

IDS IN FOCUS

Research and analysis from the
Institute of Development Studies

ISSUE 02
CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION
NOVEMBER 2007

Embedding Climate Change Adaptation in Development Processes

Today climate change adaptation is a mainstream development issue. The UK Government-commissioned Stern Review last year analysed the economics of adaptation and NGO campaigns have focused on its justice and equity dimensions. The challenge now is to embed adaptation within wider development debates and practices. This issue of In Focus comprises eight two-page briefing notes on a variety of topics related to adaptation. They draw on research conducted by IDS Fellows and their research partners to highlight ongoing work on reducing vulnerability and poverty in a changing climate.

The IDS Bulletin *Vulnerability, Adaptation and Climate Disasters* (Yamin and Huq 2005) called for efforts to ensure that poor people benefit from adaptation processes. Three headline questions were set out in the Bulletin's final chapter, entitled Linking Climate Adaptation: A Research Agenda (Yamin, Mitchell and Tanner 2005). These questions provide a framework for the work presented in these briefing notes:

- Who is vulnerable and how do sources of vulnerability change over time in response to multiple stressors?
- What are the costs and benefits of adaptation to climate change?
- How can adaptation be integrated into development and disaster risk reduction at multiple levels of governance?

Since 2005 adaptation has become a mainstream development issue. Evidence suggests that climate change impacts are

already affecting the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. There has also been an influx of funding for work linking adaptation to development, such as the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) programme funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). These financial resources are increasingly being delivered through mechanisms outside the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a product of the relative inaction on adaptation in international negotiations and the challenges posed in ensuring adaptation finance benefits the most vulnerable people.

Findings so far

Thomas Tanner and Tom Mitchell (In Focus 02.2) examine how climate change adaptation can help reduce chronic poverty, an analysis predicated on differentiating poverty and vulnerability in

What is Climate Change Adaptation?

Adaptation is the process or outcome of a process that leads to a reduction in harm or risk of harm, or realisation of benefits associated with climate variability and climate change. (Richendra Connell and Robert Willows (eds.) (2003) *Climate Adaptation: Risk, Uncertainty and Decision-Making*, Technical Report, Oxford: UK Climate Impacts Programme).

the context of climate change. This helps ground Mark Davies and Jennifer Leavy's investigation (In Focus 02.3) of the value of social protection as an adaptation strategy, which highlights the temporal and spatial dimensions of vulnerability and assesses social protection approaches for reducing climate change risk. Tom Mitchell and Katharine Haynes (In Focus

“ The challenge now is to embed adaptation within wider development debates and practices. ”

02.4) reflect on how child-centred climate and disaster programming helps to secure pathways out of poverty for children and their families.

Thomas Tanner addresses the risks and opportunities of climate change and how they influence the targeting of development assistance (In Focus 02.5). His discussion of climate risk screening tools relating to bilateral donors investigates how decision-makers can assess the costs and benefits of adaptation for poverty reduction programmes and how vulnerability to the current climate can shape future adaptation programming.

With recognition of adaptation as a mainstream development issue, much research is dedicated to exploring how best to foster climate resilience, whether in the work of development agencies or with scales of governance. Emily Polack and Eun Choi's (In Focus 02.6) study of what makes for climate resilient urban governance considers how traditional conceptions of good urban governance need to change if cities are able to successfully adapt to climate change impacts. Tom Mitchell and Guy Collender's (In Focus 02.7) review of the adaptation mainstreaming experiences of developing country governments unearths a series of climate change-related challenges and opportunities for national scale governance given that many countries have yet to develop effective institutions to tackle the problem. Likewise, by examining how development agencies are seeking to become 'climate smart', Thomas Tanner and Tom Mitchell (In Focus 02.8) establish a framework for helping organisations to consider ways they can actively manage risks from the current and future climate, while taking advantage of opportunities presented by climate change.

Future research

A clear research strategy based on IDS' strengths is now being communicated to IDS' external partners. The strategy comprises five thematic areas:

- **International Climate Change Policy:** This work supports international platforms to develop shared visions and increase global capacity for an equitable post-2012 climate change regime. Research questions coalesce around determining what kind of climate change actions best fit with national circumstances, interests and priorities.
- **Pro-poor Climate and Disaster Governance:** This theme centres on exploring how governance structures, at all levels, can ensure that communities most vulnerable to climate shocks and stresses are able to engage in, and benefit from, adaptation and disaster risk reduction programmes.
- **Organisational Response:** This research assesses the implications of climate change for the development programmes of NGOs and bilateral donors, asking how certain tools can aid the mainstreaming process while effectively incorporating uncertainty and vulnerability dynamics.
- **Children in a Changing Climate:** This work poses questions around children's ability to claim their right to adaptation, their role as communicators of climate risk within the household and beyond and their voice and participation in decision-making bodies.
- **Networks and Knowledge Services on Climate Change and Disasters:** IDS hosts a wealth of networks and knowledge services on climate change and disasters. This constitutes an unrivalled resource, but one which must be marshalled and tailored to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable in their efforts to adapt. Assessing how to build knowledge assets, which help to improve livelihoods in the context of climate change, is a fundamental part of this challenge.

Further Reading

Farhana Yamin and Saleemul Huq (eds) (2005) *Vulnerability, Adaptation and Climate Disasters*, IDS Bulletin 36.4, Brighton: IDS

Farhana Yamin, Tom Mitchell and Thomas Tanner (2005) *Linking Climate Adaptation: A Research Agenda*, in Farhana Yamin and Saleemul Huq (eds), see above.

Credits

This In Focus was written by **Tom Mitchell** and **Thomas Tanner** and edited by **Guy Collender** and **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.

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from issues of In Focus in their own publications. In return, IDS requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication.

© Institute of Development Studies, 2007, ISSN 1479-974X