

# **El Nino conference - Notes for report**

**Tuesday October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

## **1. Opening session**

### **Introduction by ICPALD Director, Dr. Solomon**

Emphasising the risks linked to El Nino and referred to past events which have resulted in severe economic loss, loss of lives and livestock.

### **Welcoming remarks from Government of Kenya**

The Government of Kenya welcomed participants and mentioned the urgent need to invest into preparation in order to save on response, and that there is a need for greater importance to work together with development partners

### **Remarks by ECHO**

Appreciated the participation of everybody during this event and emphasized the importance of the consultative meeting. There is a greater need for enhanced the collective work to be done.

ECHO described action over the past decade in DRR (governance, communities resilience, KM,etc.), and called for a leadership to guide DRR effort. ECHO also insisted on involving the private sector in the participation and development of social services. ECHO continues to, and affirms its commitment at community, national and regional level within IGAD states.

### **Remarks by USAID**

Congratulated IGAD for organizing the meeting. USAID pointed out the collective work and importance to work together, especially on resilience.

USAID has worked diligent within the region over the last couple of decades. USAID has greatly and supported ICPAC on climate data and prediction. USAID will continue to support ICPAC, IDDRSI and IGAD as a whole within the region.

### **Remarks by GFDRR**

The World Bank mentioned its long standing history of assistance and cooperation within the region, and has proud to work with ICPAC and other development partners in organising this consultative meeting.

The World Bank is aware of the hydro-meteorological hazards nations face within the region and is alert to the secondary effects, and transnational nature of such hazards in the region. The result of which requires a regional effort to mitigate their impact.

World Bank acknowledged the support of other partners that are contributing to assist in the mitigation efforts, and expects the meeting yield preparatory plans for mitigation and advocacy.

### **Opening statement by ICPAC Director, Dr Guleid**

Welcome government officials, climate experts and development partners. Great appreciation was extended to the Government of Kenya for hosting the consultative meeting.

The ICPAC Director, recalled the region's vulnerability to hydro-meteorological hazard and have strong impact on the economy of the region.

The Director, highlighted the the effect of El Nino on the region, with some parts of the reigion experiencing drought, while others will experience floods. If unchecked, outbreak of Rift valley fever on livestock, increased risk of conflict can become a very real consequence. Regional authorities have recently met to discuss issues of land degradation, recognising the need to work together in a more holistic way.

The Director also pointed out the use of the GHACOF and its importance for climate prediction, early warning and kick-off mitigation measures. The Director altered all the participants that forecast predictions are based on climate based on averages, which can appear contrary to our weather experiences.

The Director Thanked the partners for their support (GFDRR, ECHO, USAID, ISDR, UNDP), And announced the development of a Regional early warning system is a about to be operational at beginning of 2016.

### **Closing of the session by Dr. Solomon**

The Director described his desires to ensure what happen in 2011 does happen this time, thanks to our anticipation.

## **2. Presentations**

### **Update on the status and potential of the El-nino over IGAD region by Dr. Joseph Mutemi / Mr Abdishakur Othowai**

The presenter started by defining what El-Nino as it is known in the international circles: a phenomena associated with warming of the sea surface along the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean that influences the global air circulation affecting rain seasons all over the world. In some regions, the rain seasons are enhanced and in other regions the seasonal rains are reduced.

In most of the times, El-Nino is followed by La-nina which tends to suppress seasonal rains in eastern Africa. This ongoing El-Nino is no exception. The meeting was therefore urged to make plans for events after El-Nino.

The presenter also alluded to the influence of Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) which has significant influence on seasonal rains over eastern Africa. The meeting was informed that the current El-nino phenomena is strong but not close in magnitude with 1997/98 El-Nino. Which means therefore the impacts on the seasonal rains are still as they were predicted in August 2015 during the GHACOF-41.

So far some stations in the region have experienced the El-Nino rains to the extent of surpassing their October rainfall Long Term Means (LTM). This being the beginning of the season, it is an indication that heavy rains predicted will have serious impacts to the various sectors.

### **Potential Impacts of El-Nino**

Mr. Abdishakur Othowai presented the previous statistics of damages of the previous El-Nino events specifically 1997/98. The meeting was informed that El-Nino impacts countries differently due to geographic locations, economic capacity and status of preparedness. The meeting was further informed that humanitarian impacts are higher during the El-Nino/Lanina years than non-El-Nino/Lanina.

