Climate Change and Green Job
Perspective of Bangladesh: A primary concept

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Many countries around the world, including Bangladesh, are becoming endangered and afflicted due to climate change. The demand for green jobs is growing all over the world now-a-days to improve the health of common people, especially the labor class, to preserve the environment and lessen the emissions of greenhouse gases. Trade unions of all countries of the world, are working together on this issue. Bangladesh’s trade union is firmly determined to work more strictly on these two very important issues. Climate change and green jobs are not only two very significant issues but also very complex as the process of bargaining is very complex at the international level. That is why we should have a clear notion on this issue.

The condition of atmosphere’s temperature, mist, clouds, windy pressure, rains, hailstorm, snowfall, and humidity of a specific place or area at a specific time – is known as weather. The annual and observation-based account of that specific time and place is known as climate. That means the totaling of one year’s weather is climate.

Climate change is fully obvious now. Frequent floods, typhoons, droughts, abundant rains, changes in temperature, increased rates of salinity at different areas, reduced rate of forest cover, imperiled production in agriculture, dependency on pump water to cultivate food, spring harvest are the most evident impacts. Environmental degradation is also a problem. Different rivers, including Buriganga, Shitalakshya and Balu have been filled with garbage due to various industries’ contaminated waste. These incidents are causing adverse effects on the employees engaged in different professions like – fisheries, agriculture and construction sectors. It is very important to remember that about 60 per cent of our population is dependent on agriculture while more than one crore fulltime and part time labors are engaged in fisheries sector. So there is no doubt that labors are the most affected people due to climate change. Forest labourers are unemployment at present as the forest areas are now almost destroyed. These indicators prove that climate change is keeping unbelievable negative impacts on labors’ lives and livelihoods. Not only this, for climate change, we are going to face more dangerous effects. The labors and the poor will be debilitated by these effects much as usual.

The height of sea level is rising due to increase of weather. For that reason, within 2050, large areas of Bangladesh, Maldives, Egypt, Vietnam, and Kiribati Island and most of the areas of London, Mumbai, Tokyo and New York cities will be submerged by water. Many fertile lands will become deserts. Nature of clouds, rains, wind flows and sea flows will be changed. Diseases will increase and crisis of water and food will deepen. If the sea level increases by a meter, one-third of Bangladesh’s land areas will be underwater which will make about four to five crores of our people landless and refugees. Then the population of hard core poor will be increased at a geometrical rate and the 90 per cent of the country’s population will be working labors and their families who will be engaged in both formal and informal sectors. These things make climate change and environmental degradation important issues to labor organizations which are responsible to save the interest and
rights of labors. This issue is considered as one of the most important activities of the trade unions and demands of the labors. By all means, climate change is an important trade union issue.

Naturally a question raised is why is this climate change is happening? Who are responsible for this happening and what is the solution of this problem? We will discuss it briefly. England’s industrial revolution in 1760 made human beings work in industry and detached them from nature. The invention of steam engine and later other inventions like electricity, telephone and coal hasten the expansion of consumer society. The consumerism and luxurious lifestyle increased the use of fossil fuels, fasten the forest exhausted process and brought changes to land usage.

Before the industrial revolution, the rate of carbon dioxide was 280 Parts Per Million in the world. At present this rate has raised to 430 PPM and it will reach to 800 PPM at this century’s last decade if this increasing tendency goes on. The world’s temperature started to increase since 1970 for this increasing tendency of PPM rate and at present our plant’s average temperature increased 0.60 per cent. The average temperature will increase two degrees at the end of this century if the rate goes on. So what is the situation when the temperature raises only 0.60 per cent? Currently there is continuous flood, cyclone, tornado and windstorm in the world. Different health problems, diseases and loss crops are increasing by an alarming rate. Many formal and non-formal sectors were compelled to close which resulted in unemployment of crores of people. At present, even, the unemployment rate is 11 per cent in the United States of America. This situation proved that labourers are also the most effected people in USA. So AFL-CIO has been active to protect the employment. It is better to say that one of the priorities of USA, Australia, Japan and European Union countries is now climate change and green jobs.

