

# Environmental Justice



## [Editorial: The Road to Copenhagen and Environmental Justice](#)

**By Gerry Barr**

The United Nations climate summit, taking place this December in Copenhagen Denmark, will be one of the great tests of our generation. All eyes are turned towards reaching an ambitious, just and equitable post-2012 agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). What must be achieved in Copenhagen?

## [Global Justice and Canada's Climate Crossroad](#)



**By Graham Saul**

Canada is at a crossroads when it comes to climate change. The United States Congress is poised to pass climate legislation and the most important United Nations climate summit in history will begin in Copenhagen in just a few weeks. Our country will also play host to world leaders from G8 and G20 countries in 2010, and climate change is going to be on the agenda.

## [Resilience in Farming](#)



**By Paul Hagerman and Carol Thiessen**

Each year Essie Khumalo tends the sandy soils of her small farming plot in the Nkayi district of northwestern Zimbabwe, toiling to grow enough food for her five young children. Her rows of maize are vulnerable to the vagaries of weather, to the difficulty of securing inputs (feed, equipment, seeds, energy, etc.) and other disruptions.

## [The Quest for Environmental Justice](#)



### **Interview with Dr. Yuri Melini**

Dr. Yuri Melini is the director of the Center for Legal Action in Environment and Social Issues (CALAS) in Guatemala. He is a long-time defender of environmental justice and the rights of Indigenous people. In June, 2008, CALAS won a case in the Constitutional Court of Guatemala resulting in changes to the opencast mining law – changes that will better protect communities near the mines.

## [Adaptation Financing for Climate Change: Lessons from Aid Reform](#)



### **By Brian Tomlinson**

It is undeniable that the impacts of climate change will be predominantly and most directly experienced in the poorest countries, where billions of vulnerable people already live in poverty. It is equally undeniable that the richest industrial countries, as the source for 90 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, bear an overwhelming responsibility to tackle this global crisis.

## [Fragile Environment, Fragile State: Conflict, Crisis and Climate Change](#)



### **By Surendrini Wijeyaratne**

Climate change, by accelerating adverse impacts of environmental degradation, contributes to poverty, marginalization and violent conflict. The intensity and frequency of climate-related natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and cyclones, is leading to an increase in humanitarian disasters. Fragile states, with an already limited capacity to respond to crisis, will be further tested by the simultaneous challenges of poverty, conflict, crisis, and climate change.

## The Road to Copenhagen and Environmental Justice

By Gerry Barr



The United Nations climate change summit, taking place this December in Copenhagen Denmark, will be one of the great tests of our generation. All eyes are turned towards reaching an ambitious, just and equitable post-2012 agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). What must be achieved in Copenhagen?

Wealthy countries, like Canada, produce the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions, which have brought the planet to its present state of peril. For that reason we, and others in the industrialized North, should take decisive steps to shift to a low-carbon economy. Canada should also help developing countries in their efforts to avoid a similarly damaging carbon-intensive model of industrialization. We need to commit resources and technology to support this transition.

The countries least responsible for climate change are those who are suffering most from its adverse impacts including: humanitarian disasters stemming from extreme weather events, droughts, sea levels rising and food insecurity. Canada should work to mitigate climate change, but it should also generously fund adaptation and disaster risk reduction – efforts to assist the poorest to reduce their vulnerability to climate hazards. The World Bank estimates US \$61 billion a year between 2010 to 2050 for adaptation financing. Canada's share would be US \$2.2 billion a year.

This is really not about charity. It's about justice. Many movements and networks in the global South are rightly demanding that those responsible for environmental damage repay their ecological debt – a debt to the countries and people of the South for decades of resource plundering, destroyed biodiversity, waste dumping, industrial development and energy consumption, which have driven global warming.

Humanitarian organizations predict increasing intensity and frequency of climate-related natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and cyclones. Massive displacement, disease, and lost livelihoods will further burden already limited state capacity. In conflict-affected fragile states, the impacts of climate change will contribute to social tensions and heightened conflicts, eroding the resilience of marginalized communities.

The Copenhagen negotiations have to be more than a technical exercise – though they will be filled with talk of machinery and mechanisms. At the centre of the climate crisis are violations of human rights on a massive scale, from the right to food and water, to a clean environment, to employment, education, a livelihood, political participation, and freedom from living in fear and violence. The outcome of the negotiations must set the standards for taking action in defense of the human rights of those most affected by climate change: Indigenous peoples, peasant communities, political and economically marginalized groups, and women. These actors are not just helpless victims of the climate; they are powerful agents of change, whose sustainable

practices should be seen as offering the real solutions to climate change. Their leadership is critical.

Environmental justice must over-reach the Denmark discussions. We need an agenda for action that takes account of the whole of this complex challenge. Trade, for example, is part of that challenge. A week before Copenhagen, governments will meet in Geneva for the 7<sup>th</sup> World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial meeting of the Doha Round (trade negotiations that were to focus on developing country needs).

The world's trade and investment regime must be reoriented away from facilitating energy-intensive industrial sectors, fossil fuels, and intensive large-scale agriculture towards sustainable production and alternative energies. Canada can help at the WTO by pressing for trade measures that support small-scale farmers and their sustainable practices. Canada should support relaxed intellectual property rights regimes so developing countries have access to appropriate climate-friendly technologies that can support their development.

As we approach these key moments of engagement: the climate change meetings in Copenhagen in December 2009, the WTO meeting in Geneva on November 30, or the G20/G8 meetings in Canada in 2010, let's make sure the emphasis is put on equity, justice and rights.

It's up to us to ensure Canada lives up to its historic responsibilities, puts environmental justice at the core of the debate and reforms the policies governing our climate system and global economy. It's time to stop exploiting the livelihoods and lives of the world's most marginalized people and start putting their solutions at the heart of the debate, starting at the UN climate summit in Copenhagen.

**Gerry Barr**  
President-CEO

Canadian Council for International Co-operation

## Global Justice and Canada's Climate Crossroad

By Graham Saul



Deep and Drastic Cuts Parade organized by The People's Action on Climate Change highlighting the extreme vulnerability of the most marginalized sectors to climate change. ©Asia Pacific Research Network

Canada is at the crossroads when it comes to climate change. The United States Congress is poised to pass climate legislation and the most important United Nations climate summit in history will begin in Copenhagen in just a few weeks. Our country will also play host to world leaders from G8 and G20 countries in 2010, and climate change is going to be on the agenda.

