

Knowledge Management as an enabler of co-production, uptake and use of climate information services

Taking the right measures to strengthen knowledge management is a critical part of ensuring that climate information is captured, tailored and disseminated to users that need it.

KEY POINTS

- Africa needs climate information services to understand how climate change will impact the lives and livelihoods of its people, and support wider development.
- Robust management of climate-related knowledge is intrinsically linked to the uptake and use of climate information services for decision making.
- Climate-related knowledge is often not sufficiently captured and shared. This is a major missed opportunity to make the best use of emerging knowledge for developing best practices.
- The African Climate Policy Centre and partners are taking a multi-pronged approach to harness the rich knowledge, lessons and practices resulting from climate information services initiatives.

The management of climate-related knowledge to facilitate better understanding and application of climate data and information is increasingly cited as a critical link in the quest for improved co-production, uptake and use of climate information services in Africa.

Recent years have seen growing recognition, albeit slowly, of the value of climate information to help Africa manage its response to climate change and to support sustainable development. In turn, the application of climate information in policy, practice and programmes has been on a tentative upward curve.

But progress is slow. According to the Climate Knowledge Brokers Manifesto,¹ access to and availability of climate data and information is a major hurdle in enabling stakeholders to make use of climate information. Many different actors – politicians, technical governmental staff, research institutes, universities, private sector, civil society organisations and community

members – need to apply climate knowledge to support their decision making. And their needs are diverse and complex.

Yet overwhelming quantities of material (reports, scenarios, datasets, toolkits) confound those seeking information while others find there is not enough information, the right information, or that information is too patchy, to meet their needs. Others are simply not aware of why and how climate information services can support decision making.

Robust knowledge management – the effective generation, capture, storage, transfer and translation of information – is the cornerstone to getting reliable climate information into the hands of those who need it. Without this information, countries are ill-equipped to take action to minimise damage from climate-related disasters. Nor can they make informed decisions to seize the opportunities for resilient and inclusive growth that climate change can present.

Implementing robust Knowledge Management: the time is ripe

Africa needs climate information services to understand how climate change will impact the lives and livelihoods of its people, and support wider development. Across the continent, climate information is being applied to build climate resilience into projects across a ranges of areas including adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction. However, all too often, knowledge generated from these projects is not sufficiently captured, shared or used to develop best practices. This marks a missed opportunity to make optimal use of emerging climate knowledge.

In the past, part of the challenge in accessing climate information has been poor internet connectivity or the high costs of internet services. But since 2000, internet penetration across Africa has increased by over 7400 per cent.² Mobile

phone usage has also spiralled in the last decade: in 2017, 81 per cent of the total population had a mobile subscription,³ further increasing the scope for communicating climate information.

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General understanding of climate information services as a concept is also gradually improving. While in the past, climate information has been seen essentially as the domain of climate scientists and meteorologists, the application of climate information services and associated socio-economic benefits are increasingly better understood by policy makers, researchers and practitioners. Among these groups is

Five fundamentals for implementing strong Knowledge Management

Time

Organisations need to commit time for knowledge sharing to happen, for planning, implementing, collaborating, learning together, evaluating what has been achieved, and optimizing for a more effective program.

Power

Support from top management as well as middle managers and supervisors for the Knowledge Management program is crucial.

Structure

An organisation's Knowledge Management structure should be clear to all; it must define supervision and coordination lines based on roles and accountabilities.

Measurement systems

Systems that show whether Knowledge Management is successful or not must be in place.

Organisational culture

This defines the success parameters for Knowledge Management. Before Knowledge Management activities are introduced, staff should be prepared for the transition from the present to the enhanced Knowledge Management-oriented procedures.

the recognition that stronger knowledge management practices can help move complex and scientific climate research into practical programming and real-world decision making.

Africa needs to reach a stage where countries are capable not only of generating knowledge, but of using that knowledge to influence the direction of global climate policy. Africa is a victim of climate change and must contribute at the table on what is happening - James Murombedzi, ACPC

Building the skills needed to support knowledge management will further catalyse efforts to ensure that climate knowledge, wherever it is generated, is captured, tailored and disseminated to users that need it. This capacity building requires sufficient resource and the growing recognition of the value of climate information is beginning to create incentives for organisations to commit more time and resource to knowledge management than has been the case in the past.

Climate knowledge partnerships

Across Africa, many players operating in the climate information landscape - academic institutions, climate research centres, meteorological agencies - have strengths in particular countries, regions or sectors of intervention. Given the cross-cutting nature of Knowledge Management, collaboration across these various actors can facilitate the sharing of critical climate knowledge.

While there is no consensual definition of knowledge management, it is broadly understood

to be the process by which organisations create, distribute and use their collective knowledge.⁴ Improved knowledge management practices and approaches across research programmes, networks, mechanisms and partnerships can connect initiatives to leverage emerging synergies from existing programmes processes on the ground. This enables lessons learnt to be shared more easily and interventions continuously optimized for better efficiency, economy and effectiveness. It also helps to avoid duplication of efforts that can drain precious resources.

Working together, partners can research, define and develop effective approaches to **co-explore** (identify the most pressing climate-related challenges), **co-design** (integrate identified priority areas of climate research), **co-produce** (collaboration to gather and synthesise data) and **co-communicate** (tailor and disseminate climate information in line with user needs) climate information services.

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The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) of the UN Economic Commission for Africa is recognised as a premier knowledge hub for demand-led knowledge on climate change in Africa. The centre addresses the need for greatly improved climate information in Africa and champions the use of such information by policy makers, planners and practitioners. Accomplishing this mandate can only be realised through the strong knowledge partnerships and networks that the centre has built since its inception in 2011.

Credit: xxxx

Harnessing climate knowledge: next steps

Clear understanding of who is involved in climate information interventions in Africa is an important and necessary prerequisite for harnessing the rich knowledge, lessons and practices resulting from climate information services initiatives. ACPC, in collaboration with partners, is thus committing significant resources to establishing a compendium of initiatives, development partners and implementers involved in climate information services projects in Africa. The resulting compilation will be updated continually and serve as a reference to support decision making at the stage of planning new programmes.

Furthermore, ACPC has launched a climate information services innovation solution forum to build trust, encourage peer-to-peer learning and advance the design and development of innovative solutions that will help Africans

adapt to climate variability and change using climate information. Using its robust network of partners, ACPC is creating a compendium of climate information services best practices to help showcase what success looks like and thus motivate better climate information services generation, uptake and use by communities.

In recognition of the increased prominence of contemporary communication tools – principally online communications – to represent and relay scientific climate information, ACPC will leverage emerging approaches such as global social media platforms, infographics, and webinars to facilitate the democratisation of key messages and outputs. That said, ACPC recognises the ongoing relevance of paper-based communication for certain audiences and will continue to produce policy documents, fact sheets, brochures and progress reports as well as support face-to-face learning such as workshops and meetings to enhance the availability, uptake and use of climate information and services at all levels.

¹ Climate knowledge brokers 2017, www.Climateknowledgebrokers.Net/manifesto/

² [internetworldstats](http://internetworldstats.com), 2016.

³ Ericsson Mobility Report, 2017.

⁴ Knowledge management and competition in the consulting industry, Savary, M, 1999.

About ACPC

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) is a hub for demand-led knowledge on climate change in Africa. It addresses the need for greatly improved climate information for Africa and strengthening the use of such information for decision making, by improving analytical capacity, knowledge management and dissemination activities.

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