

Expert Workshop

Responding to Climate Impacts

Monday, 22 February 2021 | 13.00 -15.00 GMT

The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre convened this technical workshop as part of a series, in preparation for the Climate and Development Ministerial to be convened by the incoming COP26 President on March 31st. Over 40 participants, including thought leaders, experts from civil society and international organizations, and academia exchanged views on matters related to responding to climate impacts, with the aim of identifying concrete priorities and actionable recommendations in the run-up to COP26.



No thanks, we're going to create some alternative options over here. Want to join?

Kendra Allenby / CartoonCollections.com

This report reflects workshop discussions and proposes policy recommendations that were raised and could be pursued to address the challenges surfaced in the workshop.

Introduction | The urgency to act

We find ourselves in a fragmented landscape where reactive rather than proactive responses to climate impacts prevail. Frontline communities are coping, while civil defense agencies and humanitarians are coming to the rescue over and over for preventable impacts. We see investment in long-term development by countries and multilateral development banks, but also investment in repeated reconstruction after disasters (often with focus on hard infrastructure aimed at reducing physical impacts), rather than in solutions supporting systems that create resilience. All the while affected communities and countries are not sufficiently involved in decision-making about efforts meant to increase *their* resilience.



How can we repair or even reimagine systems that more effectively manage risk and more effectively respond to climate impacts? How can we more focus on the longer-term future be brought into how we manage risk today?

To help workshop participants begin to visualize the challenges related to these questions, and potential solutions, an image of a bowl reflecting the centuries old Japanese practice of *Kintsugi* was introduced at the start, demonstrating how broken pottery is mended by filling cracks with gold joinery. The philosophy underpinning *Kintsugi* is to recognize the cracks in the system, honor them, understand where they come from, and think about how to repair them so the outcome is stronger and more 'beautiful' than before. It is a process that recognizes the past and mends the cracks in a mindful way that makes the object stronger and more precious than before. The

process is not about hiding the cracks, it is about acknowledging them, working with them and strengthening the object.

The cracks in the system | Challenges identified in the workshop

Workshop discussions revealed **broad consensus that current risk management mechanisms are unfit for purpose**. The approaches are stuck in a frustrating cycle of suffering from often predictable disaster impacts, focusing on recovery and reconstruction, rather than on the more desirable chain of actions comprising anticipating climate impacts - preparing - innovating and adapting. Another challenge is that we might still endeavor to adopt transformative measures in response, when limits to adaptation are reached. **There is a greater need to manage risk across timescales and address growing gaps in dealing with actual climate impacts that have not been covered by risk management mechanisms**. Managing risk across timescales must consider the time continuum: from the past experiences in the implementation of development and adaptation interventions, to present implementation to future dimensions and scenarios. We need to examine carefully what we have learnt from development and adaptation practice to date, embracing an honest and constructive learning dialogue in order to consider how this can inform future responses.

There was discussion about the need to replace systems entirely (with greater solidarity between citizens needed rather than leaving the work to politicians and donors who were noted to have created and exacerbated the cracks in the system) and discussion about what specific changes to existing system that insufficiently bridges the climate-development-humanitarian divide. This could include better implementation of actions we know work to reduce risks such as early warning systems, planned urbanization, resilient infrastructure, social protection, and other approaches that together could bring about incremental change. Widely criticized was the **lack of long-term thinking and donor incentive structures that preclude this** including the commonplace 3-5 year “climate projects” and accompanying “climate screening” lenses where what is needed is greater policy coherence across all sectors over longer time horizons (ten years and above).

Failure to anticipate and manage risk occurs while the basic building blocks to support development are missing including national policies aimed at the realization of basic human rights such as the right to life, health, education, adequate standard of living, adequate and secure housing. Strengthening people’s resilience to increasing climate impacts is more challenging when foundations for development are not there. **Social protection systems can help set the foundations for more resilient societies, but they are often lacking, do not focus enough on climate resilience, or are not anticipatory or shock responsive themselves**. There has not been enough recognition of this crucial role, both on the climate change agenda, where social protection is not yet a core policy response, as well as on the social protection front, where the implications of rising risks and the need for significantly expanded provision have not been recognized.

