



CLIMATE AND SOCIETY PUBLICATION SERIES

Climate impacts on the lives and livelihoods of millions of poor people around the world, and thus on poverty eradication efforts such as the Millennium Development Goals. In order to be effective, any investments in agriculture, human health, water resources and infrastructure must consider these impacts. The *Climate and Society* publication series is devoted to sharing knowledge and experience on climate-risk-management strategies developed to address these challenges.

Climate variability dominates rural food production and strongly influences hunger, health, access to water—and hence poverty—in so many countries. Integrated water-resource management is impossible without reliable information on climate variability. And yet the number of observation stations is in major decline. Mortality rates from diseases such as malaria are highly sensitive to climate, but we proceed as if climate variability is an inescapable fate, rather than an increasingly predictable and manageable part of our physical environment.

Development planners and resource managers must address these risks and acknowledge that future climatic conditions are bound to be substantially different from present ones. Meeting these challenges requires a substantial amount of coordination, capacity building and knowledge sharing.

Climate risk management (CRM) is an approach to climate-sensitive decision making that is increasingly seen as the way forward in dealing with climate variability and change. CRM seeks to promote sustainable development by reducing the vulnerability associated with climate risk. It involves proactive 'no regrets' strategies aimed at maximizing positive and minimizing negative outcomes for communities and societies in climate-sensitive areas.



IRI Director-General Steve Zebiak (third from right) discusses CRM with his colleagues at the U.N. COP12 in Nairobi

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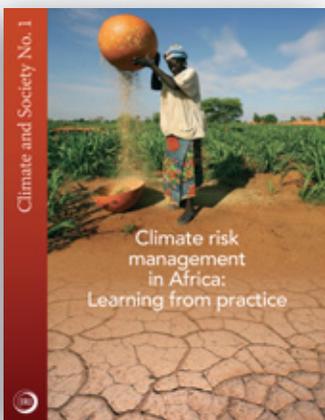


Somali refugees displaced once more as Tana River floods. C. Shirley/UNCHR

The 'no regrets' aspect of CRM means making decisions and taking action that not only address a specific climate threat but also make sense in development terms. Even if the climate threat never materializes, the development agenda still moves forward.

The aim of the *Climate and Society* publication series is to collect and disseminate knowledge and experience for the benefit of society, as together we respond to the challenges posed by climate change.

Issue 1: Climate Risk Management in Africa, Learning from Practice



The inaugural publication describes current efforts that are helping societies to better adapt to climate variability and change, and shows that when climate information successfully reaches vulnerable populations, it can be used to improve livelihoods and economies, and even save lives. The publication was launched in 2007 during a special session on Climate Change at the 8th African Union Heads-of-State Summit. The publication partners are the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa, the African Development Bank and the Global Climate Observing System.

Submit your ideas!

The success of the publication depends on our ability to tap into the collective wisdom and capacity of a wide range of stakeholders. Its success is also very much dependent upon our ability to reach decision makers and practitioners. With this in mind, we invite you to submit your experiences and ideas for future topics to be addressed in a *Climate and Society* publication. Please visit our website at: <http://www.iri.columbia.edu/climateandsociety> to download an application.

About the IRI

The IRI works on the development and implementation of strategies to manage climate related risks and opportunities. Building on a multidisciplinary core of expertise, IRI partners with research institutions and local stakeholders to best understand needs, risks and possibilities. The IRI supports sustainable development by bringing the best science to bear on managing climate risks in sectors such as agriculture, food security, water resources, and health. By providing practical advancements that enable better management of climate related risks and opportunities in the present, we are creating solutions that will increase adaptability to long term climate change. IRI is a member of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.