



2009 Spring Meetings
International Monetary Fund
World Bank Group
April 25 – 26, 2009, Washington D.C.



CIVIL SOCIETY POLICY FORUM

Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change: World Bank and CSO Approaches¹

Thursday, April 23, 2009

This session, sponsored by the World Bank's Civil Society Team along with the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, provided an overview of the challenges posed by climate change and its impact on developing countries. The session was chaired by *Phil Hay* (Communications Adviser, Human Development Network, World Bank), who moderated the presentations given by *Marianne Faye* (Co-Director, World Development Report on Climate Change 2010), *Harold Alderman* (Adviser, Human Development Africa Region, World Bank), *Douglas Brown* (Climate Change Adaption Specialist, World Vision), *Dorrett Byrd* (Director, Program Quality Support Department, Catholic Relief Services), and *Walter Grazer* (Special Advisor, National Religious Partnership for the Environment).

Marianne Faye began the session by presenting the main findings of the 2010 draft of the World Development Report on Climate Change. Among some of her key points, she argued that although the major impacts of climate change may seem obvious, there are still many in the international community that do not recognize it as significant and immediate challenge that disproportionately affects developing countries. She emphasized that the real difficulties were in the worsening news on international responses that are characterized by inertia coupled with uncertainty, which justifies a strong precautionary approach. She called for "climate smart" development policies such as more effective carbon pricing, sustainable land management, and better allocation of water resources that are needed to address the challenges of adaption and mitigation. To achieve this, she pointed to the industrialized world which bears responsibility for taking the lead in addressing these problems.

In terms of the human impact, the next presenter, *Harold Alderman*, focused on the relationship between climate change, weather shocks, and nutrition in developing countries. He argued that global warming will be accompanied by increased climate variability. Therefore, the ability of the international community to respond to natural disasters, extreme weather events, and price fluctuations should be a priority. He gave examples of studies that have been done in drought stricken communities in Zimbabwe,

¹ This summary note was prepared by *Uwimana Basaninyenzi* of the World Bank's External Affairs Department. If you have any comments or questions on the note please send an email to civilsociety@worldbank.org.

Tanzania, and Ethiopia, whose populations suffered from severe child malnutrition. Alderman called for programs like flexible financing, contingent targeting, and cash transfers that have the ability to reduce widespread risks in these communities.

Two civil society groups—Catholic Relief Services and World Vision—then shifted the discussion from the nutritional impact of climate change to programs designed to help the poor. As faith-based advocacy organizations, both CSOs felt that climate change was not only an environmental problem, but a moral, social, and economic one. Both groups discussed how their organizations have put in place successful interventions such as cash and seed vouchers, tree planting programs, and improved watershed management that have been effective in addressing these challenges. However, they acknowledged a need to develop new technology, knowledge, and infrastructure to better confront the predicaments faced by the poor.

Finally, the last presentation focused on the role played by civil society organizations in advocating climate smart policies in the developing world. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment, a coalition of four religiously based organizations, described their moral obligation to stand up for the voiceless. In their effort to push for better climate change policies in the developing world, they have appeared before the U.S. Senate to advocate for a number of bills to assist some of the most vulnerable countries. Although their legislative efforts were not always successful, the group described their continued efforts to promote a “climate fairness agenda.”

The final presentation was followed by a question and answer session, which prompted discussions in the following areas: key messages of civil society groups in Copenhagen; the World Bank’s handling of governance issues pertaining to climate change; the role of marginalized groups such as the disabled in climate change debates; precautionary approaches to climate change, the challenges of strengthening the language on international adaptation; and the implementation of key recommendations of the World Development Report 2010 edition on climate change.