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Global

[Map reveals species most at risk from climate change](#)

Are all species vulnerable to climate change? This is the question that a huge endeavour led by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is attempting to answer. In order to assess which species need protection first, experts working with the IUCN have spent the past few years reviewing 17,000 species of birds, amphibians and warm-water corals to assess how susceptible they are. They first had to decide what made a species likely to suffer from the effects of climate change. The experts identified 90 "life history traits" - essential elements of a species' behaviour or lifestyle - that were likely to be affected by a change in their local climate. The team then determined which of the 90 life traits each of the 17,000 species had. The study included all known amphibian and bird species, as well as all reef-building corals that are found in warm waters. The verdict is bleak: of 17,000 assessed species, over 7000 could become threatened with extinction because of climate change. [Read the report.](#)

[The MDGs are doing too little to address gender inequalities](#)

Gender inequality causes and perpetuates poverty and vulnerability. But greater gender equality can help to reduce the root causes of poverty and vulnerability and contribute to sustainable pro-poor growth. An ODI Briefing Paper titled 'Gender and the MDGs: A gender lens is vital for pro-poor results' argues that more attention needs to be paid to the gender inequalities that pervade all the MDGs to achieve poverty reduction and development goals. Gender is only explicit in MDGs 3 and F. MDG3 measures gender parity in education, the share of women in wage employment and the proportion of seats held by women in national legislatures. MDG5 focuses on maternal mortality and, since 2005, on universal access to reproductive health. According to the paper, this explicit inclusion in just two MDGs is too narrow, and sidelines other gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities, roles and responsibilities and power relations. The paper discusses how gender relations underpin four clusters of Goals: those on poverty and sustainable development; service access; care and care-giving; and voice and agency. It looks at ways to promote an interlinked gender-sensitive approach to the MDG achievement.

[FAO-Wageningen University Agreement on Science for Development](#)

An agreement has been forged between the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Wageningen University and Research Center to promote and support education, research, technical and institutional capacities in developing countries. The focus of the cooperation includes "identification and promotion of appropriate technologies to boost agricultural production; institutional strengthening and capacity building for education, research and technology; development of effective tools aimed at assisting member countries in the formulation and implementation of international policies and legislation and joint organization of seminars, workshops and expert consultations". Dr José M. Sumpsi, FAO Assistant Director-General, Technical Cooperation Department is hopeful that this new agreement may also lead to a more intensive policy dialogue between the Netherlands and FAO on critical issues related to food and agriculture for more concrete actions.

[Almost 1 Billion People are Starving, Food Prices Still High](#)

High food prices have pushed an additional 40 million people into hunger this year, increasing the total number of starving people to 963 million worldwide or 14 percent of the world's population, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The UN agency reports that although prices of major

cereals fell by more than half from their peaks earlier this year, they are still 28 percent higher on average than two years ago. The world hunger situation may further deteriorate as the financial crisis hits the real economies of more and more countries. The vast majority of the world's undernourished people live in developing countries, with 65 percent in seven countries: India, China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ethiopia. Nearly two-thirds of the world's hungry live in Asia and one in three people - or 236 million - are chronically hungry in sub-Saharan Africa.

Safe water and sanitation 'key' to reducing poverty

Ensuring safe water supplies and adequate sanitation throughout the developing world are the most effective measures for curbing poverty and improving health, says the UN University (UNU) analysis, Safe Water as the Key to Global Health. The report urges researchers to fill crucial knowledge gaps in these areas. UNU wants to develop a global map identifying the communities most vulnerable to the health effects of inadequate water supply or sanitation. The report also calls for increased integration between various government agencies. UNU is creating an online tool where communities can input information about their situation and receive options on the appropriate kinds of technologies.

