

## **Climate Change and Development**

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**Johan Schaar  
Director, Commission on Climate Change and Development**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me give you three images of climate change. In Cambodia, farmers tell us that the shift of seasons means that traditional rice varieties are no longer produce as they have in the past. Farmers are now at a loss, looking for new varieties.

In Mali, farmers can no longer trust the birds. Their return from the North were signs that it was time to sow. Now the weather has changed, traditional signs cannot be used anymore.

These are quiet signs of adaptation to a changing climate, not visible on our TV screens. But there are also much more dramatic images, such as the devastating floods that India now experiences after a long drought and delayed monsoon. Or the floods and landslides in Manila and rural areas of the Philippines, where flood water brought by one typhoon has hardly receded until the next typhoon comes, forcing authorities to open dam gates.

The first two images are from conversations that the Commission on Climate Change and Development had with citizens in Cambodia and Mali during visits last year. The Commission was launched by the Swedish Government to develop proposals for adaptation and disaster risk reduction, as the effects of climate change were becoming concrete and tangible. Its report, *Closing the Gaps*, was presented at the UN in mid May this year.

This audience is well aware of the effects of climate change – increasing temperatures, and climate variability, more frequent and violent weather events. We know that the poorest countries and communities are being most seriously affected. Climate change stands in the way of development, it threatens the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

And we know that we need to change and adapt agricultural practices, water management and infrastructure. But I would like to address three other aspects of adaptation to climate change, based on the analysis of the Commission on Climate Change and Development. They are (i) the need to understand resilience, or what allows households, communities and countries to manage risk and crisis; (ii) the critical role of institutional linkages; and (iii) the fact that this is not the only crisis.

First, looking at what builds the resilience of households, we find that most important is their ability for diversification, i.e. not being dependent on only one asset or source of income. Having access to both on and off-farm income for rural households, or to more than one agro-ecological zone, or being part of both the urban and rural economy, these are the elements of diversification that also spread and distribute risk. This means that mobility and migration help to build resilience. It is very common that families in developing countries have at least one member who migrates temporarily or more permanently to other parts of the country or to neighboring countries. Before concluding that climate change will produce millions and millions of migrants, and these predictions are often based on crude extrapolations from the number of people living in exposed areas, we must realize that migration first of all is a livelihood and adaptation strategy as old as mankind.

In addition to access to assets of different kinds, we find that the fundamental features of human development – health, education so that people can make informed decisions, and the presence of responsive institutions, both formal and informal, these are what builds adaptive capacity.

Moving to the societal level, what kind of environment will allow households to build their resilience and adaptive capacity? It is clear that an open society, with transparent and accountable government, where citizens trust their government so that partnerships between them, their governments and the private sector can be built, these are some of the constituent elements of resilient societies. As natural resources may become more scarce as a result of climate change, resilience will include the ability to jointly manage shared resources. It is therefore very timely that the economy prize in the memory of Alfred Nobel has just been awarded to Elinor Ostrom who has showed us how communities and countries manage to share grazing areas or transboundary water resources. This is exactly the experiences and knowledge that we must build on in the era of climate change.

What I have described as the characteristics of a resilient society could also be named ‘human security’, or a development process that puts the management of risk at its centre and makes enhanced human security its ultimate objective.

The second aspect of adaptation is the linkage of institutions, which has both a horizontal and vertical dimension. Building the resilience of households and communities is to recognize the primacy of the local level of society. To empower communities requires the linkage of institutions that mediate services, resources and knowledge from the global through regional and national levels. This has special significance as more financial resources will become available as a result of climate negotiations and that must reach local communities.

But climate change impacts will affect all sectors and all aspects of society. This is the horizontal dimension, which requires action not in silos separated from each other. Governments and organizations must ensure coherence and coordination in their actions, something that is unlikely to happen without strong leadership at the highest level.

The third aspect of adaptation is the recognition that climate change is not our only crisis. The food crisis that precipitated last year, the energy crisis, the financial crisis and the underlying ecosystem crisis –all of these tend to hit hardest and in a similar way on the poorest households and communities, those who live with such small margins that an additional shock risks pushing them over their limits. These crises cannot be addressed one by one, they are interlinked and have common roots.

For this reason, the Commission on Climate Change and Development proposed that the UN Secretary General should launch a broad, high-level panel to articulate a new vision for sustainable development for our time. Developments since the launch of our report in May indicate that the Secretary General indeed intends to do this. It will be very interesting and important to follow its work and its results.

To conclude, we must focus our efforts and our institutions on building the resilience, or human security, of societies and communities. In other words, the effects of climate change can only be managed through a renewed and reinforced development effort. There are no short-cuts – population increase is still best addressed through provision of reproductive health services and education for girls and women – but development must be promoted through more determined efforts than ever before.

Thank you.