

Climate Change: Impacts and Roles Of Humans

The Human Dimension of Climate Adaptation: The Importance of Local and Institutional Issues. (Child Friendly Version)

Summary

Climate change is already affecting poor people and their communities around the world and is creating new events that will affect their lives for many more years to come.



Photo: Flooding in Bangladesh, Plan UK

Who created this report?

An organisation called the Commission on Climate Change and Development. This organisation gathers 13 important individuals who bring together a range of knowledge and experience of different subjects. Together

This report will tell you:

1. The risks that poor people face now and in the future
2. How poor people can use the resources they have available to change their lives
3. What support poor people need from others to help them manage the risks and dangers they face

What is Climate Change?

Climate change is the changes in the weather over a period of time.

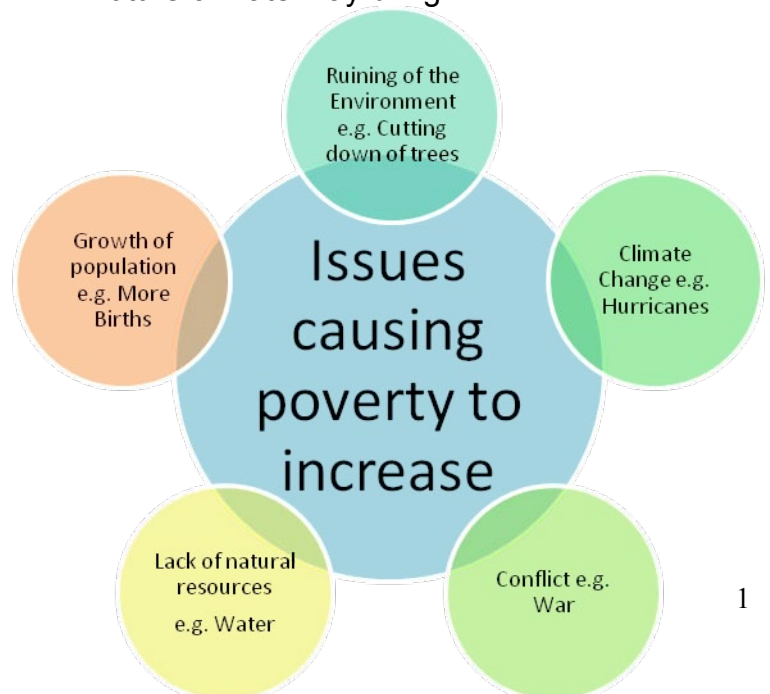
they provide exciting ways to help organisations around the world.

Why?

To highlight the ways in which climate change affects people's lives and how they handle the burden of the problems and risk they face in their local communities.

Climate Change is not a priority for many poor people who are badly affected by it. This is because many poor people are dealing with more important everyday needs like extreme poverty e.g. extreme lack of food, water and shelter.

It is important for us to be aware of the needs of people affected by climate change and to help them understand the new conditions the future climate may bring.



Development and Climate Change

What is Development?

Development is efforts to help make people's lives and communities better, to reduce the poverty they face and to reduce how much they need to rely on others for help.

Development has always been about how people manage many risks. Climate change is creating new risks faced by many poor people, especially those living in places exposed to danger.

Poor people usually adapt to difficult events alone and unseen by governments and development organisations. This can be called 'autonomous adaptation'.

To support people, households and businesses to adapt to climate change, we must give attention to all the issues that can control or limit their ability to act. These can be **social**, **economic**, **cultural** and **political** problems.

Scientists need to look at the ways climate change affects people and businesses in their local environment to see whether their problems can be reduced.

What do young people think about climate change?

"The most important issue to me is global warming because it is destroying, killing things and melting the ice caps"

Earl, 13, UK.

"We don't get enough water where I live and I think cleanliness is very important because good health is necessary for national development"

Ansy, 14, Sierra Leone.

"Deforestation is very important to me because when trees are cut down, it destroys wildlife, leads to soil erosion and causes flooding"

Rafick, 14, Malawi.

Young people's voices from the Make the link, Be the change International Climate Change project. Plan UK. www.planmli.org

The Risks of Climate Change

Because climate change is happening, adapting to its risks is more important and urgent.

