

WMO Workshop on Global Review of Regional Climate Outlook Forums

5-7 September 2017, Guayaquil, Ecuador

Good practices in RCOFs, summarising SWOT analyses

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BACKGROUND

- “RCOF Status Reports” have been completed by all participating RCOFs (available on http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/wcasp/meetings/workshop_rcofs.php)
- Most reports have a SWOT section (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)
- I have classified the responses for each SWOT topic into similar categories and then ranked these based on the number of RCOFs with similar responses
- Where a SWOT analysis has not been explicitly provided, I’ve identified some relevant responses from the general text
- A more detailed analysis could be done, but this assessment gives a fairly good picture of the current status

Ranked based on the
number of similar
responses from the
RCOF status reports

PRINCIPAL STRENGTHS

1. Capacity development and relationship building for NMHS staff and users
2. Sharing of experiences across the region
3. Interaction and collaboration with experts
4. Developing tailored products, which are used and valued by stakeholders
5. Coordinated linkages to regional (i.e. RCCs) and national (i.e. NCOF) activities and processes
6. Access to and sharing of GPC data, products and tools
7. Continuity of events over several years builds a community of learning

LESSER RANKED STRENGTHS

- Verification process builds confidence in products
- Engaging with media good for communication skills
- Harmonising of products across the region
- Consensus process useful

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PRINCIPAL WEAKNESSES

1. Staff turnover is high, so not same people attending each year
2. Low level of public awareness of seasonal outlooks and inappropriate usage of probabilities
3. Lack of tools, lack of high quality data, and data sharing constraints make forecast verification difficult
4. Need for improved forecasting and downscaling tools
5. Lack of ability to demonstrate the value of forecasts (little feedback and/or impact data)

LESSER RANKED WEAKNESSES

- Need for regional consistency of products
- Need to enhance on-going engagement with users at the national level
- Subjective nature of consensus forecasts
- Some areas have low forecast skill
- Lack of involvement of private sector and politicians

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PRINCIPAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. Develop more sector-specific tailored products
2. Foster linkages to research organisations and capitalise on climate adaptation funding opportunities
3. Ongoing improvements to forecast skill will enhance usefulness of products
4. Make more linkages to policy, strategies and actions
5. Extend forecasts to sub-seasonal and inter-annual
6. Develop a standardised regional product suite
7. Provide more evidence of the value of forecasts

LESSER RANKED OPPORTUNITIES

- Build better linkages with indigenous knowledge data and information
- Make more use of technology to enhance participation (e.g. video conferencing)
- Use events more effectively for specific technical training

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PRINCIPAL THREATS

1. Sustainable funding for RCOFs
2. Low or varied technical capability of participants
3. Low technical capacity of NMHSs (infrastructure, hardware, software)
4. Private sector operators providing non-standard and unproven services
5. Lack of sufficient funding to maintain climate station networks and databases
6. Political perception of low importance of seasonal forecasts

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

- RCOFs are exceptionally useful for building and sustaining a well-connected **community of learning**
- Repeatedly bringing experts, NMHS climate staff and sector stakeholders together to **share experiences** and learn from each other is incredibly valuable
- The need for producing a consensus forecast at an RCOF **varies across the world**; depending upon existing products and services, and regional and national capabilities
- Demonstrating the **value of forecasts** is a primary requirement and area of research – we need to carefully look at this from the user perspective

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

- RCOFs need to go beyond seasonal outlooks and be focussed on the **priority climate informational needs** of the countries in the region
- There are **many opportunities** to build on existing strengths and minimise weaknesses of RCOFs
- **Sustainable funding** of RCOFs is the number one identified threat across all regions. Is there another funding model (based on other global forums) that can be considered?