The impacts are likely to be higher in the hotspots given that there are existing vulnerability in the region due to various reasons; previous season performance, level of food insecurity, conflicts. The main impacts will be on the following sectors; Health, Food Security, Disaster Management, among others.

The El-Nino rains were seen as an opportunity and efforts should be made to “No regret Options” taking the following mitigating measures: pre-position medical supplies to high risk areas, procure vaccinations, commercial de-stocking, and avail appropriate farm inputs to the farming community, among others.

### **Lessons from Kenya Red Cross by Dr. Ayaz Manji**

The presenter took meeting through the level of preparedness and response plan already in place at Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) based on previous experiences. The 2015 El-Nino has a potential of bring a huge loss and damages on infrastructure, mass displacement of people at the same time keeping an eye on possible opportunities like increase in agriculture / livestock production and their products.

The meeting was informed that KRCS has increased its contingency plans by enhancing consultative multi-hazard sectoral. The presenter mentioned that the interventions being put in place at KRCS include; preposition of relief supplies, response logistics and collaboration.

### **Challenges**

The challenges presently include; prediction accuracy levels, poor access of some areas even before El-Nino, inadequate resources to mount humanitarian preparedness and response,

### **Lessons Learnt**

Through the years, the El-Nino preparedness has made progress in ;

Preposition of relief supplies, joint planning and alignment with international and government coordination agencies, managing expectations, early warning and partner engagement, clear response structures,

### **c) Presentation by ICPALD Representative**

The ICPALD representative reiterated the impact of El-Nino on livestock, the most dominant livelihood in the region and indicated that through regional forums, the organization has collaborated with climate information services to inform decision-making in mitigating climate related disasters like El-Nino. Some of the impacts during El-Nino include outbreak of animal diseases and flooded pasture.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the presenter appealed for member states to be supported to cope with the El-Nino by;

- i) Enhancing awareness and preparedness
- ii) Enhance surveillance.

### **3. Presentation by the Member States on the status of contingency plans and El-nino preparedness including funding situation and what needs to be done now and after the El-nino event**

#### **i. Burundi**

In Burundi, the Disaster Management Organization informed the meeting the El-Nino has already hit the country. The preparedness plan in use was developed using climate advisories released by the Meteorological service. The plan includes strategies that are coordinated from national level all the way to subnational and community. This is complete with the budget estimates but unfortunately there is still a big gap to implement the strategy. The government is taking the El-Nino plan very serious but there are inadequate funds to implement it.

#### **ii. Kenya**

The Kenya government has an elaborate El-Nino preparedness plan developed by a Task Force made up of multisectoral stakeholders. The development of the plan was informed by the seasonal forecast which indicated the high likelihood of El-Nino enhancing seasonal rains to level of heavy rains with a possibility of causing floods, destruction of transport infrastructure, landslides and mudslides, outbreak of both human and animal diseases, disruption of educational programmes like national examinations.

The preparedness was developed for all sectors without losing sight of the opportunities that will come with El-Nino rains, like bumper harvests, increased livestock production when proper interventions are put in place.

All sectoral activities have been captured in the plan and with a total budget of about Ksh12.974 billion. The government has managed to pull resources from both county and national governments to the tune of about Ksh 10 billion leaving a deficit of about Ksh2 billion.

#### **iii. Sudan**

The presenter informed the meeting that the seasonal forecast for Sudan indicated that the northern part of the country was to experience below normal rains with the rest expected to get normal to below normal rainfall. The impacts unlike other regional member states, is possibility of drought leading to famine. It should be noted that the situation is already bad in Sudan. If drought comes, it means less pasture, low agricultural yields leading to decrease in natural resources escalating conflicts.

The interventions that have been put in place in the preparedness plan include;

- Increase strategic grain reserves
- Expand irrigation cultivation areas to meet expected deficit
- Introduce water rationing as a resource management strategy
- Seek for relief support from international development partners.
- Build capacity to strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems and policies to mitigate on current and future El-Nino impacts.

#### **iv. Djibouti**

El-Nino rarely has impact in the Djibouti apart from the southern part of the country where it causes urban flooding due to inadequate drainage channels to handle water runoff due to very heavy rain which falls in storms.

Some of the preparations plans include; construction of dykes to keep water in the river in the south to avoid destroying farms. This will be done along with the awareness creation and sensitization of the vulnerable population.

**v. Somalia**

A good part of Somalia is dry but the southern part is normally affected by El-Nino by getting floods. The current El-Nino rains in Somalia have started in a big way in Mogadishu causing floods and temporary closure of the airport.

