

## Impact report - May 2011

### FIELD's work on climate change

This report provides highlights from FIELD's climate change work in the last year.

#### **The challenges: climate change and global justice**

Climate change is widely accepted to be a severe threat to people, countries, economic development and the environment. Even if countries made dramatic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions now some climate change would be unavoidable. The impacts on people in poor countries, low-lying regions and islands may be very severe.

Climate change can only be solved through global cooperation. The international negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol are extremely complicated, both politically and legally.

Rich countries often send large delegations with many experts to the international meetings. It can be very difficult for someone who represents a small or poor country to influence the negotiations. Civil society groups and indigenous peoples' organisations, representing people who may be directly affected by the international decisions, struggle even more to make their voices heard.

#### **Forests and the climate change negotiations**

"REDD" or "REDD-plus" refers to negotiations about including developing country forests in the international climate regime. There is much excitement, but also controversy, about REDD-plus.

More than 15% of the world's annual greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to come from tropical deforestation. REDD-plus is an opportunity to reduce emissions and protect forests. At the same time it offers an opportunity

to channel much-needed funding to developing countries.

REDD-plus also poses risks. It can be difficult to monitor forests and to confirm that greenhouse gas emissions are being reduced. Money could flow into the wrong hands. Many poor people depend on forests and might be forced to move or might lose out to money-making schemes.

FIELD has been able to provide information and support to representatives of developing countries, civil society, indigenous peoples and others. It has helped many people to understand and influence the international negotiations. This work has been funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

FIELD has prepared briefing papers before UNFCCC meetings, on a neutral and non partisan basis, which explain REDD-plus issues on the agenda. FIELD has shared information, provided non-technical updates and responded to questions whenever we could.

How do we know that our REDD-plus work was successful? People told us so:

"Many of us would have found REDD a nightmare if we did not have your help."

*African government representative*

"The deep knowledge and legal expertise that FIELD brings to the table have been extremely valuable in the REDD+ negotiations. In this context, FIELD has played a critical role in synthesizing complex information and making it broadly accessible."

*Heather Wright, Program Officer,  
The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation*

FIELD's work on REDD-plus is neutral and not meant to promote any particular viewpoint. It aims to help everyone involved to understand the

issues better. This improves the chances of achieving a strong and lasting global agreement that will be fair and effective when put in practice within countries.

### **Exploring ways of giving the negotiations new momentum**

FIELD also develops recommendations and proposals that we think will help strengthen international environmental agreements. In our view the climate change negotiations have made far too little progress since the failed Copenhagen Summit.

Prior to the Cancun Conference in December 2010 FIELD began exploring if international litigation by a country that is being damaged by climate change could help generate pressure on the negotiations, and if it might also provide helpful guidance from a court decision. A large amount of legal literature suggests that major greenhouse gas emitting nations could be held responsible under international law.

The FIELD paper “International climate change litigation and the negotiation process” was covered by a wide array of media outlets, ranging from the Jakarta Post to the Sudan Tribune, the BBC and the New York Times.

The Harvard Political Review described FIELD’s work as:

“The latest creative thinking, captured by a report by the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development ...”

### **Shaping a future climate agreement**

In early 2011 FIELD worked with the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice (MRFJCJ) on the legal form of the future climate agreement, or agreements. This is a very important issue in the current negotiations.

“The Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice was very pleased with a commissioned paper on ‘legal form’ which shows how well FIELD understands the legal complexity of the climate change negotiations.”

*The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRFJCJ)*

### **Independent legal advice**

Sometimes FIELD is commissioned to provide legal advice to countries, international organisations, indigenous peoples, campaigning groups or others. We take on this kind of work when we believe that our contribution will help advance constructive solutions.

Often this type of work is confidential and FIELD’s involvement is not recognised publicly. We took on such tasks in the preparations for the Cancun Conference.

Based on comments such as these we know that our work had the right impact:

“The work that was done was excellent and timely and had a big impact I think on the final formulation of the Cancun agreements in this area, invisible though that may have been at the time.”

*Climate change adviser to developing countries, confidential assignment undertaken by FIELD*

### **Evaluation, learning and feedback**

FIELD evaluates the impact of its work on a regular basis. We use different approaches: for example indicators agreed with donors to evaluate particular projects, external evaluation or qualitative internal assessment.

FIELD aims to learn continuously from its work. For example, to capture lessons learnt – both good and bad – FIELD maintains a “learning log” that we review and discuss regularly at our staff meetings.

FIELD welcomes feedback on our work, so please let us know if you have comments.

More information about all areas of FIELD’s work can be found at [www.field.org.uk](http://www.field.org.uk).

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