We know that, most of the sun’s heats came back to the world and goes back from the world. This process is being obstructed by green house gas which is created by burning mainly fossil fuels (like petrol, diesel, coal and natural gases). In the cold prone countries, trees have been planted by increasing heat in the green houses made of glasses. The entire world is becoming as a green house due to temperature rise. The trees release oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide while human beings release Carbon dioxide and absorb Oxygen. We, all though, are exhausting forest areas still.

The most carbon dioxide emitting country in the world is the USA which is about 25 per cent.. At present China, Russia, India and Brazil are also emitting huge Carbon dioxide. These countries are responsible to emit about 90 per cent of green house gases (gases like Carbon dioxide and methane) all over the world. The countries, which had signed into the Kiyoto Protocol, did not keep their promises to lessen the emission of these gases.

It is true that, the international community had started activities on this issue and since then they were continuously organizing different meetings, conferences, workshops and seminars. The general council of the United Nations formed the INC to address the issue of climate change. In 1992, the Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCI) formed. In 1995 the meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) had taken place at Berlin. At the third meeting of the COP, in December 1997 at Kyoto city in Japan, the famous Kyoto Protocol had been accepted. The developed countries took an oath to reduce the emissions of green house gas by five per cent. The 13th session was held at Bali in Indonesia. In this
sequence, conferences were held at Copenhagen in 2009, at Mexico in 2010 and at South Africa in 2011 and continuous conferences and other activities are ongoing.

Developing countries including Bangladesh are producing only two per cent of green house gas but these countries are the worst victim of Carbon. In this circumstance, many world leaders are demanding assurance of Climate Justice.

Nobel winner economist professor Joseph Stigligh gave importance on impose Carbon Tax to limit the global warming.

In 2009, as a panel discussant at the Global Editors Forum, the forest and environment ministry of Bangladesh said that Bangladesh was responsible to produce only two tones of Carbon and the developed countries were producing 15 to 20 tonnes of Carbon. Bangladesh was the most affected country though she emitted in the lowest rate. In the perspective of this unfortunate situation the minister said ‘currently our country is in the cross fire of climate change. So it is easily estimated that all people including labors are victim of climate change at present.’

**Green Job:**

‘Green Jobs have been defined as those Jobs which “reduce the environment impact of enterprises and economic sectors, ultimately to level that are sustainable, while also meeting the standards of decent work. They use efficient strategies to help cut the consumption of energy, raw materials and water to de-carbonize the economy avoid altogether waste and pollution, thus protecting and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity,’ ILO/ UNEP.

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) thinks that more strong social quality should be added with this definition. ‘A green job should be one which reduces environmental impacts of enterprise and economic sectors, while providing decent working and living condition to those involved in production and ensuring workers and labour rights are respected.’

Summary of these two definitions are almost the same. These definitions have some same traits like:

- Green Job reduces negative impacts on environment from every institution and financial sectors.
- It strictly maintains the quality of decent works.
- It stops the emission of green house.
- It gives the assurance of providing decent works and livelihoods to the working labors.
- It ensures all kinds of labor rights at work place.
  1) It makes the environment, working places and economy Carbon-free and takes working method to reduce the usage of electricity, water and raw materials to be free from waste and pollution.
  2) Green Job will make the way easier to raise labors’ opinions and discussion at work places.
  3) And lastly, it will secure ecosystem and biodiversity.

Most of you are aware that consumers all over the world are now demanding greener products and services. Organic vegetables in vegetables markets and nurtured hens, hens’ eggs and other foods from villages are becoming popular day by day at present in countries like USA, Japan and
European countries. Today’s market demand is for green products. So slowly this movement is becoming strong in different countries. At present the existing world economic system is becoming unacceptable. Failure of today’s capitalist economy based on greed, lust and consumerism along with frequent global recession has made it inevitable for a new economic order. In this connection, let me remind the reader of the International Labor Organization’s different issues including fair globalization, fundamental rights at work place and decent job.

