



## The Innovative Use of Poetry in Climate Change Education for Sustainability in Africa

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### Introduction

Education is an essential element of the global response to climate change. Climate change education is therefore vital in every community in order to prepare us for climate change impacts and to learn how to adapt and mitigate effectively (Anabaraonye.B, 2017). How can climate change education support education systems in Africa so they can respond to the challenges posed by climate change? Climate change is in the news and on the agenda of leaders, researchers and scientists across the globe. But what is it, really? And how are humans changing the Earth's climate? (Nakagawa.M, 2015). Climate change has been described as a statistical variation that persists for an extended period, typically for a decade or longer. It includes shift in the frequency and magnitude of sporadic weather events as well as the slow but continuous rise in global average surface temperature (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC, 2007]). The German advisory council on climate change noted that climate change is a threat already having substantial impact on human beings and the natural eco-system both in developed and developing countries but at varying degrees (German Advisory Council on Global Change [WBGU, 2011]).

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) defines climate change as changes in climate that is usually attributed straightforwardly or not directly to human activity which alters the composition of the overall atmosphere in addition to the usual climate changeability observed



over similar periods.

Climate change is a global problem, and it requires solutions on a global scale. Appropriate and urgent actions must be taken both by individuals, institutions and the government to eradicate pollution and deal with climate change issues in order to ensure a sustainable future for her citizens in Africa (Anabaraonye.B., Okafor J. C, & Eriobu.C.M.,2019).

Many African countries are already confronted with the threat of rapidly accelerating desertification, floods and other hazards and they need to have the means to adapt to, or mitigate climate change. If they are to move further along the path to sustainable development and achieve national goals, they will need to strengthen these capacities. To address climate change, we have to invest in natural climate solutions. Yet a quarter of the world's governments still do not prioritize them. This is despite natural climate solutions being cost-effective and having benefits beyond reducing climate change. Capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub> in our natural systems is essential to addressing climate change. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy will be critical to decreasing emissions in the long term. We need to act quickly if we hope to limit warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius, and natural climate solutions are already widely available to make it happen. There is so much to be done in Africa to ensure that our generation and future generations can benefit from the clean and renewable energy sources and climate change education is very vital in the process.

Poetry with its therapeutic benefits has been discovered as a valuable tool which can be used in climate change education for sustainable development in Africa (Anabaraonye.B,Nji.A.I,Hope.J.,2018). Here's one the recent climate change poems advanced by the Benjy Poetry And Music Global Concepts which further helps to illustrate how poetry can be used in climate change education for sustainability in Africa:

**Poem: Our Climate, Our Health**

Climate change is real  
Its impacts we can feel  
Our climate, our health  
Our health affects our wealth.

Great and untapped wealth we possess  
Nature's gift to be judiciously harnessed



These vast potentials we begin to maximize  
When we choose to live healthy and wise.

Dirtiness will tamper and hinder  
The health of the planet we desire  
Reduce waste, recycle and make some gains  
Save our planet from climate plight and pains.  
Help make the world a better place

Earth's pollution we must efface  
By going green and keeping clean  
With determination, diligence and discipline.

Improve our health systems' resilience capacity  
Adopting the use of eco-friendly technology  
Better choices will lead to a healthy people and planet  
Deal with adverse climate change effects.

Think beyond the erosion and pollution  
Think beyond the flooding and deforestation  
Think change, Take action  
Live within climate adaptation and mitigation.

Climate change is real  
Its impacts we can feel  
Our climate, Our health  
Deal with adverse climate change effects (Anabaraonye.B, 2020).

#### **Case Study: Poem “Our Climate, Our Health” Review By Barr. James Hope**

Benjamin Anabaraonye's poem “Our climate, our health” is a global initiative by the author to enlighten mankind on the health impact of climate change. Every human being is vulnerable to climate change impact on their health; such impact could be physical, mental, emotional and community health. When the climate becomes warmer, it increases the risk of illness and death from extreme heat and poor air quality. According to the World Health Organization(WHO,2018), climate change affects the social



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and environmental determinants of health, such as clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. It has been projected that if measures are not adequately taken, climate change will cause about 250,000.00 deaths per year from 2030 and 2050 as a result of malnutrition, malaria, and diarrhea. Even malaria is said to be strongly influenced by climate change. Furthermore, in 2016, the US Global

Change Research Program came up with a report on the impact of global climate change on human health and one of their findings is that climate change can affect human health in two ways: first, by changing the severity or frequency of health problems that are already affected by climate change or weather factors and secondly, by creating unprecedented or unanticipated health problems or health threats in places or times of the year where they have not previously occurred (Crimmins A,J. & Etail, 2016).

Benjamin enlightened his audience by reminding us that climate change is real and its impact can be felt if allowed to continue. Curbing the incessant dirtiness, pollutions, flooding and deforestation and adopting necessary measures such as reducing waste, recycling (stanza 3 line 3), keeping our environment clean (stanza 4 line 3), adopting the use of eco-friendly technologies (stanza 5 line 3), encouraging climate change adaptation and mitigation (stanza 6 line 4), and dealing with adverse climate change effects according to the author, will bring about a climate change healthy environment.

#### Poetic Techniques in the work

##### 1. Theme

The theme of the poem is “centered on ensuring a climate free healthy environment”.

##### 2. Tone

The tone of the poem is advocative, educating, approving and supporting.

##### 3. Mood

The mood the poem present is, thoughtful and insightful

##### 4. Techniques uses

Use of conjunction “plight and pain (s. 3)”, “adaptation and mitigation (s.6)”, “ flooding and deforestation”



Repetition “our climate, our health”

5. Rhyme

The poem contains seven stanzas of four lines each. The writer maintained a unique end rhyme scheme of AABB. Punctuations used by the writer were coined to give a better understanding of the verse. The writer was expository, yet persuasive and educative in his choice of words.

6. Language: The author used simple language in conveying his message, and can be understood by all persons irrespective of grades. The language is conveyed through the use of 3rd person narrative technique.

Benjamin’s poem has contributed immensely in ensuring a healthier climate change free environment through his show of partnership in raising and creating awareness on climate change, and has created a way of support for the implementation of the public health response to climate change. Knowledge of the impact and health implication of climate change is wealth to nation building, and Benjamin has added a voice to ensuring and bringing attention of policy makers and society to understanding the impact of climate change on human health (Hope.J,2020).

This study closely examines the need for climate change education in the continent of Africa. This study identified poetry as a valuable tool which can be used to educate communities and institutions in Africa on the impacts of climate change and ways to adapt and mitigate effectively for global sustainability. Poetry has a unique way of expressing emotions, ideas and experiences which is so appealing and attractive to the human mind. It turns out that there are some important psychological, therapeutic and developmental benefits of poetry. Poetry helps in language development, creative language skills, writing skills, self-expression, and in the development of natural rhythms. Poetry is important for children, and poetry is good for adults as well. Through poetry, we can express the beauty and wonders of nature, and the need to preserve our globe from environmental pollution and global warming. There is so much to be done both locally and globally to ensure that our generation and future generations can benefit from the climate change education, mitigation and adaptation using the tool of poetry (Anabaraonye.B,Nji.A.I,Hope.J.,2018).



### Recommendation

This study recommends poetry as a valuable and powerful tool to help in climate change education, mitigation and adaptation in Africa. It concluded that our youths in Africa should be encouraged towards innovation and creativity in arts using poetry as a valuable tool for climate change education for sustainable development. It is good to know that climate education, mitigation and adaptation has the capacity to provide employment for the teeming unemployed and underemployed youths in Africa and thus helping to achieve global sustainability.

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