

RCOFs Knowledge Partnership

Write-shop to Produce an African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (RCOFs) Best Practices Document

Report

Windhoek, Namibia
22-23 Nov 2018

Introduction

The WISER knowledge exchange series of workshops was held under the auspices of the WISER programme, brought together African RCCs with the intention of identifying the best practices in the RCOFs processes. The outcome of the RCOFs knowledge exchange workshops convened by ACPC earlier in 2018, led to a rich collection of material consisting of procedures, lessons and practices that RCCs utilize in producing consensus seasonal forecasts, organizing RCOFs, engaging stakeholders and seeking their feedback. While the knowledge shared was already benefiting the RCC focal persons who participated, ACPC planned to support the compilation of this knowledge into a best practices document that can serve as a reference by all RCCs.

To package the knowledge shared by RCCs in the foregoing events, a write-shop was organized on the 22-23 November 2018 in Windhoek, Namibia. The event was preceded by the 4th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET) bureau meeting.

Procedures and practices applied by the RCOFs to both produce consensus seasonal forecasts and publicize them vary. While most of the RCOFs face similar challenges, especially related to engaging stakeholders, dissemination and uptake of the seasonal forecasts they produce, some RCOFs have been operational for many years and thus have lessons and experiences that can help other RCOFs avoid 'reinventing the wheel'.

The RCCs RCOFs partnership is geared towards easing coordination of Climate Information Services activities in Africa and to support capacity enhancement of African Regional Climate Centers (RCCs), under the auspices of the Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) 1 . The write-shop event was thus attended by 22 participants, including representatives of African RCOFs community and weather experts from RCCs and regional institutions involved in CIS, as members of the knowledge exchange and partnership community of practice.

Objectives

The main objective of the African RCOFs write shop event was to collate and organize the knowledge gathered so far in the knowledge sharing events, towards producing a publication that will serve as a reference by RCCs in organizing RCOFs. Specifically, the event undertook the following tasks:

- Produced a structure for the best practices reference publication;
- Considered content contributed by different RCCs and NMHSs, and sought consensus on the material to be included in the document;
- Assigned editing and peer review responsibilities for each chapter;
- Agreed on the timeline and modalities for producing the publication;
- Produced a communications and dissemination plan for the reference document.

Expected Results

1. Outline of the RCOFs best practices document.

¹ For more information on WISER, navigate to <http://www.uneca.org/wiser>

2. An early draft with content to be included in the publication.
3. Assigned roles and responsibilities, timeline and publication dissemination plan.

Structure

Each of the RCCs presented the material they consider to be best practice from their experience of organizing one or more RCOFs. This material was organized into the following three categories:

- Modalities, procedures, experiences and best practices in developing consensus seasonal weather forecasts;
- The best practices for arranging and organizing RCOFs meetings and mobilizing stakeholders to participate; and
- Achieving buy-in of seasonal weather forecasts, encouraging uptake and seeking feedback from stakeholders across development sectors.

The second part of the write-shop was three breakout sessions to consider the content available for each of the RCOFs phases, and prioritized the material for inclusion in the reference publication.

Some members of the RCOFs knowledge partnership had the opportunity to participate in RA-I WIGOS Workshop on Automatic Weather Station (AWS) networks: strengthening and modernizing observing systems in Africa meeting on the 19-21 November 2018 (by invitation by WMO/AMCOMET) which preceded the write-shop.

Opening session

Mr. Simon Dirske from Namibia Meteorological Service opened the write-shop and underscored the need to strengthen the stakeholder engagement aspect in the RCOFs, especially the farmers. Mr. James Murombedzi, Officer in Charge of ACPC emphasized the need to include a collection of RCOFs case studies in the continent, to serve as a historical perspective and from which best practices can be derived. Ernest Afiesimama, Programme Manager, Offices for Africa and Least Developed Countries at WMO also noted that "The RCC experts gathered here have brought key lessons and experiences which should all be collected and best practices identified from them".

"It is always gratifying to note the dedication and expertise from the distinguished experts who gathered here and contributed their experiences and lessons learnt on RCOFs for the socio-economic development of our people on the continent," said Mr. Mark Majodina of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). "As WMO, we will continue to support the knowledge partnership to enable this forum to deliver on its objectives."