Africa

IFAD Grant to Benefit Republic of Congo's Rural Poor

The United Nation's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) announced plans to provide US \$ 8.6 million to a project that aims to enhance agricultural production and provide food security to poor people in rural areas of the Republic of Congo. Improved planting materials and seeds will be provided to smallholder farmers in the region, in addition to the know-how for better cultivation practices. Current yields in the region are very low because of the effects of mosaic disease on cassava and poor quality seed. The IFAD project will also help improve rural roads and therefore reduce transportation costs, increase productivity of small animals through re-stocking, strengthen farmers' groups and empower women and young people through their participation in project activities. In a press release, the UN Agency said that the initiative is part of a larger US \$18.7 million project in the Likouala, Pool and Sangha Departments, which aims to reach 250 villages and some 20,000 households. To date IFAD has funded five projects in the Republic of Congo, for a total of about US\$ 37.6 million.

Eliminating Malaria in Africa

Africa is the continent hardest hit by malaria, where an estimated three thousand children die from the disease each day. The World Bank is launching the second phase of its booster program against malaria in Africa, which seeks to aid countries by helping them to scale up their prevention and treatment strategies, and strengthen national health systems. Under the first phase of the program, clinics in Tanzania were able to intensify campaigns in malaria prevention. Phase two stresses the need to focus on the African countries where Malaria is most prevalent, like Nigeria and The Democratic Republic of Congo. Malaria has now superseded HIV in importance in SSA. Malaria relates to our agenda as fishing communities are exposed to malaria and well managed ponds may limit malaria.

Revolutionizing Nigerian Agriculture through Commercial Development

According to some experts, agriculture in Nigeria has been characterized for many years by subsistence farming or "cutlass and hoe agriculture." Realizing the futility of relying on subsistence agriculture to address the current food crisis, however, and in an attempt to lure investors to this sector, the Nigerian Government has asked the World Bank for assistance in raising the level of farming to commercial standards. The government hopes the move will have a triple effect and will attract university graduates to the sector by showing it as a profitable venture. The World Bank has responded with the proposed US\$150 million Commercial Agriculture Development Project to be piloted in five states.

[Finland and South Africa join to develop biosciences](#)

A three-year agreement on support for bioscience networking via the BioFISA programme was signed by Finland and South Africa on 10 December 2008. BioFISA -- the Finnish-Southern African partnership programme to strengthen the Southern African network for biosciences -- is a co-operation programme with NEPAD and the South African Ministry of Science and Technology. The aim of the programme - the first tripartite project in Southern Africa - is to build up a co-operation network in the field of biosciences between universities, research institutes and NGOs in 12 Southern African countries.

[Involving African universities in the development agenda](#)

A ministerial conference on higher education in Africa, with the theme: "Engaging African universities in the development agenda," will be held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 23-27 February 2009. The international conference is a bid by stakeholders to bring together key policymakers and others to: mobilise political commitment for increasing investments in higher education in Africa; facilitate networking at all levels to spur and sustain high quality higher education in Africa; mobilise African universities to re-engineer their human resource development programmes through proactive engagement in the continent's development agenda and to make their contribution to research and innovation; and highlight the importance of higher education to Africa's development.

[Scientists can help Africa adapt to climate change](#)

African scientists need to be empowered and supported if they are to aid government decision-making on climate change adaptation, says Mozambican scientist Filipe Lucio, speaking at the Science in Africa Symposium in Maputo, Mozambique, in October. Lucio says it is already too late to reverse the damage done to the environment; the world is on course to see dramatic climate change until at least 2090. He says African governments must heed the advice of scientists who understand the changes and could help nations adapt. The government of Mozambique holds two meetings per year to give scientists a voice.

