

SUMMARY OF SESSION 3

THEMATIC AREA 3: MOVING FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT IN DROUGHT EMERGENCIES

Theme 3 sought to understand how we can better respond to droughts by using proactive rather than reactive management approaches. The session focused on the definition of proactive management, emphasizing the role of risk-based approaches and the importance of timely, clear, and well-targeted communication to different consumers of drought information. The session also touched on the issue of stakeholder accountability, and the differing roles of development partners, donors, governments, the scientific community, and civil society.

THE CHALLENGES: COMMUNICATION GAPS, POOR COORDINATION, AND POLITICAL WILL

Clear challenges emerged from the session. The first relates to the ability of agencies to communicate not only early warnings, but also advise on how to use early warning information to mitigate drought impacts. The second challenge is the lack of integration between different elements of national and regional climate services in different geographies and the problems this poses for effective collection and dissemination of information. For the WMO and UNCCD, this also hinders the ability to communicate beyond the drought and climate forecasting communities. Further, the speakers and the audience members highlighted the issue of political will to move towards proactive management strategies. The participants voiced the following concerns regarding:

1. Communication on early warning and drought management is often not targeted and not effective. We need to understand which information goes where and to whom.
2. GIS, hydrological, and meteorological databases are scarce in many countries in the world and the scale might not be sufficient for accurate forecasting and monitoring of drought.
3. Provision of a hydro-climate service that is meant to support agriculture production is not integrated; there are not enough joint programs among organizations and at country level Ministries have conflicting mandates and scarce communication.
4. Financial resources for drought management are not the bottleneck (e.g. fund for emergencies at FAO).

THE SOLUTIONS: JOINT-PROGRAMMING AND INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Several solutions emerged from the panel discussion. These include improving coordination through joint-programming, greater focus on how messages are communicated, and the continued development of national and regional level drought policies that have political will and commitment:

1. Have a stronger focus on joint programming among organizations (also within the UN) and agencies at international level and among sectors at country level.
2. Better communicate drought management approaches to end users, policy makers, etc. and adequately target communication to the intended group.
3. Develop national drought policies and ensure political will and commitment, including a strategy for the response to early warning systems.
4. Need to go beyond mainstreaming drought and focus on enforcement, by having institutions that are accountable and can act on drought, for example, national taskforces that include a broader range of stakeholders.
5. Have a focus on vulnerability assessment to drought and invest before drought is happening: drought doesn't have to be synonymous with famine.