

VOICES FROM THE PEOPLE

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**ACHIEVING BENEFITS OF ENHANCED SERVICE DELIVERY BY
NATIONAL METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES IN EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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GIRAFFE OCEAN VIEW HOTEL

How to help ensure best outcomes for communities

- Ability and willingness of users to use services and information;
- Understanding user constraints and reasons in their decision making process;
- Helping users with solutions to overcome constraints and encourage informed decision making using services and information;
- Influence behavior change based on the information provided; and,
- Community-level users.

EARLY WARNING

- The provision of timely and effective information, through identified institutions, that allows individuals exposed to a hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response (ISDR)

WHO IS BEING WARNED?

- Ultimately coping with climate variability or adaptation to climate change is at community level and response should be at this level
- In this case the warning is to the vulnerable communities
- We need to look at the full early warning system with the communities in mind

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

- An Early Warning System (EWS) is a comprehensive monitoring framework for early detection and response to environmental threats
- It is more than just a prediction
- It comprises a chain of four elements, starting from a knowledge of the risks faced through to preparedness to act on the warning
- Failure in any one part can mean failure of the whole system
- Look at community involvement at each stage

Risk knowledge

- Prior knowledge of the risks faced by the communities
 - Are the hazards and vulnerabilities well known?
 - What are the patterns and trends in these factors?
 - Are maps and data available?
- Local context to the problem is important
 - can come from local knowledge (issue of data availability)
- Involve the communities in hazard mappings and vulnerability assessments
 - Validation exercise
 - Use this for community entry
 - Gets the buy-in of the communities

Warning service

- Technical monitoring and warning service
 - Are the right parameters being monitored?
 - Is there a sound basis for making forecasts?
 - Can accurate and timely warnings be generated?
- Resolution of the forecasts from the National Met. services generally coarse – not very location specific
- Inadequate station coverage of remote areas, especially the arid and semi-arid pastoral areas
 - Inaccurate forecasts for those areas
- Can use local knowledge to downscale
 - Local indicators have scientific explanation
 - Need to consult with old people with experience for accuracy

Example of the Nganyi community of Western Kenya

Other communities also have their Indigenous Knowledge indicators



Dissemination

- Dissemination of understandable warnings to those at risk
 - Do the warnings reach those at risk?
 - Do people understand the warnings?
 - Do they contain relevant and useful information?

Why climate information is not currently used by communities

- Inadequate communication infrastructure
- Lack of awareness on the available products from the climate community
 - “Invincibility” of Meteorological service – local communities do not know how to access the products
 - Use local networks that work
 - Use provincial administration networks (government)
 - Bring the products to the people

Do they understand the warnings?

- Problems in interpreting the products
 - Trust – credibility
 - Relevance
 - Format/Language
 - Lack of tailor-made products to meet specific needs
 - Weak networking and collaboration between the meteorological services and some users, especially the local communities

- Building of trust
 - Comes from working with the community and making them feel that they are part of the solution to the problems
 - Need to explain what you do and show that it works
 - Explain the limitations that lead to errors
 - Use social science skills to achieve this
 - Starts from the approach to the community, defining the problem with them (hazard mapping)
- Easier when a “champion” is identified
- “Champions” can be individuals or a respected group of people

- Information should be relevant to the user
 - As specific as possible
 - Terms that are understandable
 - Possible through collaborative efforts with other relevant government ministry officers – extension services
 - Training of these officers to understand the met. forecasts (important also for trust)
 - Develop advisories for different sectors with the help of these officers
 - The officers become connectors/conduits and disseminate the weather/climate information

“Connectors” group
- District level
officers (agriculture,
water, environment,
e.t.c) – Example of
Sakai location,
south-eastern
lowlands of Kenya



- The advisories are translated into local language and distributed with the help of the “connectors”
- Public meeting where each of the “connectors” give advice regarding their sectors based on the advisories



- Can also disseminate by using “champions” who are respected in the community
- Have these people talk in community meetings, radio talk shows
- If using Indigenous Knowledge groups, then you can tap into their communication systems
- “Champions” can also lead by example – community wait for their lead in different matters like preparation of farms in readiness for the next season

- Need for stronger meteorological services
 - Be able to give an unpopular forecast and stand by it, e.g. inform communities about early unseasonal rains which should not lead to early planting
 - Stop hedging of forecasts
 - Poverty is a big problem in the local communities and giving them a suite of options may not help at all
 - They often have resources enough for only one crop

Response capability

- Knowledge and preparedness (capacity) to act by those threatened
 - Do the communities understand their risks?
 - Yes, even from IK/Local knowledge
 - The warning would also be in terms that are clear – sector specific advisories
 - Do they respect the warning service?
 - After interacting with them successfully, they should respect the warning since they (or people they respect) participated in generating it!
 - Do they know how to react?
 - From the sector-specific advisories they should know what to do

- Do they have the capacity to react?
 - Poverty is a major limitation
 - Climate risk reduction is a development issue
 - Huge resources required
 - Collaborate with development partners (NGOs, government) working in the area
 - Involve them too right from the beginning and convince them to use weather/climate information in their plans for the area
 - Climate-proof their plans

In conclusion ...

- It is possible to reach the local communities
- requires going out to actively engage them (dialogue - talk and listen to them)
- May require policy formulation – entrenching, reviving extension services, recognizing local knowledge, for e.g.
- May require consensus building – use of local language to downscale the forecasts
- Make the community the focus of product development

Hence heed the “voices from the people”