

Development and Climate Justice



Policy Paper

November 2008



CIDSE 
together for global justice



CIDSE recognises the injustice of climate change, and the threat it poses to human development and global social justice. CIDSE has launched a campaign with Caritas Internationalis to push all countries to agree an effective, equitable and socially just post 2012 climate change agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This paper sets out CIDSE's policy approach to the negotiations.

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CIDSE is a coalition of 16 Catholic development agencies in Europe and North America which share a common vision on poverty eradication and social justice and a common strategy on development programmes, development education and advocacy. CIDSE's advocacy work covers trade and food security, resources for development, global governance, and EU development policy. www.cidse.org.

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Table of contents

DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE JUSTICE	4
Introduction	4
1. A post-2012 global climate change agreement	4
2. Calls for a post-2012 global climate change agreement	4
3. Recommendations for a post-2012 global climate change agreement	5
3.1 Objective 1	5
3.2 Objective 2	6
3.3 Objective 3	7
CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT	8
4. Disproportionate Impact	8
5. How Those Living in Poverty in Developing Countries Experience Climate Change	9
5.1 Natural Disasters	9
5.2 Food Security	10
5.3 Water Security	10
5.4 Health	11
6. A Web of Direct and Indirect Effects	11
7. The Urgency and the Responsibility to Act	13
BIBLIOGRAPHY	14



Development and Climate Justice

Introduction

Climate change affects us all, but not equally. Climate change is more than an environmental issue; it is primarily a matter of global justice and equity.

As an international network of Catholic development agencies working for over 40 years with people living in poverty on every continent, CIDSE is deeply concerned by the disproportionate impact human-induced climate change has on poor and vulnerable people who live in developing countries, a global problem they have done the least to create. Climate change is washing away progress made in poverty reduction and progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is crucial that we begin to address climate change from a people-centred and development perspective.

Recognising the moral and humanitarian imperative to take action to prevent further dangerous climate change, and to prepare for the consequences of the anticipated rise in global temperatures, our member organisations are calling all governments to establish a binding global post-2012 climate change agreement that will address the urgency of climate change and that will respect and promote equity and social justice.

People living in poverty in developing countries are showing resilience in adjusting to the impact of climate variability on their lives and livelihoods. However, we are quickly reaching a point beyond which they cannot further adapt. In order to achieve effective climate justice the polluter must pay; those primarily responsible for the rise in global temperatures must accept their responsibilities in addressing this global threat.

1. A post-2012 global climate change agreement

With our global constituency and our grassroots links, CIDSE believes it is crucial that the voices of those most affected by climate change are heard and taken into account in identifying the solutions. To ensure that the perspectives and needs of developing countries are taken effectively into account, **we believe the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is and should remain the primary intergovernmental forum for decision making on climate change.** A chair at the table, however, is not enough to ensure equitable representation of views. Additional actions are needed to increase the capacity of developing countries and developing country civil society organisations to participate fully in the negotiations.

2. Calls for a post-2012 global climate change agreement

CIDSE calls for a post-2012 global agreement to ensure the following objectives:

1. The recognition and protection of the right of people in developing countries to their sustainable development, with the prioritisation of vulnerable communities living in poverty.
2. The provision by industrialised countries of sufficient, predictable, secure and accessible financing, technology sharing and capacity building – each in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner – to support and enable the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries.

3. The limitation of global mean surface temperatures as far below a 2° Celsius increase as possible from pre-industrial levels. In recognition of their ecological debt to the international community, industrialised countries must assume significant responsibility for taking the lead in making absolute reductions of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.¹

Reaching an agreement on a new climate change deal will involve complex and controversial deliberations, plagued as these are by short-term political and economic concerns. CIDSE emphasises, however, that we have already reached crisis point. However difficult the decisions to be made, the overriding concern must be the consequences for the most vulnerable if we fail to take the necessary action.

