



## Making the Adaptation Fund Work for the Most Vulnerable People

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A Germanwatch and „Brot für die Welt“ Discussion Paper

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## Executive Summary

■ Targeting those people most vulnerable to climate change in adaptation is both a human rights obligation for governments as well as of strategic negotiation importance.

■ Analyses of countries' reference documents show that sound assessments of who are the most vulnerable groups and where they are based are almost not available under the UNFCCC. At present, a focus on the most vulnerable communities is not adequately reflected in the proposed Adaptation Fund policies and guidelines. The Adaptation Fund (AF) has the unique opportunity to set precedents. The AF Board made an important step forward in its 3rd meeting (September 2008) when it included special attention „to the particular needs of the most vulnerable communities“ as one strategic priority in its draft Strategic Priorities, Policies and Guidelines.

■ The Poznan climate conference has the adoption of key documents of the Adaptation Fund on its agenda and should support the substantial progress that the AF has made over the last year by adopting the necessary documents, including the special attention to the most vulnerable communities..

■ The Adaptation Fund Board will have to discuss ways to operationalise inter alia the special attention to the most vulnerable communities in its 4th meeting in December 2008.

## 1 Adaptation for the most vulnerable people

### 1.1 The Adaptation Fund: a new and innovative funding instrument

The Adaptation Fund is on its way to becoming fully operational. The Poznan Conference will have to adopt key documents the Adaptation Fund Board has successfully elaborated throughout the year 2008 in its previous three meetings. The uniqueness of the Adaptation Fund is expressed by the list of innovative elements it contains, such as a) a governing board with a significant majority for developing countries, which is unprecedented in the history of development financing, b) the option of direct access to resources from the Fund, and c) a source of resources independent of donor contributions through a 2% share of proceeds from emission reductions issued under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) is also developing an innovative streamlined project cycle for projects submissions and approval. Thus, the Adaptation Fund is a major step forward to put developing countries in the position that they deserve, being primarily those who face consequences of climate change they have not caused. However, this innovativeness also bears a high responsibility to prove that the AF can provide a model for at least a future adaptation regime under the UNFCCC, if not for international cooperation as a whole. In the negotiations on long-term cooperative action under the Convention, Fund and governance issues will continue to play an important role, and the more the AF can provide delegates with success stories the better. It may set precedents for the post-2012 adaptation regime.

### 1.2 Adaptation for the most vulnerable: a human rights obligation and a strategic negotiation issue

Prioritising adaptation support to those most in need is in principle undisputed. At the UNFCCC level, „Parties

particularly vulnerable to climate change“ usually are put in the focus, inter alia in the Bali Action Plan (BAP). Albeit, the concrete definitions vary in the UNFCCC context. The BAP follows a different definition. Even the BAP definition leaves the world with almost 100 countries particularly vulnerable to climate change – Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and countries in Africa affected by drought, desertification and floods. It is not yet clear if the Adaptation Fund Board will have to take on the difficult task of discussing how and according to what methods and indicators a more narrow definition of most vulnerable countries, could be applied. While relevant documents drafted before the 3rd meeting of the Adaptation Fund Board contained options for dealing with this issue, the adopted version of the Strategic Priorities, Policies and Guidelines only refers to the very broad definition of Article 4.8 of the UNFCCC:

*„113. Eligible Parties to receive funding from the Adaptation are understood as developing country Parties to the Kyoto Protocol that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change including low-lying and other small island countries, countries with low-lying coastal, arid and semi-arid areas or areas liable to floods, drought and desertification, and developing countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems.“ (The Adaptation Fund 2008c, Annex V)*

However, the key question for the international community is if adaptation support will meet the needs of most vulnerable communities and households within these countries. This is not negligibility.

It is a human rights obligation because climate change will adversely affect many people in securing their basic economic, cultural and social rights, such as the right to adequate food or the right to water. Most of the developing countries as well as the developed countries are legally bound by international law to respect, protect and fulfil these rights, in particular as State Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

It is secondly a strategic negotiation issue, because it is very likely that developed country governments and parliaments will only be able to commit to generating adequate, predictable, sustainable and additional resource flows to those countries particularly vulnerable to climate change if there is a process to ensure that resources will be targeted at those people most vulnerable. Clearly developing countries have a legitimate claim for receiving adaptation support by those who have mainly caused greenhouse gas emissions, in particular the developed countries. The additional annual costs for adaptation to climate change are estimated to be in the tens of billions of US\$, according to different studies that give still rough estimates, such as by the UNFCCC (2007), UNDP (2007) or Oxfam (2007). However, the magnitude of order of the resources needed in addition to Official Development Assistance (ODA) is obvious. But committing to the huge financial transfers needed will depend on public and parliamentary acceptance

of this transfer. And this willingness to pay will largely be dependent on a transparent process to direct adaptation policies to the most vulnerable people.

