Event overview

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) hosted an outreach event on 'Managing the Risks of Climate Extremes and Disasters in Africa – What can we learn from the IPCC Special Report?' in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 9 to 10 May 2012. This event was held in co-operation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), with the support of the Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Climate and Development Knowledge Network.

The IPCC Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX) was prepared over two years by 220 authors from 62 countries, involving both Working Groups I and II of the IPCC. Authors responded to 18,000 comments from governments, experts and international agencies, with governments approving the Summary for Policy Makers in November 2011 following a four day meeting in Kampala, Uganda. The full report has been available for download since late March 2012 along with other information about the SREX report: http://ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/. The Addis event formed one of a series of outreach activities taking place around the world from April to August 2012, designed to increase the accessibility of the report and promote discussion and connections between diverse stakeholders.

More than eighty national and international policy-makers, academics, media, and civil society organization representatives attended the event in Addis Ababa. This included over 15 NGOs, and about 8 universities, research organizations and meteorological agencies such as Addis Ababa University, Ethiopian National Meteorology Agency and the Ethiopian Institute of Water Resources. Important regional bodies were also represented, most notably the African Union. 14 national and international media representatives were present at the press conference, including Panapress' Chief Regional Correspondent. The event was covered nationally and regionally.

Participants were welcomed by Dr. Youba Sokona, Coordinator of the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC); Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel, Director of the REA African Union Commission; and Dr. Chris Field, WGII Co-Chair. The Norwegian Minister of International Development, H.E. Heikki

Holmas, delivered the key note address. The major findings of the report were presented by IPCC authors Dr. Chris Field, Dr. Reinhard Mechler, Dr. Balgis Osman Elasha and Professor Pius Yanda. Panel and break-out group sessions set the forum for participants to discuss how policies and programmes are affected by climate extremes and disasters now and in the future and to reflect on the IPCC Special Report from the perspective of their respective organizations or programmes.

Media coverage

The event was broadcasted by the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency with a segment during their ETV English news hour. The news report highlighted the key findings from the IPCC SREX report. The media report can be viewed here. There was further coverage in the *Reporter Ethiopia* and the *Ethiopian Herald* which carried the remarks made by the Norwegian Minister of International Development, H.E. Heikki Holmas and a summary of the event. A blog written by Sam Bickersteth and Lisa McNamara of CDKN 'Postcard from Addis Ababa: lessons of the IPCC SREX report for Africa' was republished on ClimateAfrica.net's website which is a news aggregation site dedicated to climate variability and change in sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on Kenya. Tim Ash-Vie of PwC wrote a newspaper column on the lessons of SREX for Kenya which was published in the *Business Daily*. Please see the media report for more details.

Event opening and welcome

From left to right: Dr. Youba Sokona, H.E. Heikki Holmas, Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel and Dr. Chris Field

Dr. Youba Sokona opened the meeting by congratulating the IPCC on the significant collaborative effort involved in producing the report and the transparency and openness in sharing the report through the outreach events. Ho noted the challenge of ensuring African scientists contribute to IPCC reports and the importance of developing intellectual leadership within Africa in climate change science.

Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel highlighted strides in enhancing environmental monitoring on the continent with the Africa Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) programme which will serve to significantly improve climate change information management. Other developments include the first conference for Ministers responsible for Meteorology in Africa held in 2010 convened to advance an integrated framework for meteorology, as well as collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk (UNISDR) to implement the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. A framework is also being

instituted through the Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to strengthen Regional Economic Communities to support disaster risk reduction (DRR).