Whilst the prospect of a transformational change can seem overwhelming, it does not mean sacrificing quality of life. We must have the courage to see the possibilities for alternative models for our long term development, and must have strong public policies to ensure equitable access to resources. Climate change challenges the international community – as well as the private sector, civil society and individuals – to stretch our collective perspective beyond the limitations of short-term interests to one that protects and promotes the common good of all.²

“Before it is too late, we need to adopt courageous choices, which can recreate a strong alliance between man and the Earth,”³

3. Recommendations for a post-2012 global climate change agreement

3.1 Objective 1

The recognition and protection of the right of people in developing countries to their sustainable development, with the prioritisation of vulnerable communities living in poverty.

Recommendations

1. The financing, technology sharing and capacity building that are provided to developing countries to address climate change should support and enable them to develop paths towards their sustainable development, including their access to energy.
2. All climate change policies and mitigation and adaptation activities must be coherent with development policies and programmes.
3. Measures taken to address climate change, especially mitigation, must adequately take vulnerability and poverty into account, along with broader environmental concerns. Measures, including alternative energy sources, which do not take people living in poverty and the environment into account, run the risk of deepening the spiral of inequality.

1 According to *Climate Change 2007*, the Fourth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in order to limit global mean surface temperature to as far below 2° Celsius this means a stabilisation level of approximately 350 parts per million CO₂ equating to 450 parts per million equivalent. Emerging evidence suggests, however, that even this estimate should be reviewed downwards. *Climate Change 2007*, Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC, 2007, chapter 13, page 776.

2 Within Catholic Social Teaching, The Common Good refers to the conditions of social living that allow each individual to attain his or her fulfilment.

3 Pope Benedict XVI, speech in Loreto, Italy, 2007.



Development and Climate Justice

4. It is paramount that adaptation activities benefit the most vulnerable communities affected by climate change.⁴
5. There must be support for the development, enhancement and sharing of endogenous capacities and technologies of developing countries.⁵
6. Development and dissemination of knowledge and technology should include those accessible to local communities and those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
7. South-South, South-North as well as North-South knowledge and technology sharing should be promoted.
8. People in developing countries, especially those who are traditionally most marginalised – women, indigenous communities, disabled people – through civil society organisations and their Parliaments, must play a significant role in the development and governance of mitigation, and in particular adaptation and technology sharing activities.

3.2 Objective 2

The provision by industrialised countries of sufficient, predictable, secure and accessible financing, technology sharing and capacity building – each in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner – to support and enable the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries.

Recommendations

1. Financing to address climate change must be in addition to existing commitment of donor countries to dedicate 0.7% of their gross domestic product (GDP) to the Official Development Aid (ODA target) so as to ensure that increased action on climate change does not come at the expense of ongoing development commitments.⁶
2. Innovative financing options to secure reliable funding to address climate change should be explored without delay. Priority should be given to mechanisms that internalise the cost of environmental damage of goods and services, realising a ‘double dividend’ to discourage polluting actions.
3. Funding for adaptation must be paid by industrialised countries as the payment of compensation for damage done to the atmosphere as a result of their fossil fuel-based growth.

4 Negotiations on adaptation must be kept separate from “adverse response” measures. Adverse response measures are requests made by nations for compensation when their economies are affected adversely by mitigation efforts.

5 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, Article 4, paragraph 5.

6 This does not exclude those countries who have not accepted the 0.7% ODA target from providing new and additional money for addressing climate change.

4. Annex II countries under the UNFCCC⁷ must release funds already pledged for mitigation, adaptation and technology transfer without further delay.
5. Mechanisms to deliver funding should be structured in a way so as to support community-based initiatives and affirm local control over projects.

3.3 Objective 3

The limitation of global mean surface temperatures as far below a 2°C increase as possible from pre-industrial levels. In recognition of their ecological debt to the international community, industrialised countries must assume significant responsibility for taking the lead in making absolute reductions of GHG emissions.

