



# NDYS in Action, Newsletter

Natural Disaster Youth Summit Monthly News

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## The VOICE of YOUTH is NEEDED!

Editor: Daniel Paz,  
Salta, Argentina



### Topics

**Climate Change and disaster reduction**

Floods caused many problems in Afghanistan.

## Floods caused many problems in Afghanistan

Flash floods have killed over 80 people, wounded 240 and damaged more than 5,000 houses in 12 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces over the past 18 days, the Afghanistan National Disasters Management Authority said. The floods have also killed livestock and ruined fields of crops.

Rapid assessment teams comprising staff from UN agencies, NGOs and government bodies are in the process of identifying needs in the affected provinces, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a situation report on 6 May.



Flash floods are a terrible problem in many cities nowadays.

Officials in the most affected provinces of Jozjan, Bamiyan and Baghlan said shelter, food and drinking water were among the top needs.

Natural disasters - mostly floods, droughts, earthquakes and avalanches - affect over 400,000 people in the country every year, according to OCHA.

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### Topics

**Climate Change and disaster reduction**

NEW technologies against climate change.

## New technologies against climate change

Technological innovation is key to helping African farmers cope with the increasing challenges posed by climate change, say specialists. "Temperatures have increased and the danger is that agriculture is the backbone of [Africa's] economies," said Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, chief executive officer of the South-African based Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN). "The increase in temperatures means we have less water in some places and we are already a drought-prone region."

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“The technologies that we have on the shelf... like the seeds, may not be compatible with the increased temperatures,” she added. “Malawi recorded world renowned success in terms of food security because we have experienced a fairly stable climate regime over the last 100 years. The technologies that were there [such as] the hybrid seeds... could be taken in, planted. As long they were accessible to the farmers, we could then register increases in yields”. “But the challenge we face now is that there will be new diseases, new vectors and pests that we have not known or seen before .... All these challenges are being superimposed on a system that has not been food-secure,” she also said.

Africa spends at least US\$19 billion on food imports annually yet it has the capacity to be the global breadbasket, she said. “Most of our farmers are smallholders and they are in the business of subsidizing the urban population [but] for as long as we are not creating an environment where they can increase their income and step out of poverty, we will always have [more] poor people yet we have the potential to be food-secure.”

About one billion people worldwide were food insecure in 2009, according to estimates, with the food price crisis hitting millions. The UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) Executive Director, Achim Steiner, told the conference, organized by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the Earth System Science Partnership, that the response to the crisis was similar to the cause of the problem. “We are reducing soil fertility, continuing to bank on water, increasing reliance on fertilizer... the emphasis cannot just be this both from an environmental and cost basis,” he said.

“We need to rethink agriculture as a platform from which the world will learn to ensure that 50 years from now we can produce food to feed nine billion,” he said. “Clearly increasing yields is paramount, but we cannot look at the development of agriculture driven by the horizontal approach; slash-burn, moving to new frontiers ... this paradigm is deceptive. You only have so much for horizontal expansion.”

He proposed the “vertical expansion of agriculture” through methods such as plant breeding with perennial food crops, and improved farm management practices to increase soil fertility and moisture retention. Perennial crops are less disruptive to the soil structure as there is less tilling and they help trap nutrients.

“Farming in the future will not just be about food production but other services rendered captured in an economic model. If we can prove that a certain farming system is better at reducing carbon emissions, what is there to stop farmers from being paid for their efforts five to 10 years from now?” Steiner posited. “By all means let us have a green revolution but let us give it a capital 'G' this time.”

India saw food production rise from about 65 million tonnes in the 1960s to 230 million tonnes in 2008 due to higher yielding varieties, said Pramod Aggarwal of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. But large yield gaps remain, with India accounting for 25 and 40 percent of the world's hungry and malnourished women and children, respectively.

Aggarwal said improved crop, pest and risk management as well as changes in sowing dates, improved crop varieties; irrigation and fertilizer efficiency could further mitigate climate effects while increasing production.

William Clark, professor of international science and public policy at Harvard University, called for more field-based experimentation. “The world is changing in timescales faster than programmes and feedback. There is a need for safe spaces [for researchers] that encourage innovation,” Clark said.

