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Climate services: The product or the user, which came first?

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From our experience in West Africa it is obvious that the concept of climate services is not yet well understood or established in all user groups. Also some scientists still wonder if they have not been working on generating knowledge and information about climate change impacts for decades anyway. In some climate services projects, scientists find themselves in a new role, "selling" their products to users who are not necessarily aware of the existence of the product, where an attempt is made to create a demand. In other projects the demand is clear from the beginning. However, the introduction of the term or the concept of climate services has the potential to add a new dimension to the world of climate impact research and especially its application. It influences the attitude of scientists towards the applicability of their results in the direction of more targeted and demand-driven or ideally even co-produced information and services. Understanding scientific information as a service rather than as self-sufficient information for the scientific community, helps to better meet the needs of users. To improve the production and particularly the use of climate services both parties (producer and user) are challenged. To a certain extent, the scientist has to rethink and see the results as a valuable product that can be easily understood and used by others. This often requires a redesign, not necessarily of the product itself but the way it is presented. The user, in turn, must formulate precisely which information is useful to support her or his daily work, e.g. integrating climate change information into development plans for natural resources, sustainable energy planning or adaptation and mitigation strategies. This part in particular poses a real challenge, as the user does not always urgently need the information that a project intends to provide (bad timing) or is not in a position to adequately formulate the type of information required by the institution where she or he is employed. In this case, scientists occasionally face situations where they try to anticipate what kind of information is really useful for the user. Hence, communication between producer and user is key, but is normally not trivial, because of different backgrounds, expertise, language etc. It's a process that requires facilitation by skilled staff. In the CIREG project in West Africa we elicited the stakeholder's information demand in a first workshop. Apparently, the greatest need was formulated as capacity building for planning instruments for water and energy management in the context of climate change. By training on these tools, we gain access to the stakeholders and gain insight into their actual information needs. The willingness to share data

and information also increases with this kind of cooperation and can lead to real co-production. However, data availability and the willingness to share is a challenge in many developing countries. Research projects are usually too short to identify the need for information, to jointly develop information and at the same time to guarantee and observe its uptake.