In all of the doom and gloom associated with the climate crisis, it's easy to overlook the fact that we have come a long way in the struggle against climate change.

On the whole, Canadians are now convinced that climate change is real and that people are causing it. Canadians are also beginning to understand that taking action is in our own self-interest. Climate chaos will be bad business for everybody and the rest of the world isn't going to sit back and give Canada a free ride. It will cost less to invest in solutions today than to be forced to clean-up the mess and take even more radical action in a decade or two.



But will these perfectly rational arguments, based as they are on self-interest, be enough to convince Canada to do its fair share?... An ethical and moral understanding of the problem needs to be embraced if Canada is to rise to the challenge.



More immediately, the clean energy revolution is the biggest economic opportunity of the twenty-first century and the federal government is sitting on the sidelines while Canada's most important trading partners pass us by.

But will these perfectly rational arguments, based as they are on self-interest, be enough to convince Canada to do its fair share? Although these arguments have a central role to play in stimulating climate action, an ethical and moral understanding of the problem needs to be embraced if Canada is to rise to the challenge.

First, Canada is probably the worst country in the industrialized world when it comes to taking action on climate change. Canada has a long way to go just to achieve mediocrity.

One of the top ten polluters on Earth, Canada fell to last place in the latest [G8 Climate Scorecard](#) issued by the conservation organization World Wildlife Fund and the global insurance firm Allianz SE. The report notes that Canada is one of the few G8 nations whose emissions are still increasing.

Similarly, Canada ranked 56 out of 57 countries assessed in the 2008 [Climate Change Performance Index](#), published annually by Germanwatch and Climate Action Network Europe. The report, which compares the climate protection performance of 57 industrialized countries and emerging economies, found that only Saudi Arabia was doing a worse job.

The second thing to keep in mind about what it's going to take to get Canada to do its fair share is that the scale of the challenge is much greater than most people realize.

The European Union and, more recently, G8 leaders (including Canada), set a goal of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The argument is that if global warming exceeds 2 degrees it would be dangerous for life on Earth and risk triggering tipping-points that would set off run-away climate change.

The best science indicates that in order to stand a reasonable chance of keeping global warming below 2 degrees, industrialized countries need to reduce their greenhouse gas pollution to roughly 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and come up with over US \$150 billion per year to help developing countries adopt clean energy technology and adapt to the impacts of climate change. This US \$150 billion includes not only adaptation funding, but also forest protection, energy-related mitigation, support for agriculture and technology research and development.

What does all this mean for Canada? The more than 100 Canadian organizations that make up the [KyotoPlus](#) coalition argue that if Canada wants to do its fair share, it will have to cut its emissions in half in the next 10 to 15 years.

In other words, an industrial revolution needs to be triggered the likes of which has not been seen since World War Two.

The third thing to remember is that the vast majority of Canadians still don't understand the implications of what the science is telling us will happen if we fail to take action.

The world is already about 0.7 degrees Celsius warmer than the pre-industrial era and the impacts are already being felt. Oxfam International's recent report, [The Right to Survive](#), estimates that about 240 million people each year are affected by climate related disasters such as droughts and floods, and this figure could grow by up to 50 percent by 2015 due to climate change. These numbers do not include many of the impacts that are already being felt from accelerating desertification, the expansion of diseases such as malaria into new areas, growing resource conflicts, etc.

In its last major report, the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) outlined the risks associated with allowing temperatures to rise above 2 degrees Celsius. It argued that hundreds of millions of people would be exposed to increased stress on water supplies, malnutrition, heat waves, floods and droughts. Cereal production would decline in tropical areas, coasts would suffer increased damage, and hundreds of thousands of species would be at increasing risk of extinction.

Given the scale of these impacts, it is understandable why Canadians are having trouble coming to terms with the implications of the fact that the course is set to shatter the two degrees threshold.

The International Energy Agency, a body governed by the richest countries in the world, including Canada, acknowledged in its 2008 [World Energy Outlook](#) that humanity will have committed itself to up to 6 degrees of global warming by 2100 if we continue with business as usual. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change acknowledged the possibility of a six degree scenario years ago.



This is a profoundly moral decision. It is a decision that, in ethical terms, deserves to be placed beside any other atrocity in human history, including slavery, segregation and colonialism, major genocides, and the denial of women's and workers' rights.



During the last Ice Age, a time when most of Canada was covered by two kilometers of solid ice, the world was on average only about 5 degrees Celsius colder than it is today.

The last time the world was 5 degrees Celsius warmer was about 30 to 50 million years ago, and it has been at least a few million years since we've seen a 3 degree rise, so it is hard to come to terms with what this would look like.

Put simply, under this scenario agriculture would be destroyed and life would be impossible over much of the planet. Large parts of southern Europe would look like the Sahara, major rivers of the world would dry up in the dry season, and billions of people would have to relocate as a result.

While this is obviously a catastrophic scenario, three things need to be kept in mind about the current and future impacts of climate change. First, this problem can be solved. We know what we have to do and we can do it without significantly undermining our standard of living.

Second, Canada can choose to do its fair share, or it can continue to turn its back on this problem, but either way a choice is being made.

Third, this is a profoundly moral decision. It is a decision that, in ethical terms, deserves to be placed beside any other atrocity in human history, including slavery, segregation and colonialism, major genocides, and the denial of women's and workers' rights. The impacts are on the same scale and the outcomes are just as avoidable.

Canada is among the top ten polluters in the world and Canadians produce two to three times more greenhouse gas pollution per person than most European countries, five times more per person than China, and over ten times more per person than India. Canada is among the richest countries on the planet and for more than 15 years we have repeatedly promised to reduce our greenhouse gas pollution and we have failed.

Our way of life is killing people in the poorest parts of the world, it is driving species to extinction, and it is hurting the prospects of our children and grandchildren. Developing countries want to achieve a standard of living that affords the same comforts and opportunities as ours, and we are refusing to show that this is possible without tearing at the very fabric of life.

When our leaders produce a weak climate strategy and then do nothing to implement it, when they argue that we should sit back and wait to see what the United States does, or when they suggest that India and China are the real problem at the global climate negotiations, we need to help Canadians understand just how depraved these positions are.

