

Pro-Poor Climate Change Adaptation: A Research Agenda

About 420 million people live in chronic poverty, the majority of them from South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty reduction efforts designed to help this group are threatened by climate change, but climate change adaptation may also present developmental opportunities. A pro-poor adaptation research agenda investigates how adaptation can provide pathways out of chronic poverty by going beyond tackling the additional impacts of climate change.

Approaches to chronic poverty and adaptation are both underpinned by analysing vulnerability and how situations change over time. IDS researchers suggest that by linking climate change and chronic poverty research agendas, adaptation could offer opportunities to create pathways out of chronic poverty through targeted vulnerability reduction and adaptation efforts. These lines of enquiry are underpinning a new pro-poor adaptation research agenda. The research requires challenging some fundamental assumptions about the adaptive capacity of the chronically poor.

Chronic poverty and adaptation

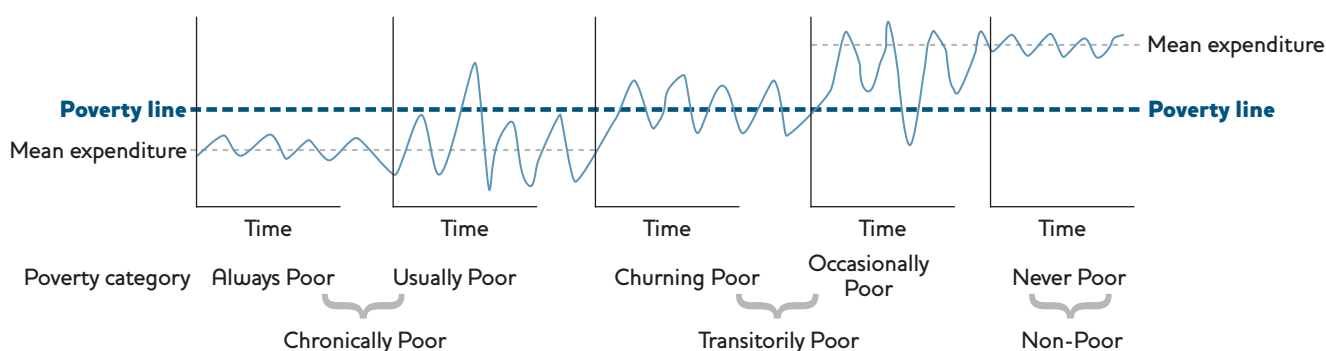
The experience of chronic poverty is multidimensional and distinguished by extended duration in absolute poverty. The different categories of poor people are shown in Figure 1.

Similarly, climate change shocks and stresses are being overlaid onto existing, and often significant, variations in poverty over time. Vulnerability to climate change has been conceptualised as a general set of characteristics influencing the capacity

to adapt and respond to shocks and stresses. This ability to cope depends on a wide range of factors such as the assets people own.

Driven by the need to counter top-down and sometimes inappropriate adaptation, the growing number of adaptation programmes in developing countries tend to engage at the community level, and often with those who have access to climate sensitive natural resources. Such interventions may fail to permit the targeting of chronically poor people.

Figure 1: Categories of poverty in chronic poverty analysis



Source: The Chronic Poverty Resource Centre (2007)

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Table 1: Examples of Adaptation Options by Poverty Category

Type of Adaptation \ Poverty Category	Chronic Poor		Transient Poor	
	Always Poor	Usually Poor	Cyclical Poor	Occasionally Poor
Autonomous adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict, crime, sex work Selling of last assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intra-community transfers/charity Sending children to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonal migration Working multiple jobs, longer hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify livelihoods Investment in social capital/assets
Market-based adaptation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote micro-finance, micro-insurance Cattle insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weather-indexed insurance Promote micro-finance, micro-insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote micro-finance, micro-insurance Selling assets
Public policy driven adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted migration Cash transfers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community restocking schemes Subsidised seed banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystem rehabilitation Improved climate information (seasonal forecasting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social insurance programmes (health, crop, employment) Irrigation schemes/urban service provision

Full table and references in Tanner and Mitchell (Forthcoming 2008)

Pro-poor adaptation

As a first step to improving poverty-centred adaptation, Table 1 takes examples from an initial mapping exercise demonstrating how different adaptation options might be more or less applicable to different categories in the poverty continuum.

Pro-poor adaptation seeks to assess how climate change may affect routes in and out of chronic poverty. It also seeks to expose opportunities presented by climate change for those in chronic poverty. This could include changes to ecosystems that make them more productive and offer a greater range of environmental assets. Despite food security concerns, transitions to labour intensive biofuel crops may provide new employment options. Opportunities are most likely to emerge through adaptation interventions and institutional strengthening that target the poorest groups, funded by increasing streams of adaptation finance.

Interesting intellectual and practical challenges emerge from considering whether a lower level of assets puts the chronically poor in a strong position as this enables them to be flexible in their livelihoods strategies. Potential testing grounds for this research agenda could include adapting social protection programmes to climate change, building adaptive institutions in fragile states and enhancing opportunities and limiting negative impacts of climate-induced migratory flows.

A pro-poor adaptation research agenda

Key components for developing a poverty-centred adaptation agenda can be suggested:

- Understanding that vulnerabilities and adaptation options may change according to different poverty categories
- Conducting household level analysis to facilitate a more targeted approach appropriate for households in different poverty categories
- Investigating the adaptive flexibility of the chronically poor
- Developing the evidence base for designing adaptation programmes that target different poverty categories
- Developing a pro-poor adaptation agenda for adoption in future international agreements, particularly to ensure pro-poor adaptation financing
- Investigating adaptive institutions and legal structures that can respond to current and future climate risks by reducing vulnerabilities of the chronic poor
- Linking scientific modelling with a deeper understanding of the impacts of climate change on shifting people into and out of poverty.

Further Reading

Chronic Poverty Research Centre (2007) *Chronic Poverty: An Introduction*, Policy Brief 1, Manchester: The Chronic Poverty Research Centre

Thomas Tanner and Tom Mitchell (Forthcoming 2008) *Entrenchment or Enhancement: Could Climate Change Adaptation Help Reduce Chronic Poverty?*, Working Paper 106, Manchester: The Chronic Poverty Research Centre

Credits

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