Ecological Justice

Development and Peace
CARITAS CANADA

«Environmental justice... is an urgent need that involves much more than simply protecting the environment. For it is a matter of justice – social, economic and human. « — Pope Leo XIV

We are currently witnessing increasing environmental degradation and climate upheavals with increasingly visible consequences: pollution, contamination of soil and waterways, ecosystem degradation, loss of biodiversity and livelihoods, and rampant deforestation. These impacts affect the world's poorest regions the most, even though, paradoxically, they have contributed the least to these changes.

Main causes of the current situation

Several factors contribute to ecological and climate injustices. Among the main ones are:

- The **predatory extractivist model**, based on the pursuit of profit rather than the common good, which exploits, destroys and pollutes the Earth and communities without restraint
- The **economic model of unlimited growth and planned obsolescence**, which ignores the social, environmental and human costs of production, waste and the destruction of the commons
- **Colonialist-style exploitative practices** that perpetuate discrimination, abuse and violations of fundamental rights
- **Corporate capture**—the takeover of political decision-making by corporations—leading to the **privatization of governance spaces** at the expense of the rights of people and the planet
- The **commodification of the planet and all living things**, which promotes policies that enable the exploitation and degradation of natural resources
- The **proliferation of false "green" solutions** that fail to address root causes, hinder necessary structural changes, and perpetuate the status quo and ecological injustices

Main communities affected

Beyond the rights to food, water and health, ecological justice also upholds the **rights to safety and life**. With this in mind, we work with vulnerable and marginalized communities that are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, including



PEASANT MOVEMENTS
that are defending their rights, agroecology, food sovereignty and agrarian reform



SOCIAL AND LABOR MOVEMENTS
that are fighting for social justice and against false environmental solutions



PEOPLE WHO DEFEND RIGHTS AND TERRITORIES
who are often criminalized or subjected to violence



COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICTS AND EXTRACTIVE MEGAPROJECTS
imposed without consent, as well as refugees, displaced persons and the communities that host them

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

whose ways of life protect biodiversity and their ancestral lands

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS

committed to integral ecology and the defence of Indigenous lands

POPULAR AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA

that raise awareness of environmental issues and provide accessible, unbiased information

WOMEN AND GIRLS

particularly affected by climate change and inequalities in access to resources and rights

Working for social change

Did you know?
Countries and populations do not contribute equally to the climate crisis, but they often bear its impacts unequally. Countries in the Global South, despite being responsible for only a small share of global greenhouse gas emissions, are among those hardest hit by climate change.

We seek to restore a balance between environmental, social and economic considerations to promote a sustainable future for current and future generations.

Our work focuses primarily on:

- **Promoting food sovereignty** based on the right of peoples to define their own food systems in order to foster social change, while protecting the environment, biodiversity and the common good
- **Adopting agroecology**—as a science of resilience and an approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation—to develop sustainable agricultural practices in harmony with ecosystems
- **Supporting smallholder economies and rural communities** that are sensitive to women's rights to combat exploitation, rural exodus and the exploitation of young people by armed groups for the purpose of violence
- **Strengthening energy sovereignty** by opposing the privatization of rivers and the abusive exploitation of natural resources
- **Democratizing governance structures** to promote citizen participation and the inclusion of underrepresented groups in defining their own vision of development

Together, we are acting to:

Reduce disaster risk and raise awareness in communities by strengthening the role of local organizations in civil protection

Raise awareness of the importance of ecosystems in climate regulation and advocate for the protection of biodiversity and Indigenous territories

Support local initiatives like community gardens, waste management, reforestation, protection of land and livelihoods, and women's entrepreneurship

Promote stricter environmental laws to regulate the activities of extractive companies

Reduce risks in humanitarian contexts by greening refugee camps and implementing initiatives to protect natural resources and public health

Develop inclusive environmental governance by supporting farming communities in establishing rules for food sovereignty and environmental protection

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