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Climate Services in Senegal: Media training and field trip report

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Climate services in Senegal

Media training and field trip report

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Introduction

To demonstrate the success of the Senegal-based project on strengthening the scaling up of climate services, and enhance capacity for regional media to report effectively on climate change issues, CCAFS carried out media training and site visit from 28 to 30 September 2015. This activity was co-led by the CCAFS West Africa team and Coordinating Unit, in collaboration with local partners, and media experts. This report summarized key activities, outputs and outcomes from the visit. Both activities were designed to take advantage of the keen interest reporters are paying to climate change this year to focus their attention on agriculture's role as a climate solution, especially through ground experiences and successes of CCAFS-led activities in Senegal (climate information services, climate-smart villages, etc.).

These activities were coordinated with the release of project outcome brief, [The impact of Climate Information Services in Senegal](#), which offers details about the project's results and a notable statistic about how many farmers have benefited from climate services.

Media training

To help Senegal-based reporters effectively address topics related to climate change, and to prepare a small group of reporters for the field visits, a half-day journalist training was organized in Dakar. The training, which was designed by communications firm Burness, aimed to improve West African journalists' capacity in reporting on climate change, agriculture and food security in the lead-up to the Paris climate talks.

Agenda and discussion *[full agenda in French is appended to the end of this report]*

Most reporters are generalists who cover anything that is considered worthy of public interest as assigned by their editors. Generally, most reporters are not experts in a particular area. As a result, reporters are often tasked with covering an area or topic that is completely new to them. When they don't have adequate background about a subject—especially one as complex as climate change—their reporting suffers.

Reporting on issues like climate change can be daunting, from making sense of the many acronyms to understanding the science, and how a shifting climate is affecting everything from agriculture to energy supplies to business.

To address this, a half-day briefing was organized immediately prior to the site visit to help reporters improve the quality of their reporting on these issues. The session was designed to also be immediately applicable to their reporting on the Senegal site visit and help reporters gain the confidence to report on these issues fairly and accurately. The workshop was facilitated by Julie-Anne Savarit-Cosenza, a media expert from Burness Communications, and included plenty of time for questions and answers, and discussion.

The agenda included:

- Expert journalists share best practices for science and climate change reporting
 - Amzath Fassasi (SciDev.Net) [[view presentation](#)]
 - Laurence Caramel (Le Monde)
 - Yves Sciama (freelance science journalist)
- Presentation of CCAFS climate services video: [Placer les services climatiques dans les mains des agriculteurs](#)
- Keynote presentation by Robert Zougmore on "Climate-smart villages: experience from Senegal" [[view presentation](#)]
- Panel on Senegal and Climate Information Services
 - Ababacar Diouf (Direction de l'Agriculture, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Équipement rural)
 - Cherif DIOP (ANACIM)
 - M. Talla DIENG, Directeur URAC

In an [article published immediately after the training](#), journalist Babacar Sene (Agropasteur) wrote how the workshops highlighted how "Journalists can take ownership of these national initiatives [such as climate services] and ensure wide dissemination of climate information." According to Sene, "The discussions demonstrate that journalists must orient themselves more towards an information and communication offensive for the promotion of the fight against the adverse effects of climate change in Africa. African journalists can also learn from our European colleagues about how to participate effectively in international conferences like COP21 looming in December, and play their full part to deepen coverage of the negotiations."

A [video report covering the training](#) by journalist Julien Chongwang (SciDev.Net) highlights some key points from the discussion including the lack of communication channels between researchers and the media, the lack of resources for journalists, and especially the lack of public interest in questions related to science and climate change. It emerged that these challenges face both African and European journalists. The scientists shared their own challenges with speaking to the media, including a fear that science would be 'sensationalised'.

The discussions concluded with general agreement on the need for a permanent dialogue between scientists and the media.

Post-workshop evaluation and feedback

A survey was given to participants immediately after the training, which was completed by seven journalists.

