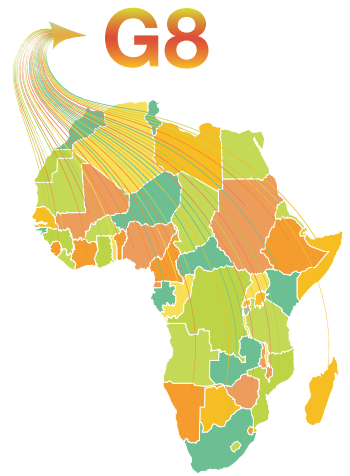


# Africa after the Africa Commission:

What priorities for the German G8?



## Opinion

May 2007

# Climate change: An opportunity for Africa?

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'Much of the commentary on climate change amplifies the potential for severe impacts, though prospects are more nuanced than coverage would suggest.'

These Opinions have been written for a high level policy forum bringing together senior DFID and NGO staff, MPs, private sector representatives, Africanists, development academics, and key journalists for discussion on the future of Africa in the run-up to the G8 meeting in Germany (6-8 June). The Forum was held on May 2nd, 2007 in London.

Africa, as the poorest continent, is commonly considered as the frontline for climate change impacts and a barometer for how poorly we are performing in our efforts to avoid the negative consequences. However, it is recognised that while the impacts of climate change are likely to target Africa's vulnerable poor earliest and hardest, they may also present opportunities to achieve poverty reduction in an improving climate for African livelihoods.

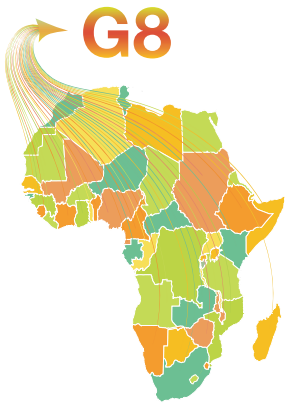
Much of the commentary on climate change by the media, politicians and the research community amplifies the potential for severe impacts, though prospects are certainly more nuanced than coverage would suggest. For example, many climate models show drier tropical regions of Africa becoming wetter (such as the Sahel). The Commission for Africa refers to the variability of impacts, but concentrates on damage caused by the added variability and the increasing frequency and magnitude of severe weather events. The Commission highlights that climate-induced threats to agricultural productivity, food security, health, water and energy security will all undermine Africa's ability to develop. This ignores the opportunities for increased agricultural productivity and for greater food, water, and energy security that, with the right institutional support, may provide pathways out of poverty.

The Commission's recommendations on climate change go some way to strengthen measures to enhance the capacity of Africans to positively adapt to climate change, rather than just avoiding or reducing negative consequences. For example by:

- Setting targets for the greater use of new energy technologies.
- Giving US\$100m to improve climate observation capacity in African research institutions.
- Encouraging donors to integrate climate variability and climate risk factors into project planning and assessment by 2008.
- Imploring donors to meet their commitments to funding adaptation to climate change in African countries.

Many donors are already addressing these recommendations, hurried along by the 'greening' of the political climate, the actions of the OECD, and the visibility of climate change impacts. However, to date, minimal attention has been given to how to ensure adaptation to climate change provides an opportunity for reducing poverty among Africa's most vulnerable. This question leads to many others, such as:

- What makes effective climate adaptation governance for poverty reduction at local and national scales?



- What does a pro-poor climate adaptation strategy look like?
- Is it possible to alter the current negative rhetoric about climate impacts given that politicians, NGOs, and academics find the current situation fruitful?

The DSA/DFID High-level policy forum, in considering priorities for the German G8 in light of the Commission for Africa, provides an ideal

environment in which to critically assess the suitability of climate adaptation and development orthodoxies for securing Africa's future in a changing climate. In leading the debate to formalise recommendations for the German G8, experts from the NGO and research communities will introduce short personal perspectives on the appropriateness of current approaches given their experiences of working on climate change issues in Africa.

### Further information

For further information on the event, including podcast, video and further downloadable materials, visit the conference websites at:  
[www.ids.ac.uk/ids/aboutids/events/dsa\\_policy\\_forum.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/aboutids/events/dsa_policy_forum.html)  
[www.odi.org.uk/events/G8\\_07/](http://www.odi.org.uk/events/G8_07/)

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