Gradually, the whole world is attracting to green jobs. There were also significant discussions on what kind of equipment and skilled labors would be needed for industries which would start green jobs. Already, the developed countries have started to create green jobs.

Different countries’ governments and owners are investing billions of dollars in the green sectors to meet people’s demand, reduce negative impact on environment and labors and employees’ justified demands. But still, theses investments are insufficient in compare to the necessity.

A question rises that all green jobs have to be decent. Global union federations including International Trade Union Confederation showed different countries’ green jobs’ examples and said that the workers in these countries did not get the right to form trade union. There were also discriminations based on salary and gender. This claim’s authenticity also found in Bangladesh. Grameen Shakti is its best example. Solar Technology is green jobs. It is a sector under green economy. But it is a mater of sorrow that the employees and workers do not have the right to organize trade union in Grameen Shakti. For that reason ITUC and Global union federation’s clear statement is that green job must be decent job. The director general of ILO, Juan Somavia says, ‘Green growth can become a strong driver for sustainable development if green jobs are also decent jobs and if there is a just transition for enterprises and workers. A decent work approach includes the promotion of green enterprises and green jobs.’

Juan Somavia very specifically mentioned three very important issues. He said if green job was a decent job it would be a driving force to achieve sustainable development. He supported the ITUC’s just transition and said that decent job would surely encourage green jobs and green institutions. ITUC’s just transition is a widely known issue in the world. This issue is a must discuss issue at any seminar, meeting and conference on green job and climate change. Just transition is the most discussed subject in global forum. The next paragraph is dedicated to just transition.

The present development model which is initiated by World Bank and International Monetary Fund which is warmly appreciated by different countries like USA but in reality it is socially inappropriate and not sustainable, environmental-friendly and of course unacceptable. The change will be huge and widely spread. It is a great challenge that how the workers, their families and the society will take these changes for welfare. We have to plan right now that the trade unions and workers should discuss and give opinions at workplace to national issues, adequate training on green jobs to enhance capability, necessary innovation policy should be taken, necessary researches, financial support for the victimized workers and employees, everyone should be assisted by advices and training of trade unions and owners, a national committee comprise of all organizations concerned to take long-term planning and decision for confronting climate change and a necessary and authentic transition package for workers and employees in the changing or transformation
process of less-carbon or carbon-less economy that is a feasible transition package that transition clearly states that change.

Opinions should be taken from the workers and employees based on necessity and that economic plan should be taken which will be appropriate as per necessary. As example – farmers are more interested to cultivate mango than paddy in the less fertile lands of the northern areas of Bangladesh. But it will be not right to force these farmers to cultivate paddy though there will more employment for day-workers because of cultivation of paddy. There will be a long-term negative impact if any project has been implemented without taking opinions from the locals and a chaos will be existed in that society which will hinder the sustainable development. actually, selecting the trend of food and agriculture based on the locals’ advices, is the best way.

Just transition says, the developed world should emit more pollution and pay more for the adaptation process to attain social justice and sustainable development. The developed technologies should be given to the least developed countries.

Participation of all members of a society should be ensured through participatory method in adaptation and mitigation.

Enough capital should be invested in economy to create green and decent jobs and the old industries should be transformed in green industries.

Necessary resources should be invested to assist for a justified change of all economic activities.

There should be measures for education and training to enhance the workers’ ability in authentic and resilient technology on climate change.

The new custom, the way of creation, should be encouraged for the sustainable use of technology and practical and organizational change.

Just transition is a very strong weapon for trade union which is continuously encouraging people to form sustainable society, green economics, decent work and green job for securing our livelihoods.