It is wrong for humanity to choose a path that will drive hundreds of thousands of species to extinction. It is wrong for a rich minority to create a problem and then refuse to do its fair share to fix it when billions of the world's poorest people will suffer first and worst. And it is wrong for this generation to destroy the habitability of the planet and ruin the prospects of future generation.

We need to find a way to explain this to Canadians not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because we are called upon to create great change. In doing so, we will face huge

resistance from those that have been convinced to fear this change as well as those that benefit from business as usual.

There are unprecedented opportunities in the clean energy economy of the twenty-first century and, as the necessary political changes are won, the market will play a powerful role in solving the climate change problem. But there is no reason to believe that the challenge of climate change will be met by simply telling Canadians that solving this problem is in their own economic interest. Arguments that speak to very souls of Canadians and not just their pocket-books are needed. People don't move beyond their sheltered lives into the arena of agitation unless some deep moral conviction fires their blood and captures their imagination.

Personally, I consider myself lucky to be part of a generation that has the opportunity to do something this important. I am proud of my country and I want it to succeed in the clean energy economy of the twenty-first century and benefit from the millions of jobs that this will create. I have no doubt that we will be better off for embracing these changes, but I'm also unapologetic about the fact that our government's refusal to move in this direction represents anything but a moral and profoundly political failure. We must demand change now, before it is too late.

The problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of humanity's relationship to life on Earth. This story is already being told through the lives of people in impoverished countries and vulnerable communities, the extinction of species, and the fate of our children and grandchildren. It is a profoundly moral story and, more than any other single issue, it can be seen through the lens of climate change. The climate crisis presents us with a line in the sand that can unite and inspire people from diverse constituencies, and the clean energy revolution is the legacy that we will leave.

*Graham Saul is the Executive Director of Climate Action Network Canada.*

## **Find Out More**

---

- [Climate Action Network](#)
- [G8 Climate Scorecard](#)
- [Climate Change Performance Index](#)
- [Right to Survive](#)
- [World Energy Outlook](#)
- [KYOTOPlus](#)

## Resilience in Farming

By Paul Hagerman and Carol Thiessen



**Zimbabwean farmer in neatly mulched field with established planting stations. As soon as the rains begin, this farmer will be able to plant her crop without needing to plough her land.** ©Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Each year Essie Khumalo tends the sandy soils of her small farming plot in the Nkayi district of northwestern Zimbabwe, toiling to grow enough food for her five young children. Her rows of maize are vulnerable to the vagaries of weather, to the difficulty of securing inputs (feed, equipment, seeds, energy, etc.) and other disruptions.

Khumalo is not unique in her farming challenges. Across Zimbabwe, smallholder farmers are struggling. Their crops and livestock suffer in drought years, which seem to occur more often than they used to. Farm inputs are getting scarcer and more expensive, due to rising oil prices, global economic woes, and the domestic political reality. The farmers are looking for a solution that will help them withstand multiple shocks. For many, conservation farming is that solution.

Khumalo first tried conservation farming (CF) on a small plot in 2007. She was initially sceptical, unsure of the claims that this new technique would enable her maize to thrive in drought conditions, but she worked hard to follow the particular conservation farming practices of southern Africa.

She prepared evenly spaced, permanent planting stations in her field using a hoe, rather than ploughing the whole field. She added manure to each station and covered it with a thin layer of soil, concentrating the nutrients in the root zone. As much as possible, she covered the field with a layer of mulch to trap moisture, reduce soil erosion, prevent weed growth and add organic matter to the soil. When the rainy season began, she planted an open-pollinated variety (not hybrid) of maize seed that can be re-used in subsequent years.

At harvest time, Khumalo's abundant yield from her CF plot – three times that of her conventional plot's yield – dispelled her doubts.

Conservation farming is fostering resilience for smallholder farmers and their communities. Three key features of resilient agriculture are:

- respect for local knowledge and innovation;
- commitment to maintaining diversity; and
- emphasis on building trust and mutual reliance.

Farming practices that build resilience are especially important in light of the growing vulnerability and uncertainty caused by climate change.

Weather has never been very predictable, and it seems to be becoming less so. Climate change models indicate that in the coming decades farmers will see more droughts, more intense storms (which could lead to both soil erosion and flooding), warmer nights (which could reduce crop yields), and more damage by crop pests. Farmers will have to find ways to adapt to these changes if they are to maintain their livelihoods and continue to produce and sell food. It is estimated that smallholder farmers (two hectares or less) produce half of all the food the world consumes. If their production declines, there are grave consequences for their ability to feed themselves, and for global food security.

Resilience in agriculture relates not only to climate shocks, however. Our food production systems use large amounts of energy, for production of fertilizer and agricultural chemicals, for transport of farm inputs and products, and for farm machinery. Most of this energy comes from fossil fuels, putting agriculture at risk of major disruption as oil prices rise, and as we reconsider our use of fossil fuels in light of climate change. A truly resilient agricultural system would minimize the risks from energy shocks. For Khumalo in Zimbabwe, her conservation farming draws nutrients from manure and uses mulch to suppress weeds, reducing her need for the high-energy input of fertilizer.

Farmers throughout the developing world, from Honduras to Ethiopia to Bangladesh, are facing climate shocks, energy shocks and more. Though conservation farming works for Khumalo in Zimbabwe, it would be foolhardy to think it would work everywhere – there is no single technique which would help all smallholder farmers deal with the risks they face. What would resilience in agriculture look like elsewhere?

In 2008, a coalition of Canadian NGOs concerned with global food security published [\*Pathways to Resilience: Smallholder farmers and the future of agriculture\*](#). This discussion paper describes key features of resilient agriculture and concludes with two policy recommendations for how Canada should structure its foreign aid to encourage resilience in agriculture.

1. Increase support targeted to smallholder agriculture, and ensure it builds on diversity and farmers' knowledge.

2. Curb the threats to farmers' resilience, such as unfair trade and corporate concentration.

The lives of most developing country farmers can be characterized by risk and diversity. Aside from weather risks, smallholder farmers are also subject to financial risks (volatility of input costs and food commodities, international competition, etc.). Given the reality of weaker governance and poorer government services in many developing countries, smallholder farmers often have other risks to contend with, such as personal illness, social unrest, unreliable services (roads, irrigation) and theft from their farms. Diversity is one way of dealing with these risks. It is expressed as a variety of crops and animals (for food, fuel, draft power, sale), different farm-related tasks (from preparing the land through to post-harvest processing and saving seed for the next crop), numerous ways of interacting with the land (cultural, productive) and numerous contributors to livelihood (consumption and sale of farm products, off-farm work, remittances, gathering of wild foods).

