

Presentation by the General Program Coordination

Introduction

There is a consensus today that populations with a low human development index, already living in an unfavorable socioeconomic situation, are most severely exposed to the impacts of extreme climatic events, though their environmental vulnerability does not exclusively result from poverty.

According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), the United Nations body responsible for producing scientific information about the effects of climate change, the poor regions of Africa, Latin America and Asia are the ones with the least opportunity to adapt themselves and are therefore the most vulnerable to changes in the dynamics of rain (with floods and droughts), the decrease of food production, including fishing, the loss of biodiversity and the effects on people's health. In other words, areas with more poverty are also more susceptible to the effects of climate change.

There are currently already 250 million people in the world affected by natural disasters and, until 2015, the tendency is that this number will increase by approximately 50% to 375 million (Oxfam – “The Right to Survive” - 2009). Besides, a Red Cross Federation figure shows that in the developing countries the average number of deaths from natural disasters is about 40 times higher than in rich countries.

In Brazil, though we have experienced extreme climatic events such as, for example, the recent floods in the southern, northern and north-eastern regions of the country and an intense drought in 2005 in Amazonia, the interface between climate change and social inequalities is still a vast field to be investigated, together with the need to sensitize and involve society as a whole in this issue and, particularly, the population groups with greater socio-economic vulnerability. There is also a need to provide civil society and those governmental institutions playing an important leading role in the discussion of the issue, with knowledge and methodologies for the formulation of public policies, both at local and national level, such as in the preparation of international treaties.

Climate Change and Poverty Program

COEP¹ has already 16 years of experience in the social mobilization of various segments – organizations, communities and people – for the implementation of initiatives to improve the quality of life in low-income areas, as well as bringing their members and other organizations together around a common objective – development, in association with actions to fight poverty.

Recognizing the importance of the inclusion of social vulnerability into the climate change theme, COEP National took this issue to the Brazilian Climate Change Forum², suggesting the development of a process aimed at the effective integration of this component into the discussions and initiatives about the subject.

As a result of this linkage, in April 2009 the Forum created the “Climate Change, Poverty and Inequalities” Working Group, having invited the COEP to be in charge of its coordination.

Thus, in 2009 we are enlarging our work proposal, introducing the climate change and poverty theme as sensitization and mobilization focus for the more than 1100 organizations (COEP Network), 8000

¹ COEP was created in 1993 by the sociologist Betinho, in the scope of the movement for ethics in politics. The aim was to mobilize organisations in projects for the fight against hunger and poverty. Since that time COEP's main activities have focussed on initiatives to improve the quality of life of low-income communities.

² The Brazilian Climate Change Forum was created in 2000, by Decree. It is chaired by the President of the Republic and its Executive Secretary is Prof. Luis Pinguelli Rosa, one of the founders of the COEP. One of its objectives is to assist the Government in the integration of the climate change issues into the various public policies.

people (Mobilizers Network) and 115 communities (Communities Network) that currently form our National Social Mobilization Network.

To this end we are starting the **Climate Change and Poverty Program**³, which includes several initiatives, among which:

- The development of initiatives such as:

The creation of a thematic group on “Environment, climate change and poverty”, in the Mobilizers Network portal - www.mobilizadores.org.br, with the objective to inform and take the issue for discussion to the more than 8000 people making up the network.

The establishment as guiding principle of the Citizenship Day - a social mobilization proposal prepared by the COEP with schools, people and communities in the whole country – the environment, climate change and poverty theme.

- The development of research: “Climate Change, Social Inequalities and Vulnerable Populations in Brazil: Building Capacity”.

Research on “Climate Change, Social Inequalities and Vulnerable Populations in Brazil: Building Capacity

Building a cooperation project

For the implementation of the proposal, COEP has endeavored to establish cooperation mechanisms with researchers and institutions renowned in the field of science, social mobilization and project development, with a view to the innovative and multidisciplinary character of the research.

To this end, it has invited two researchers to enter the partnership: professor Renato Maluf, of CERESAN – Reference Centre for Food and Nutritional Security of the UFRRJ - Rural Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and researcher Anna Peliano, of the Social Responsibility Area of the Social Studies Directorate of IPEA – Institute of Applied Economic Studies.

The research benefits also from the participation of COPPE/UFRRJ – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, through the IVIG - Virtual International Institute for Global Change and is supported by OXFAM and the Advisory Body of the Office of the President of the Republic.

Local universities and other teaching and research organizations, partners of other COEP initiatives, were involved in the execution of the various actions.

Research Objectives

Correlating the themes of climate change and social inequalities, the research aims at the development of a *social technology*, targeting the promotion of the readiness and reaction capacity of vulnerable communities to the consequences of extreme climatic events.