Excerpts of Discussions

The key thematic areas deliberated on included training and capacity building, consensus seasonal forecasting, funding mechanism and sustainability, communication and dissemination, engaging stakeholders and partnerships.

"As a best practice, for sustainability, it is important that member state governments take full ownership of the RCOFs process in terms of funding because the current donor based support

system is not sustainable,” said Phillip Omondi of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC).

Mr. Omondi also believes, as other experts do, that with changing meteorological dynamics, “continuity and consistency in training is needed to keep weather experts well-informed on latest trends and tools in the sector.”

It is generally agreed that there is a suspicious relation between scientists and media professionals. The weather experts therefore agreed on the need for enhanced relations between scientists and media. As a best practice, it was agreed, communication and dissemination should be enhanced through provision of training to media and boundary stakeholders, for the benefit of end users.

“I am particularly impressed with the way they arrive at the consensus, but I believe the way stakeholders are engaged is also key,” said Dr. Mouhamadou Bamba Sylla, Senior Scientist in climate modeling and climate change at the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL). “Having media persons, the journalists as part of the process to serve as drafters of the press releases from the technical statement is prudent, as we scientists are trained in scientific language which is most often not understood by stakeholders. It is something we must improve upon to ensure that the solutions we discover reach the intended end users.”

Main outcome

The outcome of the RCOFs write-shop was a detailed outline of the best practices document and the establishment of three groups principally composed of key members from RCCs, to further develop the best practices content in the following areas:

- Group 1: Training, capacity building, consensus forecast;
- Group 2: Funding, organizing RCOFs, Sustainability, Communications;
- Group 3: Stakeholder engagement, feedback and partnerships;

The timeline agreed for further development of the content, review by RCCs CEOs and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) runs until end of January 2019. At that point the document will be copy edited, translated and published.

Programme

Day 1: Thursday 22 Nov 2018		
Time	Activity	Moderation / Presenter
9.00-9.30am	Opening statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Simon Dirske, Namibia Meteorological Service Mr. James Murombedzi, Officer in Charge, African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), UNECA, Ethiopia Mr. Mark Majodina, WMO representative, East and Southern Africa Introductions 	Charles Muraya
9.30-10.00am	Structure of the best practices document	Mouhamadou Bamba Sylla
10.00-10.30am	Coffee break	
10.30-12.30pm	Overview of the content available (from RCCs and WMO): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCOFs establishment WMO discussion paper on S2S forecasting Content from RCCs (presented by each RCC) 	Mouhamadou Bamba Sylla
12.30-2.00pm	Lunch break	
2.00-3.30pm	Breakout session 1: writing sessions on best practices for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the consensus seasonal forecasts Organizing RCOFs Engaging stakeholders, feedback <p>Groups to develop best practices detailed outline (abstract form), using available content</p>	Philip Omondi Hubert Kabengela / Bob Ogwang Faka Nsadiza / Sunshine Gamedze
3.30-4.00pm	Coffee break	
4.00-4.45pm	Breakout session 2: writing sessions on best practices for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the consensus seasonal forecasts Organizing RCOFs Engaging stakeholders, feedback <p>Groups to develop best practices detailed outline (abstract form), using available content</p>	Philip Omondi Hubert Kabengela / Bon Ogwang Faka Nsadiza / Sunshine Gamedze

Day 2: Friday 23 Nov 2018		
Time	Activity	Moderation / Presenter
9.00-11.00am	Breakout outcomes - best practices writeshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the consensus seasonal forecasts • Organizing RCOFs • Engaging stakeholders, feedback <p>Groups to present narratives (refinement done on screen)</p>	Mouhamadou Bamba Sylla
11.00-11.30am	Coffee break	
11.30-1pm	Breakout outcomes - best practices for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the consensus seasonal forecasts • Organizing RCOFs • Engaging stakeholders, feedback <p>Groups to present narratives (refinement done on screen)</p>	Mouhamadou Bamba Sylla
1.00pm-2.00pm	Lunch	
2.00pm-3.00pm	Publication process issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document length • Proposed timeframe • Editing, translation • Dissemination arrangements <p>Closing remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. James Murombedzi, Officer in Charge, African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), UNECA, Ethiopia • Mr. Mark Majodina, WMO representative, East and Southern Africa 	Charles Muraya

Participants

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WISER is supported by:

