



## TOPICS

SIEW 2013

 Energy in Singapore

 Fossil Fuels

Coal

Gas

Oil


 Renewable Energy


Biofuels

Nuclear


Solar

Wind

 Green Growth & Low Carbon

 Energy Efficiency

 Energy Security

 Energy Trading & Finance

## Making society own the fight against climate change

By Allan Loi Tian Sheng, Energy Studies Institute and Cheryl Ng Hui Ting, National University of Singapore | 6 December 2013



Photo Credit: iStockphoto.com

Despite increased awareness of threats associated with air pollutants, differing views on social responsibility are impeding climate change and mitigation efforts. This can be attributed to what researchers have described as diffused responsibility, scientific uncertainty, and varying levels of understanding of climate change issues.

With the accountability for climate change split among multiple agents, fewer feel obliged to act for the environment, and nations favour continued emissions in order to preserve their own interests. Individuals too, are less willing to make minor changes as they consider these efforts to be negligible. Many cite climate change as a problem that is too big to handle and thus best left to others who may have more resources. The widely celebrated Yasuni-ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) Initiative for example, which was originally set up to gather the necessary amount of funds to prevent drilling for oil in the field located within Yasuni National Park was recently abolished by Ecuador due to insufficient international commitment.

Scientific uncertainty discourages people from being socially responsible. Our traditional understanding of responsibility presupposes that harms and their causes are individual, can be identified, and are local in time and space. But climate change assessments, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007) Assessment Report, have given ranges of 1.5oC to 5oC as the possible increase in global temperature due to the complexity of the climate system. As today's environmental assessment tools cannot reliably state the extent and probability of climate change happening, individuals feel less inclined to take specific action.

Climate change takes place over generations, but modern society is becoming more uncertain as to whether it should plan ahead for its descendants or focus on the present. The Brundtland Report defines sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Inter-generational justice demands equal treatment to be allocated to current and future generations; but the future generation will not exist if nothing is done now to mitigate climate change.

Fostering pro-environmental attitudes

Incorporation of ethical principles is an imperative in policy planning. This will guide attitudes

### DOWNLOADS

[Asia Energy Book 2013](#)

[Post-Show Report 2012](#)

[SIEW 2013 Pre-brochure \(7MB\)](#)

[More Downloads](#)

### PHOTOS



[More Photos](#)

towards a more pro-environmental stance with more emphasis placed on saving the environment based on an individual's innate duty towards others. Organisations should incorporate injunctive norms coupled with regular feedback in their messages on energy consumption to encourage more energy-efficient behaviour. Provision of regular feedback like this has been shown to reduce energy consumption by up to 15% as found by an Oxford University Survey.

At the same time, efforts have to be channelled towards emphasising the social impact of climate change and how they can potentially be localised. Using mass media to help place problems directly in front of individuals may increase their willingness to personally act against climate change. Media attention can also serve to raise the profile of victims of climate change and increase chances of future courtroom victories over claims relating to harm caused by irresponsible behaviour.

Furthermore, greater emphasis should also be placed on the Precautionary Principle in energy efficiency policy-making, where the public should be informed that it is morally unacceptable to expose others to the risk of substantial harm, and to assure them that they know enough at present to take action in advance of concrete scientific proof of climate change. This principle in guiding business practices and individual habits would play a big role in addressing climate inaction due to scientific uncertainties.

It would perhaps be wise to adopt a "sufficientarianism" approach in policy-making with sufficient energy consumption defined through research on people's notion of what it means to have "good life". Campaigns that urge people to engage in efficient energy use can be executed through outreach programmes to a) increase literacy levels about environmental externalities, and b) promote individual responsibilities. This approach can set a more realistic and hence achievable target upon which policy-makers can base their energy reduction policies.

Tag:

climate change policy social responsibility pro-environment

Related Articles :

[Singapore Electricity Market Liberalisation Well-Received; Continued Evolution Needed](#)  
[Asia is the focal point of energy demand growth](#)  
[5Qs with Hiroshi Ozaki, President of Osaka Gas](#)  
[5Qs with Yukari Yamashita](#)  
[China peaks over the coal horizon](#)

Platinum  
Sponsor



SIEW Networking Reception Sponsors



SIEW Notebook PC Sponsor



SIEW Thinktank  
Roundtables Sponsor



SIEW Showpack Sponsor



SIEW Official TV Sponsor



SIEW Opening  
Reception Sponsor



Youth at SIEW Reception Sponsor



SIEW Lanyard  
Sponsor



SES Networking  
Reception Sponsor



Official Airline



Organised by:



Held In:



[Site Map](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Disclaimer](#)

© Copyright 2013 Singapore International Energy Week. All rights reserved.

Powered by GlobalSignIn