



DEW Point Newsletter

Issue 6 – May 2008

Cyclone Nargis has reminded us once again of the fragility of our environment and the potential consequences of the increased risks of severe weather patterns associated with climate change. DFID is establishing its own Climate Change Unit (see item under “news”) to help focus development thinking and there will be more on this in following months. This month we welcome the lead article from our Resource Partner, Practical Action Consulting, on the theme of community based adaptation to climate change and the importance of working with locally appropriate solutions. Richard Carter, in his Director’s word, reminds us that climate change is simply exacerbating the problems of environmental uncertainty which have long impacted on the poor. We do not have to reinvent the wheel, but instead look back and take best practice from a long history of developmental experience.

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Lead article

Effecting change from within: community based adaptation to climate change

By Jon Ensor, Rachel Berger and Becky Clement, Practical Action

Community based adaptation to climate change is rooted in the local context and requires those working with communities to engage with indigenous capacities, knowledge and practices of coping with past and present climate-related hazards. The difference between a community based adaptation project and a standard development project is not principally in the intervention, but in the way the intervention is developed: not what the community is doing, but why and with what knowledge. The aim is to enable the community to understand and integrate the concept of climate risk into their livelihood activities in order to increase their resilience to immediate climate variability and long-term climate change. By seeking to work with communities to identify local problems and locally appropriate solutions, community based adaptation can build naturally on social norms and provides an opportunity to extend the range of local options for adaptation (through dialogue and by developing a local understanding of the challenges of climate change.



Photo: Adaptation to climate change, Floating gardens, Bangladesh, Mehrab ul Goni

Rooting the process of adaptation in communities allows important communal practices and collectively held metaphors or sayings to be identified and used to effect change from within, rather than attempting to force change from without. Whilst some cultures exhibit a readiness to embrace change, others lack a tradition or history of adaptation and require an approach that builds from the existing cultural context and is sympathetic to local notions of well-being. This may be more or less of a challenge depending on how radical a transformation is required and whether the existing cultural context is narrowly defined or deeply entrenched. By better understanding the underlying and ever-present role of culture in community relations, those working with communities affected by climate change will be in an improved position to support a process of change that both addresses the climate challenge and maintains individual and collective well-being.

The Director's word

By Richard Carter, DEW Point Resource Centre Director

Like many new emphases in international development, our growing understanding of climate change provides a different lens through which to view the challenges and opportunities posed by poverty. Climate change studies concur for example in highlighting the vulnerability of rainfed subsistence agriculture and the (as yet unknown in detail) impacts of different weather patterns on local and regional water balances. Households, communities and nations are faced daily with the natural vagaries of weather, weak economies, and inadequate Government; while endogenous trends such as population growth and exogenous threats such as those imposed by climate change continue or accelerate.



Many aspects of the vulnerability of the poor exist even in the absence of climate change. The natural variability of climate in many low-income countries is extreme. Both rural and urban populations are growing at rates unknown in living memory in the industrialised world. Land, soil and natural resource degradation continues apace. Water pollution is increasing. Climate change focuses attention anew on these well-known aspects of poverty and vulnerability, and warns us that things could become even worse.

There is a positive side of the coin however. In seeking ways to adapt to climate change, we should always be examining and re-examining the best principles of development, learned over many decades before climate change reached its present position on the global agenda. Economic growth, with equity, is fundamental. Infrastructure and basic services are still needed. Land, water and agricultural development are the basis of livelihoods. Competent government is essential. And as our colleagues from Practical Action point out, disaster preparedness, development and change must be rooted in the knowledge and participation of the poor themselves. Climate change simply imposes another layer of exogenous change on a world of rich and poor. Solutions for the poor, who are inevitably the most vulnerable, must build on the cumulative understanding of good practice in humanitarian relief and development acquired over at least the last 50 years.

DEW Point news

DFID Climate Change Unit

The new helpdesk to provide technical support to DFID's Climate Change Unit is a joint venture bringing together the resources from the Livelihoods Resource Centre, TI-UP (the Technology, Infrastructure and Urban Planning Resource Centre) and DEW Point. In the same way as for DEW Point, DFID and its development partners may request help on matters relating to Climate Change. Individual enquiries will be assessed to determine whether they fit the criteria for support under the funding available. Please contact the helpdesk by email climatechangeAdvice@htspe.com or telephone + 44 (0) 1442 385393.

