

## **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

### **Research question:**

How has the post-colonial context of sub-Saharan Africa affected the region's response to climate change? An analysis of legislation implemented in South Africa, Kenya and Ghana.

### **Introduction:**

As an Environmental Management and Geography major, I have become aware of the unequal impact of environmental problems in certain places and communities and how environmental injustice is indicative of historical oppression (Murdock, 2020). SSA countries are disproportionately affected by climate change for several reasons, namely, they have greater climatic variation, are highly dependent on agriculture, and have a limited capacity to adapt to and mitigate its effects (Collier et al., 2008). As a result of climate change, SSA is experiencing rising temperatures, extreme weather conditions, food and water insecurity, greater incidences of disease, changes in wildlife migration patterns, a decrease in biodiversity, and conflict over resources. Despite SSA having contributed a minimal amount to the global carbon stock, only producing 4% of global carbon dioxide emissions, it remains one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change (Fields, 2005).

My interest in environmental justice has inspired me to conduct an exploration that will discuss in-depth, the barriers faced by SSA in responding to the effects of climate change. Unlike much literature surrounding SSA, rather than contribute to the discourse that defines Africa by its underdevelopment and paints the West as the progenitor of progress, I hope to dismantle this dominant narrative and explain how the colonial legacy has reduced the region's ability to combat climate change (Bawa & Ogunwankin, 2018).

The region's climatic conditions, poverty, inability to generate sustained economic growth, minimal climate data, lack of implementable adaptation policies, improper governance, reliance on foreign aid, existing gender and cultural norms, as well as the absence of global cooperation, have diminished SSA's ability to tackle climate change (Maina, 2013). The goals of my research project are to explain the technical and institutional barriers further, detail their interconnected nature, present the effects of climate change experienced by SSA, demonstrate the need for developed countries to repay their climate debt, and reveal how the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism have hindered the region's adaptive capacity (Pickering & Barry, 2012).

**International/interdisciplinary focus:**

This paper will have an international focus because climate change is a collective action problem and the effects experienced by SSA are largely a result of anthropogenic emissions from other countries. Furthermore, the paper will discuss case studies from several SSA countries. It is interdisciplinary as it will explain how responses to climate change are inextricably linked to economic, social, cultural, political, and historical factors.

**Outcomes:**

- Produce a comprehensive report that summarizes commonalities in challenges facing different locations in the fight against climate change in SSA.
- Provide an understanding of the underlying technical and institutional issues faced by SSA in responding to the effects of climate change and discuss their historical context.
- Raise awareness on the severity of climate change in SSA and highlight the need for urgent local, regional, and global action.

- Discuss the contradictory laws that exist in Kenya, South Africa and Ghana surrounding climate change and detail how they link back to their colonial history.