Recommendations

1. The agreement should include binding targets to reduce the GHG emissions of industrialised countries by at least the top end of 30-40% by 2020 and the top end of 80-95% by 2050, based on 1990 levels.⁸
2. Global emissions must peak within the next decade and then decline rapidly.
3. The use of carbon mitigation mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism in industrialised countries must not delay urgently needed domestic emission reductions.
4. Nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing country Parties must be supported and enabled by developed countries, through the provision of technology, financing and capacity building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner.
5. Mandatory reduction targets must include emissions from all sectors, including international shipping and aviation, which are fast growing CO₂ emitters and have thus far been excluded from mitigation commitments, to ensure the application of the ‘polluter pays’ principle.

7 Annex I Parties include the developed countries that were members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1992 plus countries with economies in transition (EITs). Annex I parties accepted a voluntary commitment to return their emissions of Greenhouse Gases to 1990 levels by year 2000. Annex II Parties consist of the OECD members of Annex I. They accepted a commitment to provide financial aid to non-Annex I Parties to meet their agreed incremental costs under the UNFCCC.

8 As in footnote 2, according to *Climate Change 2007*, the Fourth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in order to limit global mean surface temperature to as far below 2° Celsius this means a stabilisation level of approximately 350 parts per million CO₂ equating to 450 parts per million equivalent. Emerging evidence suggests, however, that even this estimate should be reviewed downwards. *Climate Change 2007*, the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC 2007, chapter 13, page 776.



Climate Change and Development

“We face a fundamental question which can be described as both ethical and ecological. How can accelerated development be prevented from turning against humanity? How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life, and how can the negative consequences that have already occurred be remedied?”⁹

Climate change presents humanity with overwhelming possibilities of upheaval and destruction. It also offers us the unprecedented opportunity to cooperate as one international family to ensure the wellbeing and survival of both current and future generations.

Climate change has been at the forefront of international debate for a number of years. It was only in 2007, however, that the international community reached a scientific consensus that human-induced climate change is unequivocal, and is largely a result of rising levels of GHGs mainly caused by human activity.¹⁰

In our work with poor communities in the Global South, CIDSE is witnessing first hand the effects of climate change on poor communities and their livelihoods. As development and humanitarian agencies we are concerned with the increasingly negative impact climate change is having on the eradication of poverty, the realisation of sustainable models of development, social justice and on the full enjoyment of human rights by all.

CIDSE is thus advocating for a change in the way we view climate change. It is imperative that we recognise and respond to the scientific evidence and indications provided to us by experts. Importantly, however, we must also begin to think of climate change in terms of its impact on people, and its social, economic and humanitarian implications.

4. Disproportionate Impact

Climate change is indiscriminate; paying no heed to state boundaries it has already exerted serious impacts on people across the planet, affecting the wealthy and those living in poverty, rural and urban dwellers in both the North and the South. Nevertheless, it is clear that the social and economic costs of climate change are being disproportionately borne by those living in poverty in developing countries. While climate change affects us all, people held back by sustained and chronic deprivation of resources, capability and power, which limits their choices and security, are being affected first and most profoundly.

Developing countries are especially vulnerable to climate change because of their systemic poverty, geographical position, dependence on rain-fed agriculture, the living conditions of much of their populations, and the disruption it causes to their traditional patterns of survival. From our experience we see that poor communities are more limited in their ability to adapt to climate change, and are more reliant on the traditional farming methods and local water systems that are predicted to be heavily impacted. Developing countries are the worst affected, in large part because they are less developed. Whilst poverty exists regardless of climate change, climate change is creating a new vicious cycle which robs people living in poverty of their ability to improve their situation.

9 International Solidarity Needed to Safeguard Environment, Address by Pope John Paul II to the European Bureau for the Environment, L'Osservatore Romano, June 1996.

10 Climate Change 2007, the Fourth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007, Summary for Policy Makers, pages 2 and 5.

Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as cyclones and hurricanes, droughts and floods. CIDSE provides assistance to communities affected by these events, and support communities whose livelihoods and food security are threatened by climate variability. In our work we see a growing pattern of development projects being postponed because attention and finances are taken up by the increasing numbers of emergency relief efforts.

Kim Rattana of Caritas Cambodia confirms,

“One of the biggest challenges we are facing in our development work is the increasing occurrence of natural disasters...what we have achieved over many years is being destroyed by storms and washed away by floods.”

