

LEAD UPDATE

Changing Climates: Pakistan's Options for Adaptation and Mitigation Stakeholders Consultation, Peshawar- February 21st, 2008 .

With the growing frequency and intensity of extreme global events like hurricanes, droughts and heat waves, climate change is emerging as the most critical challenge of our times. According to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), average earth temperature is set to rise between 1.4 and 6.0C by the end of the current century and most of this change is driven by human activity. The ecological and socio-economic costs of climate change are forecasted to be enormous for the entire planet, particularly for regions more susceptible to changes in the climate. Pakistan is also one such country that lies highly exposed to the impacts of climatic events, particularly because of its agrarian economic base and resource scarcity. However some of the worst case scenarios predicted for the country can be averted if timely action is taken and adaptation strategies are adopted to cushion against the shortfalls of climate change. The challenge for Pakistan is to develop responses that are serious and effective and suited to unique regional conditions.

Actions Taken

Responding to the growing threat of global warming and increasing vulnerability of developing nations, LEAD Pakistan partnered with the British High Commission to conduct a scoping study on Pakistan's Options for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change Effects. The exercise is part of LEAD's broader, interdisciplinary Climate Change program that builds upon the organization's policy research and capacity development expertise and the strength of its partnerships with the government, industry and civil society.

To generate data and discussion for the scoping study, LEAD Pakistan is holding consultations with stakeholders from government, media, industry, academia and civil society in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Islamabad.

The consultation in Peshawar was organized at the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARAD) and highlighted linkages with key stakeholders.

Objectives

Objectives of the consultation were:

- To map the participating stakeholders' understanding on the Climate Change threats



to Pakistan

- To bring together groups of key actors including government, civil society, academia and corporations on a single platform for exchanging knowledge
- To develop a shared understanding among the stakeholders on the actions that need to be taken in response to the identified climate change adaptation and mitigation needs

Discussion

The session opened with discussions on the history of climate change concerns in the region and performance of policies and conservation strategies. Touching on the need

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- Imtiaz Ahmed, De Laas Gul Welfare Program
- Jamal Yousaf, Govt of NWFP
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- Mohammad Ikram, Forest Department
- Mubarak Ali Shah, NWFP Wildlife Department
- Muhammad Tahir, SABAWON
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- M. Arshad, PARAD
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Training Session
Participants



Certificate
Distribution Ceremony

for action and pro-activeness, speakers emphasized the need for research and data documentation to better prepare for impending climatic challenges.

Event facilitator, Mr. Agha Imran Hamid, made a presentation on Pakistan's Options for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation. Based on a background paper circulated among participants prior to the event, the presentation explained the various vulnerability factors for Pakistan vis-à-vis climate change impacts, particularly in the areas of agriculture and food production, water and energy resources, biodiversity and marginal zones. Referring to NWFP's diverse micro climates, Mr. Hamid underscored the fragility of the region's ecosystem and spelled out the various climatic risks it was exposed to.

Following the presentation, participants broke into working groups to further explore the effects of climate change on four thematic areas namely, Food Security and Agriculture, Water Resources, Ethics and Governance and general Environmental Impacts

Key Issues & Recommendations.

FOOD SECURITY & AGRICULTURE

Freakish weather patterns (floods, droughts, heat) have a detrimental effect on agriculture and water sectors. Agricultural practices and systems do not have time to adapt to the unpredictable and shifting climatic patterns and depletion of water resources which is why food production is jeopardized

Altering cropping patterns in line with shifting weather patterns

Capacity building of farmers for adapting to climate change effects

Incentives and subsidies for farmers and alternative livelihood sources

Consolidation of unused land

Establishment of disaster management and monitoring systems at all levels of society.

WATER RESOURCES

Changing weather patters and variability in river flows have made water availability unpredictable. Increasing precipitation in some regions brings with it the threat of frequent flooding while depleting water tables in other areas are creating drought like conditions.

There exists a lack of reliable database for keeping abreast of weather conditions and it is difficult to get timely data from public departments for forecasting and

planning.

Recommendations

- Adoption of water conservation measures and technologies, especially for household use
- Conservation of water through efficient irrigation systems
- Encouragement of low hydel power generation
- Recharging methods: construction of storage reservoirs
- Waste water treatment for recycling and avoiding pollution of cleaner sources

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Climatic events are in some part contributing to the loss of forest cover and mangroves in the country. The destruction of natural habitat is also contributing to the loss of biodiversity.

Moreover, impact of climate change on natural resources is posing a serious threat to livelihood earning prospects of rural and marginal communities.

Participation and involvement of communities at risk of disaster in decision making processes is very limited.

Recommendations

- Increasing disaster preparedness for risk sensitive settlements
- Increase in protected areas
- Capacity development and sensitization of stakeholders
- Networking and coordination of stakeholders
- Promotion of CNG vehicles for emissions abatement
- Raising awareness through mass media

GOVERNANCE & ETHICS

Decision makers lack adequate exposure and perspective on climate change which is why the issues are not adequately addresses in public policies and programs and fail to be mainstreamed.

Public policy formulation and governance processes fail to consult with relevant stakeholders and are influences by mafias (timber, transport, roads et.) instead.

Recommendations

- Mainstream issues such as CC into the wider public policies
- Implementation strategies need to be divided into immediate,

medium and long term at different levels

- Institutional strengthening and continuity of policies
- Increasing accountability of concerned agents through access to information – TV, radio, media
- Making the message comprehensible for mass awareness

Roundtable Discussion

Participants exchanged views and comments following the presentations. The human induced vs. natural process theories of changing climates were brought up and the lack of research data in Pakistan was highlighted. Members from academia blamed educational institutions for failing to include environmental knowledge effectively in their curricula and research agenda and also neglecting environment as a research priority. It was mentioned that Pakistan contributed less than 1% to the global R&D sector and data documentation on climate could not be traced back further than a hundred years.

The need for a critical mass of climate change scientists and experts in Pakistan was also pointed out. Increasing awareness on the subject was deemed most critical for addressing the impending issues and stakeholders requested more frequent knowledge exchange events and consultations. Member from academia also suggested using Friedrich Froebel's model of education for inculcating environmental knowledge among youngsters from an early age.

Conclusion

It was evident from the session discourses that there exists a lack of authority and expertise on climate change issues among major stakeholder sections in Pakistan. Absence of representation from the industrial sector underscored the disengagement of important actors from the issues and highlighted a need for increasing awareness and involvement of multi-stakeholder groups.

Also evident was the inadequacy of research activity and data documentation on the subject, an issue that was repeatedly stressed by participants from academia. It was generally agreed that to frame adaptation policies and strategies for the country, carrying out an in-depth assessment of local situations was essential.

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