



# **CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: AT THE CORE OF DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION**





## THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING – SO MUST WE

Human beings are remarkably good at adapting to new things – a new school, a new office, a new house all become familiar quite quickly. But some things are tougher to get used to – a changing climate, for example. In October 2009, the village of Katot in Cambodia was hit by a flood, sinking roads and fields under two meters of water. The village was 10km away from the river, so the villagers never imagined that a flood could affect them.

### The poorest suffer the most

Stories like the one from Katot will become more and more frequent in the near future. We need to find ways to adapt to climate change – and reducing greenhouse gases will not suffice.

The effects of climate change on lives and livelihoods are particularly serious in developing countries, where all too often families and communities depend on climate-related activities, such as agriculture and forestry. Yet people in these situations have limited financial and technical capacity to adapt to climate change and protect themselves against the associated risks.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Typical risks associated with climate change	
Water stress	Increased evaporation loss; reduced coastal water supply
Food stress	Reduced water supply and precipitation; higher temperatures; more extreme weather
Human health hazards	Higher temperatures, heat waves; increases in water-borne and vector-borne diseases
Coastal zone threats	Sea-level rise; floods, storms, cyclones
Mountain region threats	Glacier retreat; glacier lake expansion; flooding from melted glaciers

### “Development as usual” is not an option

Some may argue that the best way to adapt to climate change is simply to continue with “development as usual”, building up each country’s resources and capacity to adapt. Unfortunately, the solution is not so simple. Continuing development as usual without giving due consideration to climate-associated risks can actually increase vulnerability. For example, large-scale planting of drought-sensitive crops can backfire if climate change increases the frequency of droughts. This is referred to as “maladaptation”. In order to avoid maladaptation, development policies must be designed with consideration of how they will be affected by climate change.

## FIVE PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR ADAPTATION

Many international donors recognise that they should support developing countries in integrating climate change adaptation into their decision-making. Yet the question they often ask themselves is: how? The OECD publication *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation* offers important guidance, summarised in the following five key action areas.

### 1. Develop up-to-date information on climate trends and associated risks

In order to incorporate adaptation concerns into decision making, it is indispensable to have information on how the climate is going to change and what risks are associated with this. In developing countries, this kind of information is often lacking or insufficient. Efforts to gather and disseminate such information should not rest solely on the shoulders of meteorological agencies. All actors, including civil society organisations and the private sector can contribute to by collecting information in their respective levels, locations or sectors.

### 2. Identify low-regret options

Although climate-related information is indispensable, there will always be a certain degree of uncertainty. For this reason, it is important to identify and adopt measures that will benefit development regardless of future climate trends. Examples include water conservation and enhanced public health systems, among others. There is no reason not to adopt these low-regret options.

### 3. Allocate adequate financial resources

Implementation of any policy decision requires funding. Climate change adaptation should be one of the primary considerations in deciding where money goes, particularly in the sectors, areas and communities that are most vulnerable – agriculture, coastal areas and poor communities, to name a few. They should be the first to receive the financial resources they need to adapt to climate change.

### 4. Engage all relevant stakeholders at all levels

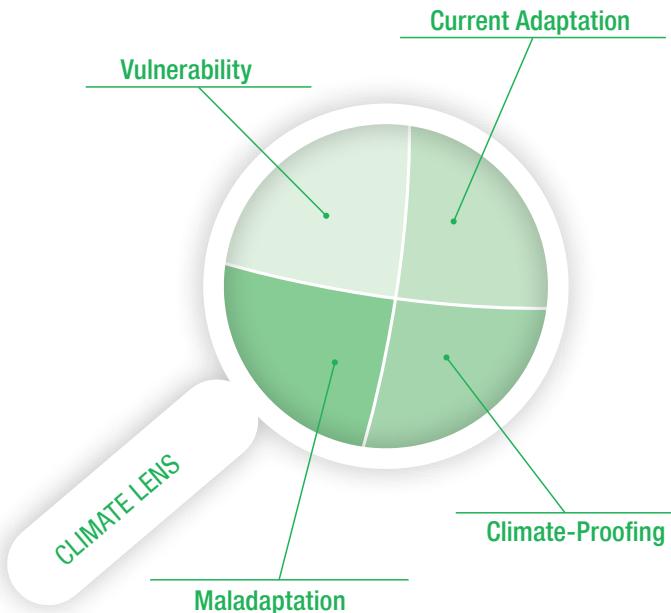
Climate change adaptation affects virtually all sectors at all levels. It is crucial, therefore, that related decisions are made in consultation with all relevant stakeholders: national ministries, local government, the private sector, civil society organisations, academia and local citizens, among others. Insufficient stakeholder engagement may result in overlooking important risks, or even in increasing vulnerability.

