



TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE: THINKING OUTSIDE THE WATER BOX

Climate change is a major threat to all aspects of human development and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, the world is in the midst of a water crisis, and climate change will only exacerbate this already critical situation.

- About 1.2 billion people – almost one-fifth of the world's population – live in areas of physical water scarcity, and 1.6 billion people face economic water shortage. Nearly all of them live in developing countries.¹
- It has been estimated that by 2025 the proportion of the world's population living in significantly water-stressed countries will increase from 34 per cent (1995) to 63 per cent – some 6 billion people.²

The poorest people, who often live in the least productive, fragile environments, are highly vulnerable to climatic impacts on water and they are hit first and hardest.

What's needed? Action, not rhetoric – the 4 'I's of implementation

Given the critical importance of water to all areas of life, Tearfund believes that the water sector should be a priority for climate change adaptation funding. The following recommendations are crucial next steps for the water sector in ensuring that effective and sustainable adaptation takes place.

1) INTEGRATION

Integration between sectors is critical to development planning and for ensuring that action is sustainable in the long term.

Governments and donors must:

- Integrate climate risk-based approaches, which address climate variability and climate change, within international and national water policy frameworks.
- Work towards 'linked-up' cross-sectoral approaches (eg synergy with land, agricultural, mining and energy sectors) to water resources planning – and ensure that climate risk is considered systematically within these approaches.

¹ Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture (2007) *Water for food, water for life: a comprehensive assessment of water management in agriculture*, London: Earthscan, and Colombo: International Water Management Institute.

² Simms A., et al (2004) *Up in Smoke? Threats from, and responses to, the impact of global warming on human development*, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London.

2) INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

To move towards an integrative approach, institutions need to be strong enough to allow effective cross-department synergy and policy development, and to draw on lessons learnt from the local level.

Governments and donors must:

- Give technical and financial support to government institutional frameworks in the water sector at national and local levels.
- Support the decentralisation process for the water sector, including efforts to strengthen related institutional, legal and regulatory components and build technical and financial capacity.

3) INVESTMENT

The latest science, existing and predicted impacts of climate change, and the current experience and needs of the poorest and most vulnerable communities, all demand substantially scaled-up investment in adaptation. This needs to be applied within the water sector.

Governments and donors must:

- Invest in targeting differentiated solutions to managing water resources according to the needs of different groups. Communities which are particularly vulnerable to climate change should be prioritised and appropriate sustainable solutions pursued.
- Strengthen local adaptive capacity by supporting localised water resources approaches and by exploring options for how to replicate them at scale.



4) INFORMATION AND INVOLVEMENT

We cannot make plans without information, and we must ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable communities inform our planning.

Governments and donors must:

- Ensure that climate risk information, where available, is made widely accessible and is used to inform international and national water policy and strategic planning.
- Empower communities to participate in water resources planning and management, so the poorest people can actively use political systems to help meet their water needs.
- Plan for change as livelihoods and cultures alter as a result of climate change and water scarcity. For example, by providing access to information and learning opportunities on the subject of income diversification.

These recommendations are based on field research carried out in Niger and north-east Brazil. The work aimed to identify the steps needed to integrate climate change adaptation within the water sector to benefit poor and vulnerable people. The subsequent report, **Separate streams? Adapting water resources management to climate change**, was launched at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference in December 2008. Please contact Mari Williams on mari.williams@tearfund.org for more information about Tearfund's work on water and climate change, or access the full report here:

<http://tilz.tearfund.org/Research>

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tearfund

www.tearfund.org

100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 8977 9144

Registered Charity No. 265464 (England and Wales)
Registered Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland)

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