



Bangladesh experiences increased number of natural calamities under climate change impact



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Leadership crisis in climate negotiations

Where do the LDCs fit in?

MIZAN R. KHAN, PH.D

Climate diplomacy is not ideology, but issue-based. From the beginning, there has been strategic shifts made by major groups involved in climate negotiations. This leadership crisis started particularly after the thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-13) at Bali. A new but important trend in climate diplomacy is evident since then. True to Morgenthau's 'power politics', emission power (few big emitters) tends to rule the game - the impacting countries from both sides are calling the shots, and the impacted ones tend to be relegated to sidelines.

At the moment, climate negotiations suffer from a leadership crisis, with the expanded EU unable to lead any more. This was manifest in Copenhagen, and also in Cancun. The EU now emits only about 15% of global GHGs; so it's a no-emission power. The UK, as before, looks likely to lead the game, with its radical proposal of emission cuts and a proposed budget of about 3 billion pounds for 2011-2015, now the 2nd highest funding, after Japan's recent commitment, to address climate issues. Canada, Japan and Russia, members of the Umbrella Group, have indicated they would not commit for the second commitment period (2013-2017) unless major emitters from developing countries do so too.

China, as the biggest emitter in absolute terms, is leading both renewable energy generation and technology. As the next superpower, China has the potential for global leadership in climate diplomacy, if China shows some flexibility in its plan of emissions reduction.

Within the G77 group, there are now so

many negotiating blocks, which complicate matters when it comes to agreeing on a common position. This is the tragedy of a fragmented G77 -- sabotaging its own position. Simultaneously, the high vulnerability of the LDCs weakens their bargaining position vis-a-vis the big emitters on the planet. Desmond Tutu talks of an "adaptation apartheid". This is characterised by industrial countries spending huge amounts of money enhancing their ability to adapt -- so-called adaptive capacity -- while the LDC efforts in adaptation remain grossly under-funded.

Despite some good progress in adaptation in Cancun, with its agreement on establishing an Adaptation Framework, an Adaptation Committee and several work programmes, the legal basis of adaptation still remains weak compared to the mitigation agenda. This is the reason why the issue of justice in adaptation finance is not discussed the way it is done in case of burden-sharing in mitigation. This is a serious lacuna in strengthening the adaptation agenda. Here LDCs may play the lead role in mobilising about 100 countries which fall under the category of high vulnerability. This requires working out an agenda of mutual interest.

But the LDC caucus is not functioning effectively. The active role of the Africa group somehow blurs the effectiveness of LDC leadership, as the majority of its members are from Africa. Here Bangladesh may fill the gap and lead the LDC process, without even having the Chair's position. Bangladesh has some features that distinguish it from the other

LDCs: a) a country with about 160 million, the largest population among all the 49 LDCs (more than 1/5 of total LDC population); b) a democratic system of governance; c) consistent rate of economic growth of around 6%; d) a vibrant civil society and rich social capital, which made participatory governance a fact of life; e) success in population and disaster management; and e) Bangladesh is rich in human and intellectual capital, compared to many other G77 countries. These features should enable Bangladesh to provide leadership not only within the LDCs, but also the G77 group.

So, Bangladesh should lead the group serving as its intellectual hub. In between COPs, Bangladesh can initiate some regional discussions, as the Africa group does, to articulate a common position on important issues. True to this approach, Bangladesh has hosted the Forum of Vulnerable Countries in mid-November, prior to Durban. This kind of meetings is also needed particularly for the Asian countries, which are not a coherent or active group, compared to the African group or the AOSIS..

It is to be reiterated that now-a-days environmental or climate diplomacy is more than economic diplomacy and poverty alleviation. It is a precondition of ensuring sustainable development and enhancing adaptive capacity of communities. It's time to operationalise the agreed principles of climate finance. Bangladesh delegation has the capacity to do this. Only it needs to be harnessed in earnest.

Mizan R. Khan, Ph.D can be contacted at mizanrk@northsouth.edu.

GLOBAL CLIMATE REGIME Legal options and challenges

M. HAFIJUL ISLAM KHAN

International environmental law has come a long way since 1972, through the adoption of the Stockholm Declaration on Human Environment. Twenty years later, climate change appeared as a distinct issue in 1992, when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) [the Convention] was adopted. The Convention laid down the basic framework with voluntary commitments of the Parties to stabilise atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, to avoid "dangerous anthropogenic interference" to the climate system.