In contrast, the high-input agriculture commonly practiced in Canada is able to thrive because the risks to farmers have been minimized. In most cases, farmers can rely on seed and fertilizers for their crops, feed and medications for their livestock to be available when and where they are needed. They can depend on the roads and rails to move commodities. Farmers can access loans and crop insurance. Even the age-old risks of weather and markets have been reduced by irrigation, greenhouses and marketing boards. This has enabled farmers to specialize in one or a few crops or livestock species and take advantage of economies of scale.



**Corn stalks surrounded by mulch conserves moisture from rain, protects the soil from erosion and reduces weed growth.**

©Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Encouraging resilience in developing countries requires recognizing the diversity that developing country farmers deal with, and working with it to minimize the risks they face. It would start with the knowledge farmers already have: of their land, their cultural and their food. Farmers always experiment and are anxious to learn new things. They will always need new research and new knowledge, but the learning process must start with the farmers, rather than agricultural companies or research centres.

Several Canadian NGOs that work on global food security have been encouraging the Canadian government to focus more attention on the needs of

smallholder farmers and to encourage resilient agricultural systems. CIDA's recently unveiled food security strategy, and the announcement (in July 2009) that Canada will double its investment in food security, are evidence that the government is taking this challenge seriously. However, details on how Canada will promote food security are still sketchy.

It is significant that CIDA's new strategy indicates a focus on smallholder farmers. But how will this play out? Will CIDA's stated goal of "increasing farmers' access to agricultural technologies" result in heavier dependence on high-tech inputs, with an associated increase in risk? Will the agricultural research that CIDA invests in be top-down, or will it be based on what farmers already know about their own soils and farming systems? Investing in food

security is a step in the right direction, but it is by no means clear that CIDA's new strategy will encourage resilient farming systems.

In Zimbabwe, resilient agriculture in the form of conservation farming not only helps farmers grow more food and adapt to their changing climate, but it also plays a role in preventing climate change. The mulch and manure used on farms are high in carbon; incorporating them into the soil is a form of carbon storage that reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Conservation farming has rightly been described as a win-win-win technique. It helps with both climate change mitigation (reducing CO<sub>2</sub>) and adaptation, and it improves the livelihoods of poor farmers.

Khumalo is increasingly confident this is what resilient agriculture looks like for her. She was so impressed with her first year's results that she is continuing to increase the land devoted to conservation farming, and encouraging family and neighbours to do the same. With the added mulch, increased yearly from the crop residue left in the soil, she is seeing improvements in the soil of her CF plot. She is convinced that conservation farming is increasing her resilience and improving her livelihood at the same time.

*Paul Hagerman and Carol Thiessen are with the Public Policy Team at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.*

### **Find Out More**

- 
- [Canadian Foodgrains Bank](#)
  - [Pathways to Resilience](#)

## The Quest for Environmental Justice

### Interview with Dr. Yuri Melini



**Dr. Yuri Melini at CCIC in Ottawa, October 2009**

*Dr. Yuri Melini is the director of the Center for Legal Action in Environment and Social Issues (CALAS) in Guatemala. He is a long-time defender of environmental justice and the rights of Indigenous people. In June, 2008, CALAS won a case in the Constitutional Court of Guatemala resulting in changes to the opencast mining law – changes that will better protect communities near the mines. Three months after the Supreme Court ruling, Dr. Melini survived an attempt on his life when he was shot seven times. On the same day of his shooting, 50 other environmental activists in Guatemala received threats. Dr. Melini was in Canada in October, 2009 for a speaking tour organized by the Social Justice Committee of Montreal.*

***e-Au Courant: What has been the impact of the Guatemalan Supreme Court decision strengthening Guatemala’s mining code to better protect communities near mining operations?***

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** This ruling emphasizes and prioritizes the human right to a healthy environment.

The Constitutional Court issued a decision, sentence number 1491-2007, which declared that 7 articles of the Guatemalan mining law, Legislative Decree 48-97, contained numerous unconstitutional provisions. These included violations

against the right to a healthy environment and environmental sustainability. The ruling also addressed the sustainable use of the subsoil, ecological balance and protection of the environment.

***e-Au Courant: What are the next steps in ensuring that this ruling has a positive impact?***

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** A new mining bill is currently being discussed in Congress. Through CALAS, I have been advocating for this new law to include aspects of the earlier ruling, to ensure that it includes respect for the human right to a healthy environment. I am also working to advocate for mining practices to be subject to environmental controls, as stipulated under environmental laws. We are also studying mining licenses granted under the law, which was declared partially unconstitutional, in order to see if these mining licenses can be contested.

*e-Au Courant: What's the next big legal challenge?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** Right now we're studying the content of the mining law (Decree 48-97) in relation to the enforcement of the rights of Indigenous peoples to prior and informed consent and to be consulted in good faith, in accordance with ILO [International Labour Organization] Convention 169.

We are going to initiate legal actions against the Marlin license, held by Goldcorp, in San Miguel Ixtahuacan, San Marcos, Guatemala. Our case states that Guatemala did not fulfill ILO Convention 169 establishing the right to prior, free and informed consent of Indigenous peoples settled in the lands bordering the mining project. We will see what the court has to say.

*e-Au Courant: The UN climate summit in Copenhagen is just around the corner. What are your expectations for that meeting? What do you want to see come out of it?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** I would expect a global agreement on the levels of carbon discharged into the atmosphere and that governments assume concrete commitments in order to stop global warming as much as possible.

*e-Au Courant: Canadian civil society organizations have been working to develop stronger corporate accountability measures for Canadian companies operating abroad. What advice would you give to your Canadian counterparts as they continue to press for legislation to regulate mining companies?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** It is important to demand greater transparency, greater environmental and social responsibility. Companies need to implement better environmental standards and, above all, companies should assume mining liabilities and pay fairer royalties.

*e-Au Courant: You have been a strong advocate for Indigenous rights. What are the key environmental justice issues facing Indigenous communities in Guatemala?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** Exclusion, discrimination, racism and denial of citizenship. Social inequities related to access to land, as a legal asset, and the absence of a public policy related to rural development.

