



A REPORT OF NAIVASHA SUB NATIONAL CLIMATE CAFÉ HELD ON 24th OCTOBER 2019 AT BURCH'S RESORT, NAIVASHA



Introduction

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.

Having organized the national café in Kenya, the Network of Climate Journalists in the Greater Horn of Africa (NECJOGHA) moved the climate discussions to the sub national level for

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stakeholder engagement. In this connection, NECJOGHA organized the sub national climate café in Naivasha, Kenya targeting participants from Naivasha, Narok and Nakuru.

Objective

The main objective of the climate café was to bring together experts, communicators and climate users to deliberate on the current weather season, share opportunities and gaps in communicating timely and accurate information especially at the county levels for communities to make informed decisions while planning their activities. The region is dominated by arable farming, livestock keeping, tourism and limited fishing. The one day event was attended by 27 participants who included scientists, conservationists, civil society actors, media, researchers, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries representative; farmers and business men as users of climate and weather information.

In his welcome remarks, Benjamin Waburoko, NECJOGHA Project Manager gave the objective of the event at the time when timely climate and weather information was needed for the attention of users. He gave examples of how NECJOGHA was disseminating climate information in the Greater Horn of Africa and particularly in the East Africa countries where the Wiser project was being implemented. Key products shared were use of climate cafes, Online platforms for mentoring of journalists and scientists in effective climate communication; and the website www.necjogha.com. Participants were invited to join these educative and interactive platforms.

Sharing of experience in climate communication

Participants from different sectors shared their experiences of how they receive and disseminate climate and weather information.

Macharia Mwangi from Nation Media Group based in Nakuru

He noted that as a Journalist, he was belonged to the NMG Whatsapp group that sometimes shared weather and climate information. He went on to say that journalists from Nakuru County mainly depend on press conferences to obtain climate and weather information to write their stories. He added that it was not easy to get weather and climate information from government officials let alone getting the right people.

He pointed out the challenge of climate, weather and environmental information not being marketable in the media industry and urged journalists to make it interesting to their media houses and to the users. Another challenge Macharia pointed out was the missing link between experts and climate journalists. He proposed that all journalists should benefit from NECJOGHA mentoring platforms. He called upon scientists and journalists to reduce use of jargons and simplify their language while communicating weather and climate information to the local audiences.



Macharia Mwangi of NMG making his presentation at the Naivasha Sub national climate cafe

Anan Echakari from ELSAMERA, a conservation based organization around Lake Naivasha

Anan gave his experience of disseminating weather information to the users. He said that his organization uses structures at the community level i.e. school children, teachers and communities to share general information including climate/weather information. He urged government structures to sensitize people beyond Lake Naivasha. The organization has designed training programmes for education institutions.

As a conservation agency, ELSAMERA relies on meteorological department which gives information but a bit late hence compromising planning. The organization belongs to a Whatsapp group in Nakuru (Nakuru Green Team) linked to the Meteorological department which gives forecast for 3 months. Participation in public Barazas gives them an opportunity to learn and share information for planning.

Anan suggested development of early warning system to protect Lake Naivasha ecosystem for sustainable tourism development. He also proposed the need for timely text messages to farmers and communities because farmers and tourists receive information late. He concluded that climate information was not taken seriously and yet it affects all sectors. Called upon journalists to seize space and disseminate climate information consistently

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Phillip Koech, a farmer from Narok County

As users of climate information, he noted that farmers invest based on weather and climate information short of this they incur losses. He said farmers are advised late. He cited the 2018 scenario when farmers made losses due to heavy rains because weather information was not passed on to them in time. This affected their markets for Sweet potatoes

For 2019, farmers were advised to plant short term crops due to low rainfall but this turned out to be disastrous. He called for blending of indigenous and scientific knowledge of forecasting for accuracy and urged the meteorological department to be timely in giving weather and climate information to enable users plan better.

Alfred Koech, Peregrine Fund (Civil Society initiative)

As a civil society actor pointed out bad attitude among journalists who mainly prefer attractive stories. He said their work was to train journalists and other stakeholders on eco-system around Lake Naivasha. Alfred called for change of attitude among many stakeholders in the receipt of climate information in order to minimize losses which occur as a result of poor planning. He also called for early warning system and to sensitize communities on the periodic winds and their effects.



Hannah Maina, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries

Hannah gave the mandate of the ministry and noted that her ministry relies on Meteorological department. She informed participants that Nakuru County Director of Meteorology has all contacts of technical officers with whom he shares climate information. She however noted the lack of trust for the journalists by technical officers

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She shared about the Nakuru County Call Centre which shares weather information with farmers in Nakuru County. Contacts include

- Facebook page (NakuruCallCentre),
- Twitter (@NakuruAgricCall
- Email (Nakurufarmerscallcentre@gmail.com)
- Telephone numbers – 0701032032, 0737032032

Other mechanisms used to share weather information include

- Barazas which were used to advise and share climate and weather information with communities
- Advisory letters given to school children, churches to reach all parents

She, however, pointed out that there were few officers on the ground to disseminate information to all members of the community and rely on information from media to reach farmers. Disaster management teams get climate information from other sources to be shared with farmers. Noted that problem of flash floods which killed many animals in the county suggesting climate change is affecting everyone. At the village level, people rely on traditional weather forecasters who work with the weathermen. Advised media to unpack climate information for farmers to understand and use it. Media to learn to trust scientists was here final counsel.

Susan Jepkemoi, a Scientist/Environmentalist

She explained that there were different micro climates in the counties, different ecological zones and suggested that more rain gauges should be installed through the agricultural insurance schemes. She called for climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation measures

Recommendations and way forward on improving climate communication

- Scientists and journalists requested to join the NECJOGHA Whatsapp mentoring platform to get tips and guidance on story development as well as sharing of up to date weather information for the benefit of users.
- County meteorological office to provide regular information to specific communities working with agricultural extension staff as well as environmental and wildlife conservationists.
- NECJOGHA working with partners to organize regular networking events and invite some participants to attend and share experience

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- Packaging of climate information in understandable format by both scientists and journalists for the benefit of users in the region
- Make use of NECJOGHA website to get references for stories by journalists
- Make use of agricultural extension services to improve dissemination of climate information to farmers.
- Increase frequency of dissemination climate information and site specific for planning purposes
- Link participants to external opportunities to learn and share experience in climate communication.