

Facts

Fact sheet on Climate Justice and the Right to Development

Climate change and the right to development

Greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans have a major impact on the climate. It is mainly people in the rich part of the world who have created and continue to create the problems, but effects of climate change have their worst impact on the poor. This makes climate change one of the most important justice issues of our time. Poor people's right to development must be respected alongside tackling climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The scientific evidence is overwhelming – greenhouse gas emissions have a major impact on the global climate. In its fifth evaluation report, the UN's Climate Change Panel (IPCC) estimates that the average temperature on earth will increase considerably if emissions are not limited quickly. This not only affects wildlife and plant life but, naturally, also the opportunities for poverty reduction. Climate change risks undoing previous initiatives taken to achieve fair and sustainable development. In the worst case, development in many poor countries may be reversed.

CLIMATE CHANGE A QUESTION OF JUSTICE

Historically rich countries have been the primary emitters of greenhouse gases. But it is the poor who are worst affected. As the battle for resources gets tougher, the effects of climate change hit women and girls hardest. This makes climate change one of the most important justice issues of our time.

A DOUBLE CHALLENGE

According to the UN, 870 million people don't have enough to eat. 1.2 billion people are living on less than 1.25 dollars a day and 1.2 billion lack access to electricity. Global poverty is still a major challenge. Climate change places a huge strain on people already struggling against poverty. According to the 2009 Human Impact Report, 300,000 people

a year die as a result of the effects of climate change. The areas in the world suffering drought have doubled between 1970 and the early 2000s. More periods of drought in turn lead to drastically smaller harvests. Global poverty is closely linked to climate change. This means that we need common solutions. As a development organization, Diakonia highlights the poverty and justice perspectives of climate change.



Felix Wilca lives by the peaks of Tambo Accha, Peru. Together with other men from the area, he works in agriculture to support his family. Felix's livelihood is threatened by the effects of climate change, which are constantly changing the agricultural situation. PHOTO: ENRIQUE CASTRO

The effects of climate change

WATER

In dry tropical areas, many of which are already suffering a water situation under strain, it is estimated that access to water will be reduced and larger areas will be affected by drought. Torrential rain may increase in frequency, increasing the risk of flooding. The amount of water in glaciers and snow cover will shrink, reducing water resources in regions supplied with melt water from the large mountain chains of the world.

FOOD PRODUCTION

Drought and flooding are becoming more common in many areas, and have a negative impact on local food production. Self-sufficient farmers and fishermen in particular are at greater risk of starvation as a result of reduced food production.

ACCESS TO LAND

There will be less land to live on and from. Several million people are expected to be affected by flooding every year as a result of rising sea levels up to the year 2080. Climate change may also lead to the desertification in dry areas.

HEALTH

Climate change will affect the health situation of millions of people through increased malnutrition and a higher number of injuries, illnesses and deaths. Infectious diseases, such as malaria, will spread to new areas.

ECOSYSTEMS

Many poor people are directly dependent on natural resources from local ecosystems. An increase of a few degrees in the earth's average temperature can lead to considerable changes in the structure and function of ecosystems. This disrupts the ecological balance of species and their geographical spread, with mainly negative consequences for biodiversity and the "products and services" of ecosystems, such as access to water and food.

Aid and climate finance

Already now, powerful measures are needed to support people affected by the effects of climate change. Adapting poor societies to climate change requires financial resources. In 2009 the rich countries jointly promised to support the poor countries with 100 billion dollars a year from 2020 onwards. But this amount fails to meet the needs. According to the UN, up to 500 billion dollars a year is needed if developing countries are to adapt to and combat climate change.

According to the OECD, global aid amounted to approximately 128 billion dollars in 2012. If only aid budgets are used to cover the costs of adapting to climate change, the money will not be sufficient to combat poverty in the long term.

Rich countries have a responsibility to transform their own societies to make them sustainable. They must also provide support, in addition to aid, to poor countries to combat and adapt to the climate changes already taking place. The rights of poor people to development need to be safeguarded.

However, aid is important in terms of making climate adaptation as effective as possible and to stimulate more sustainable development. Experience gained regarding the effectiveness of aid, people's participation and clear ownership for recipient countries must be used in combating the effects of climate change.

