

## Building Resilience to Climate Change: A Briefing Note for COP 21

CONCERN  
worldwide

### Recommendations:

Community-level projects, such as those described here, provide evidence of what is possible, but they cannot function or be replicated at the scale required without adequate investment and a supportive policy environment, agreed at national and international levels.

Support for vulnerable communities to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change must therefore form a crucial part of a climate deal at COP 21, alongside fair and ambitious agreements on emissions cuts and compensation for climate-related loss and damage. Concern makes the following recommendations for parties to the UNFCCC process:

#### Adaptation:

- **Developed countries should step up funding to the Green Climate Fund, which should allocate 50% of its funding to climate change adaptation.**

The impacts of adaptation programmes around the world demonstrate that communities can take significant strides in building resilience to climate-generated disasters. The Green Climate Fund should be institutionally prepared to channel at least 50% of its funding<sup>6</sup> for adaptation and building long term resilience in developing countries. This should be additional funding which is not counted against existing official development assistance commitments. Parties should also set ambitious targets on the transfer of capacity and technology to developing countries vulnerable to climate impacts. It is crucial that the UN climate negotiations deliver a fair deal which provides the technological and financial assistance to support resilience-building at community level.

#### Mitigation:

- **The agreement of a fair and ambitious mitigation goal which enables a low carbon development pathway for the global economy in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

The failure to agree global emissions cuts of at least 80% compared to 1990 levels is already having severe consequences for those countries most vulnerable to climate change. There is no more time for delay. We call for a fair and ambitious mitigation goal through the intended nationally determined contributions which commit parties to emissions cuts at the levels that scientific consensus deems necessary to ensure warming of no more than 2°C.

#### Compensation:

- **The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage should be included within the new climate agreement to support resilience-building among the most affected communities.**

Although adaptation can still deliver significant benefits for the most vulnerable, we are past the point at which it can help people address *all* climate impacts and continue with their current ways of life. Those countries and communities affected by current and future loss and damage to which they are unable to adapt, should receive fair compensation. This has already been agreed under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, but it must be properly integrated into the new climate regime to make sure it is acknowledged in all climate actions.

Climate change is one of the most serious challenges facing humanity. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fifth Assessment Report has concluded that it is "extremely likely" that human activities have been the dominant cause of global temperature rises since the mid-20th Century.<sup>1</sup>

But while the evidence on human-made climate change is hugely compelling, international action to stem the rise in global temperatures has fallen far short of what is required. Recent data collected by the UK Met Office shows that for the first time, global average temperatures are set to surpass the milestone of 1°C above pre-industrial levels.<sup>2</sup>

The world's failure to deliver the necessary emissions cuts means that even with dramatic future cuts, adverse effects of climate change such as increased risk of floods in coastal areas and droughts in arid regions cannot be avoided, while predicted temperature rises may also lead to reduced agricultural production in vulnerable areas.

These negative effects continue to be felt disproportionately by poor communities and countries, those who have done the least to cause them.

It is therefore imperative that Parties to the UNFCCC<sup>3</sup> process, meeting in Paris in December 2015, commit to help the most vulnerable withstand and build their resilience to climate change.

SDG 17 of the recently agreed Sustainable Development Goals calls for 'urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.'<sup>4</sup>

A deal in Paris is urgently required that not only enables the reductions in emissions needed to protect the world from the most extreme temperature rises still possible, but also stands by the most vulnerable to ensure that no one is left behind.

### Building Resilience to Climate Change: Concern's Experience

Concern's work in areas affected by climate change gives us a strong insight into the challenges some of the world's poorest people are facing. Through our programme work, we see at first hand the way in which changing weather patterns are disrupting ways of life that have sustained communities for centuries.

In Sahelian countries, climate change impacts pose a severe threat to livelihoods. Unpredictable rainfall can leave sedentary farming communities vulnerable to both drought and floods, while shortages in pasture have a significant impact on pastoralists, putting their animals at risk and forcing them to travel much greater distances.

Moreover, the recurrence of food shortages, sometimes year upon year, severely weakens the ability of people to withstand them. In bad years, they may be forced to resort to negative coping strategies such as selling livelihood assets, which erodes their ability to withstand future shocks and can leave them vulnerable even in years when the climate is more favourable.

Across the Bay of Bengal, climate change is causing an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters including cyclones, storm surges and flooding. Sea level rises will impact coastal communities, increasing groundwater salinity and coastal erosion which will reduce the amount of land viable for agriculture. Heat waves will further impact people's health, with an increase in vector-borne diseases and the incidence of heat stroke. As well as causing loss of life, these shocks destroy property and assets, disrupt agricultural practices and ultimately force many people back into, or deeper into, poverty.

In these contexts, Concern has developed valuable experience of what works in helping people adapt to changing weather conditions. The impacts of climate change are experienced at local level and many of the tools for addressing them exist at local level. Concern's approach to building community resilience therefore puts local people at the centre of identifying and tackling the range of risks they face.

In the communities in which we work, risks are not restricted to climate hazards and may include a range of threats including disease, price rises for essential goods or conflict. But in many regions, climate-related risks are among the most urgent, and our resilience-building programmes give an indication of what can be achieved in addressing these and other threats.

<sup>1</sup> IPCC (2013) Summary for Policymakers.

