

A REPORT OF THE KENYA NATIONAL CLIMATE CAFÉ HELD ON 1ST OCTOBER 2019 IN OLIVE GARDENS HOTEL, NAIROBI KENYA



Participants during the National climate café in Nairobi

Introduction

On 1st October 2019, NECJOGHA organized the first ever national climate café in Nairobi Kenya. The cafe was attended by 64 participants who included officials from the Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD), media professionals, civil society actors, representatives of UK Met and ICPAC; University students doing climate related courses and the business community as users of climate information. NECJOGHA Executive Director and Project Manager attended this event.

Background

A Climate cafe is a public discourse on the weather, climate and climate services especially climate forecasting services from end user interaction. It brings together various stakeholders in climate related sectors including scientists, media, climate impacted sector experts, academia, farmers, fishermen, livestock keepers for vital exchange of information. The use of climate information as an early warning and decision making tool is discussed from various perspectives with a view to generating feedback for better climate services delivery.

October, November and December (OND) is the second rain season in Kenya thus the need to understand its onset, progress and impact on various economic activities including pastoralism, agriculture and marine/fisheries. NECJOGHA in partnership with KMD therefore organized the national climate café to present the seasonal forecast for discussion to help many users in planning. The café was also organized to enable interaction among key stakeholders to discuss and find a way forward on how to better communicate climate and weather information.

In his welcome remarks, NECJOGHA Executive Director Patrick Luganda informed the house that a café is a free space for producers, communicators and users of climate information to discuss freely and find a way of better communicating climate information for decision making. He was particularly impressed with attendance of university students who were in the process of becoming professionals and users of weather information. He appreciated partners including KMD, ICPAC for their collaboration in the climate sector. He introduced NECJOGHA's refurbished website www.necjogha.com which he said was an important tool for sharing climate and weather related information. Patrick requested George Achia to open a whatsapp group for Kenya to help sharing of climate information as well as guidance of professionals in communication of climate information.

Ms Marta Baraibar from ICPAC was introduced and invited to speak. On behalf of ICPAC, she thanked NECJOGHA for the climate café initiative during which critical matters relating to climate are discussed. She gave the mandate of ICPAC and its complementary role to governments in the IGAD region.

Presentation of October-November-December 2019 Climate Outlook

Chris Kiptum Tuikong from Kenya Meteorological Department made a presentation of review MAM and associated impacts. He pointed out that Rainfall performance was generally poor over most parts of the country and onset was timely for Western Kenya. He added that the onset was disrupted by Tropical Cyclone IDAI; poor temporal and spatial distribution. He added that most of the seasonal rainfall occurred during the last dekad of April (Associated with Tropical Cyclone Kenneth) and in May. The better part of the country remained generally sunny and dry in March and most of April 2019.

Chris went further and gave a review of the June July and August season noting that most parts of the country experienced generally sunny and dry weather conditions during June-July-August (JJA) 2019. He gave graphic representation of the factors that determined rainfall during the season.

The official presented the “Short Rains” October to December (OND) season which he said constitutes an important rainfall season in Kenya and more so in the Central and South-eastern regions with peak normally in November.

He summarized his presentation with the following

- WMO are encouraging move towards more objective forecasting procedures
- Most models indicate increased rainfall conditions over Western Kenya
- Eastern likely to have equally near average rainfall (slightly enhanced Rainfall)
- The season was expected to be early over the Western region (parts of Western Kenya – rains continue from September) and moderately delayed over Eastern Kenya.
- Warmer temperatures were predicted over most parts of Eastern and North Western Kenya while Western Kenya is likely to have Average Temperatures

In plenary, participants gave their feedback to KMD to improve the accuracy of forecasts, provide region specific forecasts putting it into friendly formats to benefit all the users. On the side of communicators/media professionals, they were urged to correctly and timely disseminate weather information to enable users make use of it.

In 4 groups, participants brainstormed on the challenges to communication and access of weather and climate information.

Challenges

- Limited opportunities for interaction between journalists and scientists on climate related matters
- Advancing technology which require that faster and appropriate channels be used to transmit climate information to different users
- Use of jargons which were not easy to understand by users of information
- Inaccurate forecasts that were not being trusted by farmers and other users
- Climate information not being shared in a timely manner to enable planning by different sectors
- All young people at Universities and other institutions of learning lack appreciation of timely weather and climate information.
- In addition, training in Journalism schools does not build its products in climate reporting
- Not all communities receive weather updates especially those in farming and pastoralist groups
- Climate change being a big concern and the ignorance that delays action to combat negative effects.

Recommendations

1. KMD to share weather updates with media through organized groups for easy dissemination to people in communities
2. Segregation of audiences so that each category is target with different communication channels. In particular, the use needed to be target using modern communication technology – internet based rather than use of traditional media.
3. NECJOGHA was requested to popularize mechanisms of communication climate information including website and whatsapp mentoring group.
4. Strengthen links with County Met departments so as to obtain and cascade climate information that is relevant to the county.
5. Scaling down cafes to counties and on a monthly basis to reach out to various stakeholders and obtain feedback on services provided by KMD

6. Training of journalists to better communicate climate information in understandable formats
7. KMD to improve on the accuracy of its forecasts and timely alert the country on negative weather phenomena like floods, drought etc
8. Simplify the information churned out by scientists to enable audiences understand and use information. Jargons should be reduced by scientists

The national climate café was closed by Ms Bahati Musilu, KMD Communications Officer and member of NECJOGHA who asked all climate scientists, climate reporter, donors, partners and Universities to work together and disseminate climate information in a timely and accurate manner. She pledged KMD willingness to work with NECJOGHA in the communication of climate and weather information.