



NDYS in Action, Newsletter

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The VOICE of YOUTH is NEEDED!

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Topics

Climate Change and disaster reduction

Give a glimpse to some topics of Copenhagen 2009.

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The humanitarian aid community will not only be keeping tabs on the conversations about "who will cut how much [greenhouse gas emissions]" at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP15), but will also have their antennae tuned to talks on issues already affecting their constituencies. The aim of the two-week meeting from 7 Dec to 18 Dec 2009 is to draw up a deal on cutting harmful emissions.

UN agencies like the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the impact of climate change-related events was already unfolding and the humanitarian community had to focus beyond Copenhagen.



Aid workers affront more frequent natural disasters.

The aid agencies are not party to the negotiations, but hope to inform - and perhaps influence - the process by highlighting in a series of presentations on the sidelines of the conference what some of the communities they work with are already experiencing. They are also hoping to find answers to some sticky questions that will enable them to help poor communities cope with a changing climate.

Here is a guide to what the humanitarian will be watching for in Copenhagen:

*** How much money will be available to help communities adapt to an increasingly erratic climate?**

Top of everyone's list is money for adaptation to help build communities' resilience, and various cost estimates for climate change adaptation have been put forward in the past few years. The World Bank, which produces one of the most authoritative, recently announced that it would take between US\$75 billion and \$100 billion a year from 2010 to 2050, and this figure is expected to be bandied around in Copenhagen.

Ilana Solomon, a policy advisor at aid agency Action Aid USA, reckoned the World Bank's projected figures were an "underestimate", as they did not take into account community-based adaptation strategies.



Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, a scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO) reminded people not to forget funding for services like agriculture, water supply, sanitation, and disease early warning systems, which not only protect and save lives but reduce vulnerability to climate change in the future.

Aid agencies are hoping for a multi-sectoral approach; the text on adaptation so far on the table is wide-ranging, calling for the minimizing of threats to "life, human health, livelihoods, food security, assets, amenities, ecosystems and sustainable development".

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) - the financial mechanism of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - manages two special funds: the Least Developed Countries Fund, and the Special Climate Change Fund, which both disburse money for adaptation projects.

GEF will also operate the new Adaptation Fund, which will raise money from a levy of about two percent on credits generated by the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), set up under the Kyoto Protocol.

The mechanism allows industrialized countries to earn and trade emission credits by implementing projects in developed countries or developing ones, and then to put these credits towards meeting their greenhouse gas emission targets.

But the money expected to be raised through this mechanism will not be enough, which is why countries have been exploring other options. "There are various proposals for how to raise the money, but so far few pledges of cash," said Mike Shanahan of the UK-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

***How will money be channelled to affected countries or communities?**

Balgis Elasha, one of the authors of a report on adaptation by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a global scientific body, said she hoped for a commitment to increased funding for adaptation, but also wanted a funding mechanism that would help affected countries access the money easily.

Poor countries want the UNFCCC to have control over whichever funding mechanism is approved; they claim that so far disbursements have been slow and the process for approval very complex. ActionAid's Solomon said vulnerable countries had "lost their faith" in GEF's ability to manage climate finance, and the debate on the amount of finance on the table "directly relates to the conversation" on "defining vulnerability".

***How do you define who is most vulnerable to climate change?**

Finding a scale to determine how vulnerable developing countries are to climate change - which will help decide the fair allocation of adaptation funds - is the subject of a hot debate. Solomon said the "scarce resources" available for adaptation had prompted the need to define who was most vulnerable.

In fact, a GEF representative first raised the issue at an earlier round of climate change talks in Bonn, Germany, in June 2009, saying the facility was examining a possible vulnerability index to distribute resources equitably.



Experts said that establishing the level of vulnerability would be very complicated, as various indices could be used. In its Fourth Assessment Report the IPCC said the vulnerability of a society to climate change was influenced by its development path, physical exposures, distribution of resources, prior stresses, and social and government institutions. "All societies have inherent abilities to deal with certain variations in climate, yet adaptive capacities are unevenly distributed, both across countries and within societies," the IPCC report pointed out. Essentially, a formula that could establish a country's capacity to adapt to climate change would have to be found.

ActionAid's Solomon said that with discussions on vulnerability limited to countries, vulnerable populations such as women, who should be specifically targeted for adaptation resources, could be overlooked.

***What about the rights of people displaced by increasing and more intense natural disasters?**

Alina Narusova, migration policy specialist at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), noted that although the negotiating text referred to migration and displacement, "it depends on whether it will still be there by the time COP15 [the Copenhagen meeting] starts." NGOs such as hers are organizing side events to ensure the issue stays top-of-mind.

Long said her NGO was looking for some recognition and protection of the rights of people forced to migrate due to climate change, and a mechanism to address the displacement of large numbers of climate "refugees must be incorporated into adaptation funding".

In 2008 climate-related natural disasters like droughts, hurricanes and floods forced 20 million people out of their homes - many more than the 4.6 million displaced by conflicts - according to a recent joint study by OCHA and the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

***Will food security and agriculture get their due?**

Agriculture is the main source of food and income for half the world's population; it is the activity most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, but is also a major source of dangerous greenhouse gas emissions.

About 14 percent of annual greenhouse gas emissions, mostly carbon dioxide, come from agriculture; around 74 percent of total agricultural emissions originate in developing countries.

"The question is the extent to which food security, agriculture and poverty alleviation are mentioned [in the final text]," said Gerald Nelson, a senior researcher at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), a US-based think-tank that has been trying to make the case for agriculture.

A section on agriculture in the negotiating text calls for the development of efficient and productive agricultural systems that not only reduce emissions but also help the activity adapt to climate change; it also calls on the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to prepare a work programme to help achieve this.

IFPRI's Nelson said he would watch for "whether there will be a SBSTA work programme on agriculture and, if so, what it will include". He also wanted to see whether payments to developing country farmers for sequestering carbon in the soil would be allowed, and what mechanisms might be used.

***Is anyone paying attention to protecting people's health?**

"Health was named as a priority" in the original negotiating text, "but it is sometimes forgotten," said WHO's Campbell-Lendrum. Countries - mostly in the developing world - could be spending anywhere from \$6 billion to \$18 billion a year by 2030 to manage additional costs to health services as a result of climate change, he noted.

This figure was based on an assessment by WHO, which looked at studies on the impact of climate-sensitive illnesses like diarrhoeal disease - the second leading infectious cause of childhood mortality - and accounted for around 1.8 million deaths each year.



Comments: This is worth to read what is going to be going around in many tables in the meeting. How interesting is to know how powerful are some decisions and the changes they bring. I can only cross my fingers hoping a satisfactory resolution in which maybe all the most important points to evaluate could be solved in order to reach new goals.

Lets wait for the results..



"Communication saves lives!"

■ **For more information please contact** ■

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