

Ending poverty includes tackling climate change

JIM YONG KIM

OVER the last 20 years, the World Bank Group has helped countries lift 663 million people out of poverty. In the next 20, we believe it is possible to end extreme poverty. This goal is within our grasp.

But poverty reduction and climate change are linked. We have powerful new evidence that even if climate change falls short of the much-discussed 4°C warmer world, we could witness the rolling back of decades of development gains and force tens of millions more to live in poverty.

If we don't confront climate change, we won't end poverty.

To help our clients prepare for the risks of a warming planet, we asked the scientists at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Climate Analytic in Germany to examine the impacts of climate change on three tropical regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and South East Asia. We have published the results of that study.

Modeling a scenario of 4°C warming, the study reconfirms a climate picture we know well: extreme storms, prolonged heat waves, critical food and water shortages and widespread social and economic disruption. These impacts will interact to generate powerful climatic events, such as a significant sea-level rise and intense cyclones, which will cause intense and widespread damage. This is a future of enormous suffering.

But what I found particularly startling was the report's forecast of the impacts of 2°C warming. Given that the Earth has already warmed 0.8°C above pre-industrial levels, the 2°C climate milestone may not be far off. Under current greenhouse gas emission rates, we could reach this point in our lifetimes -- in maybe 20 to 30 years.

How would this seemingly small shift in global temperature affect tropical regions? Here's a snapshot of what the report's scientists foresee.

In Sub-Saharan Africa food shortages will become more common. Drought and heat will leave 40% of the land now growing maize unable to support that crop. Rising temperatures could cause major loss of savanna grasslands, threatening pastoral livelihoods. In South Asia, shifting rain patterns will leave some areas under water and others without enough water for power generation, agriculture or drinking. Events like the devastating Pakistan floods of 2010, which affected more than 20 million people, could become common place. More extreme droughts could stall power generation and turn rural fields barren, leading to lost income for farmers and widespread food shortages.

In South East Asia, farmers, coastal communities, and large urban centers will face mounting pressures as sea levels rise, tropical cyclones increase in intensity, fish catches decrease, and coastal zones lose the protection of coral reefs. Many of these changes are already underway. Other changes are happening faster than predicted.

The scientists tell us that sea-level rise has been occurring more rapidly than previously projected, and a rise of as much as 50 cm by the 2050s may already be unavoidable as a result of past emissions. In some



cases, impacts could be felt much earlier. For example, sea-level rise of 15 cm, coupled with more intense cyclones, threatens to inundate much of Bangkok by the 2030s, unless adequate steps are taken to prepare for these events.

As agriculture falters, and food and water become scarce, the pace of people migrating into informal urban settlements will accelerate. Life in these slums will be no less difficult than the life they fled. Housing made from scraps will trap heat yet provide little protection from storms, landslides or floods. Food and drinking water will become scarce, and diseases like malaria, dengue, and cholera easier to contract. Tension over access to dwindling resources may lead to conflict.

This is a picture of regions undergoing "modest," not extreme, warming. The effects of a 4°C global warming calamity would be far worse.

It's also crucial to note that, under either scenario, the poor will be hit first and hardest. This means that the people who are least responsible for raising the Earth's temperature may suffer the gravest consequences from global warming. That is fundamentally unfair.

We humans -- all of us, everywhere -- have built lives, governments and cultures within a narrow range of climate conditions. But, as these regional studies clearly show, we are pushing those conditions to the limit. Storms, economic and social disruption, and pervasive hardship pose near-term threats to the tropical regions highlighted in the report -- but, eventually, these changes will impact us all.

So, what can we do about it?

For the World Bank Group, the steps are clear. First, we accept the science that humans are changing the climate. We are looking at all our business operations

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through a "climate lens." Today, the Bank is helping 130 countries take action on climate change. We are supporting on-the-ground action to finance projects that help the poor grow their way out of poverty and increase their resilience to climate change. Last year, we doubled financial lending that contributes to adaptation; this trend will accelerate in the future.

