

INDIA MUST CLIMATE-PROOF ITS RURAL AND URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Relevant for: Environment & Disaster Management | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development & EIA

The Paris Rulebook adopted at the climate negotiations (COP24) in Katowice on Sunday is an opportunity for India to set its house in order. The Rulebook states that under Article 7 of the Paris Agreement, all signatories have to submit and update an adaptation communication periodically to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Adaptation essentially means anticipating the impact of climate change and making cities and villages resilient in the face of a 1.5 degree rise in global warming over pre-industrial levels by the early 2030s. The warming can be as high as 2 degrees for many parts of Asia, including India. India must use this opportunity to climate-proof its rural and urban infrastructure by adopting strategies that reduce the impact of droughts through forestry; use crop diversification with a focus on resilient varieties; promote and deliver agriculture and climate insurance; and adopt flood- and heat stress control in cities. India has already proposed using the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to conduct drought-proofing and afforestation activities and the move has been applauded by climate scientists as it is expected to reach the most vulnerable populations across the country.

The Rulebook has also established a system to ensure developed nations deliver climate finance to developing countries. At COP24, parties agreed that new finance targets will be established from 2025, over the current target of mobilising \$100 billion per year by 2020 to support developing countries. Developed countries have the choice to include all kinds of financial instruments— loans, grants, aids from public and private sources — to ensure the flow of funds, which has so far been slow and unpredictable. According to a report of the UNFCCC standing committee on finance, the total climate specific finance flows from developed countries in 2016 was \$38 billion — less than 40% of the target. Money apart, countries such as India need to draft a strategy to use funds effectively to minimise the impact of climate change; In India, the Kerala floods of 2018, and the 2013 flash floods in Uttarakhand were both extreme weather events caused by climate change .

The India Meteorological Department recently acknowledged that the country is facing climate change-led aberrations in long-term meteorological trends, with a sharp rise in 'extremely heavy rainfall' events and the number of 'dry days' in the past few decades. Instead of wearing blinkers like the oil-rich nations that include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Russia and the US did at COP24, India must take action to reduce its vulnerability to weather extremes using latest climate science and modelling simulations.

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