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Ecosystems Vital to Climate Adaptation



By: CBD Secretariat

The Copenhagen Climate Summit will enter history as the most important conference since the Second World War. It has taken place a couple of days before the start the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity, and has therefore provided a unique opportunity to reflect on the essential role of biodiversity in our adaptation strategies to climate change. On the one hand, climate change presents a near-unprecedented threat to the innumerable ecosystems that humans depend on for their health and wellbeing. On the other, healthy ecosystems can provide natural buffers to the impacts of climate change, especially extreme weather events. Improving the health of ecosystems is therefore an important way of adapting to climate change while simultaneously yielding multiple environmental, economic and social benefits.

"The Choices in Your Hands" by Paula Clayton (Cool Globes) Creative Commons License

Integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services into an overall climate change adaptation strategy is called ecosystem-based adaptation. There are many potential examples of this approach in action. The sustainable management of river basins, aquifers, flood plains and their associated vegetation can improve water storage and flood regulation. Restoration of coastal habitats such as mangroves can protect against storm surges, coastal erosion and flooding. The sustainable management of grasslands and rangelands can reduce soil erosion and desertification and enhance pastoral livelihoods. Indigenous knowledge can be used to maintain the genetic diversity of crops and livestock, conserving diverse agricultural landscapes and securing food provisioning.

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under changing local climatic conditions. More generally, establishing and effectively managing protected areas can ensure the continued delivery of ecosystem services that increase resilience to climate change.

Several practical reasons make ecosystem-based approaches to biodiversity conservation and management a particularly effective method of adapting to climate change. First, they can be applied at regional, national and local levels, at both project and programmatic levels, and benefits can be realized over short and long time scales. Second, they may be more cost-effective and more accessible to rural or poor communities than measures based on hard infrastructure and engineering. And third, they can integrate and maintain traditional and local knowledge and cultural values. These reasons become doubly compelling given the links between poverty and the loss of ecosystem services and biodiversity: environmental degradation and biodiversity loss strongly threaten the achievement of several Millennium Development Goals, as discussed in the recent report for national and international policymakers of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) initiative.

The prospect of future, irreversible climate change, coupled with the great potential of ecosystem-based adaptation, add to the urgency of achieving the objectives of the Conven-

tion on Biological Diversity (CBD): 1) the conservation of biological diversity; 2) the sustainable use of its components; and 3) the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Overall, maintaining and restoring biodiversity in ecosystems is an essential "insurance policy" to safeguard against the impacts of climate change. Acting now to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and to develop and implement ecosystem-based adaptation techniques should therefore be a top priority of the international community. Simply put,

The prospect of future, irreversible climate change, coupled with the great potential of ecosystem-based adaptation, add to the urgency of achieving the objectives of the CBD.

biodiversity might very well be our best first line of response to the impacts of climate change.

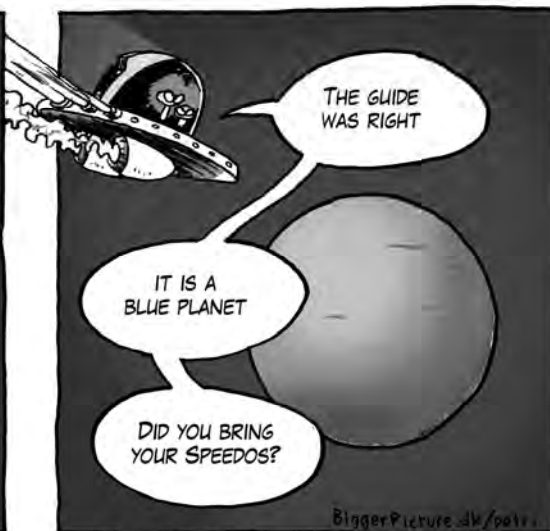
The CBD looks forward to increased collaboration in the future between the Rio Conventions and all sectors of society. The 2010 International Year of Biodiversity in particular will provide a unique opportunity to link biodiversity and climate change adaptation in the international consciousness – and

nowhere more so than at the 65th General Assembly of the United Nations in September, where a high-level segment on biodiversity with the participation of heads of state and government will be convened for the first time ever. As the slogan of the International Year reminds us: "Biodiversity is life. Biodiversity is our life." Let us take the next 12 months to spread the message. ❖



