bubble, hampering the information capillary towards communities.

Thus, international cooperation should provide technical and financial resources for creating and/or enhancing already existent instances of participatory co-production of knowledge and data, as well as comunitary instruments for monitoring human rights and climate change. International cooperation should also provide resources for translating relevant information on climate change and human rights to different audiences, in different languages, also adapting it to diverse formats, including the non-written ones.

5. **Are there concrete examples of, or specific challenges for <u>business</u> 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? Are there specific examples of State regulation that have significantly improved access to information held by private actors on climate change and human rights?**

In most countries, businesses are not properly held accountable for human rights and climate change abuses during their operation. Information on risk is diffused only when disasters and potential damages are already in progress. Even when businesses indeed elaborate reports on risks, there is no governmental proper control and inspection for demanding for business operation changes and accountability.

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Climate and human rights litigation can be a useful legal instrument for making business accountable and, eventually, defining proper **remedies** for populations living under risk due to business operations. Nevertheless, the major problems on accessing this legal instrument encompasses, precisely, the population's lack of information on their own human rights and also the difficulties in accessing the complex legal ways to claim for the realization of their rights. In most countries, the existing channels to access legal instances are very technical, not friendly to the majority of the population, and lagging in terms of procedure. Thus, litigation as a tool for guaranteeing human and climate rights should be strengthened, including at the local spheres, and the Judiciary system should be sensitized and accessible for receiving complaints on these matters.

6. **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)?**

The lack of sufficient information on risks from public institutions and corporations can have a profound effect on the guarantee of human rights, especially for disadvantaged and marginalized communities. In Angola, for instance, **factory workers** are not informed about the health risks associated with them being in close proximity to dangerous or hazardous materials, which lead to serious consequences for their health and well-being.

In Indonesia, where many cities face high risks of natural disasters, the needs and realities of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities remain underrepresented and are frequently overlooked in the decision-making processes related to the climate crisis. The issues of disability and climate crisis are often treated as separate matters by decision-makers, rather than being seen as interconnected. Individuals with **disabilities** face a unique set of vulnerabilities that those without disabilities do not experience. Based on Kota Kita's experiences during a participatory workshop for creating a disability-inclusive city profile in Solo and Banjarmasin, we discovered that persons with disabilities require accessible and easy-to-understand information related to climate change. During climate-related disasters such as floods, people with disabilities often encounter significant challenges exacerbated by a lack of accessible information. In that way, the absence of information in formats such as braille, sign language, or easy-to-read materials, hinder their ability to access crucial guidance on evacuation procedures, available resources, and emergency alerts. Additionally, reliance on technology for emergency notifications may exclude individuals with visual or hearing impairments. Moreover, the lack of inclusive disaster planning exacerbates these difficulties, leaving people with disabilities disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate disasters. Addressing these challenges requires prioritizing accessibility in disaster preparedness efforts,

ensuring that information and infrastructure are universally accessible, and actively engaging individuals with disabilities in planning and response initiatives.

In Brazil, for example, a recent research carried out by Instituto Pólis (2022), evidenced that in three different Brazilian metropolises (Belém, Recife e São Paulo) the **low income and black population (notably black women)** are also the one most vulnerable to climate change adverse impacts, since they reside in urban areas more prone to climate risks. At the same time, this is the population that is historically excluded from the decision making process, being invisibilized in public policies that could reverse this reality. So having data produced on an intersectional basis, and advancing more representative instances of decision-making at the local and national levels, can play an important role in guaranteeing more just and equitable realities concerning climate change and human rights.

Relevant sources:

Kota Kita Project: Disabled Voices in Climate Change

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpATRwo199Q&t=83s

Kota Kita's Manual for Urban Climate Risk Management:

https://kotakita.org/tools/manual-for-urban-climate-risk-management

DW Participatory Mapping:

https://dw.angonet.org/wp-content/uploads/cain_2020_building_resilience_to_climate_change_in_angolas_coastal_cities_-_chatham_house_angola_forum_-_24_nov_2020_0.pdf

Reporting Missions in Brazil (in Portuguese):

https://forumreformaurbana.org.br/missoes-denuncia/

Instituto Pólis study on environmental racism and socio-environmental justice in cities (in Portuguese)

https://polis.org.br/estudos/racismo-ambiental/