Predicting change

Sometimes people try to predict how the climate will be affected in the future and how we can protect ourselves against the risks climate change may bring.

Predicting the future is not always reliable because:

- ❖ Predictions may be wrong
- ❖ People have to depend on scientific knowledge
- ❖ Predictions ignore the poorest and smallest groups of people

Climate risks and the poor

What is Disaster Risk Reduction?

Disaster risk reduction is the steps we take to reduce the damage or risk of damage that a disaster can cause.

It is important to focus on the poor because their environment and communities are more easily affected by climate hazards and they are less able to respond than wealthier people.

These are some reasons why poor people suffer more because of Climate Change

- Poor people are more often affected by diseases like measles, tuberculosis and malaria that have been wiped out in most richer and developed countries.
- The poor are less able to protect themselves against disasters and have less access to help and support.
- Because of these challenges, poor people have created very smart and different ways to cope with the problems that come their way.

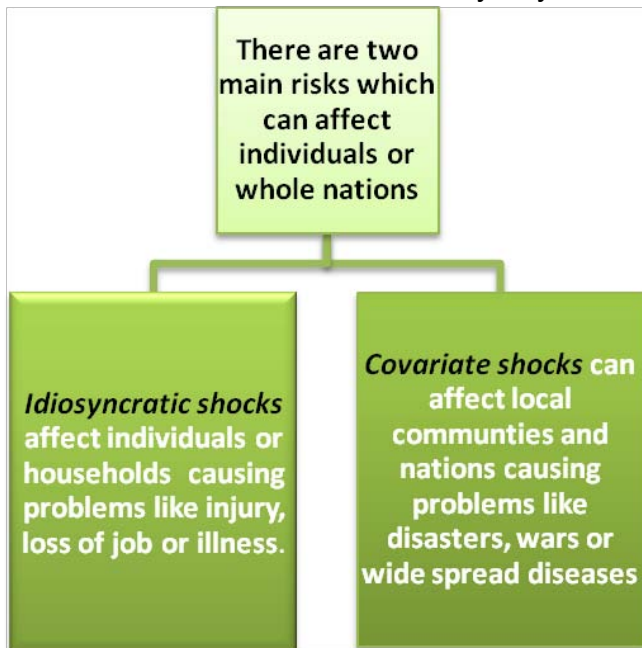
Understanding the different types of risks people face, how they change, and the ways poor people cope are important because this will allow people to make adjustments and changes to live in new environments.



Photo: Children in rain, Plan UK.

Different risks poor people face

The stress of adapting to climate change is affecting people and the governments, societies and businesses that they rely on.



Sudden and Gradual changes to the climate.

An example of a sudden change in the climate can be an extreme event like a hurricane.

Examples of gradual changes in the climate are temperature and sea level rises.

Surprises

Climate change can cause surprises. An event may be unexpected. We don't know how much it will affect people, how many people, or the areas it will affect

Organisations and Climate change

It is not possible to understand how people are affected by climate change without thinking of:

- ❖ How local and national governments work
- ❖ How the companies creating products and services for people change
- ❖ How the social structures within local communities or outside may cause strain

Why more vulnerable people stay in danger

Vulnerable people are affected by **age** for example **young or old**, **culture** e.g. **what people believe**, **access to services** e.g. **water** and **gender** e.g. **boy or girl**.

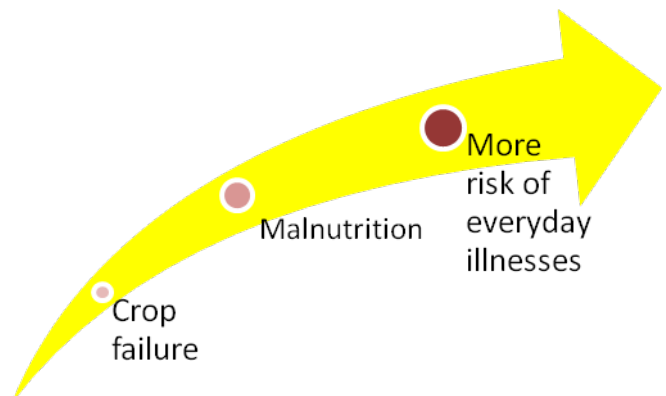


Image shows how one risk can lead to another risk

Households and communities face many dangers and risks that can grow over time. Disasters happening over and over again will cause the damages to rise. When people go through one type of risk it can increase their weakness to other risks.

