inside:

Climate justice: Human rights informing climate action

Development that also grows those at risk and those in poverty

10 December 2014

Be PaperSmart: Read Outreach online
www.stakeholderforum.org/sf/outreach
contents.

1 Climate justice: Human rights informing climate action
2 Sustainable consumption and production: Creating synergies for climate protection and development objectives
3 The human faces of climate change: Why rights protections must be included in the Paris agreement
4 Indigenous voices have a right to be heard in the fight against climate change
5 Why we must climate-proof the poor in Africa
6 UNEP’s Adaptation Gap Report: Finance, technology and knowledge are key to realising adaptation opportunities now and in the future
7 UN experts call on climate negotiators to integrate human rights
8 Drawing lessons for planning climate resilient coastal cities
9 It takes a village
10 Climate change as the decisive factor for increasing inequality and injustice: A human rights issue for Bangladesh
11 Linking the climate change and Sustainable Development Goals processes
12 Development that also grows those at risk and those in poverty
13 Side events calendar
14 Reflections from COP20, Day 8

OUTREACH IS PUBLISHED BY:

About Stakeholder Forum
Stakeholder Forum is an international organisation working to advance sustainable development and promote democracy at a global level. Our work aims to enhance open, accountable and participatory international decision-making on sustainable development through enhancing the involvement of stakeholders in intergovernmental processes. For more information, visit: www.stakeholderforum.org

OUTREACH TEAM
Editor
Assistant Editor
Print Designer
Web Designer
Amy Cutter
John Romano
Faye Arrowsmith
Tom Harrisson

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Saleh Ahmed
Andrea Berardi
Katrin Glatzel
Peter J Glyn
Joy Hyvarinen
John H. Knox
Anna Kontorov and Anne Olhoff
Jessica Olson
Mary Robinson
Patrick Schroeder, Silvia Sartori and Uwe Weber
Divya Sharma and Rozita Singh
Allison Silverman
Céline Tschirhart
María José Veramendi Villa
Géraud de Ville
Vositha Wijenayake
Chiara Zanotelli and Daniele Savietto

OUTREACH IS PUBLISHED BY:

Utah State University
The Open University
Agriculture for Impact
International Movement ATD Fourth World Field
Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment
UNEP and UNEP DTU Partnership
Sierra Student Coalition
Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice
SWITCH-Asia Network Facility
TERI
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
Royal Holloway University of London
AIDA
The Open University and Institute of Environmental Security
Climate Action Network South Asia
Youth Press Agency
Perhaps more than any other problem humanity has faced, climate change confronts us with the reality of our interdependence. No country alone can protect their citizens from the impacts of dangerous climate change; climate change observes no boundaries. Therefore solving the problem requires countries and citizens to act in solidarity, motivated by enlightened and collective self-interest for a better future. We know that the impacts of climate change undermine the enjoyment of human rights. So our actions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are important as the more they limit warming, the more likely we are to have an environment in which people will be able to realise their rights.

The human rights risks associated with climate change are of a fundamentally different nature than those posed by climate policy. If temperature increase exceeds 2°C, which becomes progressively more likely if climate action is delayed, the scale, severity and unpredictability of climate change would have profound impacts on human rights and pose an existential threat to countries and communities around the world. Meanwhile, there is good reason to believe that the risks posed to human rights by rapid climate action can be managed through a commitment to integrate human rights and equity in all climate policies and by designing policies to maximise the potential for positive co-benefits, including improved health, decent work, sustainable food production and access to renewable energy. After all, development is contingent on access to energy, not emissions.

Science tells us that in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and keep warming of the earth’s atmosphere as far below 2°C above pre-industrial levels as possible, it is necessary to phase out all carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. For a transition to zero carbon emissions to be successful and fair, all countries must undertake it together. This means we must act now, together.

A global phase-out can only work when it is done fairly. A climate justice approach which is grounded in human rights provides the framework necessary for success. In October 2014, 28 special rapporteurs and independent experts (known as special procedures) of the Human Rights Council wrote an open letter to the Parties to the UNFCCC to stress the fact that climate change threatens to undermine the protection of human rights, and that the UNFCCC has a crucial role in effectively protecting human rights for all. These UN Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts urge Parties to “include language in the 2015 climate agreement that provides that the Parties shall, in all climate change related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights for all.”

Inclusion of this language in the overarching principles set forth in the operative paragraphs of the new agreement would help to ensure that the Paris Agreement results in equitable and ambitious actions that avoid dangerous climate change and protect human rights.

A climate justice approach to reaching zero carbon offers our global society a unique opportunity to combat climate change and promote equity, while developing a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are realised; a world everyone is entitled to.

66 years ago today the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in Paris. The Member States of the newly-created United Nations proclaimed universal respect for human rights, acknowledging that every individual in the world was equal in dignity and rights.

The memorial service of one of our greatest human rights defenders, Nelson Mandela, took place on Human Rights Day last year. This year, as we gather in Lima for COP20 to negotiate a framework to deal with climate change, one of the greatest challenges to human rights of the 21st century, it seems right to remember his words: “Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. You can be that generation.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Mary Robinson is former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and currently serves as the UN Special Envoy for Climate Change and President of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice.
Sustainable consumption and production: Creating synergies for climate protection and development objectives

Patrick Schroeder, Silvia Sartori and Uwe Weber
SWITCH-Asia Network Facility

The Rio+20 conference in 2012 saw the emergence of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) on the international development agenda. SCP will gain renewed attention in 2015 when it will become a constitutive element of the post-2015 development agenda.

From the traditional development aid perspective, climate change threatens the achievements of development cooperation. Therefore, many development professionals are increasingly concerned with adaptation to the impacts of climate change. When it comes to mitigation actions, these measures are also in most cases considered to entail trade-offs with a country’s economic development. SCP provides solutions to both concerns.

