

BACKGROUND PAPER 6

Addressing Climate Change in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

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IRF2015 is a collaboration of leading sustainable development institutes from across the globe that responds to the need for independent, rigorous and timely analysis to inform the evolution of the post-2015 development agenda and the concurrent intergovernmental process on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed to at Rio+20. IRF2015 partners envision a post-2015 development agenda that is universal in scope, takes an integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of global development challenges, and can lead to more sustainable and equitable development outcomes for all.

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of IRF2015 partner organizations.

1. Introduction

The global context for development has been transformed in the fourteen years since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed. Developing countries—from emerging economies to least developed countries—are now more firmly in the driving seat in shaping their own development strategies. Numerous countries have graduated to middle income status since 2000, and there are now only 36 low income countries left, mostly located in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹ While extreme poverty continues to be a pressing issue, the world managed to achieve MDG target 1a (halving the proportion of people living below \$1.25 per day) seven years ahead of schedule.

Yet climate change could increasingly and dramatically undermine, and even reverse, many of those gains over the coming decades. As the 2013 Human Development Report for Peru stated succinctly, "If we disregard sustainability, whatever progress we have made in poverty reduction or improvement of human development will just be erased due to climate change."

Indeed, climate change and development are inextricably linked, both in terms of the impacts that will be felt and in terms of the responses and solutions that are both necessary and possible. Quite importantly, policies and investments that advance economic development—when designed properly—can often be the same policies and investments that tackle the causes and consequences of climate change. With sustainable development as our overarching objective, we can find ways to reap substantial benefits from aligning development and climate frameworks and effectively integrating climate action into our development strategies. This is particularly significant given the concurrent timing of the post-2015 development agenda, UNFCCC 2015 climate agreement, the Hyogo Framework for Action, and Financing for Development summit. Yet, decision-makers will also need to be mindful to avoid using the Post-2015 Framework to address issues better left to other processes, including the UNFCCC.

2. Why This Matters

The challenges

The negative impacts of climate change are set to escalate if no action is taken. The recent World Bank report, *Turn Down the Heat*, pointed to the potentially devastating implications of climate change for development outcomes. In addition to the long-term adverse impacts of temperature and sea level rise on food production, water security, and coastal settlements, climate change is also likely to exacerbate weather-related shocks and stresses.

The brutal tragedy of climate change is that it will most affect those people and countries that have contributed least to the problem. Poor people, for example, tend to rely disproportionately on natural assets like land, water, fisheries, or forestry—all of which will also be profoundly impacted by climate change.² If the current emissions path continues, increased average temperatures are projected to lead to immediate decreases in crop yields in low latitudes, where most poor people live, and in *all* latitudes once warming exceeds 2° C, placing tens of millions at additional risk of hunger—even before the effects of extreme weather events like droughts and floods are taken into account.³ Water availability will be severely affected as a result of serious climate change, with hundreds of millions of people exposed to increased water stress.⁴

Infrastructure and human settlements will also be at much greater risk, especially in densely populated coastal mega-deltas, which will be at risk of sea level rises and storm surges. With sea level rise, salinization of soils in coastal and deltaic zones will pose serious challenges for food security.

Temperature increases, heat-waves, cyclones, hurricanes, and flash floods will also place major strains on urban infrastructure, in particular municipal energy and water systems.

Climate change will also create new risks for human health. Health effects are likely to include increased malnutrition; more people suffering death, disease, or injury as a result of extreme weather; increases in the burden of diarrhoeal diseases; and changes in the distribution and seasonality of malaria. All of these impacts will hit the poor, the elderly, the young, and the marginalized hardest.⁵

The solutions

Even while climate change itself poses significant costs and risks to development, actions to reduce poverty and improve economic growth—when designed well—can also tackle climate change. Ensuring access to energy, building sustainable cities and ensuring food and water security can also reduce GHG emissions and build resilience to potential climate impacts. For example:

- disaster risk reduction is an essential component of climate-resilient development and adaptation;
- sustainable urban transport systems such as bus rapid transit can reduce emissions while enhancing access to transport services for the poor;
- agriculture practices that integrate forestry can boost resilience to climate impacts while also storing carbon; and
- distributed solar power can often provide less expensive and more resilient access to energy for the poor than diesel-based generators.