Related to this, the lack of meaningful locally led action on adaptation was repeatedly cited, perhaps most notably in the framing of the **disconnect between decisions made by donors and how these relate to the needs of communities**. For example, the GCF was singled out as remarkable in its absence of donor direction, while taking 2-5 years to do locally developed programs and process it through its systems. It was observed that the long time span between formulation of project idea and actual project start can take 2-5 years, which raises a series of ethical questions: How can transformative development achieved with long time lags like this, and (how) are communities able to meaningfully engage in the shaping of priority areas for adaptation and development funding?



Similarly the level at which decisions around use of climate funds was interrogated (noting they do not typically get made at as devolved a level as possible - following the principle of subsidiarity) as well as how this extends to the point at which participatory approaches are pursued. It was observed that these are often integrated into decision making processes too late to make meaningful difference and are often framed in ways that respond to donor reporting needs rather than community needs for strengthening capacity to respond to climate impacts.

The gold joinery | Learning from the past, embracing the future

Taking stock of the cracks in the system, and the need to at times repair and at times reimagine practical next steps, the following recommendations and policy solutions towards transformative, more resilient systems are based on discussions in the workshop:

Get the basics right - Continue to invest in expanding basic social protection coverage to strengthen resilience against multiple risks including climate.

It is important that we build a strong basis to address current and future challenges effectively. Building resilience is about a systems approach that provides both a basic foundation as well as a buffer for those who are vulnerable.

Here are some suggestions raised in the workshop:

- Social protection is a crucial policy instrument for delivering immediate and direct support to the poor and vulnerable and dealing with the long-term risks emerging from climate change. Continuing to invest in expanding basic social protection coverage around the world is essential to strengthen resilience against multiple risks including climate. They help get funding straight to families who are best positioned to invest in their future and can help build a strong foundation by dealing with long term risks by reducing poverty and vulnerability.
- Adaptive and shock-responsive social protection systems that transfer resources directly to households and can build capacity to anticipate and cope with shocks and disasters are key to ensure that we manage disasters more effectively and sustainably
- Think of climate change as a challenge that requires different national policies such as education, health, social protection policies, alternative growth policies - beyond shock responsive, focus on setting the foundations of citizenship and rights

In context of social protection, the following needs to be considered:

Social protection programs, while important, have limitations and may not be sufficient on their own to provide adequate resilience coverage. Social protection programs on their own are only able to support coping capacities to low intensity climate shocks. To support climate risk management in response to high-intensity climate shocks, social protection programs will need to be implemented in combination with wider investment in risk management instruments to build and sustain the resilience of the community. Such approaches must take into account the diverse needs of women and men as well as more vulnerable populations like single women, elderly people, children,



people with disabilities, etc. The increased number of climate displaced migrant also warrants the need for portability of social protection benefits.

Current scale of social protection financing is not adequate to meet the scale of identified risks. In context of LDC, financing social protection program is an issue because of the low level of domestic resource mobilization, viz. tax-to-GDP ratio, which reduces country's fiscal capacity and redistributive potential. In some progressive developing countries like Indonesia and India, reductions in energy subsidies have enabled an expansion of social assistance, but not all the fiscal space created by these structural reforms has been absorbed by social protection and adaptation programs.

Many poor and vulnerable countries do not have well developed social protection delivery mechanisms which may impact access. While some LDCs have existing social protection programs, which can be expanded to cover climate risk management, in others they are virtually non-existent

Social protection programs have their own delivery issues and challenges such as access, targeting of vulnerable and marginalized, governance issues, and these issues need to be acknowledged and addressed for achieving climate resilience objectives. Current targeting is based on poverty, which is not sufficient. There is a need to better identify the poorest and most vulnerable (community/ region), understanding the multi-dimensional vulnerability, including current and future climate risks and appropriate targeting methods to reach them. The governance needs to plug leakages and increase autonomy and financial resources at village level, community ownership and village level governance structures

Move from siloed response to climate-related disasters to addressing long term adaptation - Embrace long term visions and policies (10-30 years); and support systemic and programmatic approaches for managing and financing risk reduction.

The sharp distinction of development and adaptation has increased two concerning developments: an increase of multiple strands of siloed approaches (not considering system complexity) and short-term actions that are not consistently supporting long term transformative processes owned and driven by local actors.

