



# POSITION PAPER

## Climate Change Adaptation

**OVERVIEW** Current science shows that climate change impacts are unfolding much faster than previously modelled or observed. However, political intransigence is remarkably common – despite the fact that emissions continue to rise, limited resources are being provided for adaptation, and the scientific community continually warns of the possibility of global warming exceeding 4 to 6 degrees Celsius. The scale and increasing momentum of climate change impacts – and the disproportionate vulnerability of the populations least responsible – makes a massive adaptation response both necessary and urgent. The social, economic and environmental–ecological consequences of climate change are most severe for people in developing countries; and within those societies poor women and children are disproportionately affected. Climate change is already undermining development efforts, making poverty reduction harder to achieve. But early investment in adaptation can help reduce risks and build resilience. Massive and urgent investment must be made now – not only to mitigate climate change but also to provide sufficient resources and scaled-up support for widespread adaptation activities across a range of sectors, regions and countries.

**Poor and marginalised people in developing countries are increasingly bearing the brunt of climate change impacts but have limited responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions that have led to global warming.**

**CARE is working with people around the world on innovative, community-based adaptation approaches that help vulnerable communities adapt to the changing global climate.**

**Successful adaptation requires complementary actions that cut across traditional sectors and disciplines leading to enhanced disaster risk reduction, climate resilient livelihoods and sustainable natural resource management.**

### Key Demands

#### NATIONAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

- Create an enabling policy and institutional environment that integrates national and local perspectives on adaptation in the most vulnerable countries with a focus on gender equity and the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable populations.

#### LONG-TERM FINANCE

- Agree substantial new and additional long-term climate finance for adaptation, through targeted funding and direct budgetary support that will not divert funds from any budgets designated for poverty reduction, sustainable ecosystem management, gender equality, social welfare, social safety nets or social protection.

#### CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

- Enable effective civil society participation in the planning, monitoring and implementation of climate adaptation, especially for financing, accompanied by appropriate consultation processes, capacity-building and resourcing.

#### BEYOND STAND-ALONE ADAPTATION

- Ensure that adaptation efforts that go beyond stand-alone adaptation projects include: (a) policies and actions that reduce the underlying causes of vulnerability and also build adaptive capacity, together with (b) an integrated approach in key sectors such as water, food and nutrition security, natural resource management and disaster risk reduction that incorporates

climate change risks, projections and vulnerabilities in order to increase the resilience of the poorest people.

#### VULNERABLE AND MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

- Support vulnerable and marginalised communities and populations to participate effectively in decisions on how resources for adaptation are applied.

#### REDRESS SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

- Redress social inequalities, especially gender equity, and enshrine human rights, as a necessary foundation for achieving successful adaptation.

### Framing the Issue

The lack of action in recent decades on both mitigation and adaptation makes severe climate change impacts even more inevitable. Those who are increasingly bearing the brunt of these impacts are primarily poor and marginalised people in developing countries who have no responsibility for the greenhouse gas emissions that have led to global warming. Therefore, high-emitting developed countries have a responsibility to urgently reduce their emissions and ensure that adaptation efforts are adequately funded and supported. To date, they have fallen far short of this responsibility.

With adequate support, local people can adapt to climate change themselves, although it must be recognised that, increasingly, there are limits to where and how much adaptation is possible. To address adaptation, it is imperative to move beyond small and often isolated community-based adaptation projects and scale-up practice through learning and capacity development, coupled with new finance and widespread policy and institutional support. Adaptation must also be fully integrated into local, regional and national development planning.

Successful adaptation requires complementary actions that cut across traditional sectors and disciplines, leading to enhanced disaster risk reduction, climate-resilient livelihoods and sustainable natural resource management. Reducing social inequalities, and in particular empowering women and girls, is also critical to strengthening community resilience, reducing poverty and improving local adaptive capacity.

In certain areas, such as poor low-lying countries and islands, in dry lands and in some mountain regions, climate impacts will become so severe that adaptation will no longer be an option. In these circumstances, a stronger focus on climate change loss and damage, together with rehabilitation and/or compensation, will be required.

### Status of climate adaptation in climate change policy

Adaptation negotiations under the UNFCCC have made solid technical progress culminating and building upon the Cancún Adaptation Framework formulated in 2010. Ongoing processes such as National Adaptation Plans, the Loss and Damage Work Programme and the establishment of the Adaptation Committee are critical steps in the right direction. However, many of these have been hindered by procedural obstacles, and all are constrained by a lack of committed political will and inadequate funding for adaptation. The lack of global ambition necessary to reduce emissions, tackle climate change and provide new and predictable financial resources, is a major obstacle to progress at policy and programme levels.

The UNFCCC Work Programme on climate change loss and damage is contributing to a better understanding of the technical and political challenges raised by severe climate impacts. But major differences remain. Many developed countries are still shirking their historic and current responsibilities for causing climate change damage, while vulnerable countries are increasingly voicing their concerns about the impending threat of severe climate damage and the insufficient mitigation and adaptation support. The Work Programme must strengthen its work on equity and addressing social inequalities, in particular gender inequalities, in determining developing countries' vulnerability in the face of current and future impacts of climate change.