Making adjustments to protect ourselves from Climate Change.

It is important for countries and communities, to make changes to reduce the dangers climate change can cause to their lives. Such changes will make it possible for them to cope and recover if disasters strike.

Adaptive capacity is about having the ability to make these changes.

Making changes and development

- ❖ Being healthy means you are more able to make changes
- ❖ Basic education and knowledge allows you to think about the best way to make changes
- ❖ A good government gives people the opportunities and freedom to make changes to improve their lives.

Agency and reducing poverty

What is Agency?

A person's ability to act on behalf of what she or he values or has reason to value.

An economist named Amartya Sen speaks of the importance of agency and

Being able to use our agency is very useful and can help in reducing poverty. It brings the power of individuals and government choices together, so that people can have the best chance to make choices that change their lives for the better.

How People, Businesses and Ecosystems make changes.

People



Photo: Children pumping water, Plan UK.

There are two types of changes people can make:

- ❖ **Adaptation-** means planning towards a long lasting change in a risky or dangerous environment
- ❖ **Coping-** means a short term response to a danger like a drought or illness of a parent

To be able to make changes that will improve their lives, people need to:

- Know the problems facing them
- Plan
- Prepare
- Think about and carry out the results they want.

Businesses



To make good and quick changes to protect themselves from the effects of climate change, businesses need a lot of resources and money. They need to be able to make wise decisions, have available money and have knowledge of the way the business world works.

Ecosystems

Small events such as **droughts**, **floods**, or **pest outbreaks** might start ecological changes that are difficult or even impossible to undo.

This can be seen in ecosystems such as coral reefs, freshwater resources, coastal seas, forest systems, savannah and grasslands.



Problems caused by climate change may lead to terrible changes, such as loss of coral reefs. Sudden surprises and new infectious diseases could also become more common.

Young people's testimonies about their local environments.

What are the main risks which you think climate change poses to your life?

“We fully depend on agriculture in this community and if dry spells continue there will be no food for us and our animals. Flu and fever are common and easily spread whenever there is a lot of dust”

Sharon, 15, Kenya.

How will environmental changes affect your family and community?

“Environmental changes will affect people's jobs, health and ability to go to school. The food my family harvests has finished so we will be hungry. The whole community will suffer from diseases due to lack of food, causing deaths”

Martyn, 15, Malawi.

People's ability to develop.



Photo: Child working, Plan UK

Possibilities for people to make changes on their own with no help is known as 'autonomous adaptation' and is closely linked to issues within the government.

Countries, provinces, districts and towns facing the most serious challenges are often those less able to develop and who usually have little support from their government.

Developing people's ability means allowing people and organizations the freedom to describe and achieve the result they want as well as making sure they know the challenges they face.

This ability to develop can be seen at 3 levels:

- ❖ Individual
- ❖ Organizational
- ❖ Environmental

Capacity Development?

Capacity development is about allowing people to use their ability to say what their needs are and to work towards achieving what they want.

Promoting relationships to fight against people's powerlessness

Environment- Organisations- Individuals

Relationships between people and organisations can make people aware of any issues blocking or allowing change.

They can work together to reduce poverty and helplessness and increase people's ability to develop their lives and communities.

Such action relies on:

- ❖ Providing appropriate leadership and allowing people to be active members of society.
- ❖ Providing access to services, especially those related to information, technology, and access to money
- ❖ Creating business environments that provide opportunities that pose less risk to people's way of lives.

Copenhagen: Allowing local changes to happen

If we are going to be successful in protecting humans against the destruction and damages caused by climate change, we will need to make some changes.

