

Global climate crisis: what is the role of SlovakAid?

Climate change has become one of the most pressing issues of the 21st century and despite the developing countries being historically responsible for only a fraction of the greenhouse gases causing this crisis, they are most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate change (Merz *et al.*, 2009). In fact, residents of a developing country are 79 times more likely to suffer climate-change impacts than people in a developed country (IPCC, 2013). This is partly due to their location in most susceptible regions; and partly due to their dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods, like agriculture (Yohe and Tol, 2002). Furthermore, the vulnerability of developing countries to the changing climate is amplified by the lack of financial resources resulting in their inability to adapt to the threats, forcing them to engage in unsustainable environmental practices such as deforestation in order to sustain their well-being (IPCC, 2013).

Overall, the developing countries are paying the price of climate change for benefits of economic progress they are not enjoying. Given the disproportionate impact of the climate change on developing countries and the threat it poses to the achievement of sustainable development goals, it was suggested the need for development agencies to address the climate crisis (Huq and Reid, 2019). However, despite substantial overlap, these institutions are not solely responsible for addressing climate change (IIED, 2008). This essay will illustrate how SlovakAid and similar agencies can help address the climate crisis to complement the efforts of formal climate change institutions (such as UNFCCC), particularly by increasing adaptive potential of the communities, mainstreaming adaptation into development practice and mitigating negative environmental impacts of development.

Firstly, Slovak Aid can address the climate crisis is by building adaptive capacity of its partner countries by eliminating underlying drivers of their vulnerability. In many cases, the vulnerability of the communities in developing countries is not due to the climate change per se, but rather due other underlying issues, such as lacking infrastructure, which make them less able to adapt to additional stress caused by the changing climate (IIED, 2019). For instance, the rising temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns due to the climate change will alter the spread of these vector diseases (Porter *et al.*, 2008), such as malaria, lymphatic filariasis, dengue and yellow fever (Cairncross and Feachem 1993). The communities lacking drainage infrastructure will be disproportionately more vulnerable to this negative climate change impact (Satterthwaite, 2007), as poor drainage and sanitation create

suitable breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other vectors (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2001). Furthermore, these communities will be unable to focus on solving any additional problems attendant to climate change, as they will put most of their efforts into containing the epidemics, a problem that could have been avoided had these communities had sufficient infrastructure. This illustrates the notion that, creating adaptive capacity requires focus not only on combating direct impacts of climate change, but also on wider spectrum of issues, contributing to a broader reduction in climate change vulnerability. SlovakAid could use their expertise to eliminate the underlying drivers of vulnerability and hence establish adequate coping range in poor communities, which would increase effectiveness of adaptation. Such niche approach to addressing climate crisis, because given that is increasing the effectiveness of climate adaptation indirectly, it is not substituting the role of formal climate change institutions, like UNFCCC, but rather compliments their efforts (IIED, 2019). Furthermore, it also allows SlovakAid to support projects with high impact in addressing the effects of climate crisis, while maintaining independence and high visibility.

Second approach to addressing the climate crisis that SlovakAid could adopt is mainstreaming climate change adaptation into on-going development planning and decision-making (Klein, 2008). It can be done either by climate proofing or by using existing resources to fund climate change adaptation. Climate proofing entails screening of the existing portfolio through climate change lens with the intent to reconcile climate change concerns with agency's development priorities. This approach would not only help to identify particular on-going projects, whose realisation is threatened by climate change, but also ensure that climate change is more explicitly incorporated into the future projects (Klein, 2008). Even though, SlovakAid has already incorporated sustainability criterion into its project appraisal procedure; climate proofing could be made more effective by development of assessments and tools for applicants to guide their project development to be more sustainable. Additionally, SlovakAid could share these tools with governments and NGOs in their partner countries hence facilitate mainstreaming adaptation into their agendas as well. The alternative, and substantially more controversial, approach to mainstreaming adaptation in development is utilisation of existing resources of Official Developmental Assistance (ODA) to fund climate change related adaptation. Similarly to other development agencies, SlovakAid is well positioned to build the capacity for integrating climate considerations across the relevant institutions, through the existing channels of multilateral and bilateral assistance (Huq and Reid, 2019). However, this approach blurs the division between the funding mandated by

UNFCCC and development assistance funding, making it controversial because rather than replacing development efforts, UNFCCC funding is supposed to be “new and additional” (IIED, 2019). Using ODA resources to fund adaptation might therefore result in countries free-riding on their obligations and overall reduction in the available funding amount (Huq and Reid, 2019). To avoid this situation, SlovakAid should focus more on climate proofing its current portfolio rather than using its finances to address the climate crisis directly.

Finally, Slovak Aid can address climate crisis by enabling mitigation of negative environmental impacts of the economic development in developing countries. In other words SlovakAid could help developing countries to leapfrog the polluting part of development hence prevent them from emitting heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Oftentimes, the long-term climate change mitigation priorities conflict with near-term development priorities and development first approach might lead to maladaptation, which by enhancing climate change problem endangers the very communities it should help. For instance, more than 1.5 billion people have no access to electricity and almost half the global population depends on traditional biomass fuels for cooking and heating (Sovacool, 2012). Energy poverty results not only in unmet basic needs and adverse health impacts, but also in depressed economic and educational opportunities (Cherian, 2009; Hussain, 2011; Jin *et al.*, 2006; Larson and Kartha, 2000), particularly for women, children, and minorities (Masud *et al.*, 2007) Reliable access to electricity could propel the economic activities in rural areas and by providing improved lighting or labour-saving devices improve standard of living (Sovacool, 2012). However, if generated unsustainably, the increase in energy consumption would lead to higher emissions, jeopardising the global efforts to combat climate crisis and in the long term posing a threat to these developing countries (Sovacool, 2012). An example of project reconciling these competing demands of development and climate protection is Orb which providing solar powered energy generators, enables people to access electricity while emitting no greenhouse gases (Bieber, 2017) Nevertheless, such generators are beyond purchasing power of most people in developing countries (Bieber, 2017). SlovakAid could help close this financial gap, by decreasing the initial investment required to purchase Orb generators and therefore making it a more affordable choice than either traditional fuel sources or fossil fuel generated energy. By doing this SlovakAid would create a no-regret, high impact solution, allowing impoverished communities to reap benefits of energy consumption and subsequent economic development, while boosting global efforts to mitigate climate crisis.

To conclude, addressing the climate crisis is inseparable from delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, thus addressing the climate change is essential part of development assistance in the 21st century. By increasing the adaptive capacity, mainstreaming of climate change adaptation into their portfolio, and reconciling competing demands of development and climate change mitigation, SlovakAid and similar agencies could enable developing countries to achieve self-reliance while pursuing clean economic growth and resilient development. However, as argued in this essay, despite the development agencies having an important role in addressing climate crisis, responsibility for adaptation and mitigation does not lie with these institutions. Therefore, they should not be seen as the only way to facilitate climate-change adaptation and replacement of formal climate change institutions, like UNFCCC, but rather as complementary action increasing the effectiveness of adaptive efforts.

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