[Science the key to Africa's problems](#)

Science is at the heart of solutions to African problems such as poverty, drought and famine, write Janez Potočnik and Jean-Pierre Ezin, the commissioners for science and research in the European and African Unions, in *The New Times*. Some might question the development of advanced science in a continent where many still lack access to clean water and few can read. But Potočnik and Ezin say new technologies can improve water quality, and satellite imagery can help ensure food and water security. A partnership on science, information society and space was one of eight strategic partnerships agreed by Africa and the European Union in December 2007, which put science at the centre of Africa–European relations. But to move from recognition to results, efforts must concentrate on specific challenges and be coherent across the whole African continent, the authors say. This can be done by ensuring support is delivered in a coordinated way from and to the member states of the respective continents.

Asia & The Pacific

[Tackling tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean](#)

Tropical cyclones give developing countries much needed rain for agriculture. But as the earth warms, they are set to become more intense, and strong cyclones can cause great loss of life and property. This is especially true in South Asia, where the Bay of Bengal's shallow coastal waters, high tides and densely populated low-lying areas make cyclones particularly deadly. October 8th was International Day for Disaster Reduction, and to highlight the issues facing South Asia, SciDev.Net published a set of articles to inform policymakers, researchers and international donors about ways of improving cyclone management. The online resource focuses on the impact cyclones have in South Asia and how countries can better forecast, prepare for and adapt

to future cyclones, as well as cope with the impacts of extreme events. It highlights lessons learnt from countries like Bangladesh, India and Madagascar.

[Assessing the Socioeconomic Effects of the Greater Mekong Subregion Projects](#)

In 1992, with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion launched the GMS Economic Cooperation Program to strengthen economic linkages among them. The initial emphasis was on building trust and confidence through specific projects and programs to promote physical connectivity among the member countries. In 2002, the countries adopted the GMS Strategic Framework 2002–2012 (GMS-SF), which outlined a more comprehensive subregional development agenda, underscoring the need to supplement infrastructure linkages with cooperation on policies and programs to promote equitable and environmentally sustainable growth. The midterm review of the GMS-SF in 2007 noted that although the Program had accelerated and made significant progress in pursuing its strategic priorities, the precise scale and scope of the Program's contribution to poverty reduction and other social indicators could not be determined because of a lack of information and methodological difficulties. It recommended establishing a system for monitoring and quantifying the poverty impact of GMS projects and programs. The proposed regional technical assistance (RETA) aims to help fill this gap.

[Why South Asia is Vulnerable](#)

In conjunction with the United Nations' Climate Change Conference in Poznan, Poland on December 1-12, the World Bank has prepared a series of web features highlighting the impact of climate change in South Asia. In the first segment, Richard Damania, World Bank climate change expert, explains why South Asia is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to climate change. Damania says the impacts of climate change in the form of higher temperatures, more variable precipitation, and more extreme weather events are already felt in South Asia. It has been projected that these will intensify.

[Vietnam, World Bank sign US\\$60 million to improve Vietnam's agriculture competitiveness](#)

The State Bank of Vietnam and the World Bank Board have signed credit and related agreements worth US\$59.8 million in support of Vietnam's efforts to improve Vietnam's agriculture competitiveness. The money – coming from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessional lending arm for low income countries – will be used for the Agriculture Competitiveness Project. At the macro level, the Project supports the government's strategy on market-oriented agricultural development, which is an important element of its drive to eradicate poverty. At the local level, it aims to strengthen the competitiveness of smallholder farmers, with a focus on eight provinces in central Vietnam, in collaboration with the agribusiness sector.

[Global Warming Threatens Pacific Food Security](#)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warns that frequent tropical storms, ocean warming, flash floods and drought will take a heavy toll on food security in Pacific Island countries. According to the report "Climate Change and Food Security in Pacific Island Countries", jointly published by FAO, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program and the University of the South Pacific, climate change-related disasters are already imposing serious constraints on development in the islands, which appear to be in a constant mode of recovery. A combination of droughts and floods will bring devastating effects on agriculture, including water stress, more pests and weeds, erosion and loss of soil fertility, the report says. The report calls for a more systematic approach to climate change, with national development plans serving as the basis of adaptation measures involving governments, the private sector and civil society.

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