

CLIMATE CHANGE FACTSHEET:

CLIMATE ACTION, ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

By Teneal Koorts



October 2022



The punishing effects of climate change have been felt by every country in the world. Global warming has caused and is still causing fundamental changes to the climate system, threatening our lives and our planet. The need for adaptation is inevitable – calling for immediate individual, and especially collective action.

At the heart of collective action is local institutions, who shape how communities respond to environmental changes. These institutions include the government, extension services, producer organisations, cooperatives, private institutions, non-profit organisations, private businesses and informal institutions. All who are central to local adaptations to climate risks, specifically in deploying adaptation practices¹.

Here are a few adaptation solutions and examples²:

 <p>Preserve Habitats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreat from coastal barriers. • Connect landscapes with corridors to enable migrations. • Replicate habitat types in multiple areas.
 <p>Maintain Water Quality and Availability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent or limit groundwater extraction from shallow aquifers. • Establish or expand "containment areas" to allocate and cap water withdrawal. • Manage water demand (through water reuse, recycling, rainwater harvesting, desalination, etc.). • Develop adaptive stormwater management practices (e.g., remove impervious surface, replace undersized culverts).
 <p>Provide Public Awareness and Coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for staff to exchange experiences and ideas for programs (e.g., workshops, webinars, online forums). • Take advantage of existing resources. • Collaborate with community groups (e.g., through activities such as tree planting or installing rain gardens).

In case you were wondering³:



Mitigation refers to reducing climate change. This involves reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by reducing the sources of these gases. Sources include the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat and transport. Mitigation also involves restoring and conserving ecosystems like oceans, forests and soil that accumulate and store harmful gases.

Adaptation refers to adapting to life in a changing climate. This involves adjusting to actual or expected future climate. The goal is to reduce our risks from the harmful effects of climate change like the sea-level rising, more intense extreme weather events, or food insecurity.

¹ The Social Dimensions Of Climate Change (No. 113). 2008. Local Institutions and Climate Change Adaptation.

² The United States Environmental Protection Agency. (<https://www.epa.gov/arc-x/strategies-climate-change-adaptation#all>)

³ National Aeronautics and Space Administration. NASA Climate Change. (<https://climate.nasa.gov/solutions/adaptation-mitigation>)

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BE PART OF THE CLIMATE SOLUTION^{4,5}:



CALCULATE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Calculate your carbon footprint with an online carbon calculator. Knowing what activities are your biggest sources of emissions can help you plan how to reduce your footprint.



DON'T WASTE FOOD

One-third of all food produced is either lost or wasted. Avoid waste by only buying what you need and take advantage of every edible part of the food. Measure portion sizes of rice and other staples before cooking them and store food correctly. Be creative with leftovers like sharing extras with your friends and neighbours. Alternatively, you can contribute to a local food-sharing scheme. Make compost out of inedible remnants and use it to fertilise your garden.



TRANSFORM YOUR TRANSPORT

Transport is one of the biggest contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. You can decarbonise travel by leaving your car at home and alternatively walking or cycling. If you must drive, offer to carpool with others so that fewer cars are on the road. You can also consider buying an electric car. Another way is to reduce the number of long-haul flights you take.



DRESS (CLIMATE) SMART

The fashion industry contributes to more global carbon emissions than all international flights and maritime shipping combined. You can lower these emissions by buying fewer new clothes. Seek out sustainable labels and use rental services for special occasions rather than buying new items that will only be worn once. Recycle pre-loved clothes and repair them when necessary.



REIN IN YOUR POWER USE

Install solar panels on your roof, switch off appliances and lights when you are not using them and try to buy the most energy-efficient products. You can also insulate your home.



PLANT TREES

Plant trees to absorb carbon out of the air and stabilise the climate.



CONSUME LESS

There are carbon emissions embedded in all the things we use and buy day-to-day. When you buy fewer new things, you shrink your carbon footprint. Recycling and reusing materials uses less energy, and thus creates less pollution than extracting raw material.



