

NGO Statement for the AMCOMET Africa Hydromet Forum

NGOs representing civil society users and “boundary organisations” or climate knowledge brokers¹ of hydro-meteorological services welcome the opportunity to join delegates at the Africa Hydromet Forum. The presentations have covered a range of key issues in delivering climate services to end users, especially those most vulnerable to climate variation, change and extreme events. NGOs have contributed to this event and would like to submit these ideas to the up-coming Ministerial meeting.

Rationale

Communities are not passive recipients but bring local knowledge and experience of climate, they understand how bio-indicators can be used to forecast local weather, collect data (such as through community-managed rain gauges) and can provide essential data, feedback and guidance in the development of effective climate services. Therefore, a successful climate service must be based on the intensive and extensive climate risk-management priorities and decision making processes of these communities, which should be given much greater priority and consideration in climate service programmes and at future conferences and fora.

Although substantial progress has been made in weather and climate forecasting – it is now 30 years since the first successful El Nino forecast and 20 years since the first RCOF in Africa – the default humanitarian position when faced with extreme weather events is to wait until the impacts are experienced before declaring emergency, especially for slow-onset emergencies such as drought (for which up to 12 months of early warning is now technically feasible). Humanitarian funding is only released after this declaration is made. This has contributed to the current unsustainable burden of humanitarian expenditure. Effective early warning and early action can save lives, livelihoods, avert humanitarian need and protect broader development gains (by \$2 to 13 for every \$1 spent, according to one measure²). And yet, there is currently no formal global early action funding facility to support risk mitigation after an early warning and before emergency onset.

As NGOs providing climate services to vulnerable communities, we consult with and agree MOUs and partnership agreements with NMHSs at the start of our resilience interventions. We note with concern the lack of such coordination between NMHSs and other service providers, such as private sector climate data generators and forecasters and the multiplicity of actors working in sectors related to climate services, as highlighted by several delegates in plenary. This coordination is essential in avoiding duplication, building on learning from various initiatives and channelling investments towards gaps in the climate services value chain.

Comments

1. We support NMHSs calls for stronger coordination, regulation and the development of ethical frameworks to ensure end-users have access to and are fully participating in high quality climate services, with transparency on forecast skill and levels of uncertainty clearly explained.
2. We note with interest the promotion of hydromet-based insurance products at the forum, such as the Africa Risk Capacity. While we welcome the benefits of insurance (such as potentially early release of humanitarian funds, more effective risk management through risk modelling), it should be recognised that index-based insurance has only a minor role to play in humanitarian response. For example, in 2016 Malawi received an \$8 million drought pay-out on a \$5 million premium. This net \$3 million met less than 1% of the total \$395 million humanitarian response required. Insurance can only be a small part of the solution and should not divert attention and resources away from more cost-effective and life-saving early warning and early action. Countries building their resilience through more effective early warning and early action should be rewarded with lower and lower premium costs, thereby promoting a virtuous cycle between insurance and resilience, rather than risk complacency and high opportunity costs.

¹ See <https://www.odi.org/publications/10560-changing-role-ngos-supporting-climate-services>

² Economics of Early Response and Resilience – TEERR: Summary of Findings (2013)

3. We agree with concerns raised at the Forum about the lack of integration of Hydromet institutions and the reluctance to share climate data. This data, as a taxpayer-funded resource, is a public good and we urge all relevant institutions to adopt open-access information policies to ensure that end users have access to the highest-quality climate services, avoiding the moral hazard caused by overly proprietorial practices.
4. We welcome the recognition of the climate services value chain and the importance of understanding priorities for climate risk management for all parts of the chain. However we note the low representation of “boundary organisations” such as NGOs and community end users. We urge Forum organisers to address this in future meetings.
5. NGOs, and especially African NGOs and civil society organisations, are now implementing a range of resilience interventions that include climate service provision. Many of these are generating impact and valuable lessons learnt that can contribute positively to discussions and provide guidance in support of the expansion and improvement of climate service systems and approaches to be more user-led.
6. We appreciate the discussions on the need to generate useable climate information, such as through development of impact-based forecasts. Generating useable climate information requires positioning the information in broader decision making contexts and interpreting and communicating it to relate to the context.

CALL FOR ACTION

Based on this analysis, we, NGOs attending the Forum:

- 1. Urge the WMO, the GFCS, RCCs, NMHSs and other hydro-meteorological stakeholders to deepen the involvement of their end users in the production and use of climate services, primarily those at community level and largely engaged in climate-vulnerable livelihoods, such as small-scale agriculture, pastoralism. For climate services to succeed, they must be user-led.**
- 2. Urge NMHS and climate scientists to build long term relationships with “boundary organisations” or climate knowledge brokers, to leverage their role and capacity to engage with scientists as well as end users and adaptation/ resilience/ risk management planning processes so as to co-produce and deliver useable climate information.**
- 3. Urge WMO, AMCOMET, GFCS, NMHS and other institutions in climate sensitive sectors to institutionalise and resource opportunities for multi-stakeholder and multi-level dialogue and co-production of knowledge, and to strengthen the skill and capacity of knowledge brokers to ensure such opportunities are effective and productive.**
- 4. Urge Governments to move away from the increasingly dysfunctional and expensive emergency declaration-focus to a multi-level system of forecast-based early warning, early action for slow-onset climate hazards (such as drought), defining low-regrets actions at each level, ensuring the most vulnerable receive the best risk-mitigating advice and support. The institutions represented at this Forum have a vital role to play in developing decision relevant climate information that will ensure this transition happens.**
- 5. Urge the institutions represented at the Forum and their delegates to support the creation of a Global Early Action Facility (similar to global funds already established for emergency response and HIV, TB and malaria) to support effective early warning and early action as climate change intensifies climate extremes.**

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