ICTs and Climate Change

Building partnerships: Addressing change

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Mountain Forum is an efficient ICT-enabled platform that works towards sustainable mountain development

Overview

Climate change is a global issue that concerns every single individual on the face of this planet. Everyone has to contribute in order to fight against its causes and consequences, but one can't succeed in any of the fights without being aware of what it (causes and consequences of climate change) is and what can one do to start or to continue the fight. The fight against climate change has to be seen from two perspectives: the developed world perspective, and the developing world perspective. Here, only the perspectives of the developing world are discussed.

Raising and enhancing awareness, and building capacity for climate change adaptation is what is mostly needed in the developing world, not excluding of course the mitigation aspect. The use of ICT should and has to be seen as one of the most important motors to raise awareness and capacity-building when used appropriately. Using all ICT means and ways globally as well as regionally, one can build and strengthen partnerships to fight against climate change causes and consequences.

Building partnerships

What do we have within our premises and knowledge to immediately start fighting against climate change without waiting for help from outside? ICT can bring together individuals and organisations to build partnerships and enhance networks of manufacturers, innovators, media, radio, forums, telecentres, content experts, local knowledge champions, good and bad practices champions, policy makers, donors, researchers, livestock experts etc. Many of the aforementioned are already doing lots of work on climate change mitigation and adaptation using ICT applications, but this would have a greater impact if we could build a network for common goals. So far, there are millions of telecentres, communities' radios, local TVs and locally

Sharing climate change solutions and adaptation issues
The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), at a meeting held in Bangkok has given an opportunity to participants from countries in the Asia Pacific region to discuss and share their good practices and success stories on ways to cut greenhouse gases while reducing poverty. The meeting organised in cooperation with the Japanese Ministry of Environment and the Japanese Overseas Environmental Cooperation Centre was an attempt to showcase the mitigation and adaptation strategies in climate change affairs. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Shigeru Mochida opened the meeting. Japan's Vice-Minister for Global Environmental Affairs, Toshiro Kojima, also tried to explore ways of helping developing countries to make adaptations to climate change part of their development efforts. Subsequent to this meeting, ESCAP has plans to launch an Asia-Pacific Gateway for Climate Change and Development.

available computer programmers/trainers in one hand and content experts, local knowledge champions, good and bad practices champions and livestock champions on the other. Henceforth, why not work together and make available the right information and knowledge

to those who need them? Same for researchers, innovators, manufacturers, policy makers, donors, and scientists. If information and knowledge can flow within the above-mentioned networks, lots of progress can be made within the next couple of years in climate change mitigation and adaptation. These networks can build partnership for common goals as they have the knowledge, the innovation, the means and ways to implement them.

Example of A network making best use of ICT: The Global Mountain Forum

The Global Mountain Forum is the only global network of networks dedicated exclusively to mountains (regions and people). Its membership of individuals, professionals and organisations from over 130 countries promotes sustainable mountain development through information and knowledge sharing, mutual support and advocacy and plays an important role in collective efforts to connect mountain stakeholders and raise mountain issues high on political agendas. Mountain Forum (MF) is also recognised as an efficient global ICT platform and the premier network in the world for sustainable mountain development, contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Its range of services and products include membership profiles, regional and thematic e-mail discussion lists,

e-Conferences, a calendar of events, an online library and a bulletin. Mountain Forum also uses bridging initiatives to reach out to offline communities (example, through partnership with community radio, publications, face-to-face interactions, etc.).

At present the Mountain Forum network is comprised of a global secretariat and five regional networks (nodes) working in a decentralised and democratic manner. The five regional networks are:

- The African Mountain Forum
- The Asia-Pacific Mountain Network
- The European Mountain Forum
- InfoAndina (the Latin American Mountain Forum)
- The North American Mountain Forum

Mountain Forum's initiative on Climate Change

Why focus on mountains people and environments? Because in proportion, people from mountains are mostly affected by climate change. Melting glaciers lead to an increasing number and size of glacier lakes that are prone to build up large reservoirs and break through like avalanches, that wash away valleys and the communities that live and depend on them. This affects human lives and also reduces the capacity of the mountains to capture water.

This further afflicts people living in the lower areas and adds to the already fragile conditions and livelihood opportunities: increasing populations require more fuel to cook and heat, require more land to produce food which already puts stress on mountain areas in the form of forest reduction and soil erosion.

Mitigation and adaptation strategies

Mitigation and adaptation strategies are certainly important not only for the hazard-affected people in the mountains but are also important for combating all forms of change hazards. Some mitigation and adaptation strategies are:

- to raise and enhance awareness
- to offer and promote use of renewable energy options such as solar cooking, solar power for heating and energy, and more efficient options of hydro-power use
- to foster inducing polices of government and donors with actions by communities and intermediary organisations

- to monitor changes and effects to predict hazards and risks by using GIS (Geographic Information System) / remote sensing; and work with communities to prevent and deal with risks and hazards
- to reach offline communities via regional nodes and information bridges like publications, especially MF Bulletins; interactive radio and promote connectivity such as telecenters with locally relevant content.

Future regional actions: MF perspective

MF intends to develop a comprehensive network of partners to address regional issues and concerns pertaining to climate change. The network of partners, which is key to implementation and support of climate change dialogues is to be developed with the help of: Information function: widen the network in all regions with both scientific as well as civil society partners; widen on-line content of scientific and local experiences relevant for sustainable mountain development agenda and expertise through portals on mountain information. Support documenting local knowledge and good practices of communities and programs on climate change mitigation and adaptation, especially on renewable energy, connectivity and risk aversion.

Communication and interaction: foster sharing of new findings and feedback at various levels; pilot and upscale bridges to local communities through radio, hardcopy bulletins and sustainable connectivity / telecentre programs. Learn and identify best practises by structured e-Conferences, focused group discussions both online and offline within and across regions; build communities; create focused group discussions for best practices tuning and adaptation, as well as for problem solving and capacity sharing.

Advocacy: Link activities with communities and experts in other regions; give importance to mountains for climate change on donors' and governments' agenda; give a voice to mountain communities to foster conducive policies.

Discussing resilience of mountain communities
In yet another initiative towards climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, the Asia Pacific Mountain Network (APMN) / International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - ROAP, the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal (MoEST/GoN) and the Mountain Forum Secretariat (MFS) and with thematic moderation support from ICIMOD climate change experts, has launched an e-Discussion on 'Building resilience of mountain communities to climate change'. The e-Discussion will continue between 30 April and 14 May 2008. The e-Discussion themes are: concepts and methods of assessing impacts, vulnerability and adaptation; Climate change adaptation experience; and Limits and barriers to adaptation and desired policy responses. This e-Discussion aims to provide an opportunity for people to share their views on how climate change can be adapted across the Asia-Pacific region. The discussion endeavours to generate knowledge of resilience of mountain communities to climate change impact. The discussion forum also intends to know about the effectiveness of adaptation strategies including the adaptive ecosystem management approach that combines adaptive management of social and ecological systems, to improve the resilience of the mountain communities who suffer due to extreme climate events. The event is a part of the programme to celebrate 25 years of ICIMOD as well as World Environment Day 2008. For more details http://www.icimod.org/apmn/buildingresilience/