The World of Work pavilion will for the third day in a row present debates and seminars between trade unions and researchers. Visit the LO-Denmark building (on the COP15 bus route) and participate in the debate. See full programme at: <http://climate.ituc-csi.org>

Doing nothing, can do a lot



Climate Change, Beyond the Politicians

**By: Saleemul Huq,
IIED Climate Change Group**

I have been working on climate change for many years, first as a researcher in my native Bangladesh and later as head of the climate change group at the International Institute for Environment and Development, and as a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

I have seen first-hand the threats climate change poses in places such as the drylands of Africa, the mountains of the Himalayas and the vast low-lying deltas of Asia. I have observed years of inaction at UN climate change summits that have failed to deliver the response needed because negotiators have chosen to protect narrow national and economic interests instead of rising to the challenge of protecting future generations.

I have jostled verbally with climate change deniers who have strong links to polluting industries and who have never set foot in the vulnerable villages and urban communities where climate change is already having impacts. If they were to do so, they would realise the damage their ideology does to the people who have contributed least to this global threat.

And, now in Copenhagen in December 2009, I believe we have reached a tipping point. I truly believe that Copenhagen will be remembered in years to come, not for what happens on 18 December when world leaders meet here, but for what just happened on 12 December when tens of thousands of people took the streets to call for strong, ambitious action on climate change.

This marked the day that people from all walks of life all over the world seized the initiative from our so-called leaders.

Regardless of the words these presidents and prime ministers decide in a "protocol" or "agreement" next week, it is the people of the world who have put the writing on the wall. The leaders who choose to read those words will take us forward. Those who ignore them will be swept away by the tide of history.

Saturday marked the point when a large part of the world rose up as one to tackle a truly global challenge. Although there may be temporary setbacks (such as a less-than-ambitious deal next week) the tide has already turned. It cannot be turned back.

Regardless of how much we achieve next week – and I remain optimistic in spite of the political manoeuvrings this week – we are set on a new and inexorable path. The leaders who understand that may come from the most unexpected of quarters. Keep your eye, for instance, on President Mohamed Nasheed of tiny Maldives.

In a few months I shall be moving back to Bangladesh to fight real climate change, as opposed to fighting against bad (or inadequate) climate change policies. My ambition over the coming years is to help the people of one of the poorest and most vulnerable – and yet resilient and innovative – countries transform itself from being the world's most famously "vulnerable" country to being recognised as perhaps its most "adaptive" country.

I am going home to set up a new International Centre for Climate Change and Development, where we aim to ramp up the capacity of governments, civil society organisations, researchers, academics, journalists and many others from developing countries to respond to the challenges that climate change poses.

The new centre will provide training and share knowledge on how to survive (and indeed even thrive) in a globally warmed world. It will focus primarily on adaptation to climate change in the least developed nations but will not stop there.

Indeed we are planning to provide capacity building for industrialised countries on how to face adverse climatic impacts. Ironically, unlike most of the world's poorest countries, the rich world that has caused this problem has not done detailed planning on how to adapt.

I am returning to the frontline of climate change where the real fight is already under way. I go there knowing that millions of people around the world share my hopes and my optimism that humanity can unite to tackle the challenge that now defines our life on earth. ❖

This article first appeared in the Guardian.co.uk

Building on What We Know: How to Keep the UNFCCC Relevant for Adaptation

By: John H. Matthews, WWF-US

A comprehensive international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the rate of climate change is essential for COP15. But so is the need for sound climate adaptation. For humans, sound adaptation means a strong focus on dealing with the special problems of water.