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“We need to acknowledge that work like this will be inefficient. We don’t have the map; we are inventing it as we go along... we should agree on a target rate of failure in R&D [research and development].”

He added that research ownership was crucial. “What research we can do reflects the power structure. When knowledge influences decisions, knowledge is power. Who sets the research agenda, who says what evidence counts, whose interests are science programmes actually and appearing to serve? Those who feel that their interests have not been taken into research are unlikely to accept the findings ...”

“We are at a stage where we need to learn quickly. Climate adaptation is a classic case of learning by doing,” Saleemul Huq, a senior fellow at the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), said. “We used to think of adaptation as localized. We are now thinking in-situ in the short term. Planned migration due to rising sea levels, where people may move further inland, may have to be considered in the long term. [We] need a new way although we don’t know what this new way is.”

He also urged climate and agriculture researchers to link up with universities to train practitioners. “Climate change is a vast area, no one can deal with it alone,” he said.

At present, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development under its Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme has prioritized agriculture in four themes: sustainable land and water use, markets and infrastructure, food security, research and technology adoption, with countries expected to commit at least 10 percent of national budgets to agriculture.

FANRPAN’s Sibanda said: “We are excited by the new commitment [to agriculture] but time will tell whether there will be[an] impact and the impact will be to reduce the number of people going to bed hungry.”

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### Topics

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Flash floods displaced thousands in Somalia.

## Flash floods displaced thousands in Somalia

Flooding and fear of renewed clashes in Somalia's south-central region of Hiiraan have displaced thousands of families in and around Beletweyne, the regional capital, sources communicated.

Hamud Ali Jiliow, a local elder, said many people had fled their homes after the Shabelle River burst its banks this week and flooded parts of the town, which is 350km northwest of Mogadishu.

"So far, we estimate that 1,500 families [9,000 people] in Hawo Tako district have left their homes due to the floods in the past 48 hours," said Jiliow.

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"So far, we estimate that 1,500 families [9,000 people] in Hawo Tako district have left their homes due to the floods in the past 48 hours," said Jiliow. He said Hawo Tako, in the east, was the largest populated area of Beletweyne.

Most of the displaced had left for unaffected areas. "Many are staying with other families on higher ground," Jiliow added. He also said at least 1,000 families were marooned in their homes. "We are using canoes to reach them".

He said the only help people were getting "was from one another". "The river level was still rising, heightening fears of more flooding".

Many parts of Somalia are experiencing the Gu long rains (April to June) with average rainfall in the Hiiraan region.

However, downpours in neighbouring Ethiopia have caused the rivers downstream in Somalia to swell, leading to flooding, according to the Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM) of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

"[Shabelle] River levels have increased drastically over the last few days; there is therefore a likelihood of high risk of flooding in the lower reaches of Shabelle in the coming week," SWALIM reported, adding that "this may however be worsened by weak river embankments along the Shabelle River".

Meanwhile, fears of major clashes in Beletweyne have contributed to a "quiet exodus" from the town, according to sources.

A resident, who requested anonymity, said that some residents of Hawo Tako and Kooshin districts, to the east of the town (and close to the lines separating pro-government forces and Islamist insurgents that control the town), were leaving their homes. "They are worried and afraid that they may get caught in the crossfire once again," he said. He said forces of the Islamist insurgent group, Hisbul Islam, which controls the town, were not allowing people to move out.

"They don't want the neighbourhoods to be emptied and allow the government forces a foothold, so they are telling people to stay put," the resident added. "The pro-government forces were about 20km away from the town". "Everybody is waiting for the fighting to start any day," the resident said. "Only the heavy rains have saved us so far but as soon as the rains subside there will be clashes, no question about it."

Beletweyne has changed hands between government forces and insurgents about four times since 2009.



Comments: Human kind is always managed to deal with many things, in this case, climate change. Many things may be changed in the dealing process, even the unimaginable things. Agriculture is on the table now. Congratulations for the efforts and new ideas. May efforts and hard work can lead us to a better situation.



*"Communication saves lives!"*

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