

No. 256 | December 2008

## Climate agreement and developing countries

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### Needs of poor countries

- > **The developing countries should be in focus of the debate on a new climate agreement. In order for the climate summit in Copenhagen 2009, the so-called COP 15, to be a success it is imperative to include the needs for development of the poor countries, which may mean that they will increase their CO2 emission.**

### South-North mistrust

- > **It is also imperative to deal with the catastrophic mistrust prevailing between the countries in the north and the south. It is important that the developing countries will not end up paying the price for the present climate problems. In the long run, it will be worthwhile to prevent climate disasters in the poor countries.**

### Rights of indigenous peoples:

- > **Denmark has a unique opportunity to influence on securing the rights of the indigenous peoples in a new climate agreement.**

*The newsletter is based on the hearing on Climate Changes and Developing Countries that took place 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008. The hearing was organised by the Danish Board of Technology for the Danish Parliaments Committee for Environment and Planning and the Committee for Foreign Affairs.*

The human-made climate changes hit the developing countries considerably more than the countries in the Western world. CARE International and the UNOCHA (the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) have compiled a report that for the first time presents an overall picture of, where the climate changes are expected to hit the most vulnerable parts of the world, within the next 20-30 years. The report concerns where drought, floods and cyclones as a consequence of the climate changes will hit in the hardest way and potentially develop into humanitarian disasters. It is for instance in Africa in the areas south of the Sahara, the entire east coast and parts of western Africa. And it is in south and south-eastern Asia, northern India, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Experts predict that extreme events such as drought, floods and storms as well as an increasing lack of water will become some of the major consequences of the climate changes. The UN has assessed that drought, floods and storms in the years between 1994 and 2004 have hit 200 million people a year, primarily in the developing countries. And lack of water will mean a decrease in the production of grain, livestock and wood in many developing countries, whereas the same production will increase in many developed countries. Conclusively, the developing countries will be hit most severely.

### **The developing countries are particularly vulnerable**

Unfortunately, the developing countries are badly prepared to meet the climate changes. At

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the hearing of the Danish Board of Technology, Kirsten Halsnæs from Risø, member of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPPC, said that the developing countries are dependant on primary sectors and natural resources. This is for instance the case in many African countries in which more than 80% of the population work within agriculture under primitive conditions, without irrigation, fertilizers or other technology that could contribute to prevent the climate vulnerability. At the same time, poverty in the developing countries may present a vicious circle within which deltas, forests and rural areas are destroyed through overexploitation.

It is also a problem that the infrastructure is poor. Gravel roads, primitive bridges and badly maintained railways are often situated in areas with a risk of flooding. The water systems are overloaded and the sanitary systems do not work, and by flooding, toilets will consequently overflow and pollute the water resulting in widespread epidemics.

At the same time, the level of education is low and the information systems do not work resulting in the fact that data are not sent, and coordination during disasters will not work. Finally, many areas have weak governments that impede the planning and carrying through of adaptation strategies. So all in all, the developing countries are very badly prepared to deal with the climate change and disasters.

## **Climate disasters do not have to become humanitarian disasters**

The developing countries pay the price of the climate changes, even if they have not created the problems. But changes in the climate conditions do not have to develop into humanitarian disasters. It does not happen in wealthy countries with the means to analyse, warn and coast protect etc.

Many deaths can be prevented if “early warning” systems are present, Poul Erik Lauridsen from CARE informed. Unfortunately, there is a tremendous lack of data from the developing countries. Kirsten Halsnæs also mentioned the lack of concrete data. In Denmark, we make climate models all the way down to a 5 x 5 km scale. But in most developing countries the climate models cover 100 x 100 km. It takes money to improve it. For instance, many countries do not have weather stations, and in Ghana, where the establishment of weather stations was financed some years ago, they have decayed. So part of the effort to prevent disasters will be to achieve more concrete climate data, also on local level, enabling improved “early warning” systems. In this respect, it was mentioned that the military through satellite surveillance has more concrete data, and Poul Erik Lauridsen requested

that the relevant organisations, as it has been the case in the USA, will have access to these data.

It is also important to climate safeguard when future building and construction projects are started, preparing them to resist changed climate conditions. For instance, the companies that construct bridges should adapt the height of the bridges to how high the water level can be during flooding. Danida pays for a lot of bridges and roads in the afflicted areas, and that money will be wasted if the height of the bridges will not be adapted to the water level during flooding.

There is a lot to save by making design manuals describing how for instance bridges and roads should be constructed in a way that the investments in infrastructure are climate safeguarded, Kirsten Halsnæs said. Even though design manuals – like in Bangladesh – are compiled in order to climate safeguard projects financed by Denmark they can also be applied in relation to other investments in infrastructure.