It is a human rights obligation and a joint strategic interest of both developing and developed countries to put the most vulnerable in the focus.

### 1.3 Vulnerability assessments as a tool to direct adaptation policies

A human rights based approach to adaptation is not only relevant for a debate about principles, but it can have procedural implications. The adaptation debate can in this regard learn from the debate on the right to adequate food (cf. Brot für die Welt/Germanwatch 2008). In that, countries have agreed to procedural guidelines which include an assessment and identification of the

#### Box 1: Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups under the right to adequate food

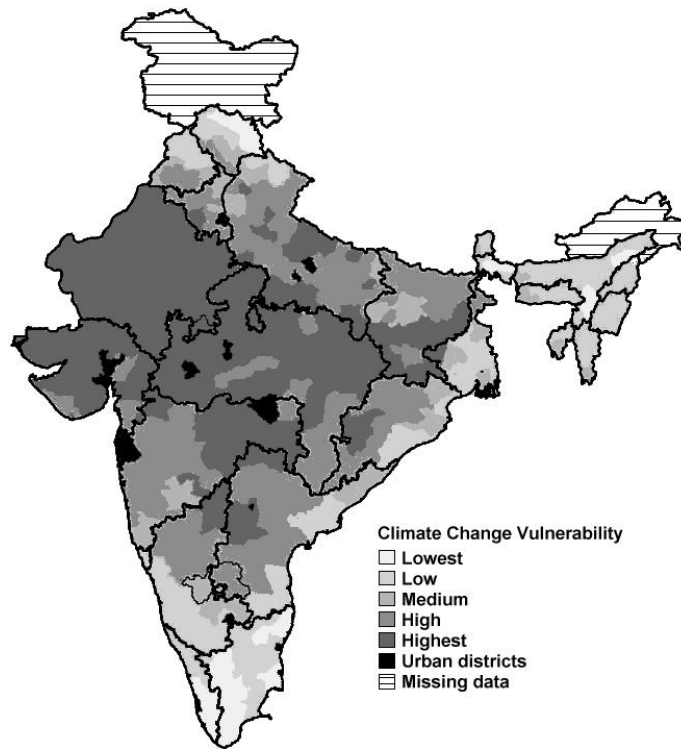
Under the „Voluntary guidelines on the implementation of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security“, governments are requested to develop a national strategy for the implementation of the right to adequate food, which shall encompass in particular the following five elements (cf. FAO 2004):

- Governments must assess and identify which are the most vulnerable groups concerning the right to adequate food, those which are food insecure, malnourished and hungry. Without proper assessment governments cannot properly focus their policy attention to these groups.
- They have to make sure that existing legislation is addressing the concerns of these groups and that the legislation is not leading „de jure“ to discriminations and violations.
- The governments have to make sure that their policy response and their choice of instruments („de facto“) is reasonably focused on those most vulnerable

under the right to adequate food. Policies shall respect and protect existing access to productive resources, income and food and governments have to prove that they do their best to implement the right to adequate food and to help people coping with risks.

- Governments are obliged to monitor the outcome of their policies and must allow for accountability mechanisms including functioning complaint mechanisms and access to recourse procedures.
- One of the strengths of this approach is that it helps to set up procedural guarantees for the affected communities and people for participation. This includes having access to relevant information (transparency) and the right to complain. A second strength is that a rights-based approach requests a specific outcome. Governments have to prove that they focus their policy and budget decisions toward the most vulnerable groups and that no group is overlooked. Governments have to prove that their own adaptation policies do no harm i.e. deprive people from access to food or water.

**Figure 1: District-level mapping of climate change vulnerability**  
 Districts are ranked and presented as quantiles.



Source: O'Brien et al. 2004

most vulnerable groups as a prerequisite for directing policies at the most vulnerable groups of society (see Box 1).

such vulnerability mappings. Figure 1 provides such a district level mapping of India.

An important tool for governments to direct their adaptation policies towards vulnerable communities, households and individuals are mappings of climate change vulnerability. These can be understood as a combined analysis of the adaptive capacity – a composite of bio-physical, social and technological indicators – and the specific sensitivity to climate change of a certain region or certain communities (cf. O' Brien et al. 2004, 303-313). Although there are still uncertainties in many regions about the specific changes in climatic conditions in the future, in many cases the knowledge about the general climate trends are sufficiently sound to generate



## 2 Will the Adaptation Fund work for the most vulnerable communities and households?

What role could the Adaptation Fund play in this regard? It needs to be discussed not only if and how the AF can help delivering adaptation to those who are most in need, but also if current discussions tend to pay enough attention to this overarching objective. Key documents for this discussion are the „Draft Strategic Priorities, policies and guidelines“ (AFB/B.3/9) and the „draft provisional operational policies and guidelines for parties to access resources from the AF“ (AFB/B.3/8) which were subject to the meeting of the 3rd Adaptation Fund Board from 15 to 18 September 2008 in Bonn. While the „Draft Strategic Priorities, policies and guidelines“ were agreed on in the 3rd meeting, the latter one will be more intensely discussed and probably finalised in the 4th Board meeting which will take place from 15 to 17 December 2008 in Bonn.

### 2.1 Vulnerable communities and the Adaptation Fund

What is the principle role of communities in the AF? First, it has to be noted that according to decision 5/CMP.2, activities on all levels, including on the community level, are eligible for funding. Second, there will be no direct access by community-level stakeholders to the AF. However, Parties can work through implementing entities recognized by the Board to develop proposals and implement projects. This means that, in addition to particularly focusing on the most vulnerable communities in their project and programme proposals, developing country governments can choose to work with organisations that have particular expertise in targeting the most vulnerable communities. It also has to be appreciated that the August draft of the AFB/B.3/8 mentions „small-scale & community-based adaptation projects/programmes“ as one of two options of access modalities, including a streamlined approval procedure for proposals with a financial volume of less than USD 300,000.

Furthermore, vulnerable communities find mentioning in the Annex of AFB/B.3/9:

*„At the stage of proposal screening, systems, sectors and communities that are particularly vulnerable should be prioritised. Developing countries should prioritise their most vulnerable systems/sectors and communities, as guided by IPCC-AR4 and their own analyses. Several systems and sectors are identified in the IPCC AR4 as ‘especially affected by climate change’ (e.g. tundra, mangrove forests, coral reefs, agriculture in low-latitude regions).“*

The final version of the Strategic Priorities, Policies and Guidelines, as it was adopted by the Board on 18 September, experienced significant changes compared to the previous draft. One of these is a particularly relevant provision regarding the issue of this paper:

*„111. In developing projects and programmes, special attention shall be given by eligible Parties to the particular needs of the most vulnerable communities.“ (AFB 2008c, Annex V)*

However, when it comes to the criteria which projects/programmes should comply with, which undoubtedly is a key issue, the community-level was not mentioned in the previous draft of AFB/B.3/8. Putting the most vulnerable communities in the focus did neither play a role in the project selection criteria listed in AFB/B.3/8, section VIII ii.

After having agreed on the draft strategic priorities, the AFB will have to discuss their operationalisation in its 4th meeting, and the document on operational policies and guidelines is expected to change significantly.

### 2.2 Existing government reference documents under the UNFCCC

If the explicit focus on the most vulnerable people and communities lacks in the draft documents, one could continue with identifying implicit appearance of them.

A logical starting point is documents which serve to identify countries' vulnerability and adaptation priorities.

To avoid double work and ineffective bureaucratic conditions, Parties want to build their project and programme proposals on vulnerability and priority assessments already done before, which makes sense.

In the UNFCCC context, most of the developing country Parties have already prepared several documents which deal with climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. Most important in this regard are the Initial National Communications, National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and Technology Needs Assessments (TNA). This is also reflected in the draft documents where the mentioned assessments serve as the key reference, as is exemplified by the following paras:

*„Each project/programme should comply with the following criteria:[...]*

*- is in line with the vulnerability and adaptation priorities outlined in the National Communications to the UNFCCC, Technology Needs Assessment Reports and NAPAs or any other government relevant documents;[...]*

*- clearly outlines a project/programme strategy that is based on a scientific justification of climate risk and vulnerability“.* (AFB/B.3/8, 46)

The adopted version of the Strategic Priorities, Policies and Guidelines states that the AFB in assessing project and programme proposals shall give particular attention to

*„118. a) Consistence with national sustainable development strategies, including, where appropriate, national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national communications and national adaptation programmes of action and other relevant instruments, where they exist“.* (AFB/B.3/1/L.1, Annex V)

### 2.3 Most vulnerable communities and households in documents submitted by Parties

If these documents will form the basis for Parties' project proposals, a crucial question is in how far these pay de facto particular attention to the most vulnerable communities and households. Germanwatch has screened about 120 documents submitted by developing countries and which are available on the UNFCCC website: NAPAs, National Communications and Technology Needs Assessments. The search for adequate vulnerability assessments as a logical first step in order to target the most vulnerable communities, including their localisation, guided this screening, based on the following questions:

- Are most vulnerable communities being identified?
- Are they regionally localised, which is a prerequisite for a targeted adaptation policy?
- Which was the process for their identification?
- How were they included in the process of preparing the documents?

