FAQ

WISER
Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa

Addressing the missing links: how the WISER mapping tool will help key climate information groups connect

A new cross-continental mapping tool will help tackle fragmentation across the African climate research community by facilitating collaboration among key stakeholders.

KEY POINTS

Although close collaboration is essential in the production of high quality climate information, fragmentation in Africa continues to impede communication among key stakeholders.

A new mapping tool developed by the Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) project supports collaboration by providing comprehensive information on climate information projects that are under way.

The mapping tool helps stakeholders to rapidly access key project information, including a project's geographical location, the experts involved in its implementation, and its funding sources.

The tool facilitates communication among stakeholders from different climate projects and enables them to identify synergies and form partnerships with a view to enhancing project outcomes.

Why is collaboration so important in the production of high quality climate information?

The economies of Africa are particularly climate-dependent and there is thus an urgent need for relevant, timely and accurate climate information, including daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal climate forecasts, rainfall onset and cessation predictions, real time weather information and extreme weather event warnings.

ACP°C
African Climate Policy Centre

United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

There is growing recognition that strong collaboration among relevant entities is a key prerequisite for generating relevant climate information. Inputs are needed from a wide range of stakeholders, including climate research centres, which collect, manage and apply relevant data studies, academic and research organizations, which compile and analyse climate information and provide climate services, the private sector, which is increasingly involved in the development of innovative climate tools, applications and products, and national meteorological and hydrological services, which monitor weather, and issue weather forecasts and warnings.

Climate information involves much more than merely producing information, however, and in order to strengthen the effectiveness of climate information services, it is essential to know more about the users of those services and their specific needs. Indeed, climate information is only valuable if it is easy for the end-user to access and apply.

Who are those end-users?

The list of end-users of climate information is long, and includes institutional users, such as planners in government ministries seeking to climate-proof critical infrastructure, and water authorities that make use of rainfall predictions to adjust water release schedules in order to optimize hydroelectricity generation. Other groups might include sector experts, such as agriculturalists advising farmers on which seeds to plant or when to harvest, scientists seeking to develop new climate-resilient seed varieties, and fishers who use forecasts of impending storms to avoid equipment damage or loss of life. Media outlets are also a crucial user group, and play a key role in ensuring that climate information is interpreted correctly, processed and disseminated, including over community radio, through text messages to mobile phones, in bulletins or on websites so that it can be used to make practical weather and climate-based decisions.

Is producer-user collaboration improving?

In recent years, the African climate research community has achieved significant progress in its efforts to enhance collaboration among relevant

A collaborative user-led approach to producing climate information services.

A user-led approach is fundamental for the provision of effective climate information services. This involves identifying potential climate information users and generating climate information that is applicable in their day-to-day lives. Collaboration with a view to generating high-quality climate information can be broken down into four stages:

- Co-explore: end-users identify their climate-related challenges and pinpoint knowledge gaps.
- Co-design: priority areas identified by end-users are integrated into the design of climate research initiatives. This ensures that users remain front and centre when research concepts are developed.
- Co-produce: different knowledge sources and experiences are brought together to deepen existing knowledge.
- Co-communicate: each end-user has different priorities and will apply the research findings differently. Outputs are tailored, processed and interpreted accordingly, and disseminated using a range of platforms.

Credit: Shutterstock

stakeholders in the climate information services value chain. Nonetheless, significant gaps remain. Projects and initiatives in Africa to support the production and uptake of climate information are fragmented and often carried out in isolation, and there are numerous opportunities to enhance the use of research facilities, resources, and infrastructure across the continent. Indeed, collaboration among key groups remains weak, while experts in the natural, biophysical and social sciences often fail to collaborate effectively with institutions that could use their analyses to develop relevant products. Furthermore, lessons learned from successful initiatives are often not shared with development partners embarking on new initiatives, while small-scale stakeholders often fail to connect with larger, more established agencies that could promote and scale up their work or ensure that project outcomes are aligned with national, regional and international standards.

These and other missed opportunities to establish links and identify overlaps can compromise the outcomes of climate information projects and result in the costly and inefficient duplication of efforts.

The WISER mapping tool seeks to support collaboration – how does it work?

The WISER project has underscored the need for enhanced collaboration among members of the climate research community, and there is considerable enthusiasm for more effective collaboration across the producer-user landscape.

