



CLEAN UP THE CLIMATE



CWS Backgrounder on Climate Change 2009

“Together, we are the world, and it is not too late to do something for us all.” Rev. Baranite Kirata, Kiribati

Climate change is now a critical development issue. It risks making poverty permanent and igniting conflict over increasingly scarce resources. The world’s poorest people suffer its worst effects, yet they didn’t create the problem. It will take a global effort to clean up the climate and create a fairer future. This backgrounder gives a brief overview of climate change, its effects, local and international actions and ways you can help. More information is available at www.cws.org.nz

What is climate change?

Climate change describes changes to long term weather patterns. In current usage it refers to unprecedented global warming over the last 100 years, Over the last 50 years, the rate of warming has almost doubled. The last decade has witnessed the warmest years since measurement began in 1850. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects increases of 1.4 to 5.8 °C by 2100 in comparison to 1990. This impacts on all natural systems with detrimental effects for human development.

Why is the climate changing?

The IPCC says human action is responsible for much of the increase.

Greenhouse gas (including carbon) emissions from the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and natural gas are stopping energy escaping into the atmosphere. The trapped radiation causes earth’s mean surface temperature to rise.

Fossil fuel dependency has driven development and economic growth in industrialised countries. It is no longer safe for these emission levels to continue to rise.

Taking action:

Locally: “We may not be contributing much to the problem but our island environment and people are definitely suffering from the negative impacts of climate change,” says Sione Faka’osi, director of CWS partner Tonga Community Development Trust.

Coastal erosion is increasing. Homes have been destroyed and plants uprooted. There has been extreme changes in weather patterns – too warm in summer or too cold in winter. Agricultural production and fisheries are depleting. On some islands, ground water is becoming salinated and people can no longer use their wells.

CWS partner, Tonga Trust, is taking action to restore coastal forest and vegetation and working to better prepare communities for when disaster strikes. Like many other Pacific nations, they say climate change can not be ignored and are appealing to the international community for understanding and action.

Internationally: This is a crucial year for the world’s climate. The UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, 7-18 December, will negotiate the successor to the Kyoto Protocol – which expires in 2012. This will set the framework for global action on climate change for the next decade and beyond.

CWS is supporting an agreement that will ensure a fair and effective deal for the world's poorest people.

The four key issues that need to be addressed are:

- emission reduction targets that industrialised countries will commit to. CWS supports calls for a 40% reduction by 2020.
- substantive new funding to assist developing countries adapt to the changing climate.
- financing to help the developing world reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop using clean technology.
- ensuring developing countries are equal partners in the decision making process.

To learn more about the international negotiation process see Countdown to Copenhagen in our special climate change section www.cws.org.nz.

See inside for ways you can help clean up the climate!

What is happening to the planet?

The rising temperatures are affecting:

- rainfall patterns
- water reservoirs
- timing of seasons
- storm frequency and intensity
- patterns of coastal erosion
- location of flora and fauna
- sea levels
- soil conditions.

These changes threaten the extinction of more animal and plant species, changes to food chains and loss of land used for agriculture.

See the *IPCC website for more on the science of climate change and its impacts.*

www.ipcc.ch

What does it mean for people?

The IPCC warns that if average global temperatures rise 2°C by 2050:

- 250 million people will be forced to leave their homes.
- 1-3 billion people will face acute water shortages.
- 30 million more people will go hungry as agricultural yields fall and food prices rise.

Food production is at risk, natural disasters will be more intense and frequent, malaria will spread and people in low lying areas like small islands and deltas will be forced to leave their homelands as sea levels rise.

Poor communities and countries are most vulnerable as they have the least resources to adapt, live on the most marginal land and are the most reliant on the natural environment to survive. They have done the least to contribute to the problem.

What's happening in New Zealand

New Zealand, according to government sources, has already experienced increased temperatures (0.9°C over the past 100 years), retreating glaciers and snow mass, and sea level rises (16cm over the last century).

Climate change will bring more frequent extreme weather events such as droughts and floods; increase erosion, necessitating coastal protection; and alter rainfall and river flow patterns forcing land use to be changed.

Visit our special climate change section on www.cws.org.nz for more on the issues and impacts of climate change including responses, impacts on food production, increased frequency of disasters, the situation in New Zealand and the Pacific, and why we can't afford not to act. .



Increasing coastal erosion in Tonga threatens homes



Darfur refugee planting seeds.

From our partners: Agriculture under threat

CEPAD, Nicaragua:

"Now rains fall very heavily washing the soil away and causing landslides. The farming season traditionally runs from May to November but now the rains are falling very irregularly and the farmers hesitate to plant."

Monlar, Sri Lanka:

"Methods of farming in Sri Lanka are based around the rains. But now weather patterns are changing and this is confusing the whole system. Small farmers are best placed to understand climate change compared to many academics and policy makers because for them it has a practical impact on their lives."

Developers Foundation, Philippines:

"I know that climate change is now happening in our island. The soil becomes dry and difficult for growing vegetables and rice. We get achy sunburn on our skin, and water pumps and wells dry up, and few fish for fishermen like my father to catch. Parents have to cross the island in order to buy water."

Lerma, 10 Years

The CWS position

CWS is supporting a 40% cut in emissions because this is the minimum needed to avert devastating climate change. The CWS 'clean up the climate postcard' makes this demand and asks the New Zealand government to work for a just and fair climate change agreement. We believe richer countries which have used more than their share of the world's resources need to pay back their carbon debt to the planet and to the world's poorest people. Climate change should not be used as an excuse to prevent poorer countries from developing. They will need assistance to develop using clean technologies and cope with the challenges ahead.

