

Civil Society Advocacy Cards

Sourced from the IIED report Southern Voices on Climate Policy Choices

The Climate Change and Development Forum in Bangladesh reports that awareness on climate change and associated issues varies between stakeholders. In 2008, climate change awareness was poor amongst government organisations and employees, especially at the local government level. NGOs and civil society organisations were more aware but the private sector was largely unaware about the impacts of climate change and vulnerability. In early 2011, awareness levels had improved amongst all actors

Increasingly, non-government organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders have been coming together to form civil society networks in some of the countries that have been affected most by climate change. These networks have been involved in a wide range of activities to raise awareness about climate change, support climate change adaptation activities that benefit the most vulnerable, develop low-carbon development pathways to help mitigate climate change and improve local livelihoods, conduct research and disseminate results, build capacity on climate change and influence government planning processes at a multitude of levels through a variety of advocacy activities

Climate Action Network South Asia has been working to influence discussions and planning surrounding climate change financing in the region. This is occurring primarily through the production of newsletters, briefings or thematic papers developed for this purpose, and also through participation in relevant meetings and global climate finance discussions, especially through civil society organisation platforms. There is a clear need for developing a robust climate financing mechanism for South Asia, but emphasis to date has focused on the assessment of existing funding streams and how effective they are. Funding currently comes from several UNFCCC funds (the Adaptation Fund, the Special Climate Change Fund, the LDC Fund), bilateral (single donor country) sources, multilateral sources (groups of countries) and also institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and World Bank. There is little agreement on the best channel for providing the funds required for supporting future regional climate actions. It is unclear how international financing institutions will be integrated into future regional climate financing, and the multiplicity of funding channels for the adaptation activities in particular could give rise to duplicity and poor synergy between the donor agency activities. A recent report prepared by a CANSA member has suggested that a new body dedicated to financing climate actions would be a good idea provided it does not duplicate work.

Civil society has been engaging with governments in a number of ways to hold governments to account and tackle these problems of implementation. Focus areas for particular advocacy efforts described below include disaster management, financing and REDD. In Vietnam, for example, plans developed under the National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 are low quality due to the availability of insufficient resources and guidelines, particularly at the local level. Members of the Disaster Management Working Group in Vietnam have been working to improve the situation by developing local level pilot programmes that contribute to Strategy development and implementation and working with government by providing inputs on related disaster management policies and strategies. They have been sharing knowledge with government via meetings, workshops and dialogues such as the national Disaster Risk Reduction forums, where good practices and lessons learnt are discussed, and they have organised public events, such as on International and National Disaster Risk Reduction Days, to raise awareness amongst policy makers, managers, media and the public.

The Climate Change and Development Forum in Bangladesh has been trying to raise the voices of the vulnerable in different ways under the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. It has prepared a position paper on the issues, conducted media briefings, shared lessons and experiences amongst members and met with government organisations especially the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The Forum regularly discussed the action issues identified in the Strategy and Action Plan and ongoing implementation mechanisms in its meetings, and it analysed and presented financial allocations to different vulnerable zones and sectors.

NGOs working in the Central African Republic on environmental and human rights have organised themselves into a Civil Society Network for Climate Change and Reducing Emission from Deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) to lobby for greater respect for local and indigenous community rights. The Network held two workshops in forest provinces in the south-west of the country in late 2010, and training and awareness raising workshops in Bangui. The network issued a statement before the RPP (Readiness Preparation Proposal) was discussed in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility meeting in Vietnam in March 2010 identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the RPP. The government has now committed to carrying out more consultations and hopes to resubmit its RPP in due course.

Since 2008, Suswatch Latin America has been promoting approaches to facing climate change in an environmentally and socially responsible manner at local scales through demonstration projects. These help build local adaptive capacity and strengthen levels of community organisation to face climate change challenges. Project communities in Central America are selected according to the following criteria: the community must rank highly according to poverty indicators, it must be located in a high risk area far from major cities or provincial capitals, and it must be organised in such a way that its structures and leadership enable project implementation.

The media has a central role to play in climate change advocacy activities. It reaches lots of ordinary people who may not be aware of the issues highlighted but who might want to get involved if they have more information. Government officials also generally read, watch and listen to the media, so it can be an effective way of highlighting a problem to them. Some examples of media work include telling stories relating to the issue in a regular radio show, introducing the subject matter into the story line of a well-known soap opera, writing an article or letter for a newspaper or magazine, talking on the radio or television or telling a journalist about the situation. More recently, forms of social media such as Facebook and Twitter have also played an important role in raising awareness of climate change issues like specific threats and impacts and also highlighting risks and recommended responses.

Two civil society networks in Niger – the National Committee of NGOs on Desertification, and the Niger Youth Network on Climate Change – recommend that civil society organisations should collaborate more with research faculties, scientists, academics, students and other researchers at institutions such as the University Abdou Moumouni Dioffo and the National Institute of Agronomic Research of Niger. Such collaborations will help develop better adaptation options, and improved information regarding the adoption of appropriate policies and approaches to deal with climate change, and the monitoring and evaluation of these policies once implemented. This information will boost advocacy work by basing arguments on good science in addition to lessons learnt from daily work with grassroots communities. At the international level, this will help strengthen national positions when negotiators are up against institutions and experts from outside the country.