

Three WISER projects transform Tanzania weather and climate landscape

By James Padili in Tanzania

The Tanzanian government, its fishermen and farmers have benefited from three Weather and Climate Information Services (WISER) projects.

The three projects are national WISER, Highway and Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (MHEWS) project respectively, all sponsored by UKAid and UKMet Office (UKMO).

The projects which began in 2016, have remarkably changed the quality, accessibility and use of weather and climate information services at all levels of decision making for sustainable development in Tanzania.

The Three projects came offered a unique package that culminated for weather and climate services information consumption to end users and enhancement of the Tanzania Meteorological Agency (TMA) capacity to provide weather and climate information.

They included a robust dissemination framework of such services for effective decision making to deal with natural hazards impacts and other socio-economic issues.

The National-WISER project (ongoing) executed by TMA, within the central-zone regions (Dodoma, Singida) and northeast regions, has a clear-cut goal of enhancing weather and information climate services to all information buyers, more importantly changing the way how TMA and other end users interact with the

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information provided and how its utilization can shape better decision making and combating poverty.

Highway project (ongoing) focused on the ability to research on weather issues, behind the evolution of extreme weather events occurring within the Lake Victoria basin.

The project focused on how communities and TMA can combat extreme events by having a robust early warning system and to reduce the loss of life attributed by strong winds and flooding.

The MHEWS which was implemented from February to December 2016, focused on improving and enhancing early warning systems.

The project focused on setting up the realistic operation procedures within the respective ministries and other entities to have a common understanding on how to set a useful format for weather information related to warning systems.

Dr Ladislaus Chang'a, Principal Meteorologist and Director of Research and Applied Meteorology from TMA, said the National-Wiser project is an important project to the country.

“It contributes towards enhancing provision, dissemination and application of climate services,” he said.

Chang'a emphasized the need for availability of information, enhancing access to information and application of information.

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“WISER came in with the purpose of enhancing climate services to the providers of information but also to enhance the capacity of users so that they may effectively utilize the information disseminated,” Chang’a said.

On the Highway project, Chang’ a said the project aims to reduce the impact triggered by extreme weather events and improve the resilience of communities within the Lake Victoria basin.

“Through this project, we have improved communication capacity and use of the early warning systems products with relevant, technicians, forecasters, intermediaries and users,” Chang’a said.

He said MHEWS has put together some tools to improve the standard operations procedures, put in place warning systems, resulting in impact based focus, rather than business as usual scenarios and built capacity of providers and other users such as government ministries.

Experious Emmanuel, an agriculture expert from Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MALF), said the project has been extremely beneficial.

“I benefited first as a food security expert, and helped the ministry acquire a standard warning system that helps us in mitigating hazards and improve food production and security,” Emmanuel said.

He added that the improved quality of weather and climate information from TMA has enabled agriculture experts to understand clearly weather patterns such as low rainfall seasons.

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He said MHEWS project has also helped local farmers understand causes of natural hazards occurring in their areas.

“Weather and climate issues are very dynamic, getting clear information is likely to tackle a dozen issues of which can help both us (MALF) and the farmers in the rural areas,” he said.

Musa Habili, a Regional Officer In Charge of Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation said the MHEWS project had vital impacts to the community.

“It improved the communities’ socio-economic activities and helped them understand hazards and take precautions to reduce losses caused by extreme weather,” Habili said.

He said his skills and knowledge on dealing with maritime affairs were improved in dealing with maritime safety procedures.

“Ports, ships and small vessels operators have benefitted from this project and are able to know in advance about any weather hazards that are harmful to their vessels and take remedial measures,” Habili said.

Omar Ali Mohammed, Communications and Early Warning Officer for Zanzibar Disaster Management Department said early warning systems to Zanzibar are very crucial.

“Disaster management is very challenging to the Zanzibar island. Knowing the nature and dynamics of disasters allows for immediate action and mitigation measures, to avert losses associated with them,” Mohammed said.

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He said in disaster management, prevention, mitigation and preparedness are key and therefore if people know when a disaster will strike, they will be well prepared to deal with the consequences.

“Here in Zanzibar, we have press releases whenever TMA relays weather information, we then disseminate it to all wards and districts. We are now able to go an extra mile and tell local communities in their local languages when an event is to happen and how they can deal with it,” Mohammed said.

He said in the past whenever it rained in Zanzibar, it flooded all over but and people had to be rushed to camps for safety.

“But today, we have no people in flooding camps when it rains, a good sign that our people now know how to prepare themselves, for example, move to higher grounds to save lives,” Mohammed said.

Khowe Abraham Malegeri, an expert in Disaster Management Department in the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa’s Office, said the projects have changed the way government deals with weather and climate matters.

“There are almost 34 weather stations in valleys or basins within communities in Liwale-Mtwara, Bahi-Dodoma and Arumeru-Arusha regions. These empower communities to know what is happening and relay early warnings messages to to avert disaster,” Malegeri said.

Gilbert Meleck, 26 years old, small scale farmer from Kiushini-Ngaramtoni, Oltrumeti Ward, Arumeru District, Arusha region said weather and climate related information has helped small scale farmers who rely on rain-fed farming.

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“We are now able know what crop to grow by knowing various patterns of rainfall and potential disasters. It is important for us, we are grateful for this service in our district,” Meleck said.

Lucy Shamale, 27 years old, another small scale farmer, from Arumeru District, Oltrumeti Ward, Arusha region said early warning services have helped her so much.

“This year as the rainfall pattern changed, I was informed, thanks to this project on how to farm based on the available weather and climate information. This has helped because in the yesteryears, we could blindly plant only for the crops to wither and die,” Shamale said.

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