The majority of participants ranked the content of the sessions and quality of presentations "excellent". The majority also felt that the workshop was pertinent to their work.

Strengths There was wide variation on which part of the workshop people found most useful. Some felt it was the presentations from and discussions with the seasoned

journalists. Others felt it was the expert panel. Several people remarked that Robert's presentation on Climate-smart villages was a highlight.

Weaknesses There were few remarks on what could have been done differently. Many people would have preferred more time for discussions and engagement, and the need to invite a larger number of Senegalese journalists.

How would people use the information and what changes they make in their work habits? Several different answers were given including:

"I have acquired knowledge that will strengthen my ability to of scientific information, especially on environment and agriculture, and climate change"

"I think differently now about how to approach researchers and discuss with them"

"I will work to satisfy the needs of climate information users"

"I intend to approach my newspaper to take a greater role in reporting environmental issues"

One person remarked that a "Key merit of this workshop will have been putting us in touch with new people who are all new sources of information."

Media visit

The visit spanned 3 days, and included stops in several climate-smart villages near Kaffrine and Niakhar, as well as visits to community radio stations and agro-advisory offices.

The visit targeted local and international correspondents based in Dakar, as well as reporters based in Paris.

The visit was designed to enable journalists to see firsthand how farmers on the ground are benefiting from climate services, as well as other climate-smart activities.

The climate-smart village in Kaffrine, the initial pilot site for the climate services project, was identified as the key site visit location. A second set of sites in Niakhar demonstrate how this project is being scaled up.

During the course of the visit, the journalists were able to see the following activities:

- The transmission and use of climate information on the ground at the village level, including the use by farmers of specific technologies, such as mobile phones and radio
- Test plots showing a contrast where climate information has been applied and those that haven't used the information.
- The testing and development of an integrated set of interventions in Climate-smart villages (Daga-Birame)

- Process for climate and weather advisory development carried out by Agence Nationale de l'Aviation Civile du Sénégal (ANACIM) and partners in the GTP

Itinerary

Tuesday 29 September 2015

- Sikilo village – see test sites and meet climate-smart farmers including Mariama Keita.
- Daga Birame Climate-Smart Village (17 KM south of Kaffrine) – meet climate-smart farmers including womens' group; meet ISRA scientists
- Kaffrine rural radio station to meet broadcasters
- Gnibi village – meet farmer Amy Ndiaye « Mme Météo »

Wednesday 30 September 2015

- Niakhar: visit two further test sites
- Niakhar: Meet with “GTP” (Multidisciplinary working group) to learn how they develop advisories
- Visit to rural radio station in Fissel, Niakhar

Spokespersons

The site visits allowed provide reporters to speak with the spokespeople from the following groups:

National level officials, including representatives of ANACIM and the National Meteorological Agency, which generates climate information

- Ousmane NDIAYE (ANACIM)
- Bounama NDIEYE (ANACIM)
- Mariama BATHILY (ANACIM)
- Serigne NDIAYE (ANACIM)
- DIABEL NDIAYE (ANACIM)
- Ibrahima DIOUF (Agricultural adviser, GTP member)
- Abdoulaye DIOUF (Chief of Sop village, GTP member)
- Doudou (Environmental adviser, GTP member)
- Bassirou FALL (stockbreeder, GTP member)
- Paul NDOUR (TRS radio host)

National researchers, including those who pilot climate smart practices and technologies and test them with local communities

- Diaminatou SANOGO (ISRA)
- Ababacar DIOUF (Direction de l'Agriculture)
- Mohamodou DIOP (ISRA)

Local officials, who include extension workers, farmer groups and individual farmers—both men and women.

