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## Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation in Developing Countries

The effects of climate change pose a severe threat to human development and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Donors, governments and NGOs are increasingly addressing these risks by incorporating climate change adaptation into their work. Yet mainstreaming adaptation into development planning, programmes and budgeting faces a series of barriers and remains in its early stages in most developing countries. This joint research by IDS and Tearfund highlights certain successful adaptation strategies and makes recommendations for the future.

### Adapting to climate change

Until recently the development community seldom considered the risks posed by climate change to lives and livelihoods during development planning. But climate change adaptation is rapidly growing in importance on the development agenda. The 2005 Commission for Africa Report recommended that from 2008 donors should make climate change risk factors an integral part of their project planning.

Mainstreaming adaptation has been limited in most countries, although exceptions include small island developing states in the Pacific and Caribbean countries. The varied and far-reaching barriers and opportunities to mainstreaming include issues around information, institutions, inclusion, incentives and international finance. Critically, there is insufficient research on the extent to which adaptation has been

integrated within Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

### Mainstreaming adaptation: Progress to date

Caribbean countries were among the first to start work on adaptation with the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change (CPACC) project in 1997. This is partly due to their vulnerability to climate change because of environmental factors, such as exposure to extreme weather, and economic realities, including their relative isolation and size. Elsewhere, the Pacific island of Kiribati has successfully integrated adaptation into national development strategies from within the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and later from the Office of the President. This shows the effectiveness of coordinating adaptation from within an important ministry.

International donors and research institutions are also playing a part in advancing the mainstreaming process. The World Bank and Asian Development Bank are leading the way in making current and future investments more resilient to climate change. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting adaptation through disaster risk reduction programmes, including raising house levels in a low-lying region in the north of Bangladesh.

### Recommendations for mainstreaming adaptation

Challenges and opportunities involved in mainstreaming climate change adaptation:

**Information:** There is a general lack of awareness among policy-makers and development practitioners about the risks posed by climate change, and how these relate to development priorities. Raising

“ The varied and far-reaching barriers and opportunities to mainstreaming include issues around information, institutions, inclusion, incentives and international finance. ”

awareness of the likely impacts of climate change remains a key priority, particularly among senior politicians and high level policy-makers. Governments will need to engage more actively with the scientific community, who must provide easily accessible and up-to-date climate risk information relevant to the demands of different sectors. Improving the capacity of developing countries to generate such information within the country is a crucial building block for enhancing the effectiveness of information flow.

**Institutions:** Experience suggests that successful mainstreaming is heavily dependent on addressing key aspects of organisational and institutional learning. One common barrier cited is that housing climate change in environmental or meteorology departments of government leads to limited leverage on the issue. Similarly, government departments responsible for poverty and disaster risk reduction are in some cases aware of vulnerability to extreme climate events, but have no means of co-ordination, which leads to the development of parallel efforts in all three areas. Multi-stakeholder national co-ordination committees, chaired by a ministry with power, should be formed to manage the national adaptation strategy.

**Inclusion:** It is rare to find participation of a broad range of stakeholders in policy-making related to

climate change. Civil society in particular has commonly had little or no voice in national policy-making. The process of identifying risks and resulting interventions must be inclusive, so that experiences are shared among different actors and adaptation strategies can be supported through collaboration and a sense of ownership.

**Incentives:** Climate change mainstreaming has much to learn from political science in focusing attention on incentive structures for individuals, organisations and institutions. These include early attention to regulatory and bureaucratic issues when considering policy implementation, as well as transaction costs of changing to a different set of adaptive practices. The mainstreaming fatigue experienced by many engaged in international development and elsewhere must also be tackled by creating positive and recognisable goals, and avoiding replication with other parallel processes.

**International Development Finance:** Developed countries must shoulder part of the burden for mainstreaming, both in the context of development aid and assistance to developing countries on the process and implementation of climate change adaptation. In this regard, donors should support research and monitoring and evaluation of the mainstreaming process, to develop understanding of what contributes to effective enabling environments.

## Further Reading

Tom Mitchell, Thomas Tanner and Emily Wilkinson (2006) *Overcoming the Barriers: Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation in Developing Countries*, Tearfund Climate Change Briefing Paper 1, Middlesex: Tearfund

## Credits

This In Focus was written by **Tom Mitchell** and **Guy Collender** and edited by **Emily Polack**. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IDS or any of the other institutions involved.

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