As a climate adaptation ecologist with WWF, I have traveled worldwide and interacted with people and institutions doing climate adaptation. I've seen how major international treaties like the Ramsar Wetlands Convention have begun to include adaptation into their work. Lastly, I am a scientist, grounded in the literature of ecology. From my perspective, we can see a new consensus forming around climate adaptation practice and theory. This is wonderful news — and it's also new. The emerging adaptation consensus should be welcomed by all.

But this consensus has not been widely recognized here in Copenhagen. This is the concern of many in the NGO world. If the UNFCCC wishes to remain relevant to the global adaptation discourse, it must recognize this consensus before this great institution can begin to lead us to implement effective practice for the most vulnerable of the world.

Most of the key concepts behind this consensus are not very new. In fact, at the most general level, we already know most of what we need to do in order to help humans and other species adapt to the shifting climate. Moreover, many of these concepts are already embedded in many other policy statements. Given my interest in water, I would point out the Dublin Principles of 1992, The Hague Ministerial Declaration on Water Security of 2002, the Brisbane Declaration of 2007, the Nairobi Statement on Land and Water Management for Adaptation to Climate Change of 2009, and the Stockholm Message to Copenhagen of 2009.

Moreover, the broad lines of the consensus are clear: economic development and ecosystem adaptation are not in competition. Indeed, since most ecosystems

are managed or influenced by humans in some way, we must focus on sustainable resource management and making ecosystem services like water supply and sanitation resilient to the shifting climate regime. Thus, we need to secure people and nature together and simultaneously.

In these last few days of the UNFCCC conference, I ask the negotiators to recognize a few key thoughts about the nature of good adaptation:

Water is a thread that ties together all humans. Water is not simply a “sector” and should be privileged as a theme. Agriculture, cities, industries, energy generation, and livelihoods all depend on water. Many religions integrate rivers, wetlands, and lakes as sacred connections. Conservation, development and economic growth must be united around the pursuit of sustainable management and utilization of our water resources and work together with scientists to address the practical issues of our time.

Adapting to climate change will largely require implementation of existing and emerging practices of good water management. While the challenge of climate change requires us to adopt important new perspectives, the majority of responses will be drawn from currently known and evolving policies and approaches. Addressing existing unsustainable utilization of, and impacts on, water resources will be central to the adaptation challenge.

Adapting to climate change should not be seen as an isolated activity. The most significant impacts of climate change will occur where these impacts combine with the immense pressures being placed on freshwater systems by rapid social and economic development. A successful response will require these challenges to be addressed together.

Information and strategies to develop practical tools for effective vulnerability assessments and climate adaptation plans must be made widely available. Lessons, tools, and science-based approaches to sustainable development must be made accessible. Also building robust national, transnational, and local

monitoring networks that can define trends in ecosystems, livelihoods, and target species, as well as provide early alerts to crises

Economic development must be grounded in sustainable and climate-resilient management of ecosystems. Land and water must also be managed at water basin scales.

Environmental flows are a critical aspect of building climate resilience for freshwater ecosystems and their services. The problem of climate change and water is not simply water supply and demand; it is also water quality and flow regime. Flow regimes must be maintained as the master variable of freshwater ecosystems, even in highly managed basins.

Water infrastructure must be planned and managed to maintain or restore ecosystem function. Ideally, freshwater infrastructure will reinforce environmental flows and build ecological resilience, becoming an instrument for climate adaptation.

Good governance is critical to implementing both sound water management and the equitable allocation of freshwater resources, especially in regions where poverty, gender, race, religion, or ethnicity are used as a basis for discrimination of access.

Effective climate adaptation includes managing ecosystems more holistically by creating resilient resource management institutions and policies. Unlike ecosystems, few human institutions have ever endured a significant shift in climate. The threats and challenges from climate change are not simply within ecosystems and individuals; institutions must also embody the ability to maintain flexibility.