Design manuals should also be made for the 40,000 drinking water wells that Danida is about to build in Bangladesh over the next years. They should be drilled deeply enough to hit the groundwater level, thus avoiding salt water penetration during flooding. At the same time, they should be so tall that the dirty water does not run into them. Furthermore, the inaccurate climate data in the developing countries should be considered and the necessity of sufficient safety margins accepted. This means a smaller price increase to secure bridges and roads than if we knew precisely what the situation would be like.

The peasants could also be encouraged to grow a larger variation of crops thus preventing the peasants from losing everything in case of a drought and to secure a large rain water collecting capacity, due to the fact that many areas have varying periods of heavy rain and periods of drought.

## **Prevention is cheaper than humanitarian assistance**

Poul Erik Lauridsen pointed at the great importance of investing in the disaster prevention and climate adaptation. If you take a look at the period from 1990 to 2005, humanitarian assistance has quadrupled, because we have seen a lot more disasters. But not much has been invested in disaster prevention and climate adaptation. The CARE report refers to figures from the UN system indicating that for each kroner you invest in disaster prevention and climate adaptation you can save 7 kroner in humanitarian assistance. And CARE has concluded that after a famine disaster in Niger, it took approx. 80 times as much to re-

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habilitate a malnourished child than it would have taken to prevent it from happening.

Poul Erik Lauridsen found it to be tremendously important to achieve binding objectives for the reduction of greenhouse gas emission and that we do not forget the millions of poor people that are already now experiencing the consequences of a rougher climate. "At the COP 15 in Copenhagen, which Denmark will host, we have the opportunity to influence on the negotiations and help draw out the agenda," he said.

## The mistrust between the north and the south

In order for the COP 15 to become a success, the great mistrust between the countries in the north and the south must be defeated. Nanna Hvidt made this quite clear. She is the Director of DIIS and a member of the International Commission on Climate Change and Development that the Swedish government has appointed up to its EU chairmanship during the summit in 2009.

In the developed world, there is a common feeling that the G77 countries have "conspired" against the West. In reality, the G77 countries have very different interests. For instance, large countries like China and India do not share the same interests as minor island states or very poor African countries like for instance Burkina Faso. But they agree on two things: they will not pay for the climate disaster, and they have a mistrust of the western world and institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the UNDP.

Nanna Hvidt made it clear that the climate adaptation will reach about the same level as the amount donated to humanitarian assistance on a global basis. The commission appointed by Sweden will present suggestions to financing possibilities. The commission will also suggest that the financing should be transparent, long-term and independent of national governments. It could for instance be international tax on bunker fuel, fuel for vessels that are presently not taxed. There are also private insurance companies as members of the commission who find that you could insure peasants against the consequences of the climate changes through a mix of private and public financing.

"But we in the west have a major reliability problem towards all the developing countries, as we have never lived up to the objectives of the humanitarian assistance internationally agreed upon," said Nanna Hvidt. "We do not observe the UN decisions of the 1960ies saying that the developed countries should spend 0.7% of their GNP on humanitarian assistance." There have also been summits and donation meetings at which the developing countries have been promised all kinds of assistance that have never been

paid. The institutions are also a problem. The managements of the World Bank and the IMF represent the western world as it looked like

### Forest

All participants at the conference agreed that forest is an important, but under-prioritised area. Here is what some of the participants said:

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has calculated that the emission of CO2 from clearing forests amounts to approx. 20% of the world's total CO2 emission. To many poor countries it is by far the largest contribution to the CO2 emission.

*Gert Aagaard Andersen, the Environmental Department in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

There are many possibilities to help reducing the emission of greenhouse gasses from the developing countries. Among these is support for forest preservation. In relation to forest preservation it is important to bear in mind that part of the forestation takes place to satisfy a need for timber in Europe, North American and increasingly also in China. Therefore, it is important to increase the focus on the origin of the timber, for instance by introducing labelling arrangements and regulations in our own part of the world.

*Helle Munk Ravnborg, senior researcher at DIIS*

Forest is one of the areas receiving far too little focus, even though it is extremely important. It takes a lot more effort, also how to fit it into a common economic frame. There are people who use the slash-and-burn method, and then there are the enormous corporations in Brasil that clear a lot of forest. How do we include it all? It has not been well developed yet.

*Sofus Rex, The Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy*

Rights and common development problems are not only important from a moral point of view, but also because it makes sense economically and is part of the solution to the climate crisis. There is a major cohesion of the best preserved forest areas and the areas inhabited by natives and other local societies. And in order to find the solution of the climate crisis we must take a look at the former experience and ask the vulnerable groups who are influenced by the climate changes and efforts, for advice.

