



Integrating climate change in the post-2015 development agenda

March 2014

Introduction

At the Rio+20 conference, member states of the United Nations (UN) expressed concern about the scale and gravity of the impacts of climate change. These impacts affect all countries and undermine their ability, particularly in developing countries, to achieve sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹ This concern was later reflected in reports and proposals which have contributed to debate about the post-2015 development agenda.² The Open Working Group (OWG), established by the Rio+20 conference and charged with formulating a proposal for the post-2015 development goals³, recognised during its seventh session that climate change can ‘seriously jeopardize social and economic development gains in the years and decades to come.’

The urgency of action on climate change, acknowledged by members of the OWG, is supported by climate science. From current trends, we are heading for a global average temperature increase between 3°C and 5°C by the end of the century.⁴ Limiting climate change to 2°C warming, the current target of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.⁵ Even in a world 2°C warmer, development gains will be undermined and attaining and maintaining the post-2015 objectives will be made more difficult and costly.

Climate change and development are inextricably linked. People living in poverty are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, and actions to address climate change can have major implications for development choices and outcomes. At the same time, the achievement of global climate change objectives will depend on development decisions taken across sectors and in all countries. Well-designed policies and investments that advance social and economic development can often simultaneously tackle the causes and consequences of climate change.

While the grave threat to sustainable development and poverty eradication that climate change presents may be recognised by the OWG, how climate change will be included in the post-2015 goal framework remains undecided.⁶ With the post-2015 development agenda, financing for development discussions, negotiations towards a 2015 UNFCCC climate agreement and revision of the Hyogo Framework for Action all taking place concurrently, the challenge is how to reap benefits from aligning development and climate frameworks and how to effectively integrate climate action into development strategies. The coincidence of these global governance milestones in 2015 presents a critical and rare opportunity for global leaders to send the right signals to the wider world at precisely the time when strong signals need to be sent in order to avoid dangerous climate change.

This paper contributes towards the dialogue on these inter-related issues, by briefly outlining the significance of climate change for different development objectives and the options for integrating climate

¹ United Nations (2012) *The Future We Want*.

² Including the report of the High Level Panel, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), Global Compact and the Secretary General’s report to the General Assembly.

³ The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has 30 members, identified by the UN regional groups, though most of the membership seats are shared between two or more UN member states. By the end of February 2014, the OWG had held eight ‘stock-taking’ sessions. The OWG is required to report to the General Assembly by September 2014.

⁴ Stocker et al. (2013) *Climate change 2013: the physical science basis*. Working Group I Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Geneva: IPCC: www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/13/hl-full.html

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Climate change is one of 19 topics for potential goals presented in the OWG Co-chairs’ paper of 21 February 2014. The shape of the goal framework will not be finally decided until September 2015.

change into the post-2015 development framework.⁷ The option of leaving climate change to the UNFCCC and not including it in the post-2015 development agenda is not considered, because the crucial importance of climate change for poverty reduction and sustainable development is so widely recognised, not least by Rio+20, that its omission is now hard to conceive.

Climate change and development objectives

The World Bank's recent report, *Turn Down the Heat* (2013), has highlighted the potentially devastating implications of climate change for development outcomes. The impacts of climate change are set to escalate if no action is taken, and these impacts will largely affect those who have contributed least to the problem. People living in poverty tend to rely disproportionately on natural resources like land, water, fisheries or forestry, which will be profoundly impacted by climate change.⁸

The impacts of climate change on agriculture are felt largely through the effects upon crop growth of temperature, atmospheric CO₂ and rainfall. If the current emissions path continues, increased average temperatures are projected to lead to immediate decreases in crop yields at low latitudes, where most of the global poor live, and at all latitudes once warming exceeds 2°C, placing tens of millions at additional risk of hunger – even before the effect of extreme weather events like droughts and floods is taken into account.⁹ The impacts will be felt in the overall availability of food, the stability of food supplies, access to food and food consumption, impacting on the incomes and food security of many millions of people.

Water availability will be severely affected as a result of serious climate change, with hundreds of millions of people exposed to increased water stress.¹⁰ Changes in hydrological patterns and freshwater systems caused by climate change present additional risks to water security where water stress is already a serious concern.

