

A Pro-poor and People-centered Response to Climate Change

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Oxfam America

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Work relates to Adaptation X (primary) Mitigation X (secondary)

1. What is your organization doing to advance pro-poor and people-centered climate change?

As an international relief and development organization, Oxfam America has a long history of supporting vulnerable communities through our disaster preparedness and livelihoods work. Now, we are joining the worldwide movement to use political action to stabilize our planet's rising temperature—and help those who are at greatest risk of global warming's effects.

Our contribution? We'll put the needs of poor people first.

We are asking that the US do the following:

Stop harming. As one of the world's largest producers of greenhouse gases, the US must commit to reducing its emissions—and helping developing countries reduce their own emissions through clean energy technologies. By 2050, US reductions must be at least 80 percent below 1990 levels. This would help us avoid a global temperature rise of 3.6 ° Fahrenheit (2 ° Celsius), the point at which the world would experience huge shocks to our water resources, food production, sea levels, and ecosystems.

Start helping. The US must commit to assisting poor people in developing countries who are already struggling to deal with climate change—by providing financial and technical assistance to help them adapt. With this funding, vulnerable communities could diversify their ways of earning a living and plan and budget for disasters.

Establish fair solutions. The US must create climate policies that benefit, rather than harm, poor people at home and abroad, including low-income energy consumers. Through these policies, companies producing greenhouse gas emissions should help poor people adapt to the consequences of climate change and any changes in energy prices caused by cutting harmful emissions.

2. What is, in your view, the most critical gap or unaddressed issue in the international negotiations towards a pro-poor climate regime?

Climate change represents one of the greatest threats to development and poverty alleviation in the 21st century. Promoting resilience and adaptation to climate change with new resources, separate from existing development funds, is key to support economic development and livelihoods in the long term. Adaptation financing provided from developed to poor communities in developing countries has been a critical gap in the international negotiations. An important component here is to address what's already happening to poor people as a result of climatic changes – an issue that has not been adequately highlighted in UNFCCC negotiations to date.

3. Do you plan to address this issue? If yes, how?

Oxfam America is putting a human face on climate change by highlighting impacts on vulnerable communities around the world and how those communities are responding through resilience building approaches. We have started to do this through a variety of publications and presentations, most notably “Adaptation 101: How climate change hurts communities and how we can help”, which can be found on our website, www.oxfamamerica.org/climate. By highlighting these stories, we are building public support for immediate action on adaptation.

OA is committed to stimulating policy change by ensuring that US domestic climate change legislation makes new and additional resources available to support poor, vulnerable communities in developing countries. Many of the leading legislative proposals for addressing climate change would cap greenhouse gas emissions and provide industry and utilities with permits for emissions. These permits can then be traded among companies. If Congress requires companies to buy those emission permits rather than giving them away, the revenue generated from these sales of permits can be used to meet a number of public needs. A significant portion of the funds should be set aside to assist those countries and communities that are most vulnerable to the serious impacts of climate change. The costs of adaptation can also be funded through other revenue-generating policies, like carbon fees and taxes on major industries and utilities, or by shifting subsidies and tax breaks away from fossil fuel energy to adaptation funding.

It is also essential for additional funding to be made available through a new post-2012 global deal on climate change through new mechanisms such as international taxes on bunker fuels, carbon trades, or other approached. Funding will be necessary on the order of \$50 - \$86 billion per year according to Oxfam analysis that has since been confirmed and strengthened by the United Nations Development Program in their Human Development Report of 2007–08.

OA is also working in partnership with local organizations and vulnerable communities at the regional level in East Asia, Africa, and Latin America work to craft national adaptation plans in developing countries as well as influencing policymakers in an effort to reach a fair and equitable international deal.

4. What are the challenges you see in addressing this gap?

We have the challenge of elevating adaptation as an issue for immediate action as the debate is primarily focused on emission reductions. We need to build awareness about the human impacts of climate change so the debate is not only centered on mitigation. Awareness will then build the political will to take immediate action on adaptation. We aren't there yet, but Oxfam is working hard to make the case for “stop harming, start helping” in the US and to build awareness on the need for adaptation support. Additionally, many policymakers view adaptation as additional development aid and we need to challenge that paradigm.