

Purpose

As part of the 2017 Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF), ClimaData was engaged by the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) to provide a day-long workshop whose purpose was to build capacity in weather and climate information reporting among Caribbean meteorologists, hydrologists, climatologists and journalists.

Workshop details

The workshop was conducted on Tuesday May 30th 2017 and was divided into two parts – one session exclusively for media representatives, and an afternoon plenary session for all CariCOF participants including meteorologists, climatologists, and media. Meteorologists John Toohey-Morales and Irene Sans led the workshop.

The morning session provided approximately fifteen journalists and general media reporters a basic foundation about how weather and climate works, with emphasis on the Caribbean and the weather and climate phenomena of the area. A presentation of the evolution and advances in weather and climate communications followed (including case studies), with the intent of having media representatives recognize that they can play an important role in developing better methods to deliver timely and comprehensive weather and climate information to the public. The morning ended on a presentation designed to illustrate the difference between journalistic training and the scientific method, and an introduction to the concept of media-fueled misinformation when it comes to settled scientific facts, as facilitated by the practice of false balance or false equivalency.

During the afternoon, media representatives joined scientists in the main conference room for presentations on modern-day weather and climate communications across traditional and new platforms. Best practices that insure immediacy, precision, balance, professionalism, and credibility while delivering critical information were discussed. In the final ninety minutes a role-reversal exercise was conducted, with scientists and media representatives “swapping jobs” for the day. Five groups of approximately 8 to 12 people were each handed a different breaking weather or climate scenario, including a heat-wave, a hurricane, flooding rains, developing drought, and a brushfire or wildfire. Scientists played the role of news managers in a newsroom environment, while journalists played the role of meteorologists and climatologists at their national meteorological and hydrological services. Leaders from each of the five groups then presented out to plenary about their decision-making process, which triggered a lively discussion.

Evaluation forms requesting feedback about the workshop were provided to each participant.

Evaluation feedback

A copy of the evaluation form is attached to this report. In total, 35 evaluations were returned. Some were completely filled out, some partly filled out.

The following is a breakdown of evaluations' completion.

Completely filled: 9

Partly filled: 24

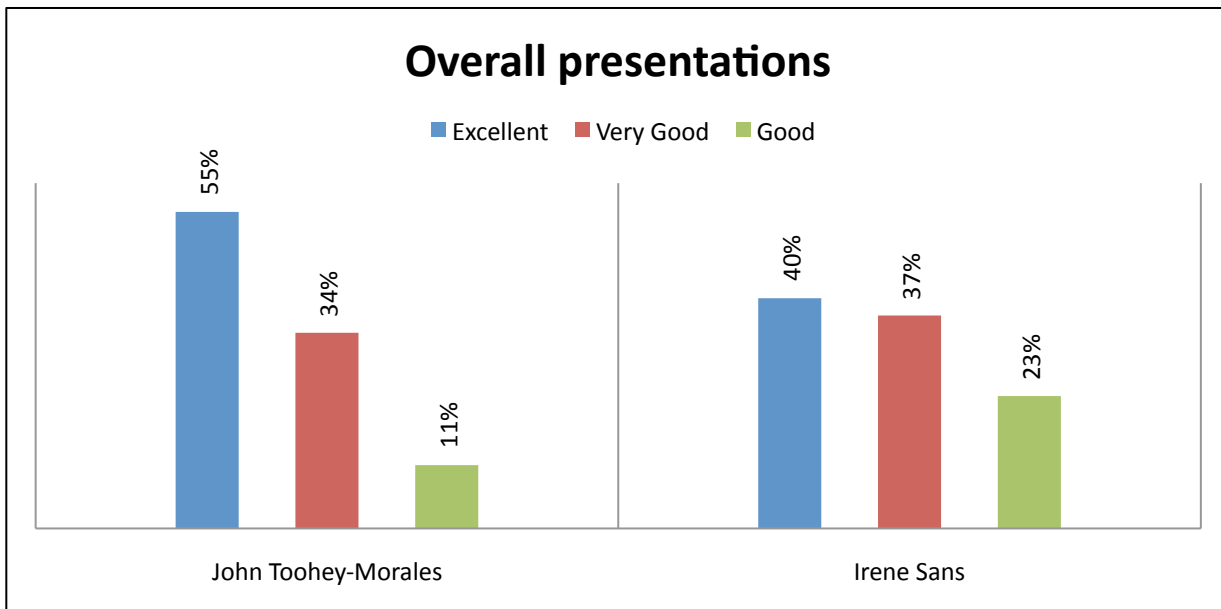
Grading of presenters

John Toohey-Morales:

11% Good, 34% very good, 55% Excellent

Irene Sans:

23% good, 37% very good, 40% excellent



Session feedback

Participants provided good feedback about the sessions they found most useful. There was slightly greater feedback participation for the afternoon sessions because the number of participants increased. The results show that there is great interest in weather and communications and the social aspect.

