

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Financing adaptation to climate change: Some ways forward



SALEEMUL HUQ

OVER the last three years (2010, 2011 and 2012) developed countries had promised to provide up to \$30 billion to the developing countries (LDC) to tackle climate change. They further pledged to provide the funds in a "balanced" manner between mitigation and adaptation and that such funding should be "new and additional" to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). At the recently completed eighteenth Conference of Parties (COP18) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Doha, Qatar in December 2012, the developed countries claimed to have provided over \$33 billion over the three year period. However, other estimates from independent researchers in the US and UK found that less than a quarter of the total was allocated towards adaptation and that it was very difficult to trace exactly where those funds went.

The developed countries also pledged to provide up to \$100 billion per year starting from 2020 through the "Green Climate Fund." However, they did not provide any concrete promises for the period between 2013 and 2020, except to say that they would try their best to maintain the same level of funding as before.

The situation at present is that some amount of funding to support adaptation in developing countries, with a focus on the LDCs, does seem to be flowing (although in a manner that is difficult to track properly). It is, therefore, important that the funds be seen to be utilised well and the benefits are transparent for all to see. There are number of actions that need to be carried out by both the developed countries providing the

funds as well as the developing countries receiving the funds.

Need for transparency:
The first step is to ensure transparency in fund utilisation. This is as important for the countries which are providing these funds as it is for the countries receiving the funds. Thus, the developed countries should provide information about the channels through which funds are being sent to the developing countries as well as information on which countries are receiving the funds and, if possible, on which projects are receiving funding. For the countries receiving such funds, it is important that they provide information on how much is being received, where it is being spent and also who are the main beneficiaries. Transparency is thus an onus on both the givers of funds as well as the receivers of funds.

Demonstration of absorption capacity:
The second major issue is for the developing countries to demonstrate their ability to absorb and utilise adaptation funds properly and well. Thus, in future the amount of global adaptation funding that any developing country is likely to receive will be a function of ability to absorb and utilise funds rather than claims for vulnerability. If a developing country receives and uses \$1 million well, it will receive five million. If it uses five million well, it will receive fifty million and if it uses fifty million well it will receive five hundred million. What it receives will be largely dependent on its demonstrated

ability to absorb and use funds transparently and well.

Focus on most vulnerable:
The third issue is to ensure that there is a focus on the most vulnerable countries globally and also on the most vulnerable communities within all countries. At the global level this means a focus on the LDCs which have identified over 500 "urgent and immediate" adaptation projects through the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) in nearly fifty LDCs, which would require around \$3 billion over the next five years or so to implement. At the national level it will require the governments of developing country receiving global funds for adaptation to prioritise the most vulnerable communities within each country and support Community Based Adaptation (CBA) wherever possible.

Mainstreaming adaptation into development:
One of the significant outcomes at COP18 in Doha was an agreement for all developing countries to be supported to carry out their NAPs, not just as stand-alone adaptation to climate change plans but much more a process of integrating or mainstreaming adaptation to climate change into regular national, sectoral and local level development planning. This will be an important element of adaptation planning in future.

Loss and damage:
This is a new issue that has come out of the COP18 "Doha Climate Gateway" agreement and will need to be considered alongside adaptation. It is still unclear what

the overlaps with adaptation and loss and damage are and to what extent they may be the same. This is an emerging topic that will need to be further investigated in future.

Role of Bangladesh:
Bangladesh has already played a pioneering role on many aspects of adaptation, including the development of the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) as well as the setting up of two Climate Change Funds for implementing the BCCSAP. It is likely that Bangladesh can continue to play an important and pioneering role with respect to monitoring, reporting and transparency of climate change fund utilisation in future. This will not only act as an example for other developing countries to follow, but will also enable Bangladesh to lay claim to further amounts of global funding for adaptation if the country can demonstrate that it has a robust and transparent monitoring mechanism in place.

Conclusion:
The next few years offer a window of opportunity for both developed countries as well as developing countries to demonstrate good practices with respect to spending global funds for adaptation to climate change, which will in turn be the major factor in ensuring that larger sums of global funding becomes available over the coming decades. The amount of global funding for adaptation will depend on proper utilisation and transparency of information rather than on claims for greater need on the basis of vulnerability alone.

