

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 7/23
“HUMAN RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE”

Assessment at national level of the impact of climate change (experienced or anticipated) on human lives and on population most affected and vulnerable

Much of the research on the human impacts of climate change is highly qualitative and conducted at global rather than national level, with the focus on particular *groups* (women, children, indigenous people etc) rather than any thorough country-based assessments that combine quantitative and qualitative data. This is something that the United Kingdom Department for international Development (DFID) is working to improve with the development of a PSIA (poverty and social impact assessment) type model that can be used to evaluate the social impacts of climate change at local and national level.

The following papers highlight key issues of persons belonging to vulnerable groups whose rights are threatened by climate change, although there is a real lack of research on how the rights of those belonging to certain vulnerable groups such as *disabled people* and *older people* are affected, highlighting a real need for more work in this area.

Women

- DFID/Bridge report: “Gender and Climate Change: Mapping the Linkages - A Scoping Study on Knowledge and Gaps” (June 2008)

http://www.siyanda.org/static/bridge_climate_change_report.htm?em=0806&tag=QG

Minorities

- Minority Rights Group International report “State of the World’s Minorities” (2008), Climate Change Special examining how the human rights of minorities are threatened by climate change.

Children

- Children in a Changing Climate report: Studies of impact of climate change on ‘the right to participate’ (2008)

<http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/docs/FINAL.pdf>

- IIED report “Climate Change and Urban Children: Impacts and Implications for Adaptation (May 2008)

<http://www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=10556IIED&n=1&l=2&a=S%20Bartlett>

Save the Children report “In the Face of Disaster: Children and climate change”

<http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/docs/In%20the%20Face%20of%20Disaster.pdf>

Older people

- Occasional paper for the UNDP Human Development Report 2007/08 “Human Security, Vulnerability and Sustainable Adaptation” by O’Brien, K. and Leichenko, R., 2007,

http://hdr.undp.org/en/report/global/hrd2007-2008/papers/o'brien_karen%20and%20leichenko

A case study on climate change and ‘elderly populations’ (p24 onwards) highlights how the vulnerability of older people to climate change is a challenge for human security. The paper highlights that the global population of older people is growing and that they have a limited capacity for adaptation, partly due to changes in kinship networks meaning older people are less able to rely on younger family members for help. The paper emphasises the vulnerability of rural older women, who are affected by increased migration, the need to care for orphaned grandchildren and who are unlikely to have support from insurance or pension schemes.

The UK Government published its first National Security Strategy in March 2008. It states “Climate change is potentially the greatest challenge to global stability and security, and therefore to national security direct effects are likely to fall most heavily on those countries least able to deal with them” [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/national_security_strategy.aspx]. The UK Government is planning to conduct further research on key regions to understand, as far as possible, the potential security implications from the impacts of climate change. A pilot is planned with the French Government looking at the Sahel region.

Studies carried out at national level, including by independent research, on the relationship between climate change and human rights

Again, most studies of the relationship between climate change and human rights are fairly theoretical and global in their approach, rather than specific national-level studies drawing on microlevel data. The following highlight the key human rights issues in adaptation and mitigation:

- Oxfam briefing paper “Climate Wrongs and Human Rights: putting people at the heart of climate change policy” (July 2008)
- Rights and Resources Initiative report “Seeing People Through the Trees: Scaling Up Efforts to Advance Rights and Address Poverty, Conflict and Climate Change” (July 2008).

Projects and measures at national level to mitigate or adapt to climate change, including information on any assessment of the impact of such projects and measures on affected populations and their human rights

National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) have been developed in a number of low income countries to identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate adaptation needs. NAPA processes involved consultation with local communities and civil society organisations in order to identify the most vulnerable and affected groups, but the quality and effectiveness of these consultative processes varied from country to country. Nor was there any specific attention to human rights in these processes. The Bangladeshi NAPA is a better example of a successful consultation process.

Although few studies or assessments of national level climate change interventions exist, a review by IIED (commissioned by DFID) of small-scale mitigation interventions at national level highlights the poverty-reduction benefits and human rights impacts (in terms of improved access to health and education, food security etc) of low carbon energy access programmes:

- IIED study “Opportunities to achieve poverty reduction and climate change benefits through low carbon energy access programmes” A review of the portfolio of the Ashden Awards for Sustainable energy.
http://www.ashdenawards.org/reports/low_carbon_energy

Views on the relationship between obligations arising out of international climate conventions and international human rights treaties, including on international assistance and cooperation

The United Kingdom recognises that climate change may impact on the full enjoyment of human rights at the national level and welcomes a stronger focus on climate justice and equity issues both between industrialised and developing countries but also at sub-national level where it is often the poorest and most vulnerable whose rights are threatened by climate change but who benefit the least from climate change interventions.

The United Kingdom Department For International Development is advocating for the idea of a "Compact" between the international community and developing countries, recognising that although climate change in itself is not a human rights violation the international community has a role in addressing the serious threat that climate change currently poses in undermining existing human rights or likely to undermine in the future; The “Compact” would therefore ensure that recipient countries pledge to act appropriately by targeting the poorest and most vulnerable in their own countries, ensuring transparency and accountability of the finance, ensuring wide participation and integration of civil society and affected groups into development strategies. The way to ensure that both the international community and national governments comply with their respective responsibilities and duties is through a Compact approach, which defines the respective responsibilities and duties of the international community and the developing countries receiving support.

Examples of support to mitigate and adapt to climate change through international assistance and cooperation bilaterally and through multilateral institutions, including assessments of their human rights impact

A number of international programmes, such as the Pilot Programmes for Climate Resilience (PPCRs) the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) and the Adaptation Fund are all in a critical stage of design prior to implementation with their operational procedures still being decided, offering a window of opportunity to ensure that human rights are integrated and mainstreamed into their operation.

The United Kingdom's DFID is taking a lead on the PPCRs and is keen to ensure that social dimensions are taken account of in all pilots. It is also ensuring that monitoring and evaluation of PPCRs should include clear indicators on the social impacts of any climate change interventions. As the CTF and Adaptation Fund have a wider range of funding sources and donors involved, DFID has less influence over their development but would like to see a stronger human rights focus in both of these.

Assessments of climate change interventions are often based on environmental indicators that measure their impact on carbon emissions or their economic effectiveness, but rarely their impact on human lives or the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable.

An unpublished study commissioned for DFID by the Institute of Development Studies assesses the evaluation of adaptation interventions within the Global Environment Facility (GEF) highlights the lack of attention to poverty reduction and sustainability in adaptation interventions. It recommends the integration of equity and sustainability issues and suggests that all evaluation of climate change adaptation interventions should be judged on five criteria of effectiveness – achieving objectives; flexibility – to account for the uncertainty of climate change and the evolving knowledge base; equity – across sectors; regions and societies; efficiency – to address agreed acceptable levels of risk; and sustainability – the wider implications of adaptation.

- IDS Desk review: Evaluation of adaptation to climate change from a development perspective (unpublished August 2008).