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Future Global Disaster Trends: Climate Change

Climate change is an ongoing public health issue with a significant global impact on the health and well-being of all life forms on the planet. Every year brings unprecedented and record-breaking weather, ranging from wildfires, drought, floods, precipitation, and heat waves. These weather events have contributed to many humanitarian emergencies that have evolved into more complex events due to the preexisting environmental conditions in which the emergency occurred. Research indicates that 3.6 billion people currently live in highly climate-vulnerable areas.¹ Furthermore, low-income countries and small developing island states (SIDS) contribute the least to global greenhouse gas emissions but experience the most adverse consequences.² As a result, it is vital to work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as global warming can surpass 2.9 degree Celsius this century.³ Hence, I ranked it as a situation of utmost priority.

Additionally, events do not occur in siloes but within an existing system interacting with a myriad of factors to influence the outcome or outcomes. So, considering all the influencing factors through a systems approach will be a step towards alleviating the situation. The first step is to analyse the factors within the system, followed by what type of impact the interventions will have on the systems. A simple example is increasing an area's walkability will positively impact the population's health whilst reducing carbon emissions. Climate Action is required. This will entail mobilising the financing for SIDS and other climate-vulnerable countries to improve resiliency. However, as of 2021, 89.6 USD billion of the 100 USD billion committed by developed countries to support climate action. The original target date set in 2009 was 2020 and extended to 2025.⁴

The world appears to be in crisis mode, with many crises occurring simultaneously, producing cascading effects that impact climate. To illustrate, in Sudan, periods of political and social instability correlated with rapid climate and environmental degradation. A United Nations Environment Programme report documented many changes since 2007, as seen in the advancement of a northern desert to the south by 60 miles in 40 years and reduced rainfall. These crises will continue to escalate if these areas do not get the assistance

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). Climate change. World Health Organization. 2024. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>.

² IBID

³ UN Environment (UNEP). Climate action. UN Environment Programme (UNEP). 2024. Accessed February 5, 2024. https://www.unep.org/topics/climate-action?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIluSljcOUhAMVwk1HAR14sg_UEAAYASAAEgLEfD_BwE.

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Climate Finance and the USD 100 billion goal - OECD. Climate Change. 2023. Accessed February 5, 2024. <https://www.oecd.org/climate-change/finance-usd-100-billion-goal/>.

needed. Unfortunately, crisis and economic development will prevail, impeding the implementation of Climate Action. Although financial assistance is needed, education and social engagement are also critical to the process. Communities must understand the issue, their role, and how to design interventions to improve their circumstances. The best solutions come from within the society, which will encourage commitment to Climate Action as there is no Planet B.

References

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2. United Nations Foundation. 5 global issues to watch in 2024. United Nations Foundation. December 15, 2023. Accessed February 5, 2024. https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/5-global-issues-to-watch-in-2024/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMIYPLubqUhAMVcS7UAR12CwK_EAAYAiAAEgI73fD_BwE.
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