For governments to be more ambitious and agree to strong emission reduction targets under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) process for the 2015 agreement and beyond, negotiators and policymakers need to be confident that climate action will not come at the cost of development. SCP offers a number of practical tools and instruments on how to achieve substantial emissions reductions, and enhance the resilience of communities and key national industry sectors of a country.

Traditional SCP tools focusing on cleaner production like environmental management systems, energy efficiency or resource efficiency measures, or industrial symbiosis, which improve the environmental performance of companies, all have co-benefits for climate protection. As much of industrial production has moved to developing countries over the last few decades, it is necessary to provide enhanced support for environmental management of the private sector through international development programmes. Particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with low awareness and limited capacity require assistance.

The 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on SCP was adopted by governments at the Rio+20 Summit, and is the first multilaterally agreed framework for action on SCP. Under the coordination of UNEP, it currently includes six programmes on consumer information, sustainable lifestyles and education, sustainable public procurement, sustainable buildings and construction, sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, and sustainable food systems. All of these cross-cutting programmes are relevant areas for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

A new element introduced by the 10YFP is the focus on consumption in international development. SCP as an integrated, holistic development approach considers all the stages of the value chain, from resource extraction to end-of-life, including consumption. SCP is also at the forefront of addressing some of the new urban development challenges faced by developing countries where traditional societies transition to consumer societies. Critical issues are: unhealthy diets and overconsumption, inadequate waste management systems, in particular for electric waste recycling, increasing energy consumption by residential buildings and urban traffic congestion.

The European Union’s (EU) SWITCH-Asia Programme has been ahead of the global aid development agenda and supported implementation of SCP practices in EU-Asia cooperation since 2007. Since the beginning of the programme, the EU has provided €144 million in funding for 86 projects in 16 Asian countries. A new call for proposals was launched on 3 December 2014, inviting grant applicants to develop project proposals which promote innovative approaches contributing to sustainable use of resources, energy efficiency and cleaner production by SMEs. Other approaches support local community development, and green job creation. For example, the “Laos Improved Cook Stoves” project promoted the uptake of high-efficient cook stoves by providing capacity building to SME producers and retailers. The “Sheep Wool Building Materials” project in Mongolia supports the uptake of building insulation materials from sheep wool, thereby providing a sustainable solution to conventional insulation materials and, at the same time, giving local herdsmen additional income. The “Sri Lanka Renewable Energy” project promotes the installation of biogas facilities in Sri Lankan hotels.

Sustainable consumption has become an increasingly important focus of the programme. Projects have supported sustainable government procurement in China and Bhutan. In India, the “Green Retail” project aims at instilling sustainable thinking and adoption of sustainable approaches in the strategy, operation and marketing of large retail chains.

The five National Policy Support Components (NPSC) of the SWITCH-Asia programme in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka focus on the inclusion of SCP in national development plans. For example, the Philippines NPSC demonstrates how SCP is directly linked to the country’s national energy efficiency strategies and national climate change plan.

Replicating and up-scaling of the existing best practices in SCP, such as those developed by the EU’s SWITCH-Asia Programme, will contribute to reconciling national development and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

MORE INFO
www.switch-asia.eu
There is no doubt that climate change interferes with the fulfillment of human rights. The rights to life, physical integrity, food, water, housing, participation and access to information are among those most affected.

At the same time, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is meeting in Lima (COP20), Typhoon Hagupit is hitting the Philippines. It is the third year in a row that the Philippines has been hit by a deadly typhoon during the climate change COPs. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan hit during COP19 in Warsaw, killing 7,350 people, and in 2012 Typhoon Bopha hit during COP18 in Doha, killing 600.

This year’s COP is negotiating a draft text that will be the basis for a new binding climate agreement to be approved in COP21 in Paris next year. As the climate talks move forward, UN human rights experts, along with civil society organisations, call upon the Parties to the UNFCCC to ensure that the agreement expressly recognises human rights obligations that apply in the context of climate change. Building on the legacy of the Cancun Agreements adopted at COP16, which emphasises that State Parties to the UNFCCC “should, in all climate change related actions, fully respect human rights,” they are requesting the incorporation of core and operative language in the new agreement states that Parties “shall, in all climate change-related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfil human rights for all.”

The implementation of projects under response measures including the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) show why it is imperative that rights be respected in all climate change-related actions. As the CDM – which provides for emissions reduction projects in developing countries – has become operational, more and more projects raising human rights violations have emerged.

A case in point: In 2014, the Santa Rita dam project in Icbolay river in Guatemala was registered under the CDM. Maximo Ba Tiul, Indigenous Q’equchi and Representative of the People’s Council of Tezulutlán traveled to Lima to tell COP Parties and other participants about human rights violations against the communities. Along with the environmental harm, he describes intimidation, harassment and even murders of community members in order to ensure the project will proceed. In August 2014, 1,600 policemen came to repress the community in order to start construction of the Santa Rita dam.

Another case is the Barro Blanco project, a hydroelectric dam that is currently under construction on the Tabasará River in western Panama. Once completed, the dam is projected to flood homes, schools, and religious, historical and cultural sites in Ngäbe indigenous territories, threatening the Ngäbe’s cultural heritage. In addition, the dam will transform the Tabasará River – critical to the Ngäbe’s physical, cultural, and economic survival – from a flowing river to a stagnant lake ecosystem. This will severely affect the Ngäbe’s lands and means of subsistence, and result in the forced relocation of many families. CDM rules require investors to consult with local stakeholders and to take their comments into account during the registration process. However, the company did not consult the Ngäbe communities regarding the Barro Blanco project and its impacts, nor did the State comply with the communities’ right to be consulted under international human rights law. “We are demanding respect, which is the one of the few things we have left”, said Weni Bagama an indigenous leader of the Ngäbe community.

