

Climate Change

A framework for Christian Aid programme responses

1. Climate change - Christian Aid's position

Christian Aid's corporate position on climate change rests on four key pillars:

- **Cutting greenhouse gas emissions** urgently and deeply
- **Tackling poverty** and supporting sustainable development – poor women and men are most dependent on natural resources and most vulnerable to climate change
- **Strengthening poor communities' ability to cope** with inevitable changes in climate
- These responses **should be financed by the rich, industrialised countries** which bear the greatest responsibility for climate change and have the greatest ability to respond

[Truly Inconvenient \(Nov 2007\)](#); [Human Face of Climate Change \(Nov 2007\)](#)

Currently engagement with climate change issues is relatively stronger in terms of policy and campaigning than in programme work. We recently developed an overview of possible programme responses to climate change ([CC Guidance Notes for ID - June 2007](#)), and there has been a range of innovative but often small-scale work in different countries.

2. Adaptation – coping with the impacts of climate change

Poor women and men are likely to be hardest hit by climate change because they are poor: their lack of assets, security, access to services and voice make them more vulnerable to climate hazards, and less able to adapt to them (as with any other hazard or shock). So supporting people to cope with climate change is first and foremost about **combating poverty** through promoting secure livelihoods, accountable governance and economic justice. This does not mean that all our programme work is climate change adaptation – but that climate change is a key issue adding even greater urgency to our mission of poverty eradication. Climate change is also a **driver of poverty**. Increasingly unreliable rainfall can lead to reduced harvests; increasingly frequent and severe disasters can destroy homes and crops altogether; while long-term changes in sea levels, temperature or rainfall can make it impossible to pursue traditional livelihoods options at all.

In many countries, our livelihoods work already responds to these changes, such as reduced or less predictable rainfall, for example by strengthening community coping strategies (water storage, drought resistant crop varieties, etc), building local capacity and enhancing disaster risk reduction measures. However, where this work is largely reactive or does not take account of the likely scenarios for climate change, there is a risk that it will not be sustainable in the longer term. This is a particular risk when the climate becomes more unpredictable e.g. in Africa in August/September 2007, communities in the Sahel experienced in coping with drought were badly affected by floods for which they were largely unprepared.

So there is an urgent need to strengthen our community-based **adaptation** work – but this must be based on explicit analysis of and response to climate trends, impacts and risks.

2.1 Analysis of climate trends and impacts – the first steps in community-based adaptation are to understand how the climate is already changing, what is likely to happen in future and how these changes will affect poor women and men. This analysis should ideally bring together both scientific data and community knowledge.

The **climate science** input needs to include both past trends and future forecasts/projections, with as much local-level detail as possible. Future climate change cannot be predicted with certainty, and this must be remembered in our thinking about adaptation. However, effective adaptation depends on creating the best picture we can of future climate conditions. It is also vital to build and maintain links with climate scientists to keep this picture up to date and respond to improving information on emerging risks.

The **community analysis** should involve participatory reconstruction of long-term weather trends and their impact on resources, livelihoods and coping strategies. The process should also enable poor women and men to understand and use the climate science by presenting data in easily accessible formats, facilitating dialogue between communities, NGOs and scientists. As well as climate, the analysis needs to explore the links between climate change, poverty, vulnerability and capacity. Climate change is only one driver of poverty, interacting with others such as access to and control over resources, social exclusion and market access. Erosion of natural resources may have other causes, such as water extraction, deforestation due to commercial logging or increased urbanisation. To respond effectively, we first have to understand how these factors drive people's vulnerability, and the existing capacity they have to

manage this¹. Unless programmes or partners have carried out this explicit analysis of climate changes, impacts and responses, we would **not** describe their work as climate change adaptation. Even if projects are already under way, they should still carry out this kind of analysis and revise their approach accordingly.

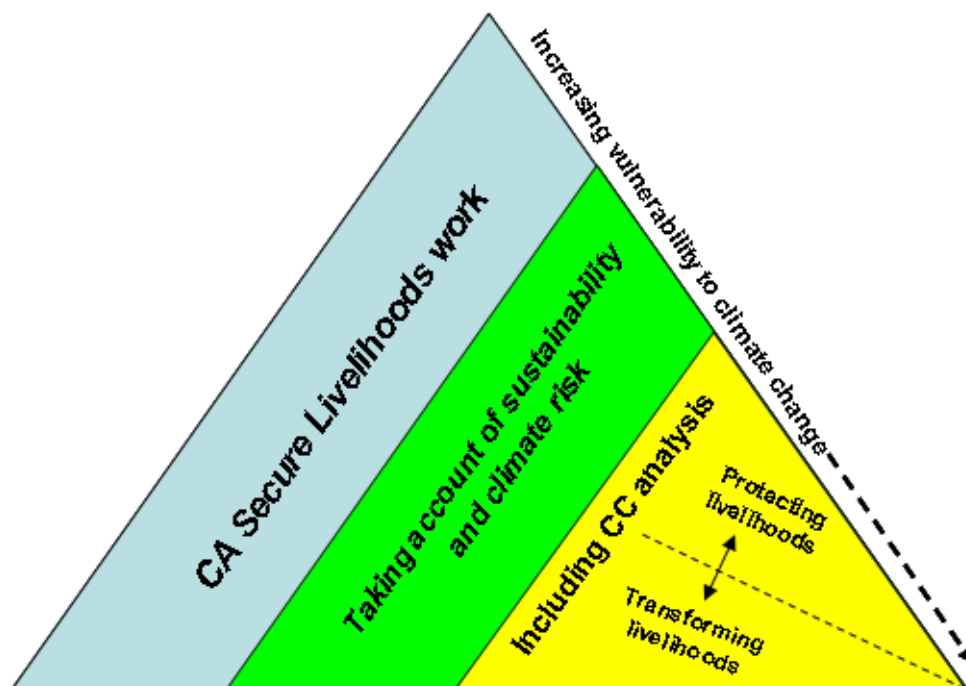
The aim of the analysis is to support poor women and men to adapt, based on a stronger understanding of likely climate changes and how these will impact on their livelihoods. This will involve a mix of two complementary responses – transforming and protecting livelihoods:

