

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Resources Management

Water is the primary medium through which climate change will impact people, ecosystems and economies. Water resources management should therefore be an early focus for adaptation to climate change. It does not hold all of the answers to adaptation; a broad range of responses will be needed. But water is both part of the problem and an important part of the solution. It is a good place to start.

Achieving and sustaining water security, broadly defined as harnessing water's productive potential and limiting its destructive potential, provides a focus for adaptation strategies and a framework for action. For countries that have not achieved water security, climate change will make it harder. For those who have enjoyed water security, it may prove hard to sustain. All are likely to need to channel additional resources to water resource management.

A focus on water security is a sound early adaptation strategy that will deliver immediate benefits to vulnerable and underserved populations, thus advancing the Millennium Development Goals, while strengthening systems and capacity for longer-term climate risk management.

A water secure world will need investment in the three I's: better and more accessible Information, stronger and more adaptable Institutions, and natural and man-made Infrastructure to store, transport and treat water. These needs will manifest at all levels – in projects, communities, nations, river basins and globally. Balancing and sequencing a mix of 'soft' (institutional and capacity) and 'hard' (infrastructure) investment responses will be complex. Information, consultation and adaptive management will be essential.

Furthermore, tough trade-offs are likely to be unavoidable in balancing equity, environmental and economic priorities. Finding the right mix of the three I's (information, institutions and infrastructure) to achieve the desired balance between the three E's (equity, environment and economics), will be the 'art of adaptation' in water management.

Financial resources will be needed to build a water secure world. Water management is weakest in the poorest countries. The poorest countries suffer the greatest climate variability today and are predicted to face the greatest negative impacts of climate change in the future. Investment in national water resources management capacity, institutions and infrastructure should therefore be a priority for mainstreaming adaptation finance. Mainstreamed funding will help ensure that long term capacity is built and retained in the institutions that are going to have to cope with these unfolding changes.

In some transboundary basins the best adaptation investments for any individual country may lie outside its borders, for example in basin-wide monitoring systems or investments in joint infrastructure and/or operating systems in a neighbouring country. Strategies should look beyond single-country solutions, to generate public goods and to promote cooperative transboundary river basin solutions where they are cost effective and in the best interest of all riparians.

Source:

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