

## Climate services for regional development

Before the political borders, communities in IGAD Cluster I region - located in the cross-border area between Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia commonly referred to as the *Karamoja* cluster, lived in the clusters that were interconnected for shared resources. This was based on the similarities among the communities within the region from language to livelihoods and shared natural resources. Development within the countries, increasing populations and climate variability have led to communities owning and seeking to protect their natural resources especially during droughts. During droughts, communities including livestock herders in search of pasture migrate across the borders. It is in these times that preparedness, cooperation and collaboration are key to ensure peace during the migrations across borders. Through this measures, trade among other benefits can be promoted while conflict and disease spread during migration is minimized.

Dr. Kathia Dominic has been working as the coordinator for cross-border development in the *Karamoja* cluster and the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) focal point for Uganda. Over the years, his work with IDDRSI has sought to improve the collaboration and cooperation within the cluster to facilitate the collaborative efforts of communities, institutions and governments during disaster risks. This, however, has been greatly challenged by weather and climate variability especially the increasing drought intensities and frequencies. Drought events have had impacts on natural resources – water and pasture have been increasing in scarcity further increasing migration, the risks of conflict – inter-community increasing frequency, human-wildlife and between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists; disease and pest spread in the cluster. Those engaging in crop growing have also been negatively affected by erratic rains leading them to destructive coping mechanisms such as charcoal burning further degrading the environment. Collectively this has amplified the need for weather and climate information to support planning and decision making within and across the communities and countries. As a result, the idea of having a cluster forum for



*Peer Learning and Training Workshop on User Based Co-produced Climate Services, Nairobi, Kenya*

downscaling and understanding weather and climate information and its potential impacts for the cluster had been in consideration by national IDDRSI coordinators in the cluster.

In July 2019, Dr. Kathia attended

the five-day Peer learning and training workshop organised by CARE International in Kenya and ICPAC under the WISER project. The workshop encompassed all aspects of climate services and contextualised of same at different levels. Dr. Kathia recognized that everyone is a player in climate services, especially the role played by the media in dissemination of climate information services. As a result, during participants selection for the cluster forum for downscaling and understanding weather and climate information, media persons who were earlier not considered, were included. This as Dr. Kathia reckons is because he now understands the media's role and importance in ensuring the right information gets to the end users. In addition, he also got a better understanding of his role as an intermediary in improving climate services.

In February 2020, the first “Enhancing the uptake of climate early warning information and early response capacity of *Karamoja* cluster” workshop was conducted in Lodwar, Kenya. It brought together representatives from different sectors, IGAD institutions and media presenters from the cluster and NGOs to collectively understand, deliberate and forecast based develop advisories for the cluster. The advisories directed to communities, local governments, sectors, IGAD institutions and NGOs are hoped to inform and strengthen planning and collaborative efforts in the cluster to maximize on the March-May rainfall season. Dr. Kathia hopes that as a first in the region, the forum will be an inspiration for other clusters in support to get the right information, to the right people at the right time for effective planning, decision making and action. This will in turn support efforts to mainstream climate services in development programming as a cross-cutting issue.

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