The Parties of the Convention agreed in its first Conference of the Parties [COP-1, 1995, Berlin] to take legally binding commitments realising an inadequacy of voluntary commitments to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs). The 'Berlin Mandate' led the way for further negotiation, for legally binding instruments, leading to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol [the Protocol] at COP-3 in Kyoto, 1997. The Protocol created legally binding targets on GHG emission reductions, particularly, for the developed countries and set an initial time period of 2008-2012, known as the first commitment period along with additional commitment periods.

Controversy surrounded, the lack of, any agreed outcomes

from COP-15 and Meeting of the Parties (MOP-5). It came as no surprise then that the decision was taken to extend the mandate of two working groups and to complete their work at COP-16, held in 2010. Failure of COP-15 and the undue adoption of the Copenhagen Accord raised serious concerns over multilateralism within the UNFCCC. Later, the Cancun Conference, approving a set of decisions, demonstrated that multilateralism was still alive and can play a role in the climate regime. In addition, the Cancun Decisions have provided a framework on adaptation, technology transfer and financial mechanisms, which needs to be developed at future COPs.

The Cancun Decisions extended the mandate of Long-term Cooperative Action (LCA) to continue its work and to be present at COP-17, Durban 2011. It also requested for the LCA to continue discussing legal options. That one of the priorities for the Durban should be to make progress in addressing the legal form for the next phase of the Convention.

The Cancun Agreements also extended the work of the Ad-hoc Working Group, Kyoto Protocol. This ensures that there will be no gap between the first and second commitment periods. With this in mind a new period will begin from 1 January 2013. This is why Durban is so crucial. Any amend-

ments to the Protocol must enter into force on or before this date meeting a rigorous process. Yet, in order to continue the Protocol three fourths of the Parties to the Protocol will need to accept the amendments, and ratify these by 3 October 2012.

Durban represents the last opportunity for the global community to bridge a gap between the first and second commitment periods. But a legally binding agreement before the expiration of the first commitment period seems unlikely due to lack of political will of the developed countries.

Political will particularly from the developed countries is evident towards a new single instrument replacing the Protocol. The Protocol came into force as an unwanted child struggling all the way, through eight years and then again, without complying with its first commitment period. Major polluting countries are arguing for a new one, which would face similar difficulties to take effect. Replacing the Protocol, for many in developing countries represents a mockery for the victims of climate change. It is expected that there will be two outcomes at Durban, yet only time will tell if they will be for better or worse.

M. Hafijul Islam Khan is environmental lawyer and legal research fellow, CISDL, Canada.

Psychological impact of climate change

GRAHAM POWELL

With climate change comes global warming and a rise in sea levels, and Bangladesh is already the second lowest lying country in the world. A higher sea level makes it easier for freak tides and cyclones to breach the coastal and tidal defences, and the effects of climate change also increases the risks of river flooding and earthquake losses.

The effects of such disasters touch all. The Bangladesh Association of Psychiatrists (BAP) conducted a survey 2 months after the cyclone Sidr of November 2007, assessing 750 survivors. Of these, 25.2% had post-traumatic stress disorder, 17.9% had major depressive disorder, 16.3% had somatoform disorder and 14.6% had a mixed anxiety and depressive disorder. Furthermore, 17.1% reported the death of a family member, and 82.9% were homeless. There were therefore major losses and bereavements outside of formal mental health disorder, with issues of bereavement and adjustment.

The frequency and severity of climatic events is going to increase, creating a high need for psychological management, not just a high need for practical preventative steps and for the preparation of the physical aspects of the disaster recovery plan (food, sanitation, water and so on).

The disaster recovery plan for Bangladesh needs a psychological dimension, in which all front line staff (army, relief workers, aid workers, community workers) have some knowledge of psychological first aid



When all is lost, trauma grips

PHOTO: STAR

(the importance of rapport, the need for active listening, the promotion of problem solving rather than despair, basic do's and don'ts when dealing with traumatised people). There needs to be short training courses for everyone in psychological first aid, run by clinical psychologists. After the first aid comes a further level of psychological management, the setting up of psychosocial support in the community, the profiling of psychosocial needs, the launching of psychosocial activities, activities for children and for adults that promote psychological adjustment and build on residual community supports. After this there is another level, identifying the vulnerable and the most affected and providing specific psychological advice for them. Finally

there is formal psychological treatment for those who do not recover. Yet there are only 39 clinical psychologists in the whole country. Therefore in planning disaster recovery there needs to be a manpower development plan that includes the provision of more clinical psychologists, who can train people in psychological first aid, train people in how to promote psychosocial supports, and who can treat the worst affected whose problems become chronic. The disaster recovery plan for Bangladesh needs to help the survivors survive psychologically.

