

Presentation

Poverty Reduction and Adaptation to Climate Change: Synergies and Contradiction

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Poverty reduction as overarching task of German development policy

Poverty reduction is the overarching task of German development policy. This task is derived from the shared goals of the international community: the Millennium Declaration and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Germany's strategy paper for realising these development goals, the inter-ministerial Program of Action 2015, which was adopted by the German government in April 2001.

The ten most important points of the program are as follows:

- Boosting the economy and enhancing the active participation of the poor
- Realising the right to food and implementing agrarian reform
- Creating fair trade opportunities for the developing countries
- Reducing debt and financing development
- Guaranteeing basic social services and strengthening social protection
- Ensuring access to vital resources and fostering an intact environment
- Realising human rights and respecting core labour standards
- Fostering gender equality
- Ensuring the participation of the poor in social, political and economic life, and strengthening good governance
- Resolving conflict peacefully, and fostering human security and disarmament

Germany's activities in the field of poverty reduction are based on an extended notion of poverty, according to which poverty is not defined solely by low income, but is a complex state of life, characterised by need, **vulnerability**, injustice and a lack of prospects. For the individual this means few opportunities and little possibility to participate in political and economic life; higher risks because of a lack of social security systems; violations of human dignity and human rights; and limited access to resources such as water and food. Poverty is the cause and the result of all development problems. Just as the causes of poverty are many and varied, so too are the measures undertaken by German development cooperation to reduce it (Source: <http://www.bmz.de/en/principles/aims/index.html>).

Negative impacts of climate change are more severely felt by poor people and poor countries

The impacts of climate change have become more acute in recent decades, and we must assume that they are likely to intensify further. Identifying appropriate responses to climate change should therefore be a key element of the sustainable development strategies adopted by the affected countries.

Yet at present, we have little experience of how to manage this adaptation process. There are scarcely any systematic risk assessments predicting who will be affected, and when.

What is certain, however, is that the negative impacts of climate change will be felt more severely by poor people and poor countries; by those with least adaptive capacity due to their lack of financial and technical resources. They suffer most from the impacts of climate change as they are often directly dependent on the natural environment and agriculture for their survival. Both will be severely impacted by the ongoing process of climate change. Yet due to extreme poverty and a lack of education and infrastructure, most people have limited possibilities of switching to alternative sources of income. The impacts of climate change will worsen the already grave conditions of life faced by the very poor – a vicious circle which will further entrench poverty.

In principle, the situation is not new: populations in affected areas have always had to adapt to climatic changes. However, due to their speed and intensity, the changes predicted for the coming decades far exceed the adaptive capacities of societies and institutions. Traditional adaptation methods and mechanisms are no longer adequate, and the societies affected are likely to become even more vulnerable.

For this reason, the developing countries are calling for intensive support from the industrialized countries – which are primarily responsible for climate change – in planning and implementing adaptation measures.

Taking the above circumstances into account, we can argue that whatever we do to decrease the vulnerability and increase the resilience of poor people to climate change is supporting poverty alleviation. There are clear **synergies** between successful climate change adaptation and poverty reduction.

GTZ approach with regard to adaptation to climate change: mainstreaming

The GTZ approach with regard to adaptation to climate change is the integration of policies and measures to address climate change into ongoing sectoral and development planning and decision-making (**mainstreaming**) with the goal of ensuring the long-term sustainability.

In order to achieve this, several steps have been taken:

In early 2003, a screening of GTZ supported projects has been conducted. This screening had several objectives:

- Identification of sectors and projects which are of importance and relevance with regard to climate change
- Identification of adaptation measures, which have a high priority for partner countries
- Identification of pilot projects to develop tools and methodologies and further gain experience
- Sensitization and awareness creation of GTZ staff for the subject of climate change adaptation

For this, 330 projects have been contacted and asked to fill in a questionnaire. Feedback was received from 104 projects. Half of the projects think, they are directly affected by climate change. Agriculture and water are expected to be the most vulnerable sectors.

Almost all projects (91 %) believe, that their project has a positive impact with regard to climate protection, either in the field of mitigation or adaptation, and the majority (64 %) expressed interest to further consider climate change aspects into the project activities.

Based on the results of the screening, a number of (small) **pilot projects**, which are integrated into ongoing large scale development programmes have been identified:

- India, Tunisia, and Benin on Watershed Management / Agriculture, combat desertification;
- Mozambique and Nicaragua: Disaster Risk Management / Early warning systems;

Those pilot projects favour – in the light of uncertainties with regard to precise regional trends of climate change – win-win and no regret options; they also serve the purpose to gain experience on methods for climate change adaptation, which can be fed into national policies and planning process (e.g. NAPAs)

Possible contradictions

While as the above mentioned screening of projects has shown, almost all projects believe, that their project has a positive impact with regard to climate protection, either in the field of mitigation or adaptation, it is nevertheless possible, that in spite of good intentions, unintended negative impacts are created.

One example is the construction of inappropriate dams to prevent floods or protect coastal areas, where the dams themselves can be a hindrance, that the water can retreat after the floods (e.g. Bangladesh).

Another classical example – for more developed and industrialised countries - is the use of air conditioner for cars to adapt to increased temperatures: while this brings relief to the passengers, it usually causes a higher consumption of fuel with consequent higher CO₂ emissions, which again will – on the long run –worsen climate change.

The term maladaptation is used for action, which increase vulnerability. This could be e.g. by the introduction of drought resistant crop varieties which are, however also prone to diseases; or by introduction of shrimp farming for income generation, for which mangrove forest, vital for coastal protection, are destroyed.

Outlook and open questions

One of the main differences between (a) projects focusing on climate change adaptation and (b) projects focusing on (sector) development is, that climate change adaptation projects try to anticipate what kind of climate change will happen in future. In this light, uncertainties with regard to precise regional trends of climate change bring about **uncertainties** with regard to the **cost – benefit ratio** of climate change interventions. It is difficult to mainstream the concept of climate change adaptation, especially if substantial funding is required and / or if present livelihood and other systems need to be changed drastically.

In order to „kick start“ successful mainstreaming of adaptation and integration into development policy-making and planning, **additional funds** have to be made available to initiative successful pilot projects which can be used as learning ground and models for larger scale implementation.