

A REPORT FOR THE NATIONAL CLIMATE CAFÉ HELD ON DECEMBER 11th, 2019 AT SILVER SPRINGS BUGOLOOBI, KAMPALA (UGANDA)



A group photo of participants at the National Climate Café at Silver Springs Hotel.

1.0 Introduction

The Network of Climate Journalists of the Greater Horn of Africa (NECJOGHA) held a national climate café at the Speke Resort Hotel, Bugolobi a suburb of Uganda's capital city, Kampala on December 11th, 2019. The café was organized to share the current climate and weather information and strategize on better ways of communicating climate information effectively to help in planning.

2.0 Attendance

The national climate café was attended by 63 participants who were drawn from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The participants were carefully selected from the different sectors impacted by climate namely agriculture, fisheries. Others were members of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) of the three countries as the generators of climate information; and the media and civil society organisations (CSO) as the disseminators of climate information.

3.0 Introductory remarks



Patrick Luganda, the ED NECJOGHA making introductory remarks at the climate café.

The café started with the ED NECJOGHA, Mr Patrick Luganda making introductory remarks where he welcomed participants and explained what a café is about. He explained that a café 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.

4.0 Presentations

The main presentation on the rainfall performance and seasonal forecast for the September-December rainfall season was made by Samuel Ekwacu, a meteorologist with the Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA).

The UNMA presentation was discussed by Dr. Evelyn Lutalo, an environmental safeguards specialist working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF).

4.1.0 UNMA presentation

As mentioned above, the UNMA presentation on the rainfall performance and seasonal forecast for the September-December 2019 rainfall season was made by Samuel Ekwacu, a meteorologist with UNMA.

3.1.1 Mandates of UNMA

He started by giving the mandate of UNMA which include;

- Design, install and maintain Weather observing stations
- Monitor the weather and climate natural resource
- Exchange meteorological data, information and products (Nationally, regionally & international)
- Issue weather & climate advisories to all sectors of the national economy and international use
- Monitoring, detection and prediction of climate change

He then went on to name the different instruments they use which include rain gauges, manual weather stations and automatic weather stations.

4.1.2 Products of UNMA

Ekwacu went on to enumerate the different products of UNMA which include;

1. Products on past climate
 - Historical climate data (Daily to annual)
 - Observed climate change signals
 - Climate variability trends and
 - Any other statistics, etc
2. Prediction products
 - Civil Aviation Specialised Products
 - General Daily Weather Forecasts
 - Seasonal Climate Forecasts (3 months) (DJF, MAM, JJA, SON)
 - Monthly weather Updates
 - Decadal (10 day) bulletins

- Climate change Projections up to 50 years for different parts of the country
- Specialized weather alerts for fishermen around L. Victoria (NEW).

