



Building a sustainable future: Australia's Climate Change and Environment Program



Reducing the negative impacts of climate change and other environmental factors underpins international efforts to help people overcome poverty and is a key development objective of the Australian aid program.

The impacts of environmental degradation and climate change can undercut and even reverse decades of development gains and jeopardise the livelihoods of billions of poor people who rely on ecosystems for their livelihoods.

Above: Phoune, 30-years-old, waters her vegetable plot close to the river. These very productive gardens are vital to an otherwise river-based diet and are promoted by CARE, an AusAID-funded NGO, Taoun Village, Laman District, near Sekong, Laos PDR.

Photo: Jim Holmes

Below: Villagers with relief aid during Bangladesh floods. Photo: G.M.B. Akash/Panos



The challenges

The environment is integral to the economic prosperity of many developing countries—it accounts for 30 per cent of the wealth of least developed countries.

Yet economic growth on its own is not sufficient. The quality of growth also matters. Sustainable growth that protects the environment is vital. For example, better environmental management could prevent 40 per cent of deaths from malaria, 41 per cent of deaths from lower respiratory infections, and 94 per cent of deaths from diarrhoeal disease—the world's biggest killers of children.

People living in poverty in developing countries are also among the most exposed to the impacts of climate change because they rely on the natural environment for income, food and water. This vulnerability is in many cases compounded by a lack of resources and capacity to respond to climatic events, such as droughts, floods and other disasters that are exacerbated by climate change.

The consequences of climate change are already apparent with the increasing frequency and cost of natural disasters. In 2011 there were more than 800 disasters—90 per cent of which were weather-related—totalling US\$380 billion in damages and disproportionately affecting developing countries where 90 per cent of deaths occurred.

While these challenges are daunting, they are not insurmountable.

What Australia is doing

Australia is making a real difference to the livelihoods of the poor by investing in climate change and environment action that supports development. Australia is:

- > sharing experience and expertise with developing country partners to help prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change, manage scarce water resources, and ensure that environmental wealth benefits all citizens
- > contributing to global efforts to ensure our work to reduce global poverty is not undermined by environmental challenges and climate change
- > working with partner countries and multilateral organisations, such as United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the Global Environment Facility, to ensure our aid program investments lead to sustainable development that benefits all
- > providing \$599 million over three years to address the urgent and immediate needs of developing countries vulnerable to climate change, and assist them to avoid future emissions by pursuing cleaner development.

Through the Australian aid program we are:

- > building the resilience of developing countries by helping governments and their citizens adapt to their changing environment and respond to new opportunities
- > working with partner countries to pursue low carbon development pathways
- > improving the livelihoods of poor people through better management of natural resources and ecosystems
- > enhancing the effectiveness of development assistance through integrating environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction considerations into all of our programs.

Wetlands in Kien Giang, Vietnam are rehabilitated as part of the Climate Change and Coastal Ecosystems Program.
Photo: Kellie Raab, AusAID 2012