*Christina Nilsson, IWGIA*

at the time after 2nd world war. "Nobody really trusts the UNEP either, but here the developing

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countries have a considerate representation", Nanna Hvidt said. Conclusively, she finds that we are talking about a jumble of institutions that the developed countries conceive as efficient, whereas they do not seem trustworthy in the south, or institutions trustworthy in the south but which are conceived as inefficient in the north. She thinks that the existing institutions should be abolished and that a new one should be established to deal with the financing of the climate changes.

Jakob Simonsen, Director of the UNDP Nordic Office, agreed on Nanna Hvidt's analysis. "The UN of today does not represent the 21st century," he said at the hearing. "Many people will agree on that, and this point of view could form the basis required to change it." He thought, however, that it is of such urgency to commence the processes of climate adaptation that it cannot wait until new and ideal institutions are established to perform the processes and administer the assistance to the developing countries. But he fully agreed on the importance of dealing with the mistrust that the countries in the south have of the western countries.

## **Indigenous peoples are hit most severely**

The poorest developing countries are particularly vulnerable when it comes to climate changes, but the situation is even worse for the many indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups. Many hunters, fishermen and subsistence peasants are dependant on nature, and at the same time they belong to the poorest groups of population in the countries they live in, because they have been displaced to areas in which nature is particularly vulnerable.

Christina Nilsson from IWGIA, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, explained that the climate changes mean that existing problems with political, social and economical marginalisation and displacement from land and thereby natural resources will be further intensified.

The indigenous peoples fear that their financial situation and natural resources will be worsened to such an extent that it will jeopardise their social life, traditional knowledge and culture. At the same time, some of the efforts made to ease the CO2 emissions also threaten their existence. This could for instance be the production of biofuels, large dam projects or protection of large forest areas that drive people away from their land or worsen their living conditions considerably.

This takes place in spite of the Declaration on Indigenous People's Rights passed at the UN general meeting in 2007. Christina Nilsson pointed out that many countries that voted for the decla-

ration have no intention to implement the rights in their legislation. "In this respect, Denmark, who was very active in drawing out the declaration, could put more pressure on," she thought. "Part of the problem is that the people stationed at the embassies do not have a large knowledge of indigenous peoples. We have the Danish strategy for indigenous peoples, but this is forgotten. I think it is a question of informing the embassy employees more about this matter, thus making the topic valid at a local level, where the rights should be implemented."

## **The rights of indigenous peoples and the climate summit**

After the hearing, Christina Nilsson said that Denmark has been active up to the passing of the Declaration on Indigenous People's Rights and has a special obligation to support them. She also refers to the Minister for Foreign Affairs Per Stig Møller who has said that it has priority in the Danish foreign policy.

"In the overall development work and as the host of the climate summit in Copenhagen, Denmark has, in my opinion, a quite unique opportunity to give priority to the rights of indigenous peoples," she said. "For instance by giving support to vulnerable groups in their efforts to build up capacity enabling them to cope with the climate challenge and by participating in national and international climate processes. In fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just granted 1.7 mill. DKK for this purpose. But if concrete results should come out of it, it is important that it will be followed by strategic considerations as to how Denmark as the host of the COP15 can secure the real influence of these groups on a new and just climate agreement based on rights."

Christina Nilsson thinks this could be done by ensuring that existing and future climate efforts are socially just. In addition, Denmark can assist in preparing the documentation that shows how vulnerable groups of people are influenced by climate changes, and to support the own initiatives of these groups in relation to climate adaptation.

## **Expert panel at the hearing**

Kirsten Halsnæs, Risø  
Member of the UN International Panel on Climate Change, IPCC.

Poul Erik Lauridsen, CARE  
Co-writer of the report Humanitarian Implications of Climate Change.

Christina Nilsson, IWGIA  
Responsible of climate change in IWGIA.

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# Fra rådet til tinget

Newsletter from The Danish Board of Technology to the Danish Parliament

Helle Munk Ravnborg, DIIS  
Head of the DIIS research on CO2 reduction in developing countries.

Jens Fugl, Danida  
Technical Advisory Services. Analyses of the consequences of climate changes in the co-operating countries in the programme.

René Karottki, adviser  
Former energy adviser of the European Commission, Directorates-General and Services, Development.

Geert Aagaard Andersen, Danida.  
Head of the Environmental Department in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sofus Rex, The Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy

Nanna Hvidt, DIIS. Director.  
Member of the International Commission on Climate Change and Development appointed by the Swedish government.

John Christensen, Risø  
Head of the UNEP Risø Centre on Energy, Climate and Sustainable Development.

Jakob Simonsen, UNDP  
Director of UNDP's Nordic Office

## Links

Written report and podcast from the hearing on [www.tekno.dk](http://www.tekno.dk).

CARE International's report "Humanitarian Implications of Climate Change" can be downloaded from [www.care.dk](http://www.care.dk). Further information on the data used for this report can be seen on <http://www.careclimatechange.org>.

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