The lack of legal certainty on Indigenous territories and land is also an issue. The framework of ILO Convention 169 is not respected. There is also a lack of willingness to listen to the development perspectives of Indigenous peoples, in the context of their worldview on nature.

*e-Au Courant: On the day of the attempt on your life, 50 other environmental activists in Guatemala received death threats related to their work. The UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights denounced the attack on your life and recently made numerous recommendations related to the rule of law and impunity in Guatemala. What, in your opinion, needs to be done to ensure that those responsible for these crimes are brought to justice?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** Guatemala's Attorney General's Office is weak and full of deficiencies. Many factors are preventing it from consolidating a well defined criminal policy in the struggle against impunity, particularly in cases of human rights advocates, where environmentalists and environmental activists are especially vulnerable. In my case, over a year has already passed (since September 4, 2008 attack) and those responsible remain unpunished.

*e-Au Courant: You've drawn links between spirituality, peace and the environment. Can you describe how this connection affects your work?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** My spirituality is based on a solid faith, on the certainty that what I do is correct and also in the service of the public and in defence of collective interests. It would seem that my work on behalf of nature and of the inhabitants of this planet is a crime, since I was physically attacked in response. Those who harmed me caused deep wounds and physical damage that led me to the brink of death, but for some reason, God gave me a second life, perhaps so that I can bear witness to His love and the purpose He has for me.

In my heart, there is no hatred. I offer, I have and I give forgiveness to those who harmed me. But as an environmental activist and human rights advocate, I want justice. I look for justice and want to contribute to bringing down the wall of impunity. That is why I move forward, with humility, courage and faith. That trilogy gives me spiritual and physical peace.

*e-Au Courant: Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to add?*

**Dr. Yuri Melini:** My gratitude to all those who have thought about me, who have kept me on my feet with their prayers and who motivate me to move on. It is clear to me that I will not retrace a single step, that I will move forward, without fear, with faith in God and my willingness to continue doing what I have been doing, which is correct and for the common good.

## **Adaptation Financing for Climate Change: Lessons from Aid Reform** by Brian Tomlinson

*Adapted from [Adaptation Financing for Climate Change](#): Taking Account of CSO Perspectives for Aid Reform.*



**Flooded streets in Accra, Ghana.**

© CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoyne

for adaptation, binding targets and green technologies are the three essential and inter-related building blocks for an agreement if it is to meet the challenges of climate change for all the world's populations.

It is undeniable that the impacts of climate change will be predominantly and most directly experienced in the poorest countries, where billions of vulnerable people already live in poverty. It is equally undeniable that the richest industrial countries, as the source for 90 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, bear an overwhelming responsibility to tackle this global crisis.

At the United Nations climate change summit, in Copenhagen this December, world leaders will meet to work out an agreement to combat climate change post-2012 (when the current commitments in the Kyoto Protocol expire). And a lynchpin issue for this agreement will be financing for climate change adaptation. Without significant and adequate financing, there can be no agreement on the urgently needed targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, on support for adaptation to deal with the impacts of climate change on millions of peoples' lives, or for the transfer of green technologies. Financing

Climate justice, in a post-2012 Copenhagen agreement, requires binding commitments to massive financing on the part of donor countries. Developing countries are calling for financing that is new, adequate, predictable and in addition to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Nothing less will be considered or accepted, by developing countries in Copenhagen, as an equitable agreement. Developing countries will require significant resources to both adapt to inevitable climatic impacts and grow out of poverty with access to alternative, green technologies that mitigate future greenhouse gas emissions.

In a climate-constrained world, it is both unethical and undermining of human dignity to suggest that billions of people, who have limited access to decent incomes, sufficient food, shelter, health and education, should forgo development and pay the price for climatic conditions for which they bear no responsibility.

Often unable to protect themselves, with weak infrastructure and little resilience to recover from climate-related disasters, the poorest countries are the first to suffer development set-backs from

severe weather events and dramatic climatic fluctuations. But poor communities and vulnerable people in developing countries cannot just be “victims” of climate change, they must also be key protagonists for community actions addressing not only the conditions for poverty, but also locally-determined, low-carbon strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

New financial resources for climate change are clearly and urgently needed. But the lessons from development assistance suggest that financial resources without effective and equitable structures for directing this assistance may give a false sense of progress for both citizens in donor countries and for the poor and marginalize. According to the [Reality of Aid Network](#), despite commitments and disbursements of billions of aid dollars over decades, policies and practices in development assistance have limited its effectiveness in addressing its goal to significantly reduce global poverty and inequality. Poverty and inequality are critical variables for climate change vulnerability.



In a climate-constrained world, it is both unethical and undermining of human dignity to suggest that billions of people, who have limited access to decent incomes, sufficient food, shelter, health and education, should forgo development and pay the price for climatic conditions for which they bear no responsibility.



Civil society organizations (CSOs) are pressing for aid reforms to improve development effectiveness. Aid should be considered effective, according to CSOs, when measured by its direct and sustained impact on poverty reduction, equality and rights of the most poor and vulnerable people. Democratic ownership, at the country and local levels, is essential to effectiveness. Foreign aid should not be seen as “the solution” to poverty, but rather as an important catalyst to strengthen the capacity of the world’s poorest to claim their rights to development and dignified livelihoods.

In order to ensure that the UN climate change summit produces a just and equitable agreement, a number of critical questions need to be addressed including: How much money is needed to finance adaptation? How will the money be counted? How will it be managed? And how can the lessons of aid and development effectiveness be applied to climate change adaptation and mitigation?

### **Climate change adaptation: The financing**

How much money does the developed world need to commit, over the next several decades, to climate change adaptation? Determining levels of adaptation financing is not an exact science, with many unknowns, including:

- the extent and nature of climate change impacts over several decades;
- what is counted as adaptation financing and its relationship to development financing;
- and

- the sources of financing – public or private – for both short-term humanitarian assistance and for medium and longer-term impacts of climate change.

In its [\*World Development Report 2010\*](#), the World Bank estimates a 40-year average of financing for adaptation at US \$75 billion a year between 2010 and 2050. A quarter of this cost is to be covered by private finances, dropping the figure to US \$56 billion. The World Bank admits, however, that its calculation may “underestimate the diversity of the likely adaptation responses” and “ignore the need for adaptation to nonmarket impacts such as those on human health and natural ecosystems”. A more realistic figure, again according to the World Bank, could be US \$61 billion a year.