Some key points raised in the workshop were:

- Embrace long term visions and strategies (10-30 years); and support systemic and programmatic approaches, ending focus on single projects and sectors and focus on learning about what works over the long-term
- Use L&D as an indicator of progress on climate action - where there is no finance and action to address loss and damage, we are stuck in a cycle of constant recovery. Where there is no early action, we are stuck with an ever overstretched and collapsing emergency response system.
- Financial support for adaptation and loss and damage should be focused on local-led priorities and initiatives with the majority of support reaching the grassroots. Social protection programs and CSO-led community-based resilience programs can help deliver this support.
- Re-imagine effective MEL approaches with special focus on stakeholder driven learning
- Focus on anticipatory governance innovation, learning lessons from COVID19

For long term adaptation, the following could also be considered:

Develop comprehensive climate risk management pathways to address multidimensional, consecutive and compounding risks. So far, climate resilience approaches have primarily focussed on strengthening the resilience



towards singular events. However, as impacts of many climatic events are expected to last for several months to years, occurrence of consecutive and compounding risks can be expected. Vulnerable countries need support to adapt their planning process to these risks and respond to these events as they unfold.

Value of ex-ante risk reduction needs to be recognised. For LDCs with limited fiscal space, preventative measures are seen as costs, with uncertain or distant rewards, as they lose out resources for more immediate action. This creates imbalance in ex-ante funding, with significantly more spent on recovery and repair than on risk reduction and increasing resilience. Developing countries need support for establishing shock responsive financing arrangements that can provide certainty that basic services will not get affected and resources will be available when needed and at the lowest cost possible.

Elevate role of local actors - Place local actors at the center of decision making processes to ensure effective, flexible and accessible climate finance.

Local actors are key partners in development and adaptation processes. They are crucial knowledge holders and drivers of long-term transformative processes. In a landscape where projects are the dominant response to address development and adaptation challenges, local actors are crucial to ensure that all of the projects are supporting one coherent and community owned local transformative process.



"Notice how the table is round, so that everyone sitting at it is equal."

Some key suggestions to practically achieve this were mentioned in the workshop:

- Ensure effective, flexible and accessible climate finance by engaging in policy formulation that places local actors at the center of decision-making processes.
- Place design of development and adaptation processes and projects in the hands of beneficiaries, and guard against elite capture.
- Tackle the causes of marginalization and vulnerability across scales, while actively engaging with local stakeholders to ensure that the systemic challenges are addressed.
- Invest in capability to formulate flexible and innovative responses, starting with schools and local innovation ecosystems - while embracing new technologies as part of the bigger systemic response driven by local stakeholders.
- Embrace the role of youth in driving long term transformative processes: we need to actively create spaces for meaningful engagement and dialogue of youth representatives in policy formulation processes.

Address the issues of inequity, exclusion and marginalisation. Climate risk management approaches are marred issues of exclusion, gender inequality, and marginalisation due to inherent weaknesses, lack of transparency and targeting issues in the systems, programs and processes through which they are delivered.

Ensure just accountability - Pursue models with top-down and bottom-up indicators to define success on managing risk across timescales and ensuring that funding flows accordingly.

Accountability was considered to be a key principle in development and adaptation processes. However the way we safeguard accountability is currently strongly biased towards institutions providing finance and demanding accountability from recipients (governments, local stakeholder organisations, grassroots organisations).



“See? You can’t lift it either. So I guess it’s neither of our problem.”

P. Byrnes / CartoonStock.com

Some suggestions to ensure accountability in a transformative process were suggested in the workshop:

- Ensure accountability from all actors, across all levels - using specific indicators of success defined by respective groups of stakeholders. These indicators are a crucial part to inform learning and allow for flexible course correction.
- Allow for different levels of indicators to ensure accountability: top-down and bottom-up to ensure accountability of the entire system.
- Climate risk mechanisms must be accountable to local stakeholders and ensure accountability through open dialogue and learning (instead of stricter rules and ever tightening regulations).
- Finally, regarding reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), it was asserted that carbon taxation was an important option to price carbon and reduce GHG emissions, because a carbon tax is capable of mobilizing much needed resources for developing countries, while at the same time promoting positive environmental impact.