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Civic learning, civic engagement, youth and our universities

S.M. RUHUL ALAM

THE democratic institutions of Bangladesh are very weak due to many reasons. The alarming thing is that there is growing scarcity of qualified and skilled leadership. There is also a concern about decreasing rates of participation in the civic life of Bangladesh in voting, advocacy, local grassroots associations, and in other forms of civic engagement that are necessary for the vitality of our democracy. The general people abhor the political situation, and dislike some political leaders due to their corruption, feeble leadership, destructive activities, alienation policy etc. Having observed these, undergraduate students are indifferent towards, and do not want to enter in, politics and civic education as well as civic engagement although civic education and civic engagement are essential to democracy, society, social ties, nurture moral virtues etc.

On top of that, as per various reports, the higher education institutions are simply doing too little today to adequately prepare the youth for informed, engaged participation in civic and democratic life. In other words, youth are not receiving opportunities in their formal education to acquire necessary civic knowledge or skills.

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. Civic learning and democratic engagement means educational experiences that intentionally prepare students for informed, engaged participation in civic and democratic life by providing opportunities to develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions through learning and practice. These include civics and government as subjects unto themselves, and also service-learning and other approaches for integrating a civic and democratic dimension into other disciplines, such as science, technology, engineering, and math.

The decline of instruction in civics learning has paralleled a decline in interpersonal trust, connections to groups and family, staying informed on public affairs, and in citizens' connections to political institutions. Civil society has recognised that one of the most important purposes of educating the nation's citizens is to protect and strengthen democracy.

Education in Bangladesh must prepare all students for informed participation in civic and democratic life so that all Bangladeshis are ready to tackle the challenges confronting communities and the nation in the 21st century, and so that the Bangladesh can continue to serve as a model democracy for people and governments around the world. Yet, unfortunately, civic learning and democratic engagement are add-ons rather than essential parts of the core academic mission in

too many college and university campuses today. Many colleges and universities are pushing civics and service learning to the sidelines, mistakenly treating education for citizenship as a distraction from preparing students for college level mathematics, English, and other core subjects.

Various studies and reports make plain that our institutions of higher education need to expand and transform their approach to civic learning and democratic engagement, rather than engage in tinkering at the margins. From no university should students graduate with less civic literacy and engagement than when they arrived. As US President Woodrow Wilson, a former university president, said more than a century ago about the obligations of colleges and universities, for every individual: "Touched with the spirit of our institutions, social service is the high law of duty, and every American university must square its standards by that law or lack its national title." Hence, our higher educational institutions should plan projects to enhance and expand their support for civic learning and democratic engagement for undergraduate students.

The project should have two goals. The first one is to reaffirm the civic mission of higher educational institutions. This is defined as the obligation of educational institutions to educate the young about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and to reaffirm the higher educational institutions' commitment to making education in democracy a central part of the mission of public education equal to workplace preparation. The second goal is to convince the government, and higher educational institutions to devote sustained and systematic attention to civic education at undergraduate level. This project should be an integral part of our tertiary level institutions' strategy for achieving goal that, by 2020, Bangladesh will have the highest proportion of college/university graduates in South Asia involved in civic learning and democratic engagement. We should keep in mind that civic learning is not only compatible with career preparation and improved graduation rates, but also is a core skill in preparing students to succeed as employees, entrepreneurs, policy makers and citizens.

Bangladeshi citizens must be qualified for the 21st-century opportunities that require advanced training and education. They must also be prepared to fulfill their democratic responsibilities to their communities and their nation, and be competent to tackle complex global challenges with diverse groups and within diverse environments. Finally, we must measure the success of civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities not only by whether they are provided to all students but also by whether they are effective.

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The New York Times **EXCLUSIVE**

Asians: Too smart for their own good?

CAROLYN CHEN

AT the end of this month, high school seniors will submit their college applications and begin waiting to hear where they will spend the next four years of their lives. More than they might realize, the outcome will depend on race. If you are Asian, your chances of getting into the most selective colleges and universities will almost certainly be lower than if you are white.