Not all solutions are necessarily a “win” for development and a “win” for climate. There are often real trade-offs. However, there is a growing recognition that cost-benefit analyses have consistently underestimated the significant co-benefits of climate action and there are significant policy and investment opportunities to enhance both development and climate outcomes.

3. Addressing Climate Change in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

While the post-2015 development framework should avoid duplicating the core elements of an international climate agreement, such as emissions targets, there is an opportunity to recognize and bolster the ways in which development and climate action go together, especially at the country level. It is important to also note that addressing climate change is relevant for all countries. So how can the post-2015 framework effectively integrate climate-related concerns? Five recommendations are provided below.

First, the preamble or other similar framing for the post-2015 agenda *could* recognize the inextricable links between climate and development and the central importance of climate change to development in the 21st century. An explicit reference to the importance of avoiding catastrophic climate change and limiting global average temperature increase to less than 2° degrees Celsius would underscore this point.

Second, the post-2015 targets should focus on eliminating extreme poverty and improving economic growth while also providing important climate-related benefits. The targets should be seen as relevant to all high income countries expected to make more ambitious commitments in reducing GHG emissions. These targets might also help provide the impetus for more specific commitments by countries in the UNFCCC context. Specifically, the targets *could* include the following:

- Build resilience and reduce deaths from natural disasters, including climate-related disasters.
- Support smallholder agriculture to become climate resilient and sustainably increase smallholder yields by x%.
- Increase the water-efficiency of agricultural production by 25 percent.
- Reduce the rate of food loss and waste by 50 percent. Reducing food loss will support the resilience of the food insecure to climate-related impacts, while it can also help avoid the emissions from the production of the large quantities of food wasted.
- Reduce deforestation by x% and increase reforestation by y%.
- Double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. This can help drive energy access because distributed renewable energy can increase energy access in rural areas.
- Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency in buildings, industry, agriculture and transport. Energy efficiency can reduce costs while contributing to GHG reductions.
- Phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful production and consumption of fossil fuels.
- Halve incidence of morbidity and mortality from energy-related air pollution by 2030.
- [Halve] incidence of morbidity and mortality from indoor air pollution by 2030.
- Increase the share of women and men and communities with secure rights to land tenure. This can provide greater land security that is essential to building climate resilience, while also helping to forestall the harmful impacts of deforestation and ecosystem loss.

Third, a goal on a 'Global Partnership for Development' *could* include cross-cutting targets that help promote development and climate synergies:

- Promote co-benefits by integrating climate change and disaster risk reduction within development strategies and planning.
- Ensure universal access to climate and weather information. This could provide benefits for improving *inter alia* resilience, health, food security and urban sustainability.

Fourth, means of implementation should foster policy coherence and encourage win-win-win (mitigation, resilience and development) solutions. Implementation *could* focus on providing finance to support country-owned development strategies and plans that integrate climate change objectives within an overarching development framework. That can include support for national mitigation and adaptation strategies and other actions linked to the UNFCCC process. Additionally, given the magnitude of the sustainable development and climate challenges, a key test of success for both the post-2015 (SDGs) and climate agreements will be the degree to which they produce frameworks and commitments that speak to and facilitate action from private sector and sub-national government actors.

Fifth, data and monitoring systems have a crucial role to play by showing the extent to which progress is or is not being made. By tracking and making available development and climate indicators in key sectors, including at the subnational level, further improvement will be more likely.

Endnotes

- ¹ See http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups#Low_income
- ² See WRI, UNDP, UNEP and World Bank (2005) *The Wealth of the Poor: Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty*.
- ³ International Energy Agency (2013). *Redrawing the Energy-Climate Map*. World Energy Outlook Special Report.
- ⁴ Parry, M. (2008). *Humanitarian Implications of Climate Change*. Presentation to UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 30 April 2008.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*