Somalia does not have the capacity to develop an elaborate El-Nino preparedness and meet its budgetary requirements. The delegation appealed for special consideration when considering.

In conclusion, the presenter thanked Igad for organizing the forums, as it serves as a training ground and sharing experiences for them.

**vi. Uganda**

The meeting was informed that the Uganda Meteorological Agency briefed the president and developed a cabinet paper which was used to develop activities contained in the preparedness plan. The plan was informed also by the past lessons learnt. These include; mapping out the hotspots, training security teams as well as city dwellers on how to respond to emergencies. Other implementation strategies are; prepositioning of medicine supplies, relocation of vulnerable populations to safer grounds.

A budget drawn to procure emergency response equipment, remove equipment from hospital that is likely to be marooned by flood during the heavy rains rendering it useless.

**vii. South Sudan**

The presenter informed the meeting that the South Sudan is likely to be impacted in form of destruction of bridges, waterborne diseases. There is a chance to get adequate pasture and extra cropping season during this El-Nino.

Preparation plans include; prepositioning medical supplies, creating incentives for traders to import more grain, and encourage private sector to contribute through corporate social responsibility (CSR). Emphasis is also being put on post-El-Nino given that normally after El-Nino heavy rains what follows is drought during lanina.

**viii. Tanzania**

The presenter started by listing geophysical and climate related disasters which included floods, landslides, droughts, volcano eruptions and earthquakes. Focusing on these disaster, the presenter gave some statistics of destruction of property and people who have lost their lives through climate related disasters. For this year's El-Nino, the meeting was informed that preparations are in place to mitigate the impacts associated with heavy rains expected. This includes; establishments of disaster Relief committees up to community levels, communication strategy to reach vulnerable community at village levels, prepositioning of relief items and strengthen national and regional collaboration.

Despite efforts put in place, there is a gap which Tanzania government request for support from development partners. This support includes, capacity building in assessment and emergency preparedness, development of multi-hazard contingency plans, development of national data bases and comprehensive risk assessment and vulnerability mapping.

#### **ix. Rwanda**

The Rwanda Meteorological Service released the seasonal forecast to media and other stakeholders in good time. However the government downplayed the destructive impacts but highlighted the positive side of opportunities that come with El-Nino. In food security, the message that went out was that it was the time for good harvest.

##### Preparedness Plan

A meeting of stakeholders was called to sensitise the impacts of El-Nino and prepare the plans to mitigate them. Tasks were identified and assigned to the relevant Ministries for execution. The activities had timelines that were to end on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015. In between the deadlines, there were update meetings to monitor and evaluate the activities on weekly basis. The main activities include; awareness creation, inventory of equipment required and procurement of the same in cases where they are lacking, relocation of people to safer grounds, and drawing a budget for all these activities.

The meeting was informed that there was a storm in the early part of the season which caused loss of lives due to lightning strikes and flash floods.

In conclusion, the preparedness plan in Rwanda was going on well and has full support of the government.

#### **4. Presentation on the Lessons and challenges of communicating climate early warning advisories by Mr Brazille Musumba**

The meeting was informed that objective of this exercise was to review previous activities of communicating climate early warning advisories and draw some lessons to build on. The methodology that was used by the communication team was to administer a questionnaire to meteorological services communication experts that gathered some information on how these services disseminated information in the previous El-Nino seasons. The areas in focus were; how the services shared information, raised awareness, educating the public with the view to changing behaviour and influencing policy development. The questionnaire also looked at issues of how services mobilized resources to disseminate the information.

##### **Challenges**

The challenges that came out of the analysis of the data gathered were; language and interpretation issues, competing interests and priorities, availability of media space and airtime, conflicting roles and mandates, the issue of credibility and trust of the institution providing the information also featured prominently and lack of special media practitioners.

##### **Lessons Learnt**

The analysis revealed that in the last few years, communication of climate early warning advisories, there are a number of lessons learnt. Some these lessons are; stakeholders have learnt to worked together to develop advisories, there has been a strong relationship with

media, improved coordination and employed diversified Information , Communication and Technologies in the dissemination of climate early warning advisories.

### **Way Forward**

There is need to develop community of practice, forum to continue sharing information and knowledge, develop a platform to document these experiences. A strategic approach be developed to coordinate communication of these advisories in a structured way. This coordination will have clear and effective communication, strategy standard operating procedures (SOPs), resource mobilization to ensure sustainability.