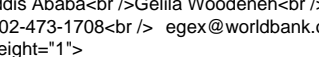




Africa: Benefits of Adapting Africa's Infrastructure to Climate Change Outweigh the Costs

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New report quantifies impacts of climate change on energy and water infrastructure, suggests adaptation options for investment plans, and provides suggestions to increase resilience now
The impact of climate change on Africa's water and energy infrastructure will be costly, according to a new World Bank report, and immediate action is needed to reduce these risks. Enhancing the Climate Resilience of Africa's Infrastructure quantifies the impacts of climate change on hydropower and irrigation infrastructure and identifies adaptation options as well as recommendations for increasing climate resilience.
Investment in infrastructure is fundamental to sustaining growth in Africa. In 2012, the Regions Heads of State and Government laid out a strategic program (PIDA) for closing Africa's infrastructure gap. Much of these investments will support the construction of hydropower dams, power stations, and irrigation canals, which will be vulnerable to the potentially harsher climate of the future.
"Climate change requires new approaches that will help make infrastructure investments in Africa more resilient to the uncertain climate of the future. No action is not an option," said Jamal Saghir, the World Bank's Senior Regional Adviser for Africa.
Launched during the Africa Climate Resilient Infrastructure Summit in Addis today, the report uses for the first time, a consistent approach across river basins and power systems in Africa, and wide range of state-of-the-art climate projections to evaluate the risks posed by climate change to planned investments in Africa's water and power sectors. It further analyses how investment plans could be modified to minimize those risks; and it quantifies the corresponding benefits and costs.
In the driest weather scenario failure to integrate climate change in the planning and design of hydropower infrastructure could result in losses of revenues between 5% and 60% and consumer cost for energy could increase by three times as much as it is now. While ignoring climate change could result in planning and designing infrastructure unsuitable for future climates, the study points to a risk of adapting to climate change in the wrong way, which could be as significant to the damages when not adapting.
"The solution to this dilemma is to identify an adaptation strategy that balances the risk of inaction with the risk of wrong action, taking into account the preferences of decision makers and attitudes toward risks," said Raffaello Cervigni, the report's lead author. "The time to act is now so that adaptation to climate change in infrastructure is realized and becomes a component of all investment plans."
Using the proposed approach to decision making under climate uncertainty, the report found that in hydropower, adaptation can cut the loss of revenue in half or the missed opportunity in the case of inaction. The analysis further suggests that the benefits in terms of reduced risks significantly exceed the cost of modifying current investment plans.
Decision-makers need information and tools to create adaptation plans responsive to their particular situations. The report provides actionable steps to increase resilience in Africa's infrastructure. This includes providing technical guidelines on integrating climate change into planning and design of infrastructure. To bring down the cost of analysis needed to integrate climate considerations into infrastructure development, it suggests creating an open data repository. The report recommends a climate resilience project preparation facility to support plans for infrastructure investments, and training programs for professionals involved in planning and design. Finally, an observatory on climate-resilient infrastructure development would be helpful to retain visibility of technical work at the policy level.
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