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Annex I

Cartoon Gallery with annotations

In the course of the workshop participants were invited to view and annotate cartoons in the view of the workshop theme. The unedited comments and cartoons are shared in this annex. Please note that these cartoons are only licensed to the Climate Centre. If you are interested in using these or other cartoons, please contact the Climate Centre (virtually@climatecentre.org).



-We have no funding for disasters that have not yet happened...

Paul Bisca / CartoonCollections.com

Comments

When policymakers/negotiators use the excuse "we don't know how much of a disaster is caused by climate change" to defend their continued blocking of ANY funding for loss and damage

And just look at how well that has worked out with pandemic preparedness recently.....

Allegedly, loss and damage. Except loss and damage is happening.

Scrambling for funding - funds for covid vs funds for anticipation. This is what we experience from some donors!

no funding even for disasters that have occurred

Infuriatingly repetitive statements about money better sooner, but given later. how to pressure systems into becoming smart?

We should move beyond just influencing to inspiring the decision makers with future reality.

Highlights the problem of political prioritization of risk reduction and adaptation. Despite the evidence that it is cheaper to invest in prevention, there is rigidity in political allocation of finance. Need to address the political incentives of political decision makers to invest in prevention as a priority

Our world is in the wrong direction. We only believe after it happens!



"I DON'T UNDERSTAND- I KEEP THROWING MONEY AT IT, BUT IT STILL WON'T GROW."

CBA14 Conference

Emily Flake / CartoonCollections.com

Comments

Nice

Excellent

This about says it all regarding how the system works currently.

This feels very accurate to me. It shows the distance policymakers often have from the issues they are trying to tackle. Particularly the fact that those who are privileged to have decision-making often do not truly know how to solve these types of problems in communities. I think this displays the need to include more frontline activists/people in decision-making at the higher levels.

That's when you come with assumed understanding of community risks! Quite common - I must add!

Strengthens view of importance of local development actors

Investment patterns will not change until we realize that is nature who created us and not the other way around.

The understanding gap.....from global to local.

Too much profit or money doesn't guarantee an ecosystem

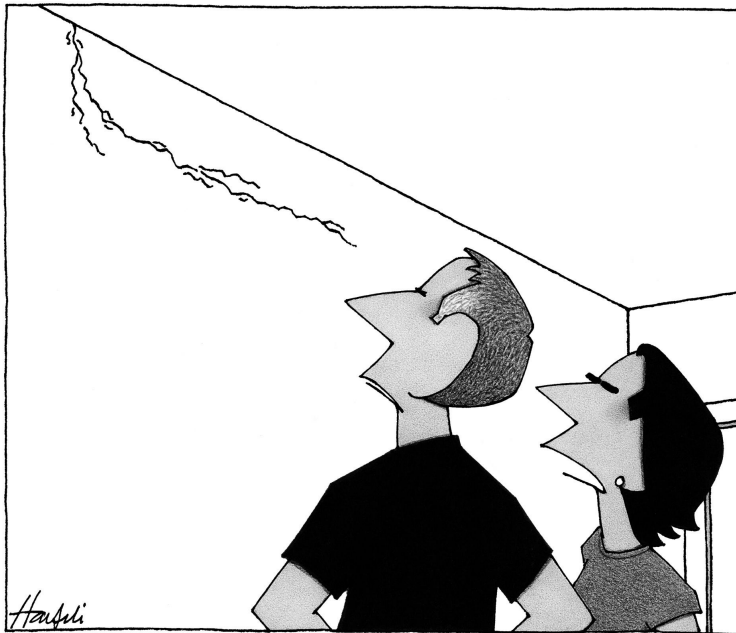
Solutions are not made of money alone, especially when the holder of money is clueless about the local issues. Make room!

Indeed we need the right solutions in response to a particular risk/challenge



what is 'Tintin' doing

Need to support existing resilience and adaptive capacities in communities - not just about money



"Can't we just get some load-bearing wallpaper?"

CartoonCollections.com

Comments

Time to stop papering over the cracks, roll up our sleeves and get into the dirty (but necessary!) hard work....

This reminds me of the "seismic paint" we used to talk about back in the day

Cosmetic fixes won't address broken structures. Anticipate cracks, help new system emerge.

