



A Climate of Conflict: Considerations for Climate Adaptation in Fragile States

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Thank you. Maybe I'll give you a second to think through the nuanced message that Dan has given around how difficult some of these issues are to tackle on the ground. It's an interesting, nuanced version of something that is actually quite complicated, that the world doesn't know very much about, which is how to do adaptation.

There aren't very many projects that have been labeled as adaptation, understandably, because no single hurricane can be identified as being one that was caused by climate change. We all know that, and thus there are many development projects that have climate impacts ingrained in them that have not been labeled as adaptations. And some of the best work so far that's been done on an inventory of what adaptation projects are is something that WRI has done, but there are only a couple hundred projects that one can say so far in the world are actually doing these things. Most of them are generally development projects in which climate impacts have been overlaid on top of them.

So we're entering into a space where the answers are incredibly nuanced in the way that Dan has been describing them, but the amount of history that the world has of being able to implement these projects is very, very low. Yet, at the same time, we're in the year of a negotiation that is going to be the most important year for climate change, as people say, this year and next for sure. And there is a massive burden for the international community to come up with a framework that is able to answer very complicated questions with a huge amount of uncertainty and very little experience from the past as to how to implement adaptation programs.

One can imagine, as a result, that the way that the policy debate is going so far is that it's incredibly simplistic. The simplistic way of looking at it is that the G-77 is asking the developed world for money—or actually, no, they're not even asking, they're demanding it. It's compensation, using the the “polluter pays” principle that polluters have to pay for all



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of the damages that have been caused, and so this has become, in a very simplistic way, a debate about money, when it should be a debate and a challenge around how to implement very complicated and socially based, from-the-ground-up adaptation actions. The quantities of money that we're talking about are in the tens of billions, so what we're talking about is additional funding to ODA of at least \$50-100 billion are the estimates that people have made.

Now, in the next couple of months there are probably going to be one or two additional studies that take into account the most recent climate change studies that have been done by scientists that will increase those numbers, because climate change is happening faster than what people had considered. So we may not be talking about \$100 billion, we may be talking about \$150 or \$200 billion as the price tag, which would involve nearly doubling or over-doubling ODA.

So these are very large sums of money that policymakers are debating, and the discourse for now is, "You cause the impact, you pay for the actions undertaken in order for us to address the impacts that were caused by pollution in the developed world." So it's a difficult argument to get your head around when you take into account the fact that all of these things are very nuanced and have to be started from the bottom up in terms of how these issues are addressed.

To complicate it even more, one has to take into account that we've learned, experienced. We have experience from 30 years of doing development, and most of development discourse is not being taken into account in these environmental negotiations. And so I spent some time last year in Bonn at one of the negotiations, and it's quite interesting that you meet negotiators from the G-77 who are not development experts—maybe forestry people, but may also be the chief of meteorology from a particular country, and that person is being asked by their nation to represent what is fundamentally a development challenge for them.

And so there's a couple of different leaps, as we see it, that this negotiation must make in a very short period of time. One is from the environmental realm, linking it across the stovepipe to development, because that is effectively what adaptation is. And then even worse, because of the impacts on state fragility, is also into issues like peacebuilding. And one can argue that right now development doesn't really understand peacebuilding, and now we're asking environmentalists to understand development, who would then understand also peacebuilding. So this is an incredibly complicated set of leaps that need to happen.





From our perspective, what is going to happen in Copenhagen will not be a detailed deal. One can't expect that. What it will provide is an overarching framework, and the ask—the most realistic ask, for those who are looking on the impacts on state fragility—has to effectively be one that allows one to create architecture underneath that enables this type of activity rather than dis-incentivizes it. So it's not to say that all of these things will be ingrained into a deal at the end of the year, but rather that that deal is structured in such a way over the next couple of years that when we get into the details, these issues can be addressed in due time.

There is no expectation that the deal will be comprehensive at the end of the year. I think there's an expectation that there will be a deal, but there are pretty reasonable expectations that the deal won't be good enough. It might not be good enough on mitigation, but it probably also won't be good enough on adaptation, but it will be there. And so what I think we're looking to do for this year is to have something that's enabling rather than disabling.

Now, specifically, if I go into where the negotiations are, there are some major challenges around adaptation funding. Again, the scale is a lot less than one would want. But the other challenge that I think we struggle with is when you look at the mechanisms that are being discussed, again, they don't take into account this long set of development knowledge that the international development community has been building up over time, and the peacebuilding communities that understand how to undertake these types of activities.

So the way that the mechanism is currently being discussed, at least one of them, involves governance that doesn't engage any of this history of development experience, and it's mainly, you know, developing countries who are managing the adaptation fund, not necessarily linking into the experience that USAID might have or the Department for International Development in the UK. And it means that there is a potential that a huge amount of money will be put into this but using a way of thinking about development from the 1970s, not taking into account all the lessons that have been learned to date.

So not to end on an absolutely negative note, the election of the Obama administration has been game-changing in the way that climate change is looked on an international level. There's a huge amount of energy and expectation that the U.S. government will act as a leader on all different parts of the climate change debate; so mitigation, adaptation, and others. The fact that China has allocated over 40 percent of its stimulus package to green





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investments is a massive push in the direction that the G-2, the United States and China, can come up with a deal. So there are very positive movements on all of these fronts that are building momentum to get to a deal in Copenhagen, but the questions of how much money and how that money will be governed need to include enabling mechanisms to address these more nuanced challenges.

I think our community's challenge is to try and make those two leaps: One that takes the environmentalists to understand development and also, secondly, into looking at issues of state fragility. Otherwise, we may end up spending a lot of money that might generate more conflict rather than less.



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