Second, the Bank is taking decisive steps on mitigation. We are helping countries identify cost-effective options to reduce emissions, and exploring opportunities to deliver co-benefits, such as climate smart agriculture and resource efficiencies. The Bank's infrastructure lending portfolio has moved toward less carbon intensive projects, and the share of renewable energy in our energy projects has doubled over the last 5 years.

We are committed to doing everything we can, but the only way we will be able to stop the worst effects of climate change will be for everyone to step up their efforts, especially the largest economies that emit the most carbon.

Countries must adopt aggressive national strategies for emissions reductions, and then show the political commitment needed to deliver on them. Innovation in energy efficiency and renewable energy will also prove vital to reducing carbon emissions. And countries -- developed and emerging -- need to make major headway in rolling back the \$1.9 trillion in annual fossil fuel subsidies.

I am convinced that we can end extreme poverty in this generation. But, as this report makes clear, we won't get there without taking immediate, decisive steps to slow climate change. Join us in this fight.

The writer is President of the World Bank Group.

Obama's climate plan falls short

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

IT seems that everyone who understands the threat climate change poses is lining up to congratulate President Obama on the plan he unveiled this week.

I fully appreciate the significantly different tone Obama has adopted, as well as the number of measures that he has articulated, and of course I welcome his words and proposed actions. I have no doubt that Obama is sincere (and that he wants to deal with the issue (unlike his predecessor) but, from where I sit in Bangladesh, I am afraid his words are simply too little too late!

Let me give a few reasons why.

First, because the United States of America refused to join the global Kyoto Protocol and took very little real action to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions over the past 15 years, other major emitters have felt little pressure to act with ambition. Meanwhile, the concentration of carbon in the atmosphere has risen to its highest level in three million years.

In other words, we have moved inexorably towards a much warmer world and we are already, arguably, seeing the manifestations of this in stronger and more frequent cyclones, hurricanes, floods and droughts and heat waves across the world. So we have lost almost two decades as the United States -- the world's richest country and its biggest historical emitter of greenhouse gases -- has stayed disengaged.

Second, the speech President Obama made this week was one he could have made in January 2009 immediately after he was elected for his first term. He wasted an entire term trying to engage with Congress and has now realised that he needs to move ahead without them. He could have done this five years ago.

Third, the United States of America has completely ignored most of the funds set up under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to help the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries adapt to today's (not tomorrow's) climate impacts. The amounts his administration has given recently to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Fund are trivial compared to both the scale of the problem as well as what other, much smaller, developed countries have provided. The United States has so far refused to make any contribution to the Adaptation Fund, which is one of the best managed funds. On this score alone the United States, far from showing leadership, is perhaps the first in showing "laggardship."

I would urge the president to be much bolder with the domestic actions to reduce emissions, using the full authority of the Executive Office bypassing Congress (which he has done on other issues) while taking a true leadership role at the international level, especially by providing substantial funds to the Adaptation Fund of the UN.

My country faces the impacts of climate change right now, not in some distant future, so I cannot join those who only congratulate the president for his pronouncements and actions. I urge those who praised the president to now spur him to take much greater actions commensurate with both his lofty rhetoric as well as the scale of the problem.

The writer is senior fellow in the climate change group at the International Institute for Environment and Development.

What's in a morning?

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

I write this column extolling the virtues of the morning in the hope that it might inspire some young readers to celebrate each new day with the sun's first warm glow.

DURING my childhood years my mother would wake me up each morning, with half-whispered advice about the benefits of starting the day early. Not being a morning person, the prospect of rising early always frustrated me. Rationally, it's true that utilising the daylight hours for productive work helps you achieve much more, but when you are young you seldom think with logic.

Later, when I started working or had to get my children

ready for school, early mornings were always rushed and hectic. My mother was no longer there to wake me with her soft touch. The responsibility was all mine and the moment I hit the bed at night my stress level would rise at the sheer thought of the morning's challenges ahead.

I notice that over the past decade there has been a major shift in lifestyle with the day starting later, especially for the young. Their nocturnal activities (game playing or tele-watching or partying) carry on until the wee hours and most of them spend their mornings in bed. By the time their real work day commences the sun is already in the mid-sky. Of course, there are still many who maintain 9-5 office schedules. But for some obscure reason it's now passé to wake up early and start work at nine. This does not mean that the youth have become indolent; it's just that their life cycle seems to have shifted to a different tempo.