The mapping tool addresses that need for greater collaboration by establishing a convening platform and by providing clear and comprehensive information on ongoing climate information projects. So, for example, an international development partner that has identified a viable project in a certain region can identify potential project partners with the right skills, from experts to help execute research and analyse the results, to grassroots organizations that can help disseminate findings at community level.
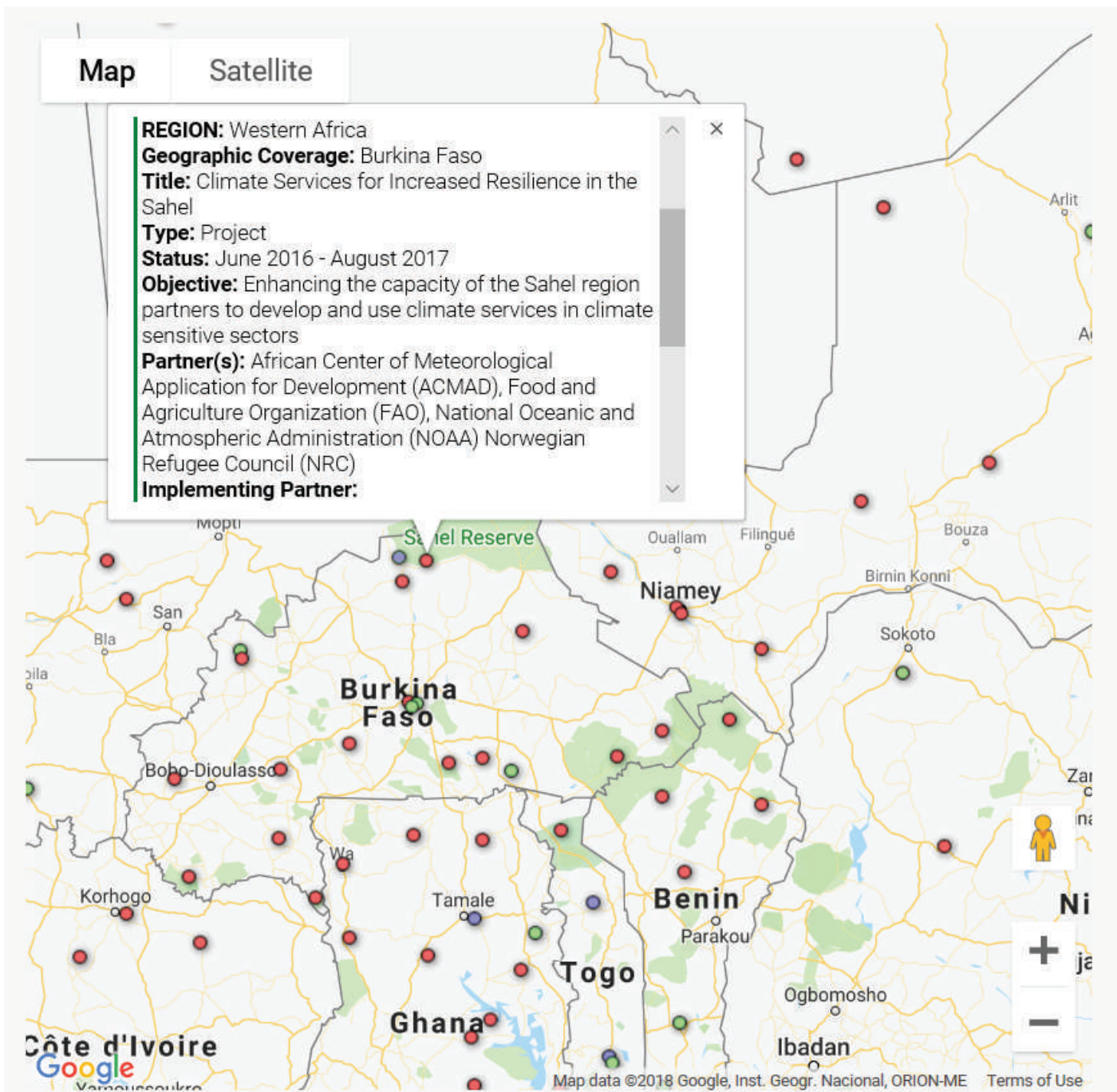
The mapping tool enables stakeholders involved in different projects to communicate, identify synergies and build partnerships. Those stakeholders are able to share practical lessons and experiences, and exchange scientific and other data. In turn, this can enhance project outcomes and, by encouraging the sharing of knowledge and expertise, can foster innovation in climate research in Africa.

What specific information does the mapping tool provide?

The mapping tool provides information in an interactive, easy to use format, including information on:

- Project location and geographical coverage. As well as clarifying the scope of projects, the tool provides a bird's-eye view of initiatives under way across the continent and thus

Map   Satellite

REGION: Western Africa
Geographic Coverage: Burkina Faso
Title: Climate Services for Increased Resilience in the Sahel
Type: Project
Status: June 2016 - August 2017
Objective: Enhancing the capacity of the Sahel region partners to develop and use climate services in climate sensitive sectors
Partner(s): African Center of Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Implementing Partner:

facilitates the identification of clusters of activity or gaps

- Project timelines: start and end dates

- Project funding levels

- Partners responsible for implementing each project, such as government entities, regional institutions or development actors

- Project partners

- Project objectives, including, for example, capacity-building, adaptation, mitigation or disaster risk reduction. The project objectives

also indicate whether an individual project has a particular sector focus, such as agriculture, water, energy, infrastructure or health.

The mapping tool also provides links to key documents, including action plans, national strategies, relevant legal and regulatory information, and other strategic documents.

How is information being compiled, and how can you access the mapping tool?

The WISER project has developed a multi-pronged approach to data mining. By leveraging the extensive knowledge network of policymakers and practitioners developed by the African Climate Policy Centre, the project identifies projects by contacting implementing organizations directly. Other information is extracted from websites and is then cross-checked for accuracy. Data is collated using Google Fusion Tables and uploaded into an easy-to-use, interactive, fully open access mapping tool. The mapping tool is available at: https://www.uneca.org/wiser/pages/cis-projectsprogrammesinitiatives.

What's next?

So far, the mapping tool has captured data for more than 500 projects, initiatives and programmes in Africa. The mapping tool will enable key stakeholders to deepen their understanding of resource gaps and identify potential players and partners active in the area of climate information services in Africa.

The African Climate Policy Centre is planning to develop a climate information services regional knowledge management platform and the mapping data will provide part of the content that the platform will feature.

About ACPC

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) is a climate knowledge Centre with an overall goal of contributing to poverty reduction through successful mitigation and adaptation to climate change in Africa and to improve the capacity of African countries to participate effectively in multilateral climate negotiations.

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