

MAPS

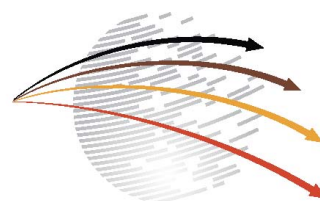
Provocateur Briefing Report

Forum on Development and Mitigation

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Poverty

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MAPS

Mitigation Action Plans & Scenarios

From 27-29 January 2014, over one hundred professionals working mainly in the climate change mitigation field, in Southern contexts, gathered at the Cape Town Waterfront for the Forum on Development and Mitigation (the Forum). The event was hosted by the Energy Research Centre of the University of Cape Town, the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, and the international Mitigation Action Plans and Scenarios (MAPS) Programme. As a feature of the Forum nine South African development experts, the 'Development Provocateurs' were invited to participate in the event and write a short reflective piece afterwards. These briefing notes considered the discourse at the Forum from the perspective of each Provocateur's particular area of expertise, looking at shared priorities, disconnects and other points of contact.

This briefing note responds from the perspective of 'Poverty' by Rashmi Mistry. The full set of briefings have been compiled into a compendium, available at www.devmitforum.ercresources.org.za and www.mapsprogramme.org.

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HUNGER, POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Introduction

This paper outlines some key reflections from the Development and Mitigation Forum, hosted by the MAPS Programme in Cape Town in January 2014. The paper argues that the mitigation community needs to shift towards putting development first in order to bridge the gap between the two sectors. Furthermore, by putting hunger and inequality at the heart of low-carbon development, broader constituencies can be built to challenge powerful interests maintaining a high-carbon growth pathway. The two communities could work together to set ambitious goals, reach out to the broader sections of society and challenge behaviour or aspirations to achieve the transformational change needed to lift people out of poverty and avoid catastrophic climate change. Beginning with Oxfam's area of focus, namely hunger, poverty and inequality, the paper comments on the mitigation discourse, the similarities and differences with development, the need to cut down on jargon and areas of future collaboration.

Oxfam focal area: Transforming a broken food system

One in eight people go hungry around the world today, and in Africa this increases to one in five (FAO 2013). Hunger is both a cause and consequence of poverty and inequality and has far reaching impacts on people's ability to live a full and prosperous life. Oxfam's global GROW campaign aims to transform the food system and address huge inequalities that lead to hunger by tackling a series of challenges (Oxfam 2011):

1. The sustainable production challenge: global demand for food is predicted to increase by 70% to feed over 9 billion people putting pressure on productivity, water and land. Climate change will exacerbate this problem leading to declining wheat yields of over 20% by 2050 (Oxfam 2011b).
2. The equity challenge: South Africa has been considered a food secure country, however at household level it is widely acknowledged that over 10 million people (20% of the population) are going hungry. Appalling inequities exist all over the world driven by shocking levels of food waste; lack of investment in smallholder farming; resources being grabbed by investors; and high cost of energy (Oxfam 2013).
3. The resilience challenge: oil prices shocks increase food prices; weather events disrupt supply; bubbles in commodity markets increase food prices; and bad competition policies compound the problems.

All of these challenges have a disproportionate burden on women from poor communities who are predominantly responsible for putting food on the family table.

There is an urgency to build resilience and support poor communities to adapt to climate change impacts that are happening or are likely to happen, and this is what the development community has been working on for many years. However, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the need to address the causes of climate change and promote a more sustainable development pathway if we are to protect future generations from falling deeper into climate driven hunger and poverty. That's why Oxfam recognises climate change mitigation matters.

South Africa's poor and vulnerable communities will bear the brunt of climate impacts making hunger worse. Meanwhile, the country is also a major emitter of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change and it maintains growth and development policies that are tied to the exploitation of fossil fuels, particularly coal. South Africa's current per capita emissions rank higher than those of the UK and Japan (Christian Aid 2011: 11) with 93% of national domestic power produced from coal in 2011. The existing high-carbon development model benefits powerful industry and the wealthier segments of society (Oxfam 2013), whilst up to 30% of households still have no electricity. With 40% of incomes in poor households used on food and electricity, rising coal fuelled electricity prices increase inequality with poor families having to make choices between food and electricity (Oxfam 2013).