On Human Rights Day, more than 200 organisations have signed a letter calling upon Parties to the UNFCCC to:

• adopt urgent and ambitious mitigation action to protect human rights;

• use a rights-based approach as a critical tool to effective outcomes, including in the development and implementation of climate policies, mechanisms and institutions; and

• recognise that the climate framework must address the human rights impacts of climate change and climate policies.

NOW is the time to fully integrate rights protections in the climate regime.
Indigenous voices have a right to be heard in the fight against climate change

Andrea Berardi  
The Open University

Géraud de Ville  
The Open University and Institute of Environmental Security

Céline Tscharnert  
Royal Holloway University of London

As we enter the final year before COP21, which will hopefully lead to a strong commitment on climate change mitigation and adaptation by the international community, it is paramount that the voices of the nearly 400 million Indigenous peoples are heard. The 2014 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that: “indigenous, local and traditional knowledge systems and practices, including indigenous people’s holistic view of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change.”

However, far too often today, dominant international strategies for addressing climate change focus almost exclusively on the commodification of nature. Policies such as REDD+ tend to override alternative conceptions of development, often held by the very minorities or indigenous peoples whose lives are most directly threatened by the impacts of climate change. As a consequence, financial support for management practices within indigenous territories is rarely pursued in accordance with these groups’ own understanding of nature and development, or in ways which do not erode cultural identity. As the people with the most to lose from the impacts of climate change, indigenous communities should control how information about their territories is collected and disseminated, and most importantly, this information should be used to direct policies towards supporting the long-term survival of these communities within their traditional environments.

Over time, and as a result of colonial legacies, the reorganisation of indigenous peoples’ spaces, beliefs and interactions with their natural environment, together with the systematic manipulation of discourses around environmental problems, have promoted the interests of non-indigenous stakeholders. When indigenous perspectives are considered – if they are considered at all – they are presented as singular and simplistic. As a result, stereotypes of indigeneity – which tend at best to portray indigenous communities as ‘guardians of nature’ or, more frequently, as ‘inefficient exploiters of natural resources’ – remain dominant. While there is an emerging call for reconciling climate change mitigation, rights to self-determination and development, practical and alternative approaches to build bridges between indigenous worldviews and dominant models of sustainable development, they remain to be implemented to date.

Direct public engagement with indigenous voices and practices could allow for a building of these bridges. Furthermore, indigenous voices on a public scene can foster networks directly amongst indigenous communities and would allow them to perform and reinforce their own identities. The few initiatives promoting bottom-up engagement of indigenous communities by empowering them to record, analyse and disseminate information can significantly enhance their potential for autonomy and self-governance, and support the voicing of alternative conceptions of development. These rare initiatives have enabled indigenous communities to engage in negotiations with a range of stakeholders, including international policymakers and funding bodies, over local development priorities.

Working in the Guiana Shield region of South America, Project COBRA is an example of an initiative demonstrating how indigenous communities can take control in presenting their own stories and perspectives to national and international policymakers and negotiators. Project COBRA builds capacities within indigenous communities to use accessible visual information and communication technologies and participatory processes to engage the whole community in identifying and sharing their own solutions to current and emerging challenges, including climate change. Even within Project COBRA’s work, the content of the materials produced by indigenous communities has occasionally been questioned if it failed to promote the agenda of particular non-indigenous institutions. Indeed it has sometimes been a real battle to prevent non-indigenous stakeholders from exerting pressure to manipulate the message, and to ensure that indigenous communities record and share their own solutions to the climate change challenge, and their aspirations for the future.

Billions of dollars are being mobilised in the fight against climate change, and other equally significant challenges such as poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, education and health. But, if indigenous communities are not allowed a say on how the money is spent, there is the real risk that it will be misdirected, forcing these communities down a development route that may not be of their choosing and potentially further degrading the environment and destabilising the climate. It is time indigenous communities record and share their own solutions to the climate change challenge and their aspirations for the future.

MORE INFO
We call combating climate change a race against time. But who is the clock truly going to run out on?

We know that the mega carbon culprits in the developed world will not be the ones to feel the most severe impacts of climate change – rather it will be the countries in the developing world, that have done the least to cause this chaos. New research has just discovered that 39 of the 50 countries least prepared to deal with climate change are in Africa. From 2049, in some areas, production of crops could fall by up to 50 per cent.

When I was last in Ghana and spoke to smallholder farmers reliant on stable weather conditions to feed their families and earn an income, they spoke fearfully of the irregular rainfall patterns that were starting either too early or too late – and getting shorter each time. They have seen their yields steadily diminish, and their parched grains shattering on the mill.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) more than 3 billion people – that is almost half of the current total global population – live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. A functioning agriculture sector is crucial in creating income-generating opportunities that are key to eradicating extreme poverty in developing countries.

So how can global development goals to end hunger and eradicate poverty be met, when agriculture is still fighting to get into the agenda at major climate talks?

Food security goals cannot be met until climate agreements consider agriculture

Policy makers, scientists, NGOs and activists are making their way to the last major climate negotiations before a new international climate change agreement is adopted in Paris in December 2015. What I argue should be running in parallel, not in isolation, is the question of how food systems around the world will build resilience to disasters (which are increasingly attributed to climate change), something that the new sustainable development goals will tackle when they are adopted, also next year.

My concern is that the dots have not yet been connected between these two major political processes.

Historically, the relationship between agriculture and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process has been rocky. At both COP17 and COP18, governments stopped short of agreeing to create a work programme for agriculture, which would have initiated a series of activities to further explore and exchange scientific and technical information on agriculture, as well as its impact and implications for climate change. Food security advocates are asking, will agriculture be part of this new 2015 agreement? If not, will the absence of agriculture in a 2015 agreement negatively affect the sector’s ability to access climate funds for agricultural adaptation and mitigation?