Sufficient funding and economic support must be allocated to climate adaptation for humans and wild species. The bulk of this funding will need to be directed into strengthening existing and emerging water management policies and institutions rather than the through creation of new or parallel institutions. This funding must include resources from the developed economies. ♦♦

Time to bridge the ‘adaptation’ gap

A view from the trade union movement on UNFCCC adaptation policies

The poor cannot be left to plunge into even greater misery. Sufficient public funding should be directed from developed countries to adaptation in developing countries and adaptation should be mainstreamed into their development and employment policies. Social protection schemes, decent work promotion and quality public services as means for reducing poverty and thus vulnerability to climate change are fundamental and should be part of UNFCCC adaptation strategies.

By: ITUC

As trade unions we have never accepted the violation of human rights that leaves fellow human beings to die of hunger or of preventable diseases. We will not accept now that human beings die because of climate change.

Climate change feeds into the vicious circle of poverty by adding more barriers to development. Not only do environmental events generate huge amounts of stress for poor households but droughts, flooding and cyclones are often aggravating already critical social and economic situations.

For this reason, the poverty challenge and the climate challenge have to be tackled in a mutually reinforcing manner. All governments, in the North and the South, have a key role to play in providing the political will and the necessary coherence in this fight. Many developed countries are investing heavily in the development of climate defense infrastructures but the developing countries face far more severe adaptation challenges.

At the heart of adaptation

Trade unions believe that a new socially fair and climate-friendly development path needs to emerge. Developing countries need to simultaneously shift towards sustainable production models and supply adequate access to energy. Synergies between decent work creation and adaptation policies must be explored, since the provision of a sustainable income reduces vulnerability.

Quality public services and strong public sector leadership at all levels of government must be at the heart of the global response to climate change, also in ad-

aptation. We must highlight the role of public services in areas such as education, public health and transportation, and access to energy to cover basic needs to contribute to fair and efficient climate policies.

Trade unions believe that a new socially fair and climate-friendly development path needs to emerge.

Poverty reduction policies require radical responses to climate change. In order for this to happen, we believe that a holistic approach should be developed, including:

1. Sustainable service and infrastructure development
2. Capacity building
3. Social protection, including insurance

Adaptation & international solidarity

The world's poor cannot be left with the choice of either trying to make do with the limited resources at their disposal or else plunging into even greater misery. Social justice and respect for human rights demand stronger international commitment to adaptation. It is therefore fundamental to transfer means for adaptation as well as ensuring technology transfer.

Sufficient public funding should and must be directed to adaptation in developing countries. According to UNFCCC, UNDP and Oxfam, over the 2013-2017 period, a mobilisation of at least €200 billion for adaptation planning and implementation in developing countries is

needed. The only formal pledge from the EU is far from being enough and it does not differ between mitigation and adaptation.

Will we get that much needed funding before Friday? The chances are slim, but negotiators, heads of state and government need to ensure that all levels of funding are new and additional, allowing for full accountability and transparency. Additionality is crucial. Otherwise, we risk that the funds for climate change adaptation will be the same as already committed in the currently scarce development aid. And developed country parties should reconsider new ideas for funding, for example through new sources of taxation.

Climate, adaptation & the world of work

Adaptation to climate change offers the opportunity to engage on new paths of economic development: a development which respects workers' rights and the environment. Regional, sectoral and local research is needed to better understand the effects that adaptation measures will have on the economy, poverty reduction and employment.

Nevertheless, we can safely say that adaptation strategies - if they improve societies' and economies' capacity to react and adapt to climate change - do not necessarily have a negative impact on livelihoods or employment. New accompanying adaptation measures could yield positive effects on employment.

Adaptation is about the survival of millions of people in an already sinking environment. We need to provide adaptation means for workers to sustain their livelihood – there is no time to fail. ❖

Adaptation Funds Must Reach Africa's Women Farmers

By: Mantoe Phakathi IPS Terraviva

One of the key components of global action on climate change will be measures to adapt to changes that are already unavoidable. The Global Gender and Climate Alliance argues that specific attention be paid to the needs of women.

"With climate change taking away their source of livelihood because of the erratic weather patterns preventing them from farming, women must find another means of making a living," said Rachel Harris, the media coordinator for GGCA.