Mitigation discourse: a mitigation first approach

The Development and Mitigation Forum structure and presentations gave a good insight into mitigation sector priorities. Whilst the Forum opened with the challenge of development first, it was evident from the following presentations and discussions that the assumption was that cutting emissions is the ultimate target. This meant the discourse narrowed very quickly into technical tools and models to cut emissions that could measure development co-benefits. It also moved very quickly into terminology and actions relative to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in particular Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) and how to achieve those with development co-benefits.

If the mitigation community is to join forces with the development community, a significant mind-shift is needed to switch this around. Rather than how to mitigate with development co-benefits, the challenge posed should be, how do you develop with mitigation co-benefits? Or perhaps the greater challenge would be how do you develop *without* increasing emissions? It was surprising that this was not being considered in much detail in the Forum, perhaps this was a demonstration of lack of ambition which also needs to shift.

Similarities and differences between development and mitigation discourse

Perhaps reassuringly, there are many parts of the development and mitigation discourse that are very alike:

1. Both seek a better world but both seem to get tangled in knots through discourse about the best solutions to get there.
2. Both struggle with competing priorities: climate action with development co-benefits or development with climate mitigation co-benefits as was the challenge in the Forum; in the development world one might struggle with provision of education first to improve health or health to improve education?
3. There is a lot of jargon which stops each community talking to others in a way that is inclusive and engaging.
4. There is a gulf between academics or policy makers, and organised civil society or communities living in poverty.

5. Both areas grapple with ambition versus reality, deliberating which compromises and trade-offs are needed to move towards.
6. Both communities love talking to themselves and forget there is a “real” world out there consisting of other change agents e.g. business, opinion formers and marketers.

Overall, it makes it easier for both communities to relate to each other but it may mean we don’t challenge each other enough. Some differences are also noted from the development approach:

1. Development puts people first with the need to support an environment that can sustain prosperous human life rather than the other way around. Addressing poverty, inequality and injustice are core objectives.
2. Emerging economies are still developing. More of the world’s poor live in emerging countries now than not, so whilst there is acknowledgement that climate change is a global problem, the discourse is still overwhelmingly in favour of rich countries taking action first. Equity is critical.
3. Economic growth does not equal to development. Much mitigation discourse focuses on emissions linked to GDP growth, with assumptions that growth means development. The high and rising inequality (Oxfam 2014) across many developing (and developed) countries is evidence that neither GDP nor emissions are equally distributed and cannot be used as measures for development. Oxfam practices a rights based approach which centres on the assumption that all people have the right to economic, social and cultural development.

It should be recognised however that there are programmes and institutions that do already straddle development and climate change sectors, particularly with adaptation but also increasingly from a low-carbon or sustainable development approach. This provides a basis from which to build stronger connections.

A need to cut out the jargon

As mentioned in the earlier section, both development and mitigation communities use jargon, however the focus for this briefing will be on mitigation language. There are a range of scientific measurements that are used liberally that are not meaningful to the development sector, e.g. gigatonnes, gigawatts, and parts per million. Without a scientific background it is hard to understand the significance of figures presented in this way. They need to be put into perspective: what is the significance of reaching 400ppm to human life? How much electricity does an average coal fired power station supplying electricity to 10,000 4-person households produce? What does saving ‘x’ tonnes of CO₂ mean to an ordinary person, what would they need to change?

Acronyms need to be explained and used only when essential. One of the Forum Provocateurs very aptly described his surprise when the NAMAs session talked about national mitigation plans rather than Non-Agricultural Market Access (a term used in the Doha trade talks).

The use of simple language and open communication in general is important for discourse to flourish – the mitigation sector should not make assumptions of prior knowledge and, importantly, needs to be careful not to consider any lack of knowledge as a deficiency.

Areas of collaboration to pursue

Creating ambitious goals

Being a “wicked problem” it may not be easy to agree on one single solution to climate change. However, there needs to be some common understanding of what ultimate, transformative change is needed to lift people out of poverty *and* avoid a climate catastrophe. The MAPS Programme proposed zero carbon by 2050. The Integrated Research and Action for Development paper proposed a development vision for 2050 (Parikh et al, 2014). But little ambition was demonstrated to achieve both simultaneously.

