

Taking a WISER approach in Asia

The results and successes of the WISER programme in East Africa are informing weather and climate forecasting initiatives in other parts of the world – as one Asian programme demonstrates.

The Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) programme set out to transform the quality and availability of weather and climate information services in countries across the Greater Horn of Africa. The programme encouraged a regional approach by setting up a collaborative framework involving national meteorological offices.

The approach has been a great success leading to valuable impacts on the ground. For example, reports of agricultural production across areas of Kenya were received indicating that yields had increased by 20%¹. The Met Office is now applying learning from WISER to inform activities in South Asia, another area of the world particularly vulnerable to a changing climate and natural disasters.

Resilience for extreme events

The Asia Regional Resilience to a Changing Climate (ARRCC) programme was set up by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) in 2018 and will initially run for four years. Its objective is to strengthen weather forecasting systems across Asia and help vulnerable communities to use weather warnings to better prepare for climate related shocks. The programme is being delivered by the World Bank and the Met Office.

¹ Source:

https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/business/international/wiser/wiser0063-western-impact-article_forecasts-0418.pdf

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Recognising the needs in this region, the Met Office is developing a partnership programme building on the learnings of the DFID-funded WISER programme. “The aim is to improve the resilience of vulnerable communities to act in advance of extreme events and ultimately to save lives,” says Met Office Programme Manager David Corbelli.

While being regional in nature, the programme focuses on four of the most vulnerable countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh, as well as partnering with other key countries such as India. “As with any regional programme, a considered understanding of the transboundary political and physical environment is vital” says ARRCC Met Office Partnership Programme Executive, Julian Menadue. Met Office personnel are unable to visit Afghanistan so have to work closely with local partners. “You can’t develop solutions at a regional level from a distance and hope they’re going to work,” Julian explains. “You have to work from the ground up, as well as from the top down.”

By building partnerships between national meteorological services, climate centres and active non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across the region, ARRCC aims to introduce actionable forecasting using similar approaches to those developed by WISER in Africa. The goal is not to create new datasets or institutions, but to improve access and communication of information that is already available for those who need it. “We aim to use existing mechanisms already up and running,” says Julian. A good example is the South Asia Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF), which meets twice a year. “SASCOF involves all the countries in the region, and we’ve been enhancing both its role and function,” says David Corbelli. ARRCC is supporting its bi-annual meetings to deliver training and capacity building to regional meteorological services. This is a similar approach to that of WISER, which has also been bringing about improvements to the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forums (GHACOFs).

One of WISER’s successes was developing a partnership approach that encouraged national services to work together to build seasonal forecasts. This project was known as Strengthening Climate Information Partnerships – East Africa (SC�PEA), and ARRCC has now set up a similar framework, Strengthening Climate Information Partnerships for South Asia (SC�PSA). “Because of our experience of successful delivery and uptake beforehand in East Africa, the expectation is that we are able to

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introduce it more swiftly and effectively here in Asia, and so far this is proving to be the case,” says Julian.

Results on the ground

WISER showed how vital it was to work with local people – the very people who would be using weather services and forecasts. ARRCC has taken this learning on board and is planning to introduce prototype services to specific sectors such as hydropower plants in Nepal and wheat producers in Bangladesh. “It’s about getting something through that’s tangible and useful to people beyond the meteorological community,” says Julian.

The WISER programme has also shown the need to build local contacts and work with local organisations to ensure that work carried out is sustainable and has a long-term future. ARRCC has set up links with partner organisations such as RIMES (Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia), a regional weather and climate services provider, that will help to embed the enhancements introduced at SASCOF.

WISER has also demonstrated the need to keep spreading the message about the programme and its successes. National meteorological services have to communicate the value of forecasting to make sure they have support at a ministerial and governmental level. The more that a government can see the value of an accurate service that’s focused on the end user, the more likely it will fund and support that service.

To demonstrate value and assess performance, ARRCC has set up a monitoring and evaluation project called Value. “We’re looking at the socio-economic benefits that weather and climate services will deliver to present compelling cases to persuade governments of the need for future investment,” explains David Corbelli.

In an ideal scenario, ARRCC will help meteorologists collaborate more effectively, delivering impact-based forecasts across all timescales. This will help to improve people’s awareness on the ground, provide better information and encourage its uptake to support resilience in vulnerable communities across the region.

While to date the main concentration of work has been at a structural level, setting up partnerships and getting foundations in place, there will be an increasing focus on the

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grass roots. Insights gained from WISER have helped the ARRCC team get up and running quickly. “Applying lessons learned from WISER during the start-up of the ARRCC programme has enabled us to focus on proven activities that we know produce tangible results”, says Julian.

October 2019

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