Climate change also threatens not only to impede further advances in development, but also to wash away much of the progress recently made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Human Development Report (2007) states that in Ethiopia and Kenya, two of the world’s most drought-prone countries, children aged 5 years or under are 36-50% more likely to be malnourished if they are born during drought. For Ethiopia, that translated into some 2 million additional malnourished children in 2005. The long-term damage to human development due to climate shocks and variability is not adequately recognised by the international community.

5. How Those Living in Poverty in Developing Countries Experience Climate Change

The impacts of climate change on global meteorological systems are widely recognised. These include the increasing occurrence of extreme weather events, heavy and erratic rainfall, drought, sea level rise, glacial melting and retreat, sea-ice shrinking, and the contraction of snow cover, and permafrost thawing. When we look at how climate change is experienced by affected communities it becomes clear that the impacts are multifaceted and the implications far-reaching.

5.1 Natural Disasters

Between 1990 and 1998, 94 percent of the world’s 568 major natural disasters and more than 97 percent of all natural disaster-related deaths were in developing countries. People living in poverty are often vulnerable and marginalised within their societies due to poor-quality housing, overcrowding, and a lack of alternative livelihoods. As a result, they are more exposed to the impacts of natural disasters where many people lose their lives,¹¹ most lose their dwellings and crops, and their water sources are polluted. The increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters, accelerated by climate change, mean that those living in poverty do not have the time or resources to adequately recover from one disaster before they are hit by the next.

Case study

The Figueroa-Mártir family used to live in the lower areas of the El Tular hamlet in El Salvador. As a consequence of hurricane Stan in November 2005, they had to leave their home and seek provisional refuge at the local school. When it was thought that the danger had passed, they returned home. However, it rained again, causing new floods and landslides, and they had to make the decision to leave their home for good. The family obtained a small plot of land on the higher grounds of the same hamlet and there they built a small shed made of plastic and pieces of wood.

“When Stan happened, we had finished half a plot of beans and maize and we lost everything because there was too much rain. We were left without a home, without anything; we all got organized and began to struggle to get tiles and fertilizer to start sowing, but there was nothing forthcoming for us from the town hall.”

The Figueroa-Mártir Family, Hamlet of El Tular, Cuisnahuat, Sonsonate, El Salvador, 2007.



5.2 Food Security

The number of undernourished people worldwide stood at 923 million in 2007.¹² This figure is set to increase as rises in temperatures are already causing increased drought and flooding. According to predictions, most of Africa will experience decreased crop yields as a result of climate change, with rain-fed crop production predicted to fall by up to 50% in some African countries by 2020.¹³

Case study

Scientists say Niger could face more frequent and intense droughts as global warming causes the rains to fail.

In 2005, Niger suffered drought and a catastrophic food crisis which left 3.6 million people facing severe shortages. Fierce dust storms are a regular occurrence in the Sahel desert region of West Africa, an unforgiving climate which regularly suffers failed harvests.

“We have never experienced anything like the crisis [in 2005] – we nearly died, we had no food, no money, nothing to do. I used to collect leaves to give to the children. I used to cook them. This was our one meal of the day.”

28-year-old Howa from the Sahel region in Niger, 2006.

5.3 Water Security

Access to clean, safe water, already inadequate in many countries, is being further eroded in many communities as a result of climate change. This is due to drought and as a result of salt water invading the soil in low-lying coastal areas, poisoning freshwater wells.¹⁴ According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in Africa alone the population at risk of increased water stress due to climate change is projected to be between 75 and 250 million people by 2020, rising to 350-600 million people by the 2050s if drastic action is not taken to change the course we are on.

Case study

In Kenya, drought is a fact of life and farming methods are adapted to make efficient use of every drop of water. But villagers say droughts are now more frequent and more severe.

“There was much rain when I was little but it keeps getting less year by year;”
Martha Munyao reflected.

Esther Kimanzi, who cares for three orphans, said:

“There would be drought one year but then several years without. When my children had children, that was when the situation started to get worse and the rain became very little...we’d have to walk five kilometres or so to the river to get water, so we wasted so much time.”