FOCUS ON PLANET-FRIENDLY INVESTMENTS

Individuals can also spur change through their savings and investments by choosing financial institutions that do not invest in carbon-polluting industries.



TWEAK YOUR DIET

Eat more plant-based meals. You can significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions by eating less meat, buying food with less packaging and growing your own food. You can plant your own fruit, vegetables and herbs in a garden, on a balcony or even on a window sill. Set up a community garden in your neighbourhood to get others involved.



SPREAD THE WORD

Encourage your friends, family and co-workers to reduce their carbon pollution.



SHOP LOCAL AND BUY SUSTAINABLE

By buying local and seasonal foods you can reduce your food's carbon footprint. This will help small businesses and farms to reduce fossil fuel emissions associated with transport and cold chain storage.



KEEP UP THE POLITICAL PRESSURE

Lobby local politicians and businesses to support efforts to cut emissions and reduce carbon pollution. Pick an environmental issue you care about, decide on a specific request for change and then try to arrange a meeting with your local representative.

⁴ United Nations Environment Programme. 2021. Ways you can help fight the climate crisis. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/10-ways-you-can-help-fight-climate-crisis>

⁵ The YEARS Project. 2022. 17 Climate Change Solutions You Can Do Yourself <https://theyearsproject.com/latest/individual-solutions-to-climate-change>

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE EDUCATION⁶

Climate change mitigation requires education that emphasises learning how to change lifestyles, economies and social structures that contribute to global carbon emissions.

Since humans partly contribute to the harmful emissions that cause changes, their actions can be identified and changed. This involves learning how to change consumption patterns, such as using renewable forms of energy and designing green technologies.

Education can teach people about the crucial role they play in redefining their lifestyles to address the current sustainability issues that humanity is facing. Schools also have a role to play in mitigation in terms of becoming carbon neutral, energy efficient and reducing their own ecological footprint.

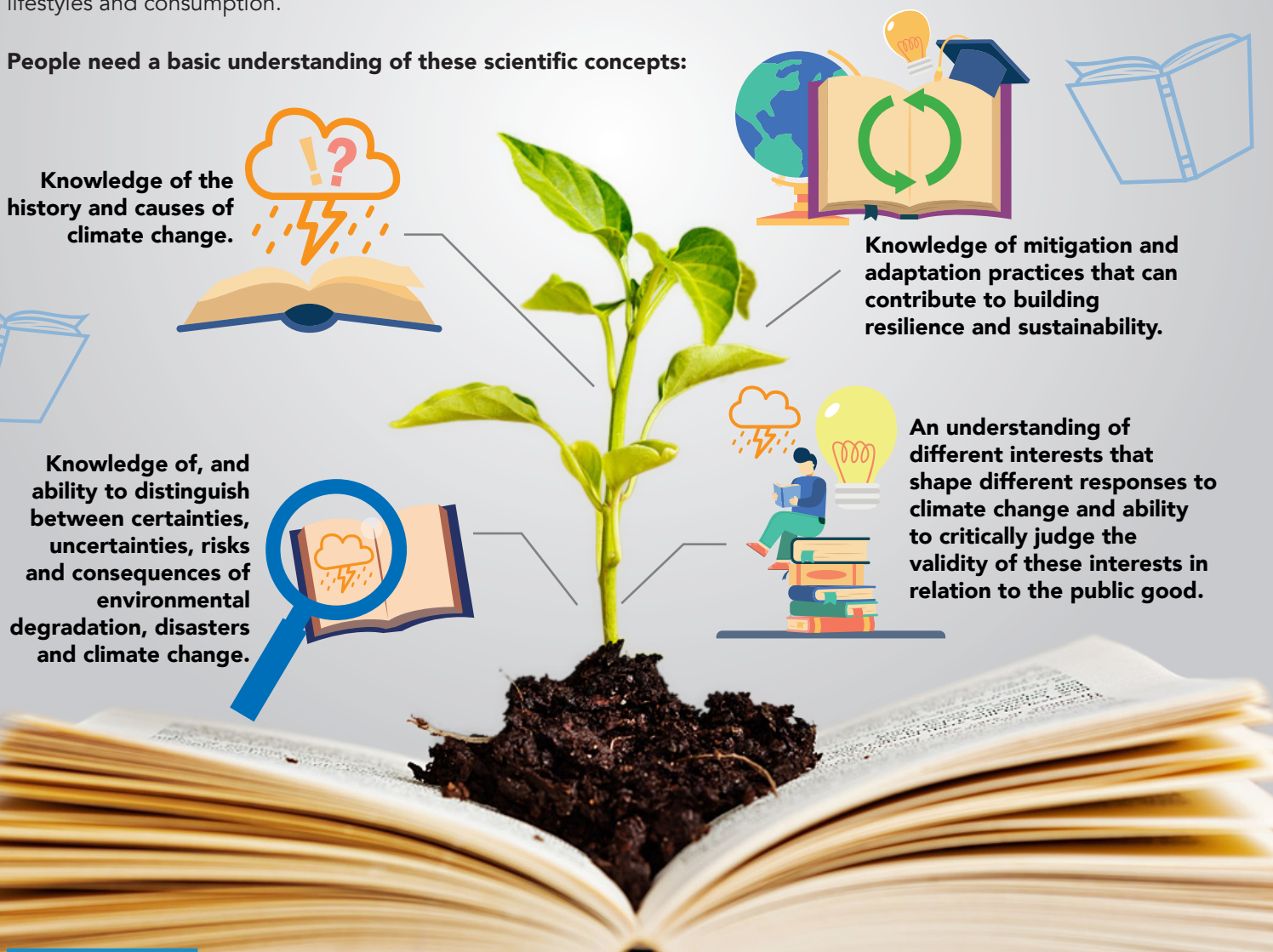
As mentioned before, adaptation is inevitable, hence, there is a need to reduce general vulnerability and to gain knowledge that will help communities to prepare for and respond to climate disasters. Education is a critical component of adaptive capacity. It can provide the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about how individual lives and livelihoods as well as ecological, social or economic systems can adapt in a changing environment.