We still have relatively little knowledge of the regional dynamics and of the specific consequences for agriculture. Poor countries, in particular, need adaptation measures to cope both with relatively predictable climatic stress and with much less predictable, but more extreme, climatic events. However, building resilience involves not only developing new technologies and farming techniques, but also appropriate economic policies and institutional arrangements.

COP20 could make climate change mitigation in agriculture an opportunity

As we strive to implement change that will help the poorest farmers cope with climate change, an immense opportunity to limit emissions can be taken advantage of at the same time. There are many opportunities for generating mitigation “co-benefits” from agricultural growth and adaptation strategies. This includes efficient pasture management, increased nutrient and water use efficiency and increased use of trees and perennials on farms – all of which will serve the purpose of driving food production whilst controlling carbon emissions. Identifying these approaches is an important component of building a “climate-smart” agricultural approach at country level.

Climate-proofing the fragile food systems in the developing world – particularly in Africa where so many remote populations are ill equipped to deal with climate shocks – should be a major priority for governments and donors concerned with development. Unfortunately, this topic will not be on the table in Lima, but technical meetings of the UNFCCC in June next year may bring about some commitments to helping poor farmers adapt to the changing climate. We must only hope it is not too little, too late.
Since 2010, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has produced annual Emissions Gap Reports. These reports have supported the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations by providing an assessment of the gap between ambition and reality in the quest to bring emissions levels down.

Over the past two years there have been frequent requests from Parties and organisations for a complementary report to be produced on adaptation gaps. The first global UNEP Adaptation Gap Report, launched on 5 December 2014 at the UNFCCC COP20 in Lima, is a response to these calls.

Adaptation challenges require global action

Although adaptation is often a response to specific climate risks at a given time and in a given context, the preliminary analysis in the Adaptation Gap Report highlights that adaptation challenges require global action. Adopting a strategic global framework for adaptation, with clear goals and targets, would help set the direction for, and track progress on, adaptation. It is UNEP’s hope that Parties and organisations will find the adaptation gap approach useful in this context and that the report will serve to support discussions under the UNFCCC, including on adaptation aspects of the 2015 agreement.

A framework for defining adaptation gaps

The adaptation gap can be broadly defined as the difference between actually implemented adaptation and a society set goal, determined largely by needs and preferences, and reflecting resource limitations and competing priorities. The UNEP Adaptation Gap Report provides a simple, conceptual framework for defining and assessing adaptation gaps that can be applied at various scales (global, national, regional, sector, city, or community) and can be measured using a wide range of indicators and metrics.

The framework is used as a basis for preliminary assessment of the gap between adaptation needs and reality. The report focuses on gaps in developing countries in three important areas: finance, technology and knowledge. Other gaps, including in capacity and governance, are equally important to consider, as are the complex interactions between various gaps. The report also points to a number of areas for further action and future analysis. UNEP’s intention is to provide fuller analysis of some of these areas in future reports, starting in 2015 with a report focusing on the adaptation funding gap.

New and additional finance is needed to close the funding gap

The Adaptation Gap Report includes an analysis of existing global, sector and national estimates of the costs of adaptation, and compares these against the levels and trends in public adaptation finance flows. It finds that the costs of adaptation are likely to be at least two-to-three times higher than available global estimates, which report adaptation costs in the range of $70 billion to $100 billion. Although there is significant progress in finance flowing into adaptation, the report concludes that there is likely to be a major adaptation funding gap, particularly after 2030, unless new and additional finance for adaptation becomes available. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) could play a key role in bridging this adaptation funding gap. The report similarly points to the importance of further investigating the role and potential of the private sector in adaptation.

Large potential for technology and knowledge to help bridge adaptation gaps

The report finds that there is significant scope for bridging adaptation gaps by accelerating the diffusion of existing technologies for adaptation, and highlights the importance of focusing on technologies that contribute to a range of development objectives beyond climate benefits. Similarly, the report illustrates the large scope for using knowledge more efficiently and for tailoring it better to the needs of users, including local farmers, large companies or policy makers.

Mitigation action is crucial for avoiding an insurmountable adaptation gap

The risks and impacts of climate change are expected to increase significantly in coming decades. The size of the emissions gap has crucial implications for the adaptation gap and the levels of adaptation effort that will be required to manage unavoidable climate risks. Many regions, sectors and systems are approaching the limits of human and ecological systems to adapt to these changes. The Adaptation Gap Report serves as a reminder that ambitious and immediate mitigation action is a crucial precondition for avoiding unmanageable climate impacts and an insurmountable future adaptation gap.

MORE INFORMATION

UN experts call on climate negotiators to integrate human rights

John H. Knox
Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment

Over 70 human rights experts of the United Nations, including the special rapporteurs on the rights to food, health, water, and an adequate standard of living, as well as the special rapporteurs on the rights of indigenous peoples, minorities, people living in extreme poverty, migrants, and the internally displaced, have issued a joint statement calling on States to integrate human rights norms in the agreement to be adopted in Paris in 2015.

The UN Human Rights Council, the principal UN human rights body, has appointed independent experts to over 50 mandates that address a wide spectrum of human rights issues. From time to time, they come together to issue a statement on a topic of cross-cutting importance. This year, they chose to issue a joint statement on climate change in conjunction with COP20 and in anticipation of Human Rights Day, which falls on 10 December.

There can no longer be any doubt that climate change threatens the enjoyment of a vast range of human rights. Mary Robinson, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has called it “the biggest human rights issue of the 21st century.” The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) document the harmful effects of climate change on the environment, human health, access to water, sanitation and food, and economic and social development.