Asian-Americans constitute 5.6 percent of the nation's population but 12 to 18 percent of the student body at Ivy League schools. But if judged on their merits grades, test scores, academic honors and extracurricular activities Asian-Americans are underrepresented at these schools. Consider that Asians make up anywhere from 40 to 70 percent of the student population at top public high schools like Stuyvesant and Bronx Science in New York City, Lowell in San Francisco and Thomas Jefferson in Alexandria, Va., where admissions are largely based on exams and grades.

In a 2009 study of more than 9,000 students who applied to selective universities, the sociologists Thomas J. Espenshade and Alexandria Walton Radford found that white students were three times more likely to be admitted than Asians with the same academic record.

Sound familiar? In the 1920s, as high-achieving Jews began to compete with WASP prep schoolers, Ivy League schools started asking about family background and sought vague qualities like "character," "vigor," "manliness" and "leadership" to cap Jewish enrollment. These unofficial Jewish quotas weren't lifted until the early 1960s, as the sociologist Jerome Karabel found in his 2005 history of admissions practices at Harvard, Yale and Princeton.

In the 1920s, people asked: Will Harvard still be Harvard with so many Jews? Today we ask: Will Harvard still be Harvard with so many Asians? Yale's student population is 58 percent white and 18 percent Asian. Would it be such a calamity if those numbers were reversed?

As the journalist Daniel Golden revealed in his 2006 book "The Price of Admission," far more attention has been devoted to race-conscious affirmative action at public universities (which the Supreme Court has scaled back and might soon eliminate altogether) than to the special preferences elite universities afford to the children of (overwhelmingly white) donors and alumni.

For middle-class and affluent whites, overachieving Asian-Americans pose thorny questions about privilege and power, merit and opportunity. Some white parents have reportedly shied away from selective public schools that have become "too Asian," fearing that their children will be outmatched. Many whites who can afford it flock to private schools that promote "progressive" educational philosophies, don't "teach to the test" and offer programs in art and music (but not "Asian instruments," like piano and violin). At some of these top-tier private schools, too, Asian kids find it hard to get in.

At highly selective colleges, the quotas are implicit, but very real. So are the psychological consequences. At Northwestern, Asian-American students tell me that they feel ashamed of their identity, that they feel viewed as a faceless bunch of geeks and virtuosos. When they succeed, their peers chalk it up to "being Asian." They are too smart and hard-working for their own good.

Since the 1965 overhaul of immigration law, the United States has lured millions of highly educated, ambitious immigrants from places like Taiwan, South Korea and India. We welcomed these immigrants precisely because they outperformed and overachieved. Yet now we are stigmatizing their children for inheriting their parents' work ethic and faith in a good education. How self-defeating.

To be clear, I do not seek to perpetuate the "model minority" myth Asian-Americans are a diverse group, including undocumented restaurant workers and resettled refugees as well as the more familiar doctors and engineers. Nor do I endorse the law professor Amy Chua's pernicious "Tiger Mother" stereotype, which has set back Asian kids by attributing their successes to overzealous (and even pathological) parenting rather than individual effort.

Some educators, parents and students worry that if admissions are based purely on academic merit, selective universities will be dominated by whites and Asians and admit few blacks and Latinos, as a result of socioeconomic factors and an enduring test-score gap. We still need affirmative action for underrepresented groups, including blacks, Latinos, American Indians and Southeast Asian Americans and low-income students of all backgrounds.

But for white and Asian middle- and upper-income kids, the playing field should be equal. It is noteworthy that many high-achieving kids at selective public magnet schools are children of working-class immigrants, not well-educated professionals. Surnames like Kim, Singh and Wong should not trigger special scrutiny.

We want to fill our top universities with students of exceptional and wide-ranging talent, not just stellar test takers. But what worries me is the application of criteria like "individuality" and "uniqueness," subjectively and unfairly, to the detriment of Asians, as happened to Jewish applicants in the past. I suspect that in too many college admissions offices, a white Intel Science Talent Search finalist who is a valedictorian and the concertmaster of her high school orchestra would stand out as exceptional, while an Asian-American with the same resume (and socioeconomic background) would not.

The way we treat these children will influence the America we become. If our most renowned schools set implicit quotas for high-achieving Asian-Americans, we are sending a message to all students that hard work and good grades may be a fool's errand.

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