### Policy recommendations

In order to scale-up adaptation, the following funding and policy advances must be made.

### International

At international level, Parties must:

- Reach agreement on the funding, modalities and guidelines for the National Adaptation Plan process to provide predictability for the delivery of resources and support for the implementation of National Adaptation Plans.
- Expand National Adaptation Plans, which are essential policy tools for national development in the context of climate change, beyond Least Developed Countries to include all vulnerable countries.
- Ensure that national adaptation programmes support the rights of vulnerable people to identify and achieve concerted community-based responses to climate change.
- Massively scale-up climate finance activating the Green Climate Fund, including a commitment by developed countries to provide a 2013-15 public finance package that is at least double the amount of the Fast Start Finance Pledge period (2010-12) and includes at least

US\$10-\$15 billion in new public finance for the Green Climate Fund.

- Recognise that failing to mitigate is not an option for many of the world's poorest people or countries and reducing adaptation costs and climate change damage require a massive reduction in global emissions and a scaling-up of support for adaptation.
- Establish the next phase of the Nairobi Work Programme to disseminate good practice related to: climate change vulnerability assessment; enhancing resilience; combined ecosystem-based adaptation and community-based adaptation approaches; and the integration of adaptation into broader development planning and programming.

**“The social, economic and environmental–ecological consequences of climate change are most severe for people in developing countries; and within those societies poor women and children are disproportionately affected.”**

- Fully operationalise the Adaptation Committee as an equitable and gender-balanced body that includes policy-makers, research organisations and practitioners, with representatives of civil society including local communities and women's groups particularly from developing countries. Approve a workplan for the Committee that ensures its effective operation and facilitates global and regional co-operation to enable developing countries to access the information, support and resources required to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.
- Facilitate global and regional co-ordination to enable developing countries to access support and undertake national adaptation planning. The Adaptation Committee can play a vital role in enabling national governments to access the information, resources, and technical and capacity support they need to ensure that effective, pro-poor efforts reach vulnerable communities.
- Provide adequate financial and technical support for local and national capacity-building to prepare the necessary policy, budgetary and institutional structures for mainstreaming local adaptation planning into development planning processes.
- Ensure that, if a UNFCCC Work Programme on agriculture is created, the emphasis will be on adaptation and

prioritising food security for developing countries and vulnerable populations.

- Make progress in the Work Programme on Loss and Damage towards an international mechanism that will address the needs of, and respect and promote the rights of, the poorest groups who bear the consequences of unabated emissions.
- Ensure that adaptation makes full and effective use of links with other key sectors and institutions, especially for disaster risk reduction and humanitarian emergencies.

## National and Local

At national and local level, governments must:

- Institutionalise National Adaptation Plans as iterative, continuous and participatory planning processes, rather than static lists of prescribed outcomes.
- Prioritise full support for community-based adaptation into national and local planning and policy processes and ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable people are at the forefront to receive support for community-based adaptation.
- Recognise, and support an explicit focus on, the poorest and most vulnerable members of society as primary agents and beneficiaries of adaptation support.
- Use existing national structures of decentralised government as entry points for a bottom-up integration of local adaptation plans into national policy.
- Ensure, including through capacity-building efforts and interventions, to promote gender equity, the equal involvement of women and enhance the involvement of marginalised groups in all decision-making processes related to NAP.
- Build on existing local and national institutions to create the capacity to manage the effective mainstreaming of local adaptation planning into development planning processes.

## References and resources

- CAN International (2012) Doha Milestones and Action. How COP18/CMP8 must increase short term ambition and establish a clear path to 2015.
- CARE/ALP (2012) Policy Brief: Climate Change. Why Community-based Adaptation Makes Economic Sense.
- CARE International climate change website - [www.careclimatechange.org](http://www.careclimatechange.org)
- CARE International (2012) Climate Change Strategic Plan 2013-15.
- DARA/Climate Vulnerable Forum (2012) Climate Vulnerability Monitor – a Guide to the Cold Calculus of a Hot Planet. 2nd Edition (continued on next page)

- Rossing T, Otzelberger A, and Girot, P (expected 2013) Scaling up the use of tools for community-based adaptation: Issues and challenges in Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change, Scaling it Up, Jessica Ayers, Hannah Reid, Lisa Schipper, Saleemul Huq and Standley, Sarah (2012) building resilience in a complex environment, Learning & Policy Series, Briefing Paper, Issue 04 October 2012, CARE International/UK.
- Standley, Sarah (2012) building resilience in a complex environment, Learning & Policy Series, Briefing Paper, Issue 04 October 2012, CARE International/UK.

---

CARE International  
Communications Enquiries  
Jo Barrett [jbarrett@careclimatechange.org](mailto:jbarrett@careclimatechange.org)  
T: +44 (0) 7940 703911 (UK)

Policy Enquiries  
Pascal Girot [pgirot@careclimatechange.org](mailto:pgirot@careclimatechange.org)

Poverty, Environment and Climate  
Change Network  
c/o CARE Denmark,  
Jemtelandsgade 1, 2300 Copenhagen  
Denmark  
[info@careclimatechange.org](mailto:info@careclimatechange.org)