Selection of documents recently added to the website

Think local, act local, a WaterAid publication. In this paper, WaterAid explores the links between decentralisation, local government and the provision of water and sanitation services in developing countries.

To read more: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/article.aspx?ArticleID=833>

Measuring aid to the water sector. Statistics published by the OECD illustrate the trend in spending in the water sector that has developed over the years.

To read more: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/article.aspx?ArticleID=840>

A comparison of carbon offset standards - Making sense of the voluntary carbon market. This comprehensive report reviews and compares the various voluntary carbon markets schemes currently existing. It was published by WWF Germany.

To read more: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/article.aspx?ArticleID=839>

Climate change: impacts, vulnerabilities and adaptation in developing countries. This book by the UNFCCC looks at what developing countries are doing in terms of adaptation to climate change, and at the ways to integrate adaptation strategies into wider development plans.

To read more: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/article.aspx?ArticleID=841>

OECD-UN Global Food Price Projections Released 2008 – 2017. Average prices for food over the next decade are predicted to remain higher than previous decades. Demand for biofuels, high oil prices and increased food demand from emerging economies along with drought are all expected to exacerbate prices. To read more: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=849>

Selection of recent helpdesk enquiries

- ◆ Identification of desertification, land degradation and poverty consultants in order to provide DFID with technical support and advice on the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.
- ◆ Technical enquiry on cement mortar mix for a school building project in DRC. This enquiry is accessible to all DEW Point members via their homepage on the DEW Point website.
- ◆ Identification of consultants for the review of a humanitarian water project in Kenya.
- ◆ Request for the updating of a BGS-WaterAid factsheet on arsenic in water.
- ◆ Contribution to studies on climate change adaptation.

Other news

International Development Committee debate on Water and Sanitation.

For more details: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=831&e=0>

Burma after Cyclone Nargis.

Link to WEDC's Technical notes for emergencies: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=835&e=0>

International Development Committee: DFID and the African Development Bank.

To read the transcript of DFID's evidence in the International Development Committee's inquiry:

<http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=834&e=0>

To read the report published by the International Development Committee on May 13th:

<http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=842&e=0>

Updates on recent meetings and conferences.

Outcomes of the 2008 OECD Environment Ministers meeting:

<http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=832&e=0>

Update on the 16th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development:

<http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=846>

Update on the SADC Water conference recently held in Lesotho:

<http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=844>

Reflections on DFID infrastructure meeting held in London on 15th May:

<http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=847>

Conferences, events and calls for papers

Conferences

- ◆ International Development in the Face of Climate Change: Beyond Mainstreaming?, 2 June in London.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=130&e=1>
- ◆ 16th European Biomass Conference and Exhibition, 2-6 June in Valencia, Spain.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=124&e=1>
- ◆ Climate Change, Growth, Stability, 3-4 June in Paris.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=113&e=1>

- ◆ High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, 3-5 June in Rome.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=99&e=1>
- ◆ Water Resource Systems Management in Extreme Conditions, 4-5 June in Moscow.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=92&e=1>
- ◆ Carbon and Communities in Tropical Woodlands Conference, 16-18 June in Edinburgh.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=115&e=1>
- ◆ Groundwater & Climate in Africa, 24-28 June in Kampala, Uganda.
More info: <http://www.dewpoint.org.uk/Event.aspx?EventID=88&e=1>

If you have any relevant news, conferences or training events that you would like to publicise in our newsletter then please do get in touch. You can email us the details at helpdesk@dewpoint.org.uk, or submit website content via your member homepage on the DEW Point website.

And finally...

Consultants with expertise in any of our technical areas (water and sanitation, water resources, environment and climate change) who think that they may be able to offer assistance to DFID and its development partners in answering queries or providing inputs to missions, please do contact us via the helpdesk.

If you wish to unsubscribe, send us a quick email to helpdesk@dewpoint.org.uk.

Questions or comments? E-mail us at helpdesk@dewpoint.org.uk.

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