What you can do?

Collect signatures:

- Sign the Clean up the Climate postcard and get others to sign. Return these to CWS by 31 October. CWS will present them with New Zealand churches to PM John Key later in the year.
- Circulate the Pacific Conference of Churches petition, demanding legal recognition and resettlement rights for climate refugees. This is a unique voice from a region where seven million people could lose their homelands. Return these to CWS by 31 October.
- Try holding a local stall to collect more signatures, have a table set up for signing after services, challenge your youth group to collect as many signatures as possible, distribute postcards with your parish newsletter.

Plus

- **Hold a special service** on climate change. CWS worship resources available
- **Support CWS partners** that are working to protect their environment, help their communities adapt and preparing people to cope in disasters. Donate now to our environment fund.
- **Join the CWS climate change campaign:** sign up for regular news and events
- **Write letters to MPs** urging them to support strong government policies that help New Zealand reduce harmful emissions
- **Look at changes you can make to your lifestyle:** Visit the New Zealand government's sustainability website: www.sustainability.govt.nz
- **Engage in conversation with others and act locally like CWS partners.** Try tree planting, promoting clean energy use, do an audit of your church's energy use or take the opportunity to make a public submission.



Community clean up and coastal protection in the Philippines

Faith resources

"The conviction that the earth and its natural riches have been entrusted to us by God also makes it imperative for us to come to the rescue of the earth as God's creation of which we are the stewards."

ACT International

See the CWS website climate change section for

- Climate change worship materials
- *All creation groaning* Theology of Climate Change by Christian Aid
- World Council of Churches statements and backgrounder on Climate Change
- Sermons, prayers and other contributions by CWS supporters

Other useful resources

CWS has produced resources for children and young people on the issue of climate change. Contact us for free copies of

- World Watch: Clean up the climate
- Youth Topics 12: Climate chance, what does it matter?

We can also help with speakers and visual resources.

Downloadable reports and links to other websites available at www.cws.org.nz These include sites on the science of climate change, the situation in New Zealand and links between climate change and poverty.

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has produced a booklet *Caring for Creation*. This can be ordered or downloaded from their website.

If you have written anything on climate change you would like to share with CWS and our supporting churches, please send it to cws@cws.org.nz

Did you know?

The carbon footprint of the earth's poorest 1 billion people is around 3 percent of the world's total carbon footprint.

Pacific Church Leaders Meeting Statement on Resettlement as a direct consequence of climate change

“Moana Declaration”

Tanoa International Hotel, Fiji, 24 April 2009

On the occasion of the Church Leaders Meeting on Resettlement as a direct consequence of climate change, Pacific Church Leaders issue the following statement on climate change and the imminent threat of forced relocation and displacement faced by Pacific peoples.

Mindful of the impacts on food and water security; our way of life; our culture; our community; our overall health and well being; the ecological systems on which we depend; other creatures with whom we share Gods creation;

Led by our faith traditions and the life of Jesus Christ, we stand on behalf of the poor, those who have little power and with those throughout history who have acted for justice,

We the Church Leaders from Pacific Island Countries (PICs) present at this meeting call upon the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), affected states and the international community of states to:

1. **Ensure** that all persons and communities affected by climate induced catastrophes in the Pacific as well as other affected world regions, in particular those who are forced to flee their homes and lands, are afforded the respect and protection of the full spectrum of rights enshrined within the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and subsequent human rights treaties;
 2. **Develop** local, national, sub-regional, regional and international plans to ensure respect for and protection of the rights of forced climate migrants;
 3. **Develop** the framework for a new Convention or Protocol on Resettlement to cater for the specific and unique situation of persons, communities and states affected by climatic induced catastrophes;
 4. **Undertake** immediate measures to identify available land and other appropriate resources for the purposes of relocating and resettling all forced climate migrants, both those displaced internally as well as those likely to seek resettlement in other countries;
 5. **Carry out** intensive public consultations with Pacific communities affected and will be affected by rising sea levels or other consequences of climate change, with a view to developing viable and practical plans to protect the rights of forced climate migrants, in particular their housing, land and property and related rights;
 6. **Develop** in a proactive way, in full partnership, cooperation and consultation with vulnerable people and communities affected by climate, policies, strategies and practical programmes that mitigate the worst effects and consequences of climate change on affected populations, and enable and empower such populations to adapt to changing environmental factors;
 7. **Devote**, where mitigation and adaptation responses are likely to be insufficient per se, adequate resources, in particular financial resources, to practical measures designed to assist forced climate migrants to relocate and resettle in a manner consistent with their rights and in ways that secure for them an adequate standard of living and sustainable livelihoods;
 8. **Explore** creative and innovative methods of identifying long-term relocation and resettlement options for forced climate migrants, consistent with their housing, land, property and related rights, whilst preserving their dignity as human beings;
 9. **Develop** and support projects that demonstrate an alternative economic model reflecting faith based values of: justice, equity, and sustainability – in challenge to the values inherent in the neo-liberal economic model dominant in the world today;
 10. **Ensure** the rights of other populations affected by the forced displacement of climate change migrants, such as host or receiving communities in areas where climate change migrants are settled, are fully and adequately protected;
 11. **Call** on the peoples of the Pacific and the international community of states, to act toward exhausting all avenues available toward the realization of the critical issues in this Moana Declaration;
 - 12: **Reaffirm** the prophetic role of the church and its responsibility to recognize and speak out against the injustices wrought on by climate change and call on all persons, communities and states to act now.
- Nadi, Fiji.