MANAGING CLIMATE RISKS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA: IRI-UNDP PARTNERSHIP

Global concern about the climate is rapidly growing. While much attention is focused on future changes in climate patterns, societies—especially developing countries—face significant climate risks today. While preparing for an increasingly uncertain climate, decision-makers must address today's climate risks to meet development needs. IRI and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have partnered to promote practical approaches to improve climate-related development outcomes, beginning with eight countries in Asia.

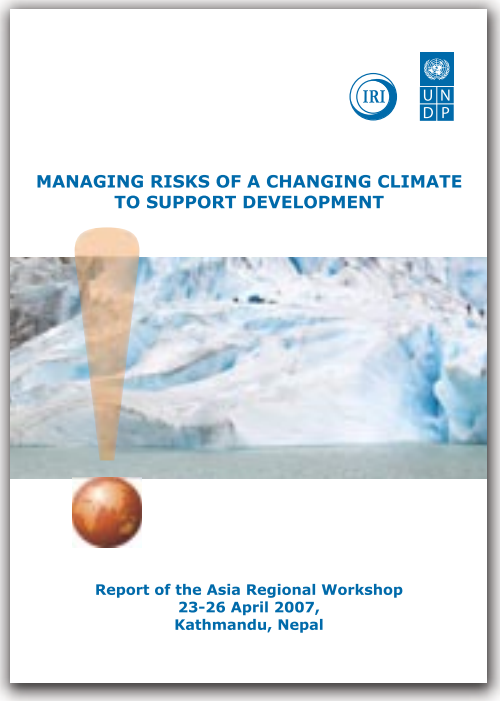
Climate affects multiple sectors including agriculture, water resources, and health. Climate variability triggers impacts such as crop failures, floods and droughts, and malaria epidemics. These types of impacts affect the ability of developing countries to achieve Millennium Development Goals related to poverty, hunger and human health. The need for anticipatory strategies has become even more urgent as resource demands increase through population growth and development. The poor are especially vulnerable to climate risks, often living in marginal areas with few assets to sustain them through disasters.

IRI and UNDP have developed a strategic approach to support the integration of strategies to manage climate risks into the development process. A critical aspect of the approach is its focus on spatial and temporal scales that matter to decision-makers. Climate risks today, and in the coming 20-30 years, are of greatest concern to policy makers as they plan to meet development needs. By addressing risks in this timeframe, climate risk management strategies can help decision-makers better manage climate extremes, and motivate investments in vulnerability reduction and capacity building.

Managing Risks of a Changing Climate: Asia Regional Workshop

IRI and UNDP launched this strategic approach in Asia through a regional workshop in April 2007 in Kathmandu, Nepal, entitled "Managing Risks of a Changing Climate to Support Development." The workshop offered a unique opportunity to bring together government leaders, UNDP country office staff, and sectoral and climate science experts to discuss country-specific challenges and approaches to managing climate risks. Participating countries included Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam.

The workshop emphasized the connections between work on disaster risk reduction, which focuses on risks in the near-term, and climate change adaptation, which tends to focus on projecting longer-term risks. It also sought to place climate risks in the context of other development trends, such as popu-



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lation growth and urban development, which will also increase vulnerability to climate impacts in the coming decades.

Representatives from government ministries focused on agriculture, water, disaster management, and environment, along with UNDP country staff, were able to discuss and identify priorities for managing risks today, and over the coming few decades. Each of the eight country teams produced a project concept to address particular climate risk management priorities, and identified critical partners and next steps. These concepts provide a concrete opportunity for engaging other country stakeholders in a process to better understand and address climate risks to agriculture, water resources, health and coastal urban development.

IRI, in partnership with UNDP, is committed to supporting these and other countries in Asia in developing pro-active and practical strategies, grounded in science, to help reduce vulnerabilities to climate risks as they pursue their development goals.

Project concepts from the eight country delegations

Bangladesh	Develop an assessment tool that measures both extent and effectiveness of mainstreaming of risk reduction efforts
Bhutan	Weather and climate forecasting for agricultural planning for national and sub-national food security
India	Godavari river basin water management
Indonesia	Improving watershed management for the community
Nepal	Agriculture planning and national and district food security
Philippines	Strengthening capacity to adapt to climate change
Sri Lanka	Improving water management of Mahaweli River Basin under current and future climate
Viet Nam	Climate-sensitive integrated water-resource management for key development sectors in the central coast

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.