

MEETING REPORT

Development & Climate Days at COP 18 meeting report

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The Development & Climate Days celebrated its 10th anniversary at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP 18 in Doha, Qatar (1–2 December 2012). With a vision of re-energizing the original purpose of bringing together policy-makers, practitioners and researchers for intensely participatory learning, dialogue and networking, this event convened over 200 negotiators, policy-makers, scientists, funding agencies and development practitioners. A highly interactive, out-of-the-box programme featured ‘speed networking’ icebreaker sessions, experiential learning games about climate risk management and development, sharply moderated discussions, high-level panels and a ‘Beyond the Film Festival’. Without support from the habitual Powerpoint presentation format, each of these sessions aimed to foster an environment of collaboration among participants, and inject serious fun into the climate and development dialogue processes. Key messages emerging from the event included: (i) considering ways to reduce social exclusion and generating ‘constituencies of demand’, in order to place the injustice of climate change in a political agenda guided by science, (ii) addressing the role of sub-national governments in delivering climate and development financing at community level, (iii) integrating climate services into climate-smart development, and (iv) improving understanding of Loss and Damage from the research, policy and practice perspectives.

Keywords: participation; adaptation; development; communication; knowledge sharing

1. Background

Ten years ago, when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) discourse was dominated by mitigation, a small group of scholars and practitioners saw the need to raise the visibility of the potential consequences of climate change. Given the lack of space to discuss that relevant topic within the COP process, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and partners convened the ‘Adaptation Day at COP 8’, held during the weekend between negotiating days at the COP, with a simple purpose: ‘to bring together scientists, experts, funders, practitioners and policy-makers working on adaptation to climate change from around the world to share the latest developments and activities of the respective groups’. The format was innovative at the time: a more flexible format than the dominant approach of climate talks – either negotiations or side events composed of sequences of uni-directional presentations followed by relatively rigid Q&A. Over the past decade, this IIED-led event has substantially evolved in substance (from ‘Adaptation Day’ to ‘Adaptation and Development Days’ to ‘Development and Climate Days’, or D&C Days).

Discussions on adaptation have evolved tremendously over the past 10 years. Adaptation is no longer a new topic struggling for attention and tangible support from the UNFCCC process. From being a side note in many National Communications, adaptation has become a central topic for many developing countries, and the question is not if, but how processes such as the new National Adaptation Plans link to hardcore development planning. There is a wide set of practical experiences to draw from, and much more scientific knowledge. At the same time, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), particularly through its Special Report on Extreme Events (IPCC, 2012), is stressing the role of risk management, which is reflected in adaptation practice, and new UNFCCC discussion on loss and damage. More than ever, these new questions and insights require dialogues among a wide range of different actors – and we need to *reinvent* the process for doing so.

A new approach was embraced by the organizing team. The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre ‘inherited’ the lead convening role for this event, working in collaboration with the IIED and the Climate and Development

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Knowledge Network (CDKN), with additional support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC). The vision for the event was to *Celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Development & Adaptation Days, re-energizing the original purpose of bringing together policy-makers, practitioners and researchers for intensely participatory learning, incisive dialogue and innovative approaches to networking.*

The event was held in Doha (Qatar) on 1–2 December 2012, in partnership with the Adaptation Practitioners Days convened by the Global Environment Facility. This article provides an overview of D&C Days, focusing on its innovations in participatory format and on key messages that emerged from its sessions. A full report is also available (Environmental Negotiations Bulletin, 2012).

2. Overview: innovations in format

To bring its vision to life, a programme was designed that at once preserved the successful aspects of previous D&C Days while at the same time sought to challenge and change traditional ways of bridging policy, knowledge and practice in development and climate issues. Unidirectional information flow was replaced by innovative, participatory approaches. The 10th anniversary of D&C Days was marked by a gathering of over 200 negotiators, policy-makers, scientists, donors and development practitioners, including high-level participants such as a former President of Ireland, the Governor of the Central Bank of Bangladesh and the Chairman of the Green Climate Fund.

D&C Days started with a 'Marketplace' – a space to connect with producers and consumers of innovative approaches to climate-smart development. Participants were invited to 'speed network' through three-minute face-to-face introductions, to get a snapshot of the knowledge, expertise and networking opportunities offered by other participants in the room.

Energized by the 'speed networking' exercise, participants were then asked to take on the role of national decision makers, provincial governments and donors, in a participatory, game-based activity specifically designed for D&C Days. In this game, players took on the roles of government officials and donors faced with a series of individual and collective policy decisions on whether to spend their allocated resources (beans) to pay for development investments, disaster preparedness, risk reduction or humanitarian aid. Like in the real world, decisions had consequences. At each round, the roll of the dice determined whether the country was affected by flooding, while new unexpected elements (such as climate change) were introduced as the game advanced. The winners maximized quantity of beans by the end of the game, while losers held the largest number of red stones (humanitarian

crises). Participants were drawn into the complexities of climate-related decision-making, vividly experiencing the need to rethink global and national processes shaping development, adaptation and mitigation.

Building on the insights and emotions derived from this serious yet fun session, the programme opened space for small, interactive group discussions that challenged participants to deliberate on four central themes of COP 18: integrating climate services into climate-smart development; mechanisms of social exclusion and how to address them; climate financing at the sub-national level; and loss and damage.