	Answered	The subject matter was presented effectively.				I can apply the content of this presentation to my work.				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Answered	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Meteorology 101	26	54%	42%	4%		24	42%	58%		
Climate 102	26	54%	46%			23	35%	65%		
Evolution of Weather & Climate in Comm.	25	48%	52%			23	52%	44%		4%
Media complicity in climate disinformation	26	46%	50%	4%		23	43%	52%		
Weather beyond traditional media	30	60%	40%			26	42%	58%		
The new social season	32	50%	50%			29	41%	59%		
Improving weather & climate	31	45%	52%	3%		30	47%	50%	3%	
Role Reversal workshop	31	39%	58%	3%		27	44%	52%	4%	

Freeform comments

There were 24 evaluation forms returned with open responses answered.

We asked participants what they found most valuable:

50% selected the role reversal exercise as the most valuable. Some indicated that they would have rather spent more time in the exercise and dive deeper into the dialogue with other professionals in a different line of work (i.e., media could use more dialogue with meteorologists and meteorologists with journalists).

“The role reversal session was awesome. It made me appreciate the need for clean accurate and timely information as a meteorologist”

“The role reversal workshop. It raised a lot of concerns about what responsibilities of the reporter”

“It was engaging and as a meteorologist it gave me the opportunity to look at reporting from the media”

“Role reversal certainly helped to change a mindset to act differently”

42% selected the social media sessions as the most valuable. Some suggested adding other social platforms and explaining how they work more in-depth; also to cover amateur radio communications.

“The new social season. It showed how to apply a more professional and effectively approach the dissemination of weather relevant messages to the public”

Participants indicated that there is a need for more time to interact and ask questions to presenters to form discussions beneficial to everyone.

There are many fields and aspects that were suggested to cover in future workshops. The ones that stood out the most were: disaster management, health and safety scenarios, government response, hydrology, more climate information, rumor control, safe reporting, and how to effectively show leadership that electronic media is efficient and important.

Recommendations for future capacity building for media & climate reporting

As shown by the results of the evaluation, the workshop in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was generally very well received. Reporters potentially ended the day with a greater understanding of the atmospheric sciences, the scientific method, and the challenges faced daily by meteorologists and climatologists. Scientists potentially gained a better understanding of the challenges faced by journalists, as well as knowledge about the evolving field of communications in the modern era, and new strategies of how to maximize the reach and impact of their weather & climate advisories.

One of the most immediate tangible returns on investment from what transpired on May 30th could be to have each national meteorological and hydrologic service (NMHS) formulate a plan -- with the participation of media outlets -- to open and expand lines of communication between them. Something as simple as a "closed" Facebook group could serve as a reasonable facsimile for America's "NWS Chat" in which meteorologists, emergency managers, and reporters all share information. Perhaps some NMHS's can find or generate similar platforms.

More broadly, the workshop should serve as a catalyst for greater collaboration between media and the national meteorological & hydrological services. Some of the more motivated individuals present at the workshop could lead the way in improving such links. The Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) may consider a new role for a communications officer: to serve as liaison between media and NMHS's, providing guidance as well as serving as a clearinghouse of information and strategies for those entities pursuing new media-scientist collaborations.

While there was a sprinkling of media representatives from other Caribbean nations present at the St. Vincent CariCOF, the plurality of reporters appeared to be either from "Vincy" or from the immediate neighboring island-nations. Therefore, there is an opportunity to continue to build the capacity of journalists in weather and climate reporting by delivering similar workshops to other regions of the Caribbean. Having different scientists from the national meteorological and hydrological services attend each time would garner the greatest impact.

ClimaData has provided training in optimizing weather communications in the past -- namely in the Dominican Republic and led by its founder John Toohey-Morales. However, the daylong workshop at CariCOF in St. Vincent was the first of its kind. We can learn from this experience and can preliminarily propose improvements like:

1. Allotting more time for the role-reversal exercise, including ample time for discussion.
2. Allowing for 5 or 10 minutes of questions and answers after each presentation.
3. Refining presentations to media so as to simplify the science, particularly for the climate subject

We are obviously open to additional suggestions from CIMH and all supporting entities.

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Annex: Evaluation form

Overall Evaluation

Thank you for completing the following survey.

Confidentiality Statement

Your responses are confidential and will be analyzed collectively with other participant responses. Aggregate data are used to provide instructors and course designers with feedback regarding the quality of the course and collective benefit to the participants. ClimaData does not disclose individually identifiable responses, and in no way will your responses be linked to or reflected in your employee personnel file.

Directions

Please mark only one answer for each question unless otherwise requested.

Sessions

Please rate the **overall presentation** for **all** sessions that you attended by placing an X in the appropriate box. Please mark only in the boxes provided.

Speaker	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	NA
John Toohey-Morales						
Irene Sans						

1. What was the most **valuable** part of the plenary sessions?

2. Please provide any **suggestions** for how the plenary sessions could be improved.

3. Please select **three** specific topic areas you would most like to see addressed at **future** workshops.

Thank you for completing the survey!