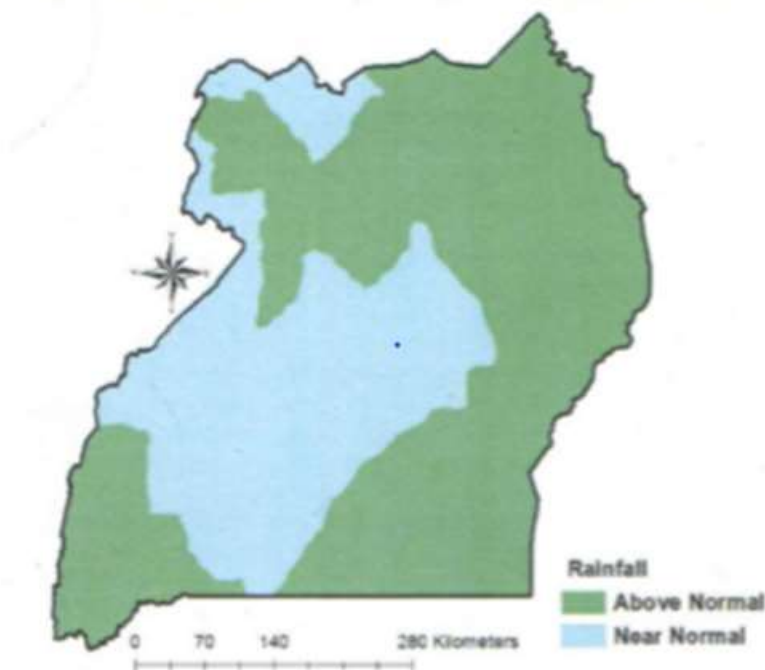
3.1.3 SOND 2019 seasonal forecast

Ekwacu then went on to the SOND rainfall forecast and said that the September to December (SOND) constitutes the second major rainfall season over most parts of Uganda. He explained that during the 53rd Climate Outlook Forum (COF53) for the Greater Horn of Africa that was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from August 26th to 28th August, 2019 the national, regional and international climate scientists reviewed the prevailing/current and expected state of the global climate systems and their implications on the performance of seasonal rainfall over the eastern Africa region.

It was observed that the major physical conditions likely to influence weather over Uganda for the forecast period of September to December 2019 are as follows;

- The predicted warmer (positive phase of) the Indian Ocean Diapole (IOD).
- Natural ENSO conditions in the central and eastern Pacific
- The influence of regional circulation patterns, topographical features and large inland water bodies

September to December (SOND) 2019 Rainfall Outlook



Ekwacu said that UNMA predicted that overall; there was an increased likelihood of near normal to above normal rainfall over most parts of Uganda.

4.1.3.1 Current status of IOD and ENSO

- Sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean have shown patterns consistent with a positive IOD event since the end of May, with the IOD index exceeding the positive IOD threshold (+0.4°C) from mid-July
- Peak of +2.1°C was attained by mid October.
- Current status as of 10 December is + 0.9°C still above the IOD positive threshold of +0.4°C however this indicates that the positive IOD is underway.
- A strong positive IOD (Indian Ocean Dipole) continues and is forecast to remain strong until the end of 2019.
- IOD events break down when the monsoon trough transitions into the southern hemisphere, which typically occurs in early December. However, the monsoon trough is likely to be delayed this year, likely due to the strength of the current positive IOD event. (This is the reason behind the current intense rains received over our region)
- Recent flooding over Eastern Africa is a typical result of a positive IOD event.
- NINO3.4 value as of 8 December 2019 is +0.4 °C, continuing within ENSO-neutral bounds. The general consensus amongst models is for the central tropical Pacific (NINO3.4) to remain neutral through to at least March 2020.
- An ENSO-neutral state means that the El Niño–Southern Oscillation has little influence on global climate.

4.1.4 The Importance of Climate Information

Ekwacu then enumerated the main uses of climate information as follows;

- Weather forecasting
- Study purposes (Research)
- Climate change studies
- Air transport
- Water transport
- Dam Construction planning
- Road construction planning

- Solar installation
- Wind mill installation
- National Planning

3.1.5 Dissemination of weather and climate information

Ekwacu also mentioned the different strategies UNMA uses to disseminate weather and climate information which includes;

- Translate the forecast into major languages
- Targeting Fm stations in the country side
- Train local journalists
- Link up with more Partners (Govt agencies, NGOs, etc.) that can support dissemination
- Interesting Youths with ICT skills to develop applications that can help in dissemination (Hackathon)

4.1.6 Challenges UNMA is facing

- Vandalism of the equipment (solar panels, rain gauges, thermometers, etc.)
- Keeping in pace with exponential technological advances (data collection, processing and storage technologies)
- Inadequate funding to meet set targets, wages, operational and expansion costs
- Key stake holders in government are unaware of the significance of Hydro-meteorological services to development until they are faced with related hazards (drought, floods, landslides etc. *Ironically, adverse weather is always cited as one of the major causes of poor budgetary performance*)

4.2 Discussion of UNMA presentation



Dr. Evelyn Lutalo was the discussant of the UNMA presentation.

She started by pointing out the scientific terms like IOD and ENSO which she said is hard for lay people like most journalists to understand.

