



Learning Event: Including Climate and Weather Information in Participatory Planning and Assessment Tools and Methods

Meeting report

Funded by: Norway

Introduction

The learning event was organized at the UN in Nairobi on the 1st and 2nd of February 2016, co-hosted by the GFCS Adaptation Programme in Africa, the Kenya Meteorological Department and the Met Office. The objective of the event was to identify best practice and share learning on including climate and weather information in participatory planning, assessment and decision making support tools and methods within practitioners in the field, with a focus on East and Southern Africa. The meeting was opened by the Chief Executive of the Met Office, Mr Rob Varley, the Director of the GFCS Secretariat, Mr Filipe Lucio, the Director of the Malawi Department for Climate Change and Meteorological Services, Mr Jolamu Nkhokwe and Mr Ayub Shaka on behalf of the Director of the Kenya Meteorological Department, Mr James Kongoti. There were a total of 46 participants from 26 organizations, representing NGOs, research institutes, government departments and international agencies. The event included presentations on approaches and methods used, and interactive sessions to allow for discussion. On the second day, a market place was held where 8 organizations displayed materials from their initiatives.

Agreed Actions

The participants at the event agreed to continue sharing learning within the group and more widely to promote good practices. The following specific actions were agreed:

1. **Establish a community of practice for continued sharing innovation and learning.** This will be done primarily through the establishment of a Mailing List facilitated by the GFCS office where project outputs and information on relevant events will be shared. In addition it was agreed to hold a series of webinars to continue the discussions around three main themes that were identified as a priority: local/indigenous knowledge, monitoring and evaluation and sustainability/scaling up.
2. **Create a knowledge space collecting all relevant material available** by the GFCS office through revising the GFCS website and include a search function. Documents would be tagged with agreed categories/themes (for instance agriculture/Malawi/communication) and the site would be linked to other relevant web pages. The GFCS office will also use the information provided by organizations to update the GFCS “contributing” projects map.
3. **Work towards developing a guidebook/sourcebook for climate service interventions**, which would be a synthesis of existing practices with an agreement of some common principles in the delivery of climate services, but it was recognized that a lot more planning is required for this activity and the effort would require investment in time and resources from a number of organizations.
4. **Continue joint efforts to strengthen coordination at the national level.** At national level there needs to be multi agency platforms coordinated by the NMHSs to achieve greater convergence. Where possible climate service interventions planned and undertaken should include investment in the establishment and/or support of such platforms.

Summary of Discussions

Seven main themes emerged from the presentations and discussions: coordination, uptake of climate information, capacity building of intermediaries, sustainability and scaling up, indigenous/local knowledge and monitoring and evaluation.

Coordination

The GFCS Director in his opening statement emphasized that the need to bring actors to facilitate a faster rate of progress for climate services at the national level. Recent years have been a rapid proliferation of climate services initiatives, and creating forums for sharing and identifying good practice is becoming essential to ensure that we maximize the use of investments being made available for climate services, and deliver the largest possible impacts. Discussions generated ideas such as identifying common principles for delivery of climate services, and agreeing a set of common indicators that would enable for clearer evidence of impact across initiatives. The ADA Consortium has developed a guide for climate services for local decision making, and there are a number of other guides and tools available at this point. These could be collated into a common knowledge space and then validated and synthesized into a guidebook/sourcebook for users. This is a significant piece of work that requires time and investment from a number of actors.

The need for coordination at the country level in the form of a mechanism that brings together all stakeholders emerged clearly. The GFCS office shared the ongoing work to establish Frameworks for Climate Services at the national level in several countries in East and West Africa. For coordination at the country level the theme of working at the local/district level to support decision making and co-produce climate services emerged as a key way to achieve both good quality climate services but also to strengthen coordination of service provision. Mapping of ongoing initiatives in country was also suggested as a way to ensure improved coordination.

UNDP highlighted the need to work with the private sector, which they have started doing in the Climate Information for Resilience and Development in Africa (CIRDA) programme, which can help create revenue streams for severely underfunded meteorological services. Discussions around working with the private sector highlighted that they have the potential of making a very important contribution but there are strengths and weaknesses to be taken into account.

Uptake of climate information

The Chief Executive of the Met Office stated that the met community spends collectively billions of dollars on gathering and processing data and doing sophisticated research into very complex subjects. However all of that collective effort has the risk of coming to nothing if information is not being used. Africa is especially vulnerable to climate change and it is important that we turn the science that we now have to actions on the ground to assert and support the voice of the meteorological community. The Kenya Meteorological Department shared some of the challenges they are facing with use and uptake of climate and weather services provided, and how the KMD has undertaken a number of surveys to identify why the uptake is not increasing. These have found that forecasts are too general, the credibility of KMD is very low and that information provided through radio and TV is not accessible for many people. KMD has tried to address these challenges through a number of activities, including training of Country Directors of Meteorology on how to deliver service and engage stakeholders and improving the climate monitoring network. County Climate Information Services Plans have been developed in 5 counties through Participatory Strategic Planning workshops in partnership with CARE where the stakeholders come together to understand the seasonal forecast and develop the advisories together to inform plans and decisions. KMD is also considering employing social scientists to help with co-production.