In the energy sector, apart from the question of managing greenhouse gas emissions, which are mostly energy-related, the effects of climate change on water resources will affect the capacity and costs of both hydropower and thermal power generation.¹¹ Increasing variability of river flow will present a challenge for hydropower generation and the viability of schemes already installed, while water supplies for cooling in thermal power plants will be threatened.

Infrastructure and human settlements will be at much greater risk, especially in densely populated coastal areas, which will be at risk of sea level rise and storm surges. With sea level rise, salinization of soils in coastal zones and deltas will present serious challenges for food production and security. Temperature increases, heat-waves, cyclones, hurricanes and flash floods will also place major strains on urban infrastructure, in particular on municipal energy and water systems.

Climate change will also create new risks for human health. Direct effects upon health will be through changing weather patterns and extreme weather events, such as heat waves and floods. The frequency and

⁷ This paper draws heavily from the IRF's Background Paper #6, *Addressing Climate Change in the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (2014), the discussion paper by Fischler et al. (2014) *Options for Integrating Climate Change Considerations into the Post-2015 Development Framework*, and Scott (2013) *Why South Asia Needs To Have Climate Change in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, presented at CEPA Symposium.

⁸ See WRI, UNDP, UNEP and World Bank (2005) *The Wealth of the Poor: Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty*.

⁹ International Energy Agency (2013). Redrawing the Energy-Climate Map. World Energy Outlook Special Report.

¹⁰ Parry, M. (2008). *Humanitarian Implications of Climate Change*. Presentation to UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 30 April 2008.

¹¹ Ellis et al. (2013)

severity of such events is likely to increase. The indirect effects of climate change upon health are through hydrological changes and the ecology of disease-bearing vectors, such as mosquitoes. Malaria, dengue fever and diarrhoeal infections are all climate-sensitive, and likely to spread into areas where transmission was previously prevented by lower temperatures.¹² All of these impacts will hit the poor, the elderly, the young and the marginalised hardest.

Climate change will affect the education of the poorest, and especially girls, through interruptions to schooling and reduced attendance caused by extreme weather events, households' loss of assets and reduced incomes, and by population displacement. Children's physiological development may also be affected.

Post-2015 goals on income poverty and jobs will be more difficult to achieve as climate change disrupts household and business planning and budgeting. For many, and especially the poor, livelihood options are likely to be reduced. In the aggregate, economic growth will be affected – global GDP has already been reduced by climate change – and studies show that early mitigation has a lower overall economic cost than reacting to climate change impacts in later years.¹³

Governance is likely to be affected by changes in the delivery of public services, population displacement and increased local conflicts over resources.

The risk of natural disasters, which are one of the main causes of impoverishment, is likely to increase because of climate variability and longer-term climate change.

While climate change clearly presents a significant threat to development, actions to reduce poverty and increase economic growth in developing countries can also help tackle climate change. For example, sustainable urban transport systems such as bus rapid transit can reduce emissions while enhancing access to transport services for the poor; agricultural practices that integrate forestry can boost resilience to climate impacts whilst also storing carbon; and distributed solar power can often provide cost-effective access to electricity for the poor. Ensuring access to energy, building sustainable cities and ensuring food and water security can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to future climate impacts.

Analysis has tended to underestimate economic damage from climate change,¹⁴ in particular undervaluing the risk of 'worse-than-expected' outcomes, and there is growing recognition that cost-benefit analyses have consistently under-estimated the co-benefits of climate action.¹⁵ Although all development actions do not necessarily have development and climate change co-benefits, there are significant policy and investment opportunities to enhance both development and climate outcomes.

Options for integrating climate change in the post-2015 development agenda

There are several ways that climate change may feature in the framework of global goals and targets for the post-2015 development agenda. As was the case with the MDGs, there is likely to be a narrative for the post-2015 development agenda and this will draw from previous international agreements, including particularly the Rio+20 outcome document and its references to climate change. This narrative should

¹² World Bank (2013) *Turn Down the Heat*. Washington: World Bank.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ IMF (2008)

¹⁵ IRF, op cit.

therefore recognise the inextricable links between climate and development and the importance of climate change to the achievement of development objectives. As was also the case with the MDGs it is likely to be the goals and targets in the new framework that most inform national development strategies and plans.