- Mariama Keita (Farmer in Sikilo Village)
- Amy Ndiaye (Farmer in Gniby village)
- Cheikh Diouf (extension agent)
- Pape KAIRE (Rural radio of Fissel)
- SYLLA (Chief of Sikilo Village)
- Ramatou DIOUF (Daga Birame CSV platform member)
- FALL (Mister Meteo, Fissel rural radio)

Representatives of CCAFS

- Dr. Robert Zougmore (CCAFS-WA)
- Vanessa Meadu (CCAFS Coordinating Unit)
- Sékou Faidala Touré (CCAFS-WA)

Participating Journalists

In total, nine journalists joined for the field trip, including

Lamine DIATTA	Journal le Soleil
Julien CHONGWANG	SCIDEV.NET
Madieng SECK	AGriInfos
Yves SCIAMA	Freelance
Ofeibea QUIST-ARCTON	National Public Radio
Margaux SUBRA	Agence France Presse
Seyllou DIALLO	Agence France Presse
Laurence CARMEL	Le monde
Babacar SENE	Agro-pasteur

Published articles and blogs to date (as of 9 December 2015)

AFP. 2015. [Au Sénégal, des agriculteurs s'adaptent face au changement climatique](#). *Agence France Presse*. 18 Novembre 2015.

Chongwang, Julien, 2015. [Comment adapter l'agriculture aux changements climatiques](#). *SciDev.Net*. 12 Octobre 2015.

Chongwang, Julien. 2015. [Journalistes et chercheurs mobilisés autour du changement climatique \[video\]](#). *SciDev.Net*. 29 September 2015

Chongwang, Julien, 2015. [La recette d'un village sénégalais face aux changements climatiques](#). *SciDev.Net*. 8 December 2015

Diatta JM. 2015. [L'information climatique au service de l'agriculture](#). *Sud Quotidien*. N. 6728, 9 Octobre 2015

Diatta ML. 2015. [Poursuite des pluies jusqu' à mi-octobre](#). *Le Soleil*. 2 Octobre 2015.

Quist-Arcton, Ofeibea. 2015. [How A Glass Of Juice Inspired A Town To Get Smart On Climate Change](#). NPR. 2 December 2015.

Quist-Arcton, Ofeibea. 2015. [This Peanut Farmer Turns To A Cellphone - And Prayer - For A Top Crop](#). NPR. 3 December 2015.

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Seck M. 2015. [Entretien Avec Dr. Sanogo du Project CORAF/WECARD/CAAFS/CNRF/ISRA](#). Agri Infos. No. 86:5, October 2015.

Seck M. 2015. [Les paysans s'intéressent aux infos météo qu'ils jugent utiles pour la gestion de leurs exploitations](#). Agri Infos. No. 86:8, October 2015.

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Sene, Babacar. 2015. [Reporting on climate change: developing capacity in Senegal's media](#). CCAFS Blog. 9 October 2015. [[version française](#)]

Touré, Sékou. 2015. [There once was a woman named Mariama](#). CCAFS Blog, 16 October 2015. [[version française](#)]

Conclusions

As a joint effort between the West Africa team and the Coordinating Unit, this media initiative had multiple benefits:

Capacity enhancement for West Africa team and partners in Senegal to identify opportunities, engage with media, develop media-friendly field visits, and speak confidently with journalists.

Demonstrate the global value of this initiative among Senegalese partners and farmers. The visit demonstrated that this successful initiative is a reference worldwide and as such serves to motivate other communities and actors (e.g. Colombia) as well as provide evidence on ground successes to global for a on climate change (COP21). Many of the farmers were happy to see international visitors coming to witness their interesting work.

Capacity enhancement for journalists based on the evaluation and informal feedback, this effort helped journalists understand climate change challenges and solutions in Senegal, and also clarified linkages between local and international climate change politics.

Global media exposure this is still to be determined. Although several international journalists attended (Le Monde, AFP, NPR), stories have not yet been published. Journalists have indicated that they are waiting until close to COP21 to file their stories

Other indicators that could be measured in the future

Build public awareness in Senegal of home-grown climate change solutions this has not been evaluated, would require a public survey