

An Analysis of Climate Change, Poverty and Human Security in South Africa

Bornwell C. Chikulo

*Department of Development Studies, North West University, Mafikeng Campus,
Private Bag X 2046, Mmabatho, South Africa 2735
Fax: +27 18 392 5775, E-mail: Bornwell.chikulo@nwu.ac.za*

KEYWORDS Basic Social Services. Climate Change. Human Security. Inequality. Service Delivery. Shifting Migration

ABSTRACT In South Africa, climate change mitigation poses significant challenges to the South African Government because it has to juggle the climate change imperatives, with the critical issues of poverty and human security, as well as a host of daunting development challenges inherited from the Apartheid regime. This paper utilizes a qualitative methodology to collect and analyse data on climate change, poverty and human security nexus in South Africa. It outlines the development challenges and development policy responses targeting poverty and human security. The analysis of the causes and effects, as well as the impact of climate change, is followed by a discussion of the delivery of basic social services and the resultant public disaffection leading to violent service protests. A significant proportion of South Africans, especially the poor, have to contend with poverty, a lack of basic social services and unemployment which are being compounded by climate change. The final section of the paper argues that despite significant service delivery milestones, little progress has been made on the central objective of reducing poverty and inequality. Consequently, although a lot has been achieved in terms of the legislation, policies, programmes, and provision of basic services for the poor, the challenge facing the South African Government is how to link the objectives of poverty alleviation policy with those of climate change and human security priorities within a sustainable development framework. The paper recommends that in order to reduce poverty and increase the poor people's capacity to adapt or respond to climate change the government will need to: firstly, mainstream or integrate climate change adaptation with sustainable development policies; and secondly, improve the capacity of local authorities to effectively deliver services to their communities. This paper has been motivated by the explosion of service delivery protests around the country, which have become violent and increasingly xenophobic resulting in attacks on African nationals and foreign-owned small businesses in the townships and informal settlements.