



COP27: AFRICA NEEDS WEALTHY NATIONS TO STEP UP

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WEALTHY nations must step up support for Africa and vulnerable countries in addressing past, present and future impacts of climate change, according to the international authors of an Editorial co-published by the *Medical Journal of Australia*, the *BMJ* and other journals today in the lead-up to the Conference of the Parties (COP27).

Dr Lukoye Atwoli, Dean of the Medical College East Africa, Aga Khan in Nairobi, and colleagues from across Africa, wrote that Africa had “suffered disproportionately” despite having done very little to cause the climate crisis, responsible for just 3% of carbon dioxide emissions since the Industrial Revolution.

“Climate change-related risks in Africa include flooding, drought, heatwaves, reduced food production, and reduced labour productivity,” Atwoli and colleagues wrote.

“Droughts in sub-Saharan Africa have tripled between 1970–79 and 2010–2019. In 2018, devastating cyclones impacted 2.2 million people in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In west and central Africa, severe flooding resulted in mortality and forced migration from loss of shelter, cultivated land, and livestock.

“Changes in vector ecology brought about by floods and damage to environmental hygiene has led to increases in diseases across sub-Saharan Africa, with rises in malaria, dengue fever, Lassa fever, Rift Valley fever, Lyme disease, Ebola virus, West Nile virus and other infections. Rising sea levels reduce water quality, leading to waterborne diseases, including diarrhoeal diseases, a leading cause of mortality in Africa.

“Extreme weather damages water and food supply, increasing food insecurity and malnutrition, which causes 1.7 million deaths annually in Africa. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, malnutrition has increased by almost 50% since 2012, owing to the central role agriculture plays in African economies.

“Environmental shocks and their knock-on effects also cause severe harm to mental health.

“In all, it is estimated that the climate crisis has destroyed a fifth of the gross domestic product of the countries most vulnerable to climate shocks.”

Atwoli and colleagues wrote that the rise in global temperature must be limited to less than 1.5oC compared with pre-industrial levels.

“While the Paris Agreement of 2015 outlines a global action framework that incorporates providing climate finance to developing countries, this support has yet to materialise,” they wrote.

“COP27 is the fifth Conference of the Parties (COP) to be organised in Africa since its inception in 1995. Ahead of this meeting, we – as health journal editors from across the continent – call for urgent action to ensure it is the COP that finally delivers climate justice for Africa and vulnerable countries.

“This is essential not just for the health of those countries, but for the health of the whole world.”

Atwoli and colleagues called for urgent action from frontline nations.

“A financing facility for loss and damage must now be introduced, providing additional resources beyond those given for mitigation and adaptation. This must go beyond the failures of COP26 where the suggestion of such a facility was downgraded to ‘a dialogue’,” they wrote.



"The climate crisis is a product of global inaction, and comes at great cost not only to disproportionately impacted African countries, but to the whole world.

"Africa is united with other frontline regions in urging wealthy nations to finally step up, if for no other reason than that the crises in Africa will sooner rather than later spread and engulf all corners of the globe, by which time it may be too late to effectively respond.

"If so far they have failed to be persuaded by moral arguments, then hopefully their self-interest will now prevail," they concluded.

The Editorial can be found online at <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2022/217/9/cop27-climate-change-conference-urgent-action-needed-africa-and-world> where it is open access.

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