

Improving African research capacity a key ingredient for sustainable development

Participants in the recent meeting of the Climate Research for Development (CR4D) Institutional Collaboration Platform (ICP) in Uganda adopted a five-year strategic plan that emphasises the three climate research priority areas of science, practice and policy, and strategies to enhance uptake of climate research outcomes at policy level and resource mobilisation. The event was convened under the auspices of DFID funded Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER).



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The 2018-2022 strategic plan further focuses on four structural goals aimed at improving research capacity in Africa as an ingredient for achieving sustainable development.

Multi-disciplinary research

The four goals are co-designed multi-disciplinary research for improving climate forecasting skills and reliability across temporal and spatial spaces, improved information service delivery, including information from observing systems, developed scientific and institutional capacity and provision of climate services and user interface platforms.

James Murombedzi, chief of the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) said the strategy presents positive opportunities for climate change in Africa and should be supported. "Let us fill the remaining slots of ICP board to 50, currently we have 21. Then we strengthen the capacity of the ACPC secretariat, mobilise more resources and integrate CR4D and other programmes that affect Africa," Murombedzi said. He thanked the CR4D partners for making it a reality and appealed for more partners to come on board to assist the initiative.

Some of the founding partners supporting CR4D are ClimDev-Africa, African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology (AMCOMET), World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) of the African Union Commission (AUC) and Climate Change Directorate of the African Development Bank (AfDB).

Research grant recipients

Frank Rutabingwa, coordinator of the WISER programme at ACPC said the call for the initiative's research grants has been launched and winners will soon be announced. "The call has been well received and review of submissions is ongoing to identify the shortlisted candidates. The winners will represent all the regions of Africa," Rutabingwa said. The grant is given to scientists from the continent to carry out research in projects on climate change issues that have greater impact on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities in Africa.

Dr Joseph Mukabana of the WMO said Africa needs research to inform policy so that policies can inform development. "Africa does not produce a lot of pollution but suffers the most through climate change impacts. We need data to use to build resilience of the society and its economy to adapt or perish," Mukabana said

Solomon Dawit, regional programme leader, CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), East Africa called for an updated donors list to reflect all the members involved in the CR4D. "Let us develop a short summary of the strategy and post it on the ACPC website where people can access different information," Dawit said.

Prof Laban Ogallo of the University of Nairobi urged members to mobilise more resources to avail more grants to African climate researchers.

Inclusive strategy needed

Jennifer Mohamed Katerere of 'Rights, Resilience' called for the inclusion of women, youth, climate justice and human rights in the strategy. She said climate risks are serious concerns for the African continent, and they will define how the Paris Agreement is implemented.

Mithika Mwenda, secretary general of Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) said CR4D is key for Africa as it will enable the continent come up with its own solutions and speak with one voice when it comes to key climate research international engagements.

Isaiah Esipisu of Pan African Media Alliance for Climate Change (PAMACC) proposed that media should be coopted as a member of ICP and be involved in all its processes because they are purveyors of information. "Media should be incorporated into ICP as this will enable its members to fully participate in CR4D and all climate related discussions and be in a better position to produce useful information for target audiences," said Esipisu.