Dr. Lutalo also noted that although people in the local languages used to ask about the weather in their greetings now people who use English no longer ask about the weather.

She also said with the climate change crisis with us now there is a need to plan very well for disasters. She noted that one of the reasons for the escalating climate change crisis is protected land being given away for agricultural or other uses.

Dr. Lutalo gave an example of the roads which she said are impassable because of the heavy rains and need rehabilitation but government did not plan for this yet UNMA had forecast the heavy rains in September.

Dr. Lutalo advised participants that due to the climate change there will be a need to change the way we build our houses and the way we dress because places which used to be warm are becoming colder and those which used to be cold are becoming warmer.

She also emphasized that climate communication should touch on topics which

5.0 Plenary discussions

After the UNMA presentation there was a plenary discussion where different participants gave comments, asked questions and made contributions on the presentations.

Andrew Kirabira (a lecturer at Uganda Martyr's University, Nkozi) - What we have in sub Saharan Africa are weather alerts not forecasts. Met services should aim weather forecast warnings not alerts. Governments in sub Saharan Africa countries also give little attention to weather forecasting. Climate scientists should also reduce on the use of complicated words in the forecasts.



Kirabira making his submission at the climate café

Judith Akol (journalist from Kenya Broadcasting Corporation –KBC) – Climate information is becoming an economic issue. Because of climate change journalists need to do stories for instance on what we are going to wear or what houses we are going to build as it becomes hotter or colder.

Dr. Jolly Kabirizi (Forage scientist) – Is it possible for the climate cafes to be held in areas affected by climate change?

Response from Patrick Luganda, ED NECJOGHA – We have been holding cafes in different parts of the country like Soroti, Mbarara and Jinja in Uganda; Kisumu and Naivasha in Kenya; and Mwanza and Zanzibar in Tanzania.

Henry Tumwine (lecturer at Uganda Pentecostal University – Fort Portal) - Mets should also involve themselves in the effects of climate change. Stories written by journalists should show impact.



Tumwine making his submission at the climate café

Mirere Sadrach (climate change activist with Friday for Future) – Climate scientists need to use terminologies that people understand. The young people should also be

mobilized to get an interested in climate issues. Space should also be given to voices championing for achieving climate change goals.

Fred Kavuma (lecturer at Uganda Pentecostal University – Fort Portal) – There should be a meeting of all stakeholders for a multi sectoral approach to climate issues.

Walukhu Simon Peter (radio journalist from Step FM, Mbale) –I want to thank NECJOGHA especially the chief mentor of the WhatsApp groups for encouraging me to do climate stories. I used to fear writing climate stories but now I am confident. I am also grateful for the weather forecasts from UNMA which are usually shared in the groups but wondering what would happen if Kaggwa is not enough to share them.

Dr. Evelyn Kobutunga (an agro meteorologist from the National Agricultural Research Organisation – NARO, Kawanda) – We always do agricultural advisories but where do they get lost in the weather forecasts? There is a need to integrate agriculture advisories in the weather forecast.

Betty Mujungu ((radio journalist with Voice of Toro, Fort Portal) – I would like to thank NECJOGHA for inviting me for the café. However, there climate information release by UNMA is general and not localized.

5.1 Response from UNMA

Ekwacu from UNMA responded to the comments made by the participants as below:

- UNMA has trained agricultural extension officers in the dissemination of weather forecasts to farmers.
- Climate info is a value chain with generators (UNMA) and connectors like NECJOGHA and the media.
- Agricultural advisories are included in the seasonal forecasts.
- UNMA encourages other organisations to come on board and help them to disseminate climate information.
- The public should get climate info from the extension officers in their areas because that's what they are tasked to do.

5.2 Response from NECJOGHA ED

The NECJOGHA ED, Patrick Luganda also had responses to make to the comments of the participants;

- There was a fear NECJOGHA was going to replace met services.
- There is a need to talk to farmers
- The collaboration between the generators of climate information and the disseminators is now real because of NECJOGHA.