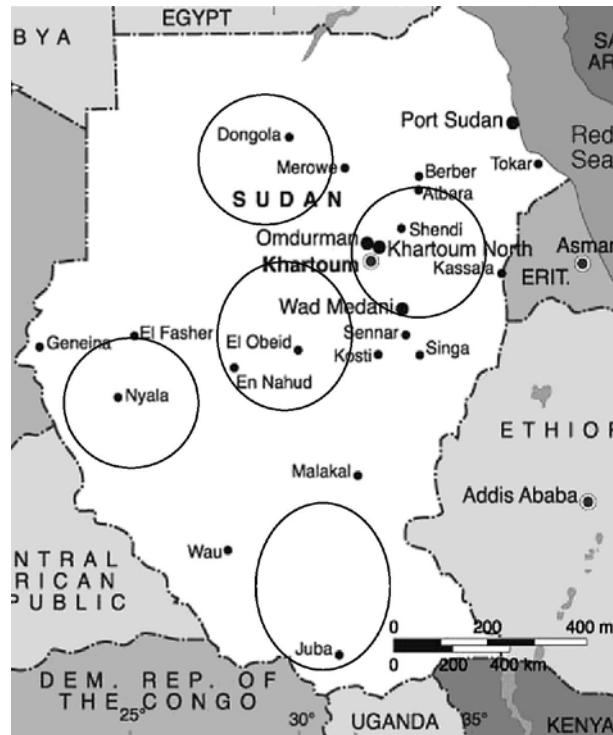
This paper for the first time summarises the results of this screening.

#### Identification of vulnerable groups and communities

According to this screening, 60% of the documents have not addressed most vulnerable communities or groups of the population in any way. About 20% have identified vulnerable groups in a rather vague way, similar to the following formulation: „the most vulnerable are the women, children, elderly and the sick“ (Bangladesh, NAPA from 2005) or „those who are most affected by climate impacts, that is the rural people and the poor“ (Cambodia, NAPA from 2006).

Formulations like „Low lying coastal communities in Belize are vulnerable to sea level rise“ or „small farm-

Figure 2: Particularly vulnerable rural areas in the Sudan



Source: NAPA Sudan

ers, urban workers, cattle raisers“ (Guinea-Bissau, NAPA from 2006) belong to the more concrete types of identification. However, it still falls by far behind already established and internationally recognised vulnerability mapping systems like the FAO co-ordinated FIVIMS (Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System, [www.fivims.org](http://www.fivims.org)) assessing vulnerability towards hunger based on a typology of 54 potentially vulnerable groups. Such approach allows for a more targeted assessment of vulnerable groups and even households and hence provides a good basis for the employment of a human rights approach also to adaptation.

**Localisation of vulnerable groups**

In order to develop targeted adaptation policies, a localisation of the most vulnerable communities very relevant and a more concrete approach than only identifying vul-

nerable groups. About 80% of the documents analysed do not have any localisation of the groups identified as most vulnerable (many of these documents do not list such an identification). Around another 10% is only very vague regarding such a localisation. Formulations such as „coastal zone“ or „areas with great environmental pressure“ fit into this category.

The following formulation is one of the very rare, relatively concrete formulations: „Settlements on the south-western coast were found to be most vulnerable, and much of Barbuda is likely to be inundated under a one metre sea level rise scenario“ (Barbuda, National Communication from 2001).

The Philippines’ National Communication from 1999 also provides a more concrete example: „Densely populated areas along the coast, especially the squatter areas of Navotas and Malabon, may survive ASLR

[Accelerated Sea Level Rise] but will be very vulnerable to severe storm surge(s)". Vulnerability mappings are almost nonexistent in the documents screened. Sudan's NAPA is one of the few exceptions (see Figure 2).

### Process for identifying the most vulnerable communities and groups

In most of the documents the process for identifying the most vulnerable communities and groups, if it is being done, is not described – if it is done at all. Only a few documents refer to specific data like the following one:

*„Vulnerability levels of different social groups were assessed on the basis of available socio-economic indicators [...] and indications of impact of climate changes“ (Guinea-Bissau, NAPA from 2008).*

Sometimes other assessments are referred to, e.g. from NAPAs to National Communications, but this document usually does not contain specific information on the identification of vulnerable communities.

