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Mainstream Climate Change Adaptation into National Planning and Development

With the dawn of peace in 2009, Sri Lanka has embarked on an ambitious new era of economic development. Over the next decade, the island nation will be making major new investments in all sectors to overcome poverty and consolidate its status as a middle income country. It has set ambitious national development targets.

But climate change impacts, resulting from human-induced global warming, can delay or derail these plans. They can also make existing economic and socio-economic disparities worse. We are already beginning to see some of these impacts taking place – they will get worse in the coming years and decades.

Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation in Sri Lanka

**National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy:
Strategic Thrust Area #1**

To pursue our development agenda despite these pressures, we need an integrated approach to improve climate resilience in all sectors of economy and society. To safeguard ourselves, we need climate change adaptation – which involves coping with impacts with knowledge, technology and careful planning.

Thematic Areas

Climate change impacts will unfold over time, and they will be felt by everyone in different ways. No individual, community or sector will be spared. It is a shared crisis.

To protect people and economic interests, we have to consider climate change as an emerging threat to all sectors and all human endeavours. In other words, we have to mainstream climate change adaptation into national planning and development processes.

During stakeholder consultations for development of the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, a number of priority issues and responses were identified. These have been grouped under five thematic areas.

Strengthening national capacity for climate-adaptation planning and implementation

The Ministry of Environment, through its Climate Change Secretariat (MOE/CCS), is mandated to provide leadership to climate change adaptation planning and implementation.

Activities on the ground aimed at climate change adaptation need to be developed and implemented by a range of sector agencies. Right now the ability of CCS, as well as the other sector agencies, to deal with climate change is severely constrained. The country needs to develop a pool of professionals and leaders, who serve both within government and beyond, to drive Sri Lanka's initiatives to combat climate change.

Climate proofing economic planning

Understanding of the economics of climate change in the Sri Lankan context is limited. While climate change is known and talked about, Lanka has very few specific laws, regulations or safeguard to 'climate-proof' people or economic activity from climate impacts.

For example, guidelines for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) do not include any directly climate change related considerations. These are often the only environmental checks on major investments – various economic sectors depend on SEA/EIA for guidance on environmental sustainability considerations.



Thematic Areas

Ensure future investments and economic plans are climate resilient

Climate change considerations are not yet included in planning processes across the economy. Many planners are aware about climate change, but don't know enough about adaptation choices and measures. The official climate change policy now being formulated will provide clarity and guidance in considering climate change factors across the economy. Stakeholders already realize how little Sri Lanka can do to mitigate climate change as the country generates relatively modest volumes of global-warming gases. Thus we need greater focus on climate adaptation, and more resources and action to protect our interests from impacts.

Systematically research climate change-adaptation options

Climate change studies and analysis are currently being carried out by a number of institutions and agencies in an uncoordinated manner. These include the Department of Meteorology, Disaster Management Centre (DMC), National Building Research Organization (NBRO), several universities and non-governmental organizations, among others. There is limited coordination and information sharing among these. We need a better arrangement for the planning, coordinating, sharing and disseminating of climate change-related knowledge and analysis.



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Increase financing to protect Sri Lanka from climate change impacts

By correctly positioning itself, Sri Lanka can attract substantial international resources specifically aimed at climate change adaptation and resilience. Pursuing these opportunities, however, requires a concerted effort that needs to be guided by the Ministry of Finance and supported by technical experts from different sectors and agencies. We also need institutional mechanisms to allocate, manage and monitor such financing.

Inform and mobilize stakeholders at multiple levels in support of climate adaptation

The education system, mass media and other information 'multipliers' can disseminate climate change adaptation knowledge and understanding to all sections of society. To get the best out of these public engagement methods, it is necessary to clearly define audiences and messages – one size does not fit everyone. Beyond general awareness, communities and local level resource managers need specific technical solutions to climate-induced problems.



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Living and coping with uncertain impacts of climate change is no longer a choice; it is an imperative. Sri Lanka needs to address climate change adaptation to ensure that its economic development can continue without disruption or setbacks, and investments in poverty reduction, food and water security and public health will not be undone.

This brochure has been produced based on the work carried out under the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Technical Assistance Project ADB TA 7326 SRI: Strengthening Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation in Sri Lanka.

ADB is working with the Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka, in formulating a national strategy for climate change adaptation to increase Sri Lanka's resilience to climate change impacts whilst pursuing sustainable economic development. When adopted, the strategy would stimulate improved effectiveness of environmental management and better organization of stakeholders to address climate change adaptation.

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