Whether or not these goals and targets should be formally merged with climate negotiations is an open question: concerns have been raised that the divisive state of global climate politics with its many unresolved issues runs the risk of derailing a post-2015 agreement. Even as a distinct agenda, however, because of the timing of the post-2015 agreement (2 months before COP21), it is critical that a strong signal is sent to the private sector and civil society that climate change is a priority. A weak narrative risks disengaging these constituencies at precisely the time they are being asked (by the UNFCCC) to engage.

Climate change could feature in the framework at the level of a goal or at the level of targets, or both. Goals in the post-2015 development framework will be easily communicable statements of a global ambition with respect to a specific sustainable development challenge (e.g. 'Achieve universal primary education'). Targets will be key specific, measurable and time-bound outcomes (results) that directly contribute to the achievement of a goal (e.g. 'Ensure that, by 2030, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, complete a full course of primary schooling'). This section outlines first what climate change-related targets might look like mainstreamed across different goal areas. It then considers how climate change could feature at the level of a goal.

Mainstreaming through targets

Climate change is a cross-cutting issue for the post-2015 development agenda, affecting all sectors and all countries. It is recognised as being linked to 10 of the 19 'focus areas' identified by the OWG for consideration in the framework.¹⁶ Arguably all goals will need to be climate-smart and include relevant targets that are designed to deliver climate compatible development – ending poverty, shifting to low-carbon development pathways, and enabling adaptation and resilience.

Climate-smart targets will be universal but implemented through national actions and differentiated by country context and in accordance with capabilities. They should be seen as relevant to high-income countries expected to make more ambitious emission reduction commitments under the UNFCCC in accordance with the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities, and by addressing the drivers of climate change might provide impetus for more specific commitments. As well as targets that help address global warming, the framework will need to include targets relating to adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction and resilience.

A number of climate-smart targets have been suggested for the post-2015 development framework.¹⁷ Though by no means comprehensive, these include the following targets, which could be included under several possible goals:

- All countries have developed and implemented low-carbon development strategies or plans, by 2030.
- All countries have national planning processes and instruments in place by 2030, which build resilience to, and reduce the impacts of, climate-related disasters.

¹⁶ See <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>. Surprisingly, this linkage is not identified for the focus areas on economic growth and water.

¹⁷ For example in the report of the High Level Panel and in suggestions from SDSN.

- Reduce the number of people killed due to climate-related disasters and climate change impacts year on year and overall by at least X% by 2030.
- Reduce the number of economic losses due to climate-related disasters and climate change impacts by at least X% by 2030.
- Increase the share of renewables in the global energy mix to X% by 2030.
- Increase the rate of improvement in energy efficiency globally to X% by 2030.
- Phase out fossil fuel subsidies by 2030.
- Increase the climate resilience and yields of smallholder agriculture by 2030.
- Increase the water-efficiency of agricultural production by X% by 2030.
- Reduce net deforestation by X% by 2030.
- Reduce the incidence of morbidity and mortality from emissions-related air pollution by X% by 2030.
- Reduce the incidence of morbidity and mortality from indoor air pollution by X% by 2030.

The above targets are directly relatable to climate change but the indirect effects of climate on non-resource related development indicators such as gender equality, education and economic poverty are often overlooked. There is opportunity in discussing these lower profile effects early on in relation to the development debate and value may be found in their being explicitly included in the post-2015 agenda.

Climate change at goal level

Climate change remains one of the options for a goal being considered by the OWG.¹⁸ It could be framed as a goal to specifically address climate change (mitigation, adaptation and resilience) or it could be a goal that combines climate change with another relevant area (e.g. energy or disaster risk reduction, which have both been proposed during discussions to date). The post-2015 goals will be setting priorities for international development until 2030, and if climate change presents a major threat to development progress it deserves consideration as a goal.

An advantage of a stand-alone climate change goal would be the visibility this gives to climate change as a crucial element of sustainable development, and the possible impetus it might give to accelerate action to address climate change and its impacts. A separate climate change goal may, however, give cause for confusion with respect to the UNFCCC, even if it is consistent with commitments negotiated and agreed there. A separate climate change goal might also be seen as detracting from consideration of climate change impacts across the whole spectrum of development processes, especially if mainstreaming climate change across other relevant goals is not also part of the framework.

