

People's Republic of Bangladesh: Arguments and Strategies Summary

Country Overview

Bangladesh is a small country, relative to the size of Iowa, in southern Asia. With a population of about 156,050,883 people¹ and a gross domestic product of about \$224 billion (in 2008 U.S. dollars), Bangladesh can be considered largely overpopulated and poor. As a result of Bangladesh's precarious location and varying geography, the country and its people are subject to a massive amount of environmental problems, as well as, extremely vulnerable to the effect of climate change. Several of these environmental issues include: loss of land, waterborne diseases, groundwater contamination and pollution, surface water run-off and pollution, intermittent water shortages, soil degradation and erosion, deforestation, drought, seasonal flooding, sea-level rise, saltwater intrusion, monsoons, cyclones, etc. Currently, Bangladesh is globally categorized by the United Nations as a least developed country and a non-Annex I party to the Kyoto Protocol. While Bangladesh still remains non-party to this agreement, their status has not prevented the country's people and government from combating the effects of global climate change. Over the past decade, Bangladesh has remained adamant about adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change through the adoption of its own set of national adaptation and climate change action plans. Despite Bangladesh's extremely low carbon footprint and national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions levels, the country strongly desires to be a leader in and a party to the next round of Kyoto Protocol negotiations.

Equity, Justice, and Adaptation for All

Because Bangladesh is a least developed country with one of the lowest carbon footprints and GHG emissions rate in the world, it is fair to say that Bangladesh bears a disproportionate cost of adapting to and mitigating against the effects of climate change. In a world full of hundreds of countries more affluent than Bangladesh, someone needs to take the initiative to alleviate some of the financial burden placed on countries like Bangladesh in a way that allows the country to flourish rather than maintain its economically suppressed existence. This is not a demand for a re-distribution of wealth, but a request for countries much better off than most least developed countries to save the lives and preserve the cultures of countries succumbing to the effects of climate change. If nothing is done to combat the effects of climate change, Bangladesh will not only suffer, but place some of its ailments on other vulnerable countries in the world through the displacement of its people and the creation of "climate refugees."

On its own accord, Bangladesh has managed to create several comprehensive adaptation and mitigation strategies. Bangladesh believes the role of adaptation should include not only a country's ability to adjust to the effects of climate change, but also a country's ability to adjust in a way that facilitates positive socio-economic growth and development in a sustainable manner. Several adaptation

¹ CIA World Factbook, July 2009

strategies, or “climate proofing” strategies, include: flood management schemes to raise agricultural productivity; flood protection and drainage schemes; coastal embankment projects; construction of over 2,000 cyclone shelters; comprehensive disaster management projects; irrigation schemes; agricultural research to provide saline, drought, and flood tolerable varieties of crops; coastal greenbelt projects. Bangladesh has achieved these projects through the investment of over \$10 billion by the Government of Bangladesh over the last 35 years. Also, Bangladesh has incurred direct annual costs equivalent to 0.5%-1% of GDP in damage and lost production from natural disasters over the last 10 years alone. In further response to looming risks and vulnerability associated with climate change, the Government of Bangladesh has recently developed a 10-year Climate Change Action Plan to build the capacity and resilience of the country to meet the challenge of climate change. This program could cost up to \$5 billion in the first 5 years alone. In order to help curb these costs, Bangladesh has established a National Climate Change Fund, with an initial capitalization of \$45 million focused primarily on adaptation. The Government of Bangladesh has also encouraged common cause partnerships with other countries to help combat similar effects of climate change. As a developing country with the right to continue economic development, these costs are likely to increase in absolute terms and as a proportion of GDP if climate change isn’t factored into long-term economic planning.

In the mitigation realm, Bangladesh is doing all it can to reduce its current GHG emissions and carve a sustainable, low emissions path for development in the future. Bangladesh has current energy projects and clean development mechanisms aimed at enhancing the use of solar, nuclear, and biomass energy. Also, Bangladesh has implemented a major nationwide program of social forestry, planned coastal greenbelts, improved the efficiency of cook stove use, requested the transfer of best available technologies from developed countries, and renewed its commitments to reducing GHG emissions from agricultural practices through better waste management.

Post-Kyoto Requirements

As previously stated, Bangladesh strongly desires to be an integral part in post-Kyoto negotiations in the 2009 Copenhagen Conference of Parties. In preparation for these negotiations, Bangladesh has developed a comprehensive plan/architecture consisting of targets, timetables, structures, organizations, and compliance and enforcement mechanisms that are essential to gaining as much global participation as possible in the next agreement. The overall objective of this agreement is, “to engage all countries of the world the battle against climate change, collectively working to reduce climate change effects, increase adaptation and mitigation abilities, diminish climate change contributors, enhance climate change education, and facilitate sustainable socio-economic growth for current and future generations.” While this plan does not ideally meet all the needs of the Bangladeshi people, it is the most feasible and reasonable plan to garner the participation and support of the global community and its key players.

Targets and Timetables

Bangladesh would like to see a stabilization of GHG emissions at 450 ppm CO₂ eq by 2050, with corresponding temperature stabilization between 1.8 and 2.2 degrees Celsius. Ideally, Bangladesh would like to see a 400 ppm CO₂ eq stabilization by 2050, however, this is probably not reasonable when considering the desires and current GHG emissions levels of Annex I countries such as the U.S. or the E.U. The incorporation of a temperature stabilization level is important to Bangladesh because temperature rise dictates sea-level rise, which is one of Bangladesh's greatest vulnerabilities. Also, Bangladesh would like a soft target of carbon neutrality by 2100, taking into consideration carbon sources and sinks for countries heavily dependent on forestry such as Bangladesh and Brazil. Bangladesh would also like to negotiate measures concerning shifts in energy sectors from fossil fuel use to a certain percentage of renewable based on a country's annexing, as well as, the increased use of carbon sequestration and storage for each annex. Aggressive action must be taken immediately in order to preserve the lives and livelihood of the people of Bangladesh, so this targets and timetables must be carefully considered.