The writer is Member of the Board of Trustees, the Governing Body of the British Psychological Society (BPS) and Clinical Psychologist, UK.

Climate change and NCDs

SHUSMITA HOSSAIN KHAN, SHAMMUNUL ISLAM AND DR. MD. SHAMIM HAYDER TALUKDER

The modern world has brought boons in our life and also many curses. We reduced the rate of infant and maternal deaths but the burden of having non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in younger age is increasing. We have cooled our homes with ACs but heated up the world with global warming. In addition to this, without lessening the rates of diseases, the multiplier effects of climate change on health may greatly exacerbate existing health inequities between and within countries, posing a major supplementary dispute obstructing global development. There is a conventional assessment that suggests the extent of climate change that had already occurred by the year 2000 was directly responsible for the loss of at least 5.5 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs).

However, keeping the conventional consequences of infectious diseases and injury of climate change on the side-lines, NCDs will likely be affected by climate change in two ways. First, climate change itself may directly and indirectly increase the incidence of many major NCDs and secondly, policy responses to climate change both adaptation and mitigation is will likely have both positive and negative implications for NCDs.

There is still a dilemma over how climate change affects the risk of having cardiovascular disease (CVD), respiratory diseases and cancer. The heat-related mortality and morbidity arise from overloading the cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Another way of having CVDs through climate change is the additional changes in

ambient temperature, precipitation, and cloud coverage that would alter sun exposure behaviour. Climate change has the potential to change the risk of UV-related health outcomes, including cancers. The last but not the least risk of having a NCD through climate change is mainly a non-communicable NCD mental health and injury. Increasing frequency and intensity of extreme temperatures and weather events, and increased antagonism for inadequate natural resources, on top of existing social inequities, are likely to affect interpersonal and intergroup behaviour and may result in increased stress and anxiety, leading to mental health problems.

This currently slightly unrecognised relationship of NCDs and climate change actually gives a food for thought that there are NCD risks from climate change mitigation and adaptation responses. The underlying determinants of NCDs and of climate change overlap substantially. Policy responses that aim to address common determinants may reduce NCD levels, could help avoid further climate change, and may assist in the management of existing climate change impact. The two key mitigation policy areas associated with the energy sector are likely to provide benefits to NCDs: energy generation and domestic energy use. One of the main pathways linking electricity generation to climate change and human health is through the fine particle air pollution arising from the fuel cycles for fossil fuels. These emissions not only cause climate change but also increase the risks of CVD, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections. On the other hand indoor smoke from inefficient burning of biomass fuels contributes not only to

climate change but to lung cancer, lower respiratory infections and pulmonary disease, low birth weight, cataracts, and possibly asthma and heart disease, a total of some two million deaths per year. Thus policies to address energy generation and domestic energy use can actually benefit the NCD risk behaviors.

The world is increasingly becoming urban. Most of the future urban growth will take place in cities in low- and middle-income countries. A key challenge, and opportunity, is to ensure that current and future urban development is done in such a way that prevents NCDs, reduces poverty, and builds societies that live within environmental limits. Urban design that supports greater street connectivity and balanced land use mix with more residential density mitigates better than nonresidential density through the incentives that people and organizations are given to pursue low carbon emission activities. Such designs have implications for NCDs.

Climate change mitigation and NCD prevention can be achieved through urban design that incorporates green spaces within communities. The presence of green space also has indirect benefits for NCDs by encouraging physical activity, improving air quality, and reducing urban heat island (UHI) effects.

Addressing the environmental and social determinants of NCDs will improve global health which will also make inroads in poverty eradication and meeting out social equity. This will ensure people, communities, and nations to cope with the fallouts of climate change and combat it effectively.

The writers are public health researchers from Eminence (www.eminence-bd.org).