

## **Development News – 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2017.**

### **Something we all know at UNIMAK!**

Investing in rural youth is essential to stem the migration of young people looking for work in cities and to keeping a global food supply, the new head of the United Nations agency charged with eradicating rural poverty today said.

In one of his first interviews since taking on the leadership of the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Gilbert Hougbo said he wants people to see life in rural areas as a choice and not a necessity.

“Food security and nutrition are essential, but we have to go beyond that and really aim at the fight against poverty and look at agriculture as a decent income-generating activity,” noted Mr. Hougbo, who was previously the Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Without adequate investment in the world's most vulnerable communities, he continued, there will be increased instability and conflict and people will find it harder to bounce back from shocks, giving them more reasons to flee rural areas.

“We need to work on those hardships so that young people can be happy in a rural setting, instead of looking to go to the capital or move outside their country,” he said.

Mr. Hougbo – whose senior positions include serving as Prime Minister of Togo – understands first-hand the challenges of living in the countryside, according to IFAD. Mr. Hougbo grew up in rural Togo, and pledged to work through IFAD to aid young people living in rural poverty.

“When I was a youngster of eight years old, I had to walk four kilometres every morning to go and get water for the house, and a few years later I had to walk 20 kilometres every day to get to high school,” he said. “It is unacceptable that kids today have to go through the same thing 40 to 50 years later.”

Mr. Hougbo said his priority is to ensure that IFAD continues to have the resources to invest in rural areas so that they become “places of prosperity and hope, where people can build decent lives and not be compelled to migrate.”

## **Climate Change affects us ALL!!**

A little girl sits outside on her front stoop, watching the cars go by and the people trot to work in the early hours of the morning. She wears a long-sleeved shirt, pants, and sneakers. Nothing is particularly shocking about this image, except the fact that it's December in New York City (or Detroit, or London). In a "traditional" year, this girl would be wearing her winter coat, a hat that covers nearly her entire head, and potentially snow boots. But not in 2016. Or 2015. It's simply too warm for all those clothes.

Changing climate, including increases in temperature and shifting precipitation patterns, lead to real and significant impacts to human health, livelihoods, cultural assets, economies, ecosystems, and society as a whole. For example, shifting rainfall patterns can drastically impact crop timing and yields. Rising sea levels already threaten to further drench coastal communities, roads, homes, and other infrastructure. Shifting disease patterns bring new issues into areas with limited exposure and immunity. Prolonged droughts can lead to famine, as in [Somalia and Ethiopia](#) at the moment. And natural disasters, which are on the rise, wreak havoc on local communities and economies. Regardless of where you live or what you do, it is nearly guaranteed that climate

In the face of this reality, one would assume that investments in disaster preparedness and climate action were on the rise. If you lived in the United States, however, you'd be grossly mistaken. In fact instead of being serious about protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of its citizens, the Trump administration has decided to gut all programmes related to climate and [many related to disaster-preparedness](#).

If you still doubt the need for action to adapt to the consequences of climate change, don't just listen to me – [listen to the US military](#), world [business leaders](#), or the [majority of Americans](#). Given that climate leadership is unlikely to come from the US federal government under Trump, many are asking, what can I do to prepare for climate change? Here are eight initial actions that individuals, as well as governments, could take immediately to prepare.

### **What you can do**

- 1) Make a plan; build a kit. Natural disasters are on the rise and are only projected to occur more frequently and be more intense thanks to climate change. Ensure you are prepared by having a plan for what you and your family will do in the case of a disaster. Then make a kit that has the supplies you'll need to [withstand and recover](#).
- 2) Get to know your neighbours. In a disaster, government resources are likely to be strained. Building strong social networks, including within your own neighbourhood, can be an extremely effective way to [prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters](#).

3) Reduce your carbon footprint. Anything we can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will help slow down climate change. The mantra I use is that we must manage the unavoidable through adaptation, but [avoid the unmanageable through mitigation](#).

4) Call your legislators today, and every day. Demand that they preserve and advance domestic and international climate programmes, policies, and funding streams. Don't take these programmes for granted.

5) Integrate climate change into all policies, programmes, and decision-making processes. We need to ensure that all investments are based on sound science and prepared to endure, regardless of what the future brings. That is why climate change must be factored into all planning and decision-making at local, state, national and international levels.

6) Invest in climate science. Instead of gutting science budgets, increase investments in climate science, including investments in real-time monitoring, research into climate-related impacts, and the implementation of climate solutions.

7) Embrace green infrastructure. Investing in green spaces, parks, urban forestry, rain gardens, and the like would be an economically smart way of managing storm-water and flooding while also investing in our local communities. Encourage your government to consider green infrastructure with the same fervour usually reserved only for traditional physical infrastructure projects.

8) Embrace climate action as a means of advancing economic development and social justice. Climate action needs to be about people. When designed with citizens, climate strategies can enhance both the economy and the wellbeing of all, especially those traditionally left behind. Make sure that the most vulnerable are part of [identifying and implementing climate solutions](#).

Regardless of where you stand on the political spectrum, it is essential that we all understand that the climate is changing and it is in our collective interest to immediately begin adapting and mitigating. The stakes are simply too high for inaction.

Best wishes,

John