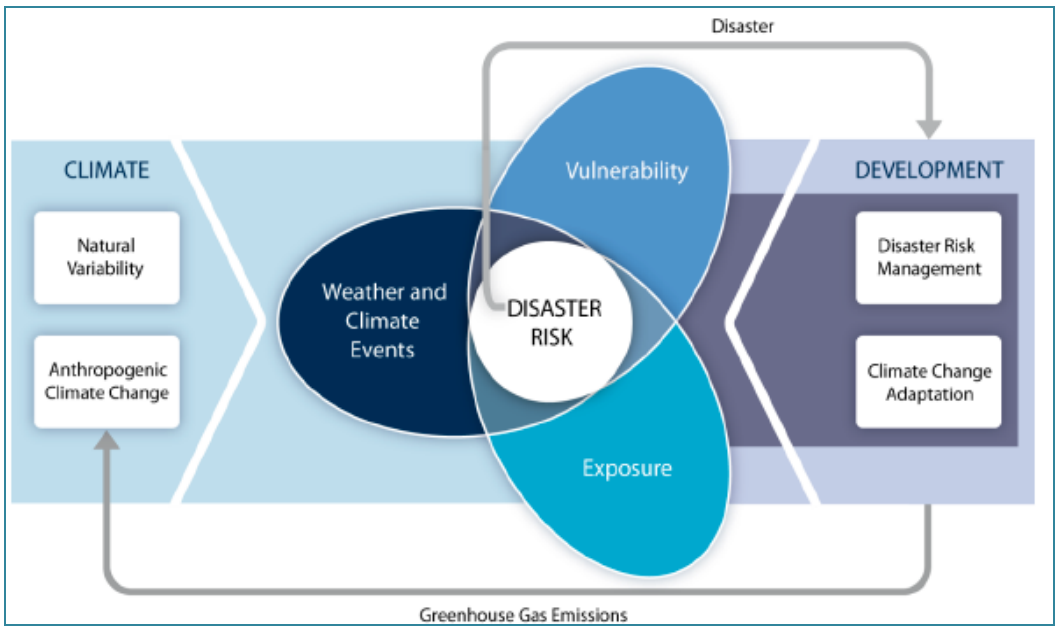
Dr. Chris Field noted that this IPCC SREX report engaged with a wide group of specialists from the climate biophysics, DRR and the Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation (VIA) communities to bridge disciplines. The SREX report has also give special attention to providing a foundation of thoughtful, productive discussion of policy options; framing issues in the context of managing risks. The outreach events are part of IPCC efforts to ensure the information is actionable, relevant and useful.

H.E. Heikki Holmas wrapped up the welcome by reflecting on climate risk in his home city of Bergen in Norway and what is being done there to adapt to wetter conditions through improving drainage systems. The Minister highlighted that prevention and development strategies 'should go hand in hand', and noted the achievements of Ethiopia in savings lives during drought through better preparedness. His Excellency articulated the main message of the report: 'as a result of climate change our challenge is that we will have to face more extreme weather conditions. We will have to face it more frequently. And we will have to face it in new places.'

Discussion on Vulnerability, Exposure and Weather and Climate Events

The workshop started with a discussion about how changing weather events are linked to climate change. IPCC scientists demonstrated how exposure, vulnerability and the nature and severity of extreme weather events strongly influence the type and extremity of the resultant impacts.

Noting that disaster risk should be viewed as a development and climate challenge, the group discussed the need for integrated approaches. Extreme hazards do not necessarily equate to extreme impacts and for exposed and vulnerable communities; even non-extreme weather and climate events can have devastating consequences. Vulnerability plays a crucial role in determining how regions, countries and communities are affected by extreme events.



Discussion on Major Findings of the SREX

Several IPCC authors of the SREX report presented the scientific findings contained in the report to policy makers and practitioners during the workshop.

The scientists outlined that, for East Africa, scarce literature and insufficient evidence means observed changes in temperature and precipitation during the 1961-1990 period are inconsistent and there is low confidence about findings related to past observed trends in heat waves/ warm spells, heavy precipitation and trends in dryness. This demonstrated the regional demand for improved collection and monitoring of weather and climate impacts data.

Findings from the report were presented about projected future changes in temperature and precipitation extremes for Africa[1]. Project trends with high levels of confidence attached for the East Africa region include:

- Likely increase in warm days (and a decrease in cold days)
- Likely increase in warm nights (and a decrease in cold nights)
- Likely more frequent and/ or longer heat waves and warm spells

[1] Trends are for the period 2071-2100 (compared with 1961-1990) or 2080-2100 (compared with 1980-2000) and are based on Global Circulation Models (GCM) and Regional Climate Model (RCM) outputs run under the A2/A1B emissions scenario.

- Likely increase in heavy precipitation

During the coffee break, participants had the opportunity to discuss different experiences of climate impacts from the perception of their respective geographical locations and thematic sectors. A local environmental youth group, Tene Kebena, showcased some of their activities in responding to and raising awareness about environmental and climate changes. Meanwhile, publications were distributed to all participants displaying the key messages from the IPCC Special Report.