What is Canada’s share of the World Bank’s estimate of US \$61 billion for adaptation? If assuming that this financing will come exclusively from the 23 official donors currently reporting ODA to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Canada’s share is 3.7% or an average of US \$2.2 billion a year.

As a reference point, total Official Development Assistance in 2008 was US \$119.8 billion. Canada’s ODA in 2008, as reported to the DAC, was US \$4.7 billion. The additional US \$2.2 billion for climate change adaptation, if distributed among all Canadian taxpayers, would amount to an average annual tax expenditure of Cdn \$195 or 50 cents a day for each taxpayer. Canada could reach both the United Nations target for aid spending of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) over the next ten years and pay for its obligations for an adaptation fund with a total average annual tax expenditure of Cdn \$265 per taxpayer – still less than a dollar a day per taxpayer.

### **Adaptation Financing: Should it be counted as ODA?**

Billions of people already live in poverty, marginalized by economic, social and political circumstances. Climate change impacts will accentuate long-term environmental and other conditions and further deprive the poor of their right to water, land, a livelihood and health.

CSOs, have been promoting an approach to development co-operation and ODA that moves away from a “charity framework” towards one rooted in international human rights standards. In many respects, adaptation is also about the rights of affected populations in poor countries, increasing their capacities and resilience to cope with the anticipated impacts of climate change on land, health or potable water.

Effective adaptation, like effective development, requires local knowledge of the complex linkages between human and ecological conditions. Adaptation can be approached as a continuum, starting with the impact of climate change in areas such as emergency assistance or infrastructure development, and moving to responses to vulnerability, for example weak health systems. The latter may not exclusively be caused by climate change, but represents a foundation for effective adaptation.

Since there is a close relationship between adaptation and development, should financing for adaptation be counted as ODA?



Effective adaptation, like effective development, requires local knowledge of the complex linkages between human and ecological conditions.



Many donors already count financing for climate change as ODA. But in doing so, these donors are ignoring commitments made in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) not to count financing for adaptation and mitigation as ODA. Donor adaptation financing must be additional to current and future donor commitments to reach the UN target for aid spending of 0.7% of GNI.

Transparency is also essential in all climate change financing. A dedicated experts working group, with equal representation of donors, recipient governments and CSOs, should meet under the auspices of the DAC to develop specific and clear markers for any adaptation or mitigation financing that donors count as ODA in their reports to the DAC. With such markers, donors should then be held accountable, in DAC reports and in DAC peer reviews of donor performance, to both their long-standing commitment to the 0.7% target for ODA and to their UNFCCC commitment for climate change financing to be in addition to ODA.

### **Managing the Financing**

Developing countries, supported by CSOs, insist that financing adaptation commitments must be made inside the UNFCCC architecture, and not through parallel funds managed by the World Bank or large bilateral donor agencies. A fund within the UNFCCC would have a balanced and equitable representation of all Parties to the Convention and would determine all financing policies and priorities. The World Bank, with its policies and practices of promoting large-scale, non-renewable energy investments, particularly coal-based solutions, can play no credible role in financing mechanisms for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

### **Development Effectiveness Lessons**

A UNFCCC fund should learn from the aid effectiveness experience. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), coming out of the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, are key donor and developing country government frameworks setting out commitments for aid effectiveness.

Although CSOs welcomed the Paris Declaration principles for aid effectiveness, which included country ownership and mutual accountability, they were critical of the limited progress made on the principles by the donors and the weak ambition exhibited to pursue deeper reforms – eliminating donor-determined aid conditions and donor-driven technical assistance. The effectiveness of dozens of parallel development cooperation funds was challenged as the funds were seen to undermine already weak developing country capacities to manage coherent development strategies.

At the Accra High Level Forum, CSOs urged donors and governments to focus on the principle of “country ownership” by strengthening “democratic ownership”. Parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and excluded populations need to be engaged in setting development and aid priorities at the country level. This is also true for climate change adaptation.

The Accra Agenda for Action links aid effectiveness to “gender equality, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability” which “are cornerstones for achieving enduring impact on the lives and potential of poor women, men and children.” The AAA also recognizes that CSOs are “development actors in their own right whose actions complement those of government.” CSOs are building on the AAA to promote a “development effectiveness framework” (focusing on conditions that must be present in order to maximize aid’s impact on poor and marginalized people).

A development effectiveness framework is also relevant for adaptation financing initiatives. Effective medium and long-term adaptation to climate change in poor countries is related to achieving improved development outcomes for poor and vulnerable people.

What specific aid reforms are relevant to medium and long-term adaptation financing?

1. **Democratic Country Ownership:** A clear lesson from forty years of development experience is that development cannot be “engineered” by donor-controlled, outside interventions. Similarly, climate change adaptation that actually benefits the most vulnerable, cannot be achieved through donor/government transfer of resources targeted to infrastructure or technical fixes alone. Country-level democratic processes matter.

Development change often accentuates highly conflictual political struggles for greater equality and political rights at all levels of society. Many aspects of climate change will affect economic interests differently; some will have access to political power to orient adaptation at the expense of others. Sustainability of change for the most vulnerable will depend on strengthening the capacity for diverse, organized citizens’ action and assuring citizens have access to a strong, responsive state.

Democratic country ownership must be a central principle in determining priorities and approaches to climate change adaptation. In financing adaptation, donors must work with governments and peoples’ organizations to enable inclusive planning processes that integrate climate change adaptation into comprehensive national poverty strategies. Alternative development paths, based on local traditional knowledge, must be developed through processes that are inclusive of marginalized populations.

2. **Avoiding Policy Conditions:** The “polluter pays” principle clearly informs the different responsibilities for adaptation and donor obligations for financing adaptation. But how should donors and developing country counterparts work together to develop and implement adaptation programs? For ODA, the record is clear – donor pre-conceived priorities and conditions attached to aid have largely failed to reduced poverty and inequality. Adaptation financing arrangements must avoid imposing donor policy conditions.

3. **International Human Rights Standards:** CSOs are calling for a donor/recipient ODA relationship that is guided by shared obligations and accountability to international human rights standards. These same international human rights standards should also guide climate change adaptation.