Action Plan for Change

ACTION PLAN



Different changes should be made at different levels- local, national and global



More time and money should be put into new ideas that protect us against climate change



What humans think should be a very important part of every plan or choice made



We must focus on the knowledge of poor people and their thoughts on the challenges they face



Use the lessons we have learnt through reducing the risks of other disasters to fight against climate change



Listen to what poorer and more vulnerable people have to say about risks and do what they want



Future plans should include the thoughts of people who have suffered because of climate change and it should ask them how they want to handle the risks ahead



More ideas are needed to deal with the risk of disasters and other risks threatening people



International communities should give support to governments in fighting the problems brought about by climate change



Share the same idea about 'making change' and learn from each other to show how local people, businesses and local governments are making changes to fight our changing climate

Climate Change Key Events Timeline

1968

- Conference,Paris, France
- International Conference bringing together many different countries.
- Early discussions towards an agreement for a sustainable environment.

1971

- Oslo, Norway
- Calls for countries causing pollution to pay the costs.

1985

- Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer in Vienna, Austria
- 21 countries and the European Union. It was the same year that the hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctica was first discovered. This convention created a general rule for countries to take action in protecting the ozone layer.

1990

- UN Summit for Children in New York, USA
- Calls for countries pay attention to the impact of the environment on the future generation.

1995

- World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- For the first time the international community expressed a clear commitment to fight against poverty.

1997

- Kyoto, Japan
- 159 countries attended. 38 richer countries agreed to reduce their carbon emissions. Together, richer countries agreed to cut back their emissions by at least 5% below the 1990 levels by 2012.

2007

- Conference in Bali
- The Conference brought together more than 10,000 participants, including people representing over 180 countries together with people from Charities and the Media. During the conference, countries discussed new agreements to be completed by 2009 that will ultimately lead to a post-2012 international agreement on climate change.

2008

- Climate Change Talks in Bangkok
- A first group meeting for countries to discuss long term changes they can make together for a better climate.

2008

- Accra Climate Change Talks 2008
- A group of countries met for the second time and made decisions to help make the climate better in the future will last a long time and help create a better climate.

2009

- Climate Change Talks in Bonn, Germany, Europe
- Important people from 182 countries met in Bonn, Germany to discuss for the first time important climate issues to be put into action in Copenhagen in December.

2009

- Copenhagen Climate change conference (COP15)
- The climate change agreement (Kyoto protocol) will expire - The goal is now to enter into a global climate agreement at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. The agreement will apply to the period after 2012.

Where can you find more information about Climate Change?

Plan-ed is Plan UK's Development Education website which hosts a range of resources mapped to the UK school curriculum and provides many testimonies and stories of climate change by young people.
www.plan-ed.org

International Climate challenge is an international initiative looking for young people to develop ideas and take action to tackle climate change.

Children's Climate Call <http://www.childrenclimatecall.org/>

'**Taking it Global**' is a social network that connects young people to discuss global issues, including climate change. <http://discuss.tigweb.org/18>

Children in a changing climate is a group of agencies (including Plan UK). Their aim is to make sure that children and young people have a voice in climate change debates, from local community to United Nations(International) level.
www.childreninachangingclimate.org

Carbon Detectives Learn about your school's carbon footprints.
www.carbondetectives.org.uk

Climate change in our world Google Earth shows users how climate change could affect the planet and its people over the next century.
www.earth.google.com/outreach/index.html

J8 Discussion Forum on UNICEF's Voices of Youth platform.

www.j8summit.com/en/uk/learn-participate

Glossary- keywords

Adaptation is changing to suit a new purpose.

Adaptive capacity is about having the ability to make changes.

Agency is a person's ability to act on behalf of what she or he values or has reason to value.

Autonomous adaptation is when poor people adapt to difficult events alone and unseen by governments and development organisations.

Capacity development is about allowing people to use their ability to say what their needs are and to achieve what they want.

Climate change is the changes in the weather over a period of time.

Development is efforts made to help make people's lives and communities better, reduce the poverty they face and reduce how much they need to rely on others for help.

Disaster risk reduction is the steps we take to reduce the damage or risk of damage that a disaster can cause.

Government is the body with the power to make and/or enforce laws for a country.

Organisation is a group of people who work together to reach one goal.

United Nations is an organization of independent states formed in 1945 to promote international peace and security.

Vulnerable is the state of being weak and unprotected.