**Attachment of trade union:**
Another important issue has been raised about green job. The change of climate and environment and attempt to create green job have made different countries specially Bangladesh to stand in front of different challenges. When the formal and non-formal sectors will start their activities for less-carbon economy or carbon-less economy, then the jobs and social safety of working workers and employees could be at stake. Remembering this matter, trade unions of different countries including Bangladesh are taking part in national and international programs on climate change, green job and decent job. For that reason, ITUC presented just transition in front the global forum and was working to show it in every possible way. The ITUC and its all member organizations of workers are working together as the jobs of the workers will not cut and new jobs for workers. Trade unions are saying that the fast growing Renewable NGO sector is creating a huge prospectus new economy and market for new employment. Many workers will be get employed in this sector and the workers organizations are active to fulfill their responsibility to help the workers, who will be in front of challenges like climate change due to being employed in the Renewable NGO sector and who will
go for the less-carbon economy, to increase their ability and ensure their social security. The workers organizations are also communicating with the government, owners, local and foreign organizations on this matter and giving the workers necessary education and training to secure their jobs. Many international organizations like - ILO, ITUC and WETU have expanded their works worldwide to work for the workers’ organizations which results the government and owners’ agreement with the trade unions in different countries. As example – construction workers’ union biogas, in Argentina, has initiated special measures to provide training and certificates to the workers on work for solar power and water electricity. The Spanish government, trade union and financial institutions and industries have organized a tri-party social dialogue, based on Kiyoto Protocol, to lessen the possible negative impact of climate change.

**The duties of Bangladeshi trade unions:**

We all know that the country’s and the whole world’s long-term safety is depending on a secured and healthy eco-system. We are observing that hundreds of harmful chemical products including various fossil fuels are being used in institutionalized and non-institutionalized sectors’ different industries, workshops and agricultural management. These products are very dangerous for both environment and human health which create industrial waste and green house gas. Besides, these products also dangerous for public heath as these cause physical breakdown of the workers and make them lame.

It is inevitably established in the national and international levels that due to climate change extremely averse, negative and obvious impacts are influencing the earnings, employments, social security, environment of working places and residences and day by day lives of the workers and employees irrespective of all working women and men.

These impacts’ influences are very dangerous in Bangladesh. Different respiration related diseases like – asthma and allergy are spreading among the workers who are engaged in the agricultural, fisheries, transport and riverside industries. Various water-borne diseases are prevailing in an alarming rate in different industrial areas. About 50 thousands of people became unemployed due to Aila. Bangladeshi trade unions are taking climate change and green job as two important trade union issues and participating in different awareness programs with ILO, BILS and ITUC to get rid of these problems. Last year ILO organized four workshops for the workers. This year the organization is also extend its hand to assist the workers while the trade unions should fulfill their own responsibilities.

1) The national workers’ federations of Bangladesh supported the United Nations’ framework convention on climate change to prevent global warming. This support should be more strengthened.

2) The workers and employees’ united council should keep important and strong roles to ensure the workers’ opinion and participations in all the stages of process to reduce the emission rate of green house gas, adapt, establish a less-carbon economy and bring necessary changes in infrastructures in the interest to continue decent works and lifestyle.
3) The trade union should take just transition as a weapon and based on this weapon they should also formulate a complete program framework to aware workers immediately. They should also discuss with the government, owners and all peoples concerned.

4) The trade unions should lobby, even create pressure, with the government to take their opinions in the trainings for the worker on all subjects like climate change and conservation of environment and programs for creating forest areas to develop the environment.

5) The trade unions should lobby with the government to amend the Bangladesh climate change strategy and action plan 2009 and the national adaptation plan. They should also lobby with the government to add decent work, green job, just transition and the labor and employment ministry, workers and owners as stakeholders in this plan and strategy’s all stages including implementation process.

6) The government should take projects to help the workers to get fund from the funds on climate change including the climate change trust fund and allocate about 20 per cent budget for the projects for workers. SKOP should also take appropriate measures while there is also need for lobbying with the government and even creating pressure on it.

7) The workers and employees united council should be strongly urged the government to engage the forest and environment workers union with the activities like stop cutting of trees and construction of houses and industries on fertile land, secure the forest areas, invest more in the forestation program and conservation of forest. The government should take a policy that forestation is the main safe armor and ensure more programs for forestation.