Moreover, climate change has a disproportionate effect on many vulnerable individuals and groups, including those whose ways of life are closely tied to the environment. In the words of Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank, “the poor will be hit first and hardest. This means that the people who are least responsible for raising the Earth’s temperature may suffer the gravest consequences from global warming. That is fundamentally unfair.”

Mitigation and adaptation measures taken to anticipate and respond to climate change must also respect the human rights of those affected by such measures, including their rights to information and participation.

States have recognised that their obligations under human rights law are relevant to climate change. In 2009, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution affirming that “human rights obligations and commitments have the potential to inform and strengthen international and national policy making in the area of climate change, promoting policy coherence, legitimacy and sustainable outcomes.” Citing that resolution, the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed in the 2010 outcome document adopted by COP16 in Cancun, “that Parties should, in all climate change-related actions, fully respect human rights.”

In the joint statement issued this week, the UN independent experts urge the State Parties to the UNFCCC to ensure that human rights are integrated into climate change governance. Specifically, they renew a call they made in October to the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), for the negotiators to include language in the 2015 climate agreement that provides that the Parties “shall, in all climate change-related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfill human rights for all.” To that end, the experts call for the Lima Conference to launch a work programme to ensure that climate actions take into account human rights.

No one is suggesting that the climate negotiations should move to the Human Rights Council. At the same time, human rights should not be considered the concern of States only when they are in the Human Rights Council. States do not leave behind their human rights commitments when they negotiate a climate agreement or when they take individual actions to address climate change.

Maintaining a human rights perspective has many benefits. It keeps the focus on the many concrete ways that climate change disrupts the lives of those most at risk. It helps to ensure that response actions are taken with the informed participation of those most affected. And it provides guidelines to measure the success of a climate agreement: whether it safeguards human rights from the harmful effects of climate change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
John H. Knox is a UN Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
The east coast of India is vulnerable to climate impacts like sea level rise and extreme events like cyclones and storm surges.

Visakhapatnam is one of the largest cities in the State of Andhra Pradesh, which is situated on this coast. It is one of the five major harbours of the country, housing a naval base, two major ports and many important industries. Between 1891 and 2012, Andhra Pradesh was affected by 73 cyclones. Of these 73 Cyclones, Visakhapatnam has been hit seven times. The recent cyclone, Hudhud, was the third in the span of a year that has hit the Indian coast. The cyclone that affected the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha caused huge damage to life, property and infrastructure in the city of Visakhapatnam (estimated to be $11 billion).

While the city is gearing up for rehabilitation of affected people and restoration of infrastructure and services, this event leads us to ask a few pertinent questions: Could the way infrastructure is located and built in the city play a role in reducing the damage caused? Considering the extreme vulnerability of coastal cities to climate impacts and hazards, should we not design stringent development norms and land use planning practices that are cognisant of vulnerable locations and climate related design and construction parameters? Should coastal cities not start planning for climate resilience, slowly but strictly integrating and mainstreaming climate resilient systems into their planning framework and functioning mechanisms?

Even before this cyclone took place, the Centre for Research on Sustainable Urban Development and Transport Systems (TERI) undertook a study in 2013-2014 to address some of the questions posed above. The study was granted under USAID’s Climate Change Resilient Development (CCRD) project’s Climate Adaptation Small Grants Programme. It focused on assessing the impact of sea level rise and storm surges on the infrastructure and services in coastal cities. The study was conducted in two cities – Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh and Panaji, the capital city of the State of Goa. The year-long assessment led to identification of vulnerable locations due to sea level rise and storm surges in Visakhapatnam – highlighting the areas in and around Visakhapatnam Port, railway station, HPCL Refinery, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, NTPC Plant, Gangavaram Port and the airport as vulnerable locations. The vulnerability mapping, which was a spatial exercise in the study, also predicted that the impact of storm surges may be felt as far inland as Gopalapatham in the north and Srinagar, Sramikanagar in the south of the city. Based upon the vulnerability assessment, the study identified critical infrastructure and services that are at risk due to climate impacts and provided structural, strategic, policy and institutional recommendations for increasing the adaptive capacity at city level.

The study has also resulted in a Database Management System (DBMS) which records sector based information on infrastructure assets and services in the city. It also contains colour coded data fields that the city must maintain for initiating resilience planning. This tool has been passed back to the urban local bodies (ULBs) in both cities with an endeavour that it could be refined in consultation with multiple departments to include several other infrastructure planning parameters, as relevant to the particular city.

Ironically, while cyclone Hudhud was making its way towards the city of Visakhapatnam, the results and recommendations of the study were being unveiled in a National Conference in New Delhi. Once the city and its citizens are back on track, it would be worthwhile to draw out lessons and consider bringing in climate concerns in development planning. A review of the Master Plan and City Development Plan (CDP) of the city taking cognisance of studies like that conducted by TERI could be carried out with the purpose of revising some of the development norms on the basis of vulnerability to climate impacts. Identification of various city and district level departments and state line departments and drawing up appropriate institutional synergies between them would also go a long way in ensuring integrated climate resilient development.

MORE INFO
To read the detailed recommendations and access the study documents, please visit this link: [http://bitly.com/YKhtzO](http://bitly.com/YKhtzO)
It takes a village

Allison Silverman
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

In the world of UN climate negotiations – in which 194 official Parties and hundreds of observers and representatives from civil society and indigenous groups have different and complex agendas and priorities – meaningful progress to reduce emissions is a challenging feat. Ensuring that progress at through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) respects human rights and environmental integrity is even more so.

