

Seventh Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA) conference

WISER focus group meetings

Report

Nairobi, Kenya

10-12 October 2018

The Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER)

The chair for the session began by providing a brief introduction on the Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) project. The project focuses on provision of climate and weather information to various sectors of the economy. He further mentioned that there are major gaps in climate information, with only 13% observation existed in Africa. DFID is supporting the project to enhance provision of the services that looks at quality of information being released and making that information accessible. The project also looks at the uptake and use of information at local, county, national and regional levels for planning purposes.

Mr. Frank Rutabingwa, senior natural resources expert from UNECA mentioned that he coordinates WISER Pan-Africa component which creates an enabling environment for production use and uptake of climate information at continental level. He reiterated that the program for research should be from an African perspective moving away from the north centric research. Use information for building resilience.

Since the increasing complexity of climate change challenges requires that policy analysis support be provided to Africa's decision makers in developing response strategies, the Pan-African Enabling Environment Component (PEEC) of WISER, led by the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), has conducted analytical studies to strengthen enabling environment for the generation, uptake and use of weather and climate information services (CIS) to support sustainable development in Africa. The participants agreed that the customized socioeconomic benefits models for disaster Risk Reduction and agriculture-water-energy nexus are useful tools for policy makers and practitioners to make evidence-based decisions on CIS investment. In this regard, the Pan-African component of WISER will launch the African-led small but potentially scalable research grant management facility and support Climate Research for Development (CR4D) research priorities. WISER East Africa component, on the other hand, supports more than nine projects in the sub-region to develop the capacity of relevant regional stakeholders and thereby deliver wide-reaching, usable, improved weather and climate products and services anchored on principles of co-production and user engagements.

The participants later proposed the following: need to consolidate all the WISER efforts and initiatives of different organizations under more continental platforms driven by AUC, UNECA and civil society for a better communication and reach out; need to build confidence and trust between the CIS producers, providers and end-users through improved co-production mechanism; and need to apply different channels of communication to different end users through a feedback mechanisms for effective flow of information.

Climate Information Services (CIS) Innovations

The session explored existing best practices, innovations, opportunities and challenges related to the climate information services with focus on agriculture. It was pointed out that challenges that hinder successful use of climate information services in adaptation of farm activities to climate change and climate variability are access, interpretation and usability. Two key factors driving such challenges to successful use of climate information services by most rural farmers are functional literacy of most farmers and appropriate delivery. For the climate information services to be beneficial, farmers seek for a tailor-made information at the lowest scale (farm level), readily usable information and ability to follow-up (two-way communication). Also, to ensure the climate information services sustainability; it is supposed to run on existing systems that are functioning in most rural communities which include community information centres, unit committees, youth groups and farmer unions.

The discussion from the floor came up with the following: it is important to link CIS to other means to make it more attractive; answer the question of who pays for the costs and how to

minimize costs; tell people why are you providing the information and its rationale; and consider diverse set-up of community and sectors (beyond youth and agriculture only). Also, ensure information are accurate; Integration of indigenous knowledge into these science information; sustainability of the CIS by using existing structures.

Climate Research for Development (CR4D) in Africa

Dr. Yosef Amha, a researcher on agriculture, climate change and adaptation, provided a brief presentation on the WISER-funded CR4D research grant. He stated that CR4D is an African-led initiative to strengthen links between climate science research and climate information needs in support development planning in Africa. It is a partnership initiative between the ACPC of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). Under the WISER-PEEC, DFID supports a small but potentially scalable research grant management facility at the African Academy of Sciences, which will support the CR4D research priorities as defined by the CR4D Scientific Advisory Committee.

He further explained that the CR4D postdoctoral fellowship, managed through the African Academy of Sciences, designed to build a critical mass of African research leaders to lead science programmes independently at local and international levels, including the capacity to engage successfully with funders, policy makers, communities and other stakeholders, and to serve as mentors and supervisors for the next generation of researchers in Africa. According to his presentation, the research grant call will be developed along the three CR4D research thematic areas such as: (i) *foundational climate science* focusing on improved understanding of the underpinning drivers and dynamics of climate variability and change in Africa; (ii) *impacts, information, translation, communication* focusing on enhanced added-value in sub-seasonal to seasonal predictions; enhanced understanding and communication of climate impacts across five priority GFCS areas {agriculture, water, health, disaster risk reduction, and energy}, as well as migration, urbanization, marine and coastal zones, etc.; improved metrics and analytics for evaluation and validation of skills and uncertainties in forecasting and projecting future climate and impacts, including understanding communication theory, barriers and opportunities, and (iii) *engagement with policy, development and decision communities* focusing on improved assessment of the uptake, application and user value of climate and impact information by stakeholders and enhanced capacity for co-production including trans disciplinary research.

Participants later discussed and agreed that the proposed CR4D research grant shall ensure high quality technical and operational standards through transparent, high-quality, independent and objective research, with robust grant administration and management systems. It shall focus on demand-driven research by identifying and prioritising demand from the user community across African climate science and climate policy communities. Efforts should be exerted to earn broader recognition within the African climate science community and other stakeholders. They later commended the initial support rendered by DFID but urged the CR4D Secretariat to work strongly in ensuring the longevity and scalability of the research grant beyond fellowship.

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