

Joint Bangladesh/UK Parliamentary Climate Change Inquiry

“Climate Change Equity: is it a plan, an aspiration or a fashion statement?”

This inquiry will produce a report which it is intended will be presented at the UNFCCC COP15 conference in Copenhagen in December, 2009.

Call for evidence

The remit of the inquiry, which is convened by the Bangladesh All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change and Environment and the UK All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group, is:

- *To explore what is meant by “equity” in existing international agreements and statements on tackling climate change*
- *To ask how definitions of equity, as above impact on Bangladesh and the UK respectively*
- *To consider leading proposals for climate change frameworks which specifically include equity as a guiding principle*
- *To consider the tensions and trade-offs between mitigation and adaptation agendas as they impact on the two countries*
- *To consider the costs of tackling climate change in each country*
- *To garner the views of citizens in each country about their perceptions of the possible impacts of climate change on their lives*
- *To explore themes of common action which both countries should undertake to address climate change to ensure an equitable share of burden taking and to make practical recommendations to both governments on accomplishing this*

Broader themes to consider could include:

What are the best methods of transferring technology from developed to developing countries?

What are the opportunities for developing carbon markets and establishing a carbon price which reflects the need for substantial effort to respond to climate change?

What should be the participant countries’ base line expectations of a post-Kyoto framework?

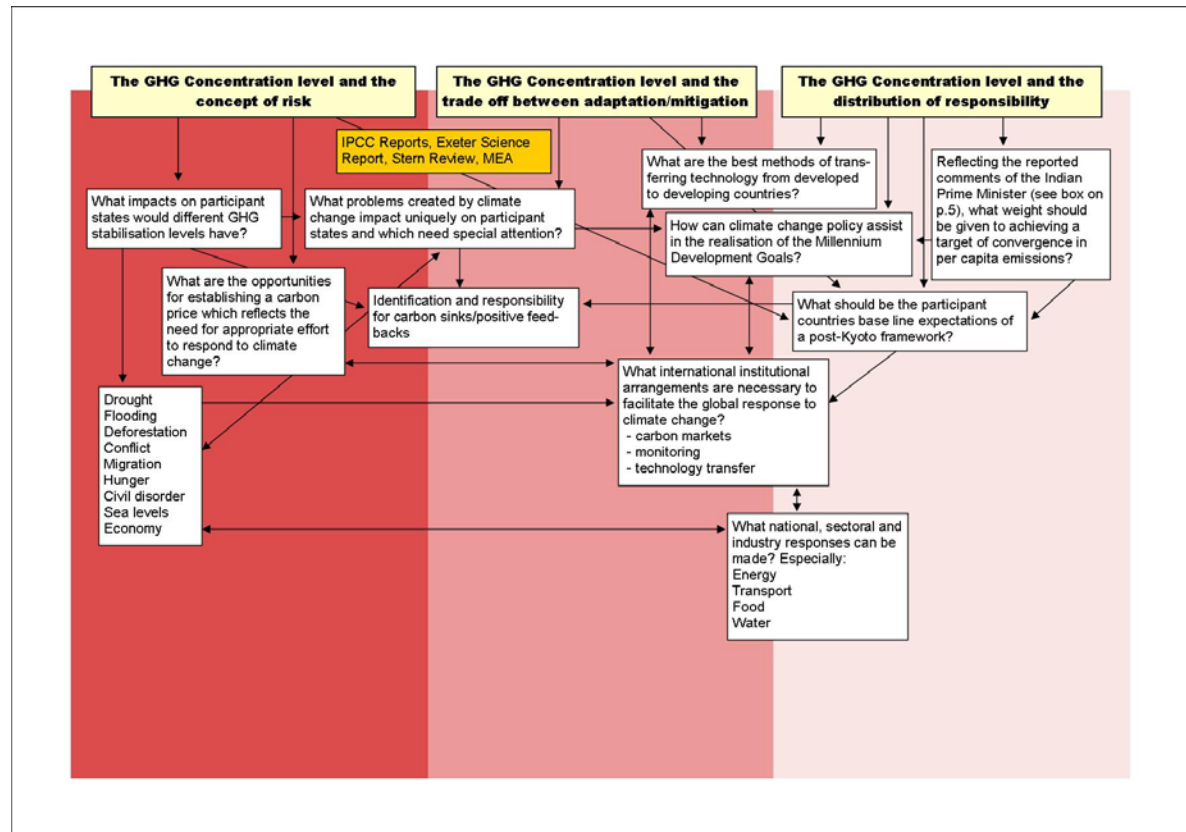
What international institutional arrangements are necessary to facilitate the global response to climate change?

