



Development & Climate days

Global ambition.

Local action.

Climate resilience for all.

#DCdays17

Over the last decade, Development & Climate Days (D&C Days) has built a reputation for providing stimulating and interactive debate of topics and issues at the interface of development and climate change during the middle weekend of the UN climate change talks.

Resilience through empowerment and access, will be one of four key themes explore at this year's D&C Days.

This year the host partners have elaborated a strategic plan to contribute to the achievement of the Paris Ambition and seek to do this by bringing evidence into dialogues aimed at influencing key stakeholders – the private sector, the climate negotiators and the climate adaptation community.

1. Resilience through empowerment and access

Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice

The IPCC Fifth Assessment Report¹ describes climate resilience as a pathway to achieve sustainable development. Climate resilient pathways are strategies, choices and actions that reduce climate change and its impacts while managing climate risk; they are development trajectories that combine adaptation and mitigation to realise the goal of sustainable development.

Communities and people are more vulnerable to climate risks when they are poor and lack assets, when they are disempowered, marginalised and unable to participate in decision making. Building adaptive capacity can reduce vulnerability and build resilience. Adaptive capacity – the ability of individuals, communities and countries to make informed choices to manage shocks – requires access to information; the realisation of rights; ability to participate in decision making; empowerment and an asset base to act as a buffer against shocks.

These key factors of resilience lie at the intersection of climate action, disaster risk reduction, sustainable

development and human rights. Building resilience empowers people to anticipate, manage and adapt to stresses and shocks, whether the stresses are climatic, economic or social. Pathways to resilience address the root causes of poverty inequality and exclusion by putting people at the centre of decision making with a focus on prevention and preparedness.

Key elements of climate resilient pathways include:

1. Poverty reduction

Poverty reduces adaptive capacity and increases vulnerability. Without assets, households have fewer resources with which to manage risks. Social protection systems are increasingly playing a role in increasing resilience by providing a safety net for households in the form of cash/asset transfers and labour market instruments to address the immediate and underlying socioeconomic risks facing the poor. When these programmes are linked to actions to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts they can result in more

durable pathways out of poverty and climate vulnerability.

Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1) strives to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030 while building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events along with other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. This objective is echoed in the Paris Agreement which aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty.

2. Empowerment

Empowerment enables people to access productive resources (eg land, water, infrastructure and credit) and to participate in the decision making processes that affect their lives. Constraints to empowerment include unequal power relations, lack of opportunity, lack of capacity and inequality due to gender, ethnicity, religion, location, disability or age. Disempowered people are more

vulnerable to climate risks as they lack information, the power to make decisions and access to resources. In most cases disempowered people do not know their rights and are unable to claim their rights which means they are unable to hold decision makers and political leaders to account.

On the other hand, empowered people can build on their assets and capabilities to increase their resilience. For example, empowering rural women in their role as food producers, by ensuring they have the same access to productive resources such as land, technology and capital as men, could increase yields on their farms by 20-30 per cent² providing economic assets with which to manage risks.

3. Human rights

Climate change has implications for the full range of human rights, particularly for people living in situations of poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability. Climate impacts erode the rights on which human dignity depends – rights such as the right to food, water, shelter and health. When these rights are eroded vulnerability increases and people and communities are more susceptible to risk. So when a community loses its crops and seed stores to a flood for example, people are unable to realise their right to food but they are also vulnerable to disease and malnutrition and they have fewer assets with which to withstand future shocks.

In addition, a failure to respect human rights in actions to mitigate or adapt to climate change can undermine people's rights, exacerbate climate injustice and increase vulnerability. For example, where renewable energy plants are constructed without adequate participation by local communities, the development can risk excluding people from traditional grazing lands or from water sources, thereby increasing their vulnerability. Rights-based climate actions deliver benefits to people in terms of wellbeing, opportunity, resilience and sustainability.

4. Gender equality

Men and women are affected by climate change in different ways, because of the societal and cultural roles and responsibilities placed on them by families and communities. Existing gender inequalities mean that climate change ultimately places a greater burden on women. In many communities women are the primary food producers and providers of water and cooking fuel for their families, so when these resources become scarce due to climate change women's work burden increases as does their exposure risk. Gender responsive climate decision making recognises these differences and the particular contribution women can make to more resilient communities. It also promotes women's representation and participation in decision making valuing their knowledge and their experience.

5. Participation and access to information

The opportunity to participate in decision making processes which are fair, accountable, open and corruption-free is essential for climate justice and for equitable and resilient societies. The voices of people vulnerable to climate change must be heard if resilience building is to be effective. Knowledge and information are key to empowering people and increasing resilience. Access to information about climate impacts, climate policies and plans for climate related infrastructure and investment can help communities to engage effectively in decision making and to manage risk. In addition, building capacity and complementing traditional and indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge can play an important role in empowering people to manage risk and increase resilience.

Conclusion

Ultimately a resilient society is a fair, inclusive and sustainable society. The goals set by Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction now need to be implemented in a mutually reinforcing way to increase resilience to all risks and to empower every person to play their role in sustainable development.

¹ IPCC (2014) Fifth Assessment Report. Working Group II: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Chapter 20. Climate-resilient pathways: adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable development.

² FAO (2012) Cooperatives: empowering women farmers, improving food security.