



Photo Credit: Karen Conniff/IWMI

 **successstories**

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Influencing climate change policy in Sri Lanka

Research conducted by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) explored the likely impacts of climate change on agriculture and water resources in Sri Lanka. Recommendations contained in the research report were adopted as part of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.



Photo Credit: Karen Conniff/IWMI

In 2009, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Environment started preparing the country's National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, as well as Sri Lanka's Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Around the same time, IWMI initiated a study, which was later titled, *Impacts of Climate Change on Water Resources and Agriculture in Sri Lanka*, as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). The IWMI study pointed out that existing climate change projections for Sri Lanka were confusing and contradictory, making it difficult to rely on them to plan adaptation interventions. While there seemed to be a general agreement that the country will become increasingly warm during the twenty-first century, with projections for temperature increases ranging from 0.9 - 4 °C, mean annual rainfall was projected to increase in some studies and to decrease in others. IWMI researchers presented their findings at a national 'Water for Food Conference', which drew the attention of several government agencies, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

By using a climate change vulnerability index measuring exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity, the study identified Sri Lanka's agricultural hot spots. Furthermore, it emphasized 'no regrets' interventions that would enhance climate resilience while simultaneously addressing development needs, making adaptation planning under high uncertainty possible. The suggested interventions included methods ranging from rainwater harvesting to micro-irrigation and wastewater reuse, up to the restoration of the ancient tank storage systems.

Joining forces

IWMI researchers were invited to attend workshops organized by the Ministry of Environment, provide information and

comment on the drafts of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the National Communication to the UNFCCC.

The Ministry of Environment modified and refined IWMI's climate change vulnerability index to identify the current status and key climate change-related issues that need to be addressed in preparing the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. At every stage of the strategy formulation, the Ministry of Environment engaged with IWMI and other different stakeholders.

New climate change policy

Eventually, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Environment was able to identify plausible policy and technical solutions to adapt to climate change, based on available information and tools. Some of the 'no regrets' adaptation options suggested by IWMI's study, such as rainwater harvesting and the restoration of the ancient tank system to provide irrigation water during droughts and storage during floods, were also included in the strategy. The strategy was approved in January 2011 simultaneously with the Second National Communication, which also included some of the findings of IWMI's study.

Following the publication of the IWMI study, a national newspaper, The Daily Mirror, invited IWMI scientists to write a series of articles on the impacts of Climate Change in Sri Lanka, to help raise public awareness. The paper published five articles between February and March in 2011.

The new climate change policy was approved in 2012. In accordance with the policy, a National Expert Committee on Climate Change Adaptation was convened by the Ministry of Environment. The Ministry invited the leading IWMI researcher conducting the study, Nishadi Eriyagama, to become a member of this committee.

Donors and partners

IWMI collaborated with the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Colombo, Sri Lanka; and the National Council for Disaster Management, Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The study was funded from the core funds of IWMI during 2009.

For more information

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IWMI report:

http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/Publications/IWMI_Research_Reports/PDF/PUB135/RR135.pdf