



# CLIMATE CHANGE

and the Millennium Development Goals



**ENDPOVERTY**  
**2015**  
millennium campaign



# BACKGROUND

Climate change and global poverty have attracted considerable attention in recent years as key global justice challenges of our times. Both are serious challenges to the future health and prosperity of our planet. They must be combated simultaneously; we cannot take care of one without addressing the other. An effective attack on poverty and the ill-effects of climate change requires taking comprehensive action that encompasses both issues. We cannot fight climate change without considering the rising energy needs of poor people and countries, nor can we effectively address global poverty without accounting for the impacts of climate change on agriculture, disease patterns and severe weather events, all of which particularly impact the poorest countries.

Climate change presents significant threats to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially those related to eliminating poverty and hunger and promoting environmental sustainability. An increasing body of evidence points to the disproportionate negative impact that climate change will have on the poorest countries that, ironically, have contributed least to the problem.

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Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of severe weather events. Poor countries lack the infrastructure necessary (e.g. storm walls, water storage) to respond adequately to such events. As a consequence, diseases such as malaria are likely to expand in range, impacting more people in the poorest regions of poor nations that are already most affected by such diseases. Changing rainfall patterns could devastate rain-fed agriculture on which so much of the population in poor countries depends to survive. In Africa, for example, only 4 percent of all cropped land is irrigated.

Currently over two billion people in the world lack access to a reliable energy source. Reducing poverty, expanding health services, promoting economic growth,

and meeting the MDGs in poor countries will be predicated on significantly increased energy supply. Whether this energy comes from fossil fuels or renewable sources will have tremendous ramifications on global greenhouse gas emissions and climate stability. Scientists warn that if we are to avoid the most dangerous climate change impacts, worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases will have to peak around 2015, and decline sharply thereafter. This means that the energy path that poor countries follow will have a significant bearing on the prospect of the most extreme climate change. How these countries grow and address poverty will affect climate change. Similarly, increased incomes and education in the poorest countries (part of MDGs 1 and 2) will increase the financial and human capacity of these countries to respond to climate change impacts.



# MAPPING OF THE MDGs

## MDGs



**GOAL 1**

**Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty**



**GOAL 2**

**Achieve universal primary education**



**GOAL 3**

**Promote gender equality**



**GOALS 4,5,6**

**Reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV, malaria and other diseases**



**GOAL 7**

**Ensure environmental sustainability**



**GOAL 8**

**Develop a global partnership for development**

Changes in natural systems and infrastructure will:

- reduce the livelihood assets of poor people;
- alter the path and rate of national economic growth;
- undermine food security.

Climate change could lead to a reduction in the ability of children to participate in full-time education by causing:

- destruction of infrastructure (such as schools);
- loss of livelihood assets (increasing the need for children to engage in income-earning activities);
- displacement and migration of families.

Depletion of natural resources, decreased availability of potable water, reduced agricultural productivity and increased climate-related disasters could:

- place additional burdens on women's health;
- increase women's workload;
- limit women's time to participate in decision-making and income-generating activities;
- reduce the livelihood assets of women.

Increased child mortality, reduced maternal health and the undermining of the nutritional health needed by individuals to combat HIV are expected to occur as a result of climate change-induced:

- extreme weather events;
- increase in prevalence of certain vector- and water-borne diseases;
- heat-related mortality;
- declining food security;
- decreased availability of potable water.

Climate change will have a direct impact on environmental sustainability because it:

- causes fundamental alterations in ecosystem relationships;
- changes the quality and quantity of natural resources;
- reduces ecosystem productivity.

Climate change could lead to conflicts over diminishing natural resources, directly undermining the prospects of global cooperation and partnership. Climate change could also affect international trade and the global financial system through:

- increased frequency and severity of severe weather events;
- loss of agricultural productivity in some regions;
- loss of natural resources.

Climate change limits the capacity of poor countries to produce and trade primary agricultural products in the world market. Furthermore, increased mitigation and adaptation costs will expand the debt burden of poor countries.

### **Beyond the traditional categorization**

of climate change as an environmental issue, it is clearly also a development issue; a poverty reduction, food security, economics, health, human rights, governance and equality issue. It is an MDG issue.

### ***We can protect the planet and its poorest inhabitants if our leaders have the political will***

It is for this reason that in September 2000, world leaders representing almost every country on the planet signed up to eight interlinked goals to be achieved by 2015 – the MDGs; Goal 7 is focused on the environment and climate change, as part of the broader commitment to sustainable development. We have passed the mid-point for the achievement of the MDGs and are running out of time to address the impacts of poverty and protect the planet. Urgent action is needed on both these fronts. Potential actions are achievable and affordable. Taking action simply requires the political will of our leaders.



*“Despite Goal 7 of the MDGs being on environment and climate change, we rarely hear the discussion on climate change in the context of the MDGs. We hear a lot about how not addressing climate change will put the MDGs at risk. But almost nothing on how not achieving the MDGs will exacerbate climate change.”*

**Salil Shetty, Director**  
UN Millennium Campaign

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. In order to mitigate the most severe development-related impacts of climate change, new approaches must be adopted in the following areas.