### Inclusion of vulnerable communities and groups

Regarding the inclusion of vulnerable communities and groups in the preparation of the reports and, where applicable, their implementation, there is hardly any description how this has been done, except for some of the NAPAs, and how this is going to be pursued. One of the very few examples is the National Communication of St. Vincent and the Grenadines from 2000:

*„Armed with the assessment report, the National Environmental Advisory Board formulated a strategic plan to address climate change issues over the next three years. The plan calls for the following: [...] Group consultations to involve diverse interest groups in the decision-making process“.*

A second, more concrete example is the NAPA of the Comores from 2006, which says that the implementation is made by „pilot committee[s]“, for different is-

lands, which include the identified „vulnerable groups“. Cambodia's Technology Needs Assessment concludes that

*„institutions necessary to allow and enable local communities, farmers, industries and local governments for participation in the options may not exist or inadequate in the country“ (Cambodia, TNA II from 2003),*

which reflects a certain sensitivity for the issue.

Some general remarks have to be made regarding this analysis and its limitations:

The type of statements on most vulnerable communities vary a lot in the different documents; thus clustering them to groups addressing the level of concreteness of the statements needs to be handed with care.

The initial conditions for doing detailed vulnerability assessments are very different: For a small island state, where most of the population is particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise, it is much easier than doing such an assessment in big countries.

In particular the Initial National Communications are quite old, many of them were produced in 2000 or 2001.

The NAPAs are set up as short-term prioritisation in a relatively short preparation process, which may not leave time to carry out detailed vulnerability assessments; some NAPA priority projects even strive to achieve better vulnerability assessments.

Other government documents may exist which include a more detailed vulnerability analysis, e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). However, they usually do not cover vulnerability towards climate change; and they had not been taken into account in those NAPAs which were assessed by the authors of this paper.

### 3 Concluding remarks and recommendations

The results of this analysis raise the concern that most countries do not dispose of a sound assessment which the most vulnerable communities are and, more important, where they are located. But this is an important prerequisite for targeted adaptation policies. This general conclusion is not challenged by the fact that the initial conditions for vulnerability analyses vary substantially country by country. The overall picture is that in most cases the most vulnerable communities are not given the attention that is needed. It now needs to be discussed how the AFB can direct the work towards targeting the most vulnerable, based on the agreed strategic priority that Parties shall give special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

First, we would like to suggest making the project and program approval procedure as transparent and participatory as possible. The AFB could discuss to include a „public comment step“ in the approval procedure. This could be done through putting the project/programme proposals on the website of the Adaptation Fund, e.g. for four weeks and allow for public comment before they are submitted to the AFB by the Secretariat (cf. AFB 2008). The Secretariat would afterwards submit the project/programme proposal together with the comments. This process would allow communities and the civil society to publicly express their opinion on certain projects.

Second, it needs to be discussed how the focus on the most vulnerable communities could be stronger placed in the compliance criteria and project approval process. This will be particularly relevant for the further elaboration of the „Provisional operational policies and guidelines for Parties to access resources from the Adaptation Fund“, which will be on the agenda of the 4th AFB meeting. In this regard it would be advisable to enter inter dialogue with other international institutions which have practical experience in working with human rights based vulnerability assessments such like the FAO, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UN

Special Rapporteurs for the Right to Food and the Right to Housing.

One suggestion is to make the availability of a strategy to identify and target the most vulnerable communities and households a key criterion for approval of Parties' applications. Part of this approach could be that Parties that want to submit proposals need to set up some kind of country coordination mechanisms under the auspices of their respective UNFCCC national focal points. It should have the form of a multi-stakeholder committee, with broad government, expert and civil society participation – including representatives of the most vulnerable communities (cf. Action Aid 2007). It might be the case that in the work of these committees conflicts of interests need to be taken into account. However, this is not an argument to reject such a body as such.

The combination of the human rights based obligation and the strategic negotiation value of targeting the most vulnerable communities through adaptation activities provides a good common basis to openly discuss how the Adaptation Fund can best foster such a focus. The inclusion of the attention to most vulnerable communities as one strategic priority has been a milestone. This must be recognised by all Parties to the Kyoto Protocol when considering the AFB documents in Poznan. The authors request Parties to adopt the documents and thus remove remaining barriers for the full operationalisation of the Adaptation Fund, including this key strategic priority. The AFB has now the task to operationalise the strategic priorities when discussing the „Provisional operational policies and guidelines for Parties to access resources from the Adaptation Fund“ at its 4th meeting from 15 to 17 December in Bonn.

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