

PRESS RELEASE

5th October 2008

Hong Kong public know little about how climate change affects people

An Oxfam opinion poll finds that the Hong Kong public is not aware of the impacts of climate change on poor people, and do not feel responsible for contributing to climate change and poverty.

Oxfam Hong Kong commissioned a survey in August 2008 on how Hong Kong people understand the link between climate and poverty. More than 500 people aged 16 and above were interviewed, by telephone, in Chinese, in a poll conducted by the Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong. According to the poll findings, only 38.8 per cent of respondents see the links between climate change and poverty. However, when asked whether or not climate change is threatening the livelihoods of poor people, 80 per cent said yes, but do not necessarily understand how.

Climate change hits poor people hardest

Oxfam Hong Kong's Ho Wai-chi (Director of the Hong Kong Unit) points out that poor people are hugely affected by climate change because they are heavily dependent on predictable weather patterns and natural resources. What's more, poor regions and countries start out with many disadvantages, such as poor infrastructure and services. Thus, poor people are more vulnerable to disasters and have more difficulty recovering from climate shocks. Industrialised nations are responsible for most of the greenhouse gases emitted and accumulated over the last 100 years. While the world's poor nations bear little responsibility, they are hit the hardest.

For instance, Hong Kong's carbon dioxide emissions per capita is 5.5 tonnes a year, which is higher than the world's average. From 1990 to 1998, 94% of damages in the catastrophic disasters around the world occurred in poor countries. The number of people affected in developing countries is 20 times more than in developed countries.

As for a sense of responsibility, 56.8 per cent of respondents agree that the Hong Kong lifestyle has contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, which negatively impacts on the lives of poor people. Yet, only 36.7 per cent agree that Hong Kong residents should be held responsible for the problem. 40.8 per cent agree that we have contributed to climate problems in Mainland China.

Solutions: Mitigation and adaptation

When asked what the Hong Kong SAR Government can do to tackle climate poverty, 71.2 per cent agree that setting a mandatory emission target would be helpful, and 25.5 per cent see financial support to be helpful for poor people to cope better. The finding reflects that Hong Kong people do not realise that poor nations require urgent financial support to cope with climate impacts.

Ho Wai-chi says, "Climate change is undermining Oxfam Hong Kong's work against poverty. We urge our government to support poor countries' climate adaptation projects and adopt proactive measures to cut emissions. Internationally, we call on industrialised nations to provide funding to help poor nations cope with climate change, which is estimated to cost at least US\$50 billion annually."

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“Fighting against poverty, everyone’s effort counts! Oxfam urges all Hong Kong people to stop harming and start helping, so as to bring an end to poverty.”

Oxfam Hong Kong’s Fight Poverty! Fight Climate Change! Campaign



Awareness-building

- A thirty-second cinema advert to be screened in eight houses of Broadway Cinemas in October and November; also available on Youtube and www.oxfam.org.hk/climatechange)
- Web interactive games at www.oxfam.org.hk/climatechange (in Chinese and English)
- Promotional materials: MTR 4-sheet poster ad and leaflets (in Chinese and English)
- December: Canvas for Change - an exhibition of artist Lau Gukzik’s and Gansu children’s paintings on climate change

Education

- Participants of **Oxfam Club** (F.3 – F.5) and **Oxfam Youth Campaign Partners (YCP)** (aged 18 – 25) visited the Philippines to learn about the impact of climate change on poor people. Oxfam Club will host a public education event in the format of an art installation exhibition in Causeway Bay on 19 October. YCP members have set up a blog on their trip and action plan. (YCP blog: <http://oxfam2008ycp.mysinablog.com/>)
- Teaching materials on Cyberschool (www.cyberschool.oxfam.org.hk)
- Workshops at the Oxfam Hong Kong Interactive Education Centre
- Training for secondary school teachers
- Art installation exhibition and talks on climate change and poverty in schools

Advocacy

December: Lobbying at the UN Climate Change Conference in Poznan, Poland.

Humanitarian response

Supporting poor communities impacted by climate change and extreme weather events through emergency relief.

Risk reduction and adaptation

Working with poor communities to adapt to climate change – developing alternative modes of agriculture; practicing sustainable natural resources management; and promoting disaster risk management and preparedness.

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