2.2 Transforming livelihoods – poor women and men need to develop livelihoods better suited to ongoing or projected climate change. These build assets, are sustainable economically, environmentally and socially and integrate the risks of climate change.

While we have often focused on supporting existing livelihoods strategies, it is likely that more emphasis on developing new strategies will be needed in the longer-term, in response to increasingly severe and unpredictable weather. For example, farmers who depend on water-intensive crops such as maize or rice may need to shift to new varieties or even new crops as rainfall and groundwater sources become less reliable. This work on transforming livelihoods is likely to range from direct practical inputs, through support to access new resources, technologies, markets and services, to work on agriculture, infrastructure, trade and poverty reduction policies.

2.3 Protecting livelihoods – the other main, and complementary, response is to strengthen both individual and community resilience and ability to protect key resources in the face of increased climate variability and extreme weather. Resilience is the opposite of vulnerability - it involves empowering poor women and men to tackle the factors that keep them poor. This would build on much of our existing development and humanitarian work, strengthening community coping mechanisms and reducing disaster risks. Again, practical support must go hand in hand with participation/governance and policy/advocacy work.

While we often think primarily of rural livelihoods, climate change will severely impact poor women and men in urban settings. Living in unsafe conditions, with poor sanitation and drainage, they are highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. Needing to buy rather than grow their food, they are also vulnerable to rising food prices due to poor harvests. Our protection work therefore needs to include an *urban focus*.



¹ The Secure Livelihoods Strategy Group is developing a toolkit to support adaptation planning processes

The triangle represents the whole of Christian Aid's current secure livelihoods work. The smallest (yellow) triangle covers work that aims to protect and/or transform poor women's and men's livelihoods, based on an explicit climate change analysis. Christian Aid will only describe work in the yellow triangle as climate change adaptation. The more vulnerable poor women and men are to climate change impacts, the greater the need to move our livelihoods work into this yellow triangle. The middle (green) triangle shows livelihoods work which explicitly addresses sustainability, including climate risk and vulnerability, but that has not (so far) included a more detailed climate change analysis. Over time, all our secure livelihoods work should build in an analysis of sustainability and move to either the green or yellow triangles.

Adaptation is about empowering people to cope with the impacts of climate change. This includes both severe shocks as a result of short-term climate variability, where our entry point will typically be through disaster risk reduction work; and ongoing degradation of livelihoods as a result of longer-term more gradual climate change, where our entry point will typically be through livelihoods development programmes. Climate change adaptation therefore learns from and draws on the complementary strengths of both disaster risk reduction and livelihoods programming.

2.4 Adaptation policy and financing – whichever approach(es) we support, there will be a role for policy engagement, especially around National Adaptation Programmes of Action ([UNFCCC NAPAs](#)). There will also be opportunities to support poor women and men to benefit from international funding streams for adaptation such as the Global Environment Facility's Adaptation Fund (as also with mitigation – see 3.2). We can make a key contribution to policy debates by demonstrating that climate change adaptation can work – that it can have a robust scientific basis and effectively empower poor women and men. In particular, identifying and quantifying the *costs of adaptation* to climate change (based on the work we support directly, or drawing on other work) will strengthen global and national advocacy for adaptation financing. In order to qualify for adaptation funding, our work must be able to demonstrate that it is addressing the consequences of climate change not just background weather variations.

2.6 Displacement and migration – poor people's other main adaptation option is to move temporarily, seasonally or even permanently. Christian Aid has a range of experience in this area, and it would be useful to consolidate our learning and do more thinking to strengthen our position. Rural-urban migration is a key issue to consider, in line with an increased focus on urban adaptation.