Kitui region of southern Kenya, 2007.

11 *Attacking Poverty*, World Development Report, World Bank, 2000/2001, p171

12 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2008, <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2008/1000923/index.html>, consulted October 2008.

13 Climate Change 2007, the Fourth Assessment Report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Working Group II, chapter 5, 2007.

14 To date, 700 million people in 43 countries worldwide live below the water stress threshold, including one quarter of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa. Human Development Report, 2007/2008, Fighting Climate Change, Summary.

5.4 Health

Erratic temperature changes, including extremes of heat or cold cause higher death rates with fatal illnesses, and Greenhouse Gas pollution and smog have a severe impact on respiratory diseases. Furthermore, global warming and the increase in frequency of extreme weather phenomena have serious implications for sanitation conditions. Climate-sensitive diseases, for example those transmitted through water and via vectors such as mosquitoes, are among the largest global killers; diarrhoea, malaria and protein-energy malnutrition alone caused more than 3.3 million deaths globally in 2002, with 29% of these deaths occurring in Africa.¹⁵

Case study

Mam Sambath of Development Partnership in Action in southern Cambodia notes a worrying trend:

“Villagers, particularly in the dry season, are being forced to migrate outside the village to find jobs, and many have returned having contracted HIV-AIDS. This is a real problem in the communities which we are working in.”

People living with HIV-AIDS are more vulnerable to other illnesses associated with increasing climate variability, such as malaria, dengue fever, dysentery and cholera.

Development Partnership in Action, Cambodia, 2007.

6. A Web of Direct and Indirect Effects

People living in poverty experience not one effect of climate change but many. Food and water scarcity presents not only a short-term humanitarian crisis but also a long-term development issue. As livelihoods are eroded families must make difficult choices to ensure their survival. The Josefina Parish Integrated Programme in the Philippines is witnessing an increasing and worrying trend:

“Farmers are very dependent on farm produce for their livelihood which is now affected due to changing weather conditions. Most children and young women from low-income families cannot go to school; instead they help their families in earning additional income through finding work in the towns and cities,”

Such sacrifices have consequences for the ability of many people in developing countries to move out of poverty.

The experiences above warn of looming crises at national, regional and global levels. Social and political stability, essential for sustained human and economic development, are set to be further undermined in many countries due to increased tensions over accessing diminishing land, water and food resources.

¹⁵ World Health Organization 2008, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs266/en/index.html> consulted March 2008.



Case study

Sura of Ethiopia has reflected on the drought that has been recurring for the last 30 years in his area and the effects this has on the people:

“There were three dry-land grazing areas in Borena. Those areas are now being taken over for farming. Therefore the livestock movement is restricted and we are facing a problem. The land is not suitable for farming and still there is a problem of farm encroachment. That brings real problem in terms of availability of pasture and ranch.”

But more serious is the problem of animal raiding. As a result of ethnic conflicts arising from the mobility of animals and the competition for scarce water and pasture resources, Sura says, he has lost most of his cattle.

“As a result of ethnic conflicts with the neighbouring Somali tribes in the last 10 years, I have lost up to 50 of my cattle and more than 100 sheep and goats. From the drought, about 10 of my cattle died. The conflict also claimed the life of 5 of my relatives.”

Sura, Borena, Southern Ethiopia, 2008.

In 2007 and 2008 we have already witnessed food riots in over 30 countries due to rising food prices, which have been linked in part to reduced yields due to the effects of climate change. International Alert have estimated that there are over 46 countries – home to 2.7 billion people – in which the effects of climate change, in interaction with economic, social and political problems, will create a high risk of violent conflict.¹⁶

Lack of access to essential resources and the conflicts this often provokes are causing an increase in migration and the number of environmental refugees. The number of environmental refugees is increasing throughout the world, with people being forced into ill-equipped camps in host countries, most often neighbouring developing countries, with limited resources of their own, which in turn leads to heightened tensions and environmental degradation. Currently there are between 25 and 50 million environmental refugees, although they lack official international recognition or protection. It is estimated that their number could increase by up to 100 million by 2010 and up to 1 billion by 2050.¹⁷

*“Today perhaps more than in the past, people are realising that they are linked together by a common destiny, which is to be constructed together, if catastrophe for all is to be avoided”.*¹⁸

Climate change poses new and complex obstacles to global peace and stability and the equal distribution of goods. Protecting people living in poverty from the spiralling destruction of further climate change, and ensuring and enabling their ability to develop out of poverty is first and foremost a moral and humanitarian obligation, but it is also a global political necessity.