<sup>2</sup> UK Met Office (2015) news release [http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/news/release/archive/2015/one-degree?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/news/release/archive/2015/one-degree?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter)

<sup>3</sup> UNFCCC stands for United Nations Framework – Convention on Climate Change.

<sup>4</sup> The full list of SDGs is available at [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals)

<sup>5</sup> BRACED stands for Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters.

<sup>6</sup> Green Climate Fund (2014) news release: [http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00\\_customer/documents/pdf/GCF\\_Press\\_Release\\_fin\\_20140222.pdf](http://gcfund.net/fileadmin/00_customer/documents/pdf/GCF_Press_Release_fin_20140222.pdf)

## Community Resilience to Acute Malnutrition, Chad

Since 2012, Concern has been working with communities in the Sila Region of eastern Chad to build their resilience to malnutrition. Acute and chronic malnutrition are prevalent in Sila, as they are for much of Chad, and the population is highly vulnerable to food insecurity.

The CRAM programme was developed by Concern following five years of emergency food projects, and its design draws on our analysis that food insecurity and malnutrition arise from a dynamic interplay of different factors that cannot be addressed in isolation.

It therefore delivers an integrated set of interventions across multiple sectors to 35 villages. These include promoting improved agricultural practices, such as climate-smart cropping and better animal husbandry, helping community members diversify their livelihood options, promoting improved hygiene and access to clean water, supporting female empowerment and improving access to maternal and child health services. Under CRAM, Concern is also working with communities to conduct risk analyses and establish community level disaster risk reduction institutions to collect early warning system data, and to implement preparedness plans in communities.

A midline study of the project recently conducted by Tufts University gives an early indication of some of the project's impacts. These include a reduction of acute malnutrition in children in smaller project villages, bringing rates down by more than 5%. The project has also led to a reduction in food insecurity during the hunger gap. The CRAM programme is nearing its completion in 2016, but the project will continue and extend its reach to cover approximately 90 villages, including among communities in western Sudan, under Concern's DFID-funded BRACED<sup>5</sup> programme.

## Making Climate Smart Agriculture Work for the Most Vulnerable

Concern's approach to climate smart agriculture involves working with poor farmers to better use and manage natural resources and adopt more efficient methods of producing, processing and marketing agricultural goods. It presents farmers with the opportunity of a 'triple win':

- Enhanced food security by sustainably increasing the reliability and productivity of agricultural livelihood activities;
- Increased smallholder resilience and adaptation to the likely effects of climate change;
- Where appropriate, and in the interest of smallholder farmers, reduced greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and improved carbon sequestration.

Concern is currently working with an estimated 100,000 poor farm households to promote climate smart agriculture in some of the poorest and most vulnerable parts of Africa. This includes work in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, where our promotion of conservation agriculture has led to the doubling of yields in comparison with conventional approaches, and in the Sahel, where we have expanded the coverage of water harvesting and spreading techniques to increase fertility in areas prone to drought.

Our approach also involves training to help farmers develop the business sustainability of their livelihood and places a particular focus on women smallholders, who are often marginalised from the sharing of agricultural and climate information.



Men and women from the community action committee in Tcharow, Sila Region, Chad analyse the hazards the village faces. Photo: Dom Hunt/Chad

Concern is a member of the African Climate Smart Agriculture Alliance which has committed to reaching six million smallholder families by 2021. Our engagement in this alliance helps us to work with national governments around their Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme commitments and facilitate the engagement of local civil society and community-based organisations in the process.

## Helping Communities Cope with Climate Change in the Bay of Bengal

Across coastal areas of south-west Bangladesh and Odisha state, India, Concern has been working to increase communities' resilience to climate change and natural hazards in the Bay of Bengal region. The programme is known as 'Paribartan', meaning 'transformation' in the local Oriya and Bangla languages, and covers 204 communities, aiming to benefit over 1.2 million people.

Paribartan works with communities to create plans to address climate impacts, improve their ability to cope with these impacts, test innovative practices and share lessons for advocacy and replication. This involves strengthening the understanding and capacity of state and non-state actors on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Communities undertake risk and vulnerability assessments and then work with local government to develop action plans to increase community resilience.

Pilot projects for adaptation have also been implemented. These include the promotion of climate resilient agriculture practices, such as rice-fish cultivation, rain water harvesting and vegetable cultivation as well as the conservation of biodiversity. Communities have also been supported to use more efficient stoves for cooking and to plant fast-growing plant species for firewood, which protects coastal natural resources as a bio shield to reduce disaster impact.

A midterm review in 2013 found that the understanding and capacity of state and non-state actors have increased, with 12 union level disaster management committees in Bangladesh and 8 village level councils in Odisha, India updating their local development plans to include disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures. 30% of the target communities are successfully practicing at least three community based adaptation options to build resilience. The pilot initiatives for promoting climate resilient agriculture and integrated rain water harvesting models have also been adopted successfully, improving nutrition and providing an alternative source of income for many families. Learning from the project is being shared amongst practitioners and multi-stakeholder fora to influence policy makers at state, national, regional and international levels.



Villagers in Arpangasia, Satkhira district, Bangladesh conduct a community risk and vulnerability analysis. Photo: Palash Kanti Haldar / Bangladesh



Ecosystem-based climate resilient agriculture in Sora, Shyamnagar, Bangladesh, with vegetable and rice cultivation and fish in the canal. Photo: Palash Kanti Haldar / Bangladesh