To be absolutely fair I have to admit that, even though I did use my mornings in productive activity in my youth, I did not consciously relate to the pleasures and benefits of rising early. I was too engrossed in my daily tasks to pause and internalise the splendour of dawn's first light. I remember my early morning music classes in Santiniketan where I sang Tagore's beautiful morning compositions with gusto. Regrettably, the magical connection between the lyrics and nature escaped my full attention. I remained intent on

learning the song and moving on to the next activity on the day's agenda.

Yes. When you are young and in the "doing" phase, time seems to be running out. As a matter of fact, if there is nothing to do you are overcome with guilt because you feel that you are wasting time. Or you are overtaken with that indefinable feeling of boredom since being alone with oneself or meditating in solitude is rarely an option for the young.

In mid-life I became a bit apprehensive about the prospects of a post-retired life, because I believed that it would be a purposeless existence. But, life is full of surprises and each turn can bring the unexpected. Now that I am semi-retired with ample spare time, I realise that there is so much more to life than the tangible goals that we measure achievements with. I am getting to appreciate the many little things that escaped me while I was busy pursuing the big things. Even the mornings have started to feel different.

Recently, I have revived my habit of waking up early but for a different purpose. My husband and I have started a routine of taking morning walks. Surprisingly, this has turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences -- the soft caress of dawn's first light and the fresh smell of the earth have rekindled my love for nature. In a way this is helping me in an interesting transition -- from the "doing"

phase to the "being" phase. The early morning strolls also provide an opportunity to appreciate the simple things -- like the larks singing, the dew on the freshly bloomed flowers, the dogwood trees guarding the sleeping homes and a co-walker waving a cheerful "Good Morning"!

The totality of the morning's experiences has helped me realise that I am privileged to be a part of this amazing, unfolding world. There is something ethereal about watching the orange hue of the rising sun spreading its radiance to announce the advent of a new day -- a new beginning. In many ways it's like an epiphany which brings one closer to the pulse of the universe. More like a revelation that life is nothing but a "bishhoy" -- a happenstance. Although I do not know how my life "happened" but what I surely know is that I am blessed to be alive.

Today's youth will inevitably journey through time, initially at a hectic pace and later slow down when their time for reflection comes -- just as we did. But I write this column extolling the virtues of the morning in the hope that it might inspire some young readers to celebrate each new day with the sun's first warm glow.

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ACROSS

1 Comes together

5 Sail support

9 Drenched

12 Met melody

13 From the beginning

14 Wall crawler

15 Voiles

17 Back talk

18 Man's hat style

19 Onfound

21 First word of "America"

22 Gotham City supervillain

24 Renown

27 Standard

28 Linger

31 Chicken-king link

32 Recede

33 Mongrel

34 Two-wheeler

36 Ph. bk. listings

37 Relinquish

38 Occurrence

DOWN

1 Handled hook

2 Great Lake

3 Told a whopper

4 Biblical dancer

5 One of the Three Bears

6 Black-bird

7 Moment

8 Make slight alterations

9 Grain called water oats

10 Satan's forte

11 Work at the keyboard

16 Parched

20 Society newbie

22 Frilly blouse accessory

23 Spheres

24 "Great!"

25 Clay, today

26 "Stop fighting"

27 Teller's partner

29 Flop

30 Before

35 Leading lady?

37 Not straight

39 "Wabbit" hunter

40 — tai

41 Walk wearily

42 Prefix re planes

43 Flightless flock

44 — E. Coyote

45 Warhead weapon, briefly

46 The Bee —

49 Unfriendly

50 Exist

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 5-23

Yesterday's Cryptoquip:

I DON'T KNOW WHY I JUST PLAYED A JOKE ON THAT SMALL BIRD, BUT PRESUMABLY I DID IT ON LARK

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals B

BEETLE BAILY

by Mort Walker

COULD I KNOCK OFF A LITTLE EARLY, SARGE?

WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?

11-18

HENRY

by Don Trachte

MONKEY HOUSE

SNAP

11-18

QUOTABLE Quotes

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

John Quincy Adams