Ky Dembele for CCAFS

LEARNING AGENDA ON CLIMATE SERVICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), more than 65 percent of the population derives their livelihood from rain-fed agriculture. This makes the rural economies in SSA especially susceptible to weather and climate. Providing decision-makers - from individual farmers, to agribusinesses, to government officials - with timely, accurate information on climate and weather variations helps inform decisions.

Informed decisions can increase agricultural production and avoid harvest loss, thereby improving food security, raising agricultural incomes, and ultimately increasing the resilience of farmers to shocks and stresses.

While climate information services (CIS) have been used with success in other regions of the world, they are used to a much lower extent in SSA. Even as investments in CIS in SSA are increasing, the generation and delivery of CIS in the region remains underfunded.

To ensure these growing investments result in improved rural livelihoods and sustainable CIS systems, objective evidence regarding the effectiveness of CIS investments is needed. Research is also needed regarding the socio-economic circumstances that constrain the use of such services in SSA, as well as business models appropriate for CIS production and delivery in SSA.

FAST FACTS

According to the intergovernmental panel on climate change, Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and change due to its high exposure to climate shocks and stresses (e.g., droughts) and relatively low adaptive capacities.

Opportunity

In response to these needs, the U.S. Agency for International Development is implementing a learning agenda to better understand how to develop effective, sustainable, country-led CIS programs in SSA.

The Learning Agenda on Climate Services in SSA generates new information, evidence, and learning on the effective and sustainable production, delivery, and use of climate information to improve rural agricultural livelihood decision-making and outcomes. This learning agenda harnesses a wide range of partners to examine CIS systems from the production of information at the national level down to the use of tailored products by individual farmers and others involved in the agriculture sector in SSA.

Response

This learning agenda is composed of two companion projects: the Mercy Corps-led Climate Information Services Research Initiative (CISRI) and the Winrock International-led Assessing Sustainability and Effectiveness of Climate Information Services in Africa (Sustainable CIS).

Together, these projects seek to:
- Improve understanding of, and access to, knowledge on the effectiveness of CIS programming
- Produce evidence and tools to improve understanding of the factors and structures that influence CIS delivery, uptake, use, and effectiveness
- Produce innovative evaluation methodologies and evidence on the degree of effectiveness of CIS
- Develop metrics to assess sustainable and effective provision of CIS by National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and others, and conduct a baseline assessment of current gaps
- Identify options to improve the sustainability of NMHSs including collaboration with the private sector
- Build partnerships, synthesize knowledge, and ensure uptake of lessons learned.

What Are We Learning?

This learning agenda is generating the evidence necessary to inform the design and implementation of future CIS investments. This will lead to an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of such investments, and, ultimately, an increase in the number of users of CIS who benefit from improved livelihoods.

KEY LEARNING TO DATE

- The design and management of effective CIS requires the identification of intended users of climate information, work to establish how climate information could be useful in the context of their lives, and plans to deliver credible, salient, and legitimate climate information that meets one or more of their needs.
  Source: Identifying Climate Information Services Users and Their Needs in sub-Saharan Africa: A Learning Agenda

- Developing effective CIS requires considerable investment. An evaluation framework can help identify infrastructure, staff, and other capacities and gaps within NMHSs. A set of metrics that integrate the GFCS pillars with the WMO categories for NMHSs, has been developed to help measure NMHS capacity and progress to address critical gaps.
  Source: Development of Metrics to Assess National Meteorological Services in Africa (upcoming report)

- The private sector currently operates in many segments of the CIS value chain in Africa, though the overall market for CIS in Africa is nascent and fragmented. Partnerships between NMHS and the private sector can help generate and deliver CIS cost effectively and complement NMHS.
  Source: A CIS market assessment and business model review

- Participatory CIS systems mapping creates a practical learning process for actors to improve relationships and linkages across the CIS chain of information.
  Source: Climate Information for Those Who Need It Most: Contributions of a Participatory Systems Mapping Approach in Niger

Learn More about the Learning Agenda

This program began in October 2016 and runs through December 2018. Further information can be found at: https://www.climatelinks.org/projects/learningagendaonclimateservices

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