Stakeholder views

As we draw closer to the 2015 expiry of the MDGs, a myriad of stakeholders at both national and international level are engaging with the post-2015 consultation process. Most organisations seem to agree on the linkages between ‘healthy natural systems and poverty reduction’, but no consensus exists on how to resolve the issue in a single post-2015 development framework. Below is an illustrative selection of stakeholder views, drawn from conference proceedings, policy notes and formal responses to the OWG and other rounds of SDG negotiation:¹

¹⁸ Ibid.

*Above all, there is one trend – climate change – which will determine whether or not we can deliver on our ambitions **People living in poverty will suffer first and worst from climate change ... The international agreement to hold the increase in global average temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels must be kept.***

High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda²

*SCP should be considered a crosscutting issue rather than as a goal in and of itself ... **Brazil caution(s) against a post 2015-development agenda more focused on natural resources than people.***

Conference on Sustainable Development in LAC³

*We believe that the arguments for merging the two agendas are stronger than the arguments for having two separate sets of goals. One option would be to include one specific goal on sustainability issues in the post-2015 framework. Ideally, however, **sustainability should be included as a component part of a number of the post-2015 goals** ... action on the environment will be essential for eliminating absolute poverty.... not all development challenges can be resolved through a goal framework. Some important environmental sustainability issues may be better resolved through other means.*

UK Government⁴

*There is a fundamental link between global environmental sustainability and poverty eradication... goals should also be coherent with existing international agreements, such as goals and targets on climate change whilst the challenge of addressing planetary environmental boundaries will require an integrated response that will impact on all these elements, and will have to be addressed in some of them, it will also require specific action in its own right. It can therefore also be seen as **an additional cross-cutting ingredient of an integrated post-2015 overarching framework.***

Commission to the European Parliament⁵

Separating the MDGs and SDGs would...create a divide between poverty and sustainable development, fragment efforts at both regional and global levels, lead to unmanageable overlaps regarding finance and infrastructure, and create difficulties in monitoring, reporting and accountability

Paula Caballero, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Colombia⁶

***South Africa expects the developed economies to honour their commitments made in the past.** Discussion on the post-2015 Development Agenda is not a platform for the re-negotiation of the existing commitments, but to build on the existing framework going forward.*

Proceedings of 'South Africa and the Post-2015 Development Agenda'⁷

*[SDGs should] tackle...structural drivers of inequality, poverty and ecological devastation at the global level. A genuine and balanced global partnership then would enable people and institutions to monitor the common but differentiated responsibilities of all actors to prohibit rather than perpetuate these global obstacles. To be good-faith partners then, **governments, business and international institutions must assess the impact of their policies (e.g. corporate accountability, environment, trade...) on human rights outside of their borders.***

Amnesty International joint public statement⁸

*The argument that economic growth is the single and most important driver of poverty (in its multi-dimensional form) eradication and development is unsubstantiated. We recommend merging and reorienting...towards “sustainable, inclusive economies” or “low carbon economic development...**Any model of development through growth alone is at odds with action on climate change and sustainable consumption and production.***

Beyond 2015's response to the OWG Focal Areas Document⁹

Conclusions

The means of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda will need to foster policy coherence and encourage climate compatible development actions. This will include providing finance to support country-owned development strategies and plans that integrate climate change objectives within an overarching development framework, including 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 development agenda and climate agreements will be the degree to which they facilitate and support action from private sector and sub-national government actors, as well as the ability to encourage a strong decision from member states in Paris.

The long-term success of the post-2015 framework, however, will ultimately depend upon how climate-smart it is. The goals must be climate-smart; i.e. include targets that deliver a triple win of ending poverty, shifting to low/zero carbon development, and enabling adaptation, disaster risk management and resilience to environmental shocks and stresses.

Sources of stakeholder quotations

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Acknowledgements

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This document is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Netherlands Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) for the benefit of developing countries. However, the views expressed and information contained in it are not necessarily those of or endorsed by DFID or DGIS, who can accept no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

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