Annex Structure and GHG Control

Bangladesh supports a four group annex systems- Annex I, II, III, and IV. A country's placement within an annex should be based on the country's Human Development Index (HDI) from 0-1 combined with its GHG emissions from 0-1 (including a weighted calculation of historical and future GHG emissions). Annex I would be for "developed countries" with a total greater than 0.9 such as the U.S., E.U., and Japan. Annex II would be for "advanced developed countries" with a total between 0.6 and 0.9 such as Russia, China, Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, and India. Annex III would be for "developing countries" with a total between 0.5 and 0.59 such as Bangladesh, some Small Islands, and many African countries. Annex IV would be for "least developed countries" with a total less than 0.5 such as many Small Islands and some African countries. The incorporation of historical emissions is important to countries such as Bangladesh because it helps identify countries that have habitually contributed to the global GHG situation so that adequate responsibility can be assumed.

In keeping with the common but differentiated principle, each annex should have differentiated commitments with 10 year reassessments from 2020 to 2050. Annex I should have binding "output" mitigation targets, since much of their industry and emission producing practices are well-established. In regards to compliance, each interval should have an increased penalty for noncompliance. Additionally, these countries should have to honor contribution commitments of a "to be determined" amount (possibly 1.0% of GNI) of funding to Annex IV countries. Annex II should have binding "source" mitigation targets, which would encourage developing countries to reduce environmentally unfriendly development technologies and increase "green" alternatives. These targets should have the same interval periods in which noncompliance penalties would be invoked, as well as, the requirement to contribute funding to Annex III countries (which will generally require less adaptation funding than Annex IV countries). Annex III should have binding targets for "source and outcome" emissions reduction approach in order to encourage the use of environmentally sustainable technology for new

developments, as well as aid in the adaptation and mitigation of current subsistence practices, socio-economic programs, and industry. Annex IV countries should have non-binding “outcome” targets similar to the Annex III group. This Annex should primarily focus on adaptation programs and ways to use sustainable technological and industrial practices. They should also be given priority with respect to international support for adaptation. Within this annex, some alternative to the CDM will be necessary to ensure this funding, as currently these countries receive a minimal amount of assistance from the CDM which favors advanced developing countries with rich energy sectors. Also, Joint Implementations (JIs), should be considered between all countries within an Annex in order to facilitate common cause partnerships.

Vulnerability Indexing/Assessments and Climate Change Education and Awareness Fund (side provision)

Guidelines concerning the extent, ability, and cost of adaptation for every country should be assessed according to the Seven Key Vulnerabilities outlined in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. The Seven Key Vulnerabilities associated with climate-sensitive systems are as follows: magnitude of impacts; timing of impacts; persistence and reversibility of impacts; likelihood of impacts and vulnerabilities and confidence in those estimates; potential for adaptation; distributional aspects of impacts and vulnerabilities; importance of the system(s) at risk. These seven vulnerabilities should also define: key sectors in need of adaptation; targets for sector adaptations; funding for sector adaptation; exceptions to normal adaptation practices based on total degree of vulnerability, and; funding for and allocation of technology transfers.

In order to gain further global support of this agreement, Bangladesh would like to see measures taken to increase global climate change education and awareness around the world. As more people become educated and aware of the risks and dangers GHG emissions pose to the stability of the Earth’s climate system and the livelihood of a significant portion of the Earth’s population, the more likely climate change will appear on political agendas around the world. The development of a Climate Change Education and Awareness Fund would require a very small, voluntary annual contribution by each country with a binding agreement. This fund can then be allocated to each country, including non-binding Annex IV countries based on population, GDP, and the existence of a national education system.

World Environmental Organization (WEO)

Bangladesh realizes the need for an organization or group to serve as a global coordinator and enforcer of the post-Kyoto agreement. Bangladesh supports a World Environmental Organization to which every party of the post-Kyoto agreement belongs. Within the organization, an executive board should oversee all aspects of the agreement. The WEO Executive Board should oversee emissions targets, emissions trading, compliance issues, re-indexing of countries (ability of a country to change annexes as a reassessment period according to HDI and GHG emissions), and flexibility mechanisms. Additionally, the Board should conduct their 10 year reassessments in a timely manner that allows for a

report with all recommendations to be circulated the year prior to when the proposed changes should take place. If there are any changes to target emissions, re-indexing, or budgets, these changes must be voted on with a two-thirds majority of all countries to pass. Also, each country has one year from the end of a re-evaluation period to object to any changes in structure, targets, permits, funding, etc. Finally, the Board should be rotated after a specified time period (maybe after each assessment period), as to give as many countries in each Annex the opportunity to serve on the Board as well as prevent biases.

Summary

As a country of this world, facing a global issue, Bangladesh will continue to contribute as much effort as possible to adapt to and mitigate the effect of global climate change. As a low-income country with a high vulnerability to climate change, Bangladesh retains optimistic that the global community will collectively make efficient decisions taking into account the well-being of each and every global citizen. The costs and efforts associated with a comprehensive global plan are astronomically high, but the lives of future and current generations being saved are worth more.