As negotiators were designing the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) Warsaw Framework at COP19 last year – which provides the basic rules for implementing REDD+ – an equally important process took place outside the closed doors of the negotiating rooms. A number of groups recognised the need to improve collaboration and the opportunity to influence the negotiations by working more strategically, by working together. These groups – the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change, REDD+ Safeguards Working Group, and the Accra Caucus – have been engaging in REDD+ in the international arena. Their goal is to ensure that in protecting forests to prevent climate change, environmental issues such as biodiversity and water protection, as well as human rights, are protected and promoted.

Together, as a loose collaboration of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and civil society organisations focused on rights and advocacy, we discovered strength in numbers and a unity of purpose in promoting rights and environmental protection in REDD+. We recognised that there was much we could learn from each other, much to gain, and much work still to be done. We identified our role in advancing climate justice more broadly in the climate negotiations.

And so, we decided to form an informal, knowledge-sharing platform that we called the “Tri-Caucus.” One particular motivation for uniting was the concern that the decisions on REDD+ made in Warsaw on finance and accounting could result in countries ignoring the remaining work needed on REDD+ safeguards and drivers of deforestation. In response – as a loosely coordinated network of national and international activists, with a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other’s work on the rights dimensions of climate change, and on how forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other local communities have been impacted – we agreed to push for stronger international policy and greater harmonisation with domestic laws.

During our first week in Lima, we advocated for the critical need for further guidance on the REDD+ “safeguards information system”, which will help to ensure that the REDD+ safeguards are actually addressed and respected, that they both do no harm, and that they provide added benefits, beyond carbon, to the forests, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and biodiversity. For us, the Cancun Safeguards were only the first step and most importantly will be how the safeguards are actually operationalised on the ground. Regrettably, negotiators did not agree on additional guidance here in Lima; however, we managed to secure continued discussions for next June, giving us additional opportunities to push on this issue, for community monitoring, and for stronger provisions for addressing drivers of deforestation.

On the broader land sector discussions under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP), we are promoting a “rights-based approach” to comprehensive land use, by which we frame governance, rights and biodiversity in the post-2020 Agreement as core enabling conditions and push the negotiations beyond carbon accounting towards a stronger focus on adaptation and multiple benefits. We have also been promoting human rights in the Convention more generally, which is particularly important given the recent murders of environmental activists, who were killed because they stood up against the destruction of their natural resources.

In the case of the Tri-Caucus, the saying “it takes a village” is an understatement. To move the world, it takes a truly global, coordinated community. While we were disappointed that in one of the world’s biggest rainforest countries, Parties could not find a way to look past their differences to help protect forests and secure the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, we are now more unified and motivated than ever. While the final decisions are out of our control, we are able to more readily work together to influence REDD+ and land use, as well as to share our messages outside the formal talks.
Climate change is an issue which has direct implications on increasing social, environmental, demographic, economic, and political challenges all around the world. The multiplier cascading effects of climate change contribute to further poverty and inequality, particularly among the people who are largely poor and marginalised.

In the advent of advanced science and technology and the presence of modernism, a large portion of the world’s population is still denied or excluded from many basic human rights. Without any doubt, we are experiencing increasing declines in food and water security, along with increasing weather-related anomalies in different communities or regions across the world.

Bangladesh is one of the countries in the world that is most heavily exposed to these adverse climate impacts. Its geophysical location makes it vulnerable to different climatic events, such as strong cyclonic storms and tidal waves. The impacts of climate change are multiplied with its enormous population in limited space, where 40 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty and congested situations. The country is already experiencing different weather-related anomalies, such as more frequent and severe types of tropical cyclones, heavier unpredictable rainfall causing more floods, higher river flows, river bank erosions, as well as sea-level rise. By the middle of this century, the livelihoods of 70 million people in Bangladesh could be permanently affected by floods or sea-level rise. In addition, eight million people will experience droughts. Up to eight per cent of low-lying lands may go under water due to sea-level rise. For many people, changing climate is not a future phenomenon; instead it is a current event. Bangladesh is among those countries where the current generations already have, or will experience adverse climate impacts in their lifetimes.

In addition to that, the country's limited adaptive capacity – due to its limited social, economic, environmental, and political resources – intensifies the extent of existing and/or perceived risks and vulnerabilities. Poor and marginalised citizens are the major victims of climate change as a consequence of their capacity to reduce and manage its impacts. Their socioeconomic conditions, due to their disadvantaged poverty situation, force them to be more exposed to climate impacts by living in risky and hazardous locations or by having subsistence livelihoods with limited to no adaptive capacities.

The climate impacts are not homogenous – they vary substantially based on spatial locations or socio-economic determinants of risks exposures. Currently, different parts of Bangladesh are prone to different climate vulnerabilities or impacts. Southern (coastal) Bangladesh is experiencing sea-level rise and salinisation of land and water, as well as increasing frequencies of tornados and cyclones. North and Northeast Bangladesh are experiencing the process of desertification, mostly due to lower than average water flow from upstream transboundary rivers. Southeast Bangladesh is most likely to experience lower than average precipitation. Unpredictable summer heats along with fluctuating winter temperatures all over the country are already making substantial impacts and altering almost all aspects of peoples’ livelihoods and economies. It is clearly evident that in Bangladesh, climate anomalies will have different features, patterns, and impacts based on locations and socio-economic determinants of the local people.

People who are poor, marginalised and dependent on different resource-based industries (e.g. agriculture, fisheries) are the major victims of climate impacts. In most cases, there is no relationship between sufferers and polluters that shape this climate injustice. Usually, the larger burden is on the people who are least responsible for CO2 emissions.

In this context, the countries which are responsible for the major share of CO2 emissions in the present and the past, have the moral and ethical obligation for initiating concerted efforts to address one of the major human rights issues in contemporary times: the unequal exposure to different impacts of climate change. Now is the time when we all should realise from our past experiences that poverty or human sufferings somewhere can lead to problems everywhere. Challenges related to climate change need to be addressed by increasing global cooperation, innovation, and support for our mutual benefit in the short and long-term.
We are today at a crucial point in global development, with climate change widely recognised as a major threat to sustainable development. This means that the negotiations on new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are extremely important.

