



Indigenous groups protest during the International Hydropower Association's world congress in Sarawak, Malaysia in May 2013. Photo: SAVE Rivers Network

Conclusion

A river's goods and services lost to a large river engineering project are difficult to retrieve or replicate. While all nations will be impacted by climate destabilization, it is the marginalized and the poor who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the compounding impacts of large river infrastructure projects. Rising temperatures, more frequent extreme weather events, and shrinking water resources will worsen existing problems such as poverty, malnutrition, and disease. Members of national governments, academia and industry will need to come together with affected communities and civil society to develop climate-resilient adaptation and mitigation solutions that dramatically cut climate pollution without sacrificing the planet's lifelines upon which we currently depend.

As someone working on climate adaptation and development issues, you are uniquely placed to be the bridge between those who are most impacted by climate change, and the experts and decision-makers who have the resources and information to aid in the development of sustainable adaptation projects and programs.

This guide has laid out a series of actions that citizen's groups can take in order to ensure that climate risks are adequately **understood, assessed, and addressed**, before solutions can be found to **adapt** to climate change. The key recommendations are summed up here:

ASSESS:

- Conduct a community-level needs and capacity assessment.
- Help build capacity around climate change topics through research and consultation with climate experts.
- Empower women in the community at all stages of the adaptation process.
- Identify the risks and vulnerabilities, especially for marginalized groups.
- Combine top-down with bottom-up approaches in order to avoid gaps in information.
- Assess the climate risks of existing water infrastructure projects by asking key questions of decision-makers, and promote the development of a Climate Change Assessment for planned projects and programs (for instance at the SEA or project feasibility stage).

ADDRESS:

- Conduct or participate in an options assessment for alternative water and energy projects.
- Lobby decision-makers to mandate integrated planning and policies that combine meeting water, energy and employment needs.

- Promote the “precautionary principle” in the face of climate uncertainty.
- Protect ecosystem services and ensure that if dams are built, an environmental flows plan is developed and implemented.
- Develop ecosystem, livelihood and disaster monitoring systems at the community level.
- Ensure climate-risk management is included throughout the entire project life-cycle.

ADAPT:

- Select and design a sustainable “no-regrets” solution that follows the principles of climate resilience.
- Ensure solutions address the needs of the most vulnerable and do not lead to a maladaptation or compromise existing efforts at adaptation.

Each individual context will differ in terms of the right strategies and the amount of climate information available, but a multitude of online and human resources, including International Rivers staff, exist to help you chart these new waters. To learn more about any of these aspects, follow the links within the guide that we have provided and check out *Key Resources* (Appendix 1) for practical field guides, climate studies, and adaptation institutions with expertise in water resource management. And as always, please let us know if you have any suggestions for improvement, as we continue to develop our resources and support for civil society organizations in this ever-evolving topic.