IDS IN FOCUS

Research and analysis from the
Institute of Development Studies

Towards 'Climate Smart' Organisations

Development and environment organisations are increasingly seeking to become 'climate smart'. This involves managing risks from the current and future climate while taking advantage of opportunities presented by climate change. Leading UK development and environment organisations and research institutes discussed their efforts to achieve this ideal at a meeting convened by IDS and WWF UK in October 2007. Their sharing of experiences highlighted some of the processes required to help organisations become 'climate smart'. This In Focus presents these findings and aims to support other organisations, including those just embarking on engaging with climate change issues.

Drivers of change

A number of key factors are driving organisational responses to climate change. Greater scientific understanding and growing experiences of impacts have fuelled demand for emissions reductions and adaptation. The globally unequal distribution in causes and impacts has underpinned a justice dimension to action and campaigning around adaptation. More recently the threat posed by climate impacts to an organisation's activities and objectives has become a strong driver for change.

The availability of financial resources specifically directed at climate change has become a strong supply-side driver. Political, media and supporter interests are now major push factors for agencies to demonstrate responsiveness, innovation, leadership on climate change and their own green credentials.

Pathways to becoming 'climate smart'

Organisations have to be transformed at a number of levels to become 'climate smart'. 'Climate smart' organisations have a clear organisational mandate and strategy on climate change brought about, and implemented through, top-level political will and leadership across the organisation. Mainstreaming into every aspect of the project cycle is key with climate change issues reflected within programmes and activities as built-in, rather than bolt-on, initiatives. Becoming 'climate smart', and thereby fully adapting to climate change, is an incremental and ongoing process which consists of three phases:

- **Phase one:** Pioneers build the case for an organisational response to tackling climate change, drawing on available scientific knowledge and advice from experts and partner organisations on risks and strategy. Pioneers may focus efforts on internal awareness raising and external networking.

- **Phase two:** Pioneers, or champions, draw in more human resources, possibly building a dedicated team and establishing a vision and strategy for

What does 'climate smart' mean?

Being 'climate smart' describes an organisation's ability to manage existing and future climate change risks while taking advantage of opportunities associated with climate change.

mainstreaming within the organisation. Assessing internal green credentials may be an effective way of building interest and collective action across an organisation. Organisations begin to focus on knowledge management and communication of messages internally and externally.

- **Phase three:** Climate change has been internalised and mainstreamed into the organisation's fabric, through its mandate, strategy and operational plans. Climate change can be seen in top-level statements and this reflection of political will is further reflected in its funding and programme of activities.

Towards 'Climate Smart' Organisations

> ❝ Becoming 'climate smart', and thereby fully adapting to climate change, is an incremental and ongoing process which consists of three phases. ❞

Organisations are likely to engage in risk screening of programmes and infrastructure. Communication of credible knowledge on climate change is likely to be prioritised to empower supporters to engage, enable adaptation, and make a credible case for political action. Well-resourced staff are able to maintain the mainstreaming process. Phase three does not signify a cessation of efforts but reveals a shift towards becoming a 'climate smart' organisation.

Each phase is associated with a set of actors, tools, processes and resources, as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The phases and attributes of becoming 'climate smart'

Phase / Attribute	1. Pioneer	2. Emergence	3. Maturity
Dominant focus	Building the case	Fostering action	Mainstreaming
Primary actors	Individual pioneers	Set of champions, partners	Well-resourced staff / experts
Key tools	Internal lobbying, external coalitions	Campaigns, internal audit, advocacy, external coalitions, pilot schemes, knowledge management	Visioning and horizon scanning exercises, strategic mandate, operational plans, monitoring and evaluation tools, communications strategy
Key processes	Discussion, building coalitions, raising awareness	Collating evidence, linking to other sectors, coherence with partners, internal reflection, strategy development,	Strategy implementation, risk screening and project cycle integration, reflection and learning
Resources	Limited (voluntary, individuals)	Growing (networks, transformation team)	Established (policy team, resourced posts)

Next steps

Identifying these phases is not to suggest that organisational transformation is uncomplicated or smooth; a range of challenges complicate and frustrate the process. Indeed all the organisations involved in the consultation are at different stages and facing challenges unique to their context. While many organisations are currently moving from the second to the third phase, with top-level support, high profile campaigns and innovative adaptation initiatives in the field, some are just entering the first phase.

Suggesting possible pathways for change, grounded in experience, can assist organisations in becoming 'climate smart'. Further research and shared learning in the following areas could strengthen organisational transformation:

- Further tools to guide the mainstreaming process such as vulnerability assessments, risk screening approaches and carbon footprinting, emissions reductions and offsetting strategies

- Clearer indicators and tools for monitoring and evaluating the climate change mainstreaming process to enable organisations to continue reflection and learning

- Stronger partnerships between development and climate science communities to address scientific uncertainty in developing adaptation options and processes.

IDS Institute of Development Studies

WWF *for a living planet*®