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Climate Change and Food Security: The Need for a Human Rights Based Approach

By Christoph Bals (Germanwatch), Sven Harmeling (Germanwatch) and Michael Windfuhr (Brot für die Welt)

Climate change will affect developing countries most heavily. Their limited response capacities lead to particular challenges: They have limits to forecasting changing weather conditions, particularly extreme weather events, or to investing in infrastructure such as dams or other mechanisms of flood control. Response capacities are also needed to enable changes in the use of agricultural crops and varieties as well as irrigation and land use techniques. Affected families need support in order to cope with the need to migrate or to cover such costs as damages to home, land, or family. It is important to differentiate between adaptations that can be done at the household level, locally, by national governments and where international support may be needed.

While some priority action needs to be urgently implemented in adapting to the short-term consequences of climate change, adaptation must be viewed as a long-term challenge for societies. "Mainstreaming", or integrating this challenge into sectoral and other policies and programs at different levels of decision making, is necessary. One priority must be reducing vulnerability to climate change. In particular, adaptation policies must address the negative effects and hardships felt by the most vulnerable groups. Ecosystem management plans that allow for multi-sectoral response dealing with whole livelihood systems are needed in addition to sectoral responses. This study summarizes available instruments for responses at different levels and in key vulnerable sectors. The study recommends that adaptation policies need to be closely monitored in order to guarantee that means are spent meaningfully.

A human rights-based assessment can help to best orient adaptation policies and the use of all instruments towards most vulnerable groups and to set priorities on who should receive support first and what can be implemented progressively. One of the strengths of this approach is that it helps to set up procedural participation guarantees for affected communities. This includes having access to relevant information (transparency) and the right to complain. A second strength is that a rights-based approach requests a specific outcome. Governments have to prove that they focus their policy and budget decisions toward the most vulnerable groups and that no group is overlooked. Governments have to prove that their own adaptation policies do no harm i.e. deprive people from access to food or water.

Development cooperation can play a crucial role in all stages of the adaptation policies. Different actors can play different parts. Bi- and multi-lateral aid can help integrate adaptation into policy development. Capacity must be built at all stages of the adaptation process in developing countries, from disaster preparedness and early warning to insurance schemes and policy design issues. Other stakeholders, such as the scientific community and NGOs, should be included into adaptation planning. Aid organisations often have access to the most vulnerable groups and they can assist with their experiences in project management and implementation, as well as by mobilizing internationally available knowledge.

Financing these adaptation measures will need adequate international support. The study discusses the UNFCCC-supported National Action Plans for Adaptation (NAPAS) as well as the strength and weaknesses of the newly introduced Adaptation Fund under the Kyoto Protocol. The UNFCCC process will likely take major decisions about the future adaptation process at the end of 2009.

Climate change and human rights

National policies – regarding health, education, social services, taxation and subsidies, property rights and their legal protection etc. – often reflect the interests of powerful sectors and are seldom oriented towards the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups. This is true for formal and informal political decision-making structures. Particularly, marginalized women and men in rural areas and in poor quarters of urban conglomerates do not benefit from them. They usually have no access to a functioning legal system, land-registration systems, and justice and appeal mechanisms for checking discriminatory laws or their practices, and so on. National governance as well as international policies can be determinants of poverty and exclusion.

International trade policies often have a direct impact on the income of poor producers or consumers. Policies of multilateral institutions can and sometimes do limit states' capacities to act in favour of poorer segments of their societies. A rights-based orientation for adaptation policies can help to overcome such forms of discrimination and exclusion. It may not be able to overcome all forms of institutionalized, historic marginalization, but they can at least avoid aggravating existing inequalities. Moreover, if adaptation policies are not well designed, they might not achieve their own objective – supporting those affected the most. Instead, the money would again be directed towards those more powerful within the society.

A rights-based approach stimulates analysis and reflection on the causes of entitlement-failure and allows a more precise description of roles, obligations, and responsibilities of different actors in the development process. It is a way of reducing the accountability-gap, which works against the poor in many countries.

A rights-based approach asks for an end to the violation of the most vulnerable groups and aims for positive outcomes for those groups. It also sets result-oriented standards for the political processes. Such approaches must be participatory, transparent, and non-discriminatory. To sum up, rights-based adaptation policies are a good tool to ensure that funds earmarked for adaptation are spent reasonably. It would be helpful if the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the FAO, and the UNFCCC would develop a rights-based adaptation policy checklist that could help governments design adaptation policies accordingly.