Vigorous adaptation to improve resilience of vulnerable communities during the next few decades – implementation of adaptation actions on the basis of:

- climate scenarios and economic impact assessments;
- financial needs assessments;
- capacity building and risk management strategies;
- integration of adaptation actions into sectoral and national planning;
- the development of risk management and risk reduction strategies; including insurance, and disaster reduction strategies;
- support to design of policies that are appropriate for a world of uncertainty, change and surprise.

2. Mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation through greater focus on local adaptive capacity, community engagement and participation.

*“Climate change mitigation and adaptation are not just about technology or infrastructure, it’s about people’s resilience and increased capacity to help themselves, it’s about the achievement of the MDGs.”*

**Erna Witoelar**

UN Special Ambassador for MDGs in Asia and the Pacific 2003–2007

*“We have to make sure that decisions on climate change are in the interest of the most vulnerable, supporting their social protection, health, livelihood and therefore they go hand in hand with the MDGs.”*

**Bert Koenders**

Minister for Development Cooperation  
The Government of Netherlands

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1 Rich countries must take primary responsibility

Although rich countries are responsible for most current climate change, it is the poorest people and countries that are paying the price. Rich countries must therefore assume first responsibility and:

- immediately implement deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, with binding targets;
- meet their aid commitments to reach 0.7 percent of GNI, consistent with the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness (MDG 8);
- provide additional aid financing for adaptation measures (estimated at \$86 billion by 2016 to prevent post-2015 reversals in human development and MDG achievements);
- transfer existing and new adaptation technology measures;
- create incentives for poor countries to limit their greenhouse gas emissions, while safeguarding their right to development.

*"We see that the government must be specific about identifying whether climate change impacts are likely to come. Preparation and implementation of adaptation plans mean particularly ensuring that ODA [overseas development assistance] is done in a way where resilience is built into the programmes."*

**H.E. Peter Garrett**  
Australia's Minister for Environment

*"In spite of all the promises made worldwide, development aid even dropped by 5 percent last year. We have to step up our effort. Adaptation costs, in my view, should be financed additionally to the ODA level and they should also come from the private sector."*

**Bert Koenders**  
Minister for Development Cooperation  
The Government of Netherlands

*"Development is the common denominator in the trade negotiations under the Doha Round and in the climate change discussions in Bali. The impact on the MDGs and poor people should be the touchstone on which we can judge the success of these talks."*

**Mari Pangestu**  
Minister for Trade  
Republic of Indonesia



*“Among developing countries the negative impact of climate change is first and worst for the poorest countries and the poorest people. The climate sensitive sectors, agriculture and fisheries, are most important for their economy. They also have the least human, institutional and financial capacity to anticipate and respond to the effects of climate change. Already, over 96 percent of deaths related to disasters caused by extreme weather were in poor countries.”*

**Eveline Herfkens**  
Former Executive Coordinator  
UN Millennium Campaign

*“Just as we’re finally making a dent on the massive challenge of poverty, literacy and disease in the achievement of the MDGs, we are now being confronted by the harsh reality of climate change. We are being advised that we will have to slow down our growth rates and reduce our dependence on our traditional sources of energy. We are also very concerned that some of the promises made of development aid and might now go towards climate change rather than the MDGs.”*

**Voices of the people in  
Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia**  
Quoted by Salil Shetty, Director  
UN Millennium Campaign

## **2** Poor countries must implement sustainable development plans to achieve the MDGs

- ensure rights to land, forests, water, energy and livelihoods for their poorest people;
- integrate accelerated programmes to prevent forest loss into national MDG-based sustainable development plans as part of their contribution to global mitigation;
- prioritize renewable energy resources, where possible;
- enhance transparency and accountability to their citizens, particularly the poor, in planning and implementing climate risk reduction measures and utilizing the domestic and external finances at their command;
- recognize the need to increase the resilience of poor people affected by climate change through a variety of locally defined solutions;
- incorporate long-term climate and disaster risk reduction strategies into the MDG-based national sustainable development plans.



### **3** World leaders must speed up the process for a multilateral post-Kyoto framework

As part of their re-dedication to the achievement of the MDGs at their current mid-point, every country in the world must immediately become part of the process for a post-2012 framework to address climate change.

We need citizens around the world to raise their voices against inaction and demand that governments meet their MDG commitments and address the climate crisis.

Addressing climate change presents unique opportunities to:

- advance sustainable development;
- encourage a more inclusive approach to economic growth;
- invent cleaner technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while promoting growth;
- counter the worst environmental catastrophe; this requires shared understanding of long-term goals, effective leadership and an ability to build and facilitate concerted action among all players and at every level.

# THE UN MILLENNIUM CAMPAIGN

The UN Millennium Campaign works with partners in countries around the world to support individuals in their efforts to hold their governments to account for the achievement of the MDGs and for the realization of human rights. We believe that only if citizens are informed of the promises and commitments that their governments have made, and are engaged in calling for their realization, will the MDGs be achieved by 2015.

**Remember, we are the first generation with the technology, resources and know-how to eradicate poverty. Take action now! Join the Campaign!**



*Please visit our website at [www.endpoverty2015.org](http://www.endpoverty2015.org)*





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