8) The trade unions should ensure that green jobs will be decent jobs.

9) Lobbying and pressure should be created on the government and owners to form green jobs. As example, about 18 lakhs green jobs could be created only in tourism sector in Bangladesh.

10) The slogan ‘Green the work’ should be made popular among the workers and employees.

11) The trade unions should take necessary measures to compel the owners to set up water treatment plants at all industries.

12) It should be proved to the government and owners that green job and development are intensely related with each other. This relationship is better for the workers’ heath and the environment in the less-carbon economy and will create new jobs. As example:

   a) Renewable energy: 2.3 millions jobs
   b) Industries related to the environment: 5.3 millions jobs
   c) Solar thermal: six millions jobs
   d) Ethanol: five millions jobs etc.
13) The responsibility of the government and owners should be ensured to protect the employment and social security of the workers and employees who are working in the transferred sectors. If necessary the government has to provide money from the adaptation fund which formed by the aid from foreign countries. The trade union should ensure the assistance after discussing with the appropriate government authorities.

14) The high level committee should be formed by the central leaders of the trade union to create more pressure on the government to make green jobs. The committee members will trying to get support from the owners, different social powers and peoples of all strata and make green job as a popular issue.

15) Trade union, it self and with the help of different international organizations including ILO and ITUC, which will make the workers aware through educational programs, seminars and workshops.

16) Trade union’s all educational and training programs will include the climate change and green job issues.

17) All the basic unions should be made aware, especially which are responsible to produce green house gas and contaminated waste and use dangerous chemicals, as they will make agreement with the company to emit less green house gas.

18) The measures should be taken to recognize the conflicting clauses in these acts by making a comparable analysis between the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 and the Bangladesh Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2010. Then these conflicting causes should be presented in front of the ministry concerned to amend these acts.

19) The government and owners should share their opinions to provide the workers education and training for gaining ability for green jobs right now. It should also be ensured to invest huge money in this sector. A tri-party committee should form on this purpose and representatives of the workers organizations should also be included in that committee.

20) There should be a central occupational institutional framework with garments structure which will work continuously to solve the problems. Workers’ representatives should be included in this framework.

21) The government should be urged to transform the ship breaking, construction, dyeing, chemical, leather and agriculture sectors as environment friendly sectors as soon as possible.

22) The trade union works with the International Labor Organization, ILO, ITUC, World Health Organization, Untied Nations Environment Programme and Untied Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to secure the environment and workplaces. Communication with these international organizations should be kept continued and assistance and cooperation of these organizations should also be taken.
23) Sometimes there should be high profile events which will persuade the common people, the government and the owners to take any decision on the climate change and green job. These high profile events will assist the workers and trade union as a medium to create climate change and green job.

24) The union owners should give enough compensation to the workers who would get wounded at any area.

25) Besides these, some programs should also be taken in basic union level:

A) Green job policy should be taken based on the local perspective. Appropriate and necessary policy and strategy should also be taken to attain this policy.

B) Immediate programs should be taken to begin the discussion among the workers on environment disaster, climate change and necessity of green job.

C) Agreements on environment and green job will be signed in the company-level joint bargaining from now.

D) Definite propaganda should be initiated to make the green job and environment issues popular in company-level.

E) Measures should be taken to initiate company-level trainings to increase awareness and ability.

F) When the central leaders will go for company-level meetings they should of course present their speeches on environment, climate and green jobs or above all on decent work in front of the workers and employees and encourage them to take suitable activities.

26) At last, the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad and National Coordination Committee on Workers’ Education will form a central task force to take and implement an overall work plan to maintain propaganda on climate change and green job and programs, measure for educational training, keep communication with the international organizations like ILO and take all of their assistance and keep communication with the government and all social forces also. The head of the task force will be a national federation’s president or general secretary who will coordinate and monitor this force’s all works and be accountable to the trade unions for his/her works.

(Translated By Shahin Akhter)