It is essential that adaptation financing give priority to and target at risk populations with the least capacity for resilience. Poor and vulnerable women will be among those most affected by climate change; national adaptation program strategies will be effective only if they promote gender equality and strengthen women's capacities to claim their rights. Policies for development and adaptation, on the part of both donor and developing country governments, within a human rights approach, must demonstrate due diligence in taking all measures to avoid increasing the vulnerability of marginalized populations to impacts of climate change. To do so, donors and developing country governments must focus on the underlying structural and systemic causes of vulnerability, such as poverty, gender inequality or unsustainable agricultural practices.

4. **Avoiding Project fragmentation:** Increasingly, donors recognize that distinct or "siloed" aid projects, as the primary mode for delivering aid, can limit the development impacts of aid resources. The Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action call on donors and development partners to channel more aid resources into "program-based approaches" that finance integrated development plans (e.g. a government plan to extend education to all its citizens).

As climate change impacts cut across sectors (agriculture, water, health, disaster management, etc.), adaptation interventions cannot be "siloed" into distinct climate change projects. A project-based approach also leads to unpredictable funding. Unfortunately, the terms and conditions in current funding mechanisms, managed through the World Bank and bilateral donors, have accentuated this project mode leading to aid unpredictability.

5. **Transparency, learning and accountability:** Adaptation financing must adopt the highest standards for transparency and access to information. Given the uncertainties associated with 20 and 30-year predictions of climate change impacts, flexibility, iterative programming and opportunities for experimentation and innovation are all the more critical.

Unfortunately, current donor approaches in aid are often influenced by narrow, short-term "managing-for-results" frameworks. CSOs have criticized these "managing-for-results" tools because they tend to be used as instruments of control by donors rather than instruments for measuring, learning and adapting for meaningful change in development.

6. **Reforming international aid architecture:** An equitable aid architecture has been an overarching concern for both developing country governments and CSOs. Any dedicated UNFCCC Fund for adaptation financing should model equitable governance in international cooperation. United Nations' systems should be strengthened and used to house funding mechanisms and to promote coherent global policies for development.

In order for the upcoming United Nations climate change summit in Copenhagen to succeed in generating an adaptation agreement that is just and equitable, a people-centred development paradigm is needed. The voices of the poor and marginalized must be heard. Their right to live without poverty with access to food, water, healthcare and education needs to be supported. And developed countries must be held accountable for their actions in contributing to climate change. Livelihoods, lives, and the health of our planet depend on it.

*Brian Tomlinson is CCIC's aid policy analyst.*

## **Find Out More**

---

- [\*Adaptation Financing for Climate Change: Taking Account of CSO Perspectives for Aid Reform\*](#)
- [\*World Bank World Development Report 2010\*](#)
- [\*Reality of Aid\*](#)
- [\*Beyond Aid\*](#)
- [\*Towards a Global Climate Fund\*](#)

## **Fragile Environment, Fragile State: Conflict, Crisis and Climate Change**

By Surendrini Wijeyaratne

***"Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible." - Principle 25, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development***



**Dry river bed in Kenya.**

Climate change, by accelerating adverse impacts of environmental degradation, contributes to poverty, marginalization and violent conflict. The intensity and frequency of climate-related natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and cyclones, is leading to an increase in humanitarian disasters. Fragile states, with an already limited capacity to respond to crisis, will be further tested by the simultaneous challenges of poverty, conflict, crisis, and climate change.

According to the [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), an estimated 250 million people are affected by natural disasters yearly, mostly from climate-related disasters such as droughts and floods. Humanitarian disasters occur when natural hazards such as droughts and floods meet human vulnerability such as poverty, displacement, and loss of land and livelihood. The close to 80 percent of the world population that lives in the developing world faces 90 percent of the disasters. Women, children, the elderly, the disabled, and the politically and socio-economically marginalized are most vulnerable to the harshest impacts of humanitarian crisis.

Violent conflicts can emerge when communities struggle over access to limited resources or where an abundance of natural wealth is plundered and exploited by armed groups, multinational corporations, and profiteering individuals. A state's ability to govern and manage the distribution of natural resources influences the extent to which environmental resources become a factor in political and social instability.

Grievances over unfair access to resources combine with other social, cultural, economic or political factors leading to violent conflict. Preventing and responding to violent conflict,

environmental degradation, and disasters is already a challenge for many developing countries. In fragile states, climate change is making this tough job all the more difficult.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND FRAGILE STATES

### Conflict

How will climate change affect fragile states? Climate change, an added challenge for fragile states with weak governance capacity, will lead to environmental degradation testing the resilience of local communities and the state. Socio-economic and political tensions, particularly in societies dependent on natural resources for immediate sustenance and livelihoods, could be exacerbated by climate change.

According to the international conflict prevention think-tank, [International Crisis Group](#), three factors affect a society's vulnerability to climate change. They are:

- “ The extent to which societies are dependent on natural resources and ecosystem services;
- The extent to which the resources and services that societies do rely on are sensitive to changes in climate; and
- Adaptive capacity – the capacity of societies to adapt to changes in these resources and services.”

[International Alert](#) (IA) in its *Climate of Conflict* report identifies political instability, economic weakness, food insecurity, and large-scale migration as risk factors which could lead to violence in under-developed countries. According to the report, 46 countries, totaling a population of 2.7 billion, are at high risk for near-term violence because the impacts of climate change are compounding existing economic, social, and political tensions. IA states that governments and citizens of those 46 countries will face the immediate and dual challenge of climate change and violent conflict. A further 56 countries, according to the report, are vulnerable to political instability.

### The Case of Sudan

#### Four points for integrating climate change adaptation into conflict and crisis agendas:

1. In fragile states, climate change adaptation should be integrated into policy frameworks for poverty reduction and peace-building, including in National Adaptation Plans of Actions (NAPAs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).
2. Adaptation policy frameworks at international, national, and local levels should include conflict-sensitive analysis and integrate disaster risk reduction goals as outlined in the Hyogo Declaration and Action Plan on Disaster Reduction.
3. Peace-building and early recovery policies and programs should consider climate change impacts on vulnerable women and men, and work to strengthen the adaptive capacities of states and local communities.
4. Humanitarian, development, and climate change communities must work together to ensure a consistent approach in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Environmental degradation can be added to the list of causes of the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region. Most of Sudan lies in the Sahel, a region recognized by the Inter-governmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) as the most vulnerable in the world to droughts. Tensions, over land and grazing rights, between pastoralists and farmers have long existed. However, with the intensification of drought, pressure for scarce water and pasture have also increased, adding to an already complex and brutal conflict.