Key Messages from the IPCC SREX for Africa

1. Even without taking climate change into account, disaster risk will continue to increase in many African countries as more vulnerable people and assets are exposed to weather extremes.

2. Based on data since 1950, evidence suggests that climate change has changed the magnitude and frequency of some extreme weather and climate events in some global regions already.

3. In the next two or three decades, the expected increase in climate extremes will probably be relatively small compared to the normal year-to-year

4. There is better information on what is expected in terms of changes in extremes in various regions and subregions, rather than just globally; though for some regions and some extremes uncertainty remains high (e.g. precipitation trends across most of Africa).

5. High levels of vulnerability, combined with more severe and frequent weather and climate extremes, may result in some places, such as African coastal cities, being increasingly difficult places in which to live and work.

6. A new balance needs to be struck between measures to reduce risk, transfer risk (e.g. through insurance) and effectively prepare for and manage disaster impact in a changing

climate. This balance will require a stronger emphasis on anticipation and risk reduction.

7. Existing risk management measures need to be improved as many countries are poorly adapted to current extremes and risks, so are not prepared for the future.
This would include a wide range of measures such as early warning systems, land use planning, development and enforcement of building codes, improvements to health surveillance, or ecosystem management and restoration.

8. Countries' capacity to meet the challenges of observed and projected trends in disaster risk is determined by the effectiveness of their national risk management system. Such systems include national and subnational governments, the private sector, research bodies, and civil society including community based organizations.

9. More fundamental adjustments are required to avoid the worst disaster losses and tipping points where vulnerability and exposure are high, capacity is low and weather extremes are changing.

10. Any delay in greenhouse gas mitigation is likely to lead to more severe and frequent climate extremes in the future and will likely further contribute to disaster losses.

The Implications of these Findings for Africa

Following the coffee break and press conference, participants returned to the plenary for the 'Panel Discussion on Major Findings'. Speakers presented on the implications of the findings for programmes in Africa. Speakers included Youcef Ait Chellouche, Deputy Regional Coordinator of UNISDR; Mr. Ato Mathewos Hunde, Director, Early Warning and Response Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector; Dr. Menghestab Haile, Deputy Director and Senior Liason Officer, WFP Liason Office to the African Union and ECA; and Lisa McNamara, Knowledge Manager in the Africa office of the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN).

Regional approaches can be effective at dealing with this vulnerability. Lisa McNamara outlined how lessons from Africa, Asia, Latin America and beyond can give guidance on integrating disaster risk reduction into economic planning and development. Meanwhile hearing about Ethiopia's groundbreaking risk-transfer mechanism and drought insurance programme gave food for thought about how we could find innovative solutions within Africa. Some reflections from the discussion are presented below, but the general perception was that there exists opportunities at regional level, country level and community level for reducing vulnerability and disaster risk and that integrating women, young people and other marginalized groups in this process will deliver wide-ranging benefits.

Some reflections on the discussion that followed the high-level presentations:

- *For Africa, climate impacts in the drylands already present a special challenge. Very urgent measures are required to address worsening drought risk in these fragile ecosystems and to avoid future crises such as the drought and famine that affected the Horn in 2011.*
- *Flood-risk – particularly in urban and coastal areas – requires integrated disaster risk reduction and management approaches. Population and migration patterns and policies to mitigate population pressures need to be designed upon an in-depth understanding of current and projected changes in climate extremes, including the implications for changing flood risk.*
- *Climate Change Action Plans – such as the Kenyan Climate Change Action Plan currently being prepared in Kenya – can support mainstreaming of climate change in national and regional planning. Opportunities exist to factor risk and disaster prevention funds into sector budgets when disaster risk reduction and adaptation needs are integrated into the core of national development plans and policies.*
- *The need to move from managing crisis to managing risk. Risk transfer mechanisms that go beyond insurance are needed such as micro finance and regional risk sharing pools (see Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility), but will require new public and private partnerships. The instructive Horn of Africa Risk Transfer for Adaptation*

(HARITA) project in Ethiopia presented by IPCC Lead Author Reinhard Mechler provides an example where farmers use their own labour to pay for insurance. Smallholder farmers in the drought-prone northern state of Tigray receive insurance for seasonal droughts in exchange for working on projects to improve climate resilience, such as irrigation or soil management. These insurance pay outs are then triggered automatically when rainfall drops below a certain threshold. The project involves many public and private players including farmers, local relief society, insurers, reinsurers, a rural bank, a university, government and donors.