Rather than starting with tools to measure mitigation impacts or multi-criteria decision-making, perhaps more research and discourse is needed to build ambitious goals. Then tools can be developed to model and measure. Oxfam’s discussion paper on social and planetary boundaries (Oxfam 2012) could provide fertile ground for further discussion.

Reaching out

The Forum was a useful step forward in opening up discourse and it’s clear that this needs to happen more and with broader range of participants. Whilst it was challenging to bring more already-stretched development practitioners to a three-day event, further ways of engaging should be explored. There are now many organisations and individuals who straddle both sectors who could provide stronger links and access to the development sector. Furthermore there could be a different approach with mitigation experts taking part in development discourse rather than the other way around: a forum on food security could include space to discuss the role of reducing emissions to build long term food security. This will require mitigation experts to reach out and step out of familiar spaces to stimulate discourse.

Mitigation gets bad press and is not understood by the public in general. Generalisations include that mitigation means rolling back development, and that rich countries are expecting poor countries to remain poor whilst they continue their consumption-rich lifestyles. The mitigation (and development) discourse needs to extend into broader social and economic discourse, but also beyond academics, policy makers and practitioners. There are change agents amongst the private sector, social and economic opinion formers and marketers who should be engaged for the mitigation agenda to be more widely understood and adopted.

Including people living in poverty

Climate change will impact the poorest hardest. If we are serious about development and mitigation, then we need to work with people living in poverty and involve them in discourse and developing solutions. One of the biggest barriers for poor and marginalised communities is lack of access to information. Meanwhile the mitigation community, particularly the academics, hold a wealth of information. We need to find ways to bridge that gap so that information can be made accessible to grassroots communities who can use it to put influence decision makers from the bottom up.

Energy poverty

The missing Millennium Development Goal (MDG)? Possibly. The development benefits of energy are well documented (UNDP, 2005; Earthlife Africa Jhb 2009; Practical Action 2009). This is an area of discourse that both development and climate communities seem to place high value on and is an obvious way to bring the issues together. For the development community the priority is to achieve universal energy access with the co-benefits including health, education, women’s empowerment and ultimately the eradication of poverty and inequality. For the climate community at the Forum, there

seems to be debate around whether growth can be decoupled from emissions and whether there should be a right to development with emissions or whether everyone should cut emissions now. The High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda, set up by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon delivered their report in 2013 and this forms the basis of much of the discourse on the post MDG development framework. Amongst the recommendations are a goal on sustainable energy including targets for renewable energy and access. Furthermore, a Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has also been set up and continues to deliberate on the potential composition of goals. A process of consultation is in process across all countries and could provide opportunities for the development and mitigation communities to collaborate.

Challenging power

Mitigating at the levels required by science means there will be some winners and losers. In South Africa, it's clear that some of the losers will be the influential energy and minerals sectors who have a political grip on decision making. In order to challenge this power, Oxfam believes we need to change the political discourse and build a pro-poor politics around low-carbon development (Oxfam 2013), building alliances to push for transformative change beyond the interests of a few. By putting hunger and inequality at the heart of low-carbon development, cutting emissions could be part and parcel of every day struggles. As one of the Forum speakers mentioned, in the forthcoming South African elections climate change is nowhere on the political agenda but if their electorate start talking about it, the politicians will too. The knowledge that the academic mitigation community holds combined with the advocacy skills and outreach ability that civil society (in development and mitigation) has should be harnessed.

Changing behaviour and aspirations

As a wicked problem, it's clear that climate change will need a range of stakeholders to change their behaviour and approach. The currently predominant, consumption lead pattern of growth is not compatible with reducing emissions to the level required by science. However, it was concerning to hear some propositions in the Forum being put forward to suggest we cannot change behaviour and in particular aspirations. Aspirations can change. The marketing industry is built around this fact. It requires investment, time and working with sectors that both the development and mitigation sectors may not be comfortable with, but it is possible. Once again, this also requires reaching out to the "real world" – opinion formers (including at grassroots level) and the private sector could be a good start.

Addressing equity

Whilst this is a term used in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations, the question of who holds responsibility for action and how much, is also a developmental question and could bring the two communities together. It's clear more debate and discussion needs to happen on the issue but time is also short to influence the international processes and equity could be an area to prioritise.

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