

(67)

**Climate Injustice in Sri Lanka through the Lens of Flooding Events**

**Gunawardena D.H.\*, Wickramasinghe D.**

*Department of Zoology and Environment Sciences, University of Colombo, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka  
\*dilishagunawardena@gmail.com*

**Abstract**

Climate change is an issue of social justice as much as it is an issue of the environment. The impacts of climate change induced disasters are known to be felt disproportionately by those in the low socio-economic status. Against this backdrop, this paper investigates flood disasters in the light of climate injustice and the impacts on the socio-economic rights of affected communities in the Gampaha district. The present study used a cross-sectional study design with qualitative data from key informant interviews and quantitative data from secondary sources and primary data from a questionnaire-based survey in 200 households in the most affected Grama Niladhari Divisions of Wattala and Kelaniya Divisional Secretariat Divisions (DSDs). Receipt of Samurdhi relief was considered to represent the low socio-economic status. The study mobilized the disaster risk assessment factors and the findings revealed that those of low socio-economic status were of a significantly higher risk (Chi squared test,  $p < 0.05$ ) to flooding in terms of proximity to flooding source, structural vulnerability of housing, poor coping up ability, limited risk reduction measures and lack of opportunities to build resilience. Consequently, a significantly higher proportion (Chi squared test,  $p < 0.05$ ) of those of low socio-economic status were found to have faced difficulties in enjoying the aspects of the right to standard of living namely, right to health, water, food and adequate housing. In conclusion, floods have resulted in an injustice to those of low socio-economic status due to their disproportionately higher risk to flooding and the resultant impact on the full enjoyment of their socio-economic rights.

**Keywords:** Climate change, Climate injustice, Floods, Socio-economic rights, Low socio-economic status