- He commended TMA for the look of their websites and other media like the online TV.
- UNMA should mention that it's NECJOGHA which started the translation of forecasts to local languages.

6.0 Panel discussion



The panelists who presented for the different sectors at the café. From the left Anita, Rose, Robert and Jane.

There was a panel discussion with panelists drawn from the four different sectors represented at the café. The sectors which gave presentations were fisheries, media, farming and civil society organisations. The topic was on 'How Climate Impacts my sector.' Robert Bakaki, a fisherman from Kalangala Islands represented the fisheries sector, Rose Lusweti, a farmer from Masaka represented the farming sector, Anita Matsika, a radio journalist from Radio West in western Uganda represented the media and Jane Nakiranda of World Vision represented the civil society organisations.

They presented on how they access and use climate information mainly forecasts, how relevant the forecasts are to them, how better they think they should be receiving the forecasts and what improvements they think should be made in the dissemination of climate information.

6.1 Agriculture – Rose Lusweti

The presentation for agriculture was made by Rose Lusweti, a farmer from Masaka (Uganda) and she had this to say:

- We receive information from radio stations and other media.
- However, the information is not timely as it comes a few days to the planting season and sometimes when the rains have stopped.
- Media fear or don't understand the forecasts and only give a small piece of the forecast.
- UNMA should work hand in hand with the media.

6.2 Fisheries – Robert Bakaki

The presentation for fisheries was made by Robert Bakaki, a fisherman from Kalangala Islands (Uganda) and he had this to say:

- I access the marine forecast via e-mail, WhatsApp, radio and UNMA
- We receive two marine forecasts, one in the morning and another in the afternoon.
- The information in the forecasts is relevant and timely.
- All of us should come together to find good ways of disseminating the climate information.

6.3 Media – Annita Matsika

The presentation for media was made by Annita Matsika , a journalist working for Radio West based in Mbarara (Uganda) and she had this to say:

- In the media, we get weather forecasts from UNMA, NEMA, NECJOGHA mentoring groups and internet.
- Sometimes the forecasts are relevant and other times not.
- Advisories don't come with the forecasts.
- UNMA should simplify the info it gives to the media
- There is a need to create networks with farmers, pastoralists, etc to enable them receive the weather forecasts.
- Warnings about extreme weather should come at least three months before.
- Scientists should be available for radio interviews, etc

6.4 CSOs – Jane Nakiranda

The presentation for the CSOs was made by Jane Nakiranda , working with World Vision (Uganda) and she had this to say:

- CSOs work with different stakeholders
- World Vision interacts with UNMA and other organisations to strengthen the availability of weather forecasts.
- We access info in English and translate it to 35 local languages.

- There is a need to bring together MDAs to support the capacity of UNMA.
- Accuracy of the forecasts has improved to about between 75-80%
- Increase on feedback sharing between the generators of climate information and the end users.

6.5 Reactions to the panel discussion

After the panel discussion, the participants had the following reactions and comments;

- Journalists have to learn the scientific terms or jargon used in communicating climate information if it's the beat they are doing. Every beat in reporting has its jargon and for the journalists to do that beat they have to understand the jargon otherwise how do you communicate what you have not understood yourself?.
- Sometimes journalists leave reports hanging because they don't understand the language.
- There is a need to translate the forecasts to the local languages for the people to understand them.
- UNMA should produce simpler version or popular versions of weather forecasts.
- Farmers need to be educated on the importance of forecasts.
- Journalists should look for alternative climate stories and avoid repetitive stories like floods and landslides now.

7.0 Way forward and suggestions on how to improve climate services

The participants concluded the climate café by giving suggestions on how they think an improvement can be made on the dissemination of climate information as well as the way forward after the café.

Below are the submissions;

- It's evident that taking action in line with climate change is in the interest of Uganda.
- When writing about climate we should also talk about access to health, agriculture.
- Dissemination of climate information is not enough.
- There should be online guidance on the forecast since many people now have smart phones.
- We need to justify why people should be interested in climate information.