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2020

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Climate Change in Rwanda

Mig Shyaka

November, 2020

Climate change has become the world's utmost threat. Different ideas of mitigation and adaptation have been developed to target climate change. These solutions stretch from development and innovation of different technologies like clean energy (solar and wind), to simpler local procedures (planting trees and simple green agroecological practices like farming). However, the need for the rapid action on climate change has created a narrow understanding of the issue and the necessary participation for the process to be smoother in developing and under-developed countries. It can be argued to be the case in some developed countries too.

The wide knowledge gap and a limited education system in developing countries like Rwanda is still a concern. This is mostly significant during the people's adaptation to the rapid changes caused by action on climate change. Changes in policies, advancements in technology and infrastructure standards threaten the stability of the local people's economies. The expensive nature of shifting to the different propositions of both the public and private sector is appalling. In terms of energy consumption, one of the policies that were created was to shift from the use of firewood. Such a policy is very important to prevent deforestation, but the people do not easily understand it.

For an educated person, such a policy is easily comprehended. However, what I have come learn is to try to visualize changes in different communities in the eyes of the local people in the region. Their understanding of situation is completely different. Some may view the change in policy as an attack to lower class individuals. The government therefore disregards the understanding of the people and neglects the time-scale required for the people to adapt. From this, one can easily hypothesize that structuring the education system to include the backgrounds of different people is crucial to eliminate misunderstandings of the different governmental drives decisions.

The education system in Rwanda is governed by the Ministry of Education, which creates a uniform syllabus for all schools in the country. Not all schools have the same resources hence the better the social class, the better the education. This is made worse by the responsibility imposed on the under-privileged low social class children. They spend a lot of time helping their parents with domestic work and other chores to maintain their family income. This is just a small fraction of the pitfalls of the education system in Rwanda. In the creation of the adaptation strategies to climate change, creating an efficient education system is critical. It has the capability to increase the people's understanding to the mitigation strategies, but importantly increase the participation in the mitigation.

If the education system cannot create a situation of people understanding simple policies like stopping the use of firewood, how can the people be expected to understand complicated projections like reports from early warning systems. On the 20th of July 2011, the United Nations declared the famine in Southern Somalia. Different reasons led to the famine, but the lack of response to the report from the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) contributed to the famine. People are expected to contribute to strategies set by the government to ensure response to different hazards. If the education system is not efficient enough, people will not be able to back their government's activities.

Mitigation and adaptation to climate change for Rwanda requires competent leaders and understanding educated citizens. Both are created by an effective education system, which is able to sustain the already achieved goals, and ensure reanimation and innovation wherever necessary. The education system should learn from the established system of developed countries, but not immediately impose the same strategies to the local system. The local system is not capable of maintaining the requirements and resources needed to sustain a western system of education. The re-assessment of the education system in Rwanda is therefore vital for climate change mitigation, and most importantly adaptation.