### 5. Raise awareness among governments, donors and people

At present, attention to climate change adaptation is not necessarily a high priority in many developing countries. This is partly because climate change is a long-term process, and therefore takes the back seat to other, seemingly more urgent concerns. Sometimes climate change adaptation even escapes peoples' awareness completely. Farmers, for example, may think: "We had a bad drought this year, but it will be better next year", instead of recognising the long-term threat. This is why raising awareness about the risks associated with climate change – at all levels – is essential.

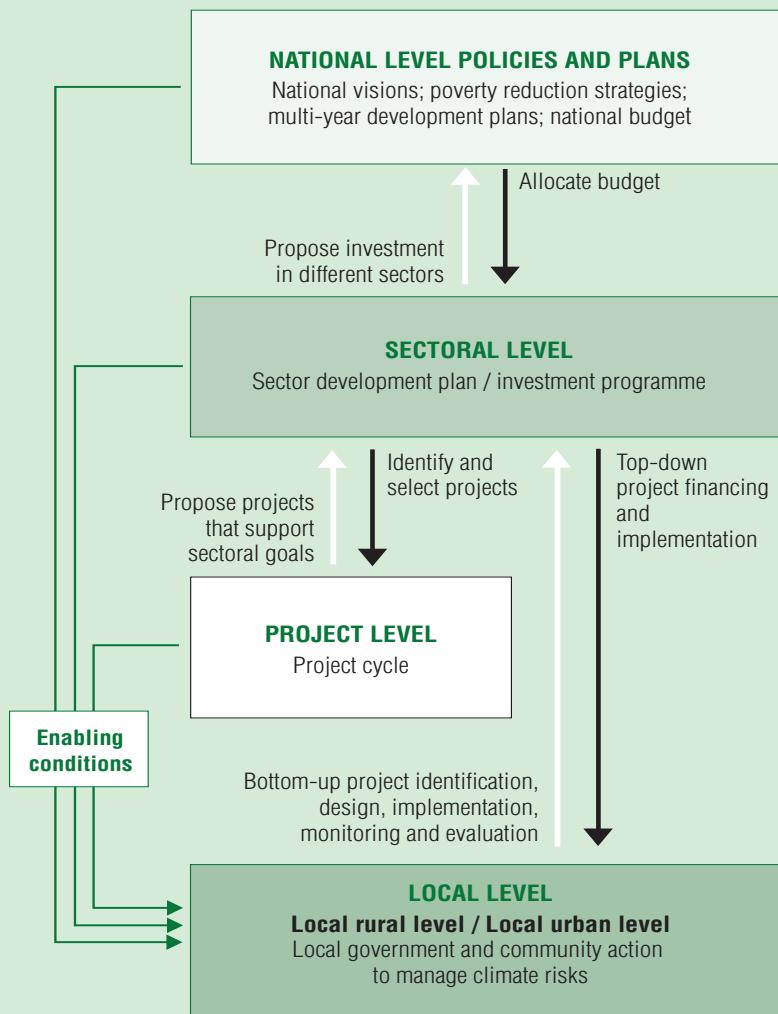
## THE CLIMATE LENS: AN ALL-ROUND POLICY TOOL

To help decision makers analyse the needs and options for climate change adaptation in all their policy choices, the OECD has developed a practical tool known as the “climate lens”. In essence, it implies asking four questions about any decision:



Using the climate lens	
<b>Q1: VULNERABILITY</b>	How vulnerable is the decision to climate change?
<b>Q2: CURRENT ADAPTATION</b>	To what extent have climate change risks already been taken into account?
<b>Q3 MALADAPTATION</b>	Does the decision increase vulnerability to climate change or overlook opportunities for adaptation?
<b>Q4: CLIMATE-PROOFING</b>	Can the decision be amended to take into account the risks posed by climate change?