The time is ripe for all actors to turn towards development that is pro-poor, pro-vulnerable and pro-environment. This calls for a convergence and integration of international processes concerned with development and environment. Sustainable development encompasses environmental protection and implies that it cannot lead to further aggravation of the adverse effects of climate change. This is why there needs to be convergence between the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process and the UN post-2015 development agenda, including the negotiations on the SDGs.

While we are in Lima negotiating a binding climate change agreement to be adopted at COP21 in Paris, it is valuable to consider how issues in the negotiations under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) may relate to the SDGs and how the two processes can be mutually supportive. The UNFCCC negotiations need to ensure a global climate policy framework which will facilitate mitigation of impacts of climate change, while building resilience and the right to development.

The post-2015 agenda and the SDGs need to support both climate mitigation and adaptation. In order to help understand the two processes better, it would be ideal if UN Member States could ensure that their ministries and representatives in the post-2015 and UNFCCC processes work together for mutually supportive outcomes. As the priorities of the various international processes and negotiations are so closely aligned at present, it makes it difficult for a discussion on climate change to take place without considering poverty and inequality. And it is not possible to talk about sustainable development without mentioning climate impacts and low carbon pathways. By increasing the recognition of the interlinked nature of our global challenges, the political momentum for ambitious outcomes will also increase.

There are numerous streams of work happening within the UNFCCC process that can be analysed and used to inform and influence the discussions on the SDG framework. Applying the knowledge and expertise on areas such as mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and loss and damage will be crucial to ensure that the development framework will adequately reflect and address climate change across all relevant goals, targets and indicators. These include the goals on climate change, energy, agriculture, forests, sustainable consumption and production, urbanisation and infrastructure, and targets on DRR, ending fossil fuel subsidies, operationalising the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other Means of Implementation (MOI).

Given the commonalities of the two agendas it is highly necessary that these two processes are mutually supportive.
Development that also grows those at risk and those in poverty

Peter J Glynn
International Movement ATD Fourth World

Climate change impacts all countries, but has the most detrimental effects on people living in poverty within national boundaries.

Despite the provisions in the current agreements that social and economic development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities, the most vulnerable communities, particularly those affected by poverty, are still most exposed to the damaging impacts of climate change. As we move into the final stages of negotiations for the new climate agreement, it is our responsibility to ensure that our actions insulate and protect the poor and those most at risk.

In the recent exchange of views on the contents of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), fewer than 10 submissions proposed measures to protect the most vulnerable communities, particularly those living in poverty. The new climate agreement provides an opportunity to exploit the potential synergies between climate change response and sustainable development, both of which contribute to the fight against poverty. In this regard, civil society should be active in their representations to Parties to ensure that the 2015 agreement and the INDCs feature strategies that effectively counteract the marked vulnerabilities of people living in poverty.

The non-governmental organisation (NGO) ATD Fourth World sees potential to improve future agreements and the INDCs (including the up-front information) to better address the needs of the most marginalised people in three areas: poverty eradication, data and reporting, and finance.

Poverty eradication

On identifying synergies, ATD Fourth World has found wide agreement that climate change impacts all countries, but that it has a greater adverse impact on the most vulnerable communities, particularly those living in poverty. The 2010 Cancun Agreements reflect the awareness of governments that responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development. They note that, “economic development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of developing countries,” yet, it is important to consider the primacy of these issues in developed countries as well.

The recently released Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) notes that, “differences in vulnerability and exposure arise from non-climatic factors and from multidimensional inequalities often produced by uneven development processes.” Further, “People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalised are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation.”

Data and reporting

It is of upmost importance that the Parties use a reporting and monitoring structure that will give particular attention to these communities. In order to ensure that the most vulnerable communities are adequately targeted by climate-change policy, it is critical to use disaggregated data when measuring the effects of climate change and corresponding responses. When the particular impacts on the most vulnerable communities are adequately captured, parties will be more able to concentrate efforts on these communities and assess the success of targeted measures.

Finance

In order to ensure that funding reaches the most vulnerable communities, Parties must take concrete actions to guarantee the provision of immediate and adequate funding and to demonstrate how the funds are used to benefit the most vulnerable communities. Both developed and developing country parties should ensure that their nationally determined budgets for climate change response strategies direct resources to the communities that are most vulnerable and least equipped to cope with the effects of climate change.