16 *A Climate of Conflict: The Links Between Climate Change, Peace and War*, International Alert, 2007.

17 http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/human_tide3_tcm15-23335.pdf - consulted May 2008.

18 Pope John Paul II, Papal Encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987.

7. The Urgency and the Responsibility to Act

The international community finds itself moving towards a critical tipping point, facing unavoidable and irreversible consequences, and the risk of even greater and catastrophic long term impacts. Global mean temperatures have risen by 0.76% since industrialisation began and we are only now beginning to wake up to the consequences. Scientists estimate that the carbon being pumped into the atmosphere has already guaranteed a further rise in surface temperatures of 0.5-1°C, and it may reach an increase of 1.8°C by the end of the century.¹⁹ If we fail to take the necessary action now to limit the warming of the Earth's surface temperature as far below 2°C as possible (based on pre-industrial levels), we could be committing ourselves to dangerous climate change. CIDSE underscores the precautionary approach affirmed by the UNFCCC,²⁰ and believe that enough is known to justify and obligate preventive action on climate change, in particular because of its disproportionate and devastating impact on the poor.

Economically developed nations have a special obligation towards the whole international community because of their previously unchecked consumption of natural resources. Industrialised countries have contributed most to global stocks of carbon – accounting for at least 7 out of every 10 tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted since the start of the industrial era.²¹ An ecological debt has been building since the industrial revolution as a result of our industrialised societies being premised for so long upon economic growth, disregarding those who do not benefit from it. It is time for those who have created the problem to begin to pay for the solutions and to ensure that developing countries can pursue development paths which do not provoke further climate change.

We are not powerless, and our history shows that we can act effectively. In the 1970s the international community responded with relative success to serious environmental alarms over acid rain and in the late 1980s the growing hole in the ozone layer. Civil society has made major achievements in eradicating national debts of developing countries, which take away much of the resources they could use to invest in their development. Climate change presents a greater and more complex problem that fundamentally questions our aspirations to certain styles of living and ways of thinking about development.²²

At the personal level we can act daily to decrease our ecological footprint, but now it is urgent that we have leadership at the national and international level to foster a global future of climate justice. There must be no illusion of quick fixes for global warming. Alternatives which prolong our dependence on unsustainable models of energy consumption should be viewed with scepticism. Measures, including alternative energy sources, which do not take people living in poverty and the environment into account, run the risk of deepening the spiral of inequality.

Climate change is a global problem that requires a unified effort from all parties to find an effective solution. It presents the unique opportunity to the international community to work together for the survival of future generations. Individuals, communities, civil society, the private sector, and the nation state all have an obligation to learn more about what can and needs to be done to address this serious risk to the human family and to life on this planet.

“The ecological question must not be faced solely because of the frightening prospects that environmental destruction represents; rather it must above all become a strong motivation for an authentic solidarity of worldwide dimensions.”²³

19 *Climate Change 2007*, the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Working Group I, Summary for Policy Makers, 2007.

20 *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, Article 3.3.

21 Human Development Report 2007/2008, Fighting Climate Change, Summary.

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This policy paper on Development and Climate Justice sets out the policy approach of CIDSE to the negotiations taking place within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for a new global agreement on climate change for post-2012.

It highlights the impact of climate change on progress made in poverty reduction and towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It also underlines the fact that though climate change is a human-induced phenomenon created primarily by rich industrialised countries, it is impacting first and most profoundly those who live in poverty in developing countries.

This report advocates that both development and justice must be central to the UNFCCC negotiations in order to achieve an effective, equitable and socially just agreement.



CIDSE member organisations