The climate lens can be applied on many levels and in many contexts. It can be used not only to develop new strategies, but also to revise existing policies or regulations. *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation* outlines how the climate lens can be used to analyze differing realities at the national, sectoral, project and local levels.



# 1

## THE NATIONAL LEVEL: WHERE FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS ARE SET

Decisions taken at the national level are crucial – because they affect all other sub-level decisions, and because they can be used to coordinate strategies among different sectors, regions and stakeholders.

### Make yourself heard

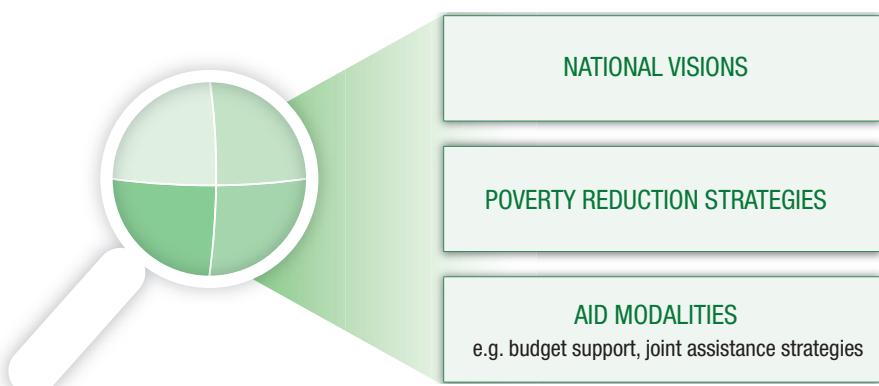
The most important role of national level decision makers is to ensure that the importance of climate change adaptation is recognised explicitly in important policies, such as national visions and poverty reduction strategies. This recognition paves the way for other sub-level decision makers to address adaptation concerns. It is also important that existing policies with substantial adaptation elements – such as policies for disaster risk reduction and national adaptation action plans – usefully feed into other areas of policy making.

### Co-ordinate powerfully

Promoting recognition of the importance of climate change adaptation should be the job of a powerful central body, such as the office of the President or the Prime Minister. Adaptation cuts across many – if not all – sectors, and leaving it to the hands of single ministry or agency (such as Ministry of Environment) lowers the political profile of the issue, as well as the chances for effective co-ordination.

### Adapt aid modalities

Donors are well placed to assist developing countries in incorporating adaptation concerns into their decision making. To begin with, they can ensure that their own aid modalities, such as direct budget support and country or joint assistance strategies, are climate-proofed. During in-depth consultations with developing countries, donors also can make use of dialogue with senior level decision-makers to bring home the need for alertness to climate change.



# 2

## THE SECTOR LEVEL: WHERE INVESTMENT DECISIONS ARE MADE

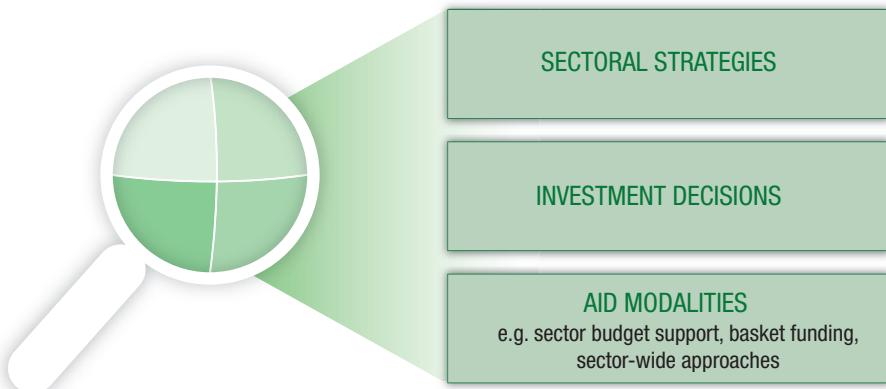
National development strategies are translated into investment and policy decisions at the sector level. Certain sectors are particularly vulnerable to climate change (for example, agriculture, public works, forestry, fisheries, water resources management and energy) and the response options are highly sector-specific. In addition, sector level strategies often entail investments – for instance in transport or land-use – that have long-lasting physical impact. To avoid the high costs of modifying decisions after the fact (for example, stopping road construction when it is nearly complete), it is critical that such plans consider climate and how it will affect projects and plans.

