

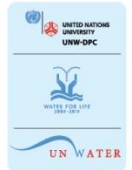
A UN-WATER INITIATIVE ORGANIZED BY:



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Convention on
Biological Diversity



Capacity Development to Support National Drought Management Policies

Summary Report

Workshop for the West and Central Africa Region
Accra, Ghana
04-07 May 2015



Background of the Initiative

Drought affects all climatic regions. It is the world's costliest natural disaster and affects more people than any other form of natural disaster. Due to climate change and associated effects, the duration, intensity and spatial extent of droughts are expected to increase further in the coming decades.

The implementation of drought policy based on the principles of risk reduction can change a nation's approach to drought management by reducing the associated impacts. Unfortunately, to date most countries continue to pursue emergency and recovery strategies and respond only after droughts have taken their toll. Such reactive and "piecemeal" approaches are not only ineffective but also unsustainable. Proactive and "risk-based" national drought management policies and practices would greatly assist countries to build societal resilience to drought.

To this end, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) together with the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC) have been collaborating to implement a UN-Water capacity development initiative on National Drought Management Policies (NDMP). The objective of this UN-Water initiative is to increase the capacities in developing countries and countries in transition on the development of risk-based national drought management policies. The initiative was launched by Michel Jarraud, UN-Water Chair, at the occasion of the High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP) held in March 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Six regional workshops have been carried out since its commencement in March 2013: for the Eastern European region, from 9-11 July 2013; for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, from 4-6 December 2013; for the Asia-Pacific region, from 6-9 May 2014, for Eastern/Southern Africa region, from 5-8 August 2014; for the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, from 17-20 November 2014 and for West and Central Africa region, the subject of the current report, which took place from 04-07 May 2015. In total, more than 170 participants from about 70 countries have participated in the workshops.

Regional workshop for the West and Central Africa region (04-07 May 2015)

Based on expressed interest, Ghana was selected to be the location of the regional workshop for the West and Central African countries. The regional workshop was hosted by the FAO regional office for Africa located in Accra, Ghana.

The sixth in a series of regional workshops, the workshop in Accra, Ghana was held from 04-07 May 2015 at the M PLAZA Hotel. It was attended by 30 representatives from countries in the West and Central Africa region: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, The Gambia and Togo. The participants of the workshop were primarily experts who lead the development of drought management policies at the national level and high-level policymakers as well as researchers. Workshop participants represented a wide range of sectors including agriculture, environment, meteorology and water, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of drought. The government ministries in the above-mentioned countries were asked to nominate participants based on the following criteria:

- willingness and ability to produce, collectively with other country representatives, a preliminary synopsis on the status of drought and drought management in their respective countries, including existing capacities and perceived capacity needs (to be submitted before the workshop);
- ability to work jointly in multisectoral teams for organizing and coordinating a network of stakeholders at country level; and
- ability to influence policy development and contribute to subsequent activities at country level

The three and half-day workshop started with high-level opening speeches by Dr Ahmed Yakubu Alhassan, the Government of Ghana Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture in charge of Crops and Mr Bukar Tijani, the Assistant Director-General, FAO Africa region.



In the following session, Dr Donald Wilhite, Professor at the University of Nebraska and founder of the National Drought Mitigation Center in Lincoln, USA, presented a keynote on 'Managing drought risk in a changing climate: the role of national drought policy'. A step-by-step process towards developing national drought management policies was presented. Participants were then exposed to the biodiversity aspect of drought management and the impact of drought on ecosystem services. The rest of the session was dedicated to presentations and discussions of country reports by the participants of the workshop. The country reports mainly assessed the state of the national drought management practices of the respective countries. Preparing the country reports in advance provided participants from the same countries an opportunity to work together ahead of the workshop, creating a network among the different ministries in the countries.

The sessions that followed focused on a set of key pillars of national drought management policy which fall under the following three essential areas: (i) Drought Monitoring and Early Warning Systems; (ii) Vulnerability Assessment and Drought Impacts and (iii) Mitigation and Response. As situations vary significantly from country to country, no prescriptive or stringent set of elements of a national drought policy was defined, but participants were exposed to a suite of strategies guiding the drought policy development in each country's individual and specific situation. The workshop's thematic presentations were streamlined to follow the above-mentioned three key areas. Each thematic presentation was followed by extended round table discussions in breakout groups.

The UN-Water entities engaged in this initiative were represented by Dr Mohamed Bazza (Senior Officer, FAO); Dr Robert Stefanski (Chief of Agricultural Meteorology Division, Climate and Water Department, WMO), Dr David Coates (Environmental Affairs Officer, CBD), Mr Boubacar Cisse (Programme Officer, Regional Coordination Unit for Africa, UNCCD) and Dr Daniel Tsegai (Programme Officer, UNW-DPC).

Workshop Outcomes

The thematic presentations and the breakout group discussions covered several key areas and exposed the participants to a wide spectrum of drought management policies and their context specific relevance. Issues discussed in depth ranged from drought monitoring and early warning systems to various drought indices and data issues in drought monitoring systems. The major components of drought monitoring systems were emphasized which include timely data and acquisition, impact data and synthesis/analysis of data used to 'trigger' actions and the need for efficient dissemination networks (web, media, extension, etc.). Approaches of drought monitoring were clarified, ranging from single index/parameter, to multiple indices/parameters and composite indices.

The steps on drought vulnerability and risk assessment and the typologies of the different drought risk management measures were also discussed, including drought preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. A range of risk management options were underlined in order to build societal resilience through national drought policies and preparedness plans, which comprise short and long-term measures. Most notably, the steps towards drought plans were discussed: (i) drought characterization; (ii) monitoring and early warning; (iii) vulnerability and impact assessment and iv) mitigation and response options. The generic 10-step process of formulating drought policies formed the backbone of the entire discussion during the three and half day workshop. The cost of inaction on drought and the long-term cost effectiveness of risk-based drought management strategies when compared with the cost of disaster response and crisis management were highlighted. On the fourth day, the participants presented their take-home messages, the immediate action steps planned and the challenges that participants foresee to implement national drought policies in their countries. In the end, participants received certificates for their successful participation.

In general, the achievements of the workshop can be summarized as follows:

- the workshop improved the awareness of participants in drought management issues and moreover the needs and strategies for national drought policies based on the principles of "risk reduction";
- the workshop equipped participants with tools and strategies for improved decision support, risk assessments of vulnerable sectors, population groups, regions and, most importantly, mitigating drought effects;
- the workshop furnished participants with up-to-date methodologies to develop/improve drought monitoring, seasonal forecasts, and early warning and information delivery systems; and
- the workshop also improved participants' understanding and the long-term benefits of risk-based drought management policies versus crisis-based policies.

The workshop was able to promote national and regional networks of stakeholders working in various ministries and institutions and encouraged mutual learning and strengthened cooperation which can help ensure the effectiveness of measures to address drought impacts and pave the way for formulating comprehensive national drought policies for their countries.