New knowledge and skills and changing behaviours can reduce vulnerabilities, manage the risks of climate change, change consumption and production patterns and build adaptive capacity and resilient societies.

WHAT SHOULD CLIMATE EDUCATION COVER?

Teaching and learning should integrate environmental stewardship, which encompasses environmental education, climate change and scientific literacy, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, as well as education for sustainable lifestyles and consumption.

People need a basic understanding of these scientific concepts:



⁶ Anderson, A. 2012. Climate Change Education for Mitigation and Adaptation. UNESCO Special Section on the ESD Response to the Three Rio Conventions. SAGE Publications.

TIME FOR ACTION

Knowing that each and every single one of us contributes to harmful global carbon emissions that cause severe changes in our climate can be worrisome – but it shouldn't be – it should rather be seen as an opportunity for improvement.

It is imperative that global citizens are aware of their contribution, recognise the need for change and create sustainable solutions.

Climate education and individual action will provide a sustainable means of communicating, motivating, informing and monitoring the public towards participating in protecting our environment and creating adaptation solutions to the effects of climate change.



KNOW YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES:

The **National Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development Policy** was launched in 2019 by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism with the following mission: To “reorient, integrate and upscale quality environmental education and education for sustainable development in environmental awareness, education and training systems, research and innovation systems, policies, programmes and action for sustainable development”. The policy inter alia intends to establish and implement education and training systems, improve synergies and partnerships, improve research and innovation outputs, and to mobilise increased funding and resource allocations in the field of environmental education and education for sustainable development⁸.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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This Climate Change Factsheet is compiled by the IPPR authors and is financially supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF). This factsheet can be downloaded from IPPR's website and printed copies are available from IPPR or HSF.



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⁷ Ruppel, O.C./ K. Ruppel-Schlichting (eds). 2022. Environmental Law and Policy in Namibia – Towards making Africa the Tree of Life. Windhoek. Hanns Seidel Foundation Namibia.