The Community of Practice for Early Warning Systems in Africa is a growing group of development agencies, government stakeholders, national meteorological services, civil contingency agencies, non-governmental organisations and academia. The Community works together to:

- share best practices, programme methodologies, relevant events and data related to Early Warning Systems (EWS) in Africa;
- interact with other practitioners and contribute to discussions on related topics;
- improve coordination between different donor funded programmes at both the regional and national level; and
- improve the effectiveness and impact of EWS development work.
Roundtable events

A roundtable event on strengthening the development of EWS in Africa was held at the United Nations in Nairobi in May 2014. Information on EWS activities was shared to identify key entry points to catalyse greater programme coordination across Africa. Chaired by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and supported by the Met Office, the roundtable provided an informal opportunity to raise awareness of programmes focussing on, or supporting, the use of climate information and EWS across Africa. Participants included the Kenya Meteorological Service, the International Federation of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Regional Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), BBC Media Action and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

Some of the key messages coming out of the first round table include:

- Collaboration is essential to meet the level of service required by a multi-sector, multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary environment;
- Consistency of warnings require one cohesive voice;
- The language and terminology for impacts and response needs to be understandable for decision makers; and
- To enable EWS projects to be sustainable, aligned with strategic plans of each country and focused on user needs, the private sector has to be engaged.

In order to facilitate post-event discussions and share relevant research documents, a Community of Practice was created on the UNEP-live platform.

What next?

The roundtable group will meet periodically to encourage better awareness and coordination of EWS initiatives in Africa. UNDP, UNEP, WMO and the Met Office will work together to find the best forum for a second roundtable event and to coordinate project activities.

The community will continue to interact, compare notes and share best practice to encourage more effective planning for EWS programmes, through the online community of practice.

How to get involved

If you are currently working in Africa with a focus on EWS, please join this community by visiting http://uneplive.unep.org/community/groups/ and click on ‘Early Warning Systems in Africa’. If you have any further questions please contact victor.nthusi@unep.org or internationaldevelopment@metoffice.gov.uk.