Open Discussion on Key Questions Raised by SREX

The first day of the conference concluded with an Open Discussion facilitated by Dr. Seleshi Bekele, Senior Water Resources and Climate Policy Specialist, African Climate Policy Centre on pressing issues and potential solutions presented by the SREX.

Some reflections on the major discussion points:

- *There is a need to ensure that national and regional adaptation and disaster risk reduction projects and programmes provide for addressing the issues presented; particularly through improving the capacities of institutions involved in related data collection and early warning systems, including encouraging investment in data collection.*
- *The importance for a broad range of regional and national government institutions to collaborate to address disaster risk. Action must go beyond those with a mandate to coordinate climate change. All relevant government departments and other non-governmental institutions will need to collectively ascertain application of current workable recommendations.*
- *Public and private partnerships could help to improve coordination of knowledge management and information sharing for reducing risk. Relevant information will need to be reviewed and acted upon to inform policy to ensure risks associated with climate extremes and weather events are integrated in national and regional development blueprints.*

- *Innovative financial mechanisms are required to attract finance for climate compatible projects. National Adaptation Plans should be holistic and designed to address the nexus between disaster risk reduction, development and climate change adaptation. Development blueprints should set aside funds for risk management.*
- *Intervention should be as collective and integrated as possible. Scenarios generated by relevant models as well as research/science based evidence need to be effectively shared, applied and regularly highlighted by the media and official knowledge sharing platforms; meanwhile targets for risk reduction could be set in collaboration with stakeholders and policy makers.*

While most of the day's discussion focused around climate change vulnerabilities, impacts and adaptation and responding to extreme events and disasters, there was some discussion on addressing greenhouse gas emissions increases. During the meetings, the need to continue influencing climate change negotiations to constantly emphasize the importance of reducing greenhouse gases was called for. In particular, there are clear opportunities for the region to influence the global community through actions closer to home. Low carbon/ emissions development, designing and implementing models of green growth and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) can demonstrate social, economic and environmental opportunities in acting to avoid dangerous anthropogenic climate change.

Day Two

On the second day, participants formed break out group to discuss the adequacy of regional institutions and policy frameworks for dealing with the challenges set out in SREX. Several solutions were identified by the groups, which included a mixture of incremental and transformative changes to current systems. Further questions deliberated by the groups included:

- Is the use of science and social science in guiding policy and decision-making sufficient?
- How can action become more evidence based?
- How can uncertainty in projections be dealt with regionally?

Some reflections on the major discussion points:

- *At a regional level challenges include the existence of multiple institutions which constrains integrated approaches and effective communication, varied capacity and expertise across the region, and data and information gaps. Participants highlighted opportunities at the regional level for increasing climate resilience however, such risk sharing through regional risk sharing pools (see above). SREX findings need to be disseminated through regional bodies and channels, and tailored and translated into key messages specific to different institutions, sectors, stakeholders and scales.*
- *At national levels, participants highlighted the need to mainstream DRR and climate change into financial and programming mechanisms based on comprehensive risk and vulnerability assessments. Effective scenario planning models are needed to plan for uncertain climate and development futures*
- *At community levels, communities need to be actively engaged in assessing risks to reflect local experiences and approached as architects of their own solutions and strategies for increasing their capacity to cope with disasters and climate extremes. Innovative micro finance solutions are needed to and community management and leadership structures need to be an integral part of early warning systems.*

In Summary

The Addis Ababa outreach event provided a forum to bring together a broad mix of policy makers, scientists, practitioners and civil society representatives to discuss potential solutions to the disaster and climate change challenges facing the East African region today. The event raised awareness about the findings of the 'Managing the Risks of Climate Extremes and Disasters in Africa' report, and facilitated several discussions which sought to find answers on the implications of the findings for Africa.

All presentations, the agenda and further reflections on the event are available to download at http://cdkn.org/event/addis-ababa-managing-the-regional-risks-of-climate-extremes-and-disasters-%e2%80%93-learning-from-the-ipcc-special-report/.