How can climate change policy assist in the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals?

What problems created by climate change impact uniquely on participant states and which need special attention?

What impacts on participant states would different GHG stabilisation levels have?

A schematic of these issues is reproduced below:



Background

Bangladesh

Since achieving independence in 1971, Bangladesh's GDP has more than tripled in real terms, food production has increased threefold, population growth rate declined from around 3% in 1974 to 1.4% in 2006 and the country is now largely food secure. Bangladesh may well become a middle income country by 2021.

Despite these successes, more than 50 million of its population still live in poverty and in ecologically fragile regions of the country, such as river islands and cyclone prone coastal belts that are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters.

Government of Bangladesh (GoB) is committed to realising its MDG targets including halving poverty and hunger by 2015 through a strategy of pro-poor growth and climate resilient development.

Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to Climate Change and this is already severely challenging its ability to achieve the high rates of growth needed to sustain these reductions in poverty. In the coming years, it is projected there will be increasingly frequent and severe floods, tropical cyclones, storm surges and droughts which will have a hugely disruptive impact on the economy.

A one metre rise in sea level will result in the displacement of almost 30 million people – “environmental refugees” – from southern coastal regions and have unimaginable adverse impacts on livelihood and long term health of a large proportion of the population. Melting glaciers in the Himalayas will result in more waters rushing into Bangladesh from the north causing flooding in the short term and eventually leading to scarcity of water in the long run.

More than half of the workforce in Bangladesh is employed in agriculture, and as a recent report showed, this is also an especially vulnerable sector:

“On average during the period 1962-88 Bangladesh lost about half a million tons of rice annually as a result of floods, equivalent of nearly 30 percent of the country’s average annual food grain imports. Future climate change trends are set to worsen agricultural conditions; a study by the International Rice Research Institute showed that a 1 degree Celsius increase in night temperature during the growing season would reduce global rice yields by 10 percent.” (Linda Starke (ed) *State of World 2009: Confronting Climate Change*, Earthscan, 2009 p157)

Bangladesh emits about 34,000,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually, and has a population of 148 million. Its CO₂ emissions are no more than 0.1% of the global total. It has hardly benefited at all from investment through the Clean Development Mechanism.

For Bangladesh, the challenge and imperative is primarily one of Adaptation.

United Kingdom

The UK has one of the best developed climate change policy platforms in the world.

With the passage of the Climate Change Act in 2008, low carbon route maps and a UK Climate Impacts Programme, it seeks to both mitigate and plan for the impacts of climate change, predicated on an objective of a containment of any temperature increase to no more than 2 degrees Celsius.

However, as a recent government publication on the government’s approach to Copenhagen has shown, even if policy aimed to limit GHG emissions to 450 ppmv CO₂e, that would only provide for a 50/50 chance of keeping temperature increase to less than 2 degrees. Hence, planning for adaptation to climate change is more likely to revolve around a rise of 4 degrees.

For the UK, Mitigation is thus a clear priority.

Submissions

Evidence is sought from civil society and all those who are concerned to achieve an equitable and fully inclusive deal on climate change in Copenhagen.

Submissions should be made in electronic form only at the same time (PDF and/or HTML format) to both of the Convenors of the inquiry listed below.

Submissions must be made by October 12th 2009.

All submissions may be published as part of the reports of the inquiry at the Convenors' discretion.

Submissions will preferably consist of no more than 3,000 words.

Publication of the Inquiry's report

The report will be published online by each All-Party Group. Copies will be sent to our respective governments and circulated to parliamentary and associate members of each Group, as well as to other recipients including Commonwealth members.

It is hoped that the report will be discussed in our respective Parliaments.

Publication will take place during the course of the December Copenhagen conference.

Convenors:

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Convenors' statement

This inquiry, the first of its kind to be conducted by Parliamentarians in our two countries, is designed to flush out the ambiguities that surround the concept of equity in climate change negotiations.

We are frustrated by the lack of clarity which characterises the global approach to this issue, which we believe is brought about by concerns that both developed and developing countries have about how to share the burden of tackling climate change.

We believe that this lack of clarity and shared purpose is the greatest barrier to success in the UNFCCC negotiations.

We wish to demonstrate in our joint approach that parliamentarians from our two countries can help resolve the burden sharing riddle.

