

Presentation

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WEEK

Coping with climate change

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Major Insights from 2009

- Adaptation is a pressing moral responsibility to communities that are already struggling with climate change impacts; we are already coping with the social, economic, political, and cultural turmoil from climate change.
- Water is the medium through which most ecosystems, societies, economies, and cultures will experience climate change.
- The water community is not engaging effectively with policymakers on adaptation, and policymakers are seen as not having listened to or responded effectively to existing adaptation needs. Current policy efforts are not holistic, deliberative, or anticipatory.
- The financial sector can either enable or distort the adaptation process at national, international, and micro-finance levels; climate-aware funding and insurance instruments will be critical to developing resilience.

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Opportunities for Progress

- We already know most of the elements of good adaptation practice, such as IWRM (Integrated Water Resource Management). New elements include focusing on assessing vulnerability, managing risk to extreme events and tipping points, and addressing uncertainty in climate projections.
- “Natural” or “soft” approaches to water management infrastructure should be more widely used, such as the use of wetlands for flood control.
- All current and future development funding should enable adaptation in order to enhance water security.

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Challenges and obstacles to progress

- The UNFCCC and NAPAs are felt to be irrelevant to meaningful adaptation practice today, but these institutions should become relevant. For COP15, this might include the incorporation of the Nairobi Statement of Land and Water Management for Climate Adaptation.
- Adaptation must be grounded in sustainable ecosystem management; people and ecosystems should be recognized as the center of good adaptation practice.
- In most cases, the loss of critical ecosystem services is irreversible. This loss often results from policies or practices that assume climate stationarity.
- In many regions, climate change impacts are exacerbating gender inequities in relation to water; capacity building should have a gender-cognizant perspective.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

- Adaptation is a process, and this process has already begun in many places.
- Highly exposed and/or sensitive regions and groups (“hot spots”) should be prioritized for rapid climate adaptation interventions.
- Information and the access to information should be immediate for communities. Capacity development and knowledge sharing should be open access, bottom-up, top-down, lateral, south-north, and gender-cognizant. Target groups should include: local communities, decision makers, the water management community, and international and multi-lateral institutions.