2.7 Sustainability – even if our initial analysis suggests that climate change is not a priority issue, all our livelihoods work still needs to be **sustainable**. This includes ensuring that projects don't contribute to poor people's vulnerability to climate change by e.g. increasing reliance on resources that are likely to be reduced or made more variable by climate change, but also taking account of other drivers of poverty - environmental, economic, social and political - and how they can be overcome. Again, there is an overlap with accountable governance, supporting poor women and men to have a voice in decisions that affect their livelihoods or the natural resource bases they depend on.

3. Mitigation – cutting greenhouse gas emissions

To date, Christian Aid's work on mitigation has been most visible in advocacy and campaigns, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in industrialised countries. This is obviously vital. However, about half of emissions are now produced by non-rich countries; and their emissions are growing fastest. These are mostly middle income countries, especially the BRICS group (Brazil, India, China and South Africa), which are all in the top 20 of global emitters. There is also a group of poorer countries with large, urbanising populations which are making a growing contribution to emissions, such as Nigeria (second highest emissions in Africa), Indonesia (third highest in Asia after China and India), Pakistan and the Philippines. [CC data in UN HDR 2007](#)

So, **mitigation** efforts now need to extend beyond the rich world. This hasn't been a major focus of our programme work to date, but with less than two years to develop a new global agreement on climate change, we must engage with mitigation urgently, and learn as we go. We will pursue the following approaches to mitigation:

3.1 G77 engagement with global climate change agreement process - the demand for a "development-friendly" global climate change agreement must come from the countries most affected. We can work with national and global partners to support G77 countries to engage constructively with the agreement process, through e.g. information exchange, capacity building, facilitating national debates/building national constituencies, and documenting impacts and solutions. This is a priority for our corporate climate change advocacy work, and will be supported by GAP as well as geographic Divisions.

3.2 Low carbon development pathways - there is no room left in the atmosphere for non-rich countries to follow the rich world's carbon-based model of development, so there is an urgent need to find ways to lift people out of poverty without triggering higher emissions. This will involve both policies and models for pro-poor clean development.

The focus of our *policy* work should be on promoting coherent, pro-poor clean development and emissions strategies in BRICS and other emerging emitters. The future development path of these big economies will be critical for global emissions over the next few decades. Hand in hand with advocating for approaches to development that are both climate-friendly and pro-poor, there is a pressing need to demonstrate what these approaches would look like in practice. We will facilitate or broker a small number of *model* energy projects, generating clean energy and distributing it at scale (10,000s of households). The focus will be on poor and marginalised communities in BRICS or other middle income countries with rapid growth in emissions but also widespread energy poverty. Demonstrating that clean energy generation and distribution to the poorest communities is both feasible and commercially viable will be a vital input into national and global mitigation policy and financing.

3.3 Pro-poor mitigation – current mitigation policy and practice risks exacerbating poverty and marginalisation. For example, commercial production of *biofuels*² in Latin America and hydro-power development in Asia have led to dispossession of poor rural communities; while future large-scale forest protection projects have the potential to exclude forest-dependent communities and threaten their livelihoods. We have a clear role in challenging negative impacts and promoting more pro-poor approaches to mitigation. One response will be to strengthen poor women's and men's capacity to engage with, and ideally benefit from, international *mitigation funding*, such as the Clean Development Mechanism, by participating in large commercial or state-run projects. This work would build on our extensive experience challenging mega-projects and 'anti-poor' development. It would need to engage with issues of governance, voice and participation and would have a significant policy dimension.

The growing demand for biofuels may provide new livelihoods options for poor women and men – but it may also lead to reduced food security, increased food costs and the loss of land rights, forests and water resources to commercial production. We need to understand more about the advantages and disadvantages of biofuels, in terms of their impact on livelihoods as well as on greenhouse gas emissions. In terms of programming, it is important to understand the local livelihood opportunities and impacts in their own context and respond accordingly.

About 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions are related to tropical *deforestation*. Three of the emerging emitters listed above - Brazil, India and China plus The Philippines, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and DR Congo - are home to 45% of the world's tropical forests. These are key 'carbon sinks' for removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. We have a well-established record in forestry, through work on logging, non-timber sources of income and fuel-saving innovations for forest-dependant communities. Forestry work will contribute to mitigation by reducing emissions and enhancing carbon sinks, but mitigation should not be the main rationale. Our work on forestry should always primarily support poor people's livelihoods and their right to manage forest resources sustainably and in ways that enhance biodiversity.

3.4 Mitigation and livelihoods – the implication is that much of our work on energy poverty, biofuels and forest management, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), will be more about strengthening the livelihoods of poor women and men than climate change mitigation. If we used the adaptation diagram on the previous page, it would be in the green triangle (sustainable livelihoods) rather than the yellow triangle (climate change). Some of this work may contribute to mitigation policies and approaches that incorporate development and ensure that the poorest women and men are not excluded. However, the 50 LDCs produce just 0.5% of global emissions, and cutting their emissions will have little or no impact on climate changes that are already under way. For the sake of clarity and credibility, we would only justify the work listed under 3.1 and 3.2 as climate change mitigation.

² Biofuels is the term used to cover 3 basic sub-classes – agrofuels, woodfuels and municipal by-products (FAO Bioenergy Terminology)