### Develop capacity

Applying the climate lens at the sector level can help decision-makers envisage sector-specific risks and response options, and incorporate adaptation into their planning. But because line ministries may lack experience in assessing climate-related risks in their sector and in gauging the costs and benefits of adaptation measures , they need to develop in-house capacity.

### Donors can help

Donors can draw on a number of existing aid modalities and approaches to help – including sector budget support, basket funding and sector-wide approaches.



# 3

## THE PROJECT LEVEL: WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD

Many decisions made at higher levels result in projects with specific budgets, locations and durations. But these projects are often in turn constrained by decisions made in the higher tiers. For example, the location of major roads may be determined at the sector level, with project managers unable to change it. This underscores the importance of wise high-level decision making, and of interaction among the various decision-making levels. Application of the climate lens at the project level is still important, however, as inadequate project design can easily result in maladaptation, even if decisions at the higher level incorporate adaptation concerns.

### Use the tools that exist

A practical way to use the climate lens is by employing existing in-depth climate risk assessment tools – such as the Assessment and Design for Adaptation to Climate Change (ADAPT), developed by the World Bank, or the Community-Based Risk Screening Tool: Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRiSTAL), developed by multiple institutions. The use of such tools help avoid maladaptation, and climate-proof projects.

### Don't stop there

Even when these assessment tools are used, project-level decisions may suffer from lack of downscaled climate change information, as climate projections tend to be uncertain at the area-specific level. Scientific efforts to improve the availability of such data are fundamental. In parallel, interaction with local actors – government, civil society and the private sector, for instance – can help supplement local climate risk information.

Using the climate lens: road planning		
A road plan under the climate lens	QUESTIONS	SAMPLE ANSWERS
	How vulnerable is the road plan to climate change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The region contains coastal zones, which may be vulnerable to sea-level rise and cyclones.</li></ul>
	To what extent have climate change risks already been incorporated in the road plan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Two-meter dikes are being planned.</li></ul>
	Does the road plan increase climate vulnerability or miss opportunities for adaptation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Roads built close to coastal zones may have increased vulnerability to sea-level rise.</li><li>A road may expand the residential area near the coast.</li></ul>
	Can the road plan be amended to address risks posed by climate change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The road should stay away from the coastline wherever possible.</li><li>If the road must run close to the coast, higher dikes should be built and early warning systems for drivers prepared.</li><li>People should be discouraged from settling close to the coastline.</li></ul>