The Darfur example illustrates the additional challenge that climate change poses to conflict-affected fragile states. The impacts of environmental degradation and climate change cannot be seen outside of the political context of a state's relationship with its citizens. Examining how the Sudanese government and the international community have responded to increased vulnerability brought on by climate change is critical. Indeed, many conflict analysts have warned that the conflict in Darfur cannot be singularly attributed to climate change impacts, or to being a resource-based conflict between tribes. What is important to consider is the government's management of natural resources between different tribes, ethnic groups, and other communities, and the government's inability or unwillingness to respond to increased tensions brought about by the degradation of natural resources caused by climate change.



The harmful humanitarian consequences of climate change, such as lost lives, livelihoods, disease and massive displacement, can be limited with investments in adaptation and disaster risk reduction.



## **Humanitarian Crisis**

According to the OCHA, an estimated 634 million people living in at-risk coastal areas and 2 billion people living in arid regions are expected to become severely water stressed. Least Developed Countries in sub-Saharan Africa and south and south-east Asia are confronted with the simultaneous challenge of poverty, conflict, and humanitarian crisis. During the course of just one year, a country in these regions could face two or three types of natural hazards such as floods, droughts, and cyclones stressing both state and community coping mechanisms.

Humanitarian response has traditionally focused on saving lives, with the severity of a disaster measured in human terms through the number of dead, injured, displaced, diseased, lost livelihoods, etc. Decades of experience in the humanitarian field has demonstrated that responding to disasters is not enough. Preventing disasters and being prepared when disasters strike are equally important. Disaster risk reduction (DRR), which focuses on reducing human vulnerability to hazards like droughts, floods and cyclones by increasing the resilience of communities, is critical for developing countries most affected by climate change.

The harmful humanitarian consequences of climate change, such as lost lives, livelihoods, disease and massive displacement, can be limited with investments in adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

## **RESPONDING TO CONFLICT, CRISIS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Conflict-Sensitive Adaptation**

Conflict-sensitivity is based on analyzing the root and trigger causes of conflict, identifying the stakeholders and affected groups, and determining the political context in which a program is being implemented. Examples of conflict-sensitive programming include measures to promote social tolerance and non-discrimination, empower and include marginalized groups, and ensure fair access to program benefits.

In conflict-prone fragile states, unless adaptation strategies consider the additional element of conflict-sensitivity, adaptation efforts could unintentionally contribute to instability and conflict. For example, in northern Kenya simply increasing agriculture production in arid and semi-arid regions to increase food security could cause tension between farmers and pastoral communities if pastoralists' needs for grazing land and access to water are not considered.

Adaptation efforts can support peace by promoting social justice, human rights, and gender equality by ensuring adaptation efforts are accessible and responsive to both women and men in vulnerable and marginalized communities. Adaptation, in this sense, could also have a conflict prevention benefit.

However, to date, there appears to be minimal to no guidance on integrating conflict-sensitive approaches into adaptation programs and policies. There have been no clear articulations of peace and conflict considerations in existing adaptation frameworks or policy statements. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Adaptation Policy Framework for Climate Change includes no specific mention of conflict analysis and is indicative of a general gap in linking climate change adaptation and conflict/fragility agendas.

### **Climate Change Adaption and Disaster Risk Reduction**

Disasters occur when environmental hazards interact with physical, social, and economic vulnerabilities causing harmful human impacts such as lost lives and livelihoods, and displacement.

In 2005, 168 governments signed the [Hyogo Declaration](#) outlining an Action Plan to reduce disaster risks. The Action Plan calls for the integration of disaster risk considerations into development programs in order to build systematic resilience to extreme weather events.

The humanitarian community is working on integrating adaptation into humanitarian response and disaster risk reduction programs. Similarly, climate change adaptation strategies should incorporate disaster risk reduction frameworks and consider these activities as eligible for adaptation funding.

Humanitarian, development and climate change communities all have critical roles to play in ensuring disaster risk reduction is supported in vulnerable communities. The three sectors need

to work together strategically to ensure a consistent and complimentary approach in adaptation frameworks, disaster risk reduction strategies, and in development programming.

### **Climate Change Adaptation and Peace-Building**

Peace-building, a term originally applied to the post-conflict context, is now used more broadly to refer to a set of activities, at the international, national and local levels, that help promote stability and end violence.

Peace-building practitioners are aware of the need for environmentally sustainable programs recognizing the links between natural resources and conflict in places like Sudan and Kenya. However, peace-building practitioners and policy-makers have not yet focused substantively on the implications of climate change on their work or on how peace-building programs may need to be more climate-sensitive.

The environment, and even climate change, could offer peace-building opportunities in conflict-affected areas. Climate change could be a mobilizing point around which antagonists see a common threat and unifying purpose in protecting and sharing resources.

The links between peace-building and climate change are nascent. More needs to be done to engage conflict-analysis and peace-building practitioners in climate change adaptation discourses. And the peace-building community needs to be pro-active in engaging in the new field of climate change adaptation.

### **Protecting the Rights of the Vulnerable**

The consequences of climate change are proving to be a further injustice for the world's poor, jeopardizing their right to land, sustenance, and a livelihood. Environmental injustices, such as unfair access to land and water, can contribute to poverty, marginalization, humanitarian crises, and violent conflict. Preventing disasters and the humanitarian toll of natural disasters and reducing risk to climate-hazards for vulnerable communities are critical to ensuring those least responsible for climate change do not bear the disproportionate burden of the climate crisis. The just and equitable management of natural resources is vital to both sustainable development and durable peace. Linking climate change adaptation to conflict-sensitivity, disaster risk reduction, and peace-building agendas will help to ensure that the rights of those most adversely affected by climate change are protected.

*Surendrini Wijeyaratne is CCIC's peace-building and humanitarian response policy analyst.*

### **Find Out More**

- 
- [The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#)
  - [The Hyogo Declaration on Disaster Reduction](#)
  - [International Alert](#)

- [International Crisis Group](#)