Women make up a majority of smallholder farmers in Africa and in other developing countries. In contrast to the options open to many men, few women can respond to drought, for example, by relocating to cities or other rural areas in search of work. Women are often tied down by the need to care for children, or social obstacles to mobility; they are also frequently without even the smallest cash savings of their own or assets to sell to bridge hard times.

Rodney Cooke, the director of the Technical Advisory Division at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), admitted that previous funding mechanisms overlooked women farmers. "We've made mistakes before," said Cooke. "Women make up 70 percent of smallholder farmers, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, but somehow funding targets were disproportionately directed towards men."

Cooke's employer, IFAD, is the U.N. agency charged with financially supporting rural livelihoods; the organisation was set up in response to a crisis of food security in the 1970s.

Cooke said there were no clear guidelines attached to previous funding on how women would benefit.

The alliance isn't waiting for a deal to be reached to complain that gender blind funding is failing the women who may need it most. Instead they are initiating proposals that will ensure women are the agents of change, able to create and adopt new agricultural options and explore other entrepreneurial ventures as a way of adapting to climate change.

Constance Okeletti, a smallholder farmer from Uganda, said women have a lot of knowledge useful for adaptation because they work with the environment through their household duties: include fetching water, gathering firewood and fruits and farming.

"We've been trying to adapt since climate change started to affect us. With the money we can do more," she said.

Okelleti observed that most development aid to African countries does not penetrate to the women at grassroots level because there are no specific provisions of how much of it should go to the poor.

"We don't know whether it's eaten by politicians or the workers in the cities," said Okelleti, who is representing a network of 40 groups of small-scale farmers in Uganda.

"Women fail to hold those in authority to account because we don't even know how much was meant for helping out women," she continued.

"We expect the final text of the declaration to emphasise the percentage of the funds that are expected to assist women projects so that they adapt to climate change," said Okelleti.

GGCA, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has come up with a women's Green Business Initiative to promote women's entrepreneurship opportunities in the sphere of climate change adaptation and mitigation to try and tap into the climate change funding.

"For example through the initiative a local women's group in Rwanda uses a voluntary carbon credit grant to implement a bamboo project for income generation and environmental protections," said Lucy Wanjiru UNDP's gender and climate change and GGCA.

She said with funding from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the Adaptation Fund, and new money coming from reduction of emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) schemes, women could be the ones accessing funds to start ecologically sustainable projects – be that planting trees or managing eco-tourism ventures – and earn a living.

"Agriculture is the sector most vulnerable to climate change," said Cooke. "An extra two million people in sub-Saharan Africa are going to be affected by water shortages and the majority of these are women."

If a deal reached at the U.N. Conference on Climate Change is to achieve its objectives, he said, it will have to incorporate a gendered perspective. ❖

Original article published on the 12th of December, Terraviva available www.ips.org/TV/copenhagen/adaptation-funds-must-reach-africas-womens-farmers/

Respect and Strengthen the Traditional Knowledge, Innovations, and Adaptation Practices of Indigenous Peoples

By: International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change

The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) convened a working group on Adaptation to follow the UNFCCC negotiations. The convener of this group is Victoria Haraseb from Africa and the members of this group include indigenous representatives from all regions of the world.

The IIPFCC policy statement regarding adaptation says:

Indigenous Peoples' Contributions to Ecosystem-based Mitigation and Adaptation

We have intrinsic contributions towards addressing the climate crisis, and renewing the relationships between humans and nature. For generations, we have managed ecosystems nurturing its integrity and complexity in sustainable and culturally diverse ways. Our customary resource management systems have proven to be ecologically sustainable, low carbon economies. These include mobile pastoralism in drylands and rangelands, rotational swidden agriculture and ecological agriculture in tropical forest regions, the conservation, management and restoration of other natural ecosystems such as mangroves, savannahs, wetlands, the Arctic environment and small island ecosystems. Traditional knowledge, innovations and adaptation practices embody local adaptive management to the changing environment, and complement scientific research, observations and monitoring.

