

Forecast-based Humanitarian Decisions: Designing Tools and Processes to Link Knowledge with Action

CDKN Project Code RSGL 0019g

Project [webpage](#)

Project duration: December 2011 – June 2013

Project value: £ 120,000

The Forecast-based Humanitarian Decisions project aims to improve the management of climate risks and promote development in Africa by bridging knowledge and communication gaps between researchers and practitioners. The research will aid the development of an analytical tool aimed at linking knowledge with action. By categorizing decisions and making connections with science-based forecasting, the project aims to establish an action-oriented analytical framework to help multiple stakeholders define and evaluate possible forecast-based decisions to support climate risk management.

Building on prior work by the project team and the “Early Warning Early Action” approach developed by the IFRC, the project will identify decisions about managing risks associated with a range of predictable climate hazards. The project will blend analytical frameworks for climate risk management decision making developed by Agrawal (2008) and Suarez and Tall (2010). Designing and running of participatory games is a key element of this, enabling experiential learning of feedbacks, thresholds and trade-offs to shape decision making. Research sites primarily comprise African states with an emphasis on East Africa.

Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pablo Suarez, Red Cross/ Red Crescent Climate Centre (PI) ● Arame Tall, Red Cross/ Red Crescent Climate Centre ● Maarten van Aalst, Red Cross/ Red Crescent Climate Centre ● Hassan Virji, START International ● Youcef Ait-Chellouche, UNISDR ● Arun Agrawal, University of Michigan
Key project impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Although limited budget (£120,000) (£220,000 including co-funding): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very high visibility due to the profile of the project team and the highly innovative concept of game-based experiential learning in the humanitarian sector. The project’s PI, Pablo Suarez, has been very proactive, promoting the project with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including amongst CDKN’s partners and DFID. ○ Strong potential for high impact with decision-makers in both the humanitarian sector and in relevant policy circles due to excellent networks. ○ High number, high quality and good range of outputs, including research articles and many wider communications media.
Fit within CDKN’s portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project has a clear and strong humanitarian focus, and therefore sits within the Disaster Risk Management cluster.

Research impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natasha Grist is a co-author on a report with Pablo and others from the project Games for a Changing Climate due out for Doha 2012.
Thought leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an innovative and policy oriented research project that builds on the combined experience of experts in the project team. • Theoretical developments, described under Research impact above.
Policy interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project is expected to have a high level of influence in the humanitarian sector and in the policy arena. As project partners, the needs of the IFRC and UNISDR – both key players in the humanitarian sector on a global scale – are built in and the potential for high impact is therefore great. Institutions and individuals involved with the UN system are embedded in the project, with strong partnerships with African governments, resulting in high likelihood of policy impact. The project is well linked to Red Cross, START networks.
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will support stakeholders to access, understand, trust and use science-based predictions at a range of timescales, turning knowledge into action. • A core part of the project is the training and mentoring of approximately 12 advanced African students (MSc/ PhD level), recruited through a competitive process. Students will receive training for research and fieldwork, will undertake fieldwork in designated case study sites, and will prepare short papers. It is hoped that many of these papers will be submitted to academic journals. Nurtured over the period of over a year, this cohort of students will form the basis of an African network of a research/practitioner community that will be encouraged to professionally devote effort to training others and to help regional humanitarian agencies with risk management challenges.
Deliverables to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project runs from December 2011 to June 2013. To date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Over 50 workshops/ game sessions have been run by Pablo and the project team, with a wide variety of stakeholders including at Durban UNFCCC 2011 ○ Book manuscript Serious Fun: Scaling Up Community Based Adaptation through Experimental Learning, by Pablo Suarez, Janot Mendler de Suarez, Bettina Koelle and Maxwell Boykoff. Submitted to Earthscan, Feb 2012. ○ Draft of manuscript for journal article ‘Bridging the gap between forecasts and humanitarian decision: Innovative, game-based learning and dialogue processes’, by Pablo Suarez, Arun Agrawal and Maarten van Aalst. ○ Increasing interest from academics and donors with many invitations including an invitation to include an article in the Disasters journal. ○ There have been 16 noted instances of media coverage by a range of organisations, news entities and events including the New York Times, Reuters, the Nordic Climate Festival and the Inter-American Development Bank. ○ 5 short films have been produced on the climate games that have been conducted in Kenya, Nicaragua, and at Boston University (July 2012).
Deliverables expected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further journal articles. ○ Pardee Centre Taskforce Report ‘Games for a Changing Climate’ with Natasha Grist as co-author ○ Additional workshops aimed at engaging stakeholders in forecast-based decisions. ○ Practitioner handbook: a collection of strategies and examples on forecast-based decisions tailored to different sectors and geographic scales, including case studies of how people understand and apply forecasts. ○ Guidelines and materials for participatory processes.
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