

Why integrate water, agriculture and the environment?

In the development sector, agriculture and water have traditionally been viewed as separate areas of intervention. Yet water and agriculture activities are becoming more and more interdependent. Changing climate patterns threaten rain-fed agriculture, while desertification stresses agricultural production in vulnerable semi-arid zones. Agricultural runoff, livestock use and other pollutions decrease water quality. In turn, waterborne diseases, poor hygiene and inadequate sanitation decrease productivity of agriculture-based households. Conflicts over water and other natural resources are increasingly affecting agriculture-based populations.

CRS is now working to better integrate water concerns into agriculture and environmental activities by:

- Promoting holistic, watershed-based programming
- Educating about the multiple uses of water for both domestic and productive purposes
- Expanding community water supply and sanitation programming through integrated programming
- Emphasizing water-related livelihoods with links to agroenterprise
- Strengthening efforts towards mitigation of climate change
- Reducing the risks of environmental and human-caused emergencies



A man displays crops lost to floods in Guatemala.
Photo: CRS staff

What's our strategy?

CRS's water sector strategy is designed to complement our new Agriculture and Environment approach that guides our programming through 2014. Both strategies aim to improve the lives of women and vulnerable populations through water and agriculture-based activities.

They focus on four objectives:

- improving household health
- improving livelihoods
- increasing environmental protection and productivity
- enabling communities to prepare, mitigate and respond better to disasters

GOALS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Water Sector

Goal: Improved health and quality of life for poor communities

Water for...

Domestic Uses -- health: drinking, cooking, sanitation, personal hygiene, household cleanliness

Productive purposes -- livelihoods: irrigation, livestock, fish ponds, small industries

Environmental protection -- water conservation, pollution management, erosion control, biodiversity protection

Emergencies and disasters -- protection of lives and livelihoods through watershed protection, water, sanitation and hygiene provision

Agriculture & Environment Sector

Goal: Improved livelihood security and integral human development for the poor

Agriculture for...

Health -- household access to nutrition, proper use of potable water and agricultural outputs

Income -- farmers increase production; farmer groups organize, innovate and compete in markets

Environment -- community management of watersheds, soil and water protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation

Emergency Response -- community management of agriculture and natural resources to prepare for, mitigate and cope with disasters

What is CRS doing...

- in policies and strategies?

CRS is actively exploring a combination of policies, strategies, advocacy approaches, and institutional capacity building to address agriculture, water and environmental needs of vulnerable populations in an effective and sustainable manner.

In 2008, CRS designed an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) strategy for East and West Africa as well as an overall water and sanitation strategy for planning and implementing holistic programming. CRS has begun an IWRM Learning Alliance for CRS programs to identify key learning areas in the water sector and build CRS' capacity through a focused learning plan.

CRS has produced guidance documents for small-scale rural water and sanitation planning, groundwater development, water quality testing and water tank design. In addition, recent publications describe best practices in water and sanitation and provide an electronic library of selected technical references.

- in programming?

CRS programs in the field currently integrate agriculture, water and environmental objectives. Here is a snapshot of such programming:

- Water, sanitation and hygiene are key components in our food security programming in [Guatemala](#), [Burundi](#), [Mali](#), [Niger](#) and other countries.
- In [Afghanistan](#), farmers focus on sustainable improvement of production from agricultural land and rangelands through land and water management.
- Chronically ill people in [Lesotho](#) utilize rainfall harvesting and grey water irrigation for raised-bed keyhole gardens, enabling them access to nutritious backyard crops.
- Farmers in [Burundi](#) are able to improve rice productivity despite water constraints through drought-tolerant



A member of a CRS-supported farmers group in the Benguela Province of Angola. Photo: David Snyder

- crop varieties.
- In [Ethiopia](#), watershed management has been an entry point for farmer groups to link to markets, as it has increased their production of crops and mitigated the effects of droughts and flooding.
- As a member of the Global Water Initiative in [Central America](#), CRS programs on integrated watershed management assist communities to improve their ability to reduce the impact of climate change and water-related shocks.

Looking ahead

In the coming years, CRS will continue to pursue integrated programs that include watershed management, comprehensive community development, adaptation to climate change and global warming, rehabilitation of lands and communities devastated by conflict, and others. The health aspects of community water supply and sanitation coupled with the livelihood aspects of food security and agricultural productivity plus the environmental aspects of land and water utilization are clearly interrelated. Governments and development institutions are becoming aware of the magnitude of the problems and the need to support integrated approaches. Many questions, however, remain, especially those stemming from the traditional separation of the agriculture, water and environment sectors. CRS continues to seek partners interested in a better understanding of integrated approaches and in the development of replicable programs to serve the poorest communities.