FAQ

Addressing the missing links: how WISER's mapping tool will help key climate information groups connect

A new cross-continental mapping tool will help tackle fragmentation across Africa's climate research community by enabling key project actors to link up.

Key points

Strong collaboration is essential for producing high quality climate information – but fragmentation across Africa means key actors are not connecting.

A new mapping tool developed under the WISER project aids collaboration by providing comprehensive information on climate information projects that are under way.

The map helps stakeholders quickly identify key project information such as geographical location, which experts are executing the research and who is funding it.

Stakeholders from different climate projects will be able to talk, identify synergies and form partnerships to support stronger project outcomes.

Why is collaboration so crucial for producing high quality climate information?

Africa's climate-dependent economies need relevant, timely and accurate climate information such as daily, weekly, monthly or seasonal climate forecasts, rainfall onset and cessation predictions, real time weather information or alerts about extreme weather events.

And there is growing recognition that strong collaboration is essential for producing this information. This means getting inputs from a wide range of actors: climate research centres who acquire, manage and apply relevant data studies; academic and research organisations who compile and analyse climate information to generate climate services; the private sector – which is increasingly involved in the business of developing new climate tools, applications and products; and national meteorological and hydrological services who observe, forecast and issue warnings.

But, as is increasingly documented, climate information needs to be about more than producing information. Today, the starting point for effective climate information services is understanding the users of the services and their needs – climate information is only valuable if it is easy for the end-user to apply.

Who are those key users?

The list is broad. It includes institutional users such as planners in government ministries seeking to climate-proof critical infrastructure, or water authorities who use predicted rainfall to adjust water release schedules to secure hydroelectricity. Other groups might include sector experts such as agriculturalists advising farmers on which seeds to plant or when to harvest, scientists seeking to develop new climate-resilient seed varieties, and fishers using forecasts of impending storms to avoid equipment damage or loss of life. The media is also a crucial user group. They have a key role in ensuring the information produced can be translated, packaged up and disseminated – whether over community radio, on SMS, into bulletins or on websites – and then applied to practical decision making.

A collaborative user-led approach to producing climate information services.

A user-led approach is fundamental for the provision of effective climate information services. This involves identifying potential users of climate information and generating climate information that will be applicable in their day-to-day lives. Collaboration to product high quality climate information can be broken down into four stages:

- Co-explore: end-users identify their climate-related challenges and pinpoint knowledge gaps
- Co-design: priority areas identified by the end-users are integrated into the design of the climate research. This ensures the users remains front and centre when the research concept is being developed.
- Co-produce: where different knowledge sources and experiences are brought together to develop existing knowledge.
- Co-communicate: Each end-user has different priorities and will apply the research findings differently. Outputs need to be tailored and packaged up accordingly, translated into applications and disseminated via different platforms.

Is producer-user collaboration improving?

In recent years, the African climate research community has made some significant strides to help connect all the actors along the climate information services value chain – but big gaps remain. One clear example is projects and initiatives seeking to support the production and uptake of climate information that are under way across the continent. Projects are fragmented and often carried out in isolation. There are many opportunities to maximise use of research facilities, resources, and infrastructure across the continent. But key groups are failing to connect. Experts from the natural, biophysical and social sciences are not collaborating with the institutions who could use their analysis to develop relevant products; lessons learnt and knowledge emerging from successful initiatives are not being shared with development partners embarking on new initiatives; small-scale projects are not connecting

will larger, more established agencies who could help promote and scale up their work, or align the project outcomes with national, regional and or international standards – leading to greater influence.

These and other missed opportunities to make links and spot overlaps can compromise the outcomes of climate information projects and result in duplication which is costly and ineffective.

WISER's mapping initiative seeks to aid collaboration – how does it work?

The WISER project has really accentuated the need to help the climate research community connect. Across the producer-user landscape, there is real appetite and enthusiasm for more effective joint working.

The mapping exercise addresses this by creating a convening platform. It provides clear and comprehensive information on climate information projects that are under way including geographical location, what the project sets out to achieve, the experts executing the research and the donors funding the projects. So, for example, an international development partner that has identified a viable project within a certain region will be able to identify project partners with the right skills – from experts to help execute research and analyse the results, to grassroot organisation that can help disseminate findings at community level.

Stakeholders in the different projects will be able to talk, identify synergies and form partnerships. They will be able to share practical lessons and experiences, and exchange scientific and data. This in turn will help build the quality of the project outcomes and, by sharing knowledge and expertise, drive innovation in Africa's climate research.

What specific information does the map provide?

The map is presented in an interactive, easy to use format and provides information on:

- Project location and its geographical coverage. As well as clarifying the scope of the project, this detail also gives a bird's-eye view of initiatives underway across the continent – helping to identify clusters of activity or gaps
- Project timeline: start and end date
- Project value (USD) and development partners
- Implementing partner(s) - responsible for executing the project – such as government, regional institution or development partners
- Project partners
- The project objective – for example capacity building, adaptation, mitigation or disaster risk reduction. The project objective also indicates whether the project has a particular sector focus such as agriculture, water, energy, infrastructure or health.