This article was first published as part of the study "Climate Change, Food Security and the right to Adequate Food", conducted by Germanwatch and Bread for the World. The study analyzes the relationship between climate change and food security, evaluates the findings systematically and incorporates them into policy recommendations for the national and international level, focusing on the development of policies to adapt to climate change.

The complete study is available at <http://www.germanwatch.org/klima/climfood.htm>

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POLICY & RESEARCH

Bread for Nine Billion?

The year 2050: The earth's population numbers over nine billion, of which about half lives in the tropics and subtropics – regions where the impact of climate change is most apparent. Extreme heat, droughts and chronic water scarcity make farming impossible, thus endangering the very basis of survival. This is the grim scenario painted by David S. Battisti and Rosamond L. Naylor, authors of the article "Historical Warnings of Future Food Insecurity with Unprecedented Seasonal Heat", which appeared in the January issue of Science.

The recent food crisis has provided a glimpse of what the coming decades hold. It has also demonstrated how such crises can explode in social unrest. As the population grows, so does global demand for food. According to World Bank estimates this demand will grow by 50 percent by 2030 and food prices will increase drastically in the long term, following their current recovery. These developments, coupled with the disastrous impacts of climate change, will impact the poor the most.

Decision makers must take advantage of the current low food prices to ensure long term food security, says Alex Evans in his report for the think tank Chatham House entitled "The feeding of the nine billion. Global food security for the 21st century". He proposes the formation of an organisation along the lines of the International Energy Agency (IEA) that will stock emergency grain reserves much like the IEA maintains oil reserves.

He advises developing countries to invest more in agriculture and particularly in supporting smallholder farm enterprises, on which 1.5 billion people already depend. In his report, Evans also recommends using adaptable grain varieties rather than ever increasing amounts of fertilizer. Further points in his action plan include assistance for developing technical and social infrastructure as well as facilitating market access, if we are to avoid heading towards a humanitarian disaster by 2050. (*Monika Kronz*)

For the report "The feeding of the nine billion. Global food security for the 21st century" please see: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/694/>

The Science article "Historical Warnings of Future Food Insecurity with Unprecedented Seasonal Heat" is available at:

<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/sci:323/5911/240>

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From Conflict to Peacebuilding – New UNEP Report

"Integrating environmental management and natural resources into peacebuilding is no longer an option – it is a security imperative." This is the main argument of the new report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) "From Conflict to Peacebuilding – The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment." The report was launched at UNEP's Governing Council in Nairobi on February 20, 2009.

Through 14 case studies, the report outlines different roles environmental affairs and natural resources could assume in conflicts. In the case of Darfur, scarcity of fertile land and water contributed to the conflict, while in the case of Sierra Leone and Angola, diamonds were used to finance war efforts. Kosovo, Afghanistan, Gaza and the West Bank reveal how the environment is impacted by armed conflict.

Within the report, emphasis is also laid on the role of environment and resources for peacebuilding and reconstruction: The case of Rwanda exemplifies how tourism and biodiversity conservation could be used for job creation and income generation. The frontier area between Peru and Ecuador has become a jointly managed nature reserve – a Peace Park – with the aim of building confidence and defusing tensions between the two states.

Aside from further improving early warning capacities, another main recommendation of the report is to improve oversight and protection of natural resources during conflict. This should prevent environmental degradation and resource extraction from prolonging or reigniting conflicts. If enduring peace is to be achieved, then both the sustainable use of natural resources during reconstruction processes and fostering environmental cooperation have to be a priority. (*Achim Maas*)

The policy report is available at:

http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/pcdmb_policy_01.pdf

More information at <http://postconflict.unep.ch/> and at

<http://www.unep.org/conflictsanddisasters/Home/tabid/146/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

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Regional Water Cooperation – A Dry Pathway towards Peace in the Middle East?

Solving water problems has been identified as a topic of common interest to Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians. The implementation of joint water-related projects is therefore seen as a hopeful sign and related projects have received substantial funding from the international donor community. Theoretical considerations support the thesis that cooperation over water resources could act as a pathway for building peace. A new case study prepared by Adelphi Research within the EC-funded Initiative for Peacebuilding (IfP) seeks to deepen the understanding of how the peacebuilding effects of such cooperation can best be harnessed, supported and sustained.

The case study analyses two existing initiatives promoting water cooperation between Jordanians, Israelis and Palestinians: the Good Water Neighbors project initiated by Friends of the Earth Middle East; and the Regional Water Data Banks Project, which promotes data management collaboration between water agencies. The study focuses on the design and implementation of cooperative processes, as both the form and content of cooperation are critical for peacebuilding. Analysis of the two cases provides insights into the challenges of putting environmental peacebuilding into practice at different levels of society. Common challenges identified include: dealing with existing asymmetries, effecting political change, creating relationships and ownership, and dealing with different expectations. One of the main recommendations the report makes is that water cooperation initiatives claiming to promote peace need to spell out how they aim to contribute to peacebuilding and define clear theories of change. (*Annika Kramer*)

The case study "Regional Water Cooperation and Peacebuilding in the Middle East" is available at

http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/pdf/Regional_Water_Cooperation_and_Peacebuilding_in_the_Middle_East.pdf

This case study is one of a series within IfP's cluster on Regional Cooperation on Environment, Economy and Natural Resource Management. A second study focusing on the intersection between the management of non-renewable natural resources and diverse forms of conflict in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru has recently been published. Case studies on the South Caucasus and the Great Lakes Region as well as a cluster synthesis report will follow soon.

For more general information on the Initiative for Peacebuilding please check www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu

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Water Bridges in Istanbul?

The World Water Forum, the largest international water conference organized every three years, will be held in Istanbul from March 16-22. The theme of the conference is "Bridging Divides" between different regions and technologies. This year's focus will be on the impact of climate change on water availability and on possible adaptation strategies.

The conference is organized by the World Water Council, which was jointly established in 1996 by the World Bank and key international organizations in the water sector. Its membership now encompasses a broad spectrum ranging from non governmental organizations to academic institutes and stakeholders in development cooperation. However, despite participation from policy makers, the conference has not achieved the kind of political credibility that, for example, a United Nations organized event on this issue could have.

In Istanbul, as in the previous conferences, there will be sufficient material for political debate. Private sector demands for full cost recovery or state investment guarantees for water services are countered by non governmental organizations who criticize that such a move would benefit the private companies rather than the affected communities. In numerous developing countries poor users living in peri-urban areas, for instance, are not in a position to bear the full costs. Private utility companies therefore do not connect such users to the supply network, or the users themselves may opt to use contaminated water due to high costs. It remains to be seen to what extent this year's conference in Istanbul will produce a political response to this conflict. (*Annabelle Houdret*)

Further information on the World Water Forum is available at <http://www.worldwaterforum5.org>

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CONFERENCE REPORTS

Africa and Climate Security: Alarming Signals at the Local Level

In the past cattle raiding in Africa was mainly a survival response, taking place when disease and famine struck a community. However, due to regional climate changes and current social and economic developments such raids are now turning more and more into violent conflicts. The conference "Climate change and security in Africa", that took

place in January in Paris, shed some light on the current situation of pastoral communities in different parts of Africa, in the context of changing weather patterns. The conference – jointly organized by CEAN, CERI, ACTED and the Egmont Institute – aimed at stimulating a critical reflection on the complex relationship between climate change and security in Africa.

Land degradation is becoming worse in severity and extent, thus increasing the need for cattle raiding in order to restock depleted livestock. However, this is not the only reason for more frequent violence. Raiders are using increasingly sophisticated weapons such as machine guns, which not only results in more violent conflicts but makes drought management activities a much greater challenge for development organisations like ACTED. Another important aspect, brought up during the conference discussions, is that as a result of climate change local communities find it increasingly difficult to preserve the cultural heritage and traditional knowledge that have for centuries informed adaptation strategies. This trend is visible in the erosion of the time-honoured leadership of elders. Traditionally a factor of local stability, the elders' knowledge becomes less effective as a means to cope with the challenges of extreme weather. This, in turn, leads to decreasing respect in the younger generation and to an accelerated disintegration of local communities. As outlined by an EU representative, all these trends are important issues for EU-Africa relations. From his perspective the implementation of the EU-Africa strategy, announced in November 2007, can function as an instrument to address the cross-cutting problems of climate change and security. To this end, however, the conference clearly showed that the strategy also needs to take into consideration the complex web of issues at the local level. (*Dennis Taenzler*)

For more information on the joint conference of the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (CERI) und Centre d'études d'Afrique Noire (Sciences po Bordeaux) (CEAN), please see

<http://www.acted.org/2009/01/19/conference-on-security-and-climate-change-in-africa-january-20th-2009/>

For more information on the situation of pastoralist communities in East Africa, please see the Oxfam Briefing Paper "Survival of the fittest" at

<http://www.oxfam.org/policy/bp116-pastoralism-climate-change-0808>

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IRENA is Born – A Chance to Tackle Energy Security?