Nice one

The wallpaper is perfect for projects with temporary solutions

engineers talking

It happens especially when it takes long for a disaster to occur, people forget that it actually means the remaining period to the next occurrence is shorter. Don't let the wall paper lie to us that the wall is ok.

For me, this symbolises how the issue gets kicked down the road for future generations to deal with an innovate on. It gets to the point where removing all the 'wallpaper' makes the repair harder to conduct. It also reminds me of some of the laughable net-zero plans which seem to rely on technology that doesn't exist, like waiting for load-bearing wallpaper rather than fixing the wall!

"Can't we just produce a report taking stock of the finance that is already going to loss and damage?"



"Here's where all the worries of the world have been seeping into your home."

CartoonCollections.com

Comments

They seep in through your television, not through cracks in your walls

can it be adapted to..

Cracks can let troubles seep in, but also it's where light will shine through, if we anticipate what needs to be intentionally broken to give room for the new.

Unless climate crisis is felt directly, it can always be ignored

We are not concerned till it comes to our face!



If you cover your eyes, you can make it go away.

Ben Schwartz / CartoonCollections.com

Comments

If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

Exactly how politicians and policy makers think

Is it possible to have a collective realization/panic/movement to action about our existential risk? What is wrong with us?

Reminds me of the approach that is often used to address (or better: not address) risks and impacts from climate related slow-onset processes (like sea level rise or thawing of permafrost)

This reminds me that it is natural human instinct to ignore problems we perceive as too large for us to solve. This argues the need to include more climate education both in schools and in communities to be able to address issues arising due to climate change.

Our deliberate blindness will make us and others burn.

Failing to see the real dangers of climate change is a choice. The dinosaurs are in denial, like many people in our society



Feggo / CartoonStock.com

Comments

That's how most policymakers behave!

listening is incredibly hard to teach, but a fundamental skill

Some actors will never understand the impact of their actions/operations without appropriate framing of environmental or social risks and without solid incentive mechanisms in place.

Policy makers are not interested in climate risks and racism

Politicians and negotiators when I ask them to take action on loss and damage

will hear with experience... like Covid

Our climate systems are build on colonialist trajectories. We must laugh at the talking heads that don't let the speaking become action.

Calls for creativity in communicating risk.





Irene Coletto / CartoonCollections.com

Comments

If the currently powerful keep holding on to it, Power will break. How to make them let go, lovingly but firmly?

Sometimes, we think withholding power is for the good of others!

Power = governance

Devolving powers is never easy

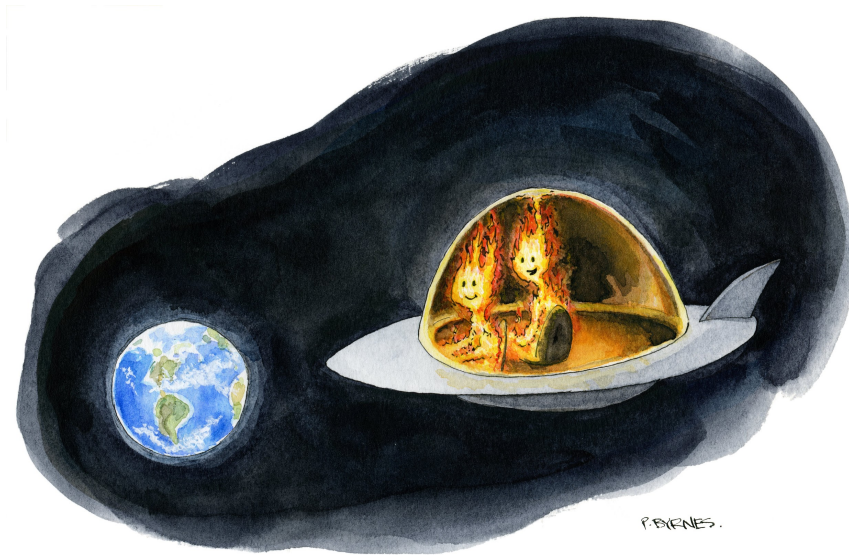
Power imbalance - the core cause behind inequality, climate change and all major crises.

Capacity to implement at the local level needs to be built

Several resonate but especially the one with the child and parent. Climate change is genuinely a problem we are not just coping with now but also passing on to our children. I think we have a massive obligation to listen to them and act radically to address all aspects of the climate crisis.