A common theme that emerged was the need to use a multitude of communication channels to ensure the information gets across and the need for co-production of climate services to collectively assess how good the information is. One example of a SMS based service presented at the event was the Mobile Weather Alert in Uganda, that started as a WMO supported project but is still running, as survey conducted found that 80% of the users found the service relevant. However, in order to scale this service a sustainable business model would need to be identified. A key challenge identified is that CS interventions are trying to get people to take decisions on the basis of information that is uncertain and competing with known existing concerns. Increasing uptake of climate information also generates a demand for CIS at different time and spatial scales, which the NMHS needs to be ready to respond to.

Capacity building of intermediaries

Most organizations at the event had worked with training intermediaries to assist with simplifying the scientific language and translate to local language. University of Reading presented the Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture approach used to train intermediaries in a number of countries in Africa, with some very positive results already being observed especially in Ghana. The PICSA approach is a seven step process that uses both historical climate data and seasonal forecasts as well as mid season updates, working with farmers to support their livelihoods decision making using a number of participatory tools. PICSA mainly targets the extension services but has recognized the need for a mixed and tailored approach where different elements (such as extension services and radio) complement each other. Ideally the approach should be coupled with programmes supporting farmers with inputs. WMO shared learning from the Roving Seminars held under the MetAgri project predominantly in West Africa and FAO presented their field schools approach that is aiming to build the decision making capacity of farmers and pastoralists themselves to ensure they are continuously in a position where they can make use of available information. The climate field schools include representatives from the NMHSs, but these

need to be integrated more systematically in the field schools and in the extension service. Efforts are also being made to link field school work with a more thorough community assessment process of hazards, vulnerabilities, risks and capacities.

Needs/Vulnerability assessments

There were several approaches to identifying climate service needs and vulnerability to climate hazards at the community level presented at the event, reflecting the fact that a lot of work is being done on adapting existing community resilience tools. The ALP consortium has reviewed the available resilience assessment tools and looked at the common elements to see where climate information is best brought in. Another resilience assessment tool presented at the meeting is the Vulnerability, Capacity and Adaptation Assessment (VCAA) approach developed by IFRC, which is a means of gathering information through a participatory way, linking the assessment to action through the development of community contingency plans. WFP also presented their tool for community based participatory planning (CBPP), which is a participatory community based approach to designing projects, starting with a vulnerability assessment at the national level and moving to livelihood planning at the district level, and community needs assessments at the village level. WFP has piloted the integration of climate in this approach. .

Sustainability

Sustainability of services and demonstrating impact was a theme that recurred in many of the presentations and discussions, including the need to demonstrate the benefits of providing climate services to influence policymakers at the national level. A number of good projects are going on but that many of the successes is taking place at the pilot scale – the challenge is how to achieve success at scale and how to integrate large scale change with the local level interventions. The ALP consortium and University of Reading are both developing processes for scaling up their respective approaches, building on the principle that a good quality service generates a demand for it, recognizing that climate information lends itself quite easily to scaling because it is about processes. The starting point for scaling up is to clarify what can be provided in terms of climate information and how good it is, and making sure providers better understand the decision making context. The only way to reach scale is through the combination of a number of services that are joined up in a way that is supporting each other, using different mechanisms for sharing information: extension and NGOs are involved in working directly with the farmers. There are advantages of building from pilots as the bottom up approach might support sustainability by providing evidence for policy makers and generating local ownership and motivation but there are examples of good pilots that have not lead to scalability because the top down approach was not there. Climate information needs to be integrated in current training programmes in country to become part of “business as usual”.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important to measure across the whole process, and need to demonstrate impact early on, by showing progress against baseline information. Indicators should be co-designed where possible as people have different ideas of what success looks like. The University of Reading shared some of the M&E tools they have developed as part of the PICSA approach and piloted in Ghana, which included a survey using ODK and tablets which allowed for the data to be made available immediately after collection for rapid analysis. The ALP consortium has also developed a guide for provision of weather and climate services to support local decision making, which includes a section on M&E.

Local/Indigenous Knowledge

A number of organizations are currently engaging with communities to see how indigenous knowledge can be included in the seasonal forecast as it is possible to build trust in the scientific forecast through integrating it with the scientific forecast. Currently there is no framework or systematic approach to link the IK to science but some activities are being undertaken in the GFCS Adaptation Programme in Africa to address this.

Annexes:

1. Final list of participants