In a truly international response to the growing issues of energy scarcity and insecurity as well as climate change, the International Renewable Energy Agency – IRENA – was founded on January 26 in Bonn, Germany. While the initiative and early work belong to Germany and like-minded countries such as Denmark and Spain, the global embrace of IRENA's goals reveals countries' common understanding of the urgent need for solutions, and 75 countries signed the Agency's Statutes in Bonn.

The Agency's goal is to reach the massive market potential of renewable energies. IRENA's work of building capacity, facilitating technology and know-how transfers, and creating suitable policy frameworks is aimed at both developing and developed countries – which was clear from the 60 supporting statements made by country representatives. Sweden for example wishes to learn from the experience of larger countries, but also to share its own experience with achieving a high share of renewable energy. South Korea and others highlighted their wish to change their heavy reliance on imported energy.

Many countries including Uganda, Turkey, Oman, and Afghanistan described not only their enormous renewable energy resources, but also their lack of financial and policy mechanisms.

The current economic instability and fluctuating oil prices were brought up repeatedly. Concerns did not stop at the short-term, however; many statements reflected the sentiment that our current energy system built on fossil fuel is unsustainable. Iceland, Egypt and many others echoed the general agreement that energy security and environmental protection are global challenges, intrinsically linked to world peace and durable economic development. Renewable energy, in short, is viewed as a path toward sustainable development, decreased dependency on imported and fossil fuels, and increased security of energy supply for all countries. (*Irina Comardicea*)

For more information on the International Renewable Energy Agency please see www.irena.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming events are also regularly published at <http://www.ecc-platform.org/>

"Securing European Energy Supplies: Making the Right Choices" in Brussels (17-18 March)

This conference looks at how the EU and its energy sector can prepare for the challenges posed by global energy markets. It deals with energy in the framework of general security issues but also in the light of the EU's climate change policy. The external dimension of security of supply will feature prominently, focusing on Europe's eastern partners, the growing role of the Mediterranean and the potential of developing countries in shaping the response of the EU to current supply risks.

Further information on the event is available [here](#)

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"IHDP Open Meeting 2009" in Bonn (26-30 April)

The theme of the 7th Open Meeting of the International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change is "Social Challenges of Global Change". The conference program focuses on social challenges of global change and addresses the issue in plenary sessions, special round tables and parallel scientific sessions. Side events and meetings, book and project launches, a generous exhibition area and specialised formats addressing the science-policy interaction will complement the event.

Further information on the event is available [here](#)

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"Forest tenure, governance and enterprise: New opportunities for livelihoods and wealth in Central and West Africa" in Yaoundé, Cameroon (25-29 May)

Organized by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Cameroon Ministry of Forests and Wildlife, this conference will seek to catalyze new and broader actions on securing tenure rights in Central and West Africa for implementation by governments, civil society organizations and local communities. Participants will share experiences in securing tenure rights, including the relationship between tenure reform and other goals such as improving livelihoods, securing investment, spurring small scale enterprises, and addressing climate change.

Further information on the event is available [here](#)

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IN BRIEF

Arctic Governance Emerges on the Agenda, Global Land Grabs on the Rise, Peace with Water Initiative is Launched

The effects of climate change have brought **arctic governance** as an emerging issue on the international agenda. The five Arctic coastal states have recently stressed, in the Ilulissat Declaration, the significance of a legal framework for the region. Different aspects of such a governance structure will be discussed at a March conference in Berlin, jointly organized by the three foreign offices of Germany, Norway and Denmark. More information on the conference and background materials concerning arctic governance are available [here](#).

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A recent briefing paper by GRAIN has shed light on an ongoing but widely unnoticed **global land grab**: "Food insecure" governments and private companies are identified as drivers of this process. While the former are shopping for land to produce their own food offshore, the latter are turning towards land as a new source of revenues in these times of financial and food crises. Interestingly, the countries (e.g. Uganda, Sudan) that governments and companies choose to invest in often suffer from food stress themselves and are potentially prone to conflicts. The briefing paper is available [here](#).

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In February, Mikhail Gorbachev launched a high-profile **Peace with Water Initiative** in the European Parliament. In a Memorandum for a World Water Protocol, the initiative calls for water issues to be included in UN negotiations on a successive process to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. An in-depth article about the initiative, including further links on the issue is available [here](#).

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