The stringent requirements of donors making it impossible to navigate the red tape... even though the finance is not even close to enough to covering the scale of the need in the first place.

That bag contains a bunch of broken pots



"It's absurd to think it won't get warm enough to colonize.
That would require them to work together."

CartoonCollections.com

Comments

High tech puts the risk far into the future, when it already happening

Working together is hard. But we must. Youth can be enabled by us to put pressure on systems. Let cracks become visible

I like that it makes reference to the earth being colonised. Colonisation and power imbalance caused many of the issues that cause climate change today and the attitudes created through colonisation seem to prevent collaborative working through isolationism and nationalism. It's like the tables have been turned in the cartoon.

maybe reframe climate change as our struggle for survival



CartoonCollections.com

Comments

Mending your hearts

One solution for all ailments

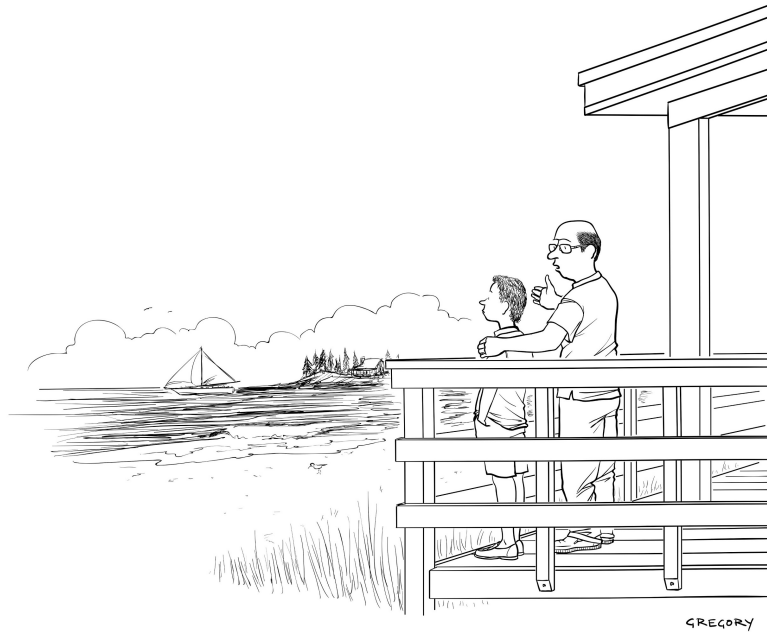
Unity in love

Oh so many broken hearts! How I feel when we dont walk the talk!

Interesting that all characters are male making the response!

Mending hearts - noticing the presence of future absence of what we love. Bracing on for loss... But we will make solidarity stronger.

Frontline activists taking leadership when governments won't



"Someday, son, this will all be yours—and underwater."

CartoonCollections.com

Comments

Island life

enjoying with scuba diving gear

The vast majority of youth have no formal power to make decisions. Many of the people damning us to death and destruction won't be around by 2050

We're bestowing a ticking bomb to our youth. They won't let their future drown without considering burning down our selfishness...

This is where we are headed if we continue folding our arms to Climate Change!

We are making the world more catastrophic to the future generation if.....

Obvious point is that assets and landscapes can be safeguarded by investment in climate proofing - not all is loss. But also there is a need to reshape our expectations of what good life is about - need to move beyond a conservative attachment to what has been valued by previous generations and forge a new idea about what is valuable and how humanity should live

This speaks directly to the impact past generations have left for us to solve. It also reflects the knowledge of those with power about the impact their actions have had on the world. Yet, the lack of action they are willing to take to lessen the impact.





“Obviously, the first priority is that my reputation is safe from harm.”

Comments

So typical of most organisations. Me first attitude

Green-washing

This thinking also applies to institutions

Sadly, reputational risks are one of the main drivers of private climate initiatives. In the end, with the world collapsing in the background, it still comes down to their own financial gains and greed.

Why character and integrity of individuals counts as much as policy solutions....

More than climate risk reduction, we're confronting a system of privilege risk reduction, and reputational ego boosting...

Ostriches Talk but no action I like Band aide solutions GCF? Need to send this to all those purchasing seaside property Lots of broken hearts? COP xx Send some of that money here!