The climate crisis threatens our very survival, particularly forest-dependent, ice-dependent peoples, peoples in voluntary isolation, and the indigenous peoples of small island states and local communities. Addressing such vulnerabilities requires recognition,

respect and strengthening of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, and strengthening the resilience of ecosystems and Indigenous Peoples and local communities' capacities to adapt to climate change. Ecosystem-based adaptation based on holistic indigenous peoples' systems and rights can deliver significant social, cultural, spiritual and economic values to Indigenous Peoples and local communities as well as to the biodiversity of indigenous lands and territories. This should be considered with the full participation of indigenous peoples in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these measures. The empowerment of Indigenous peoples and local communities is critical to successful adaptation strategies to climate change.

Our cosmovision, ways of life and traditional practices have been in existence since time immemorial. Sumak Kawsay, Penker Pujustin and other indigenous visions and values propose a way of life that is respectful, responsible, balanced and harmonious with nature and offers equity and solidarity as the guiding principles of global wellbeing. Indigenous worldviews embody an organized, sustainable and dynamic economic system, as well as political, socio-cultural and environmental rights. This vindicates a social dimension of democracy that goes beyond formal democracy, where economy becomes a subordinate activity to the development of peoples in the name of humanity, solidarity and respect for Mother Earth.

In an interview with Victoria Haraseb she said, "Our climate is changing daily. We are experiencing floods, draughts, typhoons, etc... and this has a great impact on our livelihoods. Indigenous Peoples and local communities have no other way but to adapt to these changes that are occurring.

Many of our communities need assistance in the process of adapting to climate change. Our peoples need help to prepare for adaptation. Yes, our traditional knowledge guides us to adapt but some of our indigenous communities need the assistance to rebuild their knowledge systems."

The Indigenous Peoples here in Copenhagen are not here for just one indigenous community, in one particular region. We are here hoping to bring a voice to this process for the 350 million Indigenous Peoples of the world.

The IIPFCC has introduced the following text and continue to urge and demand Parties to include it in any negotiations:

Concerning Indigenous Peoples of the world and their local communities, parties shall recognize and respect:

1. Traditional knowledge and customary methods of adaptation;
2. Laws, regulations, plans and customs as an authority in determining adaptation risks, values and benefits on Indigenous Peoples' land and territories;
3. The requirement for full, effective and direct participation of Indigenous Peoples – subject to their free, prior and informed consent – throughout the adaptation process, including disaster preparedness and response, governance, access to adaptation financing, implementation, monitoring and reporting consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and,
4. That adaptation shall be guided by the best available science and traditional knowledge. ❖

Lack of Sensitivity is Making Adaptation Harder

By: Uchita de Zoysa, Convener, Climate Sustainability PLATFORM

Just several weeks ago, the Maldivian President had to go under sea with his cabinet to prove to the world that adapting to the sea level rise due to climate change would be hard for them. Two Maldivian members of the PLATFORM once again reminded the world that their call for help for twenty years has not been answered by the international community. Not only for them, but adapting to new global scenarios is going to be hard for all of us. We realised this more in Copenhagen last week.

Adapting to the climate insensitivities in Copenhagen has been hard for many of us from the South. Lack of commitment by the rich countries at the COP15 and walk outs by African negotiators at the Bella Centre, planned demonstrations by anti-globalization activists in Copenhagen streets and mass-arrests by the non-tolerant police, expensive climate parties by Danish alternative forum organisers and lack of funds to host southern NGO delegates, the cold weather and uncertainty of the climate talks; all these are amounting to the frustrations at the UN Climate Summit.

This circus has gone beyond the patience of people who have been told that their lives are in danger due to climate change. The circus in Copenhagen is shameful. Every night a big party is organised in Copenhagen and it is a battle to get in-front of the queue. I am wondering, what are these people celebrating? What a lot of money is spent in Copenhagen for these big parties, but how many activists from the South have got to come here to make their voices heard? Even the ones who got here have had to bear with the little money provided, poor lodging facilities and coldness of the weather as well as attitudes of some insensitive-to-diversity coordinators with temporary



climate jobs. Adaptation has been hard in Copenhagen!