The Ignite talks generated awareness and stimulated thought as a wide array of speakers told strong stories about big themes including the threats and opportunities posed by geo-engineering; the need to tackle the injustice of climate change with greater urgency and ambition; participatory games as means to understand complex systems and empower ourselves in solving problems; and gaining better understanding of the tools and institutional frameworks for addressing climate change global impacts.

A 'Beyond the Film Festival' offered a uniquely participatory way to examine, discuss and even create short videos on climate and development. Participants were invited to become filmmakers by storyboarding both a 'conventional' short film on climate and development, and then an innovative video to gain new perspective on problems and possible solutions.

The High-Level panel concluded the event with speakers who shared personal experiences involving successful innovations, such as the tagging system for climate funds at the Asian Development Bank, the remarkable integration of green and inclusive tools at the Central Bank of Bangladesh, the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network led by the Rockefeller Foundation and the engagement of Brown University students in climate policy analysis.

3. Key messages

A number of key messages emerged from the interactions at the D&C Days:

Considering ways to reduce *social exclusion* in the UNFCCC processes, a list of five 'A's' were defined: access, amplify, assistance, advocacy and alternatives. Access was understood as the need for national delegations to take account of the needs of vulnerable stakeholders and make decision-making processes and information more accessible. Amplifying the voices of the poor requires effective champions for vulnerable groups. It was agreed that champions could be leaders in the national context or they could be champions in international networks, for example, non-governmental organizations or eminent individuals working internationally to defend the rights of certain stakeholder groups.

On assistance, the need to repackage complex legal and political texts in diverse languages and for capacity building support to enable more stakeholders to make a meaningful input was stressed. Advocacy related to the imperative of focusing on national-level processes to influence the political agenda where it really matters. Finally, noting that the COP process is most accessible to, and influenced by, the ‘elites’ diversifying the delegations in the official talks and finding ways for diverse perspectives from alternative forums/forums to be channelled into the COP decision-making process the importance of accruing experience through working across a range of alternative networking spaces was noted as a key mechanism for addressing central aspects of social exclusion.

With regard to *climate finance*, there was broad agreement about the central role of sub-national governments in delivering development finance at community level. Still, the additional complexity of managing climate funds generated by decentralized approaches was recognized as an important stumbling block for effectively using climate finance to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The recent launch of the Philippines People’s Survival Fund was presented as a successful example of a decentralized approach where local communities have direct access to resources to implement adaptation projects. A number of international initiatives to monitor sub-national implementation processes for scaling up delivery were also noted. It was further noted that alternative tools and changes in management approaches will require the ability to design flexible packages that respond to different local contexts and to document standards, approaches and change methodologies, particularly in relation to communicating that things need to be done differently.

Discussion on *integrating climate services into climate-smart development* recognized the difficulty of effectively communicating climate risk messages, and the need to bring together forecasters with a range of ‘end-user communities’ each capable of reaching out to multiple audiences.

Discussion on *loss and damage* focused on key ‘what if’ questions that arise from not adjusting sufficiently or fast enough to the effects of climate change. Consensus about key areas for research, policy and practice emerged, including the need for better understanding loss and damage from a ‘big picture’ perspective; developing measurement tools and indicators; and enhancing the role of the UNFCCC as a platform for dialogue, support and advocacy for the most vulnerable communities.

Participatory games for learning and dialogue were presented as ‘the cultural medium of systems’ because, if well designed and facilitated, they can spark the engagement of a diverse range of participants, enabling us to understand the complexity and see ourselves as active participants in solving problems.

Geo-engineering technologies were presented – provocatively – as an increasingly feasible and possibly necessary strategy for a situation in which ‘our best mitigation efforts are not enough and our adaptive capacity is overwhelmed’. As we now have the science to artificially imitate the effects of a volcano at a fraction of the cost of current mitigation budgets, a number of international fora, such as the International Maritime Organization and the Convention on Biological Diversity, have started to discuss geo-engineering solutions. At D&C Days, discussion about whether these emerging technologies serve the needs of the most vulnerable was a hot topic and practitioners were challenged to get involved in the broader debate, as it may substantially change the climate debate in the near future.

The *injustice of climate change* was discussed and a call was made for generating ‘constituencies of demand’, to place climate change squarely on the political agenda – an agenda that should be guided by science. At the same time, it was recognized that telling human stories that demonstrate the imperative for rapidly scaling up the transfer of clean energy technologies for the most vulnerable regions and communities is of vital importance. Affected communities are already combining mitigation and adaptation measures for their survival. It was noted that human solidarity is more critical than ever; finding new entry points for engaging more actively with the formal process and framing the issues through a lens of climate justice could inject more urgency and action into the UNFCCC.

4. Discussion

Survey responses and informal feedback from participants and partner organizations was overall very positive, especially regarding the most innovative aspects of the event (the participatory games sessions proved particularly popular and numerous participants expressed interest in learning more about how to go about integrating learning and dialogue games into different initiatives). The survey data indicated that there is a thirst to explore more innovative, cutting-edge approaches for pursuing climate-smart development, for sharing experiences from different regions and different levels of action, and for being challenged to consider the threats and opportunities latent in the interface between research, policy and practice, particularly with regard to a range of new concepts and experiences shaping development and climate issues – from geo-engineering of the global climate to better approaches for climate financing at the sub-national level, to community-based adaptation. The next Development & Climate Days is scheduled to take place in Warsaw, Poland on 16–17 November 2013, in the context of COP 19.

References

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