

Promoting better use of climate information within humanitarian and development planning

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Since 2009 the Humanitarian Futures Programme, King's College, London, has been supporting a two-way exchange between climate scientists from the UK Met Office Hadley Centre and the universities of Liverpool, Oxford and Sussex and policymakers from a number of major international NGOs (CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam and the Red Cross). The exchange is based on the premise that only through sustained, collaborative partnerships can humanitarian and development policymakers know what questions to ask of emerging climate science, and climate scientists better support humanitarian and development decision making processes. The approach has been widely welcomed, with partners recognizing the urgent need to address the continuing disconnect between the outputs of climate research and practitioners' understanding and appropriate application of these outputs. Partners have raised specific concerns regarding the issues of accountability and capacity both on the part of climate scientists, in making their climate data useful and supporting end users in its appropriate application, as well as for humanitarian and development in ensuring that their work is appropriately informed by climate information and is not maladaptive, and at risk of heightening existing and future vulnerabilities. Directly linked with Theme A6: Translating scientific understanding of the climate system into climate information for decision makers, exchange partners would welcome an oral or poster slot to present learning on the forms of dialogue and approaches which have proved most effective in supporting appropriate use of climate information within humanitarian and development planning. Presentation will focus on direct experience from at risk communities in making best use of climate science in both the immediate and longer term, for both contingency humanitarian planning and for longer-term adaptation and development planning. The exchange undertook a series of pilots in 2009 and initiated a working group in 2010, enabling interaction with a much wider group of climate scientists and humanitarian and development policymakers both in the UK and internationally. In 2011 the exchange initiated discussion with partners in Kenya and presented the approach at the Greater Horn of Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum. Partners are proposing to undertake two demonstration studies, one in Kenya and the other in Senegal, to assess how climate information can best support specific humanitarian and development decision making processes at community, national and regional levels. The exchange approach has sought to identify and meet the climate information requirements of community end users whose livelihoods are most dependent on having 'good' climate information - such as farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture and communities living in flood prone areas. The exchange approach has identified, employed and developed a variety of dialogue approaches, including participatory downscaling, two-way exchange and probabilistic forecasting games, to enable end users to better understand and 'own' the uncertainties within climate information. It is also developing a framework for dialogue, mapping out the policymaking processes within which dialogue is required to enable better use of climate information and developing criteria to measure the effectiveness of efforts to strengthen climate science policy dialogue.