Climate and gender equality

The effects of climate change hit the poor hardest. Seventy per cent of the world's poor are women and girls, and they are affected in different ways to men.

WOMEN AND MEN AFFECTED DIFFERENTLY

In poor countries women tend to have great responsibility for the family's survival. Women or girls are generally responsible for fetching water, animal feed, wood or other products from nature. In Sub-Saharan Africa women are responsible for 80 per cent of food production. With a changed and unpredictable climate, the situation of women becomes harder as access to natural resources changes and the conditions for agriculture become tougher.

Climate change can mean greater health risks for women than for men. A changed climate increases the incidence of illnesses that are difficult to treat. Insect and waterborne illnesses that affect pregnant women and children the hardest may become more common. Climate change may lead to more natural disasters, which particularly affect women and children. According to WHO, women and children make up 75 per cent of refugees after natural disasters.

EQUAL ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Resources and power over their situation are important components that must be in place if people are to protect themselves and adapt to a changed climate. People who have financial assets, access to technology, education and information have better opportunities to predict and manage climate change. In global terms, women have both fewer resources and less power over their own lives than men. For this reason, climate change has a greater impact on women than men and therefore local measures for adaptation to climate change must include an analysis of the gender equality situation.

Women's social position in many developing countries means that the role they are expected to take on often concerns the home and family rather than the public sphere. While women's contribution to the family's survival and financial development is very large, their work is less visible and receives less public attention than men's activities do. This means that women tend to have

less access to decision-making bodies and their perspective is not afforded the same weight as that of men. Women's experiences must be included in analysis and planning work if climate adaptation is to succeed. This is positive not only for women but also for society in general.



Annabelle Waititu is a changemaker fighting for the right to clean water and for women's right to a life in dignity. She is a coordinator at the Institute of Environment & Water, a climate organization in Kenya that partners with Diakonia.

PHOTO: MARKUS MARCETIC

Diakonia's positions

Diakonia supports poor people in adapting to a changed climate, but Diakonia also works to influence political decisions to combat climate change. By the end of 2015, the agreed UN plan is that a new global climate agreement will be decided by UN negotiation. Diakonia has produced constructive proposals for a fair climate agreement.

SUFFICIENT AND MEASURABLE EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS

The industrial countries have a major historical responsibility for emissions. They also have the capacity required to reduce emissions quickly. Large and immediate reductions in emissions are required domestically, which in the long term need to be close to zero. At the same time as reducing the emissions of rich countries, poor countries must receive support for a development path with much lower emissions than in the path taken by rich countries. We cannot wait for others to act first. Sweden and other industrialized countries must lead the way.

FIRST DEVELOPMENT, THEN LOWER EMISSIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Poor people have barely contributed to greenhouse gas emissions and have a right to development. The industrial countries have accounted for the majority of the emissions causing climate change. They therefore have a responsibility to reduce their own emissions and thus make room for the emissions that the development of poor countries will cause – because there is a limit to the amount the atmosphere can tolerate before catastrophic climate change occurs.

CLIMATE FINANCE IN ADDITION TO POVERTY REDUCTION

Poor people's opportunities for development are seriously threatened by the effects of climate change. Climate finance is a necessity because of industrial

countries' greenhouse gas emissions, and taking money from aid budgets already earmarked is immoral and contravenes climate agreements.

LONG-TERM, PREDICTABLE CLIMATE FUNDING

Promises are not enough. We must keep our promises too. Industrial countries have to transfer money now and guarantee long-term and predictable financing.

CLIMATE FUNDING THROUGH INSTITUTIONS WHERE THE POOR HAVE INFLUENCE

The institutions that control climate funding must be transparent, democratic and take into account the perspectives of people living in poverty. Climate finance should be channelled through institutions such as the UN's Green Climate Fund rather than the World Bank, which is less democratic.

What does Diakonia do?

Diakonia is an international development organization with Christian values that works together with local partner organizations for sustainable change for the most vulnerable people in the world. This work improves the underlying conditions enabling poor people to tackle the climate change that has already taken place and that may take place. Diakonia also works actively to influence decision-makers to promote climate justice.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Together we can tackle the climate challenge and create a fair and sustainable world!

- Act climate friendly in your daily life
- Influence others by discussing and sharing what you have learned
- Contact politicians and demand change