The tool also provides links to key documents such as action plans, national strategies, relevant legal and regulatory information, and any relevant strategic documents
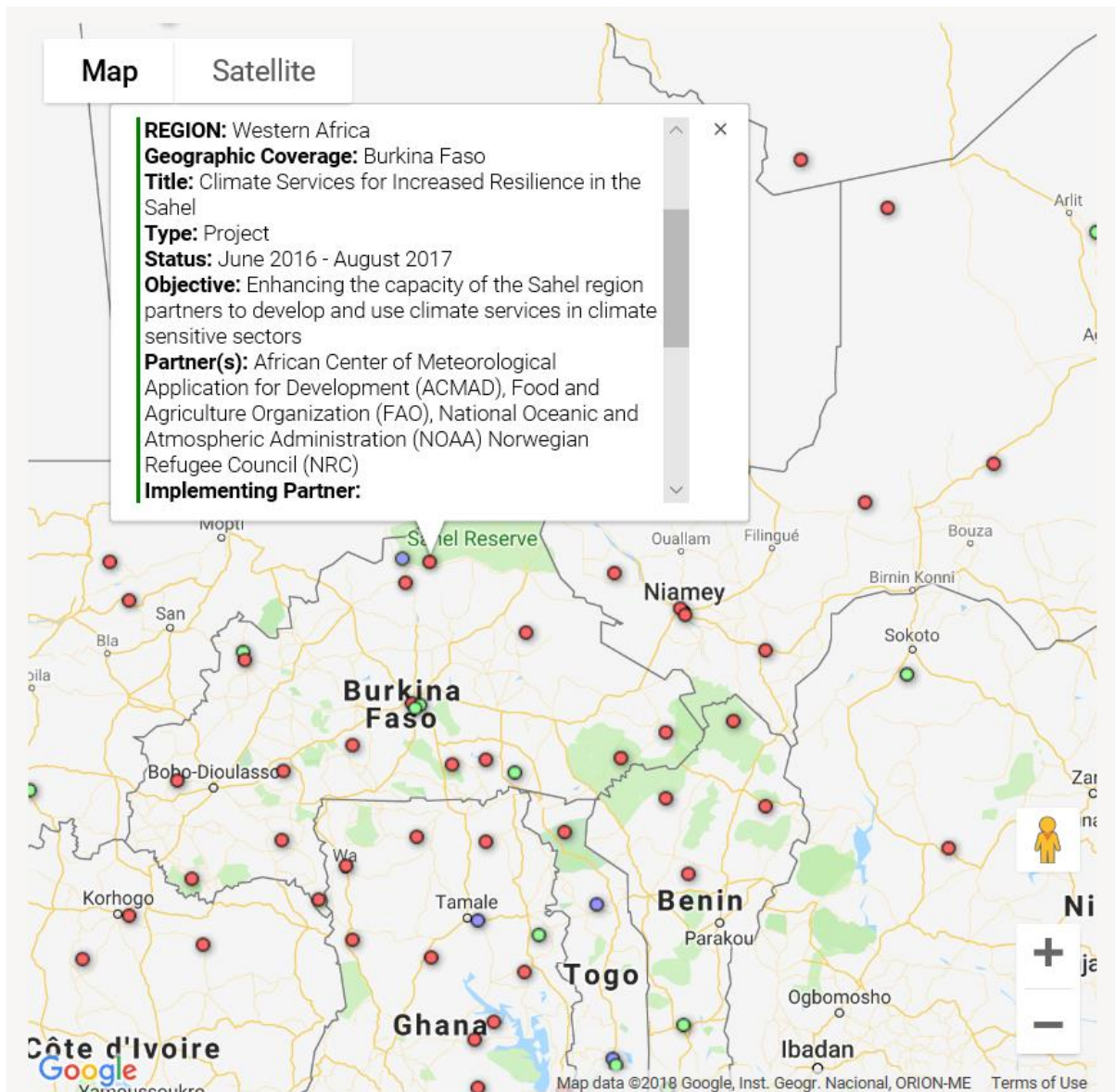
How is information being compiled, and where can you access the map?

We have taken a multi-prong approach to data mining. Using ACPC's extensive networks across policy and practice we have identified projects by contacting the implementing organisation directly. We have also extracted information from websites which is later cross checked. Data has been gathered using Google Fusion Tables and translated into an easy-to-use, interactive, fully open access map: https://www.uneca.org/wiser/pages/cis-projectsprogrammesinitiatives

What's next?

So far, the mapping has been compiled for more than 170 projects, initiatives and programmes. Collect statistics…. enable filter. [CHARLES TO ADD]

WISER is supported by: