

The Caribbean Regional Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF)

Castries, St. Lucia

May 27th – June 02nd 2015

Concept Note

The combination of climate variability and change pose significant risks for the Caribbean region. Pressures on regional resources are anticipated to increase along with demands due to population growth and the expansion of tourism. Coupled with these risks are:

- The threats already posed to society from today's climate extremes and variations
- The potentially high-impact but uncertain additional risks presented by climate change

Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOF), sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) are active in several parts of the world. These RCOFs are critical for the development and effectiveness of early warning systems in that they provide real-time seasonal climate forecasts and interpretation across relevant time and spatial scales. Appropriate climate services, tailored to the Caribbean islands, must rely on such early warning information systems if the goals of supporting climate variability and change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are to be realized in practice.

Failure to maintain a Caribbean RCOF after initial activity in the late 1990s meant that such early warning systems were in jeopardy. However, in June 2010, a workshop was convened to re-establish the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CARICOF) in order to develop a sustained collaborative process that provides credible and authoritative real-time regional climate products. This did not include the delivery of outlooks, but rather sought direction and regional support for future CariCOF activity.

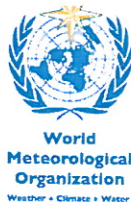
In February/March 2012 a CARICOF was held that consisted of three separate but complementary activities:

- A Technical Training Workshop that developed a draft seasonal (three-month) rainfall outlook,
- A Partnership Workshop that brought together key partners and users of climate information and
- The Outlook Forum that discussed the rainfall forecast with users which determined the final product.



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It was agreed that such forums were extremely important, and should be held once or twice per year just prior to the beginning of the wet and dry seasons in the Caribbean. In this vein in May 2013, a technical workshop and an Outlook Forum, this time focusing on the wet/hurricane season as agreed, were held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The training focused on verification and effective communication of forecasts. The Forum was followed by the rolling out of the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) in the Caribbean, which has established a roadmap for the delivery of climate services to key climate sensitive sectors including Disaster Risk Management, Agriculture and Food Security, Health and Water Resources. Since then roadmaps were drafted for Climate Services in Belize after a stakeholder meeting held there in October to November 2013, and another in August 2014 in Dominica with a major emphasis being placed on health. Most recently, a stakeholder meeting was held in May 2015, with a similar roadmap being drafted.

The most recent wet/hurricane season forum was held in Kingston Jamaica in May 2014 with a similar structure to that of 2013. The training on this occasion built on the two previous training sessions in 2012 and 2013, with the focus now on drought, which yielded an innovative drought forecast that eventually developed into a drought alerting system, as well as a tercile temperature forecasts. This CariCOF was unique in that it was supported by partners Columbia University (through the International Research Institute for Climate and Society – IRI) and the University of Arizona under the USAID/NOAA¹ funded International Research and Applications Project's (IRAP) Integrating Climate Information and Decision Processes for Regional Climate Resilience that focused on exploring research-based approaches to:

- Understanding the structure and functions of formal and informal networks for climate information production, communication and use,
- Assessing vulnerabilities of affected communities to impacts of climate variability and change,
- Assessing risks incurred by sectors impacted by climate variability and change, and
- Evaluating effectiveness of products and processes of the existing system of production, provision and use of climate information.

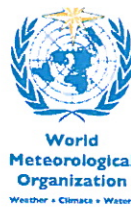
¹ United States Agency for International Development/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the USA.





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Whereas the two previous forums focused on information for the wet/hurricane season, the importance of dry season forecasts was not ignored, as this season poses a totally different, but serious threat to regional sectors that rely on an adequate, reliable water supply. To this end, in November/December 2014, the first Dry Season CariCOF was held in Antigua and Barbuda, with particular emphasis on impacts on the agriculture and food security and water resources sectors. As the most severe drought impacts in the Caribbean are based on extended dry seasons or below normal rainfall during this period, stakeholders worked along with meteorologists/climatologists to advance the drought alerting system.

It is time again to focus on the wet/hurricane season. In collaboration with our partners World Meteorological Organization (WMO), National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Higher Education for Development (HED), Environment Canada and the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI), our 2015 Wet/Hurricane Season CariCOF is scheduled for the 27 May to 2 June 2015 in Castries, St. Lucia. The pre CariCOF training will focus on:

- Sub-seasonal information and
- Coral reef watch;

introducing two new additions to the already expanding suite of climate products. The now typical monthly products, as well as the hurricane season forecast, will also be delivered at the end of the training for stakeholder discussion. The stakeholder forum will also launch the Caribbean Climate Impacts Database under the Building Capacity to Manage Water Resources and Climate Risk in the Caribbean Project.