Many PLATFORM participants have demonstrated their lack of faith in the COP15 process and they are angry about the lack of goodwill shown towards the adaptation of the poor. Ms. Susy Wandera from The Kenya Climate Change Working Group said, "There is no good faith in addressing the vulnerability of women, youth and communities who are being affected by the climate change impacts right now. How much worse does the damage have to be in the South for Annex-1 countries to make serious commitments in their emission reductions? They were able to raise one trillion dollars Euro to respond to the global financial crisis in short time. Why don't they see the same urgency in supporting the South? Like they said they would."

Ms. Gail Karlsson from the US Citizens' Network understands the need for support and assistance on adaptation in the South. She says ; "For over ten years I have been involved in advocacy and planning related to the energy needs of women in developing countries. At this point, about 1.5 billion people are living without electricity, and many more continue to rely on traditional biomass fuels for cooking. It is generally women and

girls in rural areas who are responsible for collecting firewood or other biomass fuels, and whose time, health and activities are most constrained by lack of access to electricity, modern cooking fuels, and motorized power. Financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation can help to relieve women's poverty by engaging them in developing and distributing new clean energy options if these new opportunities are formulated in ways that benefit women as well as men."

Adaptation is not just about sharing the wealth and technological know-how. It is going to be based on how much of collective action we as a human race can exercise during the coming decades. Collective action needs goodwill and that is lacking at the COP15 and in general in the Copenhagen climate circus. It is time to move on. Our destiny should not rely on a bunch of insensitive negotiators and circus managers. It is ours!

Therefore I agree with Flora Ijjas from Hungary when she says, "taking care of yourself and your people and your place is more important than worrying about emission reductions or setting quotas. Women's nature has the sensitivity and the empathy that today's arrogant world needs." ❖

South Asian Youth Lead Their Countries Towards Climate Solutions

By: Amy Dewan, Project Survival Media and the International Youth Climate Movement

Representatives from the global south have a lot at stake at the COP15. Effects on freshwater systems around the world, especially in the global south, are already a reality. Youth in particular have a large stake in this, because they will very likely see these catastrophes in their lifetime, exasperated if nothing is done by those in power now – those who have much less self-interest invested in the future.

Dipesh Chapagain, the outreach director for the Nepalese Youth Climate Action Network, summed up the issues of justice and equity into two dichotomies. Chapagain described a need for equity between the North and the South, but also the need for equity between generations. This not only reflects a difference in interests between developing and industrialized countries, but also between youth and the older generation in power.

The Nepalese Youth for Climate Actions have been working on a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of Mt. Everest to their livelihood. According to Chapagain, the Himalayan glaciers provide fresh water to approximately 1.5 billion people who depend on it. According to Bill McKibbin, the Ganges River--which sources its freshwater from the Himalayas -- is expected to dry up by 2035. This will leave much of India and Bangladesh without many options for food, since agriculture in these countries depends heavily on this water table. These effects are already being seen in places like the Sunderbans, a delta at the end of the Ganges. The waters there are rising, the result of melting icecaps upstream. This is causing flooding, but will lead to drought in a short while, when the entire snowcap has melted. Ekta Kothari, a member of Project Survival Media and of the Indian Youth Climate Network, reported on this in a documentary called *The Rising Tide*, a film to be screened at the Copenhagen summit by Project Survival Media.



Dipesh Chapagain gives a presentation at the Bella Center on the Nepalese Youth Climate Action Network. Photo by Amy Dewan.

