

Climate Change and Water Issues: Tech-MODE Tools for Strengthening Community Responses in Kenya

Workshop Background

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change & water resources management are significant global issues with regional, national and local impacts. This is felt strongly in Kenya, where issues of drought and extended dry seasons, extreme flood events, low water levels in dams, greater weather unpredictability, changing livestock migration and lack of rural energy technology are intensified by climate change.

The scope of Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) approaches and tools is broadening as the potential is seen in enabling rural communities to enhance their livelihoods. COL has supported projects in India which have been using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to enable farmers to link with research and academic institutions, commercial banks and relevant training material. Tech-MODE approaches have moved beyond the conventional educational realm into being used to promote community development.

With climate change and water resource issues having considerable impact on the ability of rural households to improve their livelihoods, there may be high potential for using Tech-MODE to enable communities to deal with these issues. The use of Tech-MODE tools and approaches to assist rural Kenyan communities in dealing with climate change and water resource issues is being investigated through a project involving three Kenyan institutions.

THE PROJECT

Three institutions in Kenya are partnering in a joint project to investigate Tech-MODE opportunities for improving rural communities' ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Lead Institution	Initiative	Target Group
African Centre for Technology and Science (ACTS)	Video programming	Rural farmers
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)	E-learning modules	Professionals working with rural communities
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST)	Radio programming	Broad public

ACTS has run a number of projects in climate change programming with rural farmers across Kenya, with the aim to increase household food security, reduce poverty through improved livelihoods & facilitate integration of adaptation to climate change. The focus of one of their current projects is to assess the use of forecasting and climate modelling to assist farmers in their agricultural practice, as well as conducting local farmer training.

JKUAT undertakes research and demonstration projects on energy technologies for rural communities. The aim of this research is to address energy poverty among rural communities, and reduce the associated negative environmental and health risks that accompany most micro-scale household energy production.

MMUST has a recently established centre for open learning, and the university has been actively converting its courses into distance learning mode, including its programmes in disaster management and humanitarian assistance. The two community radio stations which MMUST broadcasts are a tool used to increase learnership outside their formal ODL programming.

The initiatives being developed are building on or enhancing each partner's current programming and areas of expertise. The areas of agriculture, rural energy production and disaster management are strongly impacted by the effects of climate change. Where the institution has experience in climate change and water management programming, the potential for Tech-MODE tools is being explored. Where the institution is already conducting Tech-MODE activities, material on climate change and water issues is being integrated. The formation of this partnership between the three institutions to carry out the programming jointly allows for sharing of expertise and combining complementary strengths.

The intended outcome of these activities is to create an improvement in rural communities' ability to adapt to climate change and water resource challenges in Kenya. Learning and knowledge gained through partners' existing programming will be used to engage a broader audience, thus widening the target groups and reach that the partners have. The main aim is to use Tech-MODE tools to reach agricultural households directly, as well as indirectly by targeting policymakers, professionals that work with rural communities and the broader public.

The initiatives will be develop replicable projects that have been tested in Kenya and models and tools that can be tailored and used elsewhere, particularly in other African countries with which the partners have linkages.

Workshop Outline

Sessions will comprise a panel with:

- Presentations given by practitioners in using value added ODL / Tech-MODE tools to help communities adapt to climate change (and to reach out to more communities).
- Presentations given on efforts to help bridge the large gap between communities and policy makers using Tech-MODE focused on climate change issues.

The focus of the sessions will be:

- On both practice and concepts; focus will be on Africa
- On the institutional collaboration and the complement of strengths required
- Aimed primarily at practitioners in this theme area (Livelihoods), at potential donor agencies and others who have a specific interest in the topic.

Number of participants (2-part session):

- 1st part: formal panel presentations; followed by an open floor question & answer period: 50-100 people
- 2nd part: facilitated discussion following on from the presentations: 20-30 people (smaller group of interested participants, wishing to stay on for more interactive discussion)