

OCTOBER 2012

OVERVIEW

IIED Climate Change Group

Project name:

International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)

Project leader:

Saleemul Huq

Time frame:

Ongoing from 2010

Cost:

£500,000 for the first three years

Objective:

Help develop an international centre of excellence for training, teaching and research on climate change and development, which will improve capacities of developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries, to adapt to adverse impacts of climate change.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Demand is growing for high-quality training, teaching and research on climate change and development, especially in the developing world. ICCCAD – a Bangladesh-based partnership between IIED, the Independent University, Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies – is responding with short professional courses, a Masters degree course and a research programme focused on community-based adaptation to climate change. In its startup phase ICCCAD has taught over 150 professionals from 40 developing countries, and in five years the institute aims to become financially sustainable and globally recognised.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Given historic greenhouse gas emissions, a certain amount of global warming is inevitable in the next two to three decades, and poor nations and communities will be hit hardest. As the adverse impacts of climate change become more evident around the world, all countries will need to build the capacity to adapt to those impacts sooner or later. Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable

Adaptation experts in training

Southern institutions like ICCCAD in Bangladesh help build capacity in countries most vulnerable to climate change.

In high-level conversations about climate change in developing countries, there usually comes a turning point: the moment when decision makers are ready to move from awareness raising to action. “They say, ‘Alright, you’ve convinced us. Now tell us what to do,’” explains Saleemul Huq of IIED’s Climate Change Group.

Climate disruption is a new problem, in some ways unlike any other. Consultants like Huq often recommend that governments and other stakeholders seek training to help them map the way forward for their countries and communities.

“So they’d say, ‘Where do we get this training?’” continues Huq. “But at the time, I didn’t see anyone doing it.”

Southern role model

Huq is now helping to launch the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), a training and research institute that aims to meet this growing demand. Based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the centre uses its surroundings as a living laboratory on climate change and development.

Bangladesh has 150 million people living in dire poverty on less than US\$1 per day. The impacts of climate change are hitting them early and hard: floods, droughts, worsening cyclones, and sea level rise that feeds storm surges and turns crop fields into salty marshes. At the same time, Bangladesh has moved more aggressively than perhaps any

other nation to tackle the problems. The first developing country to complete a national strategy and action plan on climate change, Bangladesh has also developed an innovative ‘adaptation fund’ backed by its own treasury as well as international donors.

This funding mechanism is becoming a model for others in the developing world, as are many civil-society projects that empower local communities in Bangladesh to deal with climate impacts. When it comes to adaptation in the global South, Northern experts’ approaches are not as relevant as South-South learning – especially among the Least Developed Countries, in Africa and Asia.

The opportunity for learning is greatest between countries facing similar threats with similar technology and resources. “Visitors come to our courses thinking of Bangladesh as a poor and vulnerable country like their own,” says Huq. “By the time they leave, they still think of it as poor and vulnerable, but also vibrant and active in what it’s doing. If they came to London and saw the Thames barrier, they might be impressed, but they wouldn’t think, ‘We can do this.’”

ICCCAD explores the laboratory of Bangladesh through intensive seven-day courses tailored for specific professional groups. On field trips, students collect ideas from their Bangladeshi counterparts: government negotiators talk with other negotiators, NGO staff visit NGO projects, and so on. To spread

nations — and is also taking significant steps to adapt. Hence, the location of ICCCAD in Bangladesh will enable trainees and students from other developing countries to learn from the wealth of experience there. We also need to spread such South-South learning by seeding more institutions and multiplying training capacities across Asia, Africa and Latin America. As a centre of excellence in Bangladesh on adaptation to climate change, ICCCAD can become an information hub that enhances and supports this network.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- There is great demand not only for evidence-based research on effective adaptation to climate change, but for training courses tailored to various stakeholders. Decision makers ready to take action need to build their capacity to chart the course.
- Demand is strongest in Least Developed Countries, who learn best from other poor nations facing similar problems with similar resources. South-South learning centres like ICCCAD in Bangladesh can quickly spread solutions.
- As climate change intensifies and demand for capacity building continues to grow, one training centre won't be enough. We need to train trainers and support a network of institutions across the developing world.

PARTNERS' VIEW

Independent University, Bangladesh is pleased to host the International Centre for Climate Change and Development. ICCCAD is complementing the efforts of the Bangladesh Government in meeting the challenges of climate change by building up the capacity of various stakeholders and working towards generating new knowledge on climate change issues such as community based adaptation, loss and damage and also promoting South-South exchange.

Professor M. Omar Rahman
Vice Chancellor, Independent University, Bangladesh

IIED CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP

Working in collaboration with partner organisations and individuals in developing countries, the Climate Change Group has been leading the field on adaptation to climate change issues.



Photo: Mahmud

On ICCCAD courses, participants learn from those facing similar threats to their own countries.

key concepts more quickly, ICCCAD frequently trains trainers from other countries. One month after a recent short course on adapting to climate change in cities, an alumnus had already started a similar course at the University of Nairobi.

ICCCAD is also a research centre where graduate fellows from around the world will complete and publish studies. An immediate priority is training these and other developing-country researchers in writing proposals and papers. There are considerable funds for studies of community-based adaptation to climate change, but currently grants almost never go directly to experts from low-income countries because they are less familiar with grant writing and journal publishing.

Connecting a network

In the future, ICCCAD's research fellows could be well placed to establish, lead and teach at similar institutions worldwide. A single training college will not be able to serve the entire developing world; the real need is to multiply training capacities and ultimately create a network of institutions sharing knowledge about climate change and development across countries. ICCCAD could become a major information hub in such a network.

The centre, run by the Independent University, Bangladesh, in partnership with IIED and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, also happens to offer an excellent complement to IIED's own work. IIED has run many ad hoc short courses as part of individual projects, but is primarily a research

institute. With short funding cycles, we cannot offer an ongoing comprehensive curriculum or maintain extensive alumni networks. As a teaching institute, ICCCAD can not only host IIED trainings, but also extend our contacts with current and future thought leaders on climate change. IIED in turn can lend expertise and legitimacy to ICCCAD, helping it become a world-class institution.

In its first year and a half, ICCCAD has trained more than 150 professionals from 40 countries. Going forward, the centre will scale up research, monitor and improve graduate programmes, develop a year-round curriculum and pilot 'commercial' short courses for business professionals. Within five years, ICCCAD aims to be financially self-sufficient — sustained by research grants and course fees — and gaining global prestige through its Masters programme and publications.

For a truly meaningful impact, however, donors, governments and civil society also need to start seeding and supporting similar programmes and institutions far from Bangladesh. The challenge is urgent, demand for knowledge is intense, and a web of centres for South-South learning is one of the most promising strategies for building the world's capacity to take on climate change.

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