The 2015 negotiation period should be regarded as an opportunity to address the structural inequities that exist in our societies and to introduce measures to protect those societies from the harmful effects of climate change. Many expect that the erratic and extreme weather events will continue, as will the rise in sea levels. The poorest segments of society are the least equipped to adapt to changing environments and are therefore the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. If governments fail to combat climate change with people living in poverty, it is very likely that response measures will work against these vulnerable communities. We cannot ignore the problem and their plight.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>ORGANISERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:30—13:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Sipan</td>
<td>Climate change threatening human rights: challenges and actions</td>
<td>World Council of Churches (WCC), Friends World Committee for Consultation, World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30—13:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Machu-Picchu</td>
<td>Recent trends in carbon emissions and sharing a quota of cumulative emissions</td>
<td>University of East Anglia (UEA), Center for International Climate and Environmental Research (CICERO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30—13:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Caral</td>
<td>Water holds the key for mitigation, adaptation and for building resilience: towards a climate deal</td>
<td>Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD Pakistan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30—13:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Maranga</td>
<td>The economic case for climate action: sub-national leadership</td>
<td>Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (arg4SD), The Climate Group (TCG), University of Leeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30—13:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Wari</td>
<td>Momentum for Change: Urban Poor</td>
<td>Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30—13:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Paracas</td>
<td>Africa in a Post-2015 New Climate Change Agreement</td>
<td>United Republic of Tanzania, African Union Commission (AUC), Mozambique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15—14:15</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Cusco</td>
<td>In the struggle to solve the climate crisis, a powerful, yet largely unnoticed shift is taking place</td>
<td>The Climate Reality Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15—14:45</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Maranga</td>
<td>Monitoring the Amazon forest: a regional undertaking built on the Brazilian experience</td>
<td>Brazil, Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15—14:45</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Caral</td>
<td>Program on Climate Change Learning in Central America</td>
<td>Dominican Republic, Corporación Grupo Tayrona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15—14:45</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Machu-Picchu</td>
<td>Education and communication as cornerstones for effective climate action</td>
<td>Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15-14:45</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Sipan</td>
<td>Keeping Under a 2 degree C Rise: Latest Pathways to Success</td>
<td>Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00—16:30</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Machu-Picchu</td>
<td>Fossil-Fuel Subsidy Reform: Maximizing Contributions to Emissions Mitigation</td>
<td>New Zealand, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00—16:30</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Paracas</td>
<td>Africa &amp; Caribbean South-South knowledge exchange on Water Security &amp; Climate Resilient Development</td>
<td>Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO), Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00—16:30</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Caral</td>
<td>Ethics at the Heart of Climate Change</td>
<td>Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU), Abibimman Foundation (AF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00—16:30</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Maranga</td>
<td>Towards a Gender-Responsive Mitigation Framework for transformative change in the energy sector</td>
<td>Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:45—18:15</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Machu-Picchu</td>
<td>2015 and beyond: climate finance readiness for transformational change</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), University of Potsdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:45—18:15</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Caral</td>
<td>A new Security Agenda: safeguarding water, food, energy and health security in a changing climate</td>
<td>Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA), Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA), WWF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30—20:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Maranga</td>
<td>Observatories; A key tool to tackle Climate Changes in tropical regions</td>
<td>France, Institute de Recherche pour le Developpement (IRD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30—20:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Caral</td>
<td>Patents and technology transfer for CO2 mitigation technologies in Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>European Patent Office (EPO), Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research (FiS IG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30—20:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Machu-Picchu</td>
<td>Empowering Communities to Decision Makers through Systematic Climate Adaptation</td>
<td>Sri Lanka, CliMates, Fundación TierraVida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30—20:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Paracas</td>
<td>Sustainable Cities to Address Global Environmental Benefits</td>
<td>Global Environment Facility (GEF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30—20:00</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Chavin</td>
<td>Momentum for Change: Showcase Event</td>
<td>Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflections from COP20, Day 8

Jessica Olson
Sierra Student Coalition

Outreach is made possible by the support of

As countries are called upon to raise ambitions regarding emissions targets, Gender Day stands as a reminder that ambition must encompass more cross-cutting issues. Gender Day emerged at COP18 in Doha and has since become an annual event. The day is filled with gender-themed side events and high-level sessions that serve as a vehicle for advancing conversations on gender equality.

Gender Day at COP20 took a different tone than those of the past two years, with Mary Robinson, UN Special Envoy for Climate Change and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, setting the mood at a high-level lunch time event. Robinson acknowledged that gender equality has come a long way since the Beijing Declaration was adopted in 1995, but that there is still a long way to go. Robinson stated, “we need to continue to strengthen women’s rights and not let them backslide.” These remarks follow the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) decision on gender, which was finalised on Friday 5th December. The text denied the use of “gender equality” and instead utilises the less impactful term “gender balance”. This means that low ambition for equitable gender participation will remain the norm within the UNFCCC in Lima and beyond.

In the past two years, Gender Day has served as a platform for discussing women’s vulnerability to climate change without necessarily talking about how women contribute at an international scale. Although women are on the frontline of the impacts of climate change, there are not appropriate avenues for them to share their experiences and knowledge within the UNFCCC. Because of this, the side events and panels on Gender Day tend to be one of the few venues where women’s positive contributions can be heard within the Conference.

In order for Gender Day to fulfil its intended impact, the UNFCCC must fully recognise that gender equality is a human rights issue and address the institutional barriers that block progress. Gender Day must not only be about women, but should address the needs of all genders through gender responsive texts in the negotiations.

On Tuesday, COP20 hosted the third Gender Day, aiming to raise awareness on gender equality and the importance of women empowerment. COP20 could represent a milestone in the efforts for including women’s human rights and gender equality issues in a global process. Already, last year in Doha, a decision was adopted on promoting gender balance and facilitating broader participation of women inside the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Ahead of next year’s celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action – a thorough consideration of gender equality in terms of practical decisions and not only hollow declarations – the time is ripe for further positive progress.

The Women and Gender Constituency has been putting serious efforts in the recognition of gender equality and human rights in all climate agreements, as crosscutting themes. Thus, to actively include the gender perspective in all the bodies and the discussions that are going on here in Lima, including those on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as loss and damage.

Adaptability to climate change can be defined as the capacity of a person, group or country to anticipate, cope, resist and recover from the impacts of a given climate impact. Those who have access to fewer resources – such as technology, education and information – have greater difficulty in adapting. Many women can only dream of having access to the resources they need to build resilience and respond to climate change impacts.

It is time that decision makers admitted that women’s empowerment is not an option, but a must – in all sectors, in all UN conferences and at all decision-making levels. Change needs time, but just as the water erodes the stone when it flows towards the estuary, human rights are also gaining ground. No matter how resistant the opposition is to real change, things will happen when the time comes. Now is the time: let’s use this opportunity wisely. Let’s kill two birds with one stone. Exacerbating inequality by not adopting fair decisions will not be the solution.