# 4

## THE LOCAL LEVEL: WHERE CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES ADAPT

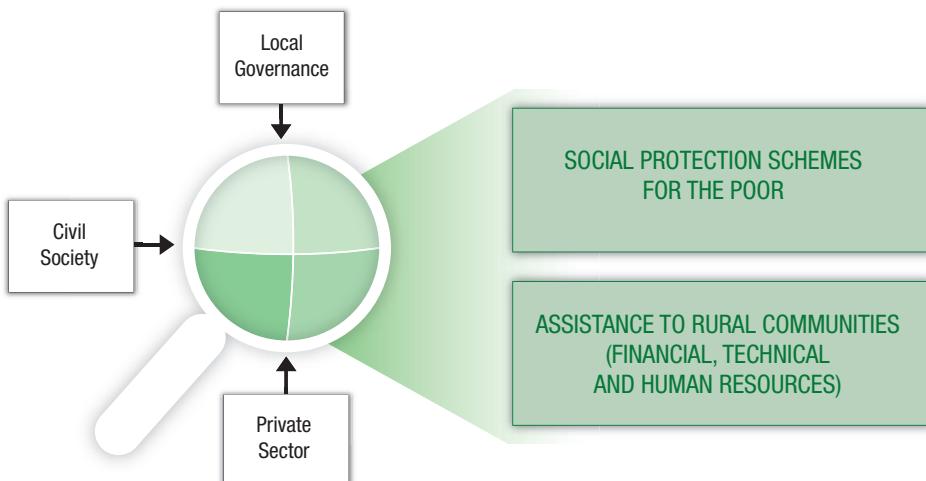
*Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation* pays special attention to the local level because climate vulnerability – and adaptation options – can be very different depending on geographical, economic and social factors. Strategies developed at the higher level cannot always take into account such diverse local contexts.

### Put the poor first

Rural and urban settings are very different in how vulnerable they are to climate change. Rural communities depend on natural resources for their livelihoods which makes them extremely vulnerable to climate change. Yet at the same time, the urban poor often lack affordable housing that will protect them from extreme weather and floods. In all cases, poverty is a critical vulnerability factor. The poor are likely to suffer most from climate-induced changes, and therefore local policies should ensure that extra care is taken to protect them.

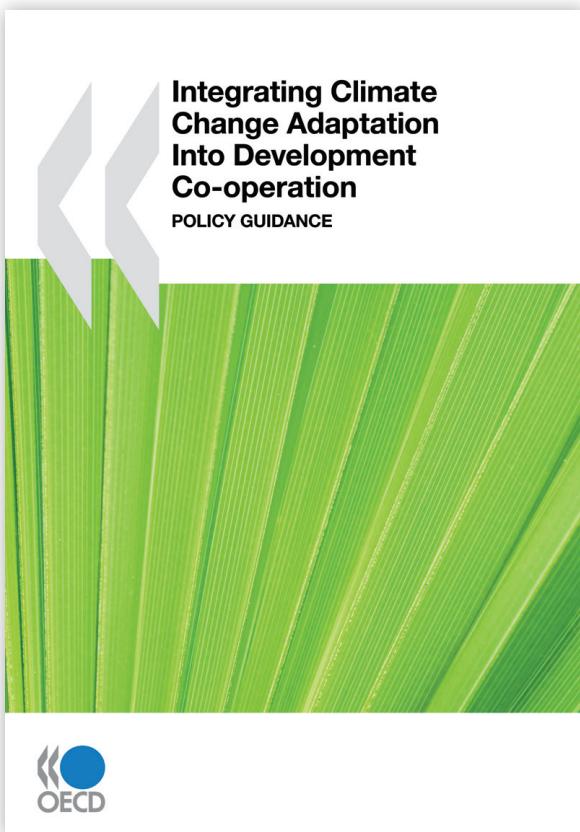
### Identify missing pieces of the puzzle

Faced with so complex and multi-faceted a challenge, local governments need to compensate for things the higher tiers may have missed. By building supportive institutional frameworks – such as social protection schemes for the urban poor or financial, technical and human resources for rural communities – local officials can bolster effective adaptation. Fortunately, local governments are not alone. Civil society associations can play an important role, offering assistance in advocacy, research, raising local awareness and building capacity, for example. The private sector can also contribute strong political influence, as well as financial, technical and human resources. In particular, pro-poor insurance schemes can offer important financial protection. The climate lens can help these actors to take into account risks and options for adaptation.



## SUMMING UP

The climate is changing and so must we. This is particularly important for development cooperation, as developing countries are home to the most vulnerable. The climate lens – used at all decision levels – can reduce vulnerability. Readers are encouraged to take a look at *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation* for further details and illustrative case studies.



This brochure is an introduction to the OECD Policy Guidance *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation*. The document can be downloaded at: [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/9/43652123.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/9/43652123.pdf)

