

Strengthening Responses to Climate Variability in South Asia
Wednesday 14th November 2012, 15.00 – 17.30

Hilton Residence Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Meeting Summary

To focus attention on the double threat of climate change and insecurity in South Asia, and to identify the underlying obstacles to building local level resilience, International Alert and the South Asia Network on Climate Change and Security (SANSaC) convened a roundtable discussion in Colombo on 14 November 2012. The roundtable provided a platform to present findings of a joint research project between International Alert and SANSaC on Strengthening Responses to Climate Variability in South Asia. Participants included members of civil society, regional academics, and representatives from the donor community, the British High Commission and the Ministry of Environment in Sri Lanka.

The link between governance deficits and the impacts of climate change that fuel the potential for conflict proved to be a dominant theme across the three case studies presented at the roundtable. The ensuing discussion focused on the issue of climate/environmental impacts on peaceful development and natural resource governance. The incentives, structural obstacles and field level challenges to understanding and operationalizing linked approaches to building resilience were also the subject of debate.

The presentations and discussion established a clear consensus around the following:

- Supporting adaptation cannot be targeted on specific actions responding to specific threats;
- Supporting adaptation means supporting resilience, which is part of how communities develop;
- Supporting the capacity to adapt properly will go far beyond technical adaptation activities and will become part of the fabric of development aid.

However, it became clear that a number of issues will require further exploration:

1. How can we better understand and plan around multiple motivations for investment and change. There is a strong need to incentivise integrated projects, with funds, certification schemes or prizes to drive integration. For example, projects proposed jointly by several departments could be given first access to funds.
2. What counts as resilience to climate change? Various actors questioned the definitional parameters of resilience. The different interpretations of this question have very practical implications for the disbursement of international climate finance.
3. There is a lot of knowledge and good practice already being documented but we need to establish some strong examples of what can be replicated and how.