

Increasing the resilience of poor communities to cope with the impact of climate change

Project summary

In the developing world, hundreds of thousands of poor people live with the constant threat of homelessness, damage to, and loss of, their possessions and means of livelihoods, and risks of injury and death due to weather-related natural disasters - drought, flooding, landslides, soil erosion and desertification.

This project builds on Practical Action's existing experience of working with natural disaster-prone communities in South Asia, and aims to increase the resilience of 37,000 men, women and children from vulnerable communities in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to cope with, and adapt to, the impacts of climate-induced hazards. The project effectively brings together issues of poverty reduction, environmental and natural resources management, disaster risk reduction and climate change.



The project has three main components:

- To strengthen the capacity of communities and government and non-government supporting institutions to prepare and respond effectively to future climate-induced emergencies
- To develop and promote practical (technology-based) interventions to strengthen people's livelihoods and natural resource assets
- To promote the engagement of vulnerable communities in decision making processes on climate-related adaptation strategies in order to influence policy change and increase self-sufficiency

Project outcomes

The project aim of increasing the resilience of poor people to cope with, and adapt to, the impacts of climate change is achieved through strengthening the capacity of vulnerable communities in four South Asian countries to prepare for and adapt to changing and extreme weather conditions.



1. Community-based disaster preparedness plans in four countries

Climate-induced hazards do not have to result in disasters if people are prepared for such events and have the resources to protect themselves and their assets. Those who face the consequences of climate-induced hazards are best placed and have the most incentive to manage the risks. Women, in particular, need to be actively involved in decision-making and planning. This output addresses the need for better community-level planning and the implementation of early warning systems and coping strategies to enable people to prepare for and cope with such hazards.

2. Sustainable technologies for natural resource management, water conservation and agriculture implemented

This output promotes "no-regrets" activities: activities that are based on the needs and priorities of local communities and also strengthen the natural resource base over the longer term. Whatever the changes in climate, such activities mitigate against environmental degradation and lessen the likely impacts of extreme weather (for example landslides and soil erosion). They are practical options that are economically viable and contribute to developing local capacity in the longer term.

3. Capacity of support institutions, local and regional stakeholders strengthened to incorporate community-based climate change mitigation strategies into development planning and natural resources management strategies

Community-based activities will only have a limited effect unless local and regional stakeholders (government, CBOs, NGOs, private sector) take up and support such initiatives. For this to happen the project needs to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to increase their awareness and analysis of climate change impacts and to engage them in supporting adaptation measures and ensuring that existing development plans and policies are consistent with such measures.

4. Changes effected in policy and practice at local, regional and international levels to support community-based climate change adaptation measures

To increase its impact and sustain benefits, it is essential that lessons from the project are analysed and disseminated and are used to inform policies on a wider scale. Although policies on climate change exist, there is a need to raise the importance given to climate change adaptation and to demonstrate how these policies can be translated into practical, effective, community-based adaptation measures. A link needs to be forged between the local experience and needs of communities and the higher level policy making.

At the international level there are a number of initiatives that aim to link greenhouse gas emissions in industrialised countries and developing countries in order to achieve a fairer right to consume fossil fuels and to reduce emissions (for example, contraction and convergence, carbon trading, Clean Development Mechanism). There is an additional need for new proposals to persuade policy-makers in

industrialised countries to provide support and investment for climate change adaptation strategies in developing countries.

Project scope and target groups

The project will work with disaster-prone communities, their representative organisations, other support institutions and government bodies. Benefits will include:

- Reduced loss of life and assets during and after floods, landslides and drought
- Increase in income and nutrition from sustainable natural resources and environmental management
- Rehabilitation of degraded environments leading to decreases in the impacts of climate-induced hazards such as soil erosion and landslides
- Strengthened capacity of poor people in developing community-based initiatives
- More effective support from other government and non-government support institutions to poor communities
- Better understanding of the effects of climate change on the poor and most vulnerable
- Enhanced capacity of partner CBOs, NGOs and government bodies in participatory development approaches
- Enhanced capacity of support institutions and government bodies in integrating risk reduction strategies into long term development plans
- Increased local awareness and information on climate change impacts
- Strengthening the voices of poor communities in decision-making on climate change adaptation approaches



Update - 2007

Now in its third year of implementation, the project has enabled thousands of villagers in the four countries to learn new skills to help them reduce their vulnerability to local disasters and to increase their production of food and earn income to feed their families. Volunteers within the communities have been trained to initiate action when floods come, to assist their neighbours.

The enormity of the challenge that climate change poses to the world is now appreciated, much more so than when this project began. In the four project countries raising awareness about the need for change, and influencing policy makers on the need to make changes in policy has been achieved; changes to national policy and obtaining agreement at international level through international

negotiations at the UNFCCC will take a few more years, but we are confident that the project has played a significant role in this work.

This project year has seen increased activity on networking and influencing in all countries. In Bangladesh, Practical Action took part in the Second International Workshop on Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change in Dhaka in February 2007. We were able to present our work in different workshop sessions, and also host a group of 25 delegates on a two-day visit, with opportunity to discuss the project with world experts on adaptation.

Workshop on Community-Based Adaptation

In July 2007, Practical Action organised a workshop for other development agencies working on community-based adaptation. Government staff and academic experts from around the world also attended, to discuss the topic. Presentations are available to download in PDF format:

- **Adapting to Climate Change in Sri Lanka** Vajira Hettige (871k)
- **Adaptation in a Post-2012 ClimatePolicy Framework** Richard JT Klein, Stockholm Environment Institute (250k)
- **Adaptation and good development** Yvan Biot, DFID (37k)
- **Increasing the resilience of communities to cope with impacts of Climate Change in Nepal** Dinanath Bhandari (1Mb)
- **Increasing the resilience of poor communities to cope with the impact of climate change in Bangladesh** Mizanur Rahman, Practical Action (2.2Mb)
- **Increasing the resilience of poor communities in Pakistan to cope with climate change** Abdul Shakoor Sindhu, Rural Development Policy Institute (1.5Mb)
- **Practical Action's view of Community Based Adaptation** Rachel Berger, Practical Action (60k)

Practical Action works closely with other UK NGOs including Tearfund, Oxfam and Christian Aid and contributed to the production of a report, *Two Degrees, One Chance*, to raise awareness on the urgency of tackling climate change.

http://www.practicalaction.org/?id=climatechange_resilience