The perspective is to offer elements that contribute to the debates that are being held about the topic in various councils and public spaces in Brazil, such as the National Food and Nutritional Security Council (CONSEA) which has already included the theme in its discussion agenda.

It is also expected to outline a first profile of the practices, action proposals, challenges and difficulties of large Brazilian organizations, with respect to the treatment of the climate change theme in association with the issue of the fight against poverty.

Research development

³ Program Coordination: André Spitz, Gleyse Peiter and Sarita Berson

The research comprises two lines: the vulnerable populations subproject and the organizations subproject.

The **Vulnerable Populations subproject**, coordinated by Ceresan/UFRRJ⁴, focuses on the issues of regional impacts and the vulnerabilities of low-income populations in different environments.

The research will be carried out in three interrelated areas:

- Survey of international and national reference documents and of national policies related to the theme: synthesis and implications for case studies.
- Scientific production and issues being debated about the “climate change and social inequalities” theme: survey and systematization.
- Case studies about the vulnerability and adaptation capacity of selected populations in different environments and peripheries of large cities.

The size of the country and the adopted focus led to the establishment of an adequate spatial selection to contextualize the condition of different vulnerable population groups. Thus, three distinct environments of indisputable importance were defined (Amazonia, Caatinga and Cerrado) and two metropolitan regions (one of them, Rio de Janeiro, in the Mata Atlântica area), in which the vulnerable populations were selected, making up 5 case studies.

Amazonia: riverine populations (community in Rondônia)
Caatinga / Semi-dry: family farmers (community in Pernambuco)
Cerrado: family farmers (quilombola community in Mato Grosso do Sul)
Metropolitan Region: periphery of two large cities - Rio de Janeiro and Florianópolis

The communities were selected in coordination with the local COEPs, on the premise of the existence of previous work of the Committee in the area.

The case studies, each one to be done by a local research team, but in an integrated way, will comprise three dimensions:

- Impacts – presentation of the likely impacts in the study areas.
- Vulnerability – identification of the environmental and socio-economic vulnerability factors on the basis of secondary data and field studies.
- Risk management – analysis of the understanding of the studied populations of the social dynamics and of the specific public programs that affect the building of capacity to adapt to the impacts of extreme climatic events, with emphasis on the Government structures and on the roles of the policy and knowledge networks

The COEPs involved in the project were also made responsible for linking up the research group with the network’s partner institutions in other initiatives. The proposal is to do a participatory preparation of a Work Agenda in each analyzed community, to be used as reference in future actions and links of each one of these COEPs, regarding the sustainable development of these areas.

The **Organizations subproject**, coordinated by IPEA⁵, focuses on the performance of organizations, considering the extension of their activities and the impacts on vulnerable populations, and comprises:

- A pilot study in the organizations associated with the National COEP and other organizations, with a view to the preparation of their profile in relation to the topic.

⁴ Coordination of the vulnerable populations subproject: Renato S. Maluf and Teresa da Silva Rosa

⁵ Coordination of the Organizations subproject: Anna Peliano, Luiz Fernando Lara Resende and Roberto Santana

- Survey of the legislation, norms and policies in force / under implementation in Brazil and in other countries related to the climate change theme and the organizations' intervention.

Expected Research Results

- Mapping of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations in a selection of three environments and two metropolitan regions.
- Mapping of the different adaptation strategies developed by the populations affected by climate change, identifying and disseminating the identified practices.
- Participatory preparation of a Work Agenda in each one of the studied communities.
- Survey of international and national reference documents and of national policies related to the climate change and vulnerable population theme.
- Survey of the legislation, norms and policies in force / under implementation in Brazil and in other countries related to the climate change theme and the organizations' intervention.
- Incentive for the extension of the organizations' intervention regarding the theme, through the identification and dissemination of well-succeeded models.
- Sensitization of society as a whole regarding the theme, disseminating the research results, through various instruments, such as seminaries, paper and Internet publications, reports, releases, etc.

In addition to contributing to the creation of a wide specialized network on climate change and its impacts on vulnerable populations, the project will form a basis for strengthening the role of these population segments and for offering the Government institutions, both at local and national level, elements for the formulation of public policies in the socio-environmental area.

The results also aim at supporting the sensitization, qualification and mobilization of the network of Organizations (COEP Network), People (Mobilizers Network) and Communities (Communities Network), which form our National Social Mobilization Network, for the development of concrete climate change adaptation and mitigation actions.

The Agenda of each community, prepared in a participatory way, will also serve as a reference in future actions and links of the local COEPs, targeting the sustainable development of these areas, in addition to providing inputs for the preparation of similar agendas in other communities with which the COEP is working.

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