Bangladesh is a country which is most often quoted as being one of the first that will suffer badly from the impacts of climate change; the UK is a country which since the industrial revolution has contributed most to the problem – and which now professes political leadership on the subject.

We believe that if we as Parliamentarians from these two countries can bridge these differences, and develop a shared understanding of our respective burdens and challenges, we could propose a model for the developed and developing worlds.

Background on the All Party Parliamentary Groups

Bangladesh

Formation of All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Climate Change and Environment was announced by Honourable Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament Advocate Abdul Hamid on June 21st 2009, with Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP as its Chair.

Abdul Momin Talukder MP, Bir Bahadur MP, Junaid Ahmed Palak MP, Tanvir Shakil Joy MP, Hamida Bhanu MP and Rumana Mahmud MP are Vice Chairs of the APPG.

Following free and fair elections to the 9th Parliament on December 2008 which witnessed the highest ever turnout of voters, one of the key challenges Bangladesh faces is to make its Parliament functional, effective and the focal point of all debates, discussions and decision making on national concerns, policies and imperatives.

This in turn necessitates dialogue and interaction amongst MPs across party lines, hopefully leading towards consensus-building on issues of critical national importance.

Climate Change is one such area and as one of the countries most vulnerable to its impacts, this is an issue of paramount importance to the people of Bangladesh.

The APPG sees Climate Change and Environment as both a development challenge and a governance opportunity.

Climate Change is unquestionably a very large part of the overall environmental challenge that confronts Bangladesh but the issue of degradation of the environment within the country, and costs and impact thereof, also needs focus and attention.

The Group aims to:

- Facilitate and develop cross party consensus building, recognizing the importance of environment as a whole and climate change in particular and formulating policy initiatives / guidelines that will be followed even when there is a change in Government.
- Network with regional and international Forums and Groups on Climate Change and establish strategic alliances and common positions and standards.
- Inform and educate the people at large on issue of climate change and environment and build awareness thereof.
- Promote political leadership and stewardship of the climate change and environment agenda.
- Develop linkages between lawmakers, local government representatives, opinion builders, business communities and NGOs to promote an advanced level of understanding and cooperation between important stakeholders on coordinated responses and actions to adaptation and promotion of sustainable environmental governance.
- Advocate specific policy initiatives to mainstream climate change and environment.
- Encourage and promote use of renewable / alternative energy throughout Bangladesh

United Kingdom

The All Party Parliamentary Climate Change Group was founded in 2005. The objectives of the group are:

“to deliver material and meaningful progress on climate change by creating an arena in which interested and relevant parties are able to discuss and formulate policy options and encourage the application of those that offer greatest promise. In particular the group expects to:

- Facilitate greater public action. While it is the role of Government to provide leadership on climate change it is the obligation of every member of society to take responsibility for tackling it. The Group will endeavour to bring the issue of climate change into the consciousness of the public fully, and to tie this awareness to an acceptance of individual responsibility.

- Promote greater communication. The Group will aim to improve communication between policymakers, commentators and opinion formers to ensure a greater level of understanding between stakeholders and to provide the Government with more political ‘head-room’ for movement.
- Encourage voluntary action. The Group will look to build Government recognition of the voluntary carbon market and to promote action beyond the regulated minima. Trailblazer individuals and organisations should receive greater support, to provide an example to others of the benefits of climate friendly practice.
- Support the development of a global standard. The Group will advocate the creation of a single global standard to denote responsible and effective carbon reduction and offset. This will simplify the recognition of those that are working to address climate change, and at the same time raise the profile of the issue.
- Formulate policy initiatives. The Group expects to provide practical action through the design and piloting of innovative policy alternatives such as the ‘25/5 Challenge’, ‘Contraction and Convergence’, ‘Domestic Tradable Quotas’ and ‘CarbonNeutral’. In this way the Group will have a direct and tangible impact on climate change policy in the UK.”

The APPCCG has become one of the largest and most active APPG’s in Westminster, with around 180 MPs and Peers in membership and around 200 associate members drawn from business, academia and NGOs. It has completed one inquiry – “Is a cross party consensus on climate change possible or desirable?” with financial support from the Joseph Rowntree Reform, published in 2007. The APPCCG has a busy meetings schedule in Parliament and has been addressed by Al Gore and Mikhail Gorbachev as well as Ministers and European Union Commissioners.

The funding of the APPCCG comes entirely from its associate membership and one-off grant support.