Youth demands on adaptation:

- Call upon every rich country to pay their climate debt
- Provide 5% of Annex I countries' GNP for adaptation and mitigation developing countries, in addition to ODA
- Provide 400 billion dollars public finance by developed countries for fast track financing
- Intellectual property rights must be relaxed to allow the transfer of technology to the developing world

Another South Asian country coping with these changes is the Maldives. They have been represented here in Copenhagen by a youth delegation, and a strong voice from their very own President, Mohamud Nasheed. Nasheed, at a joint event with 350 director Bill McKibben, pledged that the the Maldives will be climate neutral by the year 2050, despite their negligible contribution to carbon emissions. Youth delegates have been amplifying their president's voice through actions and speeches here.

Although South Asian nations face a lot of challenges due to climate change, they are also working towards solutions. Their representation at COP has been increasing quickly: just last year was the first time Indian youth organized themselves into an official youth delegation. This year the delegation sent 20-25 youth representatives.

Indian youth have also been cataloguing clean energy developments all over the country. A group of Indian youth traveled 4000 kilometers around the subcontinent to document individual and community sustainability projects. They have compiled all of these on indiaclimatesolutions.com. It is a valuable resource for communities and governments alike, who can see initiatives for climate solutions taking place all over the country, and now have the resources and capacity to encourage projects that are particularly interesting or valuable to communities, depending on local needs.

Throughout the sub continent, South Asian youth have taken it upon themselves, with few resources and little responsibility towards mitigation, to do something about climate change. Their efforts should be an inspiration for the system and policy that seems to be lagging behind. ♦♦

Food for Thought...

Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum

Sheep, Giraffes, Yaks and Nilgai

So the other day I was reading the BBC Environment Website, a great site which I do love and try to visit as regularly as possible. There was this wonderful story about how Australian scientists are hoping to breed sheep that burp less as part of efforts to tackle climate change.

According to the Australian scientists burping causes greater emissions in sheep than flatulence. I was shocked to see that 66% of the agricultural emissions in Australia are released as methane from the gut of livestock.

There is an abundance of sheep in Australia as opposed to horses, goats, deer's giraffes, bison, yaks, water buffalo, camels, alpacas, llamas, wildebeest, antelope, pronghorn, and nilgai.

The reason I am sure you all know why these animals are significant is because they have ruminant stomach which means they consist of three fore-stomachs – thus contributing methane to the atmosphere.

I have to confess I had no idea what a Nilgai was so using the trusted Wikipedia I found out. It seems that they are a type of antelope. They are found most commonly in central and northern India and eastern Pakistan and also present in parts of southern Nepal

and Alabama and Texas! Some apparently escaped from private exotic ranches; and it seems that Texas now boasts a population of something like 15,000. Could this be the script in waiting for Madagascar 4: Fighting Climate Change! - my pitch would be for Matthew McConaughey as Nigel the Texan Nilgai.

We have seen world population increase from 2.5 billion in 1950 to 6.8 billion last year, while at the same time the world's cattle herd went from 720 million to over 1.6 billion. The number of sheep and goats expanded from 1.04 billion to approaching 2 billion.

It is estimated that 64% of world total sheep live in only fifteen countries, China having the most followed by Australia, India, Iran, Sudan, New Zealand, UK, South Africa, Turkey, Spain, Pakistan, Nigeria, Algeria, Morocco and Brazil. A number of these are significant or will be significant green house gas contributors.

So where does all this fit in the agriculture negotiations – on mitigation? This is a question that may become more and more relevant as countries start becoming serious on targets here in Copenhagen and beyond. Already in another field, water

provision, there are discussions on water for food, water for biodiversity, water for industry, water for people, how do you split up the limited resource?

The future of domestic approaches to green house gases will be messy as countries look for ways to reduce the GHGs without having too much impact on people's present lifestyles. Something we should probably remember is the words of a former US President in Rio in 1992, when then President Bush said – 'The US way of life was non negotiable.' If the way we live our present lifestyles isn't negotiable. We can only hope that the Australian scientist can find ways to reduce the methane content in sheep and other ruminant